

DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS

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Philpot's devotional selections providing daily encouragement for pilgrims on the heavenly road, drawn from his sermons and pastoral writings for believers in the Strict Baptist tradition.

13 Chapters

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DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS

January

January 1

"Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm 17:5

Without scrupulously or superstitiously observing "days, and months, and times, and years," few of us altogether pass by so marked an epoch as the dawning of another year upon our path without some acknowledgment of it both to God and man. When we open our eyes on the first morning of the year, we almost instinctively say, "This is New-year's day." Nor is this, at least this should not be, all the notice we take, all the acknowledgment we make of that opening year of which we may not see the close.

When we bend our knees before the throne of grace, we mingle with thankful acknowledgment for the mercies of the past year, both in providence and in grace, earnest petitions for similar mercies to be experienced and enjoyed through the present. Last evening witnessed our confessions of the many, many grievous sins, wanderings, backslidings, and departings from the living God during the year now gone; this morning witnesses our supplications for grace to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not through the year just come. Tears are most suitable at the burial of the dead; hopes and desires at the birth of the living. The past year was the departed father, worn out with age and infirmity; the present year the new-born babe in the arms of the smiling mother. It is still, however, mid-winter. Today, the first of the present year, differs little in outward appearance from yesterday, the last of the past. But the thoughtful, prayerful mind takes little notice of wintry skies. It feels that the old, worn-out year has sunk into its grave, with all its trials and afflictions, and that a new year has come in its place, with its new hopes and new mercies; and if it bring new trials, yet that the promise still stands, that new strength will be given to meet and overcome them.

Refreshed and strengthened at the throne by such or similar communings with the God of all our mercies, we go down to meet our families, and are at once greeted on all sides with, "I wish you a happy new year," a greeting which we as warmly and affectionately return. Almost every friend, well-near every acquaintance that we meet with in the course of the day, greets us with the same kind wish. Now in all this there may be a great deal of formality, lip-service, and traditional usage; but there may be also a good deal of sincerity, kindness, and affection. We are not, surely, so shut up in miserable self as to have no desire for the health and happiness, the temporal and spiritual welfare, of our families, our friends, or even our acquaintances. And if we desire their good, we need not be backward or unwilling to express it in a few words of friendly greeting. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted;" "Be sympathetic, be courteous;" "If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men," are precepts imbued with all the spirit of the gospel, and may be, indeed, should be, attended to without the least sacrifice of that faithfulness which becomes those who would daily walk in the fear of the Lord. There may be a form of kind words as well as "a form of sound words;" and as we may use the latter in perfect harmony with the doctrines of the gospel, so we may use the former in perfect harmony with the spirit of the gospel.

January 2

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

Growth is the sure mark of life. We see this in vegetation, in the animal creation, in the growth of our own bodies, and of every other thing in which there is life. Where, then, there is the life of God in the soul, there will be a growth in that life. Paul says to the Thessalonian Church--"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fit, because your faith grows exceedingly" (2 Thess. 1:3); and Peter says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." There is "an increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10), and "a coming in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). It was for this increasing knowledge of the Son of God that Paul stretched every desire of his soul when he followed after, if that he might apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus; and thus reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-14).

This is not what is called 'progressive sanctification', as if the flesh got holier and holier, for that is still ever "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" but this is a growth of that "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." After this growth in grace, this closer conformity to the image of Christ, should we ever be striving with all the powers of our soul; not satisfied with a low and lean state before God, but with unceasing prayer and supplication, begging of the Lord that we might be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9, 10).

January 3

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever." Psalm 89:1

We are surrounded with mercies; mercies for the body, and mercies for the soul. There are indeed times and seasons when all the mercies of God, both in providence and grace, seem hidden from our eyes, when, what with the workings of sin, rebellion, and unbelief, with a thorny path in the world, and a rough, trying road in the soul, we see little of the mercies of God, though surrounded by them. Like Elisha's servant, though the mountain is surrounded by the horses and chariots of fire, and the angels of God are round about us, yet our eyes are blinded, we cannot see them; and at the very moment when God is already showering mercies upon us, and preparing others in reserve, through some trying dispensation, we are filled, perhaps, with murmuring and rebellion, and cry, "Is his mercy clean gone forever, will he be favorable no more?"

This is our infirmity, our weakness; but it no more arrests the shower of God's mercies than the parched field arrests the falling rain. The mercies of God, like himself, are infinite, and he showers them in rich profusion upon his Church and people. They come freely as the beams of the sun shining in the sky; as the breezes of the air we breathe; as the river that never ceases to flow. Everything testifies of the mercy of God to those whose eyes are anointed to see it, and are interested in it. To them all things in nature, in providence, and in grace, proclaim with one united harmonious voice, "The mercy of the Lord endures forever."

Now, as these mercies of God are sensibly felt in the soul, they soften, meeken, and subdue the spirit, melt it into the obedience of faith, and raise up in it the tenderness of love. By this we are prepared to enter into the beauty and blessedness of the precept as an integral part of the gospel. If I take a review of the mercies of God, and feel no saving interest in them; if they are not personally and individually mine, I slight, perhaps even rebel, against the precept as too hard and severe. The yoke is too heavy for my neck to bear. My Jewish mind, my stiff-necked disposition, shrinks from obedience to God's word.

But let my soul be favored with a sweet discovery of the mercies of God; let them reach my heart, soften and subdue my spirit, then there is no cross too heavy to be taken up, no trial too hard to be endured, no path of suffering and sorrow in which we cannot patiently, if not gladly, walk. The reason why the precepts are not obeyed is because the mercies of God are not felt. Love and obedience attend each other as the shadow waits upon the sun.

January 4

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

The very word "confirm" implies that the souls of Christ's disciples need strengthening. If there were no temptations to try, no sharp sorrows to grieve, no painful afflictions to distress them; or if, on the other hand, there were no sensible weakness of soul, no sinking of heart, no despondency of spirit, no giving way of faith and hope, no doubt or fear in the mind, how could the souls of the disciples be strengthened? The souls of God's people are not made of cast iron, against which arrow after arrow may be discharged and leave no dent, make no impression. The hearts of the Lord's people are in a measure conformed to the heart of Christ. And what was his heart? "My heart," he says, "is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my affections."

And thus the Lord's people, who carry in their bosom broken hearts and contrite spirits, made so by grace, are often sinking, often shaken, often cast down through the many trials they have to encounter. It is for this reason that they need confirming, supporting, strengthening, and that the Lord himself would lay his everlasting arms underneath them, lift them into his bosom, and make his strength perfect in their weakness.

And is not this the gospel way? Can I, by dint of creature exertion, brace up my soul to a certain pitch? If trouble comes, am I like a patient sometimes under the keen knife of the surgeon to brace up my nerves to bear the operation more unflinchingly? This is nature, flesh, reason; not grace. The Lord does not require this of his people. He dealt not so with his beloved Apostle, according to the account which he gives in 2 Corinthians 12. What did the Lord speak into his heart, under trial and temptation, that he might proclaim it upon Zion's walls to the Church of the living God, "My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, he adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But it is very painful to the Lord's people to find no strength when they need it most, no faith when they have the greatest need of it, no help when most required. To pass through this experience baffles and disconcerts many of the living family; but when the Lord is pleased in a mysterious way to communicate his own strength, and to make it perfect in weakness; when he deals with them, as with the worthies of old, who "out of weakness were made strong," they can then bless the Lord for

their very weakness, and, like Paul, glory in their infirmities, because the power of Christ rests upon them.

January 5

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78-79

There is a way of peace, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. For he is "our peace," and "the way," and therefore the way of peace. He has made peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:20), having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to those who were afar off, "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," and to those who were near (Eph. 2:16, 17). The dayspring, then, breaking in upon the soul, shines upon the way of peace, and guides the feet into it. The light shines upon the way lined with blood, the way of salvation through the finished work, atoning blood, and meritorious sufferings of the Son of God. As, then, the light shines upon the way, and it is seen as a way of peace, a way of pardon and reconciliation, a way of access and acceptance, a way of grace and glory, a way of life and happiness, the feet of faith move towards it, enter upon it, and walk in it.

This is a peace that passes all understanding, a peace which the world cannot give or take away, a holy calm, a gracious subduing of all rebellion; and that power which once said to the boiling waves and howling winds that chafed their whitened crests into a succession of billows, "Peace, be still!" does it all. How great the change! Instead of war with God, to be at peace; to see by the eye of faith that the whole way from earth to heaven, as revealed in the Person and work of the Son of God, is peace from first to last, and that as long as the feet are moving in that path they are walking in a way of peace here and hereafter. O to know, feel, and enjoy more of this peace, the peace of which Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you!"

The only peace is peace in believing, peace through atoning blood, peace by walking in sweet communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nor are we left ignorant how it is to be attained and maintained--"Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6, 7).

January 6

"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1

David here speaks of seeking God for what he is in himself as distinct from what he has to give. His gifts are one thing, himself is another. Therefore he says, O God, you are my God; early will I seek you;" you as distinct from your gifts. The bride may value her bridegroom's costly gifts; but what are his gifts apart from himself? So the Church highly prizes her royal Husband's gifts and blessings; but what are these compared to Him who, in her admiring eyes, is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Thus, as seen by the eye of faith, there is that in his most blessed Majesty which alone can satisfy the soul taught by his Spirit and influenced by his grace.

The soul was made for him; it was gifted with immortality by him. Powers and faculties were given to it that might be expanded into an infinite capacity to know and to enjoy him. So that being created for God, nothing but God can really satisfy its cravings and desires. But there is that in him, as revealed to a believing heart, which can satisfy. His favor is life; his presence heaven begun; his love a foretaste of eternal bliss. Thus in seeking the blessings he has to bestow, we do not seek them independent of the Giver. We love the gift, but we prize the Giver more. Without the Giver, the gift would be worthless. The bridal ring is the pledge of union. But what would be the ring without the bridegroom? Mockery. So all the favors and blessings which the Lord has to bestow, if he gave all and withheld himself, would be but to mock us. But in giving them, he gives himself.

As when the bridegroom puts the ring on the finger of his betrothed he gives himself with the gift; so when the Lord seals a sense of his espousal upon the heart of his beloved one, in giving his love he gives himself. Nor can anything else satisfy the desires of an awakened soul. "It is Jesus," it says, "that I want; without him, heaven itself would be hell; without him, life would not be life, nor glory be glory, nor immortality be immortality!"

As without the sun, the earth could not exist; so the Church could not exist without Jesus. And as in the absence of the sun, no candles could take the place of heaven's own glorious light; so no sparks, however bright, of fires kindled by human hands, could make up to the Church for the absence of the Sun of righteousness. He must be, as he is, our all; having him, we have everything; not having him, we have nothing. The Lord the Spirit write that truth deeply upon your heart that you may take it wherever you go, and make it ever your bosom companion. If you have Jesus, you have everything; if you have not him, you have nothing. This continual feeling of happiness in and with him, and of misery out of and without him, as maintained in your breast by the power of the blessed Spirit, will be leading you to seek him perpetually. This made David say, "Early will I seek you."

January 7

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." Lamentations 3:41

When the Lord lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when he makes the living man complain on account of deserved chastisement for his sins, and thus brings him to search and try his ways, he raises up an earnest cry in his soul. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands," and not the hands without the heart; not the mere bended knee; not the mere grave and solemn countenance, that easiest and most frequent cover of hypocrisy; not the mere form of prayer, that increasing idol of the day--but the lifting up of the heart with the hand. This is the only true prayer, when the heart is poured out before the throne of grace, the Spirit interceding for us and within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The contrite heart and broken spirit, the inward panting of the soul after his manifested presence, the heaving sigh and penitential tear will be regarded by him, when he will turn away from mere lip-service and bodily exercise.

But there is much also implied in the words, "God in the heavens." This expression represents him as seated far above all heavens, enthroned in light, majesty, and glory unspeakable; and yet sitting on his throne of mercy and grace to bless the soul that waits upon him, full of love and

compassion for the poor and needy one that lifts up his heart together with the hand, that he may receive pardon and peace out of Jesus' fullness, and pants with unutterable longings that the Lord himself would graciously smile and beam love and favor into his soul.

This lifting up of the heart--the only true and acceptable prayer--no man can create in himself. God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will, can alone work in us thus "to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Nature cannot, with all her efforts, and all her counterfeit imitations of vital godliness, accomplish this spiritual sacrifice. She may cut her flesh with lancets, and cry, "Baal, hear us," from morning until evening, but she cannot bring down the holy fire from heaven. She can lift the hand, but she cannot lift up the heart. Depend upon it that in this spiritual communion with the living God, out of the sight and out of the reach of the most refined hypocrite and self-deceiver, much of the power of vital godliness lies. This lifting up of the heart when no eye sees and no ear hears, in the daily and often hourly transactions of life, in the lonely chamber, and on the midnight bed, surrounded perhaps by the world, and yet in spirit separate from it, is a secret known only to the living family of God.

January 8

"And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him--but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you." John 14:16-17

The holy Comforter and most gracious Spirit does not take up a temporary abode in the heart of the Lord's people. Where he once takes up his dwelling, there he forever dwells and lives. "He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." Oh, the blessing! Where once that holy Dove has lighted, there that Dove abides. He does not visit the soul with his grace, and then leave it to perish under the wrath of God, or allow his work to wither, droop, and die. But where he has once come into the soul with power, there he fixes his continual habitation, for he makes the bodies of the saints his temple. He consecrates them to the service of God. He takes up his dwelling in their hearts; there he lives, there he moves, there he works, and sanctifies body and soul to the honor and glory of the Lord God Almighty.

And oh, what a blessing it is to have received the same gracious and heavenly Teacher as the Spirit of truth! If this be your happy case, you know the truth for yourself, and the truth is dear to your soul; it has been ingrafted by a divine witness in your heart, and inlaid by the power of God in your conscience. The truth as it is in Jesus is very, very precious to you. You cannot part with it; it is your very life. Sooner than part with God's truth and your saving interest therein, you would be willing in favored moments to lay down your life itself.

But what makes you love God's truth? What has given you a heart to embrace and delight in it; and when you have come to the house of prayer, it may be with a fainting body and a troubled mind, has yet supported your weary steps and brought you on; or when you have gone home from hearing the word, has cheered your heart, in the dark and gloomy night as you have lain upon your bed, and drawn your affections up to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Comforter, the Spirit of truth. He, and he alone, could give it so firm and enduring a place in your heart, conscience, and affections.

Then live that truth as well as love it, and proclaim its power and efficacy in your life and conversation. If the Spirit has written his truth upon your heart, he will bring forth that truth in your

lips and in your life. He will make it manifest that you are "children that cannot lie." You will show forth the power of truth, in the sincerity of your speech, in the uprightness of your movements, in your family, in the Church, in your business, in your general character and deportment, and in everything which stamps the reality of religion and the power of vital godliness.

January 9

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man--but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20-21

The Bible is put into our hands as a revelation from God. As such we have received it from our fathers. As such, and as such only, does it claim our attention and our obedience. If it is not the word of God--we speak with reverence--it is an imposture. Now, if we can but firmly establish the necessity of a revelation from God, we have laid a strong foundation for a belief that the Bible is that revelation; for no other is worth a moment's examination. This argument from necessity, then, is very strong--stronger, perhaps, than it at first appears, and as extensive in application as firm in strength. To feel the force of this argument, cast your eyes for a few moments over creation, and see what a provision has been made everywhere by its All-wise and All-powerful Creator for necessity. From man, at the head of creation, down to the lowest organized structure, there is not a necessity for which provision has not been made, and that in exact proportion to its needs. You yourself came into this world a poor, naked, helpless infant, full of necessities, and must have perished from the womb unless provision had been made for them. Who filled for you your mother's breast with milk and your mother's heart with love?

But you have a soul as well as a body--no less naked, no less necessitous. Shall, then, the body have its necessities, and these be provided for, and shall the soul have its necessities too, and for these there be no provision made? Is there no milk for the soul as well as for the body? no "sincere milk of the word that it may grow thereby?" The craving after God felt by every new-born soul, the eagerness with which it flies at once to get comfort and instruction from the word, the holy joy with which it hails every ray of heavenly light that shines on its dark path, evidently show how deep the necessity of a divine revelation is laid in the relationship between man and his Maker.

January 10

"Bless the Lord, O my soul--and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Psalm 103:1

As the Son has glorified the Father and the Father has glorified the Son, so there is a people in whom both the Father and the Son will be glorified. He therefore said, "And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22); and again, "All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am glorified in them." When, then, God's goodness and mercy in the face of Jesus Christ are manifested to this people whom he has formed for himself that they might show forth his praise, then they give him back his glory. But how is this done? By praising and blessing his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness and mercy to their soul. We thus see in what a blessed circle this glory runs. The Father glorifies the Son; the Son glorifies the Father; both unite in glorifying his chosen and redeemed people; and they glorify Father and Son by giving them the glory due to their name. We therefore read that "the Gentiles glorify God for his mercy." But how? "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people. Praise the Lord, all

you Gentiles; and laud him, all you people" (Romans 15:9-11).

This is beautifully developed in Psalm 103. It begins with blessing and praising God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul--and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits." Why was it that David called upon his soul to bless the Lord--yes, appealed to every faculty within him to unite in blessing his holy name? Why did he charge it upon his soul not to forget all God's benefits, but bear them in perpetual remembrance? For this reason--that he might render unto God a tribute of thankful praise. Now by this God is glorified, for whoever offers praise glorifies him. We cannot add to his glory; for his glory is above the heavens. It is infinite, eternal, ineffable. No creature therefore can add to it or take from it; but he does permit poor worms of earth to glorify him by giving him a tribute of thankful praise. But this we can only do by believing in his dear Son, receiving of his fullness grace for grace, and blessing and praising his holy name for the manifestation of his goodness, mercy, and love, as brought into our soul by his own divine power.

January 11

"To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ." Jude 1

What a mercy it is for God's people that before they have a vital union with Christ, before they are grafted into him experimentally--they have an eternal, immanent union with him before all worlds. It is this eternal union that brings them into time existence. It is by virtue of this eternal union that they come into the world at such a time, at such a place, from such parents, under such circumstances, as God has appointed. It is by virtue of this eternal union that the circumstances of their time-state are ordained. By virtue of this eternal union they are preserved in Christ before they are called; they cannot die until God has brought about a vital union with Christ.

Whatever sickness they may pass through, whatever injuries they may be exposed to, whatever perils assault them on sea or land, die they will not, die they cannot, until God's purposes are executed in bringing them into a vital union with the Son of his love. Thus, this eternal union watched over every circumstance of their birth, watched over their childhood, watched over their manhood, watched over them until the appointed time and spot, when "the God of all grace," according to his eternal purpose, was pleased to quicken their souls, and thus bring about an experimental union with the Lord of life and glory.

January 12

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thessalonians 2:13

There is the impartation of righteousness, as well as the imputation of it; and the impartation of it is the communication of a divine nature to the soul. Have I one grain of holiness in myself? Not one. Can all the men in the world, by all their united exertions, raise up a grain of spiritual holiness in their hearts? Not an atom, with all their efforts. If all the preachers in the world were to unite together for the purpose of working a grain of holiness in one man's soul, they might strive to all eternity--they could no more by their preaching create holiness, than by their preaching they could

create a lump of gold.

But because, by a gracious act of God the Father, Jesus is made unto his people sanctification, he imparts a measure of his own holiness to them. He works in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure; he sends the Holy Spirit, to raise up holy desires--in a word, he communicates a nature perfectly holy, which therefore loves holiness, and has communion with a holy God; a heavenly, spiritual, and divine nature, which bathes in eternal things as its element, and enjoys spiritual things as sweet and precious. It may indeed be small in measure; and he that has it is often exercised and troubled because he has so little of it; yet he has enough just to know what it is.

Has not your soul, though you feel to be a defiled wretch, though every iniquity is at times working in your heart, though every worm of obscenity and corruption is too often trailing its filthy slime upon your carnal mind--has it not felt, does it not sometimes feel, a measure of holiness Godwards? Do you never feel a breathing forth of your soul into the bosom of a holy God? Heavenly desires, pure affections, singleness of eye, simplicity of purpose, a heart that longs to have the mind, image, and likeness of Jesus stamped upon it--this is a holiness such as the Lord of life and glory imparts out of his fullness to his poor and needy family.

January 13

"The Lord bless you." Numbers 6:24

The key to the words, "The Lord bless you," is, I believe, to be found in Ephesians 1:3--"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" for the blessings prayed for in our text would seem to be chiefly spiritual blessings. Not that we are to think lightly of temporal favors. They are left-hand blessings, if not right-hand mercies; they are gifts to be thankful for on earth, if not graces that take to heaven; provision for the perishing body, if not food for the immortal soul. Health, strength, such a measure of worldly goods as shall keep the wolf from the door, and enable us to owe no man anything but love; children growing up to be a comfort to their parents; a kind and affectionate partner; warm and faithful friends; an untarnished name; and a little provision for those dear and near to us, that their tears over our body may not be doubly embittered by poverty and dependence; who shall say that these are not blessings for which God is to be praised? Viewed by the eye of faith, blessings in providence come down from heaven steeped in mercy.

And yet how short, oh, how infinitely short do these temporal blessings, which perish in the using, fall of spiritual blessings, which endure for evermore! A striking proof of this is that when we are privileged to draw near to the throne of grace with some measure of faith and feeling, the heart's desire is wholly towards spiritual blessings; and the eye of the soul is so wholly and solely fixed upon them, that there is scarcely left place either in the heart or lips to ask for any other.

But look at the personality of the blessing asked--"The Lord bless YOU." And yet when the high priest pronounced the blessing he did not fix his eye upon, nor did he address his speech to, any one individual. It was spoken to the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel; and yet the words were so framed as though the blessing were for each individual. Such are God's blessings--personal, individual. Gracious souls, sometimes, when they have heard the word with any particular sweetness or power, say, "It was all for me." Well, it was all for you; but are you the only "me" in the place? Might not someone sitting by your side say, "It was all for me?" Don't think

that one alone is to be blessed, and all others excluded. There is enough for each, and there is enough for all.

But there is something so singularly appropriating in the mercy of God when brought into the heart, that it seems as though it were for me, and for me alone. But here is the blessedness of the mercies of God, of the riches of his grace and glory--that one having a part does not exclude the other. It is not like a natural family, where each successive child seems to withdraw a portion of the inheritance from the others; so that, if they had the covetous feelings of grown-up people, the elder might well say to the new-born babe, "We don't want you, you little robber! Why are you come to take portions with us?" It does not narrow the heavenly inheritance that there are so many to enjoy it; if it did, it would narrow God himself, for God is their inheritance, and in God is enough to satisfy myriads of elect angels as well as myriads of ransomed men. There need be no envy in the things of God; it is excluded by the freeness, fullness, and richness of God's love.

January 14

"The Lord keep you." Numbers 6:24

How we need the Lord to keep us! We stand upon slippery places. Snares and traps are laid for us in every direction. Every employment, every profession in life, from the highest to the lowest, has its special temptations. Snares are spread for the feet of the most illiterate as well as the most highly cultivated minds; nor is there anyone, whatever his position in life may be, who has not a snare laid for him, and such a snare as will surely prove his downfall if God does not keep him.

When Elisha sat upon the mountain and his servant was distressed lest his master should be taken away by violence, the prophet prayed the Lord to open his servant's eyes. What did he then see? Chariots and horses of fire all around about the mountain guarding the prophet. Perhaps if the Lord were to open our eyes as he opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, we might see devils where he saw angels, see ourselves surrounded by Beelzebub and his legions, as the eyes of the servant saw Michael with the flaming hosts of heaven.

Well, then, may it be the desire of our soul, "The Lord keep me"--keep me in his providence, keep me by his grace; keep me by planting his fear deep in my soul, and maintaining that fear alive and effectual in my heart; keep me waking, keep me sleeping; keep me by night, keep me by day; keep me at home, keep me abroad; keep me with my family, and keep me with my friends; keep me in the world, and keep me in the Church; the Lord keep me, according to his promise, every moment; keep me by his Spirit and grace with all the tenderness implied in his words, "O keep me as the apple of your eye!" My friends, you can know little of your own heart, little of Satan's devices, little of the snares spread for your feet, unless you feel how deeply you need this blessing--"The Lord keep you." And he will, for we read of the righteous, that they are kept "by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and that "He will keep the feet of his saints."

January 15

"The Lord make his face shine upon you." Numbers 6:25

The allusion here seems, to my mind, to be to the sun. Sometimes the natural sun has not risen; and the world must need be dark if the sun be still beneath the horizon. So with many gracious souls; it is darkness with them, midnight darkness, Egyptian darkness, darkness to be felt,

because at present neither the Day-star has appeared, nor the Sun of righteousness risen upon them with healing in his wings. It will and must be dark with them until the Sun rises.

But sometimes after the sun has risen we see not his face--clouds--deep, dark clouds, may obscure the face of that bright luminary throughout the whole day, and we may not get a single ray from him through the whole period that he is above the visible horizon. So, many of the Lord's family, after the Sun has risen upon them in the morning of their spiritual life, may pass, perhaps, much of their subsequent time in the dark shadow, until perhaps at evening tide there is light, and a departing ray gilds the dying pillow.

But again, there are sometimes days when mists drive rapidly across the face of the bright orb of day, and yet occasionally he peeps through the breaking clouds. And is not this, in some measure, an emblem of the way in which the Sun of righteousness is continually obscured by the mists and fogs which spring up out of our unbelieving heart, hidden from view by the doubts and fears that, like the vapors of the valley, spread themselves, to our view, over his beautiful face?

Yet there are times when he gleams through the clouds and disperses the mists. When the Lord is pleased to bless the soul and shine upon it with any sweet manifestation, then he breaks in through the dark clouds, but they gather again. It is not in Christian experience one bright summer day. We do not live in Australia or Peru, where clouds and mists rarely obscure the face of the sun. Our spiritual climate is humid, our inward latitude is the chilling north.

"The Lord make his face shine upon you." Is the Lord, then, sovereign in these matters? Can we not lift up our hand and remove the cloud? We have as much power to stretch forth our hand and sweep away the mists that obscure the Sun of righteousness, as we have power with the same hand to sweep away a London fog. How this puts the creature into his right place! And the creature is only in his right place when he is nothing, and God is all in all. How blessed to see the face of the Father; and to see it shine! not covered with lowering clouds of justly-merited displeasure, as sometimes we see in the natural sky an obscured sun looking angrily down, presaging wind and storm. It is indeed true that, when we have brought guilt into our consciences, the face of God is seen to lower with anger. We have brought his just displeasure upon our heads; though not angry with the persons of his people, yet is he justly angry with their sins; and a sense of this in the soul covers his face with clouds--"You have covered yourself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. 3:44).

"The Lord make his face shine upon you." And if he makes his face shine upon you, he will make your face shine too. It was so with Moses, when he was in the mount and was holding sweet communion with God. When he came down among the people, the skin of his face shone; the glory of God was reflected upon it. And if the Lord makes his face shine upon you, it will make your face not unlike the face of Moses when you go among the people of God.

January 16

"And be gracious unto you." Numbers 6:25

How sweet the gospel is! But what makes the gospel sweet? That one word which sheds a perfume through the whole--grace. Take grace out of the gospel and you destroy the gospel; you nullify and overthrow it; it is the gospel no more. Grace pervades every part and every branch of

the blessed gospel; it is the life of the gospel; in a word, it is the gospel itself. "Be gracious unto you." In what, then, is God gracious? In a broken law? What does that know of grace? In resolutions of amendment, creature performances, and human righteousness? Can the Lord, will the Lord show himself gracious in these? I have read of a project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers. We might as well expect to make sunbeams out of cucumbers as to make grace out of the law; it is cold as cucumbers; there is no sun in it.

Grace, to be grace, must come out of the gospel. It is in the gospel, and out of the gospel must it come; and it does come, excluding all creature righteousness, putting an extinguisher upon all human merit. As the Apostle argues--"And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). "The Lord be gracious unto you."

But how is the Lord gracious? Perhaps you have had occasion, at some time of your life, to go into the presence of some one in worldly rank far your superior, and you went timid, nervous, and trembling; but you experienced what is called a "gracious reception." Did not that enable you to speak and open your petition? So it is in the things of God. A sense of our lowliness and unworthiness may and does make us tremble and feel timid before the face of the Most High; but when he draws us into his presence, and receives us graciously, as king Ahasuerus received the trembling Esther, extending to her the scepter of his grace, it emboldens the soul to lay its petition at his feet. Nothing will do it but this.

But you feel and say often, "I am so unworthy." Will you ever be anything else? When do you hope to be worthy? When do you mean to be worthy? If you could be worthy tomorrow, where is your worthiness today? Is the old score yet paid? If you venture upon the ground of 'worthiness' you must have the old score rubbed off before you come to the new. Worthiness! where is it? In man? Never since the day that Adam fell. Righteousness fell in Paradise; when Adam's hand touched the apple, worthiness fell to the ground, and never since has been able to raise its head. I must not, then, go to God upon the ground of worthiness.

But may I go on the ground of unworthiness? I read of one who did, and met with a very gracious reception. "Lord," said one, "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." What did the Lord say of this man? That he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. What, also, was the confession of the returning prodigal? "I am no more worthy to be called your son." But this brought out the best robe, the ring for the hand, and the shoes for the feet.

Why? Faith dwells with a sense of unworthiness; they are bosom companions; it dwells in no other but unworthy breasts. Feel spiritually unworthy and you are spiritually believing, for it is faith that gives a sense of unworthiness. You believe you are unworthy; by the same faith that you believe your unworthiness you believe God's grace. "Be gracious unto you." That melts the heart; law and terrors do but harden. It is grace that softens, grace that melts, grace that constrains, grace that produces, godly obedience.

January 17

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Numbers 6:26

When we offend a person, his face is not toward us as at other times. It was so with Laban towards Jacob; and if we have in any way incurred a friend's or superior's displeasure, we watch instinctively his countenance. Is it down or up? Does it wear a frown or a smile? Is it looking upon us with the eye of affection, or are the eyes averted? We can tell in a moment if we know the countenance. Thus is the blessing asked, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon you," as a kind and affectionate parent upon an obedient child, as a fond husband upon a loving, devoted wife; for such is God to his children--Father and Husband.

And do we not, as children, often provoke him to look upon us with frowning brow, or rather, not to look upon us at all, to "hide his face," as we read, "that we cannot see him?" The prayer then is, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon you," with a smile upon it; free, open, forgiving, merciful, and mild, that you may advance to him. When a disobedient child comes home and sees its father's face not towards it as before, it shrinks away; there is no pressing forward to get upon the knee, no throwing the little arms round the neck and snatching a kiss, but a shrinking away through guilt and shame. So it is in the things of God. When conscience tells us how in this and that instance we have disobeyed, been inconsistent, transgressed, and done amiss, when we go into God's presence there is a hanging back, a shrinking away, through fear of an ill reception.

But oh, the change in the child when the frown disappears and the smile comes; when the little one is taken once more into the arms and the tears are kissed away! How much more so in the things of God when he kisses away the tears of the disobedient child, as in the case of the returning prodigal! There are no kisses like those kisses of forgiveness, of mercy, and of restoring grace.

"And give you peace." Oh, what a blessing! As Deer says, "I'll lay me down and sweetly sleep, for I have peace with God." It is this that makes the pillow easy in life, and will alone make that pillow easy in death--peace with God through Jesus Christ, peace through the reconciliation, peace through the blood of sprinkling, "the peace of God which passes all understanding." Many covet great things, high things. But what said the Lord to Baruch? "Do you seek you great things for yourself? seek them not." Ministers often seek great gifts, great eloquence, great knowledge of mysteries, great congregations, great popularity and influence. They are wrong in seeking these so-called great things. Let them rather seek real things, gracious things, things that will make their souls blessed here and hereafter.

The blessing that the gracious soul most earnestly covets is peace; for this is the sweetest honey-drop in God's cup. It is true that it does not make the heart overflow like joy, nor to dance with exultation like the first beaming in of the rays of hope, nor melt it down like the visits of love; but it is in some respects sweeter than all, because it so settles down the soul into sweet assurance; it is the realization of the Savior himself, for "he is our peace," and may thus be called the crowning blessing.

January 18

"From all your idols will I cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25

When there are no crosses, temptations, or exercises, a man is sure to go out after and cleave to idols. It matters not what experience he has had, whether of trouble or consolation, distress or enjoyment; if once he ceases to be plagued and exercised, he will be setting up his household

gods in the secret chambers of imagery. Profit or pleasure, self-indulgence or self-gratification will surely, in one form or another, engross his thoughts, and steal away his heart.

Nor is there anything too trifling or insignificant to become an idol. Whatever is meditated on preferably to God, whatever is desired more than he, whatever more interests us, pleases us, occupies our waking hours, or is more constantly in our mind, becomes an idol and a source of sin.

It is not the magnitude of the idol, but its existence as an object of worship, that constitutes idolatry. I have seen some Burmese idols not much larger than my hand, and I have seen some Egyptian idols weighing many tons. But both were equally idols, and the comparative size had nothing to do with the question. So spiritually, the idol is not to be measured by its size, its relative importance or non-importance. A flower may be as much an idol to one man as a chest full of gold to another. If you watch your heart, you will see idols rising and setting all day long, nearly as thickly as the stars by night.

Now exercises, difficulties, temptations, besetments, losses, trials, afflictions, are all sent to pull down these idols, or rather to pull away our hearts from them. They pull us out of fleshly ease, and prevent us from sitting down contented with a name to live while dead. They make us cry for mercy, pull down all rotten props, hunt us out of false refuges, and strip us of vain hopes and delusive expectations.

We do not learn that we are sinners merely by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought, I might say, burnt into us. Nor will any one sincerely and spiritually cry for mercy, a sense of pardon and reconciliation by the application of atoning blood, until sin in its misery, in its dominion, in its guilt, in its entanglements, in its wiles and allurements, in its filth and pollution, and in its condemnation, is spiritually felt and known. Where the Holy Spirit works, he kindles sighs, groans, supplications, wrestlings, and pleadings to know Christ, feel his love, taste the efficacy of his atoning blood, and embrace him as all our salvation and all our desire. And though there may, and doubtless will be, much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and apparent carelessness often felt, still that heavenly Teacher will revive his work, though often by painful methods; nor will he let the quickened soul rest short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and his glorious salvation.

January 19

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield." Psalm 84:11

Is not the sun made to shine? It is his nature to do so. So it is with the SUN of righteousness; he is made to shine. And does the natural sun lose any of his light by shining? Why, the more he shines, the more light he seems to have. For ages he has shone as brightly as now. His beams were as glorious before we had birth or being, and will be as glorious when the eyes which now see him are mouldering in the dust. Thousands of harvests has he ripened, millions and thousands of millions has he fed; but he shows no sign of exhaustion or decay.

And does Jesus lose anything by communicating his light, life, love, and grace? He is all the more glorified thereby; and the more you look to him as the Sun, that as such he might shine into and upon your soul, the more you glorify him as the Sun of righteousness. When in the morning we throw the shutters back, or draw up the blinds, it is to receive the sun into the dark room. So the

more we are enabled by divine grace to throw back the shutters of doubt and fear, and draw up the blinds of unbelief which hang down over the mind, the more we glorify the Lord Jesus by receiving out of his fullness, and grace for grace.

Oh! it is good to be sometimes enabled to look beyond and above doubts, fears, misgivings, and the many things that try the mind. You may pore over your sins and miseries until you fall well-near into despair; you may look back upon your wanderings, inconsistencies, and lack of fruitfulness, until you are almost ready to sink down without hope and die. To do this is to resemble a person wandering in a dark room, tumbling over the furniture, and at last sitting down and saying, "There is no light." If he can but throw back the shutters, the sun will shine into the room.

So we sometimes may sit pondering over our many inconsistencies until we say, "There is no light in my soul; there never was, and there never will be." O to be enabled (when I speak thus, I know well, from soul experience, that it is only God who can do it in us and for us) to throw back the shutters, and look away from those things that so weigh down the mind! Look up, O sinking soul, and see the blessed Sun still shining in the skies of heaven! Why, the very power to do this, the very act of doing so, brings with it a felt blessedness.

How good, also, to be enabled to make use of Christ as a SHIELD! Oh, how often we go to battle without this shield upon our arm! But depend upon it, the Lord would not have provided such a shield for you unless he knew that your enemies were too many for you. Doubt, fear, darkness, despair, the law, the accusations of a guilty conscience, the fiery darts of the devil--how can you fight against these enemies without a shield? Why, you would be like a soldier going out against the foe without either sword or musket, and laying his bosom bare to every weapon, without sword or bayonet in his hand to defend himself.

So, to go into combat against the law; the accusations of a guilty conscience, and a desponding heart, and have no blessed Jesus to hold up as a shield against these deadly foes, would be enough to sink a man into despair. But if he is enabled to make use of the shield that God has provided, and to hold Christ up against a condemning law, a guilty conscience, an accusing devil, and a desponding mind, and say to them all, "Christ has died, and died for me," then he receives into the shield those darts which would otherwise sink into his soul, and then they all fall harmless, because they all fell on the Lord Jesus.

January 20

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

On all subjects connected with our most holy faith, it is most desirable to have clear views. Every point of divine truth is laid down with the greatest clearness and precision in the word of God. The darkness, the ignorance, the confusion which prevent us from seeing it are all in us. But as we search the Scriptures, as we meditate upon them, as we by prayer and supplication draw light, life, and wisdom out of Him "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and, above all, as we mix faith with what we read, there is often, if not usually, a gradual breaking-in of light; and as we follow up its heavenly rays, it shines more clearly and broadly, and the truth stands out more fully and prominently before our eyes. This is the only way in which we can be

"filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and thus be established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

To understand the scripture, to see in it the mind of the Holy Spirit, to be deeply penetrated with, and inwardly possessed of the heavenly wisdom, holy instruction, and gracious revelation of the counsels and will of God unfolded therein, demands much and continual patient and prayerful study. As in business, diligence and industry lead on to prosperity and success, and sloth and idleness are the sure road to ruin; so in the greatest, most serious, and important of all business, the concerns of the soul, there is a holy diligence, a heavenly industry, whereby it thrives and grows, and there is a slothful indolence whereby it becomes clothed with rags (Proverbs 23:21).

January 21

"A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you." Psalm 91:7

When Noah was shut up in the ark, Noah and the favored few, you know how they were tossed about, the rains coming down from heaven, the waters rushing and dashing below. The windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and while they were thus dashed upon the waters, not a drop came in unto those who were within. "It shall not come near you." So you see the believer may be surrounded with troubles, and yet "it shall not come near him."

And there is something more in the expression used in reference to the making of the ark--"And shall pitch it within and without with pitch" (Gen. 6:14). Now, it is a most remarkable fact that the word pitch in Hebrew signifies also atonement. Now see, the pitch with which the ark was daubed within and without kept every drop of water out. This very expression for pitch in the Hebrew signifies also atonement; and is it not the atonement that keeps out the water? Can anything but the atonement keep the soul from the waters of God's wrath and from the floods of vengeance that shall sweep away the world with the ungodly? There is nothing but the atonement, and that bears up the soul, and keeps out every drop of rain. "It shall not come near you."

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." "And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." "Received the atonement." This is it, to have the "atonement." God cannot twice exact payment for the debt. He is satisfied; he has declared that he is well pleased with the righteousness of his beloved Son. He exacts no more; his justice demands no more, and, therefore, fury is not in him.

January 22

"For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9

The temple erected by Solomon in Jerusalem, and the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness were but types of the true temple, the Lord of life and glory. The Lord himself said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," speaking of his own body. All the beauty and glory of the temple were, therefore, figurative; they typified and shadowed forth the glory of Immanuel, for "in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." God the Son has taken to himself a body, according to those words in the fortieth Psalm, as quoted by Paul (Hebrews

10:5)--"a body have you prepared me;" a holy body, a sinless, spotless body. According to those words--"Therefore that holy one who shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God;" and not only a holy body, but united to it a holy, spotless soul. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). This holy body, as united with a holy soul, the two forming his spotless human nature, the Son of God took into union with himself, and thus became the God-man, Immanuel, God with us.

It is this glorious mystery of godliness that a living soul pants to know. We cannot approach pure Godhead; we cannot understand it; it is a mystery too high and too deep for us; for who, "by searching, can find out God? It is as high as heaven; what can you do? deeper than hell; what can you know?" (Job 11:7, 8.) But when God would make himself known to the children of men, he made himself known by his only begotten Son, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, taking into union with himself the flesh and blood of the children; and thus we can, so far as the Lord gives us faith, approach to an invisible God through the visible God-man; as John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "No man has seen God at any time--the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." And, therefore, when Philip said to him (John 14:8), "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us;" Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" And why, but because as he says in another place, "I and my Father are one."

The desire, then, of every living soul (I am sure it is my desire when the Lord is pleased to work it in my heart) is to be led by the Spirit of God into an acquaintance with the God-man; to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ; to see the Godhead shining through the manhood, and yet to see the manhood veiling and yet deriving glory from the Godhead; and thus to come to Jesus as a high priest that is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; to feel nearness of access to the Father by approaching him through the Son of his love; and thus to enjoy sweet communion with Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God making himself known by taking our flesh and blood into union with himself.

January 23

"So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer." 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 5

The Lord has chosen that his people should pass through deep and cutting afflictions, for it is through much, or many tribulations, as the word really signifies, "through many tribulations" they are to enter the kingdom of God above, and into the sweetness and power of the kingdom of God below (Acts 14:22). But every man will resent this doctrine, except God has led him experimentally into it. It is such a rough and rugged path; it is so contrary to flesh and blood; it is so inexplicable to nature and reason, that man, proud, rebellious man, whether he be in a profession or whether he be out of a profession, will never believe that he must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom. And this is the reason why so many find, or seek to find, a smoother way to glory than the Lord has appointed his saints to walk in. But shall the Head travel in one path, and the members in another? Shall the Bridegroom walk and wade through seas of sorrow, and the bride

never so much as wet her feet with the water? Shall the Bridegroom be crucified in weakness and suffering, and there be no inward crucifixion for the dearly-beloved of his heart? Shall the Head suffer, grieve, agonize, groan, and die, and the members dance down a flowery road, without inward sorrow or outward suffering?

"Bastards may escape the rod,

Sunk in earthly, vain delight;

But the true-born child of God

Must not, would not, if he might."

But, perhaps, there are some who say in their heart, "I am well convinced of this; but my coward flesh shrinks from it. I know if I am to reach the Canaan above, I must pass through the appointed portion of tribulation. But my coward flesh shrinks back." It does! it does! Who would willingly bring trials upon himself? Therefore the Lord does not leave these trials in our hands; but he himself appoints a certain measure of tribulation for each of his people to pass through. They will come soon enough; you need not anticipate them; you need not wish for them. God will bring them, in his own time and in his own way; and what is more, God will not merely bring you into them, but God will bring you through them, and God will bring you out of them; for the third part was not merely brought into the fire, but through the fire, to cause them to call upon his name. What, then, will be our mercy? It will be our mercy if enabled to ask the Lord to bless us with faith and patience under tribulation; to ask the Lord to give us strength to bear the storm; to lie as clay in his hands, and ask the Lord to conform us to the image of his Son, to guide us through this valley of tears below, and eventually to take us to be with him above.

January 24

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." 2 Corinthians 4:10

The two aspects, if I may use the expression, of our gracious Lord, in which are wrapped up all our faith, and hope, and love, are a dying Jesus and a risen Jesus--Christ in his sufferings and death, Christ in his resurrection and life. This is the Christ of God, this is the Son of God in whom we believe unto life eternal, as he is presented to our view in the Scriptures of truth, and by the inward teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit. If, then, you do not believe in a dying Christ and in a risen Christ, your faith is not the faith of a Christian. Now just see how this bears upon our text.

WHY do we bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus? It is that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. As then we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; as we suffer with Christ, die with Christ, and enter by faith into the mystery of his crucifixion so as to be mystically and spiritually crucified with him, we rise, so to speak, out of this death into union with the risen, living Christ, so as to derive life and strength, grace and power out of his glorious fullness. For he is risen from the dead--he is no more in the tomb, into which he sank in all the weakness of death; but is risen again, and was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power." Yes, he has gone up on high, and now sits at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. He is gone within the veil, to be the High Priest over the house of God; there, also, he rules and reigns as King in Zion; and there he ever lives as our glorified and risen Head. As, then, we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, as crucified with him and conformed to his death, so as

"risen with him," there is even now in our body a manifestation of his risen life.

January 25

"That the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Corinthians 4:10

It is in this earthen vessel, our poor mortal body, that both the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus are manifested. In the trouble, the perplexity, the being cast down, is the dying of Jesus. In not being distressed, in not being in despair, in not being forsaken, in not being destroyed, is the life of Jesus. Thus in the same body there is a dying Christ and a living Christ, Christ in his cross in his weakness--and Christ at the right hand of God in his power. To know these two things is to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, those two divine blessings which the soul of Paul so longed to realize and experience.

In the knowledge then, the experimental knowledge, I mean, for all other knowledge is of no avail, of Christ crucified and Christ risen, consists the spiritual life of a child of God. So to live is to

February

February 1

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Romans 8:17

This is the especial blessedness of being a child of God— that death, which puts a final extinguisher on all the hopes and happiness of all the unregenerate, gives him the fulfillment of all his hopes and the consummation of all his happiness; for it places him in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

In this present earthly life, we have sometimes sips and tastes of sonship, feeble indeed and interrupted, so that it is with us as Mr. Deer speaks— "Though you here receive but little, scarce enough for the proof of your proper title;" yet are they so far pledges of an inheritance to come. But this life is only an introduction to a better. In this life we are but children, heirs indeed, but heirs in their minority; but in the life to come, if indeed we are what we profess to be, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, we shall be put into full possession of the eternal inheritance.

And what is this? Nothing less than God himself. "Heirs of God," says the Apostle. For as the Lord said to Abraham, "I am your shield and exceeding great reward;" as he said to the Levites, "I am their inheritance," so God himself is the inheritance of his people; yes, he himself in all his glorious perfections. All the love of God, the goodness of God, the holiness of God, all his happiness, bliss, and blessedness, all his might, majesty, and glory, as shining forth in the Person of his dear Son in all the blaze of one eternal, unclouded day--this is the saint's inheritance. Let us not then be weary in well-doing; nor faint and tire in running the race set before us, with this prize in view; but press on by faith and prayer to win this eternal and glorious crown.

February 2

"They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten." Jeremiah 50:5

Zion is the seat of all gospel blessings. In it is laid "the precious corner-stone" (Isaiah 28:16); in it is "placed salvation for Israel" (Isaiah 46:13); the Lamb of God stands upon it (Rev. 14:1); mercy, redemption, pardon, comfort, strength, deliverance, and glory come out of it. In turning the face then Zionwards, is implied the seeking of gospel blessings. The redeemed are therefore said "to seek the Lord their God," who is only to be found in Zion, his dwelling-place, and where praise waits for him (Psalm 65:1). But they ask the way to Zion with their faces there in no light and trifling spirit, and in no presumption that they shall ever arrive there. They have to ask the way step by step, often doubting and fearing whether they be in the way. Having been so often deceived and deluded, they dare no more trust their own hearts; but have to beg of the Lord to show them every inch of the road. They can no longer blindly follow every presumptuous guide, but have to cry to the Lord himself to teach and lead and quicken them in the way.

And as they go, they weep. They mourn over their base backslidings, over the many evils they have committed, over the levity of mind which they have indulged, over the worldliness of spirit, the pride, presumption, hypocrisy, carnality, carelessness, and obstinacy of their heart. They go and weep with a broken heart and softened spirit; not resting in their tears as evidences, but seeking the Lord their God; seeking the secret manifestations of his mercy, the visitations of his favor, the "lifting up of the light of his countenance;" seeking after a revelation of the love of Jesus; to know him by a spiritual discovery of himself. Being thus minded, they seek not to establish their own righteousness; they seek not the applause of the world; they seek not the good opinion of professors; they seek not the smiles of saints; they seek not to make themselves Christians by their own exertions. But "they seek the Lord their God," seek his face day and night, seek his favor, seek his mercy, seek his grace, seek his love, seek his glory, seek the sweet visitations of his presence and power, seek him wrestling with him until they find him to be their covenant God, who heals all their backslidings.

February 3

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit--a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." Psalm 51:17

The heart that feels the burden of, sin, that suffers under temptation, that groans beneath Satan's fiery assaults, that bleeds under the wounds inflicted by committed evil, is broken and contrite. This brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit is a thing which a child of God alone can feel. However hard his heart at times may seem to be, there will be seasons of spiritual reviving; however he may seem steeled against any sense of love and mercy, or even of misery and guilt, from time to time when he is least expecting and looking for it, there will be a breaking down of his soul before the Lord; there will be a bewailing of himself, a turning from the world to seek the Lord's favor, and a casting himself as a sinner once more on undeserved mercy, tears will flow down his cheeks, sighs burst from his bosom, and he will lie humble at the Savior's feet. If your soul has ever felt this, you have a better thing than any gift; for this brokenness of spirit is a thing that accompanies salvation, and is a sacrifice that God will not despise.

February 4

"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion." Amos 6:1

Bunyan says, in his plain, homely language-- "A Christian man is never long at ease; when one fright's gone, another does him seize."

Sin will never let him rest long, nor Satan let him rest long, nor God let him rest long, nor his own fears let him rest long. He cannot be at ease until his conscience is purged with the blood of sprinkling; until his soul has been blessed with a feeling sense and enjoyment of the love of God; until he has sweet manifestations of pardoning mercy, blessed revelations of Christ to his soul, with the voice and witness of the Spirit in his breast. This is not the ease of Moab (Jer. 48:11), but the ease of which the Psalmist speaks when he says, "His soul shall dwell at ease" (Psalm 25:13). All ease but this is the sleep of the sluggard; carnal ease as opposed to spiritual. If then he drops into carnal ease, and for a time sin does not seem to plague, nor Satan tempt, nor the world persecute, the Christian man feels that he is getting wrong; he has lost a burden, but not in the right way, and would rather have the burden back than be left to have his portion among those

who are at ease in Zion.

February 5

"For my people have committed two evils--they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13

There is nothing so piercing as the remembrance of backsliding against a good and holy God. There is nothing so wounding to a tender conscience as having sinned against manifested mercy and revealed salvation. It seems almost like doing despite to the Spirit of grace; almost like trampling under foot the blood of the covenant whereby we were sanctified, and treating our best Friend worse than his very enemies treated him. And as these things are brought to mind, and laid upon the conscience with weight and power, they will sometimes sink us very low into despondency and gloom so as almost to take away our very hope.

But the Lord is very merciful and compassionate to those who fear his name. He regards the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their cry. He listens to the sighs and confessions of the penitent heart, and broken, contrite spirit; and thus, though he will ever abase him that is high, he will exalt him that is low. He will never give up his rightful claim to his people. If he has bought us with his precious blood, he will never allow that purchase to be annulled by the malice of Satan or by the wickedness of our own nature.

How striking are those words, "You have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, says the Lord." And again, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you." "Return, O backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And shall we not answer, "Behold, we come unto you, for you are the Lord our God! Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains--truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jer. 3:23).

February 6

"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." Isaiah 4:5

There is an allusion here to the cloudy pillar which rested upon the tabernacle. It was as a cloud by day, but as a pillar of fire by night. The reason of this is evident. By day, the cloud and the smoke were sufficiently visible; but not so in the night season. In the night, therefore, it was a pillar of fire, that the presence of the Lord might be distinctly seen. Spiritually viewed, this night may signify dark seasons in the soul; for there is night as well as day in the experience of God's saints. Now when they are in these dark seasons, they need clearer and brighter manifestations of the Lord's presence than when they are walking in the light of day. Thus this "shining of a flaming fire by night" may represent the shining in of the Lord's clearer, fuller, and more manifested presence, the livelier and more powerful application of his word to the heart; the brighter evidences and clearer marks that he gives of his favor, which, compared with the cloud, are as the shining of a flaming fire. It is the same presence of God, and the same glory, as was the case with the cloudy pillar; but that presence and that glory are seen in a more conspicuous manner as giving light in seasons of darkness.

The shining of a flaming fire by night may also represent the shining light of the word of truth which is spoken of as "a light that shines in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). How often when the mind is dark, and evidences obscured, there is little else seen but the clear shining of the word of truth to which the soul turns its eyes as its only guiding light. "Your word," says David, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We often get into spots where we have to look outside of ourselves to the clear shining of truth in the word of God; for there is darkness everywhere else; and to that light we have to look and wait, and sometimes at a great distance and for a long season, until that word comes near and begins to shine into the heart.

But with that shining light, as it draws near and gives forth its comforting rays and beams, comes in due time the presence and glory of God. So to fix our heart upon the word of promise, and wait for its fulfillment, is to walk by faith and not by sight. Thus to Abraham the word of promise was by day a cloud; but when "a horror of great darkness fell upon him," the same word of promise, as the word of a covenant God, was as a burning lamp that passed between the pieces of the offered sacrifices (Gen. 15:17).

February 7

"For upon all the glory shall be a defense." Isaiah 4:5

The glory of the Lord is his presence in the soul, for that is represented by the cloud, as it was when his glory filled the house of God, which Solomon built. Now this glory of the Lord in the cloud and smoke by day, and in the shining of a flaming fire by night, is to be a defense, both upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion and upon her assemblies. A defense against what? Chiefly against four things.

1. First, it is a defense against ERROR. No person can embrace error who knows anything of the presence and power of God in his soul, or has ever seen anything of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; for all error is opposed not only to God's truth, as revealed in the word, but to God's presence, as revealed in the heart. And this is true both as regards individuals and churches. God will never sanction error as held by either. He will never bless with his manifested presence any erroneous man, be he minister or private individual, for he never honors or blesses anything but his own truth, and those only who believe and hold it. "Those who honor me I will honor." This is a very important point, for you will often hear erroneous men speak as if they knew spiritual things by divine teaching and by divine testimony, and will often boast confidently of their comforts and enjoyments, as if they had gotten their views from God himself, though they turn the truth of God into a lie.

But be not deceived by these men or their false pretensions. They have only kindled a fire to compass themselves about with sparks, that they may walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks which they have kindled. The Spirit of truth guides into all truth, and cannot and will not countenance or bless error. The Lord's own prayer to his heavenly Father for his disciples was, "Sanctify them through your truth--your word is truth." The soul never was divinely sanctified by a lie, nor the heart truly comforted by error.

2. But this glory will also be a defense against all EVIL; for nothing makes sin so to be seen and abhorred as sin as the presence of the Lord. He is known and felt at such moments to be infinitely pure and holy, and a holy God must needs hate sin. If, then, his presence be felt in the soul as a

cloud in which he manifests his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, it will be a defense against all the sins in which you might be entangled, when there is no such sensible presence to make you revere and adore his great and glorious Majesty.

3. It is, therefore, also a defense against all TEMPTATIONS, which would lead us into anything contrary to God and godliness.

4. And it will be a defense too against all ENEMIES. You may have many enemies, both without and within; but all their attempts to injure you will be unsuccessful if you have the cloud of the Lord's presence in your soul, and his glory in your midst. No enemy can hurt you if the Lord is your defense. He will watch very jealously over what he himself has communicated by his Spirit and grace to your heart, and his presence will be your best defense against every foe and against every fear.

February 8

"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John 17:19

Christ is made to his people sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). What am I? What are you? Are we not filthy, polluted, and defiled? Do not some of us, more or less, daily feel altogether as an unclean thing? Is not every thought of our heart altogether vile? Does any holiness, any spirituality, any heavenly-mindedness, any purity, any resemblance to the divine image dwell in our hearts by nature? Not a grain! Not an atom! How then can I, a polluted sinner, ever see the face of a holy God? How can I, a worm of earth, corrupted within and without by indwelling and committed sin, ever hope to see a holy God without shrinking into destruction?

I cannot see him, except so far as the Lord of life and glory is made sanctification to me. Why should men start so at "imputed sanctification?" Why should not Christ's holiness be imputed to his people as well as Christ's righteousness? Why should they not stand sanctified in him, as well as justified? Why not? Is there anything in Jesus, as God-man Mediator, which he has not for his people? Has he any perfection, any attribute, any gift, any blessing, which is not for their use? Did he not sanctify himself that they might be sanctified by the truth? Is he not the holy Lamb of God, that they might be "holy, and without blame before him in love?" What is my holiness, even such as God may be pleased to impart to me? Is it not, to say the least, scanty? Is it not, to say the least, but little in measure? But when we view the pure and spotless holiness of Jesus imputed to his people, and view them holy in him, pure in him, without spot in him, how it does away with all the wrinkles of the creature, and makes them stand holy and spotless before God.

February 9

"Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth--for I am God, and there is no other." Isaiah 45:22

How often we seem not to have any real religion, or enjoy any solid comfort! How often are our evidences obscured and beclouded, and our minds covered with deep darkness! How often does the Lord hide himself, so that we cannot behold him, nor get near to him; and how often the ground on which we thought we stood is cut from under our feet, and we have no firm standing! What a painful path is this to walk in, but how profitable!

When we are reduced to poverty and beggary, we learn to value Christ's glorious riches; the worse opinion we have of our own heart, and the more deceitful and desperately wicked that we find it, the more we put our trust in his faithfulness. The more black we are in our own esteem, the more beautiful and lovely does he appear in our eyes. As we sink, Jesus rises. As we become feeble, he puts forth his strength. As we come into danger, he brings deliverance; as we get into temptation, he breaks the snare. As we are shut up in darkness and obscurity, he causes the light of his countenance to shine. Now it is by being led in this way, and walking in these paths, that we come rightly to know who Jesus is, and to see and feel how suitable and precious such a Savior is to our undone souls. We are needy, he has in himself all riches; we are hungry, he is the bread of life; we are thirsty, he says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink;" we are naked, and he has clothing to bestow; we are fools, and he has wisdom to grant; we are lost, and he speaks, "Look unto me, and be saved." Thus, so far from our misery shutting us out from God's mercy, it is the only requisite for it; so far from our guilt excluding his pardon, it is the only thing needful for it; so far from our helplessness ruining our souls, it is the needful preparation for the manifestation of his power in our weakness; we cannot heal our own wounds and sores; that is the very reason why he should stretch forth his arm. It is because there is no salvation in ourselves, or in any other creature, that he says, "Look unto me, for I am God, and there is none else."

February 10

"For the word of God is quick and powerful." Hebrews 4:12

What is meant by the word of God being "quick?" That it moves with swiftness and velocity? It is certainly said of God's word (Psalm 147:15) that "it runs very swiftly;" but that is not the meaning of the word "quick" in the text. It there means "living," and corresponds with the expression (Acts 7:38) "living oracles." It is an old English word signifying "living;" as in the expression, "who shall judge the quick and the dead" (2 Timothy 4:1), that is, the living and the dead. So we read of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "going down quick (that is, alive) into the pit" (Numbers 16:30). So the Lord is said to have "quickened (that is, made spiritually alive) those who were previously dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The word "quick," then, does not mean moving with velocity, but "living", or rather "communicating life", and thus distinguished from the dead letter.

Truth, as it stands in the naked word of God, is lifeless and dead; and as such, has no power to communicate what it has not in itself, that is, life and power to the hearts of God's people. It stands there in so many letters and syllables, as lifeless as the types by which they were printed. But when the incarnate Word takes of the written word, and speaks it home into the heart and conscience of a vessel of mercy, whether in letter or substance, then he endues it with divine life, and it enters into the soul, communicating to it a life that can never die. As James speaks, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And also Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23). Eternal realities are brought into the soul, fixed and fastened by an Almighty hand. The conscience is made alive in the fear of God; and the soul is raised up from a death in sin, or a death in profession, to a life heavenly, new, and supernatural.

February 11

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect--but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12

The Apostle Paul, perhaps the greatest saint that ever lived upon earth, had to confess that even he had not attained. There was that in Christ more than he had ever seen, ever known, ever felt, ever tasted, ever handled, ever realized. There were heights in his glory, depths in his love, in his sufferings, in his bitter agonies in the garden and on the cross, which passed all apprehension and comprehension. Therefore he says, "Not as though I had already attained." I am a child still, a learner still, as weak as ever, as helpless as ever to obtain what I need. Though I follow on; though I forget the things which are behind and reach forward to the things before; though I know what I am aiming at, what I am seeking; though my eye is single, my heart earnest, yet it is not with me as if I had already attained.

Now just put yourself in that scale; and to measure yourself aright, look at these things. Are you following after? Do you see that there is something which is to be tasted, handled, felt, and realized of the precious things of God? Have you ever had any sips, tastes, drops, foretastes? Has your heart ever been melted, softened, warmed by the goodness and mercy of God, by the love of Christ? Did you ever feel that there was a sweetness, blessedness, and happiness in the things of God to which nothing else could be compared? Has your heart ever been opened and enlarged by the love of God, so that you felt that spirituality of mind which is life and peace; and could you have continued in that spot it would have been to you all that you needed to make you look death calmly in the face?

Now it is these sips, tastes, and drops, these sweet discoveries of what the Lord is to believing souls, which draw forth the desires of the heart and enable it to follow after.

But darkness intervenes--the Lord withdraws himself, sin works, Satan tempts, trials perplex your mind, unbelief rises up and begins to question everything. Then there is no following on. Everything looks so dark, so gloomy; divine things are so out of sight; doubts and fears so possess the mind; and it seems as if we came so short, so very short, that the question arises whether we may not come short at last; whether we may not have deceived ourselves; whether all we have felt may not have been a dreadful delusion.

And yet see how this works. How it stirs the mind up; how it makes us seek again and again to possess realities; how it seems to open the eyes afresh to see what true religion is, and that it consists in the teachings and operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. Thus our very short-comings, deficiencies, and complaints are blessedly overruled and made to work graciously to stir us up to run again the race set before us.

But depend upon it, the most highly-favored saint upon earth will have reason to say with Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," that is, matured and ripe. Not perfect in understanding, nor perfect in heart, nor perfect in lip, nor perfect in life. Every saint of God will have to confess imperfection--imperfection stamped upon all that he has and is--imperfection, imperfection upon everything but the work of the Son of God upon the cross and the work of God the Holy Spirit in the soul.

February 12

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Hosea 11:4

When God draws his people near unto himself, it is not done in a mechanical way. They are drawn, not with cords of iron, but with the cords of a man; the idea being of something feeling, human, tender, touching; not as if God laid an iron arm upon his people to drag them to himself, whether they wished to come or not. This would not be grace nor the work of the Spirit upon the heart. God does not so act in a way of mechanical force. We therefore read, "Your people shall be willing in the day of your power" (Psalm 110:3). He touches their heart with his gracious finger, like the band of men whom he thus inclined to follow Saul (1 Sam. 10:26); he communicates to their soul both faith and feeling; he melts, softens, and humbles their heart by a sense of his goodness and mercy; for it is his goodness, as experimentally felt and realized, which leads to repentance.

If you have ever felt any secret and sacred drawing of your soul upward to heaven, it was not compulsion, not violence, not a mechanical constraint, but an arm of pity and compassion let down into your very heart, which, touching your inmost spirit, drew it up into the bosom of God. It was some such gracious touch as that spoken of in the Song of Solomon, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my affections were moved for him." It was some view of his goodness, mercy, and love in the face of a Mediator, with some dropping into your spirit of his pity and compassion towards you, which softened, broke, and melted your heart. You were not driven onward by being flogged and scourged, but blessedly drawn with the cords of a man, which seemed to touch every tender feeling and enter into the very depths of your soul.

And why is this? Because it is as man that our blessed Lord is the Mediator; it is the man Christ Jesus, the man who groaned and sighed in the garden, the man that hung upon the cross, the man who lay in the sepulcher, who is now the man at the right hand of the Father, and yet God-man; for it is through his humanity that we draw near unto God. As his blood, which was the blood of humanity; and as his sufferings, which were the sufferings of humanity; and as his sacrifice, which was the sacrifice of the humanity; and as his death, which was the death of the humanity; as these are opened up with divine power, they form, so to speak, a medium whereby we may draw near unto God, without terror, without alarm, because God in Christ manifests himself as altogether love.

February 13

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:14

How can any one who knows anything of the blessedness of atoning blood and redeeming love and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit continue in sin, that grace may abound? Doctrinal professors may do these things, for a mere 'letter knowledge' of the truth brings with it no deliverance from the power of sin.

But the living soul, in whom the God of all grace is carrying on his gracious work--can it trample under foot the cross of the suffering Son of God? It is impossible that a man who knows for himself the redeeming efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, and whose conscience is made tender in the fear of God, can, under the sweet influence of his love, deliberately crucify him again.

Not but what there is a falling under the power of sin and temptation, as David and Peter fell; but there will not be a willful sinning against him, when the blessed Spirit is bringing near his blood and grace and love. May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave himself to purify unto himself a peculiar people--a people whose thoughts are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ; a people whose affections are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above; whose prayers are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication; whose sorrows are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source; whose joys are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger cannot understand; whose hopes are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil; and whose expectations are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world, but looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God.

And if they are peculiar inwardly, they should be peculiar outwardly. They should make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb, taking up the cross, denying themselves, and living to the honor, praise, and glory of God.

February 14

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." John 4:10

How blessed a thing is vital godliness! That is the thing I always wish to contend for. Not for forms and ceremonies, or doctrines floating in the brain, but for the life of God in the soul; the only thing worth knowing; the only thing to live by, and I am sure the only thing to die by. How different is vital godliness received into the heart and conscience, by the operation of God the Spirit, out of the fullness of Christ--how different is this fountain of living water from the stagnant, dead water of lip-service, formality, and hypocrisy!

And sure I am, if our souls have ever been baptized into a spiritual knowledge of this heavenly secret; if ever we have tasted the sweetness, felt the power, and experienced a measure of the enjoyment of vital godliness in the heart and conscience, we shall desire no other but living water. No, in all that we do for the Lord, or for those that fear his name, in every prayer, in every ordinance, we shall be, more or less, looking out for living water.

Are we, who profess to be in the wilderness, like the thirsty traveler in the deserts of Arabia, panting after the wells and the palm trees? Do we know what it is, after long seasons of drought, when the living water has sunk well-near out of sight, to find its streams again springing up in the conscience? How living souls thirst after these revivings! We cannot now be satisfied with lip religion, pharisaical religion, doctrinal religion, a name to live while dead, the form of godliness without the power. A living soul can no more satisfy his thirst with mere forms and ceremonies, than a man naturally thirsty can drink out of a pond of sand. He must have living water, something given by the Lord himself, springing up in his soul.

But, does not the Lord say, that he will give it to those that ask it? Shall we not ask, then, and seek for it? And will he deny us? Has he denied us in time past? Will he deny us in time to come? Has he not the same loving and compassionate heart now, as beat in his bosom towards this poor sinner at the well of Samaria? He still emboldens us to ask. He is now seated upon the throne of

grace and mercy as the Mediator between God and man. And if, through mercy, we know something of the gift of God; and if, through divine teaching, we know something of the glorious Person of Jesus, and have enjoyed a measure of its sweetness in our heart, sure I am, we shall ask, and our souls will receive the testimony of God in our conscience, that he will not deny us, but give unto us "living water."

February 15

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now has come salvation." Revelation 12:10

"Salvation." WHAT "salvation?" Salvation by grace, full and free; salvation without any intermixture of creature righteousness; salvation gushing from the bosom of God; salvation flowing wholly and solely through the blood of the Lamb. But salvation can never be tasted without a previous foretaste of condemnation. Heaven can never be looked up into before there has been a looking down into the gate of hell. There must have been an experience of guilt, before there can be the enjoyment of pardon.

"Now has come salvation." FROM WHAT? From the accusations of Satan, the curses of the law, the fear of death, the terrors of hell, and sentence of damnation.

And HOW does salvation come? While the battle is going on, while the issue is doubtful, while hand to hand, foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, Satan and the soul are engaged in deadly strife, there is no felt experience of salvation. There may be hope, enabling the soldier to stand his ground; there is no shout of victory until the enemy is put to flight. But when Satan is defeated, his accusations silenced, and the soul liberated, then "has come salvation."

The sweetest song that heaven ever proclaimed, the most blessed note that ever melted the soul, is "salvation." To be saved--saved from death and hell; saved from "the worm which dies not, and the fire which is not quenched;" saved from the sulphurous flames of the bottomless pit; saved from the companionship of tormenting fiends, and of all the foul wretches under which earth has groaned; saved from blaspheming God in unutterable woe; saved from an eternity of misery without hope; and saved into heaven--the sight of Jesus as he is, perfect holiness and happiness, the blissful company of holy angels and glorified saints! And all this during the countless ages of a blessed eternity! What tongue of men or angels can describe the millionth part of what is contained in the word "salvation!"

February 16

"Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." Psalm 25:4

To lie with a broken heart and contrite spirit at the footstool of mercy beseeching God to teach us, is indeed a blessed spot to be in. It is the evidence of a childlike spirit, and shows such simplicity, reality, and genuineness that it bears stamped upon it the indubitable marks of true discipleship. Wherever we see such a coming out of SELF, with a renunciation of our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, such a putting aside of all creature religion, and such a real spirit of humility before God, we must receive it as something beyond and above nature. Nothing but the power of God seems able to bring a soul so completely out of the shell and crust of self-righteousness, and so to lay open its spiritual nakedness before him.

Naturally there is something very sweet in seeing a docile, teachable disposition. And on the other hand, few things are more offensive than the pride of ignorance, the abominable conceit of people who think they know everything when really they know nothing, but are too proud to be taught.

The only road to knowledge is to possess a meek, teachable, inquiring spirit, a willingness to learn springing out of a consciousness of ignorance. This spirit is what we see sometimes in children, nor is there a more pleasant sight for parent or instructor than to see a child docile; earnestly seeking information, and glad to receive instruction. If anything can open the mouth to teach, it is finding such a disposition to learn.

So in grace; where there is a humble, quiet, docile spirit, it seems to draw forth out of the Lord's heart and mouth these secrets of heavenly wisdom which he hides from others; as he spoke in the days of his flesh, "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." The babes are those who are teachable and childlike, and to whom as such God reveals the treasures of his heavenly wisdom.

February 17

"And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat." Exodus 25:22

After a child of God has enjoyed something of the goodness and mercy of God revealed in the face of his dear Son, he may wander from his mercies, stray away from these choice gospel pastures, and get into a waste-howling wilderness, where there is neither food nor water; and yet, though half-starved for poverty, has in himself no power to return. But what has brought him for the most part into this state? Forgetfulness of the mercy seat; and as the Lord meets his people only there, a gradual estrangement from him.

But in due time the Lord seeks out this wandering sheep, and the first place he brings him to is the mercy seat, confessing his sins and seeking mercy. Faithful to his own word, once more the Lord meets him there; and O what a meeting! A penitent backslider and a forgiving God! O what a meeting! A guilty wretch drowned in tears, and a loving Father falling upon his neck and kissing him! O what a meeting for a poor, self-condemned wretch, who can never mourn too deeply over his sins, and yet finds grace super-abounding over all its abounding, and the love of God bursting through the cloud, like the sun upon an April day, and melting his heart into contrition and love!

But this is not all. The Lord is pleased sometimes to show his dear people the evils of their heart, to remove by his Spirit and grace that veil of pride and self-righteousness which hides so much of sinful SELF from our eyes, and to discover what is really in us--the deep corruptions which lurk in our depraved nature, the filth and folly which is part and parcel of ourselves, the unutterable baseness and vileness so involved in our very being. Now this in itself would drive us from the throne of grace. "Can God dwell here?" is the sinner's feeling. "Can I be possessed of the fear of God when such thoughts and feelings overflow my mind, and seem to fill me as if with the very dregs of hell?" Yet still he is drawn from time to time to the throne of grace to confess these sins before the mercy seat, for he cannot, dare not, stay away from it; and again God is true to his word--"There will I meet with you." There once more he reveals a sense of his mercy and goodness, and once more shows that, whatever the sinner be in himself, he is faithful to his own

promise.

February 18

"But speaking the truth (margin, being sincere) in love." Ephesians 4:15

Sincerity lies at the root of all gracious profession. If a man is not sincere he is nothing. God makes a man sincere by planting his truth in his heart; and whenever God does make a man sincere, the truth which he has implanted will grow. Truth does not lie in a man's soul dead and motionless, like a stone in the street; it is a living, active, expansive principle. If the truth is in the soul, it will be ever pushing out error, because the two principles cannot exist together; and as Isaac thrust out Ishmael, and Jacob proved stronger than Esau, so will simplicity and godly sincerity be ever mightier than craft and deception.

The truth of God in the heart will not wither and die, but will be shined upon by the Sun of righteousness, and sunned into fruitfulness by the smiles of God; and as truth becomes day by day more and more precious, so will error and evil become day by day more and more hateful. A sincere soul stands "girt about with truth;" and truth forms its shield and shield.

But how does this Christian sincerity prove the soul's safeguard from error? By putting it ever on the watch tower, looking out and looking up for the teaching of God and the light of his countenance. A soul made spiritually sincere takes nothing upon trust; it requires the seal of God on all it receives, and the witness of the Spirit to all that it feels. He who is sincere sees the rocks ahead on which others concerning faith make shipwreck; and being well ballasted with temptations, afflictions, and trials, he is not easily tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. His desire to be right keeps him right; his fear to be wrong preserves him from wrong. The light of God in his soul makes him see; the life of God in his heart makes him feel; the fear of God in his conscience makes him honest; the love of God in his affections makes him love; and all this gives truth such a firm place in him that there is no room for error.

The Apostle adds, therefore, "in love." It is not enough to be "sincere;" we must be "sincere in love." Mark that. It is not receiving God's truth as a certain orderly system; it is not furnishing our heads with a sound doctrinal creed and well-ordered Calvinistic scheme which will avail us in the trying hour; but it is to have the truth of God brought into our soul by a divine power, and realizing such unutterable sweetness in it as communicates a firm abiding love, both to the truth itself, and to Him of whom it testifies and from whom it comes. It is thus we are made "sincere in love."

The fear of God creates the sincerity, the application of the truth with power creates the love to it. And when we are thus made "sincere in love" we are brought out of the childish state in which we are carried about with every wind of doctrine, and in danger of being entrapped by the cunning craft of every deceiver. We know the truth, love the truth, and become established in the truth.

February 19

"You open your hand, and satisfy the desires of every living thing." Psalm 145:16

That word has been sweet to me sometimes, "Every living thing." How comprehensive it is! And how low it descends! How it comes down to the weakest and lowest and least of God's family, if he is only "a thing," only "a living thing!" if he cannot see himself "a man in Christ;" no, nor see himself

a child of God; no, nor see himself a new-born babe! If he cannot see in himself the features of a child even, yet to be "a living thing!"

Now, perhaps, if you cannot trace the features of a grown-up man as stamped upon you, and are exercised with distressing doubts whether your experience even amounts to the new-born babe, you may yet come in here, as being "a living thing," a nondescript; a sort of person that cannot make yourself out, having an experience which you think nobody can fathom, having exercises which nobody else seems to be harassed with, and walking in a path where no other child of God seems ever to have walked before you.

Did not one say of old, (and have not you and I echoed his words?) he was "as a beast before you;" not a man, for "surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man" (Proverbs 30:2), but possessed of life still, breathing after God still, with that in the soul which cannot rest satisfied short of the manifestation and the presence of God.

But here is the mark of the "living thing"--the desire--"You satisfy the desire of every living thing," not natural desires; not "the desire of the sluggard, which has nothing," that is, nothing spiritual in the desire, or in the answer; but the spiritual desires that the Holy Spirit himself has kindled, desires after God, "as the deer pants after the water brooks," desires to know Christ by some sweet revelation of his glory, desires to be brought to the foot of the cross, and to have his image stamped upon our soul, desires to be led into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his which passes knowledge, desires to walk before God accepted in the Beloved, desires to feel that in our souls which shall sweetly satisfy us that we are eternally His.

This "living thing," though a nondescript in his own feelings, has that which marks the existence of life in him; and that is, living desires towards the living God, breathing affections after Jesus, a restless, dissatisfied heart, discontented with the things of time and sense, feeling no pleasure in what the world presents, and sighing to the Lord for the discoveries of his grace and his love.

February 20

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Corinthians 3:17

The gospel is "the perfect law of liberty," therefore the very perfection of liberty, and thus thoroughly and entirely free from the least taint of bondage, the slightest tincture of servitude. It is this perfect freedom which distinguishes it from the law which "works wrath" and "genders to bondage." It is, therefore, a freedom from sin; from its guilt, as having "the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience;" from its filth, by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit;" from its love, through "the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit;" from its dominion, as "not being under the law but under grace;" and from its practice, by becoming "servants to God, so as to have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

How, then, can this pure, holy, and precious gospel be condemned as leading to licentiousness? It is because its power, its preciousness, its happy, holy, heavenly liberty have never been experimentally known by some who, like the Galatians, do all they can to "frustrate the grace of God," by "turning again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto they desire to be in bondage;" while others, like those monsters of wickedness whom Jude and Peter denounce with such burning words, pervert and abuse the liberty of the gospel unto licentiousness, "sporting

themselves with their own deceivings," and, "while they promise others liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption."

Now the liberty of the gospel, as revealed in the Scriptures, and made experimentally known to the soul, steers, so to speak, between these two extremes, and is as perfectly free from the least intermixture of legal bondage as from the least taint of Antinomian licentiousness. It is, indeed, this holy liberty, heavenly power, and gracious influence of the precious gospel, under the teaching and testimony of the Holy Spirit, which makes it so suitable to our case and state when first convinced of sin, and cast into prison under guilt and condemnation.

What release but a perfect release would suit our deplorable case as prisoners in the pit where there is no water, shut up under wrath and guilty fear through a condemning law and an accusing conscience? This pure and precious gospel, therefore, comes down to our pitiable state and condition as a message of pure mercy, revealing pardon and peace through a Savior's blood; and when, by grace, we can receive, embrace, and entertain it as a word from God to us, proclaiming liberty as with a jubilee trumpet through every court and ward of the soul.

What were we before this precious gospel reached our ears and hearts? Were we not bondslaves to sin, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, taken and led captive by Satan at his will--and while we talked about enjoying life, were, through fear of death, subject to bondage? When we saw the saints of God not daring to do what we did greedily, we thought that they were the slaves, and we the free men, not knowing that "to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness;" not knowing that "whoever commits sin is the servant of sin," and that our boasted freedom was real servitude, while their apparent bondage was real freedom; for they had a saving interest in that precious declaration--"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

February 21

"I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." Deuteronomy 32:39

The work of grace in the soul, in its very beginnings, penetrates deeply into its inmost substance. It wounds and lays open the conscience to the eye of infinite Purity and Holiness. "The entrance of your word (that is, the very first entrance) gives light." "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

All conviction to be true conviction must be thorough. The field must be ploughed, broken up, and furrowed, before the seed can find a home, a seed-bed for the seed to fall in so as to germinate and grow. There is much to be done in a sinner's heart before Christ can dwell in him by faith, or be formed in him the hope of glory. The heart is naturally very hard; thorns, thistles, and briars overspread its surface; the noxious weeds of pride and lust have taken deep root; much grubbing up of these bosom sins, as well as of our inbred self-righteousness and fleshly holiness, creature strength and sufficiency, is needed to--prepare us to receive a free grace salvation--separate us from the world and false professors--embitter to us the loved things of time and sense--and lay us suing for mercy at the foot of the cross.

The first work, therefore, of conviction must be deep, or at least thorough, in order to make room for Christ and his salvation. And so it is with any manifestation or discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ, any application of his blood, any visitation of his presence, or shedding abroad of his love; these divine realities do not float upon the surface, but sink deep, and penetrate into his heart of hearts, into a man's inmost and deepest soul. How soon is all lost and forgotten, but what the blessed Spirit writes himself in the heart! People say, "How well we have heard!" but all is lost and dropped before they get home from the house of prayer. They read a chapter, close the Bible, and with it, all they have read is closed too. Many have passing pangs of conviction, and passing desires, who give little proof of living under the Spirit's anointings. That divine Spirit does not let the saints of God off so easily. He holds them fast and firm to the work of conviction until he has slain them outright; and when he blesses he heals as deep as he wounds, and reveals the gospel as powerfully as he applies the law.

February 22

"But when the Comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father--he shall testify of me." John 15:26

The special work and office of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus, to glorify him, to take of the things that are his, and to show them to the soul; and therefore without these teachings and testimonies of the Holy Spirit we have no true, no saving knowledge of Christ, no living faith in him, no sweet communion with him, no tender and affectionate love toward him. And are not these the marks which peculiarly distinguish the living family of God from those dead in sin, and those dead in profession?

A bare knowledge of the letter of truth--can communicate no such gracious affections as will warm, soften, melt, and animate the soul of a child of God, under the felt power and influence of the Holy Spirit--can create no such faith as gives him manifest union with Jesus--can inspire no such hope as carries every desire of his heart within the veil--can produce no such godly sorrow for sin as makes him loathe and abhor himself in dust and ashes--can shed abroad no such love as makes him love the Lord with a pure heart fervently.

But the same blessed and holy Teacher who takes of the things that are Christ's and reveals them to the soul, thus raising up faith, hope, and love, and bringing into living exercise every other spiritual gift and grace, first prepares the heart to receive him in all his gracious characters and covenant relationships by deeply and powerfully convincing us of our need of him as our all in all.

Is he a Priest? We need his atoning blood and his all-prevailing intercession that we may have peace with God, and that our prayers and supplications may rise up with acceptance into his ears.

Is he a Prophet? We need his heavenly instruction, that we may sit at his feet and hear his word, so as to believe his promises and obey his precepts.

Is he a King? We need his powerful and peaceful scepter to subdue every foe, calm every fear, subdue every lust, crucify the whole body of sin, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

February 23

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14

By his sufferings, blood shedding and death, our gracious Lord not only made a complete atonement for sin, fulfilled every demand of the law, washed his people from all their iniquities in the fountain of his precious blood, and wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlasting righteousness for their justification, but "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." It was by the death of the cross that the gracious Lord "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." It is a point little considered, though one of much importance, that the Lord Jesus had, as if personally, to grapple with and overcome the prince of the power of the air, to hurl Satan from his usurped throne, to destroy his works, and overthrow his kingdom; and this not by an act of omnipotent power, but by an act of the lowest weakness, for "he was crucified through weakness."

According to our simple views, we might think that all that was needed to overthrow Satan was an act of omnipotent power. But this was not God's way. The king over all the children of pride, in the depths of infinite wisdom, was to be dethroned by an act of the deepest humility, of the most meek and submissive obedience, of the intensest suffering of God's own beloved Son, as standing in the place of those over whom Satan and death had triumphed through sin. We read that "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy (literally, 'loosen' or 'untie') the works of the devil." Thus he came, not only to untie and undo all that Satan had fastened and done by traversing, as it were, the whole ground, from the first entrance of sin and death, and, by a course of holy and meritorious obedience, repair the wreck and ruin produced by the primary author of all disobedience, but, as the final stroke, to destroy and put down the disobedient and rebellious prince of darkness himself.

February 24

"Thus says the Lord; I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Jeremiah 2:2

Salvation is a gift, the choicest and richest gift which the hands of a Triune God, whose name is Love, can bestow. It is a portion, an inheritance, an estate, a treasure, an eternal reality. The full possession, the entire enjoyment, the complete acquisition of this predestinated weight of glory, is indeed reserved until a future state; but the pledges, the firstfruits, the early ripe clusters, the first dew-drops of this eternal inheritance, are given to the elect while upon earth.

The everlasting enjoyment of the presence and glory of Christ is often compared in Scripture to a wedding. Thus we read (Rev. 19:7) of "the Lamb's wife," and of "the marriage of the Lamb." So the Church is said to be "brought unto the King in clothing of needlework," as the bride, in Eastern countries, was brought by the father to the bridegroom. But we read of "espousals" also, which always preceded the celebration of the marriage. "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals." "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." So Joseph was "espoused to the virgin Mary, before they came together," that is, before they became man and wife. Now this espousal was a necessary prelude to marriage, though it was not the same thing. And, therefore, a betrothed virgin was punished as an adulteress

by the Levitical law, if she was unfaithful to her espoused husband. To be betrothed had the nature of marriage in it, though it was not the same thing as marriage. The parties did not live together, and were not put in possession of each other.

Thus, it is in this life that the spiritual betrothment takes place, and the spiritual marriage in the life to come. "I will betroth you unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies; I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19, 20).

February 25

"It is a faithful saying--For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him--if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Timothy 2:11, 12

To be partakers of Christ's crown, we must be partakers of Christ's cross. Union with him in suffering must precede union with him in glory. This is the express testimony of the Holy Spirit--"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." The flesh and the world are to be crucified to us, and we to them; and this can only be by virtue of a living union with a crucified Lord. This made the Apostle say, "I am crucified with Christ--nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me--and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." And again, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord made Paul preach the cross, not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify. Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin, but for all uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). Blood and water gushed from the side of Jesus when pierced by the Roman spear.

"This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart;

Unlocked by the spear, it gushed from his heart,

With blood and with water; the first to atone,

To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one."

"All my springs are in you," said the man after God's own heart; and well may we echo his words. All our springs, not only of pardon and peace, acceptance and justification, but of happiness and holiness, of wisdom and strength, of victory over the world, of mortification of a body of sin and death; of every fresh revival and renewal of hope and confidence; of all prayer and praise; of every new budding forth of the soul, as of Aaron's rod, in blossom and fruit; of every gracious feeling, spiritual desire, warm supplication, honest confession, melting contrition, and godly sorrow for sin--all these springs from that life which is hidden with Christ in God, are in a crucified Lord. Thus Christ crucified is, "to them who are saved, the power of God." And as he "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," at the cross alone can we be made wise unto salvation, become righteous by a free justification, receive of his Spirit to make us holy, and be redeemed and delivered by blood and power from sin, Satan, death, and hell.

February 26

"The dead are raised up." Matthew 11:5

"The dead are raised up." The "dead" are those who by nature are dead in sin. These dead are raised up when life from God visits their souls. They are raised up to faith in Jesus, raised up to hope in his name, raised up to a sense of his dying love to their souls, raised up from doubt and fear, raised up from the depths of despondency, to look unto him and be saved. What a mercy it is that the Lord of life and glory still puts forth the same power in the hearts of his people, that he once put forth in their bodies, and that he raises them up from their state of death and deadness!

Do we not often feel so dead, as though we had not a particle of the grace of God? So dead, that it seems scarcely possible to have a sensation of spiritual life again? So dead, that we almost fear whether the power of God was ever felt in our hearts? Now, the Lord raises up life and feeling in our souls, by putting forth the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb. And every lifting up of the heart towards him, every panting desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection, every breathing of tender affection, every sigh, cry, and groan, yes, every feeling, however short, however transient, Godwards, is a proof that the Lord of life and glory is still putting forth his power in the hearts of his people.

February 27

"O that you would bless me indeed!" 1 Chronicles 4:10

An "indeed" blessing is what the soul is seeking after which has ever felt the misery and bitterness of sin, and ever tasted the sweetness of God's salvation. And these "indeed" blessings are seen to be spiritual and eternal. Compared with such blessings as these, it sees how vain and empty are all earthly things, what vain toys, what idle dreams, what passing shadows. It wonders at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows, and spending time, health, money, life itself, in a pursuit of nothing but misery and destruction. Every passing funeral bell that it hears, every corpse borne slowly along to the grave that it sees, impresses it with solemn feelings as to the state of those who live and die in their sins. Thus it learns more and more to contrast time with eternity, earth with heaven, sinners with saints, and professors with possessors. By these things it is taught, with Baruch, not "to seek great things" for itself, but real things; things which will outlast time, and fit it for eternity. It is thus brought to care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great, but much for what God has stamped his own approbation upon, such as a tender conscience, a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble mind, a separation from the world and everything worldly, a submission to his holy will, a meek endurance of the cross, a conformity to Christ's suffering image, and a living to God's glory.

As, then, the gracious Lord is pleased to indulge it with some discovery of himself, shedding abroad a sweet sense of his goodness and mercy, atoning blood, and dying love, it is made to long more and more for the manifestation of those blessings which alone are to be found in him. For his blessings are not like the mere temporal mercies which we enjoy at his hands, all of which perish in the using, but are forever and ever; and when once given are never taken away. They thus become pledges and foretastes of eternal joys, for they are absolutely irreversible.

When Isaac had once blessed Jacob in God's name, though the blessing had been obtained by deceit, yet having been once given, it could not be recalled. He said, therefore, to Esau, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." So when the Lord has blessed his people with any of those spiritual blessings which are stored up in his inexhaustible fullness, these blessings are like himself, unchanging and unchangeable; for "he is in one mind and none can turn him;" "The same yesterday, today, and forever."

February 28

"And enlarge my coast." 1 Chronicles 4:10

A coast means a boundary line such as divides one territory from another, or terminates a country, as the sea coast is the boundary of our island. Every quickened soul has a coast; that is, a territory of inward experience, which is limited and bounded by the line that the Holy Spirit has drawn in his conscience. As the Lord divided the tribes, to cast their inheritance by line (Psalm 78:55), so has he cast the lot for every vessel of mercy, and his hand has divided it unto them by line (Isaiah 34:17). This is as it were the tether which fastens down every quickened soul to his own appointed portion of inward experience. Within this tether he may walk, feed, and lie down. It is "the food convenient for him," the strip of pasture allotted him. He cannot, he dare not break this tether, which is fastened round a tender conscience, and every stretching forth beyond his measure to boast in another man's line of things, cuts into and galls this tender conscience. But the living soul cannot but earnestly desire to have his coast enlarged. He wants more light, more life, more feeling, more liberty, more knowledge of God in Christ, more faith, hope, and love, and to have his narrow, contracted, shut-up heart enlarged in prayer, in meditation, in communion, in affection to the people of God.

He is not satisfied with the scanty pasture allotted him, but wants a larger measure of heavenly teaching, to be indulged with more filial confidence in, and access unto God, and be more delivered from that fear which has torment. "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 9:27). "I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart" (Psalm 119:32).

This enlargement of their border the Lord had sworn to Israel, and to give them all the land which he had promised unto their fathers; and therefore when he had said, "Sing, O barren, you that did not bear," he adds, "enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations; spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes" (Isaiah 54:1, 2).

Have you any of these fervent desires after light, love, and liberty, that the world, pride, lust, unbelief, covetousness, and carnality may not shut up your heart, but that you may know the love of Christ that passes knowledge, so as to be filled with all the fullness of God? These are good desires, and very different from rushing presumptuously forward, and chattering about liberty while you

March

March 1

"The church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28

Atonement for sin stands or falls with the Deity of Christ. If we deny his Deity, we must deny the atonement, for what value or merit can there be in the blood of a mere man that God, for its sake, should pardon millions of sins? This the Socinians clearly see, and therefore deny the atonement altogether. But if there be no atonement, no sacrifice, no atoning sacrifice for sin, where can we look for pardon and peace? Whichever way we turn our eyes there is despair.

But when by the eye of faith we see the Son of God obeying the law, rendering, by doing and dying, acting and suffering, a satisfaction to the violated justice of the Most High and offering a sacrifice for sin, then we see such a glory and such a value breathing through every thought, word, and action of his suffering humanity, that we embrace him and all that he is and has, with every desire and affection of our regenerated soul. All our religion lies here; all our faith, hope, and love flow unto, and are, as it were, fixed and concentrated in Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and without a measure of this in our heart and conscience, we have no religion worth the name, nothing that either saves or sanctifies--nothing that delivers from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin--nothing that supports in life, comforts in death, or fits for eternity.

The way, then, whereby we come to a knowledge of, and a faith in, the Deity of Christ is first by feeling a need of all that he is as a Savior, and a great one, and then having a manifestation of him by the blessed Spirit to our soul. When he is thus revealed and brought near, we see, by the eye of faith, his pure and perfect humanity and his eternal Deity; and these two distinct natures we see combined, but not intermingled, in one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Until thus favored we may see the Deity of Christ in the Scriptures, and have so far a belief in it, but we have not that personal appropriating faith whereby, with Thomas, we can say, "My Lord and my God."

March 2

"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Proverbs 19:21

A man in his fleshly mind is generally devising some method or other whereby he may escape a practical subjection to the gospel; some way or other whereby he may escape walking in the path of self-denial and mortification of the flesh, and the crucifixion of "the old man with the affections and lusts." He is generally seeking some way or other to indulge the flesh, and yet, at the same time, to stand in gospel liberty--to have everything that can gratify his carnal mind, and, at the same time, have a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

But the Lord says, "No, these two things are not compatible; he that shall live with Christ must die with Christ; he that shall reign with Christ must suffer with Christ; he that shall wear the crown must carry the cross." So, that whatever devices there be in a man's heart, or whatever ways and

plans he shall undertake to bring his devices to pass, "the counsel of the Lord still shall stand." Divine sovereignty shall fulfill that which divine sovereignty has appointed, and the purposes of God shall stand upon the ruins of the purposes of the creature.

And it is our mercy (so far as we are children of the living God), it is our mercy, that it should be so. Where would we have been this moment, if the devices in our hearts had succeeded? We would have been in hell. Where would we have been, since the Lord has been pleased, as we trust, to quicken our souls into spiritual life, if all our devices had succeeded? Our "eyes would have stood out with fatness," and we would have "had more than heart could wish." We would have been now, if the Lord had left us to our own devices, indulging in some dreadful temptation, or already have disgraced our name before the Church of God; or, if we had escaped that, we would have only a name to live, while our hearts were secretly dead before God; have had "a form of godliness, while we inwardly or outwardly denied the power thereof."

And therefore it is our mercy that the devices of our hearts should not stand, but that "the counsel of the Lord" should prevail over all the purposes of our base nature. When a man is brought to the right spot, and is in a right mind to trace out the Lord's dealings with him from the first, he sees it was a kind hand which "blasted his gourds and laid them low;" it was a kind hand that swept away his worldly prospects, which reduced him to natural as well as to spiritual poverty, which led him into exercises, trials, sorrows, griefs, and tribulations; because, in those trials he has found the Lord, more or less, experimentally precious. Jacob found it so; he blessed the Lord for the path he had led him in. Though his days had been few and evil, he could see how the Lord had "fed him all his life long unto that day," amid all the changing vicissitudes through which he had passed in body and soul; and he blessed that hand which had guided him through that difficult way, and yet brought him to a "city of habitation."

March 3

"For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:11

What is meant by the expression, "our mortal flesh?" It does not mean the carnal mind, but our earthly tabernacle; and the expression is similar to another in this chapter, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." It is, then, in this poor body, compassed with infirmities, that the life of Jesus is made manifest. This divine life will often spring up in fervent breathings after God, in the actings of living faith, in the sweet communion the people of God have with one another, in reading the Scriptures, in the application of precious promises, and under the preached word. From time to time it bubbles up like a spring from its source. Sometimes indeed it runs underground, buried as it were under the load of "our mortal flesh;" but again and again it reappears, drawn up by the Sun of righteousness. "Spring up, O well." But its risings are ever proportionate to its sinkings. Thus in proportion as we cease to pray naturally, do we pray spiritually; as we cease to hope in the flesh, do we hope in the Lord; as we cease to believe with the head, do we believe with the heart; when we see an end of all perfection in self, then we begin to find perfection in Christ; and when we see nothing in our hearts but sin, misery, and wretchedness, then we begin to taste spiritual consolation. Thus in proportion as nature sinks, the life of Jesus rises, and is made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Is the soul, then, longing to have sweet manifestations of the life of Jesus? Where must it go to get them? What does the word of God say? "Whence comes wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept closed from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears" (Job 28:20-22).

Until, then, we get to "destruction and death," the destruction of fleshly hopes and the death of creature religion, we do not so much as ever hear the fame of true wisdom with our ears. Thus, when we get into darkness, then light springs up; when we get into despondency, hope arises; when we are tempted with unbelief and infidelity, faith appears. Thus those are the wisest in whom creature wisdom has most ceased; those are the strongest who have learned most experimentally their own weakness; those are the holiest who have known most of their own filthiness; those are the most religious in a true sense who have least religion of their own. So that just in proportion as we are delivered unto death, and execution takes place on what the creature loves, so does the life of Jesus begin to rise and make itself blessedly manifest.

March 4

"Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Psalm 118:27

Are you a poor broken-hearted child of the living God? Is there any measure of the Spirit of Christ in you? Is there any faint resemblance of his meekness and holy image stamped upon you? Then you feel yourself bound with cords to the horns of the altar. You feel the strong ties of necessity, and you feel the strong ties of affection binding you there. But with this, you feel also that you are a struggling victim; that you would gladly escape the troubles and trials that being bound to the horns of the altar brings upon you; you would gladly get into an easier path if you could; or if you dared, would willingly set up some altar yourself, made after the pattern of Damascus (2 Kings 16:10); and would gladly, like the Roman Catholic, worship with your body a material cross, instead of worshiping in your soul the adorable God-man who hung and bled there. You would gladly, if you could, step out of a self-loathing, exercised, tried, harassed, and tempted path, to get into the flowery meadow of doctrine and speculation, and there walk at ease without one pang in your conscience, or one trial in your soul.

But the Lord has said, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You are bound to the horns of the altar. From those horns you cannot escape. You may fume, fret, and rebel against all or any of these cords, but you cannot break them. Aye, you may, in your strugglings, stretch to their utmost extent these cords; but they are too firmly fastened round your tender conscience, and too strongly wreathed round your broken heart, for you to burst them. They would sooner cut your heart in two, than you could break them, or escape from them.

And in your right mind, you would not be otherwise than bound with cords to the horns of the altar. In your right mind, you want the cords tightened, and so to be drawn nearer and nearer unto it; and to have the blood that was shed upon it sprinkled upon your conscience. In your right mind, you want to see with the eye of faith the Victim that once lay bleeding and writhing there; and as you look upon him, to drink into his image, and to feel the melting power and softening efficacy of that sight.

But, then, connected with it, there are such trials, such temptations, and such sacrifices, that you, in your fits of rebellion or flesh-pleasing ease, would at times as gladly get away, as at other times,

you would gladly get near. Vile wretches that we are, who would often prefer to serve the flesh and the world, and take our chance, as men speak, for eternity, than suffer trials and temptations as the followers of Christ! But it is our mercy that we can neither make nor unmake, do nor undo, bind nor break any one cord of eternal love, but that, in spite of the creature, God will "fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

March 5

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Ephesians 1:19-20

Man needs to be roused by a mighty and effectual power out of his state of sleep and death. It is not a little pull, a gentle snatch at his coat, a slight tug of his sleeve, which will pull him out of his sins. He must be snatched from them as a person would be snatched out of bed when the house is on fire, or pulled out of a river when sinking for the last time. Let us never think that the work of grace upon the heart is a slight or superficial one. Indeed, there needs a mighty work of grace upon a sinner's heart to deliver him from his destructions. We always, therefore, find the work of grace to begin by a spiritual sight and sense of our ruined condition before God. But this alone will not suffice to make us true-hearted disciples of Jesus. It is a preparation, a most needful preparation for a sight of the King in his beauty, but it is not the same thing as to see and believe in the Son of God unto eternal life. We must have something far beyond any convictions of sin or any sense of our lost and ruined condition. We must have by faith a view of the blessed Lord more or less manifested to our souls by that Holy Spirit whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them to the heart so as to see his suitability, his grace, his glory, his work, his blood, his obedience; and to so see these divine and blessed realities by the eye of faith, as to know and feel for ourselves that they are exactly adapted to our case and state; that they are the very things we require to save us from the wrath to come; and that so far as we have a saving interest in them we are saved from the floods of destruction.

Wherever this believing sight of Christ is given to the soul, it creates and maintains a faith that works by love. Thus wherever there is a view of Jesus by the eye of faith, wherever he manifests and makes himself in any measure precious to the soul, love is the certain fruit of it; for we love him because he first loved us, and, when we begin to love the Lord, love gives us a binding tie which creates union and communion with him. As, then, he unveils his lovely face, and discovers more and more of his beauty and blessedness, it gives him a firm place in the heart's warmest, tenderest affections, and then he comes and takes up his abode in the soul and rules there as its rightful Lord.

The following things therefore are indispensably necessary to true discipleship; first, a spiritual sense of our lost, ruined condition; then a knowledge of Christ by a gracious discovery of his suitability, beauty, and blessedness; and thirdly, a faith in him that works by love and purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and delivers from death and hell.

March 6

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Romans 4:16

Of faith we read expressly that "it is the gift of God." This is the grand master-grace of the soul; it is the grand wheel which moves every other wheel in the heart; it is the eye, the ear, the hand of the new man of grace. Only so far as we have faith, and the Lord draws out this faith in exercise, have we any true spiritual feeling. But what makes me prize the gift of faith? It is knowing so much and so painfully the indwelling and inworking of unbelief. Is not this the case naturally? What makes me prize health? It is having a poor, weakly body. What makes me prize rest? Fatigue. What makes me prize ease? It is pain. What makes me prize food? It is hunger. What makes me prize the cup of cold water? It is thirst. By these feelings, I not only know the reality by the lack of it, but also enjoy the blessing when communicated. It is just so spiritually, as naturally. What can I know of faith, except I am exercised (and exercised I am more or less daily) by the workings of unbelief, infidelity, questionings of the reasoning mind, and all the spawn of an unbelieving heart? As the soul is tossed up and down, (and often, it is tossed up and down on this sea of unbelief,) it learns to prize the harbor of faith. And when the Lord mercifully communicates a little faith to the soul, and faith begins to realize, feel, experience, and feed upon the truth as it is in Jesus, then we know what faith is by the possession of it.

What a mercy it is that the Lord has the gift of faith to bestow! Here are poor souls toiling, troubling, laboring, groaning, sighing, oppressed with unbelief--that great giant in the heart, who has slain his thousands and tens of thousands. How our souls sometimes sink down under this wretched unbelief! But how we prize the faith all the more when it comes! How all the sinkings make the risings higher, and all the sadness makes the change more blessed! As the tossings to and fro of the sailor upon the sea, with all the perils and sufferings of the voyage, make the calm harbor so pleasant; so all the tossings up and down of unbelief endears the holy calm of living faith to the soul.

March 7

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." Psalm 48:2

We have sometimes thought that the reason why Zion typically represents the royal throne of Jesus, is by many not well understood. Mount Zion literally was a steep hill of Jerusalem, so steep and inaccessible that for generations after the children of Israel had gained possession of the land, it still remained, like a little Gibraltar, in the hands of the Jebusites, the original inhabitants of the place. "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out--"but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day" (Jos. 15:63).

But when David was anointed king over Israel, and had reigned at Hebron seven years and six months, he cast his eyes toward Jerusalem, as a preferable metropolis, and a more suitable seat of his extended empire. But as long as the hill of Zion was occupied by the warlike Jebusites, they would retain their command of the lower city. His first step, therefore, was, with the help of God, to dispossess the Jebusites of this their stronghold. But so strong was this hill-fort by nature and art, that the Jebusites ridiculed all his attempts to capture it, putting on the ramparts "the blind and the lame" soldiers of the garrison, what we would call the worn-out invalids of the army, as if these Chelsea pensioners, who could neither see nor walk, were amply sufficient to baffle all David's attempts at its capture (2 Sam. 5--6-8).

Joab, however, as a prize set before him, for which he was to be David's chief captain, mounted the hill, smote the lame and the blind on the wall, and the Jebusites behind the wall, and won possession of the coveted spot (1 Chron. 11:6). There David henceforward dwelt, as its conqueror, as in a castle; there he fixed his royal abode, and thence he swayed his scepter over the whole land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba. Its very name was typical, for it signifies literally, "sunny," or "shine upon," as facing the south, and ever basking in the rays of the warm sun. Thus the sunny hill of Zion, as a hill of conquest, and as the royal seat of David, became a suitable type of the throne of Jesus in the courts above, won by lawful conquest (Rev. 3:21), where is now his royal palace, and where he rules and reigns as the anointed King of heaven and earth. Thus mount Zion typically represents not the cross, but the crown; not the law, but the gospel; not the battle, but the victory.

March 8

"O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for you--be our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." Isaiah 33:2

Israel has often to pass through times of sorrow and trouble. Deep temporal and deep spiritual trouble is the allotted portion of many, if not of most of the people of God. But having found that the Lord is a Savior, and the only Savior who can support in trouble and deliver out of trouble, there is this conviction deeply implanted and firmly written upon their heart, that he is a Savior in the time of trouble. It is the purpose of God to hunt us out of all lying refuges, that we may believe in Jesus to the saving of our soul; that we may prove that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him; that we may learn what salvation is, and that we may know it for ourselves as a divine and blessed reality.

Thus though he is always a Savior, yet he is not experimentally a Savior in times of worldly ease, carnal prosperity, and seasons of carelessness. But in times of trouble, when none can do us any good or stretch forth a healing hand but the Lord alone, then to come to his gracious Majesty and find there and then how he can and does save in trouble and out of trouble, this is that which endears such a Savior to believing hearts.

And observe the expression, "time of trouble," and how it includes not only every trouble which may befall us temporally or spiritually, but clearly intimates that there is not a single season or time when trouble comes that the Lord is not able and willing to save us out of it. How well this corresponds with those gracious words and that sweet promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

March 9

"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Romans 6:17

What reason have we to bless God that he so instructed his Apostle to set forth how a sinner is justified! For how could we have attained to the knowledge of this mystery without divine revelation? How could we know in what way God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? How could we see all the perfections of God harmonizing in the Person and work of Jesus? his law maintained in all its rigid purity and strictest justice, and yet mercy, grace, and love to have full play

in a sinner's salvation? But the Spirit of God led Paul deeply into this blessed subject; and especially in the Epistle to the Romans does he trace out this grand foundation truth with such clearness, weight, and power, that the Church of God can never be sufficiently thankful for this portion of divine revelation. His grand object is to show how God justifies the ungodly by the blood and obedience of his dear Son; so that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He declares that "the righteousness of God is unto and upon all those who believe;" and that "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood," he pardons the sinner, justifies the ungodly, and views him as righteous in the Son of his love.

In opening up this subject, the Apostle (Romans 5) traces up this justification to the union of the Church with her covenant Head; shows us her standing in Christ as well as in Adam; and that all the miseries which she derives from her standing in the latter are overbalanced by the mercies that flow from her standing in the former; winding up with that heart-reviving truth, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life."

This then is a "form of doctrine," or mold of teaching, into which the soul is delivered when it is brought into a heart-felt reception of, and a feeling acquaintance with it; and by being led more or less into the experimental enjoyment of it, is favored with a solemn acquiescence in, and a filial submission to it, as all its salvation and all its desire. And as the mold impresses its image upon the moist plaster or melted metal poured into it, so the heart, softened and melted by the blessed Spirit's teaching, receives the impress of this glorious truth with filial confidence, feels its sweetness and power, and is filled with a holy admiration of it as the only way in which God can justify an ungodly wretch, not only without sacrificing any one attribute of his holy character, but rather magnifying thereby the purity of his nature, and the demands of his unbending justice.

March 10

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ--for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." Romans 1:16

What is meant by the word "power?" It is a term much used in the New Testament. "The kingdom of God," it is declared, "is not in word, but in power;" and true faith is said to "stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." What, then, is power? It is a divine operation that God himself puts forth in the soul. It cannot be described by words, nor explained so as to be understood by our mental capacity. It must be felt to be known; and must be realized in a man's own soul before he can have any spiritual conception of it. "Your people," we read, "shall be made willing in the day of your power."

And when the gospel does come to the soul by the application of the blessed Spirit, and a divine power accompanies it, though the power itself cannot be described even by the person himself, it is made known by the effects which follow it. For instance, here is a poor wretch condemned by the law, and in his apprehensions lying forever under its fearful curse. He may, perhaps, see there is salvation in Christ, and know in his judgment there is salvation in no other; but he cannot lay hold of Christ, nor get from under the condemnation he feels. Why? Because the gospel is not made the power of God unto salvation to his soul. But how he begs, cries, prays, and supplicates

God to have mercy on him. Continually he is endeavoring to seek God, and beseech him to have mercy on his soul. But he cannot get peace to his conscience; he is still in trouble and distress, bowed down with bondage, guilt, and fear. Here is a man longing for "power."

Now, when the Lord is pleased to apply some portion of his blessed word to his soul, or to speak home some particular promise, the power which accompanies this raises up a special faith, whereby that portion of God's holy word, which speaks of Christ, or that particular promise is laid hold of. Here, then, is "power" communicated with the gospel. The gospel has now come to him, "not in word only," as it might often have done before, leaving him all the while in guilt and fear, but with "power;" and, by the faith thus raised up, he believes in Jesus to the saving of his soul. He could not believe in him before, for his faith, such as it was, being devoid of power, left him where it found him, as forlorn and helpless as the man who fell among thieves. No. He might as well attempt to create a world, as to believe in the Son of God unto deliverance.

But no sooner does he believe what the Holy Spirit applies, than a sweet and sacred power comes into his soul, which takes away his doubts and fears; dispels guilt from his conscience; banishes the mists and fogs that for months have hung over his soul; reveals in him a precious Jesus; makes the promises of the gospel to glitter before his eyes like dew-drops in autumn; and gives him an unspeakable nearness to God, through the Person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, such as he never knew until the gospel came with power, and faith was raised up in his soul.

March 11

"Lord, give to me your mercies, the salvation that you promised me. Then I will have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust in your word." Psalm 119:41-42

A living soul wants to return an answer to the one who reproaches him. But he cannot do it of himself, for he has not a word to speak in self-justification; that is utterly cut off; and therefore he needs to have that which shall furnish him with an answer to these reproaches. And what alone can furnish him with an answer? The mercies of God in his soul. "Lord, give to me your mercies, the salvation that you promised me. Then I will have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust in your word." The coming in of "mercies" into the soul, and the manifestation of "salvation" to the heart afford an answer "for those who taunt me."

If you will observe, the word "mercies" is in the plural number, there being many mercies; but "salvation" is in the singular number, there being only one salvation. In what way, then, did the Psalmist want these mercies? Merely as standing in the letter of the word? Only as recorded in the inspired word of truth? As things to look at, as objects hung up, as it were, in a picture, merely for the eye to gaze upon? No; he wanted them in his heart, to "come to him," to visit him, to be breathed into him, to be made part and parcel of him, to be the life-blood that should circulate in his veins, to be the very kingdom of God set up with power in his soul.

And why did he want internal mercies? Because he had internal reproaches. Why did he need mercies in his soul? Because condemnation was in his soul. It was there the sentence of death was written; it was there the sentence of acquittal was to be recorded. It was there that reproach was felt; it was there the answer to the reproach was to be given. If the reproach were merely outward, the answer might be outward also; but the reproof being inward, in the heart, in the conscience, in the feelings, it was needed that the answer should be in the same place, written in

the same spot, engraved in the same tablets, and brought home with the same or far greater power, so as to be a sufficient answer to the reproaches of him that reproached him.

March 12

"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Psalm 107:10

What a blessed thing is light, the light of life, the light of God's countenance, of the glorious gospel, of Jesus' face! "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But to whom? To those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. How such hail the first rays of light! If you were shipwrecked, cast by night upon a desert rock, how you would hail the first beams of the morning light to show you where you were, and what hopes there were of final escape. So, similarly, how a sense of danger, magnified by the darkness, makes the shipwrecked soul hail the first beam of light, that it may see the way of escape from hell to heaven. How sweet to such it is to have any divine light dawn upon the mind, to have any breaking in of the goodness and mercy, grace and glory, of the blessed Jesus.

The more we sit in darkness, the more we prize light. Many high professors despise all this, and run out against it as a building upon frames and feelings, and making a Christ of our experience. Poor things! Their light is not worth having; and their religion, it is to be feared, is but a fire of their own kindling, the light of which will never light them to heaven. But why do they despise it? Because they never sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Therefore, really and truly, what is their light? A will-o'-the-wisp, a gas-lamp, a meteor, a falling star, anything, everything but the dayspring from on high, or the Sun of righteousness. But the Lord's people cannot be put off with a gas-lamp, a will-o'-the-wisp. They must have Jesus. They must have his blood upon their consciences, his grace in their hearts, his presence in their souls; sweet discoveries of his Person and work, the whispers of his love, the touch of his finger, the smiles of his face. They must have Jesus for themselves. "Give me Christ, or else I die," is their feeling.

But what makes them break forth with these earnest sighs and cries? They are in darkness and in the shadow of death. Were they otherwise, they would be content to remain as they naturally are; dark and dead. But feeling their state, it makes them long for the beams of light; and when it breaks in upon their soul, they can bless it because it comes from and leads to God.

March 13

"But he knows the way that I take--when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10

What a purifying effect experience of trial produces; what a separation it makes of the dross from the ore! If a man has a grain of faith in his soul, trial will discover it; if he has a particle of living hope, temptation will bring it to light; if he has a grain of love, trial will extract it from the ore; if he has any patience, any humility, any fear of God, any desire to be right, any dread to be wrong, any honesty, any sincerity, any integrity, in a word, if he has any vital power in his soul, anything of the grace of God in his heart, trial will make it manifest, as the hot flame of the furnace, acting upon the crucible, manifests the gold by breaking up its alliance with the dross. You scarcely know whether you are a believer or an unbeliever until you pass through trial. You do not know what the nature of faith is as a divine gift and a spiritual grace, unless you have passed through this fiery trial. You do not know the worthlessness of creature religion, the emptiness of everything in SELF,

until you have been put into the furnace of trial.

We are tempted sometimes, perhaps, to doubt the truth of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, the efficacy of his atonement, and many things which I will not even hint at in your ears lest I unwittingly sow infidel seeds in your heart. Now when we are thus exercised, trial as a fire burns up everything that stands in the wisdom and strength of the creature, and brings us to this point, that nothing but that which is of God in the soul can live in the flame. If, then, we find there is that in our heart which lives in the flame, that there is a faith which trial cannot burn up, a hope it cannot destroy, a love it cannot consume, a fear of God which it cannot conquer, then we see there is that in our heart which is like pure gold in the midst of the dross, and can say in some measure with Job, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

March 14

"Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" Jeremiah 8:22

There is balm in Gilead, and there is a physician there. This is, and must ever be, our only hope. If there were no balm in Gilead, what could we do but lie down in despair and die? For our sins are so great, our backslidings so repeated, our minds so dark, our hearts so hard, our affections so cold, our souls so wavering and wandering, that if there were no balm in Gilead, no precious blood, no sweet promises, no sovereign grace, and if there were no physician there, no risen Jesus, no great High Priest over the house of God, what well-grounded hope could we entertain? Not a ray. Our own obedience and consistency? These are a bed too short and a covering too narrow.

But when there is some application of the balm in Gilead, it softens, melts, humbles, and at the same time thoroughly heals. No, this balm strengthens every nerve and sinew, heals blindness, remedies deafness, cures paralysis, makes the lame man leap as a deer and the tongue of the dumb to sing, and thus produces gospel sight, gospel hearing, gospel strength, and a gospel walk. When the spirit is melted, and the heart touched by a sense of God's goodness, mercy, and love to such base, undeserving wretches, it produces gospel obedience, aye, a humble obedience; not that proud obedience which those manifest who are trusting to their own goodness and seeking to scale the battlements of heaven by the ladder of self-righteousness, but an obedience of gratitude, love, and submission--willingly, cheerfully rendered, and therefore acceptable to God, because flowing from his own Spirit and grace. It is the application of this divine balm which purifies the heart, makes sin hateful, and Jesus precious, and not only dissolves the soul in sweet gratitude, but fills it with earnest desires to live to God's honor and glory.

This is the mysterious way the Lord takes to get honor to himself. As he opens up the depth of the fall, makes the burden of sin felt, and shows the sinner how his iniquities have abounded, he brings the proud heart down, and lays the head low in the dust; and as he makes him sigh and cry, grieve and groan, he applies his sovereign balm to the soul, brings the blood of sprinkling into the conscience, sheds abroad his mercy and love, and thus constrains the feet to walk in cheerful and willing obedience. This is obeying the precept from right motives, right views, right influences, under right feelings, and to right ends. This is the true Christian obedience, obedience "in the spirit and not in the letter," an obedience which glorifies God, and is attended by every fruit and grace of the Spirit.

March 15

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."
Proverbs 22:15

We profess to believe in an Almighty, All-present, All-seeing God; and we would be highly offended if a person said to us, "You do not believe that God sees everything, that he is everywhere present, that he is an Almighty Jehovah;" we would almost think that he was taking us for an atheist. And yet practical atheists we daily prove ourselves to be. For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything, and yet we are plotting and planning as though he saw nothing. We profess to know that God can do everything, and yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though he were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice. We profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring his people out of every trial, and yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial, we speak, think, and act as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of the case, and can stretch forth his hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged, (to speak with all reverence,) to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with, until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us.

This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges his people so deeply into a sense of sin; it is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin there is in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the same reason, also, they walk in such scenes of temptation; it is in order to show them what a wonder-working God he is in bringing them out.

This, also, is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued; it is that they may not live and act as though there were no God to go to, no Almighty Friend to consult, no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon; it is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know until the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn, and actually forces them to believe what they profess to believe.

Such pains is he obliged to take with us; such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. In order, then, to teach us what a God he is, what a merciful and compassionate High Priest; in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of his love, he is compelled to treat, at times, his people very roughly, and handle them very sharply; he is obliged to make very great use of his rod, because he sees that "foolishness is so bound up in the hearts" of his children that nothing but the repeated "rod of correction will ever drive it far from them."

March 16

"Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Ephesians 2:19

If grace has touched your heart; if the love of God has come into your soul, it has placed you among the saints of the Most High, and given you every privilege which God ever did or could give to them. And what are their privileges? To be washed in the atoning blood of the suffering Son of

God, to be clothed in the justifying righteousness of his perfect and meritorious obedience, to be consecrated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to have the love of God as their enduring portion, peace in believing, supplies of grace as needed, support and strength as they pass through this valley of tears, comforts abounding in proportion to the abundance of afflictions, everlasting arms beneath in death, a mansion of eternal bliss for the soul when the body drops into the grave, and a glorious resurrection of the body at the appearance of Christ in glory.

All that the love of God can give; all that the blood of Christ has been a channel for communicating; and all that the Spirit of God can reveal to any heart, or has ever brought with power into the soul of any saint--all these things become ours when we become fellow-citizens with the saints of God; not indeed always or often by vital enjoyment, though we get sips and tastes, drops and crumbs; but as Abraham was given possession of Canaan when he had not so much as to set his foot on, yet was it his as much by promise as it became his children's by strength of hand. Does not the Apostle declare this, in the broadest and clearest language, where he says, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours?" and why all yours? "for you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

March 17

"I and my Father are one." John 10:30

There is a great deal of caviling in some men's minds about the expression, "the blood of God." "How," say they, "could the Godhead bleed? How could the Godhead suffer?" But if it is not the blood of Him who was God, I might just as well rely for salvation on the blood of one of the thieves that were crucified with him. What is Christ's human nature? That is the rock on which many gallant ships have struck. It is not a person, having a distinct existence apart from the Deity of Christ; but it is a nature--what the Holy Spirit calls a "Holy Thing" (Luke 1:35); "a body that God had prepared for him" (Heb. 10:5), taken into intimate, mysterious, and inexplicable union with the Person of the Son of God. So that, whatever that human nature did and suffered, from its intimacy and union with the Son of God, the Son of God did and suffered. Did that nature bleed? It bled as having union with Deity; it being, so to speak, the instrument that Deity made use of.

To use an illustration--as my soul touches an object through my hand, or speaks its thoughts by my tongue; so Deity not being itself able to bleed, bled through the humanity. Did that nature suffer? It was not the mere suffering of a human person, as a man might suffer; but it was the suffering of a holy nature in intimate union with the Person of the Son of God. And did that nature obey? The Son of God obeyed through and with that nature. So that, to cavil at the expression, "the blood of God" is nothing less than to strike a blow at a great fundamental truth. We might object, on the same ground, to the expression, "God our righteousness," as the Prophet speaks, "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness," that is, "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). Who is our righteousness but the Son of God? And what was that righteousness but the obedience of his human nature, for Godhead could no more obey than suffer and bleed; and yet Jehovah is our righteousness. And if we do not object to the expression, "the righteousness of God," why should we cavil at the expression, "the blood of God?"

Now this is the grand mystery which faith embraces, and which is dear to the heart of every God-taught soul. What a power and efficacy, as the veil is taken off the heart, does faith see in that sacrifice! What a atoning sacrifice does it see made for sin by the blood of the Son of God! Faith does not view it as the blood of man! Can the blood of man put away sin? But when we see it as the blood of the Son of God, oh, what value, efficacy, power, and glory shine forth in it! But until the veil is taken off the heart we cannot see it; nor can we, until the Spirit makes it experimentally known, learn what a divine reality there is in this blood to purge the guilty conscience.

March 18

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19

The "sure word of prophecy" is the mind of God revealed in the Scripture of truth. This is compared to "a light shining in a dark place." This "dark place" is the heart of man, and a dark place it is; and the light shining in the dark place is when the Spirit of God pours his own heavenly light into the dark heart. The Spirit of God works by the word of God. He makes use of the Scriptures of truth, by means of these blessed Scriptures to communicate light. There is no light in the Scriptures themselves; they cannot teach a man to profit, that being God's prerogative. They are a dead letter, nothing but a collection of words and syllables; there is no light in them, no, not a particle, but what the Spirit of God throws upon them when he shines through them.

I might compare the Scriptures to the moon--the moon has no light in herself, but she borrows all her light from the sun--blot out the sun from the sky, and the moon would cease to shine. Or I might compare the Scriptures to what James compares them--"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass." Here the Scriptures are compared to a mirror, or looking-glass. But light must shine upon the glass. Of what use is a looking-glass in a dark night? It reflects no image; it presents to you no likeness; you discern not your features therein; it might be nothing else but a naked board, as far as any reflection it gives of your face. But let light come into the room, or let the sun rise and shine upon it, and your countenance is reflected therein. So with the word of God; it is utterly ineffectual until the Spirit shines upon it; and when he shines upon it, he casts at the same time a ray of light into your heart; and as he shines with this twofold ray, first upon the word, and then into your soul, he reflects from the word your very image, and you see yourself just as you are, clearly portrayed. Now this is the light shining in a dark place; the light of God's truth shining into your dark heart. This becomes "a sure word" to you; faith is raised up in your heart to credit what God has revealed; the shining in of this light into the dark place causes you to believe; and you, believing in the light which is thus come into your dark heart, receive the word of prophecy as a sure word.

March 19

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6

There is no promise made that we shall be set free in this life from the indwelling and the inworking of sin. Many think that they are to become progressively holier and holier, that sin after sin is to be removed gradually out of the heart, until at last they are almost made perfect in the flesh. But this is an idle dream, and one which, sooner or later in the case of God's people, will be rudely and

roughly broken to pieces. Nature will ever remain the same; and we shall ever find that the flesh will lust against the spirit. Our Adamic nature is corrupt to the very core. It cannot be mended, it cannot be sanctified, it is at the last what it was at the first, inherently evil, and as such will never cease to be corrupt until we put off mortality, and with it the body of sin and death. All we can hope for, long after, expect and pray for, is, that this evil nature may be subdued, kept down, mortified, crucified, and held in subjection under the power of grace; but as to any such change passing upon it or taking place in it as to make it holy, it is but a pharisaic delusion, which, promising a holiness in the flesh, leaves us still under the power of sin, while it opposes with deadly enmity that true sanctification of the new man of grace, which is wrought by a divine power, and is utterly distinct from any fancied holiness in the flesh, or any vain dream of its progressive sanctification.

March 20

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Romans 8:29

The risen body of Christ is the type to which the risen bodies of the saints are to be conformed, for "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This is that glorious image to which the saints are to be all conformed. But though fully retaining all the essential characteristics of humanity, for otherwise it would cease to be manhood in conjunction with Godhead, yet so unspeakably glorious is this risen body of the blessed Lord, to the image of which the risen saints will be conformed, that in this time-state we can not only form no conception of its surpassing glory, but not even of that inferior degree of glory which will clothe the bodies of the saints at the resurrection. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be--but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

But of this we may be sure, that there will always be an essential and unapproachable distinction between the glory of Christ's humanity and theirs. His humanity, being in eternal union with his Deity, derives thence a glory which is distinct from all other, and to which there can be no approach, and with which there can be no comparison. The glory of the moon never can be the glory of the sun, though she shines with his reflected light. "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" but though like, it will not be the same. It will be the saints' eternal happiness to see him as he is, and to be made like unto him; but it will be their everlasting joy that he should ever have that pre-eminence of glory which is his birthright, and to adore which will ever be their supreme delight. To have a body free from all sin, sickness, and sorrow, filled to its utmost capacity of holiness and happiness, able to see him as he is without dying under the sight, and to be re-united to its once suffering but now equally glorified companion, an immortal soul, expanded to its fullest powers of joy and bliss--if this be not sufficient, what more can God give?

March 21

"The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Corinthians 4:4

Oh! what beauty and blessedness shine forth in the gospel, when we view it connected with the Person and work of the Son of God! Take the doctrines of grace isolated from the Person of Christ; they are scattered limbs; there is no beauty in them; but view the truths of the gospel, in

connection with the Person and work of the Son of God, what a heavenly light, what a divine glory is cast upon every truth connected with his sacred Person, atoning blood, finished work, and dying love! This is the way to receive the gospel--not as a thing of shreds and patches, a mere collection or scheme of certain doctrines floating up and down God's word, as waifs and strays from a stranded ship; but as one harmonious gospel, full of grace, mercy, and truth, impregnated with divine blessedness, and all connected with, all springing out of, the Person of the God-man.

How it seems to lift us up for a time, while the feeling lasts, above sin, misery, and wretchedness, to view our completeness in Christ, to see our saving interest in his finished work, to behold ourselves members of his mystical body, to triumph in his holy triumphs, to rejoice in his victories, and to ascend with him above the smoke and stir of this dim spot that men call earth. As one might rise out of a London fog into a pure atmosphere, and bask on some mountain-top in the bright beams of the sun, so the dear saint of God, when he is privileged to read his title clear, see his name in the book of life, feel the love of God in his heart, and rejoice in Christ, is lifted up above the fog and smoke of this dim spot, and sitting with Christ in heavenly places, he feels a sweet victory over every foe internal, external, and infernal.

And there is no other way whereby we can get out of it. Like a man in the London fog, struggling on with fog in the east, west, north, south, fog and smoke all around; so it is while we are struggling onward with sin and self--north, south, east, and west, there is nothing but fog, fog, deep and dense. We must be raised out of it to the mountain-top, and this only can be by being lifted up by a sweet testimony of saving interest in the blood and love of the Son of God. This lifts up, this lifts out; this gives strength, and this alone will give victory; and so far as we fall short of realizing these precious things, we grope for the wall like the blind, and stumble in desolate places like dead men.

It is true that for the most part the saints of God only have a little of these blessed things, from time to time, just brought in and taken away, but sufficient to taste their sweetness, to know their beauty, to see their glory, and therefore sufficient, while they last, to help them onward in their course, and keep them struggling on, until they reach that eternal glory.

March 22

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." 1 Peter 1:2

Foreknowledge of the persons of the elect in the divine economy precedes election. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate;" and this foreknowledge was not any eternal foreview of their faith or love in time, as if that were the ground of God's choice of them; but it implies, first, that thorough knowledge which God had of them, and of all that should concern them, of all the depths of sin and rebellion, disobedience and ungodliness, of which they might be guilty before called by grace, and of all their grievous backslidings, slips, and falls, with all the base returns that they should make for his goodness and mercy toward them after he had touched their hearts by his finger.

And secondly and chiefly, it signifies the good will and pleasure, with that everlasting love of God the Father, whereby he foreknew them with a holy approbation of them, a divine affection toward them, and a holy and unalterable delight in them as viewed in his dear Son, chosen in him and accepted in the Beloved. And thus election is not, if we may use the expression without

irreverence, a dry choice of them in Christ, but a choice of them as foreknowing, with a holy approbation, each of his elect family, personally and individually, and however they might differ among themselves in the infinite variety whereby one man varies both naturally and spiritually from another, yet that his approving knowledge of each and all of them in Christ Jesus was in sweet harmony with his determinate choice. To realize this in soul feeling, is very sweet and precious.

We do not know ourselves. We may have seen a little into our fallen state by nature, and may know something of the dreadful evils that lurk and work within; we may have had some passing skirmishes, or even some hot battles with our proud, rebellious, unbelieving, infidel, and desperately wicked heart, but we do not know ourselves as God knows us. And though we may cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," yet how shallow for the most part and superficial is that knowledge and experience of ourselves! How little do we measure our sinfulness by the holiness of God, or look down into the depths of our nature as they lie naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do! When, then, we think that he who knew from the beginning all that we ever should be in the depths of the Adam fall, yet chose us by determinate decree in his dear Son unto eternal life, what a blessed lift does it give to the soul out of all those sinkings into which a sight and sense of sin is continually casting it.

March 23

"The Lord will give grace and glory." Psalm 84:11

Wherever the Lord gives grace, he in and with that grace gives glory. We, therefore, read, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Thus he has already made them, even while on earth, partakers of his glory; and this by making them partakers of his grace; for as in the bud is the bloom, and in the bloom the fruit, so in budding grace is blooming glory--grace being but glory begun, and glory being but grace finished.

But what is "glory?" Viewed as future, in its full consummation, it is to be with Jesus in realms of eternal bliss, where tears are wiped from off all faces; it is to see him as he is; to be conformed to his glorious likeness; to be delivered from all sin and sorrow; to be perfectly free from all temptations, trials, burdens, and exercises, and to dwell forever in that happy land, "the inhabitants of which shall not say, I am sick;" where a weary body, a burdened conscience, a troubled heart, a faint and weary mind, are utterly and forever unknown.

In a word, it is to have a glorified body re-united to a glorified soul, and for both to be as full of happiness and holiness, bliss and blessedness, as an immortal spirit can hold, and an immortal frame can endure, drinking in to the full, with unutterable satisfaction but without satiety, the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.

But no human heart can conceive, nor human tongue unfold in what the nature and fullness of this glory consist; for "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." Yet all this glory will the Lord give to those upon whom he has already bestowed his grace. He gives them grace now, to bring them through this wilderness world, this valley of tears, this scene of temptation, sin, and sorrow; and when he lands them on that happy shore, he gives them there the fullness of his glory. Then will be fully

accomplished the Redeemer's prayer and will--"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Their right and title to the enjoyment of this predestinated inheritance are securely lodged in the hands of their covenant Head; and he living at God's right hand to save them to the uttermost, all their temptations, enemies, sins, and sorrows can never hinder them from reaching the shore on which God has decreed they shall safely land. Satan may spread a thousand snares to entangle their feet; not a day or scarcely an hour may pass that they are not burdened with indwelling sin; a myriad of lusts may start up in arms from the depths of their carnal mind; and many a pang of guilt and chill of despair may seem at times wholly to cut them off from eternal life. But yet, where the Lord has given grace he will give glory; for when he gives grace with the left hand, he gives glory with the right; yes, we may say that with both hands he gives at once both grace and glory; for as grace and glory flow out of the same loving heart, and are given by the same loving God, they may be said to be given by both hands at one and the same time. A portion or foretaste of this glory is given on earth in every discovery of the glory of Christ; as the Lord speaks, "And the glory which you gave me I have given them"--already given them; and this he did when "he manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him" (John 17:22; 2:11).

March 24

"And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:7

When the Lord leads, we can follow. The path may be rough, but if the Lord upholds, we can walk in it without stumbling. Whatever the Lord bids, we can do if we have but his presence; whatever he calls upon us to suffer, we can bear if we have but the approbation of a good conscience and his approving smile. Oh, the wonders of sovereign grace! The cross is no cross if the Lord gives strength to bear it; affliction is no affliction if the Lord supports under it; trial is no trial if sweetened by his smile, and sorrow no grief if lightened by his love. It is our fretfulness, unbelief, carnal reasoning, rebellion, and self-pity which make a rough way a wrong way; but grace in its all-conquering power, not only subdues every difficulty without, but what is its greater triumph, subdues every difficulty within.

It is, and ever must be, one of the strongest principles of our faith, that every way must, in the end, be a right way if it be God's way. And is it not, according to the verdict of our own conscience, a right way to lead us forth out of the world, out of sin, out of self, out of pride and self-righteousness, out of evil in every form, into everything which is good, holy, gracious, acceptable, saving, and sanctifying; everything that can conform us to the image of Christ, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light?

And what is the end of all this leading and guiding? "That they might go to a city of habitation"--the new Jerusalem, the glorious city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. There, some of our friends have gone before; there they dwell as citizens of that blessed city which is all of pure gold, like unto clear glass; a city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. This is the city of habitation where the saints will forever dwell; and the Lord is leading forth each and all of his wilderness wanderers by the right way, that he may bring them in the same way into his eternal

presence, and to the enjoyment of those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

March 25

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and fears unto him that was able to save him from death." Hebrews 5:7

The Apostle says that Christ was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4). We must remember, however, that weakness was not imperfection in him, though it is imperfection in us; for when we speak of the weakness of Christ's human nature, we mean its weakness as compared with the strength and power of his divine nature. Our Lord felt the weakness of his humanity, for though in union with his eternal Deity, though most blessedly upheld and supported by the power and strength and consolation of the Holy Spirit, yet it was inherently weak, and an experience of its weakness was a part of the sufferings that he endured.

Having, then, to bear as laid upon this weakness the whole weight of imputed sin, the whole curse of the law, the whole indignation of the Almighty, our Lord was brought to a spot where he needed special support. To be brought through that work safely, honorably, successfully, agreeably to the will of God and in the fullest harmony with the eternal purposes--to this point were the prayers and supplications of our suffering Lord directed; this was the solemn conflict which our gracious Lord had to endure in the garden in its beginning, and upon the cross in its finishing.

We know what he felt--at least the Holy Spirit has given us an account of that solemn agony in the garden, when he said, as in a moment of weakness, "Let this cup pass from me." It was so bitter in contemplation; it was so full of unmitigated wrath; the ingredients were so mingled with the anger of the Almighty against sin and the manifestation of his displeasure against every one who was chargeable with it, that as he stood there as our substitute, in our place, to endure what we must have endured without him, and to bear the whole weight of eternal wrath and indignation, which must have sunk us and all with us, were we millions, to a deserved hell, that he needed the special interposition of the help of God to hold him up as he drank it to the very dregs.

It was to obtain this help that he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears; and it was the vehemency of the conflict which made the blood fall from his brow and tears drop from his eyes, and his whole soul engaged in an agony of mingled grief and horror, fear and supplication, each increasing and stimulating the other, and the whole poured forth with prayers, cries, weeping, and supplications unto him that was able to save him from death; not from the death that he came to die, but to save him from everything connected with the original sentence of death, as involving in it the wrath of God and its consequences.

March 26

"And was heard in that he feared." Hebrews 5:7

There is something in my mind extremely mysterious and yet divinely blessed in the expression, "in that he feared," and it is right to mention that there is some little difficulty as to the right rendering of the expression. The word means in the original not so much fear, as indicating dread or apprehension, as a holy reverence and tender cautiousness. It means literally the great care with which we handle brittle vessels, and, as used in the New Testament, signifies a reverential fear of God. It is used, for instance, of Noah, where he is said to be "moved with fear" (Heb. 11:7),

and is translated "godly fear" in those words, "whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).

It does not, therefore, mean fear in any such sense of the word as would imply a servile dread. It does not mean that our gracious Lord was possessed with that servile dread of the Almighty which repr

April

April 1

"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help." Hosea 13:9

God is all-wise, and therefore takes no rash, precipitate steps. As the original plan of salvation was devised by infinite wisdom, so all the successive steps of the execution of that plan are directed by the same boundless wisdom also. "Wherein he has abounded towards us," says Paul (Eph.1:8), "in all wisdom and prudence." Thus, in his dealings with his people, God does not put them at once into possession of all the blessings which he has laid up for them.

He has pardoned, for instance, their sins; but he does not immediately, when he calls them by his grace, put them into possession of this blessing. He has first to teach them their need of it. He has to prepare their heart for the right reception of it. It is no common gift, and he has to teach them how to value it. They are saved from wrath and eternal misery, from his dreadful displeasure and ever-burning indignation against sin. They have need to be shown, and made deeply to feel, from what they are saved, as well as to what they are saved. And as the oak does not grow to its full stature in a day, but needs years of sunshine and storm, of beating winds and howling tempests, to give it strength and constancy, a deep and wide root, as well as a lofty and branching stem, so do God's children need months and years of trial and temptation, that they may push a deep root downwards, and shoot up healthy and vigorous upwards.

Thus, before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted thereby. It is proud, and needs to be humbled; careless, and needs to be awakened; alive, and needs to be killed; full, and requires to be emptied; whole, and needs to be wounded; clothed, and requires to be stripped. It is, by nature, self-righteous and self-seeking; is buried deep in worldliness and carnality; is utterly blind and ignorant; is filled with presumption, arrogance, conceit, and enmity, and hates all that is heavenly and spiritual. Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element. "The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots." To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is; to make him love God instead of hating him; fear, instead of mocking him; obey, instead of rebelling against him; and to tremble at his terrible majesty, instead of running upon the thick bosses of his shield;--to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful change, requires the implantation of a new nature by the immediate hand of God himself.

April 2

"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:5

True faith I may call the grand tidal wave of the soul. I will endeavor to explain the expression. We see the river Thames day by day ebbing and flowing. What causes this change? You answer, "It is produced by the sea in the Channel alternately coming up and retiring." It is a true explanation. But what makes the sea of the Channel alternately come up and retire? There is what is called "a

grand tidal wave" that comes across the Atlantic Ocean, which, as it ebbs and flows, affects all the minor tides of the neighboring seas; and thus the tide of the Channel, and that of the river Thames, ebb and flow in unison with this huge Atlantic wave.

In the same way faith is the tidal wave of the soul; and all the graces and fruits of the Spirit ebb and flow just as faith rises, or just as faith sinks. If faith rises in the soul, all the graces and fruits of the Spirit rise with it; light increases, life is deepened, the fear of God strengthened, hope brightened, and love augmented. And when this great tidal wave of faith falls in the soul, all the minor tides of the Spirit's graces fall in unison with it. Thus when faith recedes and becomes low in the soul, all the other graces of the Spirit sink with it; consolation ebbs out altogether, hope recedes to a narrow streamlet, life dwindles to a scanty current, and love is reduced to a shallow channel. And as in the Thames we see, at low tide, the muddy banks which the stream has forsaken, so as faith sinks to a low ebb in the soul, there seems little else left but the mud and mire of corruption.

But what makes the grand tidal wave itself move? There is a cause for that also. It is drawn up by, and obeys the attraction of the sun. And is not this true spiritually of the grand tidal wave of faith in the soul? Is it not drawn up by the Sun of righteousness, as the natural sun draws up the wave of the ocean, and makes it ebb and flow? And when that glorious Sun ceases to draw up faith, does it not ebb and sensibly sink in the soul, as the natural sea sinks when the sun recedes from it?

April 3

"In the house of the righteous is much treasure--but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble."
Proverbs 15:6

How different is the estimate that faith makes of riches, honors, and comforts from that made by the world and the flesh! The world has no idea of riches but such as consist in gold and silver, in houses, lands, or other tangible property; no thought of honor, but such as man has to bestow; and no notion of comfort, except in "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." But the soul that is anointed by an "unction from the Holy One," takes a different estimate of these matters, and feels that the only true riches are those of God's grace in the heart, that the only real honor is that which comes from God, and that the only solid comfort is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a broken and contrite spirit. Now, just in proportion as we have the Spirit of God, shall we take faith's estimate of riches, honor, and comfort; and just so much as we are imbued with the spirit of the world, shall we take the world's estimate of these things.

When the eye of the world looked on the Apostles, it viewed them as a company of poor ignorant men, a set of wild enthusiasts, that traveled about the country preaching concerning one Jesus, who, they said, had been crucified, and was risen from the dead. The natural eye saw no beauty, no power, no glory in the truths they brought forth; nor did it see that the poor perishing tabernacles of these outcast men contained in them a heavenly treasure; and that they would one day shine as the stars forever and ever, while those who despised their word would sink into endless woe. The spirit of the world, and the views that the flesh takes are not altered now. Nature ever remains the same, and can never understand or love the things of eternity; it can only look to, and can only rest upon, the poor perishing things of time and sense.

By this test, therefore, we may in a measure try our state. What, for instance, are our daily and hourly feelings about the things of time and sense, and what about the things of eternity? Which of the two press with more power on our minds, which occupy more of our thoughts, which are laid up more warmly in our affections? And just in proportion as the solemn things of eternity, or the things of time and sense, occupy our mind; just so much as our hearts are fixed upon heaven or earth; just so much as we are living to God, or to ourselves, in the same degree is the strength of our faith, and the depth of the work of grace upon our conscience.

April 4

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Hebrews 2:9

How wondrous that he who, as the Son of God, made the angels, should be made inferior to them, and even need and receive their ministering aid and support. O the depths of humiliation to which the blessed Redeemer stooped, carrying down into their lowest point that pure, spotless, holy humanity which he had assumed into union with his divine Person as the Son of God! And let us ever bear carefully in mind that humiliation is not degradation. Our blessed Lord "humbled himself" by a voluntary act of surpassing grace; and it was no more in the power of men or circumstances to debase him of his glory than of lying witnesses to strip him of his innocency. The spotless purity of his sacred humanity, as in union with his divine nature, and as filled with and upheld by the Holy Spirit, preserved it from degradation in its lowest humiliation. The crown of thorns and the purple robe, the mocking knee of the Roman soldier and the taunting scoff of the Jewish priest, though they called forth the grace, did not tarnish the glory of our suffering Lord. His holy obedience to his Father's will in drinking the bitter cup, his meek dignity amid the worst of insults, and his calm resignation to all the weight of suffering which God or man laid upon him, all shone forth the more conspicuously under every attempt to dishonor him.

It is most sweet and blessed to look down, as it were, into some of those depths of humiliation into which the Redeemer sank, and to see that in the lowest depths of his soul travail, when he was poured out like water, and his heart, broken with grief and sorrow, was melted within him like wax, he was, in the midst of all, the glorious Son of God, though then the suffering Son of man; and that he was the same Jesus yesterday when hanging on the cross, as he is today at the right hand of his Father, and will be forever in the realms of heavenly bliss.

April 5

"And the servant abides not in the house forever--but the son abides forever." John 8:35

It is the irreversible blessing of a son, that he is never to be turned out of the house, that the union between the Parent and the child can never be broken, but that he is to reign with Christ through the ages of one everlasting day. This is a sweet consolation to God's family that "the son abides forever." How often is a child of God exercised, whether he shall abide forever, whether he may not draw back to perdition, whether some temptation may not overtake him whereby it shall be made manifest that he is nothing but a deceiver and deceived! But the Lord himself says, "the son abides forever;" let him be but a babe, let him have but the first beginning of spiritual life in his soul, he "abides forever;" he has the same interest in the affections of the Father, is a fellow-heir with Christ, and has a title to the same inheritance as those who are of longer standing, and those

who are his elders in age.

But sometimes the son may get tired of the restraint of his Father's house. God is a wise Parent as well as a kind one. He will treat his children with the most tender kindness and intimacy, but he will never allow them to be guilty of disrespect towards him. Sometimes, then, the sons get weary of their Father's house; they are like the younger son in the parable, when he asked his father to give him his portion, and when he had gotten it, he went away into a far country, away from his father's house, from under his father's roof, and wasted it in riotous living. This is where many of God's children get. There is a restraint in God's house, where the soul is not really blessed with the personal and present enjoyment of gospel truth, and restraint being ever irksome, the vain, idolatrous heart thinks it can derive some pleasure from the world which is not to be found under the roof of the Father. And, therefore, he gradually withdraws his steps from his Father's house, seeks to derive some pleasure from the things of time and sense, erects some idol, and falls down to worship it.

But notwithstanding all this, "the son abides forever." The Father of all his people in Christ does not disinherit his dear children; and though earthly parents may disinherit theirs, God's family are never cast out of the inheritance. The true-born Israelite who had waxed poor and sold himself unto the stranger was to obtain his freedom in the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25:47, 54), and to return to his own house and his own estate. So the son who has departed from his Father's house, and sold himself under sin, and become a slave to that cruel taskmaster, when the year of jubilee comes, the year of restoration, and the silver trumpet is blown, shakes off his shackles and fetters, casts aside the livery of servitude, returns to his Father's house, and is received with joy beneath his Father's roof. O what a meeting! The forgiving Parent, and the disobedient child! The Father dissolved in tears of affection; the child dissolved in tears of contrition!

Whatever, then, be our wanderings of heart, alienation of affection, and backsliding of soul; however we may depart from God, so far as we are sons, we shall "abide in the house forever," and possess an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for those that are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." And it will be our mercy to abide in the house below as members of the family, without departing from it, until reunited to the family above, "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."

April 6

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?" Luke 18:7

"Behold, he prays," was the word of the Lord to Ananias to convince him that that dreaded persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, had been quickened by the Spirit. And what a mercy it is for the quickened soul that the blessed Spirit thus helps his sinking, trembling spirit, puts life and energy into his cries and sighs, holds him up and keeps him steadfast at the throne, and thus enables him to persevere with his earnest suings for mercy, mingles faith with his petitions, and himself most graciously and kindly intercedes within him and for him with groanings which cannot be uttered. This is "praying with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15) and "in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). This is pouring out the heart before God (Psalm 62:8), pouring out the soul before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15); and by this free discharge of the contents of an almost bursting heart, sensible relief is given to the burdened

spirit.

By this special mark, the convictions of a quickened soul are distinguished from the pangs of guilt and remorse which are sometimes aroused in the natural conscience. Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," but there was neither repentance nor prayer in his heart; for "he went out from the presence of the Lord "--the very presence which the living soul is seeking to reach and be found in, and into which the Spirit brings him (Eph. 2:18).

Saul was "sore distressed," when God answered him, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets," but he goes to the witch of Endor, and in the end falls upon his own sword. Judas repented of his accursed treachery, but went and hanged himself. No prayer, no supplication was in either of their hearts. So it is prophesied that men shall gnaw their tongues for pain, and yet shall blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and not repent of their deeds (Rev. 16:10, 11). But the elect cry day and night unto God; and their prayers, perfumed with the incense of their all-prevailing Intercessor at the right hand of the Father, enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath.

April 7

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18

A view of Christ's glory, and a foretaste of the bliss and blessedness it communicates, has a transforming effect upon the soul. We are naturally proud, covetous, and worldly, often led aside by, and grievously entangled in various lusts and passions, prone to evil, averse to good, easily elated by prosperity, soon dejected by adversity, peevish under trials, rebellious under heavy strokes, unthankful for daily mercies of food and clothing, and in other ways ever manifesting our vile origin. To be brought from under the power of these abounding evils, and be made "fit for the inheritance of the saints in light," we need to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind," and conformed to the image of Christ.

Now this can only be by beholding his glory by faith, as the Apostle speaks, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is this believing view of the glory of Christ which supports under heavy TRIALS, producing meekness and resignation to the will of God. We are, therefore, bidden to "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds;" and to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

SICKNESSES, also, sometimes befall us, when we need special support; the sands of our time are fast running out, and there is no turning the glass; our "days are passing away as the swift ships, as the eagle that hastens to the prey;" and death and eternity are fast hastening on. When the body sinks under a load of pain and disease, and all sources of happiness and enjoyment from health and strength are cut off; when flesh and heart fail, and the eye-strings are breaking in death, what can support the soul or bear it safe through Jordan's swelling flood, but those discoveries of the glory of Christ, that shall make it sick of earth, sin and self, and willing to lay the poor body in the grave, that it may be forever ravished with his glory and his love?

Thus we see how the glory of Christ is not only in heaven the unspeakable delight of the saints, whose glorified souls and bodies will then bear "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" but here on earth, in their days of tribulation and sorrow, this same glory, as revealed to their hearts, supports and upholds their steps, draws them out of the world, delivers them from the power of sin, gives them union and communion with Christ, conforms them to his image, comforts them in death, and lands them in glory.

We thus see Christ, like the sun, not only illuminating all heaven with his glory, the delight of the Father, the joy of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the adoration of all the angelic host, but irradiating also the path of the just on earth, casting his blessed beams on all their troubles and sorrows, and lighting up the way wherein they follow their Lord from the suffering cross to the triumphant crown.

April 8

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Ephesians 6:18

If we do not continually "pray in the Spirit," our limbs will, so to speak, shrink, and our armor drop off. The knights of old exercised every day in their full armor, or they could not have borne it, nor used their weapons with dexterity and strength. So must the Christian warrior, by prayer and supplication, "exercise himself unto godliness." To this must be added, "watching thereunto." To watch for the answer; to wait for the appearing of the Lord "more than those who watch for the morning." And this, "with all perseverance," never giving it up, taking no denial, begging of the Lord again and again, and wrestling with him until he appears to bless, visit, and shine upon the soul.

O how this heavenly recipe keeps every part of the armor bright, and the soldier active and expert in its use! The armor indeed of itself, as being from heaven, gets neither dull nor rusty. It is we who get sluggish in its use. But, to our apprehension, faith and prayer make it glitter more brightly. How, for instance, "the prayer of faith" brightens up the belt of truth, and makes it glitter and shine! How it burnishes the breast-plate, and makes it fit tightly round the bosom! How it makes the helmet glitter in the sun, and its noble plumes to wave in all their native luster! How it beats out every dent the shield may have received from the fiery darts, and fits it for fresh encounters! And how it sharpens "the sword of the Spirit," gives it a brighter polish, and nerves the arm to wield it with renewed activity and vigor!

Oh, this is the secret of all true victory! All is, all must be well, when we are in a prayerful, meditative, watching state; and all is ill, when this heavenly recipe is neglected; when the hands droop, and the knees faint, and prayer seems dead and motionless in the breast. Let there be in the soul an abiding spirit of prayer, and victory is sure. Satan has little power against the soul that has an abiding spirit of prayer, and is "watching thereunto with all perseverance." But without this spirit of prayer, we are a prey to all his temptations, and can neither take, wear, nor use the only armor against them.

April 9

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

To glorify God is the highest ambition of angels. The brightest seraph before the throne has no higher aim, no greater happiness, than to bring glory to his name. And yet a poor sinner on earth may glorify God as much, and in some way more, than the brightest angel in the courts of eternal bliss. What different views the eyes of God and the eyes of men take of events passing on the earth. What glory is brought to God by all the victories gained by one country over another? I have thought sometimes that a poor old man, or feeble, decrepit woman, lying on a workhouse pallet, fighting with sin, self and Satan, yet enabled amid all to look to the Lord Jesus, and by a word from his lips overcoming death and hell, though when dead thrust into an cheap coffin, to rot in a pauper's grave, brings more glory to God than all the exploits of Nelson or Wellington, and that such victories are more glorious than those of Waterloo or Trafalgar.

It is true that the parish officers will not proclaim such a victory; nor will bells ring or cannons roar at such exploits; but the God of heaven and earth may get more glory from such a despised creature, than from all the generals and admirals who have ever drawn up armies in battle, or sunk hostile fleets beneath the wave. Truly does the Lord say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

It is indeed astonishing that glory should be brought to his great name by what his people do and suffer upon earth; that their feeble attempts to believe, to love, and to hope in him; to speak well of his name; and to adorn his doctrine in their life and conversation, should redound to his honor and praise. Wondrous indeed is it that a poor, insignificant worm, whom perhaps his fellow-mortal will scarcely deign to look at, or passes by with a shrug of contempt, should add glory to the great God that inhabits eternity, before whom the highest angels and brightest seraphs bow with holy adoration!

Well may we say, "What are all the glorious exploits that men are so proud of, compared with the tribute of glory rendered to God by his suffering saints?" You may feel yourself one of the poorest, vilest, neediest worms of earth; and yet if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a living faith, hope in his mercy, love his dear name, and in your vocation adorn his doctrine by a godly, consistent life, you are privileged above princes and nobles, yes, even above crowned heads, and all the glory of man, because you are bringing glory to God.

It matters not what may be your station in life. You may be a servant, master, wife, husband, child; your rank and station may be high or low; but whatever it be, still in it you may bring glory to God. If a servant, by obedience, cleanliness, industry, and attention to the directions of your master or mistress. If a master or mistress, by kindness and liberality to your dependents, and doing all that you can to render the yoke of servitude light. There is not a single Christian who may not glorify God, though in worldly circumstances he be, or seem to be, totally insignificant. Glory is brought to God by those who live and walk in his fear, and more sometimes by the poor than by the rich. Only adorn the doctrine of God in all things, and you will bring glory to God in all things.

April 10

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John 10:1

Here are three marks whereby you may know whether you have entered by faith into the sheepfold. First, have you any evidence of being saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an

everlasting salvation? Secondly, have you felt any blessed and holy freedom and liberty of going in and coming out of the heavenly sheepfold? Thirdly, have you found pasture? Sometimes finding pasture in the ordinances of God's house; sometimes in the sacred truths of the gospel, as you read or hear the word of truth; and especially in partaking by faith of the flesh and blood of the Lamb.

But there may be those who are in this spot. They see plainly that Christ is the door, and are fully convinced there is no other way of entrance into the fold but by him; and yet they do not seem to have entered personally and experimentally in, so as to enjoy for themselves its privileges and blessings. But have you never entered in by hope and expectation? And how could you enter in by expectation unless something in you, which you could not give yourself, were expecting a blessing from God; unless you possessed a principle of living faith, whereby, though at present weak and feeble, you yet seem to realize the sweetness of the blessings held forth in the gospel? How different is this state of soul experience from climbing daringly and presumptuously over the wall, or taking the ladder of self-righteousness, and thus helping yourself in by some other way than the door. How much better to be lying in humility at the gate, looking to Jesus and longing to enter in, begging of him to open the door and give you admission, than to make yourself a daring and rash intruder. How different is this humble, dependent, and self-abased state of soul from self-righteousness on the one hand, and bold presumption on the other.

There is everything to encourage the weak and feeble part of the flock who long to enter into the fold. To them Jesus opens his arms wide, and says in their heart and ears, "I am the door: enter through me, and by no other way. There is access to God by me, for I am the way, the truth, and the life. If you enter in by me, you shall be saved from all you justly dread and fear, both as regards this life and the life to come. You shall go freely in and freely out, and find pasture; lying down and feeding on my divine Person, flesh, and blood on earth, as the prelude and foretaste of enjoying me forever in the blissful courts of heaven above."

April 11

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

The Deity of the Son of God shines all through the sacred page. It is the grand cardinal point, on which all the doctrines of grace turn; and he that is unsound there, is unsound everywhere. The Godhead of Christ does not rest upon a few texts of Scripture, but it shines all through the Scripture; it is the light of the Scripture, and it is the life of the Scripture. Take away the Deity of Jesus out of the Scripture, and you would do the same thing spiritually as though you blotted the sun out of the sky naturally; the sacred page would be one black darkness. But the Person of Jesus is not Deity only. No man can see God and live; we could not bear to look upon pure Deity. And therefore the Son of God has taken into union with himself our nature; he has "taken upon him the seed of Abraham"--that "holy One" who was begotten by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and there united to the second Person of the glorious Trinity, that Godhead and manhood might form one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us.

Now to the eye of faith there is the greatest beauty and glory in Christ's humanity. The enlightened soul views Deity shining through the manhood; and when it sees Jesus "going about, doing good," when it hears the words that dropped from his gracious lips, when it views him by the eye of faith,

bleeding, suffering, agonizing, and dying, it sees the Godhead in all these acts, upholding and shining through the manhood. And it is this union of the two natures in one glorious Person, that fills the heart that receives it in the faith of it and in the love of it with a measure of pure affection.

Here, then, the Church has a view of the glorious Person of Jesus; and she falls in love with him. There is something in supernatural beauty which kindles spiritual affection, as there is something in natural beauty which kindles natural affection. When the quickened soul sees supernatural beauty, it immediately falls in love with it. The spiritual affections center in spiritual beauty. And thus, when the redeemed and regenerated soul sees the glorious Person of Christ, God-man, Immanuel, God with us, and has a taste and sense of his love, the blessed Spirit thereby kindles in it spiritual affection, and attracts it with these "cords of love and bands of a man."

April 12

"As the truth is in Jesus." Ephesians 4:21

Without truth there is no regeneration; for it is by "the word of truth" that we are begotten and born again (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). Without truth there is no justification; for we are justified by faith, which faith consists in crediting God's truth, and so gives peace with God. Without the truth there is no sanctification; for the Lord himself says, "Sanctify them through your truth--your word is truth." And without the truth there is no salvation; for "God has chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

And as the truth is the instrumental cause of all these blessings, the divinely-appointed means whereby they become manifested mercies, so truth enters into and is received by all the graces of the Spirit as they come forth into living exercise. Thus, without the truth, there is no FAITH; for the work of faith is to believe the truth. What is all the difference between faith and delusion? That faith believes God's truth, and delusion credits Satan's lies. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Without truth there is no HOPE; for the province of hope is to anchor in the truth. "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." The two immutable things in which hope anchors are God's word and God's truth; in other words, the pledged veracity and faithfulness of him who cannot lie. This made holy David say, "I have hoped in your word." Those who go down to the pit," said good king Hezekiah, "cannot hope for your truth." No; it is "the living, the living who praise you as I do this day." And it is "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures," that is, the consolation which the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures affords, "that we have hope."

Without truth there is no LOVE, for it is by "the love of the truth" that the saved are distinguished from the lost. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." And it is only as we speak "the truth in love that we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Thus "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;" and this in the Person of the Son of God, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

April 13

"Fools die for lack of wisdom." Proverbs 10:21

There is such a connection between true wisdom, which is "a knowledge of the holy" (Prov. 30:3), and the fear of the Lord; and such a connection between ignorance of the Lord and sin, that saved saints are called "wise," and lost sinners are called "fools," not only in the Old Testament, as continually in the Proverbs, but in the New. Many of the Lord's people look with suspicion upon knowledge, from not seeing clearly the vast distinction between the spiritual, experimental knowledge for which we are now contending, and what is called "head knowledge." They see that a man may have a well-furnished head and a graceless heart, that he may understand "all mysteries and all knowledge," and yet be "nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2); and as some of these all-knowing professors are the basest characters that can infest the churches of truth, those who really fear the Lord stand not only in doubt of them, but of all the knowledge possessed by them. But put it in a different form; ask the people of God whether there is not such a divine reality, such a heavenly blessing, as being "taught of God" (John 6:45); having "an unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things" (1 John 2:20)--knowing the truth for oneself, and finding it makes free (John 8:32); whether there is not a "counting of all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," and a stretching forth of the desires of the soul to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings;" whether there is not "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins" (Luke 1:77); "a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6); a being "filled with the knowledge of his will" (Col. 1:9); an "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10); "a growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18);--ask the living family of God whether there be not such a knowledge as this, and if this knowledge is not the very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of vital godliness, and they will with one voice say, "It is!"

April 14

"Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." John 15:3

What God does, he does by the word of his grace and the influences which accompany that word; forever bear in mind that God does nothing but by his word. The sanctifying, cleansing effects therefore which attend the word of his grace under the operations of the Spirit are spoken of as "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). "The word" is the written Scripture; the "water" is the power of the Holy Spirit; the "washing" is the cleansing effect of the application of the word. Let me ask you this question, if you doubt my words, How are we to get the burden and guilt of our sins off our conscience, the defilement of mind which sin produces, the bondage of spirit which sin creates, the fears and alarm of the soul which sin works? You will say, "By believing in Jesus Christ, for being justified by faith we have peace with God." That is true; but how can we believe in Jesus Christ, so as to find this peace? By the word of his grace, accompanied by the special influence, unction, and dew of the Holy Spirit revealing and making known pardon and acceptance with God, which is therefore spoken of as "the washing of water by the word." For as water washes the body, so the word of truth washes the soul, by washing away the guilt and filth and defilement of sin. As the blessed Lord said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And again, "He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Thus as water when applied cleanses the body from natural filth, so does the word of promise, the word of truth,

the word of salvation revealing and making known the Savior's precious blood, cleanse the conscience from the guilt, filth, and defilement of sin.

April 15

"But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatever does make manifest is light." Ephesians 5:13

But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, Ephes. 5:13

Feeling is the first evidence of supernatural life; a feeling compounded of two distinct sensations, one referring to God, and the other referring to self. The same ray of light has manifested two opposite things, "for that which makes manifest is light;" and the sinner sees at one and the same moment God and self, justice and guilt, power and helplessness, a holy law and a broken commandment, eternity and time, the purity of the Creator and the filthiness of the creature. And these things he sees, not merely as declared in the Bible, but as revealed in himself as personal realities, involving all his happiness or all his misery in time and in eternity.

Thus it is with him as though a new existence had been communicated, and as if for the first time he had found there was a God. One ray of supernatural light, penetrating through the veil spread over the heart, has revealed that dreadful secret--a just God, who will by no means clear the guilty. This piercing ray has torn away the bed too short, and stripped off the covering too narrow. A sudden, peculiar conviction has rushed into the soul. One absorbing feeling has seized fast hold of it, and well-near banished every other. "There is a God, and I am a sinner before him," is written upon the heart by the same divine finger that traced those fatal letters on the palace wall of the king of Babylon, which made the joints of his loins to be loosed, and his knees to smite one against another (Dan. 5:5, 6).

"What shall I do? Where shall I go? What will become of me? Mercy, O God! Mercy, mercy! I am lost, ruined, undone! Fool, madman, wretch, monster that I have been! I have ruined my soul. O my sins, my sins! O eternity, eternity!" Such and similar cries and groans, though differing in depth and intensity, go up out of the new-born soul well-near day and night at the first discovery of God and of itself. These feelings have taken such complete possession of the heart that it can find no rest except in calling upon God. This is the first pushing of the young bud through the bark, the first formation of the green shoot, wrapped up as yet in its leaves, and not opened to view. These are the first pangs and throes of the new birth, before the tidings are brought, "A man-child is born." "What shall I do to be saved?" cried the jailer. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" exclaimed the tax-collector. "Woe is me, for I am undone!" burst forth from the lips of Isaiah.

April 16

"Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" Jeremiah 15:12

You see that the Lord, when he is pointing out the trials his people are passing through, compares them to "iron." He does not diminish their weight; he does not at all lower their oppressive tendency. But, then, in order to administer a suitable remedy to Jeremiah's soul, he brings forward something much stronger. "Shall iron," he says, "break the northern iron and the steel?" No surely; the "northern iron and the steel" shall break through that. The common iron never can break through the northern iron, which is a metal of such a far superior nature; still less prevail against

that keen well-tempered steel which can cut through everything it touches.

Now if your hearts are exercised with iron sorrows, temptations, trials, and perplexities, I am sure you will want the almighty power of God in your souls to cut them asunder. And God can do it. Are you a poor persecuted believer? God can cut down in a moment that enemy who is persecuting you. Are you tempted of Satan? He in a moment can cut his fiery darts asunder. Are you passing through a severe trial? By the application of some precious promise the Lord can in a moment cut the trial asunder. Are you entangled in some grievous snare that you feel and cry out under night and day, and yet are unable to extricate yourself? The Lord can in a moment, by the application of his precious word to your soul, cut that snare asunder. He has but to bring against it "the northern iron and the steel," and it is done in a moment.

How was it with Jeremiah? Did not he say, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart?" Why? Because keen persecutions, sharp trials, severe temptations had given him an appetite; that was the reason why the "word was found." He fell upon it as a hungry man upon a crust. It was sweet to his soul, because it brought with it a precious deliverance from the temptations and the sorrows his soul was groaning under.

Thus, we see that in proportion as we feel the iron nature of trials and sorrows, shall we experience "the northern iron and the steel" of God's almighty power and grace to deliver. Happy are the people that are in such a case! Happy the people that have this Lord for their manifested God!

April 17

"Lead me in your truth, and teach me." Psalm 25:5

By what steps do we usually embrace the truth as it is in Jesus? First of all, for the most part, we receive it as a doctrine; the judgment being more or less informed, the eyes of the understanding being enlightened to see it in the word. The doctrine for some time may be floating in our mind; but after a time, as the Lord leads us more into a knowledge of our own hearts, and into a deeper feeling of our necessities, he lets down the truth from our head into the heart, and it then becomes a truth. It is very sweet to have a doctrine turned into a truth.

But after a time, we need something more than a truth; we need it as a blessing. When we are brought into pressing straits and severe trials, we need the doctrines which we first received into our minds as truths, now to be blessed by a divine application to our souls. Thus, what we first knew in our judgments as a doctrine, is afterwards received in our conscience as a truth, and then is applied to our very heart of hearts as a blessing; and so we find God's word, and eat it, to the joy and rejoicing of our souls.

Thus it is with respect to Christ's ascension. We receive it first as a doctrine, as a great and glorious part of the scheme of salvation; then we begin to see, as we are led, more and more into a knowledge of it, what a wonderful truth it is, to have a Mediator at the right hand of God; to have an Intercessor pleading by the efficacy of his atoning blood and justifying righteousness, for poor, needy, guilty souls. This draws out the faith, hope, and love of the heart to this ascended and interceding Mediator; and then, as the Lord the Spirit reveals the virtue and efficacy of this glorious Mediator in the guilty conscience, the truth becomes a rich, unctuous, and savory blessing.

So that so far from experience casting out the doctrines of grace, it only leads the soul into a vital acquaintance with them; and we might as well think of saving our lives by drawing the bones out of our body, as of blessing our souls by casting out the doctrines of grace; yes, we daily feel more deeply the need of the doctrines being brought into our heart by divine power; we feel them more to be the stay and support of our soul, as my arm when raised is stayed and supported by the bones which God has placed there.

April 18

"Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." James 1:18

If we look at the work of the Spirit on the heart, we shall see how, in all his sacred dealings and gracious movements, he invariably employs truth as his grand instrument. Does he pierce and wound? It is by the truth; for the "sword of the Spirit is the word of God," and that we know is "the word of truth." If he mercifully heals, if he kindly blesses, it is still by means of truth; for the promise is, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth." And when he thus comes, it is as a Comforter, according to those gracious words, "But when the Comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me."

In fact, if we look at the new man of grace that the blessed Spirit begets and brings forth in the heart, we shall see that all his members and faculties are formed and adapted to a living reception of the truth. As the eye is adapted to light; as the ear to sound; as the lungs to the pure air that fills them with every breath; as the heart to the vital blood which it propels through every bounding artery, so is the new man of grace fitted and adapted to the truth of God. And as these vital organs perform their peculiar functions only as they receive the impressions which these external agents produce upon them, so the organs of the new man of grace only act as truth is impressed upon them by the power of the blessed Spirit. Has, then, the new man of grace eyes? It is to see the truth (Eph. 1:18, 19). Has he ears? It is to hear the truth (Isa. 55:3; Luke 9:44). Has he hands? It is to lay hold of and embrace the truth (Prov. 4:13; Isa. 27:5; Heb. 6:18). Has he feet? It is that he may walk in the truth (Psalm. 119:45; Luke 1:6; 3 John 4). Has he a mouth? "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." It is that he may feed upon the truth, the living truth, yes, upon His flesh who is truth itself (John 6:35, 14:6).

April 18

"I have poured out my soul before the Lord." 1 Samuel 1:15

How much there is in that expression pouring out the soul before the Lord! Shall I use a familiar figure to illustrate it, as sometimes familiar figures are best adapted to that purpose? Look at a sack of corn; you know, when the mouth of the sack is tied up, there is no pouring out its contents; but let the sack be opened and thrown down, and then its contents are immediately poured out, and the rich grain falls upon the floor. Our hearts are sometimes like the sack with the mouth tied; there are desires, pantings, and longings; there are needs, and these urgently felt; but we cannot give them utterance. As we read, "I opened my mouth and panted." But the Lord in mercy, at times, opens the mouth; and then when the mouth is opened, the heart can pour out its desires, just as the rich grain is poured out of a sack when the mouth is untied.

But must not the sack be full before the grain is poured out? If there are but a few grains at the bottom, or only half-a-pint of wheat in one corner of the sack, though you open the mouth, there is no pouring out of the rich grain. So with our hearts. If the heart be not full; if there be no vehement desires struggling for utterance, we may open the mouth, but there is no pouring it out in pantings and longings.

If you want a scriptural instance of what it is to pour out the soul before the Lord, read the first chapter of the first book of Samuel, where you will find that gracious woman Hannah, so agitated, and so discovering the state of her mind by the convulsive movements of her frame, that the high priest charged her with being drunken; but though her heart was so full that her lips quivered, and her very features betrayed what was passing within, yet she meekly replied to his chiding speech, when he bade her to put away her wine, "No, my Lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." That was something like prayer. And we know what a blessed answer the Lord gave her, and how the Holy Spirit has recorded her triumphal song.

April 20

"O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." 2 Chronicles 20:12

Jehoshaphat did not know what to do; he was altogether at his wit's end; and yet he took the wisest course a man could take. This is the beauty of it; that when we are fools, then we are wise; when we are weak, then we are strong; when we know not what to do, then we do the only right thing. O had Jehoshaphat taken any other course; had he collected an army, sent through Judah, raised troops and forged swords and spears he would certainly have been defeated! But not knowing what to do, he did the very thing he should do. "Our eyes are upon you." "You must fight our battles; you must take the matter into your own hands. Our eyes are upon you, waiting upon you, looking up, and hoping in you; believing in your holy name, expecting help from you, from whom alone help can come."

But this is painful work to be brought to this point, "Our eyes are upon you," implying there is no use looking to any other quarter. It assumes that the soul has looked, and looked, and looked elsewhere in vain, and then fixed its eyes upon God as knowing that from him alone all help must come.

This I believe to be the distinctive mark of a Christian, that his eyes are upon God. On his bed by night; in his room by day; in business or at market, when his soul is in trouble, cast down, and perplexed, his eyes are upon God. From him alone all help must come; none else can reach his case. All other but the help of God is ineffectual; it leaves him where it found him; it does him no good. We are never safe except our eyes are upon God. Let our eyes be upon him, we can walk safely; let our eyes be upon the creature, we are pretty sure to slip and stumble.

April 21

"But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption--that, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31

Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. God has made Christ all these to his people. He has set him up as their eternal Head, made him the Bridegroom of their souls, that out of his fullness they may all receive. Then, just in proportion as they learn these two lessons--what they are, and what he is--they receive him into their hearts actually what he is to them in the purpose of God.

Am I a fool? Do I feel it and know it? Have I had painful experience of it, so that all my creature wisdom is turned into one mass of foolishness? Do I catch by the eye of faith a view of the risen Mediator, "Immanuel, God with us," and see what he is made of God to us? The moment my eye sees him as "WISDOM," that moment a measure of divine wisdom flows into my conscience.

Am I polluted and defiled throughout? Have I no righteousness of my own? Is all my obedience imperfect? Am I unable to fulfill the requirements of God's holy law? If once I catch by the eye of faith this glorious truth, through him who is the truth, that Jesus Christ is of God made unto me "RIGHTEOUSNESS"--the moment I see that by the eye of faith, that moment a measure of imparted righteousness flows into my heart.

Am I an unholy, depraved, filthy wretch? Does corruption work in my heart? The moment I catch by the eye of faith Jesus made unto me of God "SANCTIFICATION," that moment a measure of sanctification comes into my heart, drawing up holy affections, casting out the love of the world, curbing my reigning lusts, and bringing my soul into submission at his footstool.

Am I a poor captive, entangled by Satan, by the world, and my own evil heart? The moment that I catch this glorious view, that Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father is made unto me "REDEMPTION"--if I can believe that he is made such for me, that I have a standing in him, and a union with him, so that he is my redemption--that moment a measure of deliverance comes into my soul, and redemption imputed becomes redemption imparted; the soul receives then internally what Christ has done externally.

In a word, when Christ is received as "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," he becomes all these in vital manifestation.

April 22

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be--but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2

What Christ is to the Church, what the Church is to Christ, can never be really known until time gives place to eternity, faith to sight, and hope to enjoyment. Nor even then, however beyond all present conception the powers and faculties of the glorified souls and bodies of the saints may be expanded, however conformed to the glorious image of Christ, or however ravished with the discoveries of his glory and the sight of him as he is in one unclouded day--no, not even then, will the utmost stretch of creature love, or highest refinement of creature intellect, wholly embrace or fully comprehend that love of Christ, which, as in time so in eternity, "passes knowledge," as being in itself essentially incomprehensible, because infinite and divine.

Who can calculate the amount of light and heat that dwell in, and are given forth by the sun that shines so gloriously in the noonday sky? We see, we feel, we enjoy its bright beams; but who can number the millions of millions of rays that it casts forth upon all the surface of the earth, diffusing

light, heat, and fertility to every part? If the creature be so great, glorious and incomprehensible, how much more great, glorious and incomprehensible must be its divine Creator!

The Scripture testimony of the saints in glory is that "when Christ shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is;" that they shall then see the Lord "face to face, and know even as also they are known;" that their "vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" that they shall be "conformed to his image," and "be satisfied when they awake with his likeness;" that they shall be "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;" that "their sun shall no more go down, for the Lord shall be their everlasting light;" that they shall have "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and shall "shine as the brightness of the skies, and as the stars forever and ever."

But, with all this unspeakable bliss and glory, there must be in infinite Deity unfathomable depths which no creature, however highly exalted, can ever sound; heights which no finite, dependent being can ever scan. God became man, but man never can become God. He fully knows us, but we never can fully know him, for even in eternity, as in time, it may be said to the creature, "Can you by searching find out God? can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what can you do? deeper than hell, what can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." But if, as we believe, eternity itself can never fully or entirely reveal the heights and depths of the love of a Triune God, how little can be known of it in a time state! and yet that little is the only balm for all sorrow, the only foundation of solid rest and peace.

April 23

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

If I may use the expression, we do not need a dead, but a living Jesus; not an absent, but a present Jesus; not a once, but a now Jesus; we need a friend at the right hand of God at the present moment; an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and yet pitiful and loving Mediator between God and us; an interceding High Priest, Surety, and Representative in our nature in the courts of heaven, who can show mercy and compassion to us now upon earth— "Whose heart is made of tenderness, Whose affections melt with love."

Our needs make us feel this. Our sins and sorrows give us perpetual errands to the throne. This valley of tears is ever before our eyes, and thorns and briars are perpetually springing up in it, that rend and tear our flesh. We need a real friend. Have you not sometimes tossed to and fro upon your weary couch, and almost cried aloud, "O that I had a friend!" You may have received cruel blows from one whom you regarded as a real friend; but you have been cruelly deceived. You feel now you have no one to take care of you or love you, and whom you can love again; and your heart sighs for a friend who shall be a friend indeed. The widow, the orphan, the friendless, the deserted one, all keenly and deeply feel this. But if grace has touched your heart, you feel that though all men forsake you, there is the Friend of sinners, a Brother born for adversity, a Friend who loves at all times, who will never leave or forsake you.

But we need this friend to be almighty, for no other can suit our case--he must be a divine Friend. For who but God can see us wherever we are? What but a divine eye can read our thoughts? What but a divine ear can hear our petitions? And what but a divine hand can stretch itself forth

and deliver? Thus the Deity of Christ is no dry, barren speculation, no mere Bible truth, but an experience wrought powerfully into a believer's inmost soul. Happy soul! happy season! when you can say with the Church, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song Sol. 5:16).

Thus the very needs of the soul instinctively teach us that a friend, to be a friend, must be a heavenly friend; that his heart and hand must be divine, or they are not the heart and hand for us. This Friend, whose bitterest reproach on earth that he "was the Friend of sinners," is his highest glory in heaven, is the blessed Jesus, our great High Priest in the courts above. We find him at times to be very merciful, very pitiful, and very compassionate. And I am sure that we need all the compassion of his loving breast; for we are continually in states of mind when nothing but his pure mercy can suit, when nothing but his rich and boundless compassion is adapted to our case.

April 24

"Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me--because I live, you shall live also." John 14:19

Communion with Christ rests on three things--seeing him by faith, living upon his life, and experiencing his manifested presence. But all these three things depend on his resurrection and a knowledge of its power. As risen from the dead, the saints see him; as risen from the dead, they live a life of faith upon him; as risen from the dead, he manifests himself unto them; and as life and feeling spring up in their souls from sweet communion with him, the power of his resurrection becomes manifest in them.

This communion, therefore, with the Lord Jesus as a risen Head all the reconciled and justified saints of God are pressing forward after, according to the measure of their grace and the life and power of God in their soul. It is indeed often sadly interrupted and grievously broken through, by the sin that dwells in us. But the principle is there, for that principle is life; and life is the privilege, the possession, and the distinction of the children of God. You need none to assure you that Jesus is risen from the dead if he manifests himself to your soul. You need no evidence that you are one of his sheep if you have heard and know his voice. So you may say, "Jesus is risen, for I have seen him; Jesus is risen, for I have heard him; Jesus is risen, for I live upon him."

Communion with Jesus is the life of religion, and indeed without it religion is but an empty name. If without him we can do nothing; if he is our life, our risen covenant Head, our Advocate with the Father, our Husband, our Friend, our Brother, how are we to draw sap out of his fullness, as the branch from the vine, or to know him personally and experimentally in any one of his endearing relationships, unless by continual communion with him on his throne of grace? In fact, this is the grand distinguishing point between the living and the dead, between the true child of God and the mere professor, that the one has real union and communion with a risen Jesus, and the other is satisfied with a form of godliness. Every quickened soul is made to feel after the power of God, after communion from above, after pardon and peace, after visitations of mercy and grace; and when he has had a view of Christ by faith, and some revelation of his Person and work, grace and glory, nothing afterwards can ever really satisfy him but that inward communion of spirit with Jesus whereby the Lord and he become one; "for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

April 25

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips--for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:5

God has described his Zion as "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from top to toe. Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed. Her understanding was blinded; her conscience stupified, and her affections alienated. Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted.

As in a ship-wrecked vessel the water runs in through every leak, so when Adam fell upon the lee-shore of sin and temptation, and made shipwreck of the image of God in which he was created, sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being.

Or to use another figure; as when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent, the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot, so did the poison fang of sin penetrate into Adam's inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown.

But the fearful havoc which sin has made is never seen nor felt until the soul is quickened into spiritual life. Oh, what work does sin then make in the conscience, when it is opened up by the Spirit of God! Whatever superficial or shallow views we may have had of sin before, it is only as its desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. It is this sword of the Spirit which cuts and wounds; it is this entrance of life and light that gashes the conscience; it is this divine work which lacerates the heart and inflicts those deep wounds which nothing but the "balm in Gilead" can heal.

And not only is a poor convinced sinner cut in his conscience, inwardly lacerated and gashed by sin as thus opened up by the Spirit of God, but, as the prophet speaks, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." He is thus laboring under a complication of diseases. Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin. Every mental faculty is depraved. The will chooses evil; the affections cleave to earthly things; the memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good; the judgment, like a bribed or drunken juryman, pronounces heedless or wrong decisions; and the conscience, like an opium-eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupified silence.

This miserable state, brought upon us and into us by the fall, all the people of God must in some measure feel. It is of no use mincing the matter and saying that a person can be saved by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, without knowing anything of the depth of misery and wretchedness into which he is sunk as the fallen child of a fallen father. We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are and what they are capable of; we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind, before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

April 26

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." 2 Corinthians 4:13

There is a distinction to be made between faith and the spirit of faith. The spirit of faith is faith in exercise. Faith sometimes is like a day in which there is no wind blowing. It is so calm, that there scarcely appears to be any air stirring to move a leaf. But after a time a gentle breeze comes and blows over the earth. Thus it is with faith and the spirit of faith. Faith in repose is like the calm air of a summer's day, when there is nothing moving or stirring; faith acting, faith in exercise, is like the same air in the gentle breeze which makes itself sensibly felt. If God has given me faith, that faith is never lost out of my breast. If once a believer, I always am a believer; for if I could cease to believe, I would cease to be a child of God; I should lose salvation out of my heart, for I am saved by grace through faith.

And yet there may be many times and seasons when I may not have much of the spirit of faith. Faith may be very inactive, I will not say stagnant, for that would almost imply death, but still, quiet, calm, sleeping like a bird with its head under its wing. But in due time there is a stirring, a movement, a gracious blowing of the Spirit--"Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind; blow upon my garden" (Song Sol. 4:16).

May

May 1

"Therefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:17

God gave the persons of the elect into the hands of his dear Son, as Jacob committed Benjamin into the hands of Judah; and as Judah accepted Benjamin, so Christ accepted the Church and undertook to bring it unto God, or he himself would bear the blame forever. But how this faithfulness was tried! Men tried it; devils tried it; God tried it; but it came gloriously through all. Yet what loads were laid upon it! How the very knees of Jesus, so to speak, staggered beneath it! How, as Deer says, he had— "Strength enough, and none to spare!"

How he had to sustain the curse of the law and the load of imputed sin! How he had to drink up a very hell of inward torment! How he had to be agonized in body, and more than agonized in soul! What bloody sweat in the garden, what tears, what sore amazement, what heaviness of spirit, what sorrowfulness even unto death; what pangs of body upon the cross, what grief of mind, what distress of soul, did the Holy Lamb endure in being faithful unto God! How he might have prayed, and his Father would have sent him twelve legions of angels! He had but to speak, and he might have soared to heaven and left the cross and all its shame and suffering behind.

But he was faithful to God and to the work which he had undertaken. Six weary hours he hung upon the cross. Six weary hours he endured the wrath of God, and that most cutting stroke of all, reserved to the last as the bitterest drop in the whole cup, the hiding of his Father's countenance, which wrung from his bosom that cry, such as neither earth nor heaven had heard before—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And yet not until he had finished the work did he give up his spirit. So he was faithful "in all things pertaining to God."

And he is faithful, also, in all things pertaining to man. He could say to the Father, "Of all whom you have given me"— except the son of perdition, Judas; he had no charge to save him from death and hell; but of all the others whom he had received as his Father's gift, he could say, "I have lost none." Thus he was faithful while he was on earth. And how faithful he is now! The high priest under the law had two offices to execute; he had to OFFER SACRIFICE for the people, and to offer prayer and INTERCESSION for them. Upon earth Jesus fulfilled the first; in heaven he fulfils the second, as there making by virtue of his presence continual intercession for us.

May 2

"Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41

The entering into temptation is a different thing from temptation itself. "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." A temptation presents itself, draws near to us, or we draw near to it. If conscience sounds an alarm, and we keep, so to speak, to the windward of temptation, we are for

the present safe. Temptation is a lee shore on which the wind fiercely blows; it is a coast strewn with a thousand wrecks, and with the bleached bones of innumerable drowned mariners. Keep the ship's head to windward, and she may weather the point; neglect sail and helm, and she will go ashore.

David and Joseph were exposed to a similar temptation. David entered into it, and fell; Joseph was kept from entering into it, and stood. In the country you often see a footpath across a field; if we keep in it we are safe. But we may be tempted by various objects to diverge a little, to gather a flower, or saunter upon the banks of the river, or make a shortcut across the fields. While we are in the footpath, temptation may be very near, but we have not yet entered into it; we are upon the borders of it, but we have not yet entered into its territory. Few, if any, enter into temptation without falling by it. The FLY hovers round the spider's web; to touch it is to enter into it. The BIRD flies around the fowler's snare; to peck at the bait is to enter the trap. The MOTHS flutter round the candle; to enter the flame is to burn its wings.

The Lord's words were not, "watch and pray against temptation," but "that you enter not into temptation." Few come out of temptation as they entered into it. How clearly James has described the difference between enduring temptation and falling by temptation. He does not say, "Blessed is the man who is free from temptation," but "who endures temptation." Blessed is the man who is kept in the footpath, who sees temptation on every side, but endures it, is not drawn out of the path by it, for "when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life." He has fought the good fight, won the battle, and shall receive the crown.

But he adds, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God." He must not say that the Lord presents temptation to him, and is therefore chargeable with it if he falls. "No," says James, "let that thought be abhorred. God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." There is no sin in temptation, for the Lord Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Nor in lust is there practical, though there is speculative sin. It is when the two meet and embrace, and the will consents to the union, silencing the voice of God and conscience, that sin is produced.

And thirdly, follows the fearful and fatal fruit, "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death;" that is, as I understand it, death in the conscience, guilt, condemnation, and misery, and the deadening of all the fruits and graces of the blessed Spirit.

May 3

"In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." Isaiah 4:2

Where in heaven or on earth can there be found such a lovely Object as the Son of God? "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" ask the companions of the Bride. But she answers, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." If, then, you have never seen any beauty in Jesus, you have never seen Jesus; he has never revealed himself to you; you never had a glimpse of his lovely face, nor a sense of his presence, nor a word from his lips, nor a touch from his hand. But if you have seen him by the eye of faith, and he has revealed himself to you even in a small measure, you have seen a beauty in him beyond all other beauties, for it is a holy beauty, a divine beauty, the beauty of his heavenly grace, the beauty of his uncreated and eternal glory, such as no earthly countenance can wear, nor man or woman, no, not Adam, in all his unfallen

innocency, nor his fair partner Eve, with all her virtue, grace, and dignity, ever could show, for it is the beauty of the glorious Son of God, which he forever wears as the Son of the Father in truth and love.

And as he is "beautiful," so is he "glorious." Oh, what a glory does faith see sometimes in his eternal Deity, in his divine Sonship, in what he is in himself as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person, and in what he is as made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption! How glorious does he show himself to be in his atoning blood and dying love. Even as sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden, and as hanging in torture and agony upon Calvary's cross, faith can see a beauty in the glorious Redeemer, even in the lowest depths of ignominy and shame. Was there not a glory in his meek obedience, in his suffering patience, in his submission to his Father's holy will, in his uncomplaining resignation to the heaviest strokes of vindictive justice, in bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and thus putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself? But more especially does faith see him glorious as rising from the dead and going up on high, and sitting down at the right hand of the Father, crowned with glory and honor, and all things put under his feet.

May 4

"And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and lovely for those who are escaped of Israel." Isaiah 4:2

By "the fruit of the earth" we may understand that gracious and holy fruit which grew upon the Branch--and it seems to be called "the fruit of the earth," because it appeared on earth when our Lord was there. Thus not only all his words, works, and ways, all the parables, doctrines, precepts, and promises uttered by the mouth of the Son of God in the days of his flesh, but all the benefits and blessings that spring in the way of redemption out of his complex Person, and grow as it were a holy fruit out of him as the Branch, such as his atoning blood, his glorious righteousness, his dying love, his resurrection and ascension, and his power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, may all be considered as "the fruit of the earth," because wrought by him in and upon the earth, and done in the days of his flesh when his gracious feet were upon this earthly ball.

This fruit is "excellent" to the escaped of Israel. There is seen in it to be a divine excellency. Therefore, there is not a shadow of a fault to be found with it. It is perfect in all its parts; complete to the very center, and therefore seen to be excellent, as so glorifying to God, and so adapted to every need and woe of those that are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem.

And "lovely" too. In his sufferings, in his blood shedding, obedience, holy life and expiatory death, there is a surpassing loveliness, because in them shine forth a divine glory and a heavenly beauty. It is indeed the same word as is translated "beauty" in the holy garments made for Aaron by Moses (Exod. 28:2), and clothed in which he ministered before the Lord when he went into the holy place. So our great High Priest now ministers within the veil in the holiness and beauty of his glorified humanity; and as this is seen and apprehended by faith, the Church sings, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." "His glory is great in your salvation--honor and majesty have you laid upon him."

May 5

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Hosea 6:3

We gather from these words that there is such a thing in soul experience as "a following on to know the Lord;" and indeed there is no obtaining the blessings which are laid up for the righteous, unless there is this following on. "To know the Lord" is the desire of every living soul; that is, to know him by his own divine manifestations, by the gracious revelation of his grace, his love, his presence, and his glory.

But the expression, "follow on," implies that there are many difficulties, obstacles, and hindrances in a man's way, which keep him back from "knowing the Lord." Now the work of the Spirit in his soul is to carry him on in spite of all these obstacles. Nature, and all the work of nature, and all the power of Satan working on nature, is to draw the man back; but the work of the Spirit on the soul is to lead him forward, to keep alive in him the fear of God, to strengthen him from time to time with strength in his inner man, to give him those enlargements, to drop in those hopes, to communicate that inward grace, and to gird up the loins of his mind, so that in spite of sense, reason, and nature, he is compelled to follow on.

Sometimes he seems driven, and sometimes drawn, sometimes led, and sometimes carried, but in one way or another the Spirit of God so works upon him that, though he scarcely knows how, he still "follows on." His very burdens make him groan for deliverance; his very temptations cause him to cry for help; the very difficulty and ruggedness of the road make him want to be carried every step; the very intricacy of the path compels him to cry out for a guide; so that the Lord the Spirit working in the midst of, and under, and through every difficulty and discouragement, still bears him through, and carries him on; and thus brings him through every trial and trouble and temptation and obstacle, until he sets him before the Lord in glory.

It is astonishing to me how our souls are kept alive. I believe a living man is a marvel to himself. Carried on, and yet so secretly; worked upon, and yet so mysteriously; and yet led on, guided, and supported through so many difficulties and obstacles, that he is a miracle of mercy, and, as the Apostle says, "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men;" the world wondering, the angels admiring, and men standing astonished, how the quickened soul is carried on amid all its difficulties, obstacles, trials, and temptations; and yet in spite of all "following on."

But "following on" for what? "To know the Lord," as the sum and substance of all religion, as the very marrow of vital godliness; to know Jesus, so as by faith to enter into his beauty and loveliness, and feel ourselves one spirit with him, according to those words, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

May 6

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended--but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13, 14

The FAITH that rests short of believing in, laying hold of, and resting upon the Son of God in his finished work, will not be the work of faith that God will own and crown with his approbation; the LOVE that never labors for an entrance into the mysteries of his dying love, will be found to be a love more in lip and tongue than in heart and life; and the HOPE that anchors in anything short of

the finished work of the Son of God, will be a brittle cable which will snap asunder, or a rotten piece of iron which will break in the first heavy storm.

Do not rest in the knowledge of a few doctrines in the letter of truth. Do not take up with a few passing thoughts and feelings; do not be satisfied with a few fleeting convictions or a few transient desires. Press on to know the blessed mysteries of the gospel as the food of your soul; press on to know the Son of God, not only as a crucified man, not only as sweating blood in Gethsemane's garden, and agonizing on Calvary's tree; but press on to know him as the exalted God-man Mediator at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; and press on to enjoy him as your living Head, distilling into you as a living member of his mystical body, what the Psalmist calls, "the dew of his youth;" that is, the fruits of his resurrection, ascension and glorification, as manifested by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Press onward to know the power of the precious gospel you profess, to enjoy it more in your soul, and to manifest its reality more in your conduct, your conversation, and your life.

May 7

"For to be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6

One of the most blessed marks of regenerating grace and the sure fruit of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, is that spiritual-mindedness of which Paul declares, it is "life and peace." "To be spiritually-minded," to live and walk under the blessed power and influence of the Holy Spirit, to have the heart and affections drawn up from this poor, vain scene, to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, this is "life," the life of God in the soul, with all its present blessedness and all its future glory, and "peace," for peace and rest are alone to be found in this path of union and communion with a glorified Redeemer.

In this sweet spirituality of mind, in these heavenly affections, and in this communion with the Lord at his own throne of grace, the life and power of godliness much consist. We trust we know, from what we have felt in our own bosom, what this sweet spiritual-mindedness is, and what are its blessed effects. It is a key to unlock the Scriptures, for then we read them under the same sacred influence, and by the same divine teaching by which they were written; it is a door of prayer, for under these calm and peaceful emotions the soul, as if instinctively and necessarily, seeks holy communion with God; it is the fruitful parent of sweet meditation, for the truth of God is then thought over, fed upon, and is found to be bread from heaven; it is the secret of all life and power in preaching, for unless the heart be engaged in, and melted and softened by the truth delivered, there will be a hardness in its delivery which will make itself sensibly felt by the living hearer; and it is the power of all spiritual conversation, for how can we talk with any unction or profit unless we are spiritually-minded, and in that frame of soul wherein the things of God are our chief element, the language of our lips, because the delight of our soul?

But to be otherwise--to be carnally-minded on our knees, with the Bible open before our eyes, in the house of prayer, at the Lord's table, in the company of the family of God--what a burden to our spirit, what a condemnation to our conscience, what a parent of doubt and fear whether matters can be right between God and our own soul, when there is such a distance between him and us!

It is true that the most eminent saints and servants of God have their dead and dark seasons, when the life of God seems sunk to so low an ebb as to be hardly visible, so hidden is the stream by the mud-banks of their fallen nature. Still it glides onward, round them, if not through them; and sometimes a beam of light falls upon it from above, as it threads its way toward the ocean of eternal love, which manifests not only its existence but its course, and that it gives back to heaven the ray it receives from heaven.

No, by these very dark and dead seasons, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God; they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie; they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing; that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God; and that all they are and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace, flow from the pure, sovereign grace, the rich, free, undeserved, yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God. They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness, and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility, that lovely, becoming garb; cease from their own strength and wisdom, and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

May 8

"For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15

Our gracious Lord experienced temptation in every shape and form, for the word of truth declares that "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." I wish to speak very cautiously upon this subject, for upon a point so difficult and so mysterious there is great risk of speaking amiss. So long as we keep strictly within the language of the Scripture we are safe, but the moment that we draw inferences from the word without special guidance by the Spirit of truth, we may greatly err. You may think then, sometimes, that your temptations are such as our gracious Lord never could have been tempted by; but that word of the Apostle decides the question, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

It is a solemn mystery which I cannot explain, how temptation in every point, shape, and form could assail the holy soul of the immaculate Redeemer. I fully believe it. I see the grace and wisdom of it, and my faith acquiesces in it as most blessed truth. But I cannot understand it. I know also and believe from the testimony of the word and that of my own conscience, that whatever temptations he was assailed with, not one of them could or did sully, stain, or spot his holy humanity. That was absolutely and perfectly a pure, unfallen, immortal nature, able to die by a voluntary act, but having in itself no seeds of sickness, mortality, or death. And yet I read that, though thus possessed of a holy, pure, and spotless humanity, in everlasting union with his own eternal Deity, in all points he was tempted like as we are.

I cannot explain the mystery--I do not wish to do so. I receive it as a mystery, in the same way as I receive that great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." But still I bless God that he was tempted in all points like as we are; for it makes him such a sympathizing High Priest with his poor, exercised, tried, tempted family here below. I have sometimes compared the temptations which beat upon the soul of the Lord to the waves of the sea that dash themselves against a pure,

white marble rock. The rock may feel the shock of the wave; but it is neither moved by it nor sullied. It still stands unmoved, immovable in all its original firmness; it still shines in all the brightness of the pure, glittering marble when the waves recede and the sun breaks forth on its face. So none of the temptations with which the Lord was assailed moved the Rock of ages, or sullied the purity, holiness, and perfection of the spotless Lamb of God.

May 9

"And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matthew 1:23

We must never, even in thought, separate the human nature of our adorable Redeemer from his divine. Even when his sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from his pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for his human soul, after he had once become incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, never was parted from his Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it. It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of his divine. In the Virgin's womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb, Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the seven loaves and the fish; but it was God-man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children. The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who walked on the waves to the ship. The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are "spirit and life" (John 6:63), but it was the Son of the living God who spoke them (John 6:69). The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine, for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it (Acts 20:28).

May 10

"And now, Lord, what do wait I for? my hope is in you." Psalm 39:7

True religion is a very simple thing. Simplicity is stamped upon all the works of God, and especially upon the work of grace. The more genuine, therefore, our religion is, the more simple it will be. To be simple is to be child-like, and to be child-like is to have that mind and spirit without which no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. Can we, then, with this child-like simplicity, walk step by step here with David, and follow him throughout? Can we put our seal to these things, and say, "Lord, what do wait I for?" Is your religion brought into this narrow point? "Truly, my soul waits upon God; from him comes my salvation." "My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

Such a frame of soul is indeed from the hand of God, for no man ever did, or could bring himself into it. And if we can enter into one part of these heavenly breathings, we shall be able also to enter into the others, and say, "My hope is in you." Feeling the weight and burden of sin, we shall be constrained to cry, "Deliver me from all my transgressions;" and feeling our own weakness, and the evil of our hearts, we shall add, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." If, then, we can sincerely, before God, employ these petitions, may we not ask who produced them? Who wrought

this experience in the soul? From whose hands did it come? Surely, surely, the same Lord that taught David, must have taught us; the same power that wrought in him, must have wrought in us, before we could, in sweet experience, enter into this feeling language, and adopt it as our own. Here, therefore, we see a little of what true religion is; here we see what are the genuine breathings of a child-like spirit, and what is the experience of a man of God; and it will be our mercy if we can see in his experience a sweet counterpart of our own.

May 11

"Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples." John 15:8

When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth he was in a suffering state; and to this suffering image must all his people be conformed. In that suffering state he brought glory to God; and is now exalted to the right hand of the Father. So those who suffer with him will be also glorified together; and glorious indeed will they be, for they will shine like the stars forever and ever, resplendent in the glorified image of the Son of God. The Apostle therefore says, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." The Lord did not assume angelic nature. He therefore did not adorn or beautify it; but by assuming our nature, the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person, he invested it with surpassing luster. This is the foundation on which a redeemed sinner brings glory to God, not in himself, but as being a member of Christ, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

What a thought it is, that the lowest believer should actually bring more glory to God than the highest angel; and that the suffering obedience of a saint should be of higher value than the burning obedience of a seraph. To bring glory to God, then, should be our highest aim and most ardent desire. How the Lord urges this upon the consciences of his true disciples, "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." A little fruit brings but little glory to God. It is in proportion to the amount of rich, ripe fruit that is borne upon the branches of the vine, that the Lord is glorified.

May 12

"You are those who have continued with me in my temptations." Luke 22:28

Satan brought all his artillery to bear upon the Son of God. He was permitted to try him to the utmost. It was the purpose of God, that his well-beloved Son should be tempted like as we are; and if you are God's, not a single temptation has beset you which did not beset the Lord of life and glory. Are we tempted sometimes to doubt a God of providence? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted, when Satan said to him, "Command these stones to be made bread." Are we tempted to vain confidence and presumption? The Lord of life and glory was similarly tempted, when the prince of darkness said to him, "If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down from hence." Are we often tempted to disbelieve that we are the children of God, and exercised at times with distressing suspicions and fears lest we have only a profession of religion, without its experimental power in our hearts? Satan brought the same temptation against the Lord, when he said, "If you are the Son of God;" as Deer says, "O, what an IF was there!" Are we tempted to turn our backs upon the Lord for the sake of what the world offers? The Lord Jesus was similarly tempted when Satan said that he would give him all that he presented before his eyes when he took him upon the mountain top. Are we ever tempted to turn from the true God and worship idols? The Lord of life and glory was

similarly tempted when Satan with his infernal pride and cursed impudence proposed to the Son of God to worship him. The Son of God worship Satan!

But some may say, "Was Jesus tempted like I am? How can that be? He was pure, spotless, and holy; but I am full of corruption from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. The Lord of life and glory had a perfect, unfallen nature, a holy human body, and a holy human soul, taken into union with Deity; but I have a fallen nature, defiled in body and polluted in soul. Can there be a resemblance in our temptations?" I would ask, what is it in you that feels the burden of temptation when Satan injects his blasphemies into your mind? Is there not a something in you which is grieved, I was going to say tortured, by these fiery darts? Is it not the new nature? and is not that nature spotless and holy? Is it not born of God, and therefore as holy as God is holy, and pure as God is pure?

Thus just in the same way as your pure and holy nature that is born of God is grieved and distressed by the fiery darts of Satan, so was the holy soul of the Lord Jesus ten thousand times more grieved and tortured by the temptations of Satan presented before his pure and spotless mind. The disciples did not forsake their Lord, though so severely buffeted with these temptations; no more, they, according to the measure of their faith, partook of them individually and personally, suffering as well as sympathizing with him, and wounded, though in a far less degree, by arrows from the same bow.

And thus disciples now continue with Jesus in his temptations by suffering as members with their covenant Head, walking, most of them, in a daily path of trouble and sorrow, daily tempted by Satan, by the world, and by their own evil hearts; day by day tempted to do everything from which their spiritual nature recoils; day by day tempted to do things which are hateful in the eyes of a pure God, and to them also when in their right mind.

May 13

"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, just as my Father has appointed unto me." Luke 22:29

For whom is this kingdom appointed? For the presumptuous, the proud, the hypocritical, and the self-righteous? No; not for these. "I appoint unto you," you that "have continued with me in my temptations;" you that are tempted and exercised; you that walk in the paths of tribulation; you that follow in the print of the footsteps of a suffering Jesus; you that know the painful exercises of temptation, and yet are strengthened with strength in your inner man, to "resist even unto blood, striving against sin," so as not to be carried away or overwhelmed by it. What kingdom is this? It is the same kingdom that the Father has given to Jesus. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, just as my Father has appointed unto me."

Now what is the kingdom which God the Father appointed unto his dear Son? Is it to sit upon a throne like an earthly monarch? To wear a diadem, and carry a scepter? "My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world" (John 18:36). The kingdom of the Lord of life and glory was to make an end of sin, to abolish death, and "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" to reign spiritually in the hearts of his chosen; to be King and Lord in Zion, and to rule over the willing affections of his subjects; a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; a kingdom of grace set up by the blessed Spirit in the heart; a spiritual kingdom which none can see or enter into but those who are born of the Spirit.

His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and consists in having a people to see him as he is, a people to glorify him, a people to love him, and a people for him to love. A kingdom cannot be the same to sovereign and subject, when it is of an earthly and temporal nature. Were the earthly monarch to impart his kingdom to his subjects, it would cease to be a kingdom, and become a republic. But not so with a spiritual kingdom. Jesus does not diminish his own grace by imparting it to his people, nor lessen his own joy by shedding it abroad in their hearts, nor sully his own glory by communicating of it to them. The sun has lost no light nor warmth by the countless millions of rays that have issued from it since it was first created. Nor does the glorious Sun of righteousness lose the fullness that is in him by communicating of his grace and glory. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, unexhausted and inexhaustible. Then this kingdom which he appoints to his tried and tempted disciples is the kingdom of grace in the heart; the kingdom of God in the soul; the presence of Jesus within; the manifestation of that kingdom which is spoken of in Daniel 2:44, as set up on the ruins of all the other kingdoms, when it has broken them in pieces.

May 14

"Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." Psalm 4:6

The cry of the Church has always been, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." You may often feel as if immersed in the very shadow of death, and say with Heman, "I am counted with those who go down into the pit; I am as a man that has no strength" (Psalm 88:4); but the very feelings of death, the chill at your heart, and the cold sweat upon your brow, make you long for the appearance of him who is the Resurrection and the Life; and who can in one moment whisper, "Fear not; I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." You may be pressed down at times with the power of unbelief, and think and say there never was a heart like yours, so unable to believe, so doubting at every step; but this deep conviction of your wretched unbelief, which is the Spirit's work to show (John 16:9), only makes you long for that living faith of which Christ himself is not only the Object, but the Author and Finisher. You may be sunk at times in despondency, as to both your present and future state; but that makes you the more desire to have a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. You may feel at times the guilt, and not only the guilt, but the dreadful power and prevalence of sin; but that only makes you long the more earnestly for manifestations of pardon and peace, and that no sin may have dominion over you. "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," that sooner or later you shall have every needful blessing. The valley you now feel to be in shall be exalted; the mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and your eye shall see the glory of the Lord; Christ shall be made precious to your heart; he will come sooner or later into your soul; and then when he comes he will manifest himself as your Lord and your God. And so you keep hanging, and hoping, and looking up until he appears; for your heart is still ever saying, "None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good."

May 15

"And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest--and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city--one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered." Amos 4:7

How powerless we are as regards the rain that falls from the sky! Who can go forth when the sun is shining in its brightness and bid the rain to fall? Or when rain is falling, who can go forth and restrain the bottles of heaven? He who gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, also turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those who dwell therein.

Equally sovereign is the blessing that God gives to the preached gospel. He holds the blessing in his own hand; it is his to give, and his to withhold. If he blesses, it is because he has promised it; but when, where, and to whom it shall come, is at his own sovereign disposal. Yet what do we naturally desire when the earth is parched up for lack of rain? Knowing that there is rain stored up in the clouds above, and that when it does come it will produce beneficial effects--desires, if not prayers, go up that it may fall. In fact, the earth itself, parched and dried up by heat, the very ground itself, by the fissures and clefts which are made in the soil by a burning sun, silently, mutely, but still imploringly calls upon the rain to fall. Every crack you see in July is a silent mouth asking the rain to come down. The withered herbage, the cattle lowing in the field, the dried-up ponds and brooks, are all imploring, though not a word is uttered, that rain may fall.

So in grace. The parched, withered, dried-up feelings of the soul are all so many mute mouths imploring God's blessing to come down. No, the very hardness, barrenness, and sterility felt in our heart when the blessing of God does not rest upon the word, are so many mute appeals to the God of all grace that his blessing would attend the word to our conscience. I say this because you may think sometimes that you are not praying for the blessing of God to rest upon the word, because you may not be using vocal prayer, or are not favored with a spirit of grace and supplications. God sees your needs, and to those needs he has a kind regard. The babe need not, and indeed cannot ask in so many words for food. The cry of hunger is enough. Or even if too weak to cry, the mother knows the child is hungry by its restless movements; and she is as pleased to give the nutritious food as the babe is to receive it.

So you must not always measure the strength of your prayers by the mere vocal utterance you may give to them. The heart-searching God reads your needs, knows your desolate case, and sees your barren condition. As in the kingdom of his providence he views from his holy throne the parched ground, and sends down showers because he sees its need; so in the kingdom of his grace he looks upon the parched condition of his people, and gives the spiritual rain because he knows they need it.

May 16

"In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord." Ephesians 2:21

The body of Christ is at present scattered, and, if I may so speak--fragmentary. Of the members of his mystical body some are now before the throne, "spirits of just men made perfect." Others are still in the wilderness; others are yet in the world, dead in trespasses and sins, uncalled by grace, destitute of the Spirit; others at present are unborn, still hidden in the womb of time. But earth is the stage whereon ALL the members are from time to time brought into a vital, manifestive union with their living Head.

When I was a boy at school, in London, Waterloo Bridge was building; and I and my playmates used to go sometimes to what was then called "The Stone Field," on the other side of the water, where the stones that now make up Waterloo Bridge were being squared and chiseled. Every vestige of that field, I have no doubt, is gone, and the place covered with buildings; but there stands Waterloo Bridge; and those stones that I used to play upon as a boy now form a part of that beautiful structure which Canova, the great Italian sculptor, said it was alone worth coming to London to see.

Take the idea into spiritual things. The body of Christ is compared in Scripture to a building. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord." Of this building believers are "living stones;" and many of them are at present in "the Stone Field," where they are being hammered and hacked, squared and chiseled by the hand of the great Architect. During this state, like the stones of Solomon's temple, which were hewn and squared at a distance, that "neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron might be heard in the house while it was in building," so are these living stones prepared for their future glory. The mallet and the chisel are at work upon them now day by day, that in due time they may fill their designed position in the spiritual building.

I remember well that all the stones which were strewn over the field were marked and numbered; and these figures no doubt denoted their intended position. Every stone so marked was in due time individually transferred to, and now occupies, the exact position that the architect designed for it. So every living stone was marked and numbered in eternity, is hewed and squared in time, and will, in future glory, be placed by the hand of the divine Architect in that place of the spiritual building originally designed for it.

May 17

"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart--the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 19:8

As without a revelation of the doctrine of salvation we would not know how a sinner could be saved, and thus could not glorify God by our faith; so without a revelation of the precept we would not know how to serve God, and thus could not glorify him by our obedience. Look at this point, believing child of God. You long to glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his (1 Cor. 6:20). You desire, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, to do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). There are times and seasons with you when you sigh and mourn over your barren, unprofitable heart and life, and earnestly long to think and speak and act to his honor and glory who has done so much for you in providence and grace. At least, if you have no such desires you are no Christian, and are at the best but a poor, worldly, dead professor.

When, then, and how far do you live to God's glory? Only then, and only so far as your life, and walk, and conduct harmonize with, and are guided by the precepts of the word. For see the connection. We can only glorify God outwardly by doing his will; we can only know that will, as regards our practical obedience to it, by the express revelation which he has given of it. Where is that revelation? In his word, and chiefly in the preceptive part of it. It is this which makes it "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path." David therefore cried--"Order my steps in your word;"

"Make me to go in the path of your commandments;" "O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes!" as feeling that it was only by walking in the word and by the word that he could please God and live to his praise.

We find thousands in this land who, as they think, are doing God service by plans and schemes of their own devising, priding themselves on their good works. But we may say of all these their duties and doings what Augustine said of the ancient Roman virtues, that they are but "splendid sins", or, to use the language of the Church of England, entitled, Works before justification, "for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

May 18

"Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." 1 John 4:13

A right knowledge and living experience of the Person, graces and operations of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, is a very essential thing. Man is so deeply sunk, so utterly fallen, so unable to bring himself back, that he needs this holy Teacher to lead him into a saving, experimental knowledge of the truth of God; for we know nothing but by his teaching, have nothing but by his giving, and are nothing but by his making. The more clearly, then, that we are led to see, and the more deeply we are taught to feel what we are as fallen sons and daughters of Adam, the more shall we feel our need of, and the more shall we value when realized, his blessed operations upon the heart and conscience.

Now, in the case of Aaron, (viewed not only as a type of Christ, but as personally ministering at the altar of the tabernacle, and thus consecrated to the office of high priesthood,) it was not sufficient that he was washed, nor that he was clothed; he must be also anointed by the holy anointing oil before he could stand in the sanctuary of God. So it is with a son of the Most High, one of "the kings and priests" that form "the royal priesthood;" it is not sufficient for him to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in his justifying righteousness; he must be consecrated to God's service by the holy anointing; in other words, be sanctified, regenerated and renewed in the spirit of his mind, that, by being made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), he may enter into a spiritual experience of the truth of God here, and enjoy the eternal pleasures which are at God's right hand hereafter.

From the very nature of the fall, it is impossible for a dead soul to believe in God, know God, or love God; it must be quickened into spiritual life before it can savingly know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. And thus there lies at the very threshold, in the very heart and core of the case, the absolute necessity of the regenerating operations of God the Holy Spirit upon the soul. The very completeness and depth of the fall render the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit as necessary, as indispensable as the redeeming work of the Son of God. The Apostle therefore puts them together. "But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." If, therefore, the soul is to enter into eternal glory, it must be prepared for glory by being made a partaker of grace. It must, in this present life, this time state, be made fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, be capacitated while here below for the eternal fruition of the Triune God, by receiving a new and

heavenly nature begotten of the Holy Spirit, which as a pure spirit (for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit") is capable of seeing, enjoying, and eternally delighting in the open vision of the Deity as manifested in the glorious Person of the God-man.

May 19

"And I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." Hosea 2:19

Communion with Christ begins below, in our time state. It is here that the mystery of the marriage union is first made known; here the espousals entered into; here the first kiss of betrothed love given. The 'celebration of the marriage' is to come; but the original betrothal in heaven and the spiritual espousals on earth make Christ and the Church eternally one. As then the husband, when he becomes united to his wife in marriage ties, engages thereby to love her, cherish her, feed her, clothe her, count her interests his interests, her honor his honor, and her happiness his happiness, so the blessed Jesus, when in the councils of eternity, he betrothed the Church to himself, undertook to be to her and do for her everything that should be for her happiness and honor, perfection and glory. His own words are, "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord." And again, "For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." "For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

There must be union before communion, marriage before possession, membership before abiding in Christ and he in us, a being in the vine before a branch issuing from the stem. It is the Spirit that quickens us to feel our need of him; to seek all our supplies in him and from him; to believe in him unto everlasting life, and thus live a life of faith upon him. By his secret teachings, inward touches, gracious smiles, soft whispers, sweet promises, and more especially by manifestations of his glorious Person, finished work, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, agonizing sufferings and dying love, he draws the heart up to himself. He thus wins our affections, and setting himself before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely," draws out that love and affection towards himself which puts the world under our feet. All religion flows from his Spirit and grace, presence and power. He is our sun, and without him all is darkness; he is our life, and without him all is death; he is the beginner and finisher of our faith, the substance of our hope, and the object of our love.

May 20

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

When a man is walking in the darkness and death of unregeneracy, he has no true light. He may indeed have a false light, as the light of presumption, delusion, or vain-confidence; but all such borrowed light is worse than darkness; as the Lord says, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The only saving light is the light of God shining into the soul, giving us to see and know "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." A man may have the clearest light in his judgment, and yet never have the penetrating light of the Spirit producing conviction in his soul; he may have the soundest knowledge of the doctrines of grace, and see the harmonious scheme of salvation; and yet never have seen a holy God by divine teaching, nor have ever felt the spirituality of God's righteous law condemning him as a transgressor. But "the light of life," as the Lord calls it, is sure to guide its possessor aright. If we have it not, we shall be sure to go astray; we shall be entangled in some error, plunge into some heresy, imbibe some doctrine of devils, drink into some dreadful delusion, or fall into some dreadful sin, and "concerning faith make shipwreck."

A false light is something like the lights which pirates hold up to entrap ships to their destruction; or like the fires, which the "wreckers," those dreadful characters in Cornwall, used to kindle on their iron-bound coast, in order that the mariner might mistake them for some friendly light-house, and run his vessel on the rocks, where those heartless wretches plundered it. A false light can but wreck us on the rocks of presumption or despair. But the light of divine life in the soul is accompanied with all the graces of the Spirit. It is the light of the glory of God, the light of Jesus' countenance, and the light of the Spirit's teaching, and therefore an infallible guide and guard; as the Apostle says, "You have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." And this infallible pilot will guide the soul to whom it is given safe into the harbor of endless rest and peace.

May 21

"Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24

We beg of the Lord, sometimes, to give us a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a tender conscience, and a humble mind. But it is only a view by faith of what the gracious Redeemer endured upon the cross, when he bore our sins in his own body with all their weight and pressure, and with all the anger of God due to them, that can really melt a hard, and break a stony heart. No sight, short of this, can make sin felt to be hateful; bring tears of godly sorrow out of the eyes, sobs of true repentance out of the breast, and the deepest, humblest confessions before God what dreadful sinners and base backsliders we have been before the eyes of his infinite Purity, Majesty, and Holiness.

Oh, what hope is there for our guilty souls; what refuge from the wrath of God so justly our due; what shelter from the curse of a fiery law, except it be in the cross of Jesus? O for a view of him revealed to the eyes of our enlightened understanding, as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree! O to see by the eye of faith, all those dreadful sins which have caused us so much inward grief and trouble, all those fearful backslidings and sad entanglements on which we can but reflect with shame and grief; O to see all we have said and thought and done, which conscience testifies against, and all those innumerable evils that we have never seen or conscience has forgotten; to view them by the eye of faith taken off our guilty head and put upon the head of the Lord the Lamb.

Where, oh, where, can we get relief from any other source or by any other way? There is no relief anywhere else! Where can you find pardon sealed upon your breast, forgiveness manifested to your soul, or any expectation of winning heaven and escaping hell, except in the cross, and some testimony in your own bosom of your saving interest in that precious blood and righteousness, and the knowledge for yourself that the dear Redeemer bore your sins in his body on the tree? I know,

indeed, full well, that it requires special faith, a faith of God's own giving and raising up to believe this, an especial manifestation of salvation by the blood of the Lamb to the soul; a blessed bringing in of the power of Christ crucified to the heart.

But I believe I do but speak the inmost conviction of every heart touched by the finger of God when I say, that until this is in some measure done, there is no solid relief; no true peace with God; no firm, abiding foundation on which we can stand, as if for eternity; nothing strong enough to banish the fear of death and open the gates of heaven.

May 22

"I hold fast to your testimonies--O Lord, put me not to shame." Psalm 119:31

In whatever state or stage of experience you are, it will be your wisdom and your mercy to hold fast to God's testimony. Has the Lord just begun a work of grace in your heart? Is he showing to you what you are by nature, and bringing before your eyes the sins of your youth, and plunging you in deep convictions? It will be your wisdom, and it will be your mercy, to hold fast to that testimony; not to be driven from your standing into despair, nor pushed forward into fleshly confidence; but to hold fast to that testimony which God himself has implanted.

Has God made you to sigh and cry from the depths of a broken heart--to fall down before his truth? Hold fast to that testimony; he will not put you to shame. Again, if the Lord has done a little more for you, shown you the least glimpse of mercy and favor, and given you some little testimony of your saving interest in the blood of the Lamb, it will be your wisdom, and it will be your mercy, to hold fast to that testimony too. You will find those who would push you presumptuously forward; you will find those who would drive you despairingly backward; you will find those who would pull you down into those doubts and fears that their own minds are exercised with, and you will find those who would draw you aside into the vain confidence in which they themselves are standing. It will be your wisdom and mercy to abide by the testimony which God himself has revealed; and he can work in your soul that faith whereby you can and will hold fast to his testimony.

But some may say, "How do I know that I am holding fast to God's testimonies?" I would ask, what are the feelings of your hearts towards them? Is there godly fear? Is there holy reverence? Is there trembling awe? Is there any exercise of soul? any pouring out of the heart before God? any realizing of his presence? any trembling lest you should offend him? any desire after him? any solemn feelings whereby your soul is exercised upon his perfections? Then there is reason to believe there is some testimony of God in your conscience, and that you are holding fast to it.

But if your religion be such as leads to vain confidence, to self-righteousness, to presumption, to false security, and to a careless, light, trifling spirit, depend upon it--you are not holding fast to God's testimony, or else you have no testimony from God to hold fast unto. But if the Lord is bringing into your soul some sense of his displeasure; if you have trifled with him, and brought guilt into your soul and trouble into your mind, it will be your wisdom, and it will be your mercy to do, as the Lord speaks in Leviticus 26:41, "accept the punishment of your iniquity;" to put your mouth in the dust, and confess that you are vile; not to turn aside to presumptuous confidence as though you would blunt the edge of God's sword in your soul, but to receive it in your heart, embrace it in your conscience, and to cleave to it as the testimony of God himself. "I have held fast unto your testimonies." To cleave to everything which God makes known in the conscience, be it judgment,

be it mercy, be it a smile, be it a frown, be it a testimony for, be it a testimony against, whatever it be that comes with power, and is brought to the soul by the application of the Spirit--to cleave to it, keeps the soul in a safe and blessed spot.

May 23

"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Luke 1:74, 75

The grand point in all true religion is to be brought by the blessed Spirit into that happy spot where we can serve the living God free from that guilt, bondage, darkness, doubt, and fear which often possess our mind, and are the worst enemies of our soul's peace. But though they are such enemies to all true peace and happiness, yet are they mercifully overruled for our spiritual good, to convince us from whence our help must come, to strip us thoroughly of all creature help and hope, and bring us to the spot where the Lord meets the soul in mercy, sheds abroad his love, and brings near a precious Christ.

We have no reason to thank bondage, guilt and the law, still less sin and Satan, for any work they have done which God has overruled for our good. And yet without some experience of these dead works and the bondage and guilt produced by them, we could not know what it was to have our conscience purged by the blood of sprinkling to serve the living God. There are reasons, therefore, and wise reasons on the part of God, why his children should be thus vexed and plagued.

It is not the 'revealed' will of God that his children should spend so many of their days in darkness, doubt, and fear. He has given us a glorious gospel; he has set before us in Jesus everything for our comfort and relief; he has promised to send his Holy Spirit to testify of Christ, and has filled his word with promises and invitations suited to every case. And yet his 'secret will and purpose' are that we should be thus exercised and tried, and walk in this path of darkness and desolation, that we might value more the precious liberty of the gospel, know more of what Christ is, and what he has done to save us from the depths of the fall, be more deeply indebted to the riches of free and sovereign grace, and come more personally into the blessedness of gospel mercies as made known to our soul by a divine power.

May 24

"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isaiah 45:24

Have you yet learned that you are a sinner in the sight of God? Have you ever felt the length, breadth, and spirituality of his holy law? Do you feel in your very soul that without Christ's righteousness being imputed to you, and his blood being sprinkled upon your conscience, you must die in your sins and never reach the heavenly shore? Has this ever been, or is it still a matter of anxious solicitude to you? Has it ever caused sighs and groans to come out of your heart? Has the spirit of prayer ever been given, to make you plead with the Lord for the forgiveness of your sins, through the merits of a crucified Savior? And have you any hope but in his blood, righteousness, and finished work?

Now if the Lord has been pleased to exercise your soul in this way, if he has not yet granted the longing desire of your heart, he certainly will in due time reveal his dear Son in you as the God-man who has saved you from death and hell; he will apply his atoning blood to your

conscience, bring near his glorious righteousness, shed abroad his dying love, give and strengthen faith, and draw it forth into a blessed assurance of your saving interest in the Son of his love.

Or if your manifestations should not be very bright and conspicuous, he will give you a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast; and will draw up your affections to that blessed Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father in power, majesty, and glory. And as he does this, he enables the believer thus favored and blessed to take these words into his lips, "In the Lord have I righteousness."

He cannot say it before. He may know that there is no righteousness but in the Lord; he may have utterly renounced his own; he may have sunk very deep into guilt and bondage; but until the Lord the Spirit is pleased to liberate him, he cannot come forth into liberty; until he has the witness of the Spirit he cannot cry, "Abba, Father."

But when the Lord is pleased to bring near his righteousness, to reveal his dying love, and to shed it abroad in his heart by divine power, then he can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness." And when he has this, he wants no other; it is complete, which no other can be. It is acceptable to God; it is available in the courts of heaven; it will bear him up through all the storms of time; it will smooth a dying pillow, and land him safely in a glorious eternity.

May 25

"Awake, O north wind; and come south wind; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Song of Solomon 4:16

We are, most of us, so fettered down by the chains of time and sense, the cares of life and daily business, the weakness of our earthly frame, the distracting claims of a family, and the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen nature, that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

We can take no pleasure in the world, nor mix with a good conscience in its pursuits and amusements; we are many of us poor, moping, dejected creatures, from a variety of trials and afflictions; we have a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart; get little consolation from the family of God or the outward means of grace; know enough of ourselves to know that in SELF there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart, or to be able to do tomorrow what we cannot do today.

As then the weary man seeks rest, the hungry food, the thirsty drink, and the sick health, so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with him. From him come both prayer and answer, both hunger and food, both desire and the tree of life. He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in his bleeding wounds and pierced side; makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God's wrath, that we may hide ourselves under his justifying robe; puts gall and wormwood into the world's choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from him; keeps us long fasting to endear a crumb, and long waiting to make a word precious.

He wants the whole heart, and will take no less; and as this we cannot give, he takes it to himself by ravishing it with one of his eyes, with one chain of his neck. If we love him, it is because he first loved us; and if we seek communion with him, it is because he will manifest himself to us as he

does not unto the world.

Would we see what the Holy Spirit has revealed of the nature of this communion, we shall find it most clearly and experimentally unfolded in the Song of Solomon. From the first verse of that book, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," to the last expressed desire of the loving bride, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a roe or to a young deer upon the mountains of spices," all is a "song of loves," all a divine revelation of the communion that is carried on upon earth between Christ and the Church. She "comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved," while "his left hand is under her head, and his right hand does embrace her." She says, "Look not upon me, because I am black;" but he answers, "You are all beautiful, my love; there is no spot in you." At one moment she says, "By night, on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not;" and then again she cries, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived

June

June 1

"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Romans 8:34

As the soul is led and taught by the Spirit, it follows the Lord through all the various acts and sufferings of his life. The first spot to which the Holy Spirit takes the poor sinner is the cross of Jesus. That is the first real saving view we get of the Lord of life and glory; the Holy Spirit taking the poor guilty sinner, laden with the weight of a thousand sins, to the foot of the cross, and opening his eyes to see the Son of God bleeding there as an atoning sacrifice for sin. To be brought there by the power of the Holy Spirit, and receive that blessed mystery of the bleeding, suffering, and agonizing Son of God into our hearts and consciences, is the first blessed discovery that God the Spirit favors us with.

But we pass on from that to see Jesus sleeping in the sepulcher; for we have to die ourselves, and we need to see the Forerunner who has entered into the grave for us. We need to feel that we can lie down in the grave, and see that narrow bed in which our body will one day be stretched, in a measure perfumed by Jesus having lain there before us.

And when we have traveled from the cross to the sepulcher, we then go a step farther; to the resurrection of the Lord of life and glory. On the third day we view him by faith springing out of the sepulcher in which he lay entombed, rising up in glory and power for our justification. And thus we see in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the hope of the soul for a blessed immortality.

But we do not tarry there; as the Lord the Spirit gives us eyes to see, and moves our heart to feel, we travel one step farther; this is, to the ascension of the Lord of life and glory; not tarrying on earth (for he tarried not there), but mounting up to see him sitting at the right hand of the Father, as the Mediator between God and man, as the divine Intercessor, as the glorious Head of grace, as communicating out of his own fullness gifts and graces unto poor and needy souls, who are living in daily and hourly bankruptcy. These need to receive perpetual supplies of life, light, and grace out of his fullness, to keep them in the way wherein the Lord has set their feet.

So that the ascension of the Lord Jesus up on high, and his sitting at the right hand of God, when received into the conscience under the power of the Spirit, is not a dry doctrine, not a dead bone of a withered skeleton; but is so connected with all the feelings of our heart, with all our misery and ruin, with all our wretchedness, with all our guilt, with all our daily needs, with all our hourly necessities, that, when led by the Spirit's teaching to look at this Mediator at the right hand of the Father, it becomes a truth full of blessed sweetness and power to the heaven-taught soul.

June 2

"All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will never out." John 6:37

Now, poor sinner, upon whose head the beams of a fiery law are darting; now, poor sinner, distressed in your mind, guilty in your conscience, plagued with a thousand temptations, beset by innumerable doubts and fears, can you not look up a little out of your gloom and sadness, and see that the eternal God is your refuge? Do you not cleave to him with the utmost of your power, as being beaten out of every other refuge? Have you not taken hold of his strength that you may make peace with him? Are you not looking to him? And does he not say, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth?" He bids you look at him as Moses bade the Israelites look to the bronze serpent. Poor sinner, groaning under the weight of your transgression, he bids you look to him. Has the blessed Lord, he into whose lips grace was poured, not said, "Him that comes to me I will never cast out?" Why should you not look? Why should you not come to him? Will he cast you out? Do you not feel the secret drawings of his grace, movements upon your heart which make you come often with strong crying and tears, with groans and sighs, earnest, vehement, and continual supplications? What are these but the inward teachings of God, as our Lord said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me."

And do you not know that the Lord himself said, that no man can come to him except the Father who has sent him draws him? These comings, therefore, of your soul in earnest and vehement desire are, according to his own testimony, from the special teachings and gracious drawings of God in you. Having made his dear Son to be the refuge of your soul, he is now drawing you unto him that you may find pardon and peace in him.

But perhaps you will say, "I am so sinful, so guilty, I have been such a sinner, much worse than you can form any conception of; and it is this which sinks me so low." Are you lower than brother Jonah when he was in the whale's belly, and, in his own feelings, in the belly of hell? And yet what said he? "Yet will I look again toward your holy temple." Can you not look again toward the holy temple? Is his mercy clean gone forever? So David felt and feared, but it was not so, for "his mercy endures forever;" and that is a long and strong word. Look and live, look and live!

June 3

"In whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." Ephesians 1:13

Sealing is subsequent to believing--"In whom after you believed, you were sealed." In legal documents the writing always precedes the sealing. That is the last act, and follows even the signing, putting an attesting stamp on the whole document, from the first word to the last signature. So in grace. The Spirit begins the work. He writes the first lines of divine truth on the soul; he makes the first impression on the heart of stone, which under his operation becomes a heart of flesh; he writes every truth that he thus makes known on the fleshy tables of the heart. He thus gives faith and hope, and then he comes with his special inward witness, and seals the truth and reality of his own work, so as not only to make it plain and clear, but to ratify and confirm it beyond all doubt and fear, questioning or dispute, either by our self or others.

The work of God on the soul sometimes seems to lie as if dead and dormant; little prayer goes up, little answer comes down. Then doubts and fears arise whether the work be genuine, and much bondage and darkness sensibly gather over the mind like a dark and gloomy cloud, which much

obscures the handwriting of the divine finger. Now the blessed Spirit revives his work by some application of the word with power, some softening and melting of the hard heart by his divine influence, some communication of a spirit of prayer, some discovery of the gracious Lord, some strengthening of faith, reviving of hope, and drawing forth of love. He thus puts the seal on his own work, and stamps it as genuine.

Under the sweetness and blessedness of this attesting seal many a poor child of God can look back to this and that testimony, this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, blessing, manifestation, answer to prayer, special season under the word or on his knees, which were almost lost and buried in unbelief and confusion. But especially when he bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and shedding abroad the love of God in their heart becomes in them the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father," is his sealing manifest and complete.

June 4

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

What is it to "come short of the glory of God?" It is to act without a view to his glory. Now everything that we have ever done, which has not been done with a single eye to God's glory, has the brand of sin stamped on it. But who in an unregenerate state, who, as the fallen son of a fallen parent, ever had an eye to the glory of God? Did such a thing ever enter into man's natural heart as to speak to God's glory, act to his glory, consult his glory, and live to his glory? Before ever such a thought, such a desire can cross our breast, we must have seen Him who is invisible; we must have had a view by faith of the glory of the Three-One God; we must have had a single eye given us by the Holy Spirit to see that glory outshining all creature good.

Every movement, then, of the selfish heart, every desire to gratify, please and exalt self, is a coming short of the glory of God. This stamps all natural men's religious services with the brand of sin. It leaves the religious in the same dreadful state as the irreligious; it hews down the professing world with the same sword that cuts down the profane world. When men in a state of nature are what is called "religious," is their religion's end and aim the glory of God, the glory of free grace, the glory of the Mediator between God and man, the glory of the Holy Spirit, the only Teacher of God's people? Take it in its best, its brightest shape, is it not another form of selfishness, to exalt their own righteousness, and climb to heaven by the ladder of their own doings?

And is not this a coming short of the glory of God? But besides that, the very glory of God requires that every one accepted in his sight should be without spot, speck, stain or blemish. A pure God cannot accept, cannot look upon, cannot be pleased with impurity; and just in proportion to the infinite purity and ineffable holiness of Jehovah, must all impurity, all carnality, all unholiness, and the slightest deviation from absolute perfection be hateful and horrible in his sight.

Now this all the 'election of grace' are brought more or less to feel. It is the solemn and indispensable preparation of the heart for mercy; it is the introduction by the hand of the Spirit into the antechamber of the King of kings. It is the bringing of the soul to that spot, that only spot, where grace is felt, received, and known. It is, therefore, utterly indispensable for the election of grace, for all the ransomed and quickened family of God, to have this felt in their conscience, that they "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

June 5

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hebrews 10:19

Nothing will satisfy a living soul but coming "into the holiest." He wants to have communion with God, the holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. He is not dealing with a God distant and afar off--an idol, a God in whom he has neither faith, nor hope, nor love; who can neither see, nor hear, nor save; a God of his own conception or of some indistinct, traditional opinion; but he feels in his very conscience that he is carrying on a sacred and holy communion with the God of heaven and earth, the God who has made himself in some measure known to his soul as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. With him he has to do; to him he must come; and with him he must hold holy communion. Before his heart-searching eyes he feels he stands; into his ever-open ears he pours his petition; to his mercy and pity he appeals; his compassion he craves; his love he seeks; his salvation he longs for; and his presence above all things he earnestly desires. So he must come into the holiest, for there God dwells; and to come unto God is to come there.

The man who thus feels and acts is an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit; one of the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Others are satisfied with the courts of the house, with admiring the external building, or the painted windows, carved pews, and long drawn aisles; with the mere worship of God as so much lip service. But the living soul goes beyond all that into the very heart of the sanctuary itself. As the high priest on the day of atonement did not tarry among the people in the court, nor with the priests in the holy place, but pressed on, ever pressed on through the thick veil until he got into the holy of holies; so with the saint of God--he does not tarry in the outer court with the profane, nor in the sanctuary with the professor, so as to be satisfied with seeing God with a veil between. But he must come into that immediate presence of God, where he may see something of his grace, behold something of his glory, feel something of his mercy, and taste something of his power. And this makes him press forward into the holiest.

June 6

"Thus says the Lord; I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." Jeremiah 2:2

If we look at salvation, we shall see that it consists of three parts; salvation past, salvation present, and salvation future. Salvation past consists in having our names written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Salvation present consists in the manifestation of Jesus to the soul, whereby he betroths it to himself. And salvation future consists in the eternal enjoyment of Christ, when the elect shall sit down to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and be forever with the Lord. Now, as none will ever enjoy salvation future who have no saving interest in salvation past; in other words, as none will ever be with Christ in eternal glory whose names were not written in the book of life from all eternity; so none will enjoy salvation future, who live and die without enjoying salvation present. In other words, none will live forever with Christ in glory who are not betrothed to him in this life by the manifestations of himself to their soul.

According to the Jewish custom, the man, at the time of betrothing, gave the bride a piece of silver before witnesses, saying to her, "Receive this piece of silver as a pledge that at such a time you

shall become my spouse." And the parties then exchanged rings. This meeting of the espoused parties together, who then saw each other for the first time, is a sweet type of the first meeting of the soul with Jesus. The damsel had heard of the youth, but until then had never seen him; as seeking souls hear of Jesus by the hearing of the ear, before their eyes see him. The veil was upon her face (Gen. 24:65), as the veil is upon the heart (2 Cor.3:15), until Jesus rends it in twain from the top to the bottom. The bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of silver, as a pledge that all he had was hers. And thus Christ gives to the soul, whom he betroths to himself by his own manifestations, a pledge, a token, a testimony, which, in itself, is the first-fruits and assurance of eternal glory. The parties exchanged rings, as pledges of mutual affection and eternal faithfulness. And thus, when Christ reveals himself to the soul in his dying love, mutual engagements, mutual promises, mutual assurances and pledges of faithfulness and love pass between the soul and him. "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." At these seasons, "in the day of the King's espousals," the language of the soul is, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste; he brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

June 7

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you, and your fellows that sit before you--for they are men wondered at." Zechariah 3:8

A saved sinner is a spectacle for angels to contemplate. As the Apostle says, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." The ancients used to say that "a good man struggling with difficulties was a sight for the gods to look at." We may say, with all Christian truth, that the mysteries of redemption are "things the angels desire to look into;" and among the mysteries of redemption, what greater than a redeemed sinner? That a man who deserves, by sin original and sin actual, nothing but the eternal wrath of God, should be lifted out of perdition justly merited into salvation to which he can have no claim, must indeed ever be a holy wonder. And that you or I should ever have been fixed on in the electing love of God, ever have been given to Jesus to redeem, ever quickened by the Spirit to feel our lost, ruined state, ever blessed with any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his saving grace--this is and ever must be a matter of holy astonishment here, and will be a theme for endless praise hereafter.

To see a man altogether so different from what he once was; once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned; to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state--is not that a man to be looked at with wonder and admiration? To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus, and one word from his peace-speaking lips to all the titles, honors, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow; why, surely if there be a wonder upon earth, that man is one.

Was not this the very feeling of the disciples when Saul first "preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God?" "All that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that persecuted the Church of God?" So we look and wonder, and feel at times a holy joy that he who reigns at God's right hand is ever adding trophies to his immortal crown. And whenever we see any of those near and dear to us in the flesh; be it husband, wife, sister, brother, child, relative, or

friend, touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord, subdued by his grace, and wrought upon by his Spirit, then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder, but with the tenderest affection, mingled with the tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies.

June 8

"I am God and not a mere mortal." Hosea 11:9

We speak sometimes of the attributes of God, and we use the words to help our conception. But God, strictly speaking, has no attributes. His attributes are himself. We speak, for instance, of the love of God, but God is love; of the justice of God, but God is just; of the holiness of God, but God is holy; of the purity of God, but God is pure. As he is all love, so he is all justice, all purity, all holiness. Love, then, is infinite, because God is infinite; his very name, his very character, his very nature, his very essence is infinite love. He would cease to be God if he did not love, and if that love were not as large as himself, as infinite as his own self-existent, incomprehensible essence.

The love of the Son of God, as God the Son, is co-equal and co-eternal with the love of the Father; for the holy Trinity has not three distinct loves, either in date or degree. The Father loves from all eternity; the Holy Spirit loves from all eternity. The love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as one, equal, indivisible, infinite Jehovah cannot be otherwise but One. We therefore read of "the love of God," that is the Father (2 Cor. 13:14); of "the love of the Son" (Gal. 2:20); and of "the love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30).

This love being infinite, can bear with all our infirmities, with all those grievous sins that would, unless that love were boundless, have long ago broken it utterly through. This is beautifully expressed by the prophet--"Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy." Hosea 11:8-9

June 9

"For we who have believed enter into rest." Hebrews 4:3

To rest is to 'lean' upon something. Is it not? So spiritually. We need to lean upon something. The Lord himself has given us this figure. "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" The figure of "a rock" on which the Church is built, "the foundation" which God has laid in Zion, points to the same idea, that of leaning or dependence. Now when the soul comes to lean upon Jesus, and depend wholly and solely on him, it enters into the sweetness of the invitation.

Have we not leaned upon a thousand things? And what have they proved? Broken reeds that have run into our hands, and pierced us. Our own strength and resolutions, the world and the church, sinners and saints, friends and enemies, have they not all proved, more or less, broken reeds? The more we have leaned upon them, like a man leaning upon a sword, the more have they pierced our souls. The Lord himself has to wean us from the world, from friends, from enemies, from self, in order to bring us to lean upon himself; and every prop he will remove, sooner or later, that we may lean wholly and solely upon his Person, love, blood, and righteousness.

But there is another idea in the word "rest"--termination. When we are walking, running, or in any way moving, we are still going onwards; we have not got to the termination of our journey. But when we come to the termination of that we have been doing, we rest. So spiritually. As long as we are engaged in setting up our own righteousness, in laboring under the law, there is no termination of our labors. But when we come to the glorious Person of the Son of God, when we hang upon his atoning blood, dying love, and glorious righteousness, and feel them sweet, precious, and suitable, then there is rest. "We who have believed enter into rest," says the Apostle. His legal labors are all terminated. His hopes and expectations flow unto, and center in Jesus--there they end, there they terminate; such a termination as a river finds in the boundless ocean.

June 10

"The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Corinthians 3:13

The fire which is to prove every man's work of what sort it is, is not merely God's wrath as manifested at the last day; but his fire as significative of the fiery trial which takes place in this life, and which God mercifully brings upon his people to burn up their wood, hay, and stubble. Now it is an inestimable mercy to have all this combustible material burnt up before we come to a death-bed. Fiery trials, such as God sends through afflictions, temptations, distressing feelings, and painful soul exercises, will burn up the wood, hay, and stubble which any of his saints may have gathered up as a superstructure. Guilt pressing upon a man's conscience; the terrors of the Almighty in a fiery law; his arrows deeply fixed in the breast and drying up the spirit; fears of death, hell, and judgment; and the terrible consequences of dying under the wrath of God; all these are a part of the fiery trial which burns up the wood, hay, and stubble heaped by Babel builders on the foundation. All sink into black ashes before this fire, which proves what they are, and what a vain refuge they afford in the day of trouble.

What then stands the fiery trial? God's work upon the soul, the faith that he implants by his own Spirit. It may be weak; it must be tried; it may seem at times scarcely to exist; and yet being of God, it stands every storm, and lives at last. A good hope through grace, a hope of God's own communicating and maintaining--like a well-ried anchor, this will stand the storm; like gold and silver, this will bear the hottest furnace; lose its dross, but not lose the pure material, but be refined, purified, and manifested all the more as genuine metal. So, also, these "precious stones" (1 Cor. 3:12), these heavenly visits, sweet manifestations, blessed promises, comforting discoveries, and gracious revelations of the Son of God, with the whispers of his dying, bleeding love--these heavenly jewels can never be lost and never be burnt up. They may be tried, and that keenly and sharply, but being of God's gift and operation, they are essentially indestructible.

June 11

"But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Isaiah 40:31

How different the religion of a living soul is from the religion of a dead professor! The religion of a dead professor begins in self, and ends in self; begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly; begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness; begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation! There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord, no actings of faith upon the divine perfections.

But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens and sorrows; yet when the Lord does show himself, and renews his strength, he soars aloft, and never ceases to mount up on the wings of faith and love until he penetrates into the very sanctuary of the most High. A living soul never can be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Everything short of that leaves it empty. All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied. Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to feel his presence, taste his love, enjoy his favor, see his glory--nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges his people with.

"They shall renew their strength." They shall not be always lying groaning on the ground, not always swooning away through the wounds made by sin, not always chained down by the fetters of the world, not always hunted in their souls like a partridge upon the mountains. There shall be a renewal of their strength; and in their renewal, "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

June 12

"I will satisfy her poor with bread." Psalm 132:15

What a sweetness there is in the word "satisfy!" The world cannot satisfy the child of God. Have we not tried, some of us perhaps for many years, to get some satisfaction from it? But can wife or husband "satisfy" us? Can children or relatives "satisfy" us? Can all the world calls good or great "satisfy" us? Can the pleasures of sin "satisfy" us? Is there not in all an aching void? Do we not reap dissatisfaction and disappointment from everything that is of the creature, and of the flesh? Do we not find that there is little else but sorrow to be reaped from everything in this world? I am sure I find, and have found for some years, that there is little else to be gathered from the world but disappointment, dissatisfaction, "vanity and vexation of spirit." The poor soul looks round upon the world and the creature, upon all the occupations, amusements and relations of life, and finds all one melancholy harvest, so that all it reaps is sorrow, perplexity, and dissatisfaction. Now when a man is brought here, to want satisfaction, something to make him happy, something to fill up the aching void, something to bind up broken bones, bleeding wounds, and leprous sores, and after he has looked at everything, at doctrines, opinions, notions, speculations, forms, rites and ceremonies in religion, at the world with all its charms, and at self with all its varied workings, and found nothing but bitterness of spirit, vexation and trouble in them all, and thus sinks down a miserable wretch, why, then when the Lord opens up to him something of the bread of life, he finds a satisfaction in that which he never could gain from any other quarter. And that is the reason why the Lord so afflicts his people; why some carry about with them such weak, suffering tabernacles, why some have so many family troubles, why others are so deeply steeped in poverty, why others have such rebellious children, and why others are so exercised with spiritual sorrows that they scarcely know what will be the end. It is all for one purpose, to make them miserable out of Christ, dissatisfied except with gospel food; to render them so wretched and uncomfortable that God alone can make them happy, and alone can speak consolation to their troubled minds.

June 13

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Ephesians 3:17

God bade Moses receive from the people oil for the light, and to set up a candlestick with seven lamps, ever burning with this oil, to illuminate the holy place. This light was typical, no doubt, of the Holy Spirit, but as it is only by his own gracious light that the Lord Jesus is made known, we may still say, that as Christ dwells in the heart by faith, faith giving him a place in the bosom, he dwells in the enlightened understanding of his saints, in the gracious light of his own manifestations.

Have you not seen at times wondrous beauty in the gospel? Has not a sacred light shone, from time to time, upon the holy page, when it testified of Christ? Have you not seen wondrous glory in a free gospel, a gospel that saves the sinner, and yet magnifies and glorifies the justice of God; a gospel that reconciles every apparently jarring attribute, brings justice and mercy to kiss each other, and makes God to be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus? Now that light whereby you saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, was gospel light; and as Christ came into the heart in the glory of that light, he may be said to dwell in the shining light of his own grace.

You may complain, and often bitterly complain, of the darkness of your mind, and it may seem at times as if you never had any true light to shine into your soul. But I would have you carefully observe these two things; first, that the very cause of the darkness which you feel is the presence of light. The Apostle, therefore, says, "But all things that are reprov'd, (margin, 'discovered,') are made manifest by the light, for whatever does make manifest is light" (Eph. 5:13).

Apply these words to your case. Is there not something in you that discovers to you your darkness, and not only discovers, but reprov's it, and makes it manifest as a thing to be condemned? This secret something is light, for "whatever does make manifest is light." And as you not only see it, but feel and mourn under it, it is "the light of life" which the Lord promised to those who follow him.

But observe, secondly, that whenever a little light dawns in again upon your soul, in that light you again see the same grace and glory in Christ which you saw in him before. Now, what a proof this is that Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and that the light in which we see him, is the light with which he has enlightened our understanding, and himself dwells in it.

June 14

"Again, they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow." Psalm 107:39

Oppression is the exercise of strength against weakness, the triumph of power over helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for oppression. It was so with Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was laid on his bed of sickness, death stared him in the face, and he expected he should be cut off, and cast into perdition. This opened the door for oppression; says he, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." The cold damps of death stood upon his forehead, and despair pressed upon his soul. All his fleshly religion vanished in a moment; and he had but just faith and strength enough to cry out under the gripe of the oppressor's hand at his throat, "Undertake for me" (Isaiah 38:14).

Oppression then is a weight and a burden superadded to poverty. It is not the same thing as poverty, but it is an additional infliction to poverty. A man may be poor without being oppressed; but when he is poor and oppressed too, it makes the poverty tenfold greater than before. Thus the

Lord, in his dealings with his people in order to bring them down, first strips them and makes them poor; and when he has made them poor, and brought them into the depths of soul-destitution, then he causes burdens to lie on them as heavy loads, as though they would sink them into a never-ending hell.

But here is the mark of life; the groaning, panting, sighing, and crying of the soul under the burden. The dead in sin feel nothing; the hypocrites in Zion feel nothing; and those that are at ease in a fleshly religion feel nothing. They may have powerful temptations; they may have alarming fears of going to hell; but as to any heavings up of a quickened conscience under the weight of oppression, as to any pouring out of the heart before God, or any giving vent to the distresses of the soul in sighs and cries unto the Lord to have mercy, to speak peace, and bring in a sweet manifestation of pardon and love, and to keep at this day after day, and night after night until the Lord appears; these are exercises unknown to the dead, and peculiar to the living family.

A man may "cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit" (Isaiah 65:14), but as the prophet speaks, "they do not cry unto God with their heart, when they howl upon their beds" (Hosea 7:14). But to breathe and pant after the Lord, to groan and sigh because of oppression, to wrestle with the Savior and give him no rest until he appears in the soul--this inward work is known only to the elect, and is out of the reach of all who have a name to live while they are dead. It is the fruit of the pouring out of the spirit of grace and supplications into their soul; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, helping its infirmities, and making intercession in it with groanings which cannot be uttered.

June 15

"A time to kill, and a time to heal." Ecclesiastes 3:3

All through the Christian's life there will be "a time to kill, and a time to heal." We sometimes read in books, and hear in conversation, an experience of this kind--a work of grace commencing with very powerful convictions of sin, and the soul brought almost to the very brink of hell, and then a wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ, a powerful application of his atoning blood to the conscience, and a blessed manifestation of God's love to the soul. And then what follows? They possess an unwavering assurance during the remainder of their sojourn upon earth. Sin and Satan never distress nor wound them; the flesh lies calm and tranquil, like the summer sea, never lashed up by angry gusts into a storm of fretfulness and rebellion; the sea birds of doubt and fear never flit with screams around them, as harbingers of a tempest, but the gale of divine favor gently fills their sail, and wafts them along until they reach the harbor of endless rest.

Is this consistent with the Scriptures of truth? Does not the word of God set forth the path of a Christian as one of trial and temptation? Can a living soul pass through many scenes without ever being killed experimentally in his feelings as one of "the flock of slaughter?" Does not a chequered experience run through the whole of a Christian's life? Does the Scripture ever afford us the least warrant to believe that a man can be walking in the footsteps of a tempted, suffering Lord, who continues for months and years together at ease in Zion, without any trouble, exercise, grief, or distress in his soul? David never was there. Jeremiah never was there. Paul never was there. Heman never was there. Asaph never was there. You will find that no saints of God, whose experience is left on record in the Bible, ever were there; but their path was one of change and

vicissitude; sometimes down, sometimes up, sometimes mourning, sometimes rejoicing, but never long together in one unvaried spot.

The Spirit of the Lord, in carrying on this grand work in the hearts of God's people, will be continually operating in two distinct ways upon their souls. Jeremiah was a prophet of the Lord, and he was "set over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down"--thus ran one part of his commission "to build and to plant"--that was the second part of his office. These two distinct operations were to run through the whole of his mission; they were "the burden of the Lord," laid upon him at his first call to the prophetic office, and they continued during the whole of his ministry, a space of more than forty years. Did he, then, merely on one occasion pull down, and on one occasion build up? Was not the whole of his ministrations, as evidenced in the prophecies that are contained in the book that bears his name, a continual pulling down with one hand, and building up with the other? So is it then with the ministry of the Spirit of the Lord in a vessel of mercy. He is continually killing, continually healing, continually casting down, continually raising up, now laying the soul low in the dust of self-abasement, and now building it up sweetly in Christ.

June 16

"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found--for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Jeremiah 50:20

Some have feared lest in the great day their sins should be brought to light, and they put to shame by the exposure of their crimes to open view. But that will not be the case with the dear family of God. We read indeed that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;" and while some awake "to everlasting life," others will awake "to shame and everlasting contempt," because their sins will be remembered and brought against them as evidences of their just condemnation. But the wise, who "shall shine as the brightness of the skies," will rise to glory and honor and immortality, and not one of their sins will be remembered, charged, or brought against them. They will stand arrayed in Christ's perfect righteousness and washed in his blood, and will appear before the throne of God without spot or blemish.

We can scarcely bear the recollection of our sins now. But what would become of us if the spirit of one unburied sin could flit before our eyes in the day when the Lord makes up his jewels? If any one sin of the Lamb's wife could be remembered or brought against her, where would be the voice which John heard in Revelation, as "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigns?" Now what was this voice? "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white--for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7, 8).

But suppose that any of the past transgressions of the Lamb's wife could be brought against her on that marriage day, any one instance of unfaithfulness to her plighted troth, would it not be sufficient to prevent the marriage, mar the wedding supper, and drive the bride away for very shame? No, there is no truth in God's word more certain than the complete forgiveness of sins,

and the presentation of the Church to Christ at the great day faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

June 17

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isaiah 27:13

Called by the sounding of the great trumpet, the perishing and outcasts "come." And what do they do when they come? Do they trifle with sin, mock God, and abuse his grace? We read not so. They "worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." They worship him in spirit and in truth; they worship him in the beauty of holiness. With purified hearts, purged consciences, and spiritual affections, they fall down before him, and their souls are impressed with a sense of the greatness of his love. They had no such heavenly feelings before; they could not therefore worship the Three-One God in the holy mount nor at Jerusalem. The great trumpet had not been blown, the jubilee had not come, the chains had not been knocked off, the shackles not loosed, and the prison-gates not thrown open; they could not therefore worship God freely, fully and calmly, with liberty of access and freedom of spirit.

But where do they worship him? "In the holy mount." The holy mount we may understand to signify spiritually Mount Zion, the place where Jesus sits in glory. This is the ancient declaration of the Father, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Here Jesus ever sits with love in his heart, grace in his lips, and the gospel in his hands. He sits on a holy hill, sways a holy scepter, and rules in the hearts of a holy people. Men talk much of holiness; and indeed they may well talk of it, for it is a most solemn declaration, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But what sort of holiness are most men seeking after? A holiness of the flesh, a sanctity of the creature. They must do this and abstain from that; and if they do this and abstain from that, then they are holy. So many prayers must be said, so many chapters read, so many duties done. This is a Popish holiness, the sanctified austerity of a St. Dominic, not that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

That is of a very different nature--different every way, in source, way, means, and end. The only true holiness is that which is produced by the Spirit of God in the soul. Other source or fountain there is none. And how does he produce it? By the law or the gospel? By the gospel, certainly. When the great trumpet of jubilee sounds in the soul, when it listens to the notes, and comes obedient to its call, it is to worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem. True holiness is then produced in the soul, for then there are given spiritual desires, spiritual affections, spiritual views, spiritual feelings, and spiritual hearts. This is the holiness which is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, and without which no man shall see the Lord.

June 18

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Hebrews 6:9

What is "salvation?" In looking at salvation, we must consider it in two points of view; salvation wrought out for us, and salvation wrought out in us. Salvation was wrought out FOR the Church by

the finished work of the Son of God, when he cried with expiring breath, "It is finished." The salvation of "the remnant according to the election of grace" was then completely accomplished, so that nothing could be added to, or taken from it; for "by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified;" and thus the Church stands complete in Christ, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But there is a salvation which is wrought out IN the soul; the manifestation and application of that salvation which Jesus wrought out by his sufferings, blood-shedding, and death; and this we can only know experimentally so far as the blessed Spirit brings it into our hearts, and seals it there with holy unction and heavenly savor.

But all the people of God cannot feel sure they have this salvation as an experimental reality; doubts, fears, darkness, and temptations becloud their path; Satan hurls his fiery darts into their souls; and they are often unable to realize their saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation. They do not doubt that the Lord Jesus is the Savior of those who believe; they know that there is no other refuge for their guilty souls but the blood of the Lamb. They are effectually stripped from cleaving to a covenant of works; they are not running after things that cannot profit them, nor hiding their heads in lying refuges--from all these things they are effectually cut off by a work of grace on their souls.

But through the unbelief of their hearts, the deadness of their frames, the barrenness of their souls, and the various temptations they are exercised with, they fear they have not the marks of God's family, and are not able to realize their saving interest in the love and blood of the Lamb. The Apostle, therefore, speaks of "things that accompany salvation;" that is, certain marks and signs, certain clear and indubitable tokens of the work of grace on the soul. And, speaking to the Hebrews, he says for their comfort and encouragement, "We are persuaded," whatever be your doubts and fears, whatever the darkness of your mind, however exercised with sharp and severe temptations, "we are persuaded" you are in possession of those "better things," of those "things that accompany salvation;" and that this salvation is therefore eternally yours.

June 19

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name." John 1:12

Wherever faith is given to the soul to "receive" Christ, there will be mingled with this faith, and blessedly accompanying it, love to the Lord of life and glory; and sometimes we may know the existence of faith when we cannot see it, by discerning the secret workings and actings of love towards that Savior, in whom God has enabled us to believe. There will be, from time to time, in living souls a flowing forth of affection towards Jesus. From time to time, he gives the soul a glimpse of his Person; he shows himself, as the Scripture speaks, "through the lattice;" passing perhaps hastily by, but giving such a transient glimpse of the beauty of his Person, the excellency of his finished work, dying love, and atoning blood as ravishes the heart, and secretly draws forth every affection of the soul, so that there is a following hard after him, and a going out of the desires of the soul towards him. Thus, sometimes as we lie upon our bed, as we are engaged in our business, as we are occupied in our several pursuits of life; or at other times under the word, or reading the Scripture, the Lord is pleased secretly to work in the heart, and there is a melting down

at the feet of Jesus, or a secret, soft, gentle going forth of love and affection towards him, whereby the soul prefers him before thousands of gold and silver, and desires nothing so much as the inward manifestations of his love, grace, and blood.

And thus a living soul "receives" Christ; not merely as driven by necessity, but as also drawn by affection. He does not receive Christ, merely as a way of escape from "the wrath to come," merely as a something to save the soul from "the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched;" but mingled with necessity, sweetly and powerfully combined with it, and intimately and intricately working with it, there is the flowing forth of genuine affection and sincere love, that goes out to him as the only object worthy our heart's affection, our spirit's worship, and our soul's desire. And we cannot say that less than this comes up to the meaning of the Scripture expression--"to receive Christ."

June 20

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him--rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6, 7

It is a goodly sight to see a noble tree; and we may gather from the strength of the tree the strength of the soil, for only in deep and good soil will such trees grow. But look at the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified! What depth and richness there is in the heavenly soil in which they are planted! View the true, real, and eternal Sonship, the glorious Deity of Jesus, and view that Deity in union with his suffering humanity! What soil is there! What breadth to hold thousands and thousands of noble trees! What depth for them to root in! What fertility to clothe them with verdure and load them with fruit! The most fertile natural soils may be exhausted, but this is inexhaustible. For can Deity be exhausted? Is it not its very nature to be infinite? And when we view what our most blessed Lord now is at the right hand of God, what a perfect and complete Savior he is for the soul to lay hold of!

Again, as the more deeply and widely that a tree spreads its roots into the soil, the more nourishment does it suck up; so it is with a believing heart. The more Christ is laid hold of by faith, the more the soul roots down into him; and the firmer hold it takes of him, and the more deeply it roots into him, the stronger it stands, and the more heavenly nourishment it draws out of his fullness. This is being "rooted in Christ." A religion must always be a shallow, deceptive, and ruinous religion if it has not Christ to root in, for then it must be rooted in self. But if it is planted and rooted in Christ, then there is a sufficiency, a suitability, a glorious fullness in him in which the soul may take the deepest root, and not only for time but for eternity; for such a faith can never be confounded, such a love never perish, and such a hope be never put to shame.

June 21

"Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

O what a change takes place in the soul's feelings toward the word of God when God is pleased to quicken it into divine life! Nor, indeed, need we wonder why there is such a marked revolution in our feelings toward it; for it is by the power of God's word upon the heart that this wondrous change is effected. "Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). Other books

may instruct or amuse; they may feed the intellect, charm the imagination, and cultivate the mind. But what more can they do? I do not mean by this to despise or set aside every other book but the Bible, for without books society itself, as at present constituted, could not exist; and to burn every book would be to throw us back into the barbarism of the Middle Ages. Let, then, books have their place as regards this life; but what can they do for us as regards the life to come? What can our renowned authors, our choice classics, our learned historians, our great dramatists, or our eloquent poets do for the soul in seasons of affliction and distress? How powerless all human writings are in these circumstances. Is it not as Deane well says—

"What balm could wretches ever find

In wit, to heal affliction?

Or who can cure a troubled mind

With all the pomp of diction?"

Now here is the blessedness of the word of God, that when everything else fails, that comes to our aid under all circumstances, so that we can never sink so low as to get beyond the reach of some promise in the word of truth. We may come, and most probably shall come, to a spot where everything else will fail and give way but the word of God which forever is settled in heaven. Then the word of grace and truth which reaches down to the lowest case, the word of promise upon which the Lord causes the soul to hope, will still turn towards us a friendly smile, and still encourage us under all circumstances to call upon the name of the Lord, and to hang upon his faithfulness who has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Thus, under circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, where nature stands aghast and reason fails, there the word of God will come in as a counselor to drop in friendly advice, as a companion to cheer and support the mind by its tender sympathy; and as a friend to speak to the heart with a loving, affectionate voice. We need not wonder, then, how the word of God has been prized in all ages by the family of God; for it is written with such infinite wisdom, that it meets every case, suits every circumstance, fills up every aching void, and is adapted to every condition of life and every state both of body and soul.

June 22

"He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." Deuteronomy 32:10

"He led them about." This was true literally. What a circuitous, tangled, backward and forward route was that of the children of Israel in the wilderness! Yet every step was under God's direction; they never moved until the cloudy pillar led the way.

But how does the Lord lead about in grace? By leading his Israel into a path of which they do not see the end. One turn of the road hides the next. I have read that you may make a road with a curve at every quarter of a mile, and yet in a hundred miles the distance will not be so much as a mile more than a perfectly straight line. So in grace. The length of the road swallows up the turnings.

But these turnings make the road seem more round about than it really is. All before us is hidden. For instance, when the Lord begins a work of grace, he brings convictions of sin, opens up the spirituality of the law, makes the soul feel guilty, guilty, guilty in every thought, word, and deed. But does a man in that condition know what the Lord is doing? Can he clearly trace out the work of God upon his soul? Is he able to say, "This, this is the work of God upon my heart?" For the most part, he knows not what is the matter with him; why he is so distressed; why he can take no rest; why the things of eternity keep rolling in upon his soul; why he stands in continual dread of the wrath to come; why his mind is so exercised with thoughts upon God; why he feels condemnation, bondage, and misery.

Nor even when the Lord is pleased to raise him up to some hope, to apply some sweet promise to his soul, to encourage him in various ways under the ministry of the word, can he often take the full comfort of it. He may for a time, but it is soon gone, and he can scarcely believe it to be real. Unbelief suggests that it did not come exactly in the right way, or did not last long enough, or did not go deep enough, or was not just such as he has heard others speak of; and so he is filled with doubts, fears, and anxieties whether it was really from the Lord. But when God leads him on a step further; opens up the gospel, reveals Christ, drops into his heart some sweet testimony, gives him some blessed discovery of his saving interest in the Lord Jesus, and seals it with a divine witness in his heart, this banishes all his doubts and fears, and fills his soul with joy and peace. Yet even after this, when the sweet feeling is gone, he may sink again very low, and may question the reality of the revelation he has enjoyed. All this is "leading about;" for one turn of the road hides the other.

June 23

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in you; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools." Psalm 84:5, 6

"Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.

As they pass through the Valley of Baca,

they make it a place of springs;

the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

They go from strength to strength,

until each appears before God in Zion." Psalm 84:5-7

David casts a glimpse here at those pilgrims who were taking their upward journey to worship God in Zion. He marks their road, and takes occasion to spiritualize it; for he says, "In whose heart," in whose experience, in whose soul, "are the ways" of these pilgrims Zionward.

What are these "ways?" It is this, that "passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well." This valley of Baca appears to have been a very perilous pass, through which pilgrims journeyed toward Jerusalem; and on account of the difficulties, dangers, and sufferings that they met with, it was named "the valley of Baca," or "the valley of weeping," "the valley of tears."

But the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well." Here is the distinctive character of the true pilgrim. Not that he is journeying merely through the "valley of Baca;" not that his eyes are drowned in tears; not that his heart is filled with sorrows; not that his soul is cut with temptations; not that his mind is tried by suffering. But this is his distinctive feature--he "makes it a well." This the ungodly know nothing of; this the professing world, for the most part, are entirely unacquainted with; but this is the secret which "no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen."

One feature of the "valley of Baca" was, that the burning sun above, and the parched ground beneath, at the time of year when the pilgrims traveled, made the whole valley arid and dry. But "they made it a well." There were wells dug in this valley of Baca for the pilgrims to slake their thirst at. And David, looking at these wells dug for the pilgrims, applies them spiritually to the refreshment that the Lord's people meet with in their course Zionward. "Make it a well;" that is, there are from time to time sweet refreshments in this valley of tears; there are bubblings up of divine consolation; there are fountains of living waters, streams of heavenly pleasures.

I remember a friend of mine telling me, that once while journeying through one of the deserts in Asia, he and his companions came to a well; and their disappointment when they found the well was dry he said no language could depict; their grief and trouble when, after hours of traveling, they came at night to encamp by the well, and found that the sun had dried it up, were indeed most acute. As, therefore, none but pilgrims through the dry and parched valley could adequately feel the sweetness of the natural well; so none but spiritual pilgrims, afflicted, exercised, and harassed, can appreciate the sweetness of the "pure water of life" with which the Lord at times refreshes the soul.

June 24

"They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion." Psalm 84:7

"They go from strength to strength." It is in the margin, "from company to company." I rather think, that the meaning implied is, "they go from resting place to resting place." There were certain fixed spots where the whole company rested at night; as we read, when the infant Jesus tarried at Jerusalem, his parents knew it not--they supposed that he was "in the company;" that is, had gone on with the traveling pilgrims; but when night came, and they looked for him, he was not there.

These resting places were certain spots where the caravan of the traveling pilgrims rested at night; by these successive restings their strength was recruited, and they were enabled to bear the long journey, rising in the morning refreshed with their night's rest.

The Psalmist viewing it spiritually says, "They go from strength to strength." At each resting place they received fresh strength to pursue their journey onward. And is not this true in grace? There are resting places in the divine life, spots of refreshment, where the true pilgrims renew their strength. For instance, every manifestation of the Lord is a communication of divine strength, a recruiting place, where the soul renews its strength to travel onward. Every promise that comes with sweet power is another resting place where the traveler may rest. Every discovery of saving interest in Christ; every glimpse of the grace and glory of Jesus; every word from the Lord's lips; every smile from the Lord's face; every token for good; everything that encourages, supports, blesses, and comforts the soul, enabling it to go onwards towards its heavenly home, is a resting

place, where the pilgrim rests, and where he recruits his weary limbs.

And where can we rest, except where God rests? But does not God "rest in his love?" And can we rest anywhere short of God's love shed abroad in our heart? Does not God rest in his dear Son? Did not this voice come from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" All the satisfaction of God centers in Jesus; all the delight of the Father rests in the Son of his love. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights!" Can we then rest anywhere but where God rests? Is it not spiritually with us as with the Israelites of old? When the cloud tarried, they tarried; when the cloud went, they went; when the cloud moved onward, they followed it; and when the cloud stopped, they halted, and rested beneath its shadow.

June 25

"They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion." Psalm 84:7

As the Lord is true, no spiritual pilgrim will ever fall and die in the valley of Baca. Some may fear that through temptation their strong passions or boiling lusts will one day break out and destroy them. No, not if they are pilgrims. "Every one of them in Zion appears before God." Others may think they never shall have a testimony; they never shall read their name clearly in the Book of Life; the Lord will never appear in their heart or bless their soul; they never shall be able to say, "Abba, Father." If Jesus is theirs, they shall.

But are they spiritual pilgrims? Do they find it a valley of tears? Are their faces Zionward? Have they come out of the world? Do they sometimes make the valley of Baca a well? And does the rain fill the pools? And have they ever had strength made perfect in weakness? Then every one of them will appear before God in Zion. Blessed end! Sweet accomplishment of the pilgrim's hopes, desires, and expectations! The crowning blessing of all that God has to bestow! "Every one of them appears before God," washed in the Savior's blood, clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness, adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, and made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

No weeping then! The valley of Baca is passed, and tears wiped from off all faces. No thorns to lacerate the weary feet there; no prowling wild beasts to seize the unwary traveler there; no roving bandits to surprise stragglers there; no doubts and fears and cutting sorrows to grieve, perplex, and burden them there. Safe in Zion, safe in the Redeemer's bosom, safe in their Husband's arms, safe before the throne, every one of them appears before God in glory!

June 26

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Matthew 5:5

Spiritual poverty is a miserable feeling of soul-emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the lowest hell.

And intimately blended with the poignant feelings of guilt and condemnation, there is a spiritual consciousness that there is such a thing enjoyed by the elect as the Spirit of adoption, that there are such sweet realities as divine manifestations, that the blood of Jesus Christ is sprinkled by the Holy Spirit upon the consciences of the redeemed to cleanse them from all guilt and filth.

And thus by comparing its own needs with their blessings, and having an inward light wherein the truth of God's word is seen, and an inward life whereby it is felt, a soul wading in the depths of spiritual poverty, is brought to feel that it must be the manifestation of the light of God's countenance which can alone deliver; that it must be the testimony of God spoken by his own lips to the heart that alone can save; and that the lack of this is the lack of everything that can manifest it to be a vessel of mercy here, and fit it for, as well as carry it into, eternal glory and bliss hereafter.

To be poor, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God. Nor is it, perhaps, ever more deeply felt than in the lonely watches of the night, when no eye can see, nor ear hear, but the eye and ear of Jehovah; in these solemn moments of deep recollection, when the stillness and darkness around us are but the counterpart of the stillness and darkness of the soul, he that is spiritually poor often feels how empty he is of everything heavenly and divine, a sinking wretch without a grain of godliness; and without drawing too rigid a line of exclusion, we may unhesitatingly say that he who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings-forth of heart as a needy, naked wretch, he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God, has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

June 27

"And patience of hope." 1 Thessalonians 1:3

What is meant by the expression "patience?" It means 'endurance'; as though hope had to endure, faith to work, and love to labor. It is the "patience of hope" that proves its reality and genuineness. Hope does not go forward fighting and cutting its way. Hope is like a quiet sufferer, patiently bearing what comes upon it. Hope is manifested in enduring, as faith is manifested in acting. For instance--when the Lord hides his face, when testimonies sink out of sight, when signs are not seen, when Satan tempts, when the work of grace upon the soul seems to be all obscured, and in consequence a feeling of despondency begins to set in, then the "patience of hope" is needed to endure all th

July

July 1

"As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after you, O God." Psalm 42:1

What a striking figure has David made use of in these words. Conceive a wounded stag, with the arrow in his flank or pursued by a crowd of hunters and hounds, all eager to pull him down; conceive him to have run for some space of time under a burning sun and over heaps of sand; and conceive that at a distance this poor wounded or hunted animal sees water gently flowing along. Oh, how it pants! How its heaving sides gasp, and how it longs for the cooling stream, not only that it may drink large draughts of the fresh waters and lave its panting flanks and weary, parched limbs--but, by swimming across, may haply escape the dogs and hunters at its heels. How strong, how striking the figure.

And yet strong as it is, how earnestly does David employ it to set forth the panting of his soul after God. We cannot, perhaps, rise up into the fullness of this figure; we cannot, we dare not lay our feelings stretched fully out side by side with his, or use the same burning, vehement, ardent expressions. But we may at least see from them what the saints of God have experienced in times of temptation and trial in days of old; and we may in some measure compare the feelings of our soul with theirs--sometimes to fill us with shame and confusion at our short-comings, sometimes to stimulate and encourage us so far as we experience a degree of similar teachings; for these things are written for our instruction, "upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Thus in various ways and to various ends we may, with God's help and blessing, look at and into such expressions as we find in the words of David, and in the fear of God search our hearts to see if we can find anything there corresponding to the work of grace that the Holy Spirit describes as existing in his soul. Nor be utterly cast down nor wholly discouraged if you cannot find a full or close similarity. Can you find any? If so, take encouragement, for the Lord despises not the day of small things. It is his own work upon the heart and his own work alone to which he has regard, as David felt when he said, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me--your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; forsake not the works of your own hands" (Psalm 138:8). And that work will ever be a copy in full or in miniature, a complete or reduced photograph, of the work of grace described in the Scripture as carried on by the Spirit in the hearts of God's saints of old.

July 2

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom--but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." 1 Corinthians 1:22, 23

The mystery of the cross can be received only by faith. To the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. When, then, we can believe that the Son of God took part of our flesh and blood out of love and compassion for our souls; that there being no other way which even

heaven itself could devise, no other means that the wisdom of God could contrive whereby sinners could be saved, but by the death of the cross, then the mystery shines forth with unspeakable luster and glory. The shame, the ignominy, what the Apostle calls the "weakness" and "foolishness" of the cross disappear, swallowed up in a flood of surpassing grace; and faith views it as a glorious scheme of God's own devising, and of the Son of God's approving and accomplishing.

Viewed in this light how glorious it appears, that by suffering in our nature all the penalties of our sin, Jesus should redeem us from the lowest hell and raise us up to the highest heaven. How full of unspeakable wisdom was that plan whereby he united God and man by himself becoming God-man; empowering poor worms of earth to soar above the skies and live forever in the presence of him who is a consuming fire. How glorious is that scheme whereby reconciling aliens and enemies unto his heavenly Father, he summons them, when death cuts their mortal thread, to mount up into an eternity of bliss, there to view face to face the great and glorious I AM; to be forever enwrapped in the blaze of Deity, and ever folded in the arms of a Triune God.

It is this blessed end, this reward of the Redeemer's sufferings, blood shedding and death, which lifts our view beyond the depths of the fall and the misery of sin, as we see and feel it in this miserable world. It is this view by faith of the glory which shall be revealed which enables us to see what wisdom and mercy were in the heart of God when he permitted the Adam fall to take place. It is as if we could see the glory of God breaking forth through it in all the splendor of atoning blood and dying love, securing to guilty man the joys of salvation, and bringing to God an eternal revenue of praise.

July 3

"But God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:14

An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord made Paul preach the cross, not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify. But as then, so now, this preaching of the cross, not only as the meritorious cause of all salvation, but as the instrumental cause of all sanctification, is "to those who perish foolishness." As men have found out some other way of salvation than by the blood of the cross, so have they discovered some other way of holiness than by the power of the cross; or rather have altogether set aside obedience, fruitfulness, self-denial, mortification of the deeds of the body, crucifixion of the flesh and of the world.

Extremes are said to meet; and certainly men of most opposite sentiments may unite in despising the cross and counting it foolishness. The Arminian despises it for justification, and the Antinomian for sanctification. "Believe and be holy," is as strange a sound to the latter as "Believe and be saved" to the former. But, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is as much written on the portal of life as, "By grace are you saved through faith." Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin, but for all uncleanness. Blood and water gushed from the side of Jesus when pierced by the Roman spear.

"This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart;

Unlocked by the spear, it gushed from the heart,
With blood and with water; the first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one."

"All my springs are in you," said the man after God's own heart; and well may we re-echo his words. All our springs, not only of pardon and peace, acceptance and justification--but of happiness and holiness, of wisdom and strength, of victory over the world, of mortification of a body of sin and death, of every fresh revival and renewal of hope and confidence; of all prayer and praise; of every new budding forth of the soul, as of Aaron's rod, in blossom and fruit; of every gracious feeling, spiritual desire, warm supplication, honest confession, melting contrition, and godly sorrow for sin--all these springs of that life which is hidden with Christ in God are in a crucified Lord. Thus Christ crucified is, "to those who are saved, the power of God." And as he "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," at the cross alone can we be made wise unto salvation, become righteous by a free justification, receive of his Spirit to make us holy, and be redeemed and delivered by blood and power from sin, Satan, death, and hell.

July 4

"For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed." Romans 10:11

A child of God may be often deeply exercised whether he has any faith at all; for when he reads what faith has done and can do, and sees and feels how little it has done for him, he is seized with doubts and fears whether he has ever been blessed with the faith of God's elect. This makes him often say, "Oh, do I indeed possess one grain of saving faith?" But he does possess it--no, it is his very faith which makes him so anxiously ask himself the question, as well as see and feel the nature and amount of his unbelief. It is the very light of God shining into his soul that shows him his sins, their nature and number; convinces him of their guilt and enormity; lays the burden of them upon his conscience; and discovers to him the workings of an unbelieving heart. But besides this, if he had no faith at all he could not hear the voice of God speaking in the gospel, nor receive it as a message of mercy; so that he has faith, though he has not its witnessing evidence, or its abounding comfort. This faith will save his soul; for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" that is, God never repents of any gift that he bestows or of any calling which he has granted. If, then, he has ever blessed you with faith, however small that faith may be in itself or in your own view of it, he will never take it away out of your heart, but rather fan the smoking flax until it bursts forth into a flame. He will never forsake the work of his own hands, for he which "has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

If ever, then, if but once in your life, you have felt the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation; if you have ever had one view of Christ by living faith; if but once only, under the influence of his blessed Spirit on your heart, you have laid hold of him and felt even for a few minutes that he was yours, your soul is as safe as though it were continually bathing in the river which makes glad the city of God, continually drinking of the honey and milk of the gospel, and walking all day long in the full light of his most gracious countenance. Not that a man should be satisfied with living at a poor, cold, dying rate; I mean not that, but merely to lay it down as a part of God's truth that as regards salvation, it is not the amount, but the reality of faith that saves the soul.

July 5

"It shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary." Ezekiel 47:12

There is always something new in the things of God. Here is a passage perhaps in the word of God that we have read and read again and again without seeing or feeling anything in it; but all of a sudden there may come a blessed flash of light upon it; we now see something in it that we have never seen before, something exceedingly sweet and precious. It is now all new; it is received as new, felt as new, fed upon as new, relished as new. It seems as though we never saw anything in the passage before. So with prayer; so with hearing. You may perhaps have had your soul shut up in distress and bondage and misery for months; you could scarcely trace anything of the life of God in you. But under the preached word, it may have pleased God to drop something which has come into your heart with warmth, and life, and feeling. Oh, how new it is! It is as new as though it were never heard before; it seems as though the eyes were now first opened to see new things, and the ears were opened to hear new things, and the heart opened to receive new things. The Lord thus fulfils that blessed promise, "He that sits upon the throne says, Behold, I make all things new!" "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

July 6

"Those who walk in pride he is able to abase." Daniel 4:37

Among all the evils which lie naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, pride seems especially to incur his holy abhorrence; and the outward manifestations of it have perhaps drawn down as much as, or more than, any other sin, his marked thunderbolts. Pride cost Sennacherib his army and Herod his life; pride opened the earth to Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and hung up Absalom in the boughs of an oak; pride filled the breast of Saul with murderous hatred against David, and tore ten tribes at one stroke from the hand of Rehoboam. Pride drove Nebuchadnezzar from the society of his fellow-men, and made him eat grass as oxen, and his body to be wet with the dew of heaven, until his hairs were grown as eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

And as it has cut off the wicked from the earth, and left them neither son nor nephew, root nor branch, so it has made sad havoc even among the family of God. Pride shut Aaron out of the promised land, and made Miriam a leper; pride, working in the heart of David, brought a pestilence which cut off seventy thousand men; pride carried captive to Babylon Hezekiah's treasure and descendants, and cast Jonah into the whale's belly, and, in his feelings, into the very belly of hell.

It is the only source of contention; the certain forerunner of a fall; the instigator of persecution; a snare for the feet; a chain to compass the whole body; the main element of deceitfulness, and the grave of all uprightness. The very opposite to charity, pride is not patient, and is never kind; she always envies, and ever boasts of herself; is continually puffed up, always behaves herself unseemly, ever seeks her own, is easily provoked, perpetually thinks evil, rejoices in iniquity, but rejoices not in the truth; bears nothing, believes nothing (good in a brother), hopes nothing, endures nothing. Ever restless and ever miserable, tormenting herself and tormenting others, the bane of churches, the fomentor of strife, and the extinguisher of love--may it be our wisdom to see,

our grace to abhor, and our victory to overcome her, and may the experience of that verse in Deer's hymn be ours—

"Your garden is the place

Where pride can not intrude;

For should it dare to enter there,

Would soon be drowned in blood."

July 7

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10:28

The Lord says, "I give unto them (that is, my sheep) eternal life;" not, "I will give them in the life to come; but I give it unto them now." We therefore read, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life"--has it now, as a present, felt, and enjoyed possession. This life is given manifestly when Christ reveals himself to the soul; for eternal life is then received out of his fullness as an enjoyed possession. All, then, who have truly fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before them, embrace in so doing eternal life. They live, as being manifestly in Christ, for he is "our life;" and as they embrace it in him they feel its sweet movements in their breast, in the joy it communicates, in the peace it imparts, in the prospects it opens, in the doubts it removes, in the fears it disperses.

Thus, in real religion, there is something, if I may so speak, tangible, something to be laid hold of; and this distinguishes a good hope through grace from every other hope which is delusive, enthusiastic, or visionary. Depend upon it, there is a reality in vital godliness, a possession for eternity, which, therefore, kills and deadens the living child of God to a perishing world, and the fading things of time and sense. Whenever we get a view of Christ, there is a view of eternal life in him; for he is the eternal Son of God, and when he makes himself known to the soul as such, he shows us that all our life is in him. The work that he accomplished is for eternity; he lives himself forever and ever; and those whom he has redeemed by his blood, justified by his righteousness, and sanctified by his grace, will live forever and ever in his glorious presence. It is the eternity of his love which stamps it with its main value and blessedness; for this life being eternal, secures not only perpetuity, but immutability, prevents it from any change in time as well as from any change in eternity, and secures it firm and stable to all the heirs of promise. As, then, they lay hold of eternal life in laying hold of him who is the life, and as the sweet movements of hope spring up in their breast, it opens before their eyes a vista of immortal joy.

July 8

"I will set him on high, because he has known my name." Psalm 91:14

A man must know the Lord's name before ever he can feel any real love to him. Now this is needful, this is what the Lord does for his people, he causes them to know his name. "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest" (Jer. 31:34). "They shall all;" they shall. The Lord has declared it. They shall know me. Now what is the name of the Lord? When God revealed

himself unto Moses, did he not say, "I AM THAT I AM?" This was the way God taught Moses his name, and we may gather from it that whatever God is, that is his name. God is holy, God is just, God is merciful, God is a God of love. Now the sinner must know this. He must know that God is a pure and holy God, and at first when he is beginning to learn this lesson, he is completely astonished and appalled by it. It causes him to shrink away and hide himself from God. "How can I appear before God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" he cries. And so you see it brings distress into his conscience.

It is the first work of the Spirit to "convince of sin," and a sense of God's holiness is that which brings us this conviction--our sin and God's purity. How can the sinner appear before and approach to God? And while he is under the terrors of the law, he is full of distress, and at times, perhaps, wishes he had never been born, and at other times he is tempted with hard thoughts of God, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not sowed. This is how God is seen in his perverted mind. The devil is at him, and tries all he can to harden his heart against the Almighty. But the terrors of the Almighty have taken hold of him, and he tries many ways to get these arrows extracted; but all his tugging and pulling only make the wound worse. And so he goes on until he is brought to see that God is a God of mercy--and this is revealed to him in and through the Lord Jesus. This is what clears up the mystery--when he sees Christ bleeding on the cross. Here he sees God is both a just God and a Savior. God is pure and holy, and exacts to the utmost farthing all the enormous debt he owes, and yet to the bleeding, broken heart, he, through Christ, can and does manifest his mercy.

July 9

"The gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24

What does the word "gospel" signify? Its literal meaning is either "God's word" or message, or rather, "good news," or "good tidings," which is more agreeable to the original. But if it be "good news," it must be good news of something and to somebody. There must be some good tidings brought, and there must be some person by whom, as good tidings, it is received. In order, then, that the gospel should be good news, glad tidings, there must be a message from God to man, God being the Speaker, and man the hearer; he the gracious Giver, and man the happy receiver. But if the gospel means good news from heaven to earth, it can only be worthy of the name as it proclaims grace, mercy, pardon, deliverance, and salvation, and all as free gifts of God's unmerited favor. Otherwise, it would not be a gospel adapted to our needs; it would not be good news, glad tidings to us poor sinners, to us law-breakers, to us guilty criminals, to us vile transgressors, to us arraigned at the bar of infinite justice, to us condemned to die by the unswerving demands of God's holiness. And as it must be a gospel adapted to us to receive, so must it be a gospel worthy of God to give.

This gospel then, pure, clear, and free, is good news or glad tidings, as proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus and justification by his righteousness. It reveals an obedience whereby the law was magnified and made honorable, and an atoning sacrifice for sin by which it was forever blotted out and put away; and thus it brings glory to God and salvation to the soul. It is a pure revelation of sovereign mercy, love and grace, whereby each Person in the divine Trinity is exalted and magnified. In it "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." As revealed in it, "truth springs out of earth" in the hearts of contrite sinners, and "righteousness,"

eternally satisfied by Christ's obedience, "looks down from heaven."

If you love a pure, a clear, a free gospel, "the gospel of the grace of God," you love it not only because it is so fully suitable to your needs, so thoroughly adapted to your fallen state, but because you have felt its sweetness and power; because it not only speaks of pardon, but brings pardon; not only proclaims mercy, but brings mercy; not only points out a way of salvation, but brings salvation, with all its rich attendant blessings, into your heart. It thus becomes "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes."

July 10

"I am the vine, you are the branches--He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit--for without me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Without a union with Christ, we have no spiritual existence; and we may boldly say that we no more have a spiritual being in the mind of God independent of Christ, than the branch of a tree has an independent existence out of the stem in which it grows. But you will observe, also, in this figure of the vine and the branches, how all the fruitfulness of the branch depends upon its union with the vine. Whatever life there is in the branch, it flows out of the stem; whatever strength there is in the branch, it comes from its union with the stem; whatever foliage, whatever fruit, all come still out of its union with the stem. And this is the case, whether the branch be great or small. From the stoutest limb of a tree to the smallest twig, all are in union with the stem and all derive life and nourishment from it.

So it is in grace--not only is our very being, as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, connected with our union with Christ, but our well-being. All our knowledge, therefore, of heavenly mysteries, all our faith, all our hope, and all our love--in a word, all our grace, whether much or little, whether that of the babe, the child, the young man, or the father--flows out of a personal, spiritual, and experimental union with the Lord Jesus; for we are nothing but what we are in him, and we have nothing but what we possess by virtue of our union with him.

July 11

"And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." 2 Corinthians 1:7

The Lord has appointed the path of sorrow for the redeemed to walk in. Why? One purpose is to wean them from the world; another purpose is to show them the weakness of the creature; a third purpose is to make them feel the liberty and vitality of genuine godliness made manifest in their soul's experience. What am I, and what are you when we have no trials? Light, frothy, worldly-minded, carnal, frivolous. We may talk of the things of God, but they are at a distance; there are no solemn feelings, no melting sensations, no real brokenness, no genuine contrition, no weeping at the divine feet, no embracing of Christ in the arms of affection.

But when affliction, be it in providence or be it in grace, brings a man down; when it empties him of all his high thoughts, lays him low in his own eyes, brings trouble into his heart, I assure you he needs something more than mere external religion. He needs power; he needs to experience in his soul the operations of the blessed Spirit; he wants to have a precious Jesus manifesting himself to his soul in love and blood; he needs to see his lovely countenance beaming upon him in

ravishing smiles; he needs to hear the sweet whispers of dying love speaking inward peace; he needs to have the blessed Lord come into his soul, manifesting himself to him as he does not manifest himself to the world.

What brings a man here? A few dry notions floating to and fro in his brain, like a few drops of oil in a pail of water? That will never bring the life and power of vital godliness into a man's heart. It must be by being experimentally acquainted with trouble. When he is led into the path of tribulation, he then begins to long after, and, in God's own time and way, he begins to drink into, the sweetness of vital godliness, made manifest in his heart by the power of God.

July 12

"Then those who were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God." Matthew 14:33

What a beauty and blessedness there is in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, when viewed by the spiritual eye! Our reasoning minds, it is true, may be deeply stumbled at the doctrine of an incarnate God. My own mind, I know, has sometimes been driven almost to its wits' end by this great mystery of deity and humanity combined in the Person of Christ, for it so surpasses all human comprehension, and is so removed beyond the grasp of all our reasoning faculties. It is not, indeed, contrary to reason, for there is nothing in it impossible or self-contradictory; but it is beyond and above the reach of human thought and tangible apprehension. But when we are led to consider what would be the most certain and most fearful consequences unless the Lord Jesus Christ were what he declares he is, God as well as man, we are compelled, from the very necessity of the case, to cast ourselves with all the weight of our sins and sorrows upon an incarnate God, as the shipwrecked sailor gladly casts himself upon the rock in the ocean as the only refuge from the devouring sea.

When we feel what sinners we are, and have been, look down into the depths of the fall, and see in some feeble and faint measure what sin is in the sight of a holy and pure God, what can save us from despair unless we see the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ investing his work upon the cross and his obedience with a merit that shall suffice to justify our guilty souls, wash away our aggravated iniquities, blot out our fearful crimes, and make us fit to appear in the presence of a righteous God? Thus we are sometimes absolutely compelled to throw ourselves on the deity of Christ, as ready to perish, because in such a divine Savior, in such precious blood we see a refuge, and we see elsewhere no other.

We then feel that if the deity of Christ be taken away, the Church of God is lost. Where can you find pardon? where justification? where reconciliation to God? where atoning blood, if there is no Savior who merited as God, and suffered as man? We might as well leap into hell at once with all our sins upon our head, as a sailor might spring over the prow of a burning ship into the boiling waves, to meet death instead of waiting for it, unless we believe by a living faith in the deity of the Son of God.

But sometimes we are sweetly led into this glorious truth, not merely driven by sheer necessity, but blessedly drawn into this great mystery of godliness, when Christ is revealed to our souls by the power of God. Then, seeing light in God's light, we view the deity of Christ investing every thought, word, and act of his suffering humanity with unspeakable merit. Then we see how this glorious fact

of deity and humanity in the Person of Immanuel satisfies every need, puts away every sin, heals every wound, wipes away every tear, and sweetly brings the soul to repose on the bosom of God. Sometimes, therefore, from necessity, driven by storms of guilt and waves of temptation, and sometimes sweetly drawn by the leadings and teachings of the Holy Spirit, we lay hold of the hope set before us in the essential deity and suffering humanity of the Son of God, knowing that there is a refuge in him from sin, death, hell, and despair.

July 13

"We have such an high priest, who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Hebrews 8:1, 2

Our blessed Lord was to be "a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec." It will be remembered that Melchizedec met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him (Gen. 14:19). In the same way our great High Priest blesses the seed of Abraham; for "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" and as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they walk in his steps who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

But Melchizedec the type could only ask God to bless Abraham. He could not himself confer the blessing; but Jesus, the antitype, our great Melchizedec, whose priesthood is "after the power of an endless life," blesses his people, not by merely asking God to bless them, but by himself showering down blessings upon them, and by communicating to them out of his own fullness every grace which can sanctify as well as save.

Even before his incarnation, when he appeared in human form, as if anticipating in appearance that flesh and blood which he should afterwards assume in reality, he had power to bless. Thus we read that when Jacob wrestled with the angel, which angel was no created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, even the Son of God himself in human shape, he said, "I will not let you go except you bless me." And in answer to his wrestling cry we read that "he blessed him there." Jacob knew that no created angel could bless him. He therefore said, when he had got the blessing, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." To this blessing Jacob afterwards referred when, in blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads." Thus, also, our gracious Lord, immediately before his ascension to heaven, as if in anticipation of the gifts and graces which he was to send down upon them when exalted to the right hand of the Father, "lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples;" and as if to show that he would still ever continue to bless them, "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven," even "while he blessed them," as if he were blessing them all the way up to heaven, even before he took possession of his mediatorial throne (Luke 24:50, 51).

July 14

"But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." Jude 20

By the words "most holy faith," we may understand chiefly the grand truths of the everlasting gospel which are revealed unto and embraced by faith. And they are called "our most holy faith," because they are imbued with all the holiness of God; and not only so, but as they are received

into believing hearts, communicate sanctification, because they have a liberating, sanctifying efficacy. The words "build up" assume that there is a foundation laid. Christ is that foundation which God has laid in Zion, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and where Christ is revealed to the soul by a divine power, a foundation is laid in the heart on which every subsequent truth is to be built up.

The grand thing to be clear of in our own experience is, whether Christ has been laid as a foundation in our souls or not, and if he has, we have been driven from every other as finding no rest or peace but in him. If ever he has been revealed to our souls by the mighty power of God, then we have seen and felt that in him there is a foundation on which we can stand, and that for eternity. As the Son of the Father in truth and love; having come to finish the work which the Father gave him to do; having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and brought in an everlasting righteousness in which we may stand justified, there is a foundation on which a poor, guilty soul may rest. When this foundation is brought near, and we, by the power of God's grace, are lifted up to rest upon it, we can say, "How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

July 15

"Keep yourselves in the love of God." Jude 21

When Christ is made known to our soul by the power of God, we have views of truth in him, of happiness in him, and of deliverance. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." We receive him as the Son of the Father in truth and love; we receive him as suitable to our needs and woes; we receive him as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and endearing himself to our heart in the sweet manifestation of his Person, goodness, and love. Now as long as Christ and the soul are together, there is no place for error, and no place for evil. He makes the soul tender, the heart upright, the spirit broken and contrite, truth precious, error hateful, and sin loathsome and detestable. And while he and the soul are engaged together, error cannot approach nor evil find an entrance, so as to get any standing-ground in the heart.

But error is very subtle; it addresses itself to our reasoning powers; and when we lose sight of Christ, then error very easily creeps in; or if not error, some special lust, or something ungodly, seems by degrees to obtain power and influence, and we gradually decline from the strength of faith, the confidence of hope, and the sweet affections of love, and drop, it may be, into a cold, carnal, careless, lifeless state, where we lie open to the invasion of error and the temptations of Satan as an angel of light or an angel of darkness.

But now Jude comes and says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God; and I will tell you, if you will listen to me, how you shall do it. You must build up yourselves on your most holy faith." God has laid a foundation for your faith in his holy word; he has laid Christ as a foundation in your own soul. That is a very strong foundation; it is of God's own laying. It is very solid; it will bear any weight laid upon it. And therefore you must build up yourselves upon that most holy faith if you would have a religion which stands; because if your religion, or any part of your religion, be built upon another foundation, it will not stand. But if you build up yourselves on your most holy faith, then everything you build upon it will stand, because it rests upon the foundation, and is in harmony with it.

July 16

"Search me, O God, and know my heart--try me, and know my thoughts--and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24

The people of God cannot take their religion upon credit; they cannot be satisfied with the endorsement of this or that good man. They must have it wrought by God himself. They are often exercised as to whence their religion came. Do you not find it so, and that it costs you many exercises? If, for instance, you are cast down, you are exercised whether it springs from godly sorrow for sin. If you are comforted, you cannot take the comfort for granted; you must have it weighed up in the gospel balance. If you meet with providential deliverances, you cannot take them as so many certain evidences that all is right with your soul. So that every step you take you have to examine, and weigh it whether it be of God.

The dead professors, the hypocrites in Zion never have their religion tried and weighed up in this way. They know nothing of these inward exercises. They take things for granted; they nestle under some good man's wing, or get their religion endorsed by some minister, and are satisfied.

But the people of God must have testimonies from the Lord himself; and they will often be sharply exercised whether they have that work in their souls which will stand in the trying hour. And if in answer to their cries the Lord is pleased to shine into their souls, and raise up clear tokens that it is from heaven, it fills their hearts with gratitude, sinks the things of time and sense, and lifts up their affections to that blessed fountain whence these testimonies came down. Thus those very things which seem against them are for them, and they derive their sweetest consolations out of their heaviest afflictions. They would not change their trying path, with all its bitter things, for the smooth flowery path in which they see thousands walk, knowing that a religion without trials and temptations will only lead the soul down into a never-ending hell.

Thus at times they can feel good spring out of their exercises, and would rather be all their days a tempted, tried people, and bear those things which God inflicts, than walk in a path which seems right in the eyes of a man, and at the end find eternal destruction. They would rather have those chastisements which prove they are children and not bastards, than walk in a flesh-pleasing way of which the end is eternal damnation.

July 17

"Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all your people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house." 2 Chronicles 6:29

Solomon comes to experience; he puts his hand upon the right spot. It is knowing his "own sore" and his "own grief." You may know another man's; that will not profit you. You may read of experience in books, love to hear experimental ministers, and will hear no others; and yet not know your "own sore," your "own grief." Like a physician who may know the symptoms of every malady, and yet not have one malady of his own; so you may hear described every symptom of every disease, and yet be untouched by one.

But the man for whom Solomon's prayer is, he that knows and feels, painfully feels, his "own sore" and his "own grief," whose heart is indeed a grief to him, whose sins do indeed trouble him. How

painful this sore often is! how it runs night and day! how full of ulcerous matter, and how it shrinks from the probe! Most of the Lord's family have a "sore," each some tender spot, something perhaps known to himself and to God alone, the cause of his greatest grief. It may be some secret slip he has made, some sin he has committed, some word he has spoken, or some evil thing he has done. He has been entangled, and entrapped, and cast down; and this is his grief and his sore which he feels, and that at times deeply before God. For such Solomon prays--he casts his net upon the right side of the ship; and says, "Then hear from heaven your dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart you know; for you only know the hearts of the children of men." Yes; God alone knows the heart; he knows it completely, and sees to its very bottom.

July 18

"Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." How often do we find and feel this to be our case. Darkness covers our mind; ignorance pervades our soul; unbelief vexes our spirit; guilt troubles our conscience; a crowd of evil imaginations, or foolish or worse than foolish wanderings distract our thoughts; Satan hurls in thick and fast his fiery darts; a dense cloud is spread over the mercy-seat; infidelity whispers its vile suggestions, until, amid all this rabble throng, such confusion and bondage prevail that words seem idle breath, and prayer to the God of heaven but empty mockery.

In this scene of confusion and distraction, when all seems going to the wreck, how kind, how gracious is it in the blessed Spirit to come, as it were, to the rescue of the poor bewildered saint, and to teach him how to pray and what to pray for. He is therefore said "to help our infirmities," for these evils of which we have been speaking are not willful, deliberate sins, but wretched infirmities of the flesh. He helps, then, our infirmities by subduing the power and prevalence of unbelief; by commanding in the mind a solemn calm; by rebuking and chasing away Satan and his fiery darts; by awing the soul with a reverential sense of the power and presence of God; by presenting Jesus before our eyes as the Mediator at the right hand of the Father; by raising up and drawing forth faith upon his Person and work, blood and righteousness; and, above all, by himself interceding for us and in us "with groanings which cannot be uttered." When the soul is favored thus to pray, its petitions are a spiritual sacrifice, and its cries enter the ears of the Lord Almighty, for "He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27; James 5:4; 1 Peter 2:5).

July 19

"Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." Psalm 55:19

True religion is certainly the most weighty, and yet the most mysterious matter that we ever have had or can have to do with in this world. And I will tell you this, that it will either comfort you, or it will distress you. It will either exercise your mind, trouble your soul, cast down your spirit, and make you truly miserable, or else be the source of your choicest comfort and your greatest happiness. From religion come our deepest sorrows and highest joys, the greatest uneasiness

and the sweetest peace.

There is this peculiar feature about true religion, that in the greatest prosperity it may be the cause to us of the chief trouble, or in the greatest adversity be to us the cause of the purest joy. What are wealth or health, rank or titles, and every comfort the world can afford to a wounded spirit? What are poverty, sickness, persecution, contempt, a garret or a prison to a soul basking in the smiles of eternal love?

Religion will surely make itself felt wherever it exists, and will testify by its power to its presence. If, then, you are a partaker of true religion, be you who, where, or what you may, you cannot be at ease in Zion, for there will be ever something working up out of your own heart or arising from some other quarter to make you uneasy.

Job was once at ease, but he was not allowed to die in his soft nest. He therefore says, "I was at ease, but he has broken me asunder--he has also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark." And yet with all this unexpected and apparently cruel treatment, he could still say, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." And though so exercised and distressed that he had to cry out, "I have been reduced to skin and bones and have escaped death by the skin of my teeth. Have mercy on me, my friends, have mercy, for the hand of God has struck me." Yet he could add, in all the confidence of faith, as desirous that his words might stand forever upon record--"Oh, that my words could be written. Oh, that they could be inscribed on a monument, carved with an iron chisel and filled with lead, engraved forever in the rock. But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" Job 19:23-27

July 20

"Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live, and keep your word." Psalm 119:17

Can the Lord deal any way but bountifully with his servants? Why has he made you his servants? Why did he strike the chains of former servitude off your hands? Why did he bring you out of the service of sin, the world, Satan, and self? Why did he ever make himself precious to your heart, win your affections, and enable you to give yourselves wholly unto him? That he might cast you off? that he might mock your calamity? that he might trample you one day into hell? that he might leave you to yourself, that he might allow Satan to overcome you, permit your lusts to destroy you; or allow your sins to be tied one day, like a mill-stone, round your neck to sink you into hell?

Oh, can our heart ever indulge thoughts so derogatory to sovereign grace? Was it not because the Lord had bounty in his heart towards you, that he first turned your heart towards himself? Was it not because the Lord had purposes of love towards you, that he first led your feet into his paths? Was it not because God first loved you, that he gave his Son to die for you?

Now if he has taught you, led you, upheld you, kept you, all this time, is it to cast you off now--to let you sink at last? He cannot do so, will not do so. Those whom he loves, he loves to the end; the good work which he has begun, he will accomplish, and bring to final perfection; and therefore all the Lord's acts are acts of bounty.

July 21

"So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." Romans 9:16

He that is not interested in the eternal election of God the Father, in the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of God the Son, in the work and witness of God the Holy Spirit, whatever be his name, sect, denomination or profession; whatever be his outward conduct, the doctrines he professes, or the creed to which he signs his name, he will die as Esau died, as Balaam died, as Saul died, as Judas and Ahithophel died. He will never see the King in his beauty; never see the land afar off; never see the new Jerusalem, nor the blood of sprinkling, "that speaks better things than the blood of Abel."

But every living soul that has been feelingly taught his lost condition, that has known something of a resting-place in Christ, that has turned his back upon the world and the professing church, and gone weeping Zionward, in whose heart God the Holy Spirit has implanted those solemn desires, and (if I may use the expression) those solemn determinations under the divine teaching, not a determination of free will, but the inward determination of grace strengthened to it by the Spirit of God, "to join himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten"--that he may live in Jesus and die in Jesus, live out of Jesus and unto Jesus, that he may feel his power, taste his love, know his blood, rejoice in his grace; every such soul shall, like Israel of old, be borne safely through this waste-howling wilderness, shall be carried through this valley of tears, and taken to enjoy eternal bliss and glory in the presence of Him whom to see as he is, constitutes the blessedness of the redeemed. Every such poor, exercised, tempted soul shall be brought into a personal enjoyment of Christ below and of Christ above, so as to enjoy a foretaste of heaven here, and hereafter to bathe in the ocean of endless bliss.

July 22

"Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous--nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:11

It may be said of spiritual exercises as the Apostle speaks of chastening generally, of which indeed they form a component part, that "for the present they are not joyous, but grievous; but afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." Why the Lord allows so many of his people to be so long and so deeply tried about their saving interest in Christ, why he does not more speedily and fully manifest his pardoning love to their souls, is a mystery which we cannot fathom. But I have observed that, where the first work was not attended with deep and powerful convictions of sin, it is usually the case, as if what was lacking in depth has to be made up in length, and a slow, continuous work compensates, as it were, for a shorter and more intense one.

I consider it, however, a great mercy where there are these exercises, for I am well convinced that exercise is as much needed for the health of the soul as of the body. Without movement the air becomes pestilential, and water putrescent. Motion is the life of the natural, and equally so of the supernatural, creation; and what are exercises, doubts, and fears, accompanied as they always are by desires and prayers, but means by which the soul is kept alive and healthy? As Hezekiah said, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit."

But if you cannot see what good exercises have done you, can you not see what evil they have kept you from? They mainly kept you from being entangled in a worldly system; they have preserved you from resting in the form without the power, and kept you from that notional dead-letter faith which has ruined so many thousands. (This extract was taken from a letter to a friend.) Without exercises you could do without a revealed Christ, without manifested pardon of sin, without the love of God being shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

And here most are, who are not exercised--resting in "a name to live," and in the doctrine without the experience. But, being sick, you need a physician; being guilty, you need mercy; and being a sinner, you need salvation; and all this, not in word and name, but in reality, and divine revelation and application. Your exercises give you errands to the throne of mercy, and make you see in Christ and his precious gospel what otherwise would neither be seen nor cared for.

At the same time, it would be wrong to rest in exercises as marks and evidences of grace. Thirst is good as preparatory for water; hunger is good as antecedent to food; but who can rest in thirst or hunger? Without them, water and food are not desired; so, without exercises, Christ, the Water and Bread of life, is not desired nor longed for. But these exercises are meant to quicken longing desires after Christ, and eventually make him very precious.

July 23

"Turn us unto you, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old." Lamentations 5:21

If we do not wish to deceive ourselves, if God has made us honest, if he has planted his fear in our hearts, if he has begun and is carrying on a good work in us, there will be evidences of the existence of the life of God within. Life is the commencement of salvation as an inward reality; for whatever the eternal purposes of God are, or whatever standing the vessel of mercy has in Christ previous to effectual calling, there is no more movement in the soul Godwards until life is imparted, than there is natural life and motion in a breathless corpse that lies interred in the churchyard.

But wherever divine life is implanted there will be certain fruits and feelings that spring out of this life. One fruit will be 'complaint', and this will arise sometimes from a feeling of the burden of sin, and at others from a sense of merited chastisement from God on account of it. But wherever this complaining is spiritual, there will be accompanying it "an accepting the punishment of our iniquity," and "a putting of our mouth in the dust." Thus where there is spiritual life there will be complaint, confession, and submission; the effect being meekness, brokenness, and humility.

This breaks to pieces self-conceit and self-justification, and the result is a searching and trying our ways whether they are of God. The fruit of this search will be, for the most part, a solemn and painful conviction that the greater part have been in the flesh; or, at least, there will be many anxious suspicions which cannot be relieved except by an express testimony from the Lord himself. This produces a going out of soul unto him, the cry now being, "Let us turn again to the Lord;" and towards him the heart turns as to the only Source and Author of every good and perfect gift. As the quickened soul knows that he is a heart-searching God, this appeal will purge away much hypocrisy and insincerity, and deepen uprightness, sincerity, and godly integrity. And the blessed fruit and end of all this sifting work will be a coming down of gracious answers, divine testimonies, smiles of the Savior's loving countenance, soft whispers of God's eternal favor, and the blessed witness of the Spirit within.

July 24

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) and has raised us up together." Ephesians 2:4-6

Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since the body of Christ was quickened in the sepulcher; but the virtual effect of that quickening reached all the election of grace, and will stretch down to the remotest period of time. Now, by virtue of this quickening, when the Holy Spirit comes forward for the execution of his purpose, life enters into the soul. "You has he quickened, who were dead." With quickening comes living sensations, such as conviction of sin, guilt of conscience, the fear of God, the heart broken, the spirit of prayer, repentance unto life; in a word, all the first work of grace in the soul. As in the body of Christ, when quickened by the Holy Spirit, there were vital movements before that body left the sepulcher, so there are vital movements in the soul of a child of God under the quickening operations of God the Holy Spirit, before raised up and brought forth. He is quickened into life, and under that quickening sees, feels, trembles, cries, groans, begs, and sues for mercy; every faculty of his renewed mind is alive and open to the things of God. Never do we pray, read, hear, feel so much the power of eternal things, as when the Lord by his Spirit and grace is first pleased to quicken us into this spiritual life. But no resurrection yet; the quickening precedes.

But as, when the breath of the Holy Spirit, so to speak, quickened the body of Christ as it lay in the sepulcher, it was but a preparation for the raising of that dead body from the tomb, so the quickening operations of God the Holy Spirit in the heart of a child of God are but preparatory to his being raised up together with Christ. Christ's body did not remain in the tomb, though it was alive in the tomb; so those whom God has quickened, and who are still lying in the tomb of sin, misery, and wretchedness, but are sighing, suing, and begging for mercy at his hands will certainly be brought out. Christ's body was not left there when it was quickened, neither will any of you who are quickened be left in your sin and misery, in your condemnation and guilt. The same divine operation that quickened you into spiritual life will bring you out of this state of concern and anxiety into the resurrection life of Christ, as was done in the case of his body, when he rose out of the tomb.

Now, when the power of God is put forth in the soul; when mercy reaches the heart; when Christ is revealed, his word applied, and it comes forth out of the dark tomb in which it has lain, like Lazarus, bound with grave-clothes, and yet alive; when the door of hope thus is set open, and the soul is raised up to believe, hope and love, then it is "raised up together with Christ." The resurrection of Christ was not merely the grand testimony that God put upon him as his dear Son, for he was declared to be "the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," but he was "raised also for our justification;" and we rose in him, if we believe in his name.

All the elect of God rose with him; for they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." When he died, they died; when he rose again, they rose again; and as they rose virtually in the Person of the Son of God when he rose triumphant from the tomb, so, when the Holy Spirit applies to the heart and conscience the benefits and blessings of his death and resurrection, he raises them up and brings them out of the dark sepulcher into the open light of a glorious gospel day. And this is being "raised up together with Christ."

July 25

"And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6

Jesus did not tarry upon the earth after his resurrection; he ascended up where he was before, and took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But when he ascended up on high, all the election of grace ascended with him. He did not leave his members behind upon earth, but he took them all 'virtually' into heaven. And this is a pledge that they will one day be with him in the realms of eternal bliss, because they have already ascended with him, as the members of his mystical body. This, in experimental manifestation, is the lifting up of the affections, the raising up of the soul to sit together with Christ in heavenly places. Sin, death, hell, and Satan, with all the misery and wretchedness we have brought upon ourselves--to have them all under our feet, as Christ now reigns, having put all enemies under his feet--to enjoy this, is to sit with Christ in heavenly places. One of the last acts that God usually does for the soul, is the lifting it up thus to sit with Christ in the anticipation of eternal glory. To see death dethroned, hell destroyed, sin abolished, and a glorious immortality reserved for the saints of God; to enjoy this in the sweet anticipation and blessed foretastes, so as to be in heaven before we get there--this is to sit down with Christ in heavenly places, by virtue of his sitting down there "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now, see what benefits and blessings spring out of a union with the Son of God. Why did God quicken your soul? Because you were a member of Christ. Why were you raised up to "a good hope through grace?" Why did mercy, peace, and pardon flow into your soul? Why were you brought out of misery and death into the light of God's countenance, and had a precious Christ revealed to your heart? Because in the day, when the Son of God rose triumphant from the tomb, you, as a member of his mystical body, rose there and then with him. Why are you sometimes privileged to have your affections on things above, attain any victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave, find your enemies put under your feet, and look forward at times with a sweet anticipation of eternal joys? Because, as a member of Christ's mystical body, you have already ascended, and are already sitting at the right hand of God with Christ, who is sitting as the Head of his body there.

July 26

"Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ." Philippians 1:27

What is this conversation? The word means the whole of your life before God and before man. It is a very comprehensive term in the original, meaning, literally, "Conduct yourselves as citizens." It therefore includes the whole of our spiritual fellowship and daily communion with God and man. It thus views us as citizens of no base city; as citizens, I may indeed say, of a heavenly city, the new Jerusalem; and it bids us walk and speak, live and act, as becomes citizens of a heavenly country. This, then, is the meaning of the word "conversation" in our text, and by it we are called to walk with God as becomes the gospel. He has reconciled us to himself by the blood of his dear Son; and when we receive the atonement, or reconciliation, as the word means, then we can walk with God in peace, equity, and amity, for sin, which made the breach, is removed out of the way. So Levi, as ministering at the altar, and those near to God, walked of old. "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear with which he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips--he

walked with me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity" (Malachi 2:5, 6). This is walking in the light as He is in the light, and so far as we can do this, our fellowship is with the Father (1 John 1:3-7).

And our conversation with God, our walk with God, must be as becomes the gospel of Christ. If we walk at freedom with God, in sweet liberty, with holy access, pouring out our heart before him, enjoying his presence, and having some discoveries of his goodness and mercy, then our conversation with God becomes the gospel. The gospel is a message of mercy. When, then, we embrace that mercy, and feel the power of it; when that mercy reaches our heart, melts our inmost soul, dissolves our doubts and fears, and removes legality and bondage, then we walk worthy of the gospel, as walking before God in the light of his countenance through the power of the gospel. God does not send the gospel to condemn us, for "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" and they walk after the Spirit when they have access by him through Christ unto the Father.

July 27

"And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." Acts 16:5

Oh what an inestimable mercy it is for a man to know the truth for himself by divine teaching and divine testimony; to have it applied to his heart by a gracious influence and a heavenly power, so as to know for himself what salvation is, whence it comes, and above all to enjoy a sweet persuasion that this salvation has reached his heart! He will then know where to go in the hour of trouble, to whom to resort when sorrow and affliction come into his house, or illness or infirmity shake his tabernacle. He will not be a stranger to the throne of grace, nor to the sweetness of the covenant ordered in all things and sure.

But there will be given him from above, out of the fullness of Christ, such grace and strength as will support him in the trying hour. It is by these gracious dealings upon his soul, that a believer becomes "established in the faith." No, the very storms through which he passes will only strengthen him to take a firmer hold of Christ, and thus become more established in the faith of him. It is in these storms that he learns more of his own weakness and of Christ's strength; more of his own misery and of Christ's mercy; more of his own sinfulness and of super-abounding grace; more of his own poverty and of Christ's riches; more of his own desert of hell, and more of his own title to heaven. Thus he becomes "established in faith," for the same blessed Spirit who began the work carries it on, goes on to fill up the original outline, and to engrave the image of Christ in deeper characters upon his heart, and to teach him more and more experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus.

July 28

"But my eyes are unto you, O God the Lord--in you is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." Psalm 141:8

The very cry is a pledge that the Lord will not leave the soul destitute. Strange though it be to us; it is the light that shows darkness; it is life that makes us feel deadness; no, more, it is fertility and fruitfulness that make us feel barrenness; it is riches that make us feel poverty; it is God's teaching and presence that make us feel destitution. This very mourning over our barrenness; this very

feeling of our inability to do good, is a proof of the life of God in the soul, an evidence of the work of grace in the heart.

"Leave not my soul destitute." This is something genuine; this is heart-work; these are the footsteps of the flock; these are the leadings and teachings of God the Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed. These things are saving; these things will lead the soul to eternal glory. And he that knows any of these things by personal experience will one day see the glory of the Lord face to face.

What do we, then, know of these things? Can we lay our experience side by side with this experience of the Psalmist, and say, "My eyes are unto you, O God the Lord; in you is my trust; leave not my soul destitute?" Wherever that prayer is, it will bring an answer; and wherever that answer is, there will be matter for everlasting praise. Blessed are the souls that know these things from genuine heartfelt experience. They will shine forth as stars forever and ever; and when the Lord of life and glory comes a second time without sin unto salvation, then shall they also appear with him in glory.

July 29

"Beloved, let us love one another--for love is from God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God." 1 John 4:7

"Love is of God." I can have no satisfaction, real satisfaction, that I am a partaker of the Spirit and grace of Christ except I feel some measure of the love of God shed abroad in my heart. I may have hopes, expectations, and evidences, fainter or brighter; but I have no sure, clear evidence in my own soul that I have the Spirit and grace of Christ there, except I am blessed with the love of God; for until love comes, there is fear which has torment. And while we have fear which has torment, there is no being made perfect in love. You have no clear assurance in your own breast that God has loved you with an everlasting love; nor have you any bright testimony that the Spirit of God makes your body his temple until this love comes into your soul. But when the crowning blessing comes of the love of God experimentally felt and enjoyed by his own shedding of it abroad in the heart, with the communication of the Spiri

August

August 1

"Let your work appear unto your servants, and your glory unto their children." Psalm 90:16

"Let your work appear unto your servants." Creature works we here read nothing of. They had been long ago cut to the very ground. And what had been their deathblow? What had driven the dagger into their very heart? "Days of affliction, and years of evil." These had been their destruction; creature righteousness they had stabbed to the very heart, and let out the life-blood of human merit. There is no petition, then, "Let our works appear!" No. These were buried in the grave of corruption; these were swallowed up and lost in "days of affliction, and years of evil." But, "Let your work," the finished work of the Son of God; the obedience of Jesus to the law; the atoning blood which he shed upon Calvary's tree; the work which he undertook, went through, and completed--"Oh," breathes forth the man of God in earnest cry (and our hearts if they have been taught by the same Spirit will unite in the same strain), "let your work appear unto your servants!"

What! can we not see that work in the word of God? is not that sufficient? Can we not hear that work set forth by good men? is not that sufficient? Can we not read it as opened up by the pen of ready writers? is not that sufficient? Yes; for those who have never seen "days of affliction, and years of evil," amply sufficient; but not for God's exercised children; they have other thoughts and other feelings upon these matters. They know what darkness of mind is, the power of unbelief, and creature helplessness; and they know that nothing short of the light of God's countenance, the manifestation of God's mercy, and the teaching and witness of God the Spirit, can make the work of Jesus appear in all its beauty, suitability, and glory; and therefore they can say,

"Let your work appear unto your servants. Give me, Lord, a sight by living faith of the atonement of Jesus. Show me" (the soul would cry in the language of Moses), "show me your glory; reveal in my heart the finished work of Jesus; sprinkle my conscience with his atoning blood; discover him to me, and thus give me a sweet manifestation of his Person, love, blood, and complete salvation. Let it, Lord, appear before my eyes, and in my heart, and seal it with divine power upon my conscience."

August 2

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33:27

How Moses brought before the people the eternity of God! He will have nothing to do with time. What is time? A fragment, merely like the foam of the sea compared with the mighty ocean. The ocean is eternity; time is merely the foam upon the wave. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." And depend upon it, if the everlasting arms are underneath the saints of God, for it is of and to those who the words are spoken, they are there for some purpose. God puts affliction upon affliction to bring the soul down, that it may fall into and upon the everlasting arms, and find how firm and strong they are. And have you not often found it so? Do not lie against your right. How

many trials in providence you have been brought through. How conspicuously the Lord has appeared in this and that instance, so that your unbelief and infidelity were, for the time at least, thoroughly silenced, and faith saw the hand of God so clearly that you felt as if you could never doubt again. Have you not had many sweet supports on your bed of languishing, many precious seasons when you could bless God for laying upon you his afflicting hand? And have you not found that strength was always given to you according to your day, that with every trial power was given you to bear it, and that out of your deepest afflictions came your greatest blessings? Why are you not in hell? Do you not deserve to be there? Why still upon praying ground, with a good hope through grace, and your soul waiting for the Lord to appear, more than those that watch for the morning? If these arms have once supported you, will they not support you again? Would they be everlasting if they could part asunder and let you fall through? Rest upon them and you will find how strong they are.

August 3

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."
Colossians 3:4

If Christ be your life upon earth; if you have a living faith in his divine Majesty; if any drops of his love have ever bedewed your soul; if any sweet smile has ever comforted your heart, the Apostle would say to all such, "When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." No longer pestered by sin and Satan, no longer carrying about a weak, infirm tabernacle, the seat of innumerable evils and maladies, but endued with a soul pure as he is pure, and a spiritual body capable of enjoying the bliss and blessedness of eternity, "then shall you appear," you suffering saints, who have set your affections on him whom you have not seen, and yet in whom you believe, "then shall you also appear with him in glory."

And is not this worth struggling for? Is not this a blessed goal at the end of the race? Is not this a worthy prize to run for? Is not this an ample reward of all your temptations, troubles, griefs and sorrows, to believe, and not in vain, that "when he shall appear," you "shall appear with him in glory?" The Lord, if it be his will, lead our souls into these divine and blessed realities! They are the substance of vital godliness; and so far as we feel them, and live under the sweet influences and bedewing operations of the Spirit of grace, these things will prove all our salvation, as they must be, if we be rightly taught, all our desire.

August 4

"But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Peter 5:10

There is no Christian perfection, no divine establishment, no spiritual strength, no solid settlement, except by suffering. But after the soul has suffered, after it has felt God's chastising hand, the effect is to perfect, to establish, to strengthen, and to settle it. By suffering, a man becomes settled into a solemn conviction of the character of Jehovah as revealed in the Scripture, and in a measure made experimentally manifest in his conscience. He is settled in the belief of an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure;" in the persuasion that "all things work together for good to those who love God, and are the called according to his purpose;" in the firm conviction that everything comes to pass according to God's eternal purpose; and are all tending

to the good of the Church, and to God's eternal glory.

His soul, also, is settled down into a deep persuasion of the misery, wretchedness, and emptiness of the creature; into the conviction that the world is but a shadow, and that the things of time and sense are but bubbles that burst the moment they are grasped; that of all things sin is most to be dreaded, and the favor of God above all things most to be coveted; that nothing is really worth knowing except Jesus Christ and him crucified; that all things are passing away, and that he himself is rapidly hurrying down the stream of life, and into the boundless ocean of eternity. Thus he becomes settled in a knowledge of the truth, and his soul remains at anchor, looking to the Lord to preserve him here, and bring him in peace and safety to his eternal home.

August 5

"And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3

How many are anxious to know what is the way of salvation, how eternal life is to be obtained, and how to "flee from the wrath to come." But the Lord Jesus has shown in one short sentence in what eternal life consists, that it is in the knowledge of the "only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent." He therefore that knows the Father and the Son has eternal life in his soul. The Lord Jesus, in the sixth chapter of John, quoted this among other passages of the Old Testament, and says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me." He lays this down, then, as one especial fruit of divine teaching, that it produces a coming unto him. The Spirit, who teaches to profit, holds up before the eyes of the soul, the Person, work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He shows the soul that he is just such a Savior as it needs. He opens up the dignity of his Person, and shows that he is God-man. He makes known in the conscience that he has offered up himself a sacrifice for sin; that he has shed his atoning blood so that the sin of the Church is forever put away from the sight of a just God. He opens up before the eyes of the mind his glorious righteousness, as that in which the Father is well pleased, and in which if the soul has but a saving interest, it is secure from the wrath to come. He unfolds to the heart the willingness of Christ to receive every coming sinner; he shows the treasures of mercy and grace which are locked up in him; and brings down in the heart the comforting words that he spoke in the days of his flesh, such as, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

August 6

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city." Proverbs 16:32

What a foe to one's peace is one's own spirit! And what shall I call it? It is often an infernal spirit. Why? Because it bears the mark of Satan upon it. The pride of our spirit, the presumption of our spirit, the hypocrisy of our spirit, the intense selfishness of our spirit are often hidden from us. This wily devil, SELF, can wear such masks and assume such forms; this serpent, SELF, can so creep and crawl, can so twist and turn, and can disguise itself under such false appearances, that it is hidden often from ourselves.

Who is the greatest enemy we have to fear? We all have our enemies. But who is our greatest enemy? He that you carry in your own bosom; your daily, hourly, and momentarily companion, that entwines himself in nearly every thought of your heart; that suggests well near every motive; that sometimes puffs up with pride, sometimes inflames with lust, sometimes inflates with presumption, and sometimes works under feigned humility and fleshly holiness.

Now this SELF must be overcome; for if SELF overcomes us eventually, we shall perish in the condemnation of SELF. God is determined to stain the pride of human glory. He will never let self, (which is but another word for the creature,) wear the crown of victory. It must be crucified, denied, and mortified; it must be put off, so that Jesus may be put on; that in the denying of SELF, Jesus may be believed in; and that in the crucifixion of SELF, there may be a solemn spiritual union with Him who was crucified on Calvary.

Now, are we overcoming SELF? Are we buffeted? What says SELF? "Buffet back." Are we despised? What says SELF? "Despise back; retort angry look for angry look, and hasty word, for hasty word; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But what says the Spirit of God in a tender conscience? "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

The way to overcome self is by looking out of self to Him who was crucified upon Calvary's tree; to receive his image into our heart; to be clothed with his likeness; to drink into his spirit; and "receive out of his fullness grace for grace."

August 7

"The fear of the Lord is his treasure." Isaiah 33:6

"The fear of the Lord is his treasure." And, oh, what a treasure is this fear! Treasure in ancient times was generally hidden; it was concealed from the eye of man, hoarded up, and not brought out ostentatiously to view. Wealthy men of old hid the knowledge of their treasures, lest they should be robbed of them by the hand of violence. So spiritually, the fear of the Lord is hidden in the heart, and lies deep in the soul; it is not spread out ostentatiously to view, but is buried out of sight in a man's conscience. But though hidden from others, and sometimes even from ourselves, this "fear of the Lord" will act as circumstances draw it forth. There may be times and seasons when we seem almost hardened and conscience-seared; sin appears to have such power over us, and evil thoughts and desires so carry us away, that we cannot trace one atom of godly fear within; and the soul cries, "What will become of me! Where am I going now! What will come next on such a wretch as I feel myself to be!"

But place him in such circumstances, say, as befell Joseph, then he will find that the "fear of the Lord" is in him a fountain of life, a holy principle springing up in his soul. Thus, this fear, which is a part of the heavenly treasure, acts when most needed. And the more the life of God is felt in the soul, the more the fear of God flows forth as a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. The more lively the grace of God is in the soul, the more lively will godly fear be in the heart; and the more the Spirit of God works with power in the conscience, the deeper will be the fear of God in the soul.

August 8

"Jesus said unto him, I am the way." John 14:6

How is Jesus the way? In everything that he is to God's people he is the way. His blood is the way to heaven; "for the whole path," as Deer speaks, "is lined with blood." By his precious blood shed upon Calvary's tree he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and opened a way of access to God. His righteousness, also, is part of the way; for only so far as we stand clothed in his glorious righteousness have we any access unto, any acceptance with God the Father. And his love is the way; for if we walk in love, we walk in him, for he is love. Every part of the way was devised and is executed by the love of his tender heart.

But the way, also, is the way of tribulation. Was not Jesus himself the great Sufferer? And if he be the way, the only way, I must be conformed to his likeness in suffering. Not to know afflictions and tribulations, is not to know Christ. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!" And if so, to have no sorrow, to have no acquaintance with grief, and to know nothing of tribulation, is to proclaim to all with a loud voice that we have no union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we are continually turning aside "to the right hand" or "to the left." There is that cowardice in the heart which cannot bear the cross; there is that slipping into carnal ease and fleshly security, so as to get away from under the painful cross of affliction and suffering. But when we thus turn aside "to the right hand" or "to the left," the voice the Lord sends after us is, "This is the way"--the way of affliction; no other; the way of tribulation, the way of trial, the way of exercise. This is the way in which the King walked of old; and this is the way in which all his people have walked before him and after him; for this is the only path in which the footsteps of the flock can be found.

August 9

"Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness." Psalm 112:4

We often get into such dark paths, that we seem altogether out of the ways of God, and feel as if there were no more grace in our souls, than in one altogether dead in trespasses and sins. And whether we look back at the past, or view the present, or turn our eyes to the future, one dark cloud seems to rest upon the whole; nor can we, with all our searching, find to our satisfaction that we have one spark of true religion, or one atom of grace, or one grain of vital godliness, or any trace that the Spirit of God has touched our consciences with his finger.

Now, when we are in this dark, benighted state, we need light; we need the blessed Sun of righteousness to arise; we need the south wind to blow a heavenly gale, and drive the mists away; we need the clouds to part, and the light of God's countenance to shine into our souls, so as to show us where we are, and what we are, and make it clear, that base and vile as we are, yet that we have a saving interest in the love of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the teachings of the Holy Spirit. And when his word begins to distill like the rain and to drop like the dew, when the Lord himself is pleased to speak home one sweet testimony, one little word, one kind intimation--what a change it makes! The clouds break away, the fog clears off, the mists dissolve, and the soul becomes sweetly persuaded of its saving interest in the blood and love of the Lamb.

August 10

"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not--for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified." Matthew 28:5

Whatever be our state and case, if it can truly be said of us what the angel said to the women at the sepulcher, "I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified," we have a divine warrant to believe that "he is gone before us into Galilee. There shall we see him." He is risen; he has ascended up on high, and "has received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He is now upon the mercy-seat, and he invites and draws poor needy sinners to himself. He says, "Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He allows us, he invites us to pour out our heart before him, to show before him our trouble, to spread our needs at his feet, as Hezekiah spread the letter in the temple. If we seek communion with him, we may and shall tell him how deeply we need him, that without him it is not life to live, and with him not death to die. We shall beg of him to heal our backslidings; to manifest his love and blood to our conscience; to show us the evil of sin; to bless us with godly sorrow for our slips and falls; to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us; to lead us into his sacred truth; to preserve us from all error; to plant his fear deep in our heart; to apply some precious promise to our soul; to be with us in all our ways; to watch over us in all our goings out and comings in; to preserve us from pride, self-deception, and self-righteousness; to give us renewed tokens of our saving interest in his finished work; to subdue our iniquities; to make and keep our conscience tender; and work in us everything which is pleasing in his sight.

What is communion but mutual giving and receiving, the flowing together of two hearts, the melting into one of two wills, the exchange of two loves--each party maintaining its distinct identity, yet being to the other an object of affection and delight? Have we nothing, then, to give to Christ? Yes, our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all the salvation and sanctification of our souls. And what has he to give us? What? Why, everything worth having, everything worth a moment's anxious thought, everything for time and eternity.

August 11

"They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them--I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble--for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." Jeremiah 31:9

Oh how much is needed to bring the soul to its only rest and center! What trials and afflictions; what furnaces, floods, rods, and strokes, as well as smiles, promises, and gracious drawings! What pride and self to be brought out of! What love and blood to be brought unto! What lessons to learn of the dreadful evil of sin! What lessons to learn of the freeness and fullness of salvation! What sinkings in self! What risings in Christ! What guilt and condemnation on account of sin; what self-loathing and self-abasement; what distrust of self; what fears of falling; what prayers and desires to be kept; what clinging to Christ; what looking up and unto his divine Majesty, as faith views him at the right hand of the Father; what desires never more to sin against him, but to live, move, and act in the holy fear of God, do we find, more or less daily, in a living soul!

And whence springs all this inward experience but from the fellowship and communion which there is between Christ and the soul? "We are members," says the Apostle, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." As such there is a mutual participation in sorrow and joy. "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He can, therefore, "be touched with the feelings of our infirmities," can pity and sympathize; and thus, as we may cast upon him our sins and sorrows, when faith enables, so can he supply, out of his

own fullness, that grace and strength which can bring us off eventually more than conquerors.

August 12

"The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Hebrews 9:13-14

What a mercy it is to have a conscience in any measure purged from dead works to serve the living God; to feel any free access to his gracious Majesty, any happy liberty in walking before him, any deliverance from doubt and fear, any removal of those exercises which try the mind and often bring heavy burdens upon the soul! Still, after all our wanderings, we must ever come to the same spot; after all our departings and backslidings, still again and again we must be brought to the same place to get the guilt removed, the mercy proclaimed, and the peace revealed. For is not this the blessedness--that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin? Having obtained eternal redemption for us, his blood will never lose its efficacy, but will ever purge the conscience as long as the conscience of any burdened member of his mystical body remains to be purged, until he presents all his ransomed saints faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

August 13

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you--and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

This "new spirit" is a broken spirit, a soft, tender spirit, and is therefore called "a heart of flesh," as opposed to "the heart of stone," the rocky, obdurate, unfeeling, impenitent heart of one dead in sin, or dead in a profession. And how is this soft, penitent heart communicated? "I will put my Spirit within you." The same divine truth is set forth in the gracious promise--"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." But what is the immediate effect of the pouring out of the spirit of grace and of supplications? A looking to him whom they have pierced, a mourning for him as one mourns for an only son, and a being in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. This is evangelical repentance, as distinguished from legal; godly sorrow working repentance to salvation not to be repented of, as distinct from the sorrow of the world which works death.

These two kinds of repentance are to be carefully distinguished from each other, though they are often sadly confounded. Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, all repented; but their repentance was the remorse of natural conscience, not the godly sorrow of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They trembled before God as an angry judge, were not melted into contrition before him as a forgiving Father. They neither hated their sins nor forsook them, loved holiness nor sought it. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord; Esau plotted Jacob's death; Saul consulted the witch of Endor; Ahab put honest Micaiah into prison; and Judas hanged himself.

How different from this forced and false repentance of a reprobate is the repentance of a child of God--that true repentance for sin, that godly sorrow, that holy mourning which flows from the

Spirit's gracious operations. This does not spring from a sense of the wrath of God in a broken law, but of his mercy in a blessed gospel; from a view by faith of the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross; from a manifestation of pardoning love; and is always attended with self-loathing and self-abhorrence, with deep and unreserved confession of sin and forsaking it, with most hearty, sincere, and earnest petitions to be kept from all evil, and a holy longing to live to the praise and glory of God.

August 14

"For you have magnified your word above all your name." Psalm 138:2

This is one of those expressions in Scripture that seem so comprehensive, and yet so amazing. To my mind it is one of the most remarkable expressions in the whole book of God. "You have magnified your word above all your name." The name of God includes all the perfections of God; everything that God is, and that God is revealed as possessing. His justice, majesty, holiness, greatness, and glory, and whatever he is in himself; that is God's name. And yet he has magnified something above all his name; his word, his truth. This may refer to the Incarnate Word, the Son of God, who is called the Word. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one" (1 John 5:7). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1). You may take the words either as meaning that God has magnified his Word--his eternal Son--above all his great name, that is, he has set Jesus on high above all the other perfections of his majesty, or take it as meaning his written word, which is contained in the sacred Scriptures. He has magnified it above all his name in the fulfillment of it; God's faithfulness being so dear to him, that he has exalted it above all his other perfections. He would sooner allow them all to come to nothing, than for his faithfulness to fail. He has so magnified his faithfulness, that his love, his mercy, his grace would all sooner fail, than his faithfulness; the word of his mouth, and what he has revealed in the Scriptures.

What a firm salvation, then, is ours, which rests upon his word, when God has magnified that word above all his name! What a comprehensive declaration is this! What volumes of blessedness and truth are contained therein! So that, if God has revealed his truth to your soul, and given you faith to anchor in the word of promise, sooner than that should fail, he would suffer the loss of all--for he has magnified his word above all his name.

August 15

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Galatians 2:20

There is no way except by being spiritually baptized into Christ's death and life, that we can ever get a victory over our besetting sins. If, on the one hand, we have a view of a suffering Christ, and thus become baptized into his sufferings and death, the feeling, while it lasts, will subdue the power of sin. Or, on the other hand, if we get a believing view of a risen Christ, and receive supplies of grace out of his fullness, that will lift us above sin's dominion. If sin is powerfully working in us, we need one of these two things to subdue it; either we must have something come down to us to give us a victory over our sin in our strugglings against it, or we must have something to lift us up out of sin into a purer and better element.

When there is a view of the sufferings and sorrows, agonies and death of the Son of God, power comes down to the soul in its struggles against sin, and gives it a measure of holy resistance and subduing strength against it. So, when there is a coming in of the grace and love of Christ, it lifts up the soul from the love and power of sin into a purer and holier atmosphere. Sin cannot be subdued in any other way. You must either be baptized into Christ's sufferings and death, or you must be baptized (and these follow each other) into Christ's resurrection and life. A sight of him as a suffering God, or a view of him as a risen Jesus, must be connected with every successful attempt to get the victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. You may strive, vow, and repent; and what does it all amount to? You sink deeper and deeper into sin than before. Pride, lust, and covetousness come in like a flood, and you are swamped and carried away almost before you are aware. But if you get a view of a suffering Christ, or of a risen Christ; if you get a taste of his dying love, a drop of his atoning blood, or any manifestation of his beauty and blessedness, there comes from this spiritual baptism into his death or his life a subduing power; and this gives a victory over temptation and sin which nothing else can or will give.

Yet I believe we are often many years learning this divine secret, striving to repent and reform, and cannot; until at last by divine teaching we come to learn a little of what the Apostle meant when he said, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And when we can get into this life of faith, this hidden life, then our affections are set on things above.

There is no use setting people to work by legal strivings; they only plunge themselves deeper in the ditch. You must get Christ into your soul by the power of God; and then he will subdue, by his smiles, blood, love, and presence, every internal foe.

August 16

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

"The earth, from which food comes,
is transformed below as by fire;
sapphires come from its rocks,
and its dust contains nuggets of gold.

No bird of prey knows that hidden path,
no vulture's eye has seen it.

Proud beasts do not set foot on it,
and no lion prowls there." Job 28:5-8

The truths of the gospel, though to an enlightened eye they shine as with a ray of light all through the word, yet are they, for the most part, laid up as in deep veins--"Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place where gold is refined." "The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire; sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold." (Job 28:5-6).

But where is "the place of sapphires?" and where these "nuggets of gold?" "In the path which no bird of prey," no unclean professor, "knows, and which the vulture's eye," keen though it be after this world's carrion, "has not seen."

But to a spiritual mind sweet and self-rewarding is the task, if task it can be called, of searching the word as for hidden treasure. No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit of prayer and meditation, of separation from the world, of holy fear, of a desire to know the will of God and do it, of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity, to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which are stored up in the Scriptures; and this, not to furnish the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the bread of life.

Truth, received in the love and power of it, informs and establishes the judgment, softens and melts the heart, warms and draws upward the affections, makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender, is the food of faith, the strength of hope, and the mainspring of love.

To know the truth is to be "a disciple indeed," and to be made blessedly free; free from error, and the vile heresies which everywhere abound; free from presumption and self-righteousness; free from the curse and bondage of the law and the condemnation of a guilty conscience; free from a slavish fear of the opinion of men and the contempt and scorn of the world and worldly professors; free from following a multitude to do evil; free from companionship with those who have a name to live but are dead. But free to love the Lord and his dear people; free to speak well of his name; free to glorify him with our body and soul, which are his; free to a throne of grace and to a blood-besprinkled mercy-seat; free to every good word and work; free to "whatever things are good, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report."

August 17

"But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you our Potter; and we all are the work of your hand." Isaiah 64:8

Until free-will, self-righteousness, creature exertions, and human merit are dried up and withered away, until they all die, we can never come into that spot where we are the clay, and God is the Potter. Can the clay make itself into a vessel? Can it mold itself into shape and form? Can it start from its bed, and work itself up into a vessel for use or ornament? No more can we make ourselves fit for glory, or mold ourselves into vessels of honor. If the Lord does but give us the feeling in our souls, our sweetest privilege, our dearest enjoyment, is to be the clay.

Free-will, self-righteousness, human wisdom, and creature strength--we give them all to the pharisees; let them make the most of them. But when the Lord indulges our souls with some measure of access to himself, and brings us in all humility and brokenness to lie low before his throne, we feel that we are nothing but what he makes us, have nothing but what he gives us, experience nothing but what he works in us, and do nothing but what he does in and for us. To be here, and to lie here, is to be the clay; and to find the Lord working in us holy desires, fervent breathings, secret cries, and the actings of faith, hope, and love; and to feel these things freely given, graciously communicated, and divinely wrought, and to know the Lord is doing all this for us and in us, is to find him the Potter, and is to be brought to the sweetest, lowliest, and happiest spot that a soul can come into.

August 18

"But let patience have her perfect work." James 1:4

Patience then has its work; and what is that?

1. To ENDURE all trials, live through all temptations, bear all crosses, carry all loads, fight all battles, toil through all difficulties, and overcome all enemies.
2. To SUBMIT to the will of God, to own that he is Lord and King, to have no will or way of its own, no scheme or plan to please the flesh, avoid the cross, or escape the rod; but to submit simply to God's righteous dealings, both in providence and grace, believing that he does all things well, that he is a Sovereign, "and works all things according to the counsel of his own will."

Now until the soul is brought to this point, the work of patience is not perfect; it may be going on, but it is not consummated. You may be in the furnace of temptation now, passing through the fiery trial. Are you rebellious or submissive? If still rebellious, you must abide in the furnace until you are brought to submission; and not only so, but it must be thorough submission, or else patience has not its perfect work. The dross and slag of rebellion must be scummed off, and the pure metal flow down. It is all of God's grace to feel this for a single moment.

But are there not, and have there not been, times and seasons, in your soul, when you could be still and know that he is God? when you could submit to his will, believing that he is too wise to err, too good to be unkind? When this submission is felt, patience has its perfect work. Look at Jesus, our great example--see him in the gloomy garden, with the cross in prospect before him on the coming morn. How he could say, "Not my will, but your be done!" There was the perfect work of patience in the perfect soul of the Redeemer. Now you and I must have a work in our soul corresponding to this, or else we are not conformed to the suffering image of our crucified Lord.

Patience in us must have its perfect work; and God will take care that it shall be so. As in a beautiful piece of machinery, if the engineer sees a cog loose or a wheel out of gear, he must adjust the defective part, that it may work easily and properly, and in harmony with the whole machine; so if the God of all our salvation sees a particular grace not in operation or not properly performing its appointed work, he by his Spirit so influences the heart that it is again brought to work as he designed it should do.

Measure your faith and patience by this standard; but do not take in conjunction, or confound with them the workings of your carnal mind. Here we often mistake--we may be submissive as regards our spirit, meek and patient, quiet and resigned, in the inward man, yet feel many uprisings and rebellings of the flesh; and thus patience may not seem to have her perfect work. But to look for perfect submission in the flesh is to look for perfection in the flesh, which was never promised and is never given. Look to what the Spirit is working in you--not to the carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and therefore knows neither subjection nor submission. Look at that inward principality of which the Prince of peace is Lord and Ruler, and see whether in the still depths of your soul, and where he lives and reigns, there is submission to the will of God.

August 19

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." 2 Corinthians 4:8

The saint of God is "troubled on every side," because he has on every side on which he may be troubled, a spiritual side as well as a temporal side, a side in his soul as well as a side in his body, a side in his supernatural as well as in his natural life, a side in his new man of grace as well as a side in his old man of sin. And as it is necessary for him to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, trouble comes upon him on every side and from every quarter, to make him like his blessed Lord. No, his troubles are multiplied in proportion to his grace, for the more the afflictions abound the more abundant are the consolations; and an abundance of consolation is but an abundance of grace. Thus, the more grace he has the greater will be his sufferings; and the more he walks in a path agreeable to the Lord, and in conformity to his will and word, the more will he be baptized with the baptism of sorrow and tribulation with which his great Head was baptized before him.

"Yet not distressed." The words "not distressed" literally signify that we are not shut up in a narrow spot from which there is no outlet whatever. It corresponds to an expression of the Apostle's in another place where he says, "God will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it;" and tallies well with the words of David--"You have known my soul in adversities." There is the trouble on every side. But he adds, "And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a large room." "Not being shut up into the hand of the enemy" is not being abandoned of God to the foeman's death-stroke; and having "the feet set in a large room" is to have a place to move about in, one which affords an escape from death and destruction.

Thus, the dying Christian has a God to go to; a Savior into whose arms he may cast his weary soul; a blessed Spirit who from time to time relieves his doubts and fears, applies a sweet promise to his burdened spirit, gives him resignation and submission to the afflicting hand of God, and illuminates the dark valley of the shadow of death, which he has to tread, with a blessed ray of gospel light.

August 20

"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:10-11

I believe many of God's people, if not most, have much ado to "make their calling and election sure." They are not a people to take things for granted; they cannot sit at ease and say, "I have no doubt that I am a child of God;" they need something powerful, something applied, something spoken by the mouth of God himself; and short of that, they must be exercised with doubts and fears as to their state before him. Now let conscience speak; let us turn over the leaves of conscience. What says that faithful witness? Has God spoken with power to your soul? Has he pardoned your sins? Has he given you a sweet testimony of your saving interest in the Son of his love? Say you, "Why, I do not know that I can say all that, I do not know that God has pardoned my sins."

Well, we will come a little lower then; if you cannot say that, we will take a little lower ground; can you say that you are sighing and groaning and crying at times, not always, but as the Lord works in you, for the sweet manifestations of Jesus' love to your souls? Here is a door open for you, the

door of hope in the valley of Achor. Can you come in here? Well, these are marks of being one of God's peculiar people. But you cannot be satisfied, short of God himself making it known to you; you need an immediate testimony from his blessed mouth, and nothing but that can satisfy you, and when he sheds abroad his love in your soul, it will give you peace and comfort, and nothing short of that can.

August 21

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he sends forth judgment unto victory." Matthew 12:20

The gracious Man of Sorrows will never ever "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." It is true that "he sends forth judgment," for he means to bring the soul down into the dust; but while this judgment is going on, he secretly supports; for he kills that he may make alive; he brings down to the grave that he may bring up. But in sending forth this "judgment," it is "unto victory." Conquest is at the end; victory is sure. There may be a long conflict; a hard and fearful battle, with the garments rolled in sweat and blood; but victory is sure at last; for he will never rest until he fully gains the day. Oh, how Satan would triumph if any saint ever fell out of the embraces of the good Shepherd; if he could point his derisive finger up to heaven's gate and to its risen King, and say, "Your blood was shed in vain for this wretch, he is mine, he is mine!" Such a boast would fill hell with a yell of triumph. But no, no! it never will be so; the "blood that cleanses from all sin" never was, never can be shed in vain.

Though the reed is "bruised," it will never be broken; though the flax "smokes," it will never be extinguished; for he that "sends forth judgment" sends it "unto victory." Long indeed may the battle fluctuate; again and again may the enemy charge; again and again may the event seem doubtful. Victory may be delayed even unto a late hour, until evening is drawing on and the shades of night are about to fall; but it is sure at last.

And it is the Lord who does the whole. We have no power in ourselves to win the battle. Is there one temptation that you can master? Is there any one sin that you can, without divine help, crucify; one lust that you can, without special grace, subdue? We are total weakness in this matter. But the blessed Lord makes his strength perfect in this weakness. We may and indeed must be bruised, and under painful feelings may think no one was so hardly dealt with, and that our case is singular. But without this we would not judge ourselves; and "if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord." If you justify yourself, the Lord will condemn you; if you condemn yourself, the Lord will justify you. Exalt yourself, and the Lord will humble you; humble yourself, and the Lord will exalt you.

August 22

"O send out your light and your truth." Psalm 43:3

"O send out your light." The Psalmist desired that light might be sent out, that is, that there might be a communication of it. The soul walking in darkness, and enabled under that darkness to pant and cry after light, is not satisfied with the conviction, however deep, that with God is light. The thirsty man is not satisfied with knowing that there is water in the well; nor the man who has lost his way in a mine, with knowing that there is light in the sun. One faint ray gleaming through a

think were worth to him a thousand suns, blazing, unseen by him, in the sky. And thus the benighted saint cannot rest in the bare knowledge that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," but his sigh and cry is that this light may be sent out of the fullness of the Godhead into his soul, so as to shed abroad an inward light in his heart, whereby he may see the truth of God; whereby he may see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; whereby he may see his name written in the book of life, and clearly discern his saving interest in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure;" whereby he may see Jesus, and in seeing Jesus see his own eternal union with Jesus, and in seeing his own eternal union with Jesus may enjoy sweet communion with him, so as to feel his presence in his soul, and have his glory revealed, and manifested to his heart.

David wanted something more than light. He says, "O send out your light and your truth." What was "the truth" which he sought to know, and realize its inward power by its being sent out of the fullness of the Godhead? Doubtless, the very same truth that saints are crying to be sent out now; and this can be nothing less than "the truth as it is in Jesus;" the truth of his blood as atoning for sin, the truth of his righteousness as justifying us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; the truth of personal and everlasting deliverance from all curse and condemnation, that truth whereby the soul is made free, according to those words, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" the truth whereby the affections are separated from the things of time and sense, and fixed on the realities of eternity; in a word, to know Jesus himself, by his own sweet revelation, for he is "the way, the truth, and the life," and that he may be himself enjoyed in our soul as the sum and substance of truth.

August 23

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Jeremiah 50:5

"Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord." Does this imply any power in the creature to join himself to the Lord? No; but it implies this--that when the Lord unites us to himself, then we unite ourselves to him; when the Lord brings the believer into a manifested union with himself, then there is a leaping forth of the soul, a going forth of the affections, a cleaving to him with purpose of heart, a believing in him with all the powers of the mind, and a solemn renunciation, a casting aside, a trampling under foot, a rejection of everything but that which stands in the power of God, as made known to the soul by the Holy Spirit.

It is not spoken in a presumptuous way--"Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord." It does not indicate any bold presumptuous claim upon the Lord, as if being now on the road to Zion, and being possessed of certain evidences, they could claim the inheritance, and, as it were, rush in, and lay hold of gospel blessings; but it points out the actings of living faith in the soul, which goes forth, when raised up and drawn out by the blessed Spirit.

The vain confidence and rash forwardness of those who are at ease in Zion is a very different thing from the meek faith of those who are going and weeping, asking the way to Zion with their faces there, whose hearts are melted by the Spirit into contrition, who renounce everything but Christ and him crucified, and desire to feel and taste the sweet manifestation of the love of a dying Lord. These, without presumption or bold familiarity, can say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the

Lord," as feeling in their souls the actings of that living faith, whereby they cleave to and lean upon him, as the only prop between them and hell.

August 24

"And he is the head of the body, the church." Colossians 1:18

That the Lord Jesus Christ should have a people, in whom he should be eternally glorified, was the original promise made by the Father to the Son. "Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession" (Psalm 2:8). This was "the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame." This was "the purchased possession," "the travail of his soul," and the reward of his humiliation and sufferings (Phil. 2:9, 10). This people form the members of his mystical body, all of which were written in his book, the book of life, when as yet, as regards their actual existence, there was none of them (Psalm 139:16). All these were given to him in eternity, when he was constituted their covenant Head in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. They thus became, in prospect of his incarnation, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

How touchingly did the blessed Redeemer remind his Father of those covenant transactions, when he said in his memorable prayer, "I pray for them--I pray not for the world, but for those who you have given me; for they are yours. And all mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am glorified in them." Being thus given to Christ, and constituted members of his mystical body, they can no more perish than Christ himself. He is their Head; and as he is possessed of all power, full of all love, filled with all wisdom, and replete with all mercy, grace, and truth, how can he, how will he, allow any of his members to fall out of his body, and be lost to him as well as to themselves? Will any man willingly allow his eye, or his hand, or his foot, or even the tip of his little finger, to be taken out or cut off? If any member of our body perish, if we lose an arm or a leg, it is because we have not power to prevent it. But all power belongs to Christ, in heaven and in earth; and therefore no one member of his mystical body can perish for lack of power in him to save it.

But however truly blessed this doctrine is, it is only when we are quickened and made alive unto God by a spiritual birth that we savingly and experimentally know and realize it; and we are, for the most part, led into it thus. We are first made to feel our need of Christ as a Savior from the wrath to come, from the fear of death, the curse of the law, and the accusations of a guilty conscience.

When enabled, by the blessed Spirit's operations, to receive him into our heart, by faith, as the Christ of God, and to realize in some measure a saving interest in him, we are then taught to feel our need of continual supplies of grace and strength out of his fullness. For we have to learn something of the depths of the fall, of the evils of our heart, of the temptations of Satan, of the strength of sin, of our own weakness and worthlessness; and as every fresh discovery of our helplessness and wretchedness makes a way for looking to and hanging upon him, we become more and more dependent on him as of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

August 25

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life." John 11:25

How often we sink into places where we are in our feelings dead men. Has sin never slain you? Have convictions never, so to speak, knocked the life of God out of your soul? Has Satan never come with his fiery darts, with all the artillery of hell, and sought to scorch up every gracious feeling and every living desire? And have you not sunk at times in your soul into such miserable deadness of spirit, that it seemed that not only there and then you were devoid of all grace, but that it was an impossibility for grace ever again to renew and revive your soul? Here you were dead. I have often been here, which enables me to describe it to you. Yet with all this, there is a longing look, a heartfelt groan, a heaving sigh, a resisting unto blood, not an utter giving way, nor sinking down into miserable despair. God the Spirit kept alive his work upon the soul, and Christ himself as the resurrection dropped into our bosom, raised up and drew forth towards himself some fresh movements of that life which is in him. There was thus fulfilled that gracious consequence of his resurrection, "Whoever believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Oh, amid all our deadness, all our gloom and desolation, all our emptiness, barrenness, and helplessness, if there be in our souls a longing look, a heartfelt cry, an earnest groan, a sincere desire toward him who is the resurrection, our prayer will ascend into his pitying, sympathizing ear; and as he is the resurrection, he will once more raise up into life and feeling our dead and drooping soul. We have no other source of life. If we were altogether and really dead, we would always continue dead unless he were the resurrection. But because he is the resurrection, he can re-animate, revive, renew, and re-quicken us by pouring into our hearts fresh life and feeling. It will be our mercy to be ever looking unto him, hanging upon him, believing in him, trusting to him, and giving him no rest until he appear again and again to the joy and rejoicing of our heart.

August 26

"He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." John 11:25

How can any one who is dead believe? He can, or our Lord would not have said so. I will show you how. He is a living man as quickened into life by the power of the Spirit of God, and yet he is dead. This is the deep mystery, that though he is dead in law, dead in conscience, dead in helplessness, yet God the Holy Spirit has breathed into him and deposited in him a seed of living faith. By this faith he cries, by this faith he sighs, and by this faith he hungers and thirsts after righteousness; yes, more, by this faith he looks unto and believes in the Son of God. He scarcely knows that he has faith. His faith is so weak and so small in his own estimation, that he dare not say he has faith; and yet he has all the fruits of faith, all the marks of faith, and all the evidences of faith.

Take as a parallel case Jonah in the whale's belly. Had he faith or had he not faith? How low he sank when the waves were heaped over his head, when carried through the boundless deep in the belly of the whale. Yet even there he could say, "I will look again toward your holy temple." Had he no faith? Yes, he had; and by that faith he was saved, justified, accepted, brought out, and delivered, and able to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Take Hezekiah upon his bed of sickness. Had he no faith? How then could he turn his face to the wall and pray unto the Lord? How could his eyes fail with looking upward, when he said, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me?" Take David in his mournful journey, when he went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up barefoot, with his head covered, at the time of

Absalom's rebellion. Had he no faith? How then came he to pray, "O Lord, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness?" And why did the Lord answer that prayer, if it were not the prayer of faith? In all these men of God, sunk though they were almost to the last and lowest point, there was still the life of faith; and by that faith they called upon God. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.

Here, then, is the connection between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and the experience of this seemingly dead soul. When Christ died, he bore the sins of this poor dead soul in his body on the tree, and thus atoned for them and put them away. When Christ rose from the dead, this poor dead soul rose with him, as a member of his mystical body. When Christ went up on high, he ascended with him. And when Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father, he virtually and mystically sat down with him in heavenly bliss. Therefore, because Jesus is the resurrection, and because as such he has a saving interest in him, "he that believes in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

August 27

"Being made so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Hebrews 1:4

Christ was made so much better than the angels, not as the Son of God, because as that he was better than they already, being, indeed, their Maker and Creator. Nor did he become God's Son by being appointed heir of all things," and "obtaining by inheritance a more excellent name" than all the angelic host. If I have an only son, and he inherits my property, his being my heir does not make him my son, but his being my son makes him my heir. So the blessed Jesus is God's heir. But the beauty and blessedness, the grace and glory, the joy and consolation of his being "the heir of all things," lies in this, that he is such in our nature--that the same blessed Immanuel who groaned and wept, suffered and bled here below, is now at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest, Mediator, Advocate, Representative, and Intercessor; that all power is given unto him in heaven and earth as the God-man (Matt. 28:18); and that the Father has "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20, 21).

But he has all this pre-eminence and glory not to make him the Son of God, but because he who, as the Son of God, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:6-11). The joy of heaven above, the delight of the saints here below, their only hope and help, strength and wisdom, spring from this, that the Son of God is exalted to the right hand of the Father in the very nature which he assumed in the womb of the virgin.

August 28

"The full soul loaths an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Proverbs 27:7

Afflictions, trials, and sorrows are very bitter things. And they must needs be bitter, for God never meant that they should be otherwise. When he takes the rod, it is to make it felt; and when he brings trouble on his children, it is that they may smart under it. Our text therefore does not, I believe, mean that the "bitter thing" is sweet when it is taken, for then it would cease to be bitter; but it is sweet on account of the blessed nourishment that is brought to the soul out of it.

I remember reading, many years ago, the travels of Franklin to the North Pole; and a very interesting book it is naturally. But there is one incident mentioned in it which just strikes my mind. In wandering over the snows of the polar regions there was no food to be gotten for weeks, except a lichen or kind of moss that grew upon the rocks, and that was so exceedingly bitter, (something like "Iceland moss,") that it could only be taken with the greatest disgust; and yet upon that Franklin and his companions lived. They had no alternative; they must either eat that or die. But that bitter moss became sweet after it had passed their palates; for it had a nutriment in it which kept their bodies alive.

And thus many of God's people, who have endured the most dreadful trials, have afterwards found nutriment to spring out of them. What bitter things are God's reproofs and rebukes in the conscience! And yet who would be without them? I appeal to you who fear God, whether you would deliberately choose never to experience marks of divine disapprobation, and never feel the frowns of God's anger at any time when you go wrong? I believe in my conscience that you whose hearts are tender in God's fear would say, "Lord, let me have your frowns; for if I have not your frowns and a conscience to feel them, what sins would I not recklessly plunge into? Where would not my wicked nature carry me, if I had not your solemn reproofs!" These very rebukes then become sweet, not in themselves, nor at the time, but because of the solid profit that comes out of them.

August 29

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

Good works, properly so called, spring out of the inward operation of God's grace. By making the tree good he makes the fruit good (Matt. 12:33). He works in us first the will to do that which is good, and then he gives us the power. He thus works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Under the operations of his grace we are transformed by the renewing of our mind to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2); and as this will is sought after to be known and done, good works follow as the necessary fruit. All those acts of love and affection, of kindness, sympathy, and liberality towards the Lord's people; all those instances of self-denial and willingness rather to suffer than to do wrong; all those proofs of unselfish desire to do all the good we can according to our means, position, and circumstances of life; all that striving after and maintaining integrity and uprightness of conduct in all matters of business and trust; all that strict and scrupulous adherence to our word, even to our own injury; all that Christian fulfillment of our relative duties, and the social relationships of husband and father, wife and mother, which the Scripture has enjoined--in a word, all those works which by almost

unanimous consent are called "good" by men, are only really and truly good as wrought in the heart, lip, and life by the power of God.

August 30

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Revelation 12:11

It is not "the blood of the Lamb" as revealed in the word of God, but as applied to and sprinkled on the conscience, which answers the accusations of Satan. But we may observe that there is our coming unto "the blood of sprinkling," and there is "the blood of sprinkling" coming unto us. The Apostle speaks, Hebrews 12:22-24--"You have come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel." This coming to the blood is the first step in gaining the victory. But in Christian warfare defeat generally, if not always, precedes conquest. It is not, therefore, so easy to overcome sin, death, and hell, which are all striving against us; and usually we never look to the right quarter for help until well-near all hope is gone. The first gleam generally comes from a view of "the blood of the Lamb," as it were, in the distance.

The lighthouse casts its glimmering rays far over the wide waste of waters, to guide into harbor the storm-tossed mariner; so, when there is a view in the soul of "the blood of the Lamb," even at a distance, it is a beacon light, which draws towards it the eyes and heart of those who are doing business "in deep waters." The light may not at first seem very bright or clear; but it is a day-star, heralding the rising of the sun. The Spirit shines on the word, and raises up faith in the soul to believe that the Lamb has been slain, that blood has been shed, that a sacrifice has been offered, and that "a new and living way" has been opened and consecrated "through the veil," the torn "flesh" of the Lord Jesus. This affords the accused soul some foothold on which it can stand and answer Satan's accusations. "True," he says, "I am a guilty wretch, a sinner, and the chief of sinners, for I have sinned against light, against convictions, against conscience, and the fear of God; my heart is altogether evil, my mind wholly corrupt, and my nature utterly depraved; I have never done any good thing; I am a wretch, and the worst of wretches, and I can never say anything too bad of myself, nor others of me; but, with all that, the Lamb of God has shed his precious blood, and that blood cleanses from all sin." "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord," we read, "shall lift up a standard against him"--the blood-stained flag of the crucified Redeemer; and to come for refuge under this banner di

September

September 1

"But now we see not yet all things put under him." Hebrews 2:8

It is God's special prerogative to bring good out of evil, and order out of confusion. If you were to watch carefully from an astronomical observatory the movements of the planets, you would see them all in the greatest apparent disorder. Sometimes they would seem to move forward, sometimes backward, and sometimes not to move at all. These confused and contradictory movements sadly puzzled astronomers, until Sir Isaac Newton explained the whole; then all was seen to be the most beautiful harmony and order, where before there was the most puzzling confusion.

But take a scriptural instance, the highest and greatest that we can give, to show that where, to outward appearance, all is disorder, there the greatest wisdom and most determinate will reign. Look at the crucifixion of our blessed Lord. Can you not almost see the scene as painted in the word of truth? See those scheming priests, that wild mob, those rough soldiers, that faltering Roman governor, the pale and terrified disciples, the weeping women, and, above all, the innocent Sufferer with the crown of thorns, and enduring that last scene of surpassing woe, which made the earth quake, and the sun withdraw his light. What confusion! What disorder! What triumphant guilt! What oppressed and vanquished innocence!

But was it really so? Was there no wisdom or power of God here accomplishing, even by the instrumentality of human wickedness, his own eternal purposes? Hear his own testimony to this point--"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," in the great and glorious work of redemption, was accomplished by the wicked hands of man; and if so, in this the worst and wickedest of all possible cases, is not the same eternal will also now executed in instances of a similar nature, though to us at present less visible?

September 2

"Unto you who fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."
Malachi 4:2

Oh, what a mercy for the Church of Christ that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus has not left her as he might justly have left her, to perish in her sins, but has provided for her a Savior, and a great one, and does from time to time encourage every poor, self-condemned sinner to hope in his mercy!

The very things, poor, exercised soul, that most try your mind are the very things that make such a Savior suitable to you. You are dark; this makes the Sun of righteousness exactly suitable to enlighten you. You are cold; this makes you need the Sun to warm you. You are cheerless and

cast down; this makes you need the Sun to gladden you. You are barren and unfruitful, and lament that you cannot bring forth fruit to God's glory; you need the Sun to fertilize you. You are, at times, very dead in your feelings, and can scarcely find any inclination to pray, meditate, or read the Scriptures; you need the Sun to enliven and revive you.

Are not, then, these very trials and temptations necessary to make you feel that the Lord Jesus is the Sun you need, the very Sun that David (Psalm 84:11) felt him to be? What value do those put upon the Lord Jesus who make a fire for themselves, and walk in the sparks of their own kindling? What is Jesus to those who know no trouble of soul? What real and earnest prayer or fervent desire have they after him? what ardent longing for his appearing? what breathings to see and feel his blood and righteousness? Oh! it is sharp exercises, manifold trials, and powerful temptations that make the soul really value the Lord Jesus.

September 3

"God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

Nothing distinguishes the divine religion of the saint of God, not only from the dead profanity of the openly ungodly, but from the formal lip-service of the lifeless professor, so much as communion with God.

How clearly do we see this exemplified in the saints of old. Abel sought after fellowship with God when "he brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," for he looked to the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. God accepted the offering, and "testified of his gifts" by manifesting his divine approbation. Here was fellowship between Abel and God. Enoch "walked with God;" but how can two walk together except they be agreed? And if agreed, they are in fellowship and communion. Abraham was "the friend of God;" "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face;" David was "the man after God's own heart;"--all which testimonies of the Holy Spirit concerning them implied that they were reconciled, brought near, and walked in holy communion with the Lord God Almighty. So all the saints of old, whose sufferings and exploits are recorded in Hebrews 11, lived a life of faith and prayer, a life of fellowship and communion with their Father and their Friend; and though "they were stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword;" though "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" though "they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," yet they all were sustained in their sufferings and sorrows by the Spirit and grace, the presence and power of the living God, with whom they held sweet communion; and, though tortured, would "accept no deliverance," by denying their Lord, "that they might obtain a better resurrection," and see him as he is in glory, by whose grace they were brought into fellowship with him on earth.

This same communion with himself is that which God now calls his saints unto, as we read, "God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," for to have fellowship with his Son is to have fellowship with him. As then he called Abraham out of the land of the Chaldees, so he calls elect souls out of the world, out of darkness, sin, and death, out of formality and self-righteousness, out of a deceptive profession, to have fellowship with himself, to be blessed with manifestations of his love and mercy. To this point all his dealings with their souls tend; to bring them near to himself, all their afflictions, trials, and sorrows are sent; and in

giving them tastes of holy fellowship here, he grants them foretastes of that eternity of bliss which will be theirs when time shall be no more, in being forever swallowed up with his presence and love.

September 4

"God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." 1 John 4:16

Love is communicative. This is a part of its very nature and essence. Its delight is to give, and especially to give itself; and all it wants or asks is a return. To love and to be beloved, to enjoy and to express that ardent and mutual affection by words and deeds--this is love's delight, love's heaven. To love, and not be loved--this is love's misery, love's hell. God is love. This is his very nature, an essential attribute of his glorious being; and as he, the infinite and eternal Jehovah, exists in a Trinity of distinct Persons, though undivided Unity of Essence, there is a mutual, ineffable love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To this mutual, ineffable love of the three Persons in the sacred Godhead the Scripture abundantly testifies--"The Father loves the Son;" "And have loved them as you have loved me;" "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And as the Father loves the Son, so does the Son love the Father--"But that the world may know that I love the Father," are his own blessed words. And that the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son is evident not only from his divine personality in the Godhead, but because he is essentially the very "Spirit of love" (Romans 15:30), and as such "sheds the love of God abroad in the heart" of the election of grace.

Thus man was not needed by the holy and ever-blessed Trinity as an object of divine love. Sufficient, eternally and amply sufficient, to all the bliss and blessedness, perfection and glory of Jehovah was and ever would have been the mutual love and intercommunion of the three Persons in the sacred Godhead. But love--the equal and undivided love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--flowed out beyond its original and essential being to man; and not merely to man as man, that is to human nature as the body prepared for the Son of God to assume, but to thousands and millions of the human race, who are all loved personally and individually with all the infinite love of God as much as if that love were fixed on only one, and he were loved as God loves his dear Son. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," is spoken to each individual of the elect as much as to the whole Church, viewed as the mystical Bride and Spouse of the Lamb.

Thus the love of a Triune God is not only to the nature which in due time the Son of God should assume, the flesh and blood of the children, the seed of Abraham which he should take on him (Hebrews 2:14-16), and for this reason viewed by the Triune Jehovah with eyes of intense delight, but to that innumerable multitude of human beings who were to form the mystical body of Christ. Were Scripture less express, we might still believe that the nature which one of the sacred Trinity was to assume would be delighted in and loved by the holy Three-in-One. But we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the point, that puts it beyond all doubt or question. When, in the first creation of that nature the Holy Trinity said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and when, in pursuance of that divine council, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living, soul," God thereby uniting an immortal soul to an earthly body, this human nature was created not only in the moral image of God, but after the pattern of that body which was prepared for the Son of God by the Father.

September 5

"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3

What poor, blind fools are we by nature! How insufficient is all our earthly wisdom and all our natural knowledge, to guide us into the truth! When the soul really is under divine teaching, how ignorant it feels as to every single thing it desires to know! What clouds of darkness perpetually hang over the mind! What a veil of ignorance seems continually spread over the heart! The simplest truths of God's word seem hidden in the deepest obscurity, and the soul can neither see the truth, nor see nor feel its personal interest in it.

Now, when a man is here, he does not go to the Lord with lying lips and a mocking tongue, and ask him to give him wisdom, merely because he has heard that other persons have asked it of God, or because he reads in the Bible that Christ is made of God "wisdom" to his people; but he goes as a poor, blind fool, as one completely ignorant, as one totally unable to understand a single spiritual truth of himself, as one thoroughly helpless to get into the marrow of vital godliness, into the mysteries of true religion, or into the very heart of Christ. For it is not a few doctrines received into the head, nor a sound creed, that can satisfy a soul convinced of its ignorance. No; nothing can satisfy him, but to have that divine illumination, whereby he "sees light in God's light;" that spiritual wisdom communicated, whereby he feels himself "made wise unto salvation;" that unctuous light shed abroad in the heart, which is the only key to gospel truth, and is its own blessed evidence, that he knows the truth by a divine application of it to his soul.

September 6

"To see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary." Psalm 63:2

Every place is "a sanctuary" where God manifests himself in power and glory to the soul. Moses, doubtless, had often passed by the bush which grew in Horeb; it was but a common hawthorn bush, in no way distinguished from the other bushes of the grove; but on one solemn occasion it was all "in a flame of fire," for "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire" out of the midst; and though it burnt with fire, it was not consumed. God being in the bush, the ground round about was holy, and Moses was bidden to take his shoes from off his feet. Was not this a sanctuary to Moses? It was, for a holy God was there.

Thus wherever God manifests himself, that becomes a sanctuary to a believing soul. We do not need places made holy by the ceremonies of man, but places made holy by the presence of God. Then a stable, a hovel, a hedge, any homely corner may be, and is a sanctuary, when God fills your heart with his sacred presence, and causes every holy feeling and gracious affection to spring up in your soul. If ever you have seen this in times past, you have seen God in the sanctuary; for then your heart becomes the sanctuary of God, according to his own words, "You are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." Are not your very bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit? (1 Cor. 6:19.) Does not Christ dwell in the heart by faith? And is he not formed there, the hope of glory? It is, then, not only in Christ without, but in Christ within that we see the power and glory of God. It is in this way that we become consecrated to the service and glory of God, set our affections upon heavenly things, and obtain a foretaste of eternal joy.

September 7

"I will give you the treasures of darkness." Isaiah 45:3

Is not this a strange expression? "Treasures of darkness!" How can there be darkness in the City of Salvation of which the Lord the Lamb is the eternal light? The expression does not mean that the treasures themselves are darkness, but that they were hidden in darkness until they were brought to light. The treasures of Belshazzar, like the Bank bullion, were buried in darkness until they were broken up and given to Cyrus.

It is so in a spiritual sense. Are there not treasures in the Lord Jesus? Oh! what treasures of grace in his glorious Person! What treasures of pardon in his precious blood! What treasures of righteousness in his perfect obedience! What treasures of salvation in all that he is and has as the great High Priest over the house of God! Yet, all these treasures are "treasures of darkness," so far as they are hidden from our eyes and hearts, until we are brought by his special power into the City of Salvation. Then these treasures are not only brought to light, revealed, and made known, but the soul is at once put into possession of them. They are not only seen, as the Bank of England clerk sees notes and sovereigns, but are by a special deed of gift from the Court of Heaven made over to him who by faith in the Lord Jesus receives him into his heart. No one has the least conception of the treasures of grace that are in the Lord Jesus until he is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and knows him and the power of his resurrection by the sweet manifestations of his presence and love.

But the word "treasures" signifies not only something laid up and hidden from general view, but, being in the plural number, expresses an infinite, incalculable amount--an amount which can never be expended, but suffices, and suffices, and suffices again for all needs and for all believing comers. When we get a view by faith of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus and see the everflowing and overflowing fullness of his grace, and how it superabounds over all the aboundings of sin, it may well fill our minds with holy wonder and admiration. When we get a glimpse of the virtue and efficacy of his atoning blood, that precious blood which "cleanses from all sin," and that divine righteousness which is "unto all and upon all those who believe," what treasures of mercy, pardon, and peace are seen laid up in him! To see this by the eye of faith, and enter into its beauty and blessedness, is indeed to comprehend with all saints the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know something of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. The sun will cease to give his light, and the earth to yield her increase; but these treasures will still be unexhausted, for they are in themselves infinite and inexhaustible.

September 8

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low--and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Isaiah 40:4

If in your road heavenward, no valley ever sank before you; if no mountain and hill ever rose up in sight; if you encountered no crooked path through the dense woods; and no rough places, with many a rolling stone and many a thorny briar in the tangled forest, it would not seem that you were treading the way which the saints of God have ever trod, nor would it appear as if you needed special help from the sanctuary, or any peculiar power to be put forth for your help and deliverance. But being in this path, and that by God's own appointment, and finding right before

your eyes valleys of deep depression which you cannot raise up; mountains and hills of difficulty that you cannot lay low; crooked things which you cannot straighten; and rough places which you cannot make smooth; you are compelled, from felt necessity, to look for help from above.

These perplexing difficulties, then, are the very things that make yours a case for the gospel, yours a state of mind to which salvation by grace is thoroughly adapted, yours the very condition of soul to which the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is altogether suitable. So that if you could at the present moment view these trials with spiritual eyes, and feel that they were all appointed by unerring wisdom and eternal love, and were designed for the good of your soul, you would rather bless God that your pathway was so cast in providence and grace that you had now a valley, now a mountain, now a crook, and now a thorn.

And even as regards the present experience of your soul, you would feel that these very difficulties in the road were all productive of so many errands to the throne--that they all called upon you, as with so many speaking voices, to beg of the Lord that he would manifest himself in love to your heart.

We all desire ease; we love a smooth path. We would like to be carried to heaven in a palanquin; to enjoy every comfort that earth can give or heart desire, and then, dying without a pang of body or mind, find ourselves safe in heaven. But that is not God's way. The word of truth, the sufferings of Christ, and the universal experience of the saints, all testify against the path of ease; all testify for the path of trial; they all proclaim, as with one united voice, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,"--and this is the way of ease and of that prosperity which destroys fools (Prov.1:32); but "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life,"--and this is the path of suffering and sorrow.

September 9

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Hebrews 10:12

It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith, that the man Christ Jesus is now at God's right hand, a very man, not a shadowy, ethereal substance. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." God looks at him as such with eyes of intense delight, with ever new approbation and love; and views him as the representative of all that are savingly interested in him; he being the Head, the Church the members; he the Bridegroom, the Church the bride; he the great High Priest, and the Church the house of God. As living for her at the right hand of the Father, he is ever presenting on her behalf the validity of his intercession. The fact, the reality that he is there, is the Church's joy, as it is all her hope and all her boast. "Because I live, you shall live also."

To him, then, do we direct our prayers; on his glorious Person we fix our believing eyes; upon his blood we hang our hope; under his righteousness we ever desire to shelter; to feel his presence, taste his grace, experience his love, and know his power, is what our soul, under divine teaching, is ever longing for. See, then, the grounds of holy boldness for a poor sinner to enter into the holiest. Blood has been shed, which blood has the validity of Godhead stamped upon it. A new and living way has been consecrated, in which a living soul may walk. A great High Priest is set over the house of God, who is ever presenting the merits of his intercession. Thus, those who feel

their need of him, who cannot live, and dare not die without him, whose eyes are upon him and hearts towards him, are encouraged to enter with all holy boldness into the holiest, that they may have communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

September 10

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:37

Those who know nothing of their own heart, of their own infirmities, of their own frailties, of their own inward or outward slips and backslidings, know nothing of the secret of super-abounding grace, nothing of the secret of atoning blood, nothing of the secret of the Spirit's inward testimony. They cannot. Only in proportion as we are emptied of self in all its various forms, are we filled out of the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Now you, perhaps, (I address myself personally to some poor, tempted child of God, that in touching one, I may touch others,) are a poor, tempted creature; and your daily sorrow, your continual trouble is, that you are so soon overcome; that your temper, your lusts, your pride, your worldliness, your carnal, corrupt heart are perpetually getting the mastery. And from this you sometimes draw bitter conclusions. You say, in the depth of your heart, "Can I be a child of God, and be thus? What mark and testimony have I of being in favor with God when I am so easily, so continually overcome?"

Now I want you to look to the end. What is the issue of these defeats? Remember, it is a solemn truth, and one that we learn very slowly--that we must be overcome in order to overcome. There is no setting out with a stock of strength, daily adding to it, weekly increasing it, and then gaining the victory by our own resolutions, our own innate strength. Such sham holiness may come under a gospel garb, may wear a fair appearance; but it only more hides the rottenness of the flesh. Then, remember this--that in order to gain the victory, we must know our weakness; and we can only know our weakness by its being experimentally opened up in our consciences. We cannot learn it from others; we must learn it in our own souls; and that often in a very painful manner. But these painful sensations in a tender conscience lead a man more humbly, more feelingly, more believingly to the Lord of life and glory, to receive out of his fullness. Thus every defeat only leads to and ensures victory at the last. Says the Apostle, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." How? Through our resolutions, through our wisdom? No; "through Him that loved us." There is no other way, then, to overcome, but by the "strength of Jesus made perfect in our weakness."

September 11

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." 1 Corinthians 2:4

It is not the work of the Spirit to produce doubts and fears, but to overcome them. And yet we are continually subject to them. Infidel thoughts fly across the mind; doubts and questionings suggest themselves; Satan is busy in plying his arguments; a guilty conscience falls too readily under his accusations; painful recollections of past slips, falls, and backslidings strengthen the power of unbelief, so that to come to a spot wherein there is not the least shadow of a doubt of divine realities, and, what is far more, of our own saving interest in them, is a rare circumstance, and only

attainable at those favored moments when the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul and settle the matter between himself and our conscience.

But these very doubts, these very questionings, these cutting, killing fears, these anxious surmisings work together for good, and are mercifully overruled for our spiritual benefit. What else has brought us to this point that nothing short of demonstration will satisfy the soul really born and taught of God? It must have demonstration--nothing else will do. We cannot live and die upon uncertainties. It won't do to be always in a state that we don't know whether we are going to heaven or hell; to be tossed up and down on a sea of uncertainty, scarcely knowing who commands the ship, what is our destination, what our present course, or what will be the end of the voyage.

Now all human wisdom leaves us upon this sea of uncertainty. It is useful in nature, but useless in grace. It is foolish and absurd to despise all human learning, wisdom, and knowledge. Without them we would be a horde of wild, wandering savages. But it is worse than foolish to make human wisdom our guide to eternity, and make reason the foundation of our faith or hope. What you thus believe today, you will disbelieve tomorrow; all the arguments that may convince your reasoning mind, all the appeals to your natural passions, which may seem for the time to soften your heart, and all the thoughts swaying to and fro which may sometimes lead you to hope you are right and sometimes make you do not fear are wrong--all these will be found insufficient when the soul comes into any time of real trial and perplexity.

We want, therefore, demonstration to remove and dispel all these anxious questionings, and settle the whole matter firmly in our heart and conscience; and this nothing can give us but the Spirit by revealing Christ, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us, applying the word with power to our hearts, and bringing the sweetness, reality, and blessedness of divine things into our soul. It is only in this way that he overcomes all unbelief and infidelity, doubt and fear, and sweetly assures us that all is well between God and the soul.

September 12

"But in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." 1 Corinthians 2:4

In human reasoning, demonstration cannot usually be obtained except in mathematics, but not so in divine. There grace outshines and exceeds nature, for the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit is always demonstrative, that is, convincing beyond the possibility of doubt. It is not demonstration simply we require, not demonstration of the word, as if there were some innate proof and power in the word itself to demonstrate its own truth, though doubtless it is so when the Spirit shines upon it, but it is the "demonstration of the Spirit." This is very necessary to observe, for you will often hear the word of God spoken of, as if the Bible possessed not only demonstrative proof of its own inspiration, but was able to give that demonstration to the souls of men. But the demonstration not of the word but of the Spirit in, through, and by the word, is the thing needed to convert sinners and satisfy saints. This is proof indeed, not cold and hard like mathematical demonstration, but warm, living, softening, and sanctifying, being the very light, life, and power of God himself in the soul.

Now Paul's preaching was this demonstration of the Spirit. The Spirit of God speaking in him and by him, so demonstrated the truth of what he preached that it came, as he elsewhere speaks, "not

in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5). There are now no Pauls; and, yet, unless we have a measure of the same demonstration of the Spirit, all that is said by us in the pulpit drops to the ground; it has no real effect; there is no true or abiding fruit--no fruit unto eternal life. If there be in it some enticing words of man's wisdom, it may please the mind of those who are gratified by such arts; it may stimulate and occupy the attention for the time; but there it ceases, and all that has been heard fades away like a dream of the night; and, as regards the family of God, we may apply to all such preaching the words of the prophet--"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreams, and, behold, he eats; but he awakens, and his soul is empty--or as when a thirsty man dreams, and, behold, he drinks; but he awakens, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul has appetite" (Isaiah 29:8).

But anything which is communicated by the Holy Spirit, which is demonstrated by the Spirit to your soul, which is brought into your heart with light, life, and power, sealed and witnessed by that sacred Teacher and divine Comforter; that abides, you take it home with you; it comforts you, not only at the time, but when you look back to it in days to come; it is a bright spot in your soul's experience, when you can believe that then and there God was pleased to bless his word to your soul, and seal it home with a sweet influence upon your conscience. This is "demonstration of the Spirit."

And where there is this, there is "power," for the Apostle adds, "and of power." The grand distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God is that "it is not in word, but in power." Thus power is given to believe in the Son of God, and we cannot believe truly and savingly in him until power is put forth; power to receive the Lord in all his covenant characters and gracious relationships in the gospel of his grace; power to believe that what God has done he does forever; power to come out of every doubt and fear into the blessed light and liberty of the truth which makes free.

September 13

"And Enoch walked with God." Genesis 5:24

The chief way whereby we walk with God is by faith, and not by sight. Abraham walked in this way. Unbelief severs the soul from God. There is no communion between God and an infidel. An unbelieving heart has no fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ; but a believing heart has communion with him. It is by faith that we have fellowship with God and his dear Son; and you will find that just in proportion to the strength or weakness of your faith is your walking with God. If you have faith in blessed exercise, as you look to the atoning blood, you find that you can walk with God; you can pour out your heart before him, tell him all your concerns, spread before him the inmost movements of your mind, and look to him for peace and consolation.

But when your faith is weak, when it gives way under trial, and cannot take hold of the promises, then communion is interrupted; there is no longer a walking with God. But in proportion as faith is strong, so there is a walking with God in sweet agreement; for faith keeps eyeing the atonement; faith looks not so much to sin, as to salvation from sin; at the way whereby sin is pardoned, overcome, and subdued. So it is by faith, and in proportion to our faith, that we walk together with God.

September 14

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

If you are blessed with all spiritual blessings, it is only "in Christ" you are so blessed. If you were chosen before the foundation of the world, it was only "in Christ" that you were chosen. He is our covenant Head. What we are we are only in him. There is nothing in SELF; no fixedness there. All is fluctuating here below; all is uncertain as regards man. Certainty is with God; and the fixedness of God's purposes is our grand, our only support. Thus the doctrine of election received into the heart diffuses a sacred blessedness over the whole truth of God, for it gives stability to it. It is not a dry doctrine which men may toss about from hand to hand like a tennis ball; it is not an article of a creed written down in church articles, or a theory to be argued by divines. Nor is it a mere loose, floating idea gathered from a few dim and doubtful passages of God's word. It is no meteor light dancing over morasses and swamps. It is a steady light set by the hand of God in the Scriptures, as he set of old lights in the skies of the heavens to give light upon the earth. It therefore diffuses its rays over the whole of God's truth.

For it is "in Christ" his people were chosen, and therefore election being in Christ, it is reflected with all the beams of the Sun of righteousness upon every gospel truth. There is not a single gospel truth, or a single spiritual blessing, which does not derive its blessedness from its connection with the Person and work of the Son of God; and what is true of all, is true of this, that the blessedness of election is because it is "in Christ."

But some may say, "These things are hard to believe." They are very hard to believe, for our unbelieving heart finds it very hard to believe anything that is for our good. We can believe Satan's lies with great readiness; we can give an open, willing ear to anything which our evil heart suggests. But to believe God's truths so as to enter into their beauty and blessedness, to feel their quickening power, and live under their cheering, invigorating influence, this is another matter. But where is the life of our religion when these things are taken away from it? Take, if you could take--God be praised it is beyond the reach of human hand!--but take away that solemn fact, that God has blessed the Church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, where would there be room for any blessing to rest upon our soul? Why, any sweet promise that comes rolling into your breast, any lifting up of the light of God's countenance in seasons of darkness and adversity, any liberty in prayer, any looking up and receiving out of Christ's fullness; all hang upon this grand point, the blessings with which God has already blessed us in Christ Jesus. So that all we have to do--and it is a great thing to do--God alone can enable us to do it--is to receive what God has been pleased so mercifully to give; and as he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, to feel their power, to enjoy their sweetness, and to know for ourselves by the sealing of the Spirit that he has blessed us, even us, and that with life for evermore.

September 15

"For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Mark 4:28

Faith, I believe, has in it always a measure of assurance. For what is assurance? It is merely the larger growth and fuller development of faith. The nature of assurance is much misunderstood. It is

often considered something distinct from faith. This is not the case. It is merely faith in a fuller, larger development. The word "assurance" in the original has a very simple, yet beautiful meaning. It means literally "a full bearing;" and the word is applied sometimes to a large crop of corn or fruit, and sometimes to the tide coming in with a fuller wave. Now it is the same corn which grows in the fields, whether the crop be much or little; it is the same tide that comes up the river whether in a scanty or full flow. So it is with assurance and faith--it is the same faith, only increased, enlarged, bearing more abundant fruit, or flowing in a more abundant tide.

Assurance in Scripture is not confined to faith; there is "the full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2), that is, a fuller measure and amount, a greater enlargement of understanding to know the truth of God. The understanding is the same; but there is a larger measure of it. So there is the full assurance of hope, that is, a hope strengthened and enlarged, bearing more fruit and flowing in a fuller tide. But it is the same hope; the same in kind, though larger in degree; a stronger anchor, and yet an anchor still (Heb. 6:19). Similarly there is the full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22), that is, a larger, fuller measure of faith; a richer crop, a more abundant tide. Thus you have a measure of the assurance of faith if you have faith at all. In fact, if you have no assurance of the truth of these things, why do you follow after them? Why do you hang upon them, why do you hope in them, and why do you seek the power and experience of them in your soul? Have you not arrived at this point yet? "We have not followed cunningly devised fables; these things that I am following after are realities; these objects set before me are certainties."

I grant that you may be much exercised about your saving interest in them. Still, unless you know that they are certainties, why do you believe them? Why are you anxious to know your saving interest in them? Why do you sink in doubt and fear for lack of clearer evidences of a saving interest in them? And why do you spring up in peace and joy the moment that a little light from them beams upon your soul, and a little sweetness out of them drops into your heart? Because you know that these things are realities. So far then you have an assurance that they are certainties, and in due time, as God is pleased, you will have the assurance in your own breast, not only that they are certainties, but that you have them in your own sure and certain possession.

September 16

"Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel." Genesis 49:22-24

One would have thought that Joseph being a fruitful vine could have looked with complacency, almost with holy scorn, upon these archers who shot at him, but it was not so; "they severely grieved him." To be sold by his own brethren into Egypt; the dreams and visions God had given him to be derided; to be cast into prison as an ungodly man through the very person who was tempting him to ungodliness, and there to be neglected and forsaken; how these archers had shot their arrows against his bosom, and severely grieved him!

It was because he had the fear of God, because his feelings were tender, that the arrows found a place. Had he had a bosom of steel, had he had a heart of stone, the arrows would have fallen off blunted and pointless; but it was because he had tender feelings, a living conscience, warm

affections, godly fear, and a work of grace upon his soul, that he presented a tender spot for these arrows to stick in; therefore the archers not only "hated him, but shot at him, and severely grieved him."

But did they prove his destruction? Did any one drain his life blood? Did he sink and die like a wounded deer? Did he fall upon the plain and gasp out his forlorn life? No; "But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel." He then had a bow; he could shoot too. And what was his bow? and how did he direct the arrow? He picked up the arrows that were shot at him, or rather he took them out of his own wounded bosom; and instead of aiming these shafts against those who had so severely grieved him, he shot upward; he launched his arrows towards the throne of the Majesty on high; he turned their bitter shafts into prayers, supplications, and petitions.

Thus the very arrows shot at him he turned into petitions with which to approach the throne of God. He drew his bow even up to the heaven of heavens; and that is what you should do. Never return evil for evil; never return railing for railing. When you are shot at by the archers, do not shoot at them again. Take your arrows and bring them before the throne; present your feelings wounded as they are, your groans and sighs, with your warm petitions, and spread them before God, who hears and answers prayer; and you will find the benefit and blessing of it.

The world will beat you at shooting if you shoot at them. They can use language that you cannot. A man of birth and education, drawn into collision with a street ruffian, cannot bandy words with him; he must pass on; he would soon be beaten in the strife of words. So you must never shoot arrow against arrow with those archers who severely grieve you. You have a tender conscience; you have the fear of God; you weigh your words; you know what will grieve your mind when it comes back upon you, and you are therefore sparing of your speech. Cease from that war; return not a single arrow, let them shoot away, take their arrows, direct your bow upward, turn them all into prayers and supplications, and in due time sweet answers of mercy and peace will come into your bosom.

Thus Joseph's bow "abode in strength," and all their arrows neither struck his bow out of his hand, nor broke it asunder. He could shoot as well as they, but not in the same way nor at the same object. We see, then, Joseph's fruitfulness; we see the source of it; we see the persecutions his soul was grieved by; and we see the final victory that he gained. God of his infinite mercy lead our souls into the same blessed track, apply his truth to our hearts, that our bow may abide in strength, and that the arms of our hands may be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

September 17

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1

If the Son of God has redeemed us by his blood, all that we are and have belongs to him; our body, soul, and spirit are his. Nothing is our own; we are bought with a price. In laying down his precious life for us, he has redeemed us unto himself, that we should be his peculiar people, and not only render to him the calves of our lips, but give him body, soul, spirit, substance, life itself; all that we are and have being his by sovereign right. He lays claim to them all, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer, having bought them by his precious blood. When we feel his mercy

warm in our soul, can we keep body or soul back? Look at Abraham. When God called to him, and said, "Abraham!" what was his answer? "Here I am--Here is my body, here is my soul, here is my substance, here is my wife, here is my son; all are at your disposal. What shall I do, Lord? Take them; they are all yours. You have a right to them, and you must do with them, and you must do with me, what seems good in your sight."

Under these feelings, then, we should "present our bodies," not, indeed, leaving our souls behind. For what is the casket without the jewel? What is the body without the soul? Will God accept the body if the soul be left behind? That is popery; to give the body, and keep back the soul. Not so with the dear family of God; they present their bodies, but with their bodies they present the soul that lodges in their body--the house with its tenant, the jewel-case with the jewels in it. But what is it to present their bodies? They must be presented as "a living sacrifice." God accepts no dead sacrifices. You will recollect, under the Jewish law the sacrifice was to be a living animal, and that without spot or blemish. No dead lamb, but a living animal, perfect in its kind, was to be the victim sacrificed. So if we are to present our bodies, there must be "a living sacrifice." It may well be asked, What have we sacrificed for the Lord's sake? Have we been called upon to sacrifice our property, prospects, idols, affections, name, fame, and worldly interests; and have we obeyed the call? Abraham did not offer Isaac until the voice of the Lord called him to make the sacrifice; but when the Lord called him to do so, Abraham at once rendered obedience to the voice. So must it be with those that walk in the steps of faithful Abraham. If they are called upon, as all are, sooner or later, to make sacrifices, those sacrifices they must make.

Now, in thus presenting our bodies "a living sacrifice," it becomes also a "holy" offering, because what is done in faith is accepted by God as being sanctified by his blessed Spirit. If we make a sacrifice without the blessed Spirit's operation upon our heart, it is a dead sacrifice. Men go into monasteries, deluded women enter convents, become sisters of mercy, and what not, offer their bodies a sacrifice to God, but it is not a living sacrifice, because there is no spiritual life in either offerer or offering. But when we sacrifice our warmest affections, our prospects in life, everything that flesh loves, because the gospel claims it at our hands, and we do it through the constraining love of Christ, that is a living sacrifice, and is "holy," because springing out of the sanctifying influences and operations of the Holy Spirit.

We indeed, looking at ourselves, see nothing holy in it, for sin is mingled with all we do, but God's eye discerns the precious from the vile. He sees the purity of his own work; and he can separate what we cannot, the acting of the spirit and the working of the flesh. God looks at that which his own Spirit inspires, and his own grace produces, and he accepts that as holy.

September 18

"And be not conformed to this world." Romans 12:2

In proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world our understanding becomes dull in the things of God, our affections cold and torpid, and our consciences less tender and sensitive. There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the saber that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and

sharp, that execution may be done upon the foe. So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his saber upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point.

If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding that we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin, any sin, becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight, "without fear and without reproach." So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion, as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honor and bravery of a man.

Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sullyng the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and in that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints, so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world; but, as in Holland, if one breach be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so, if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity.

Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles, the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb.

September 19

"But be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

As worldly conformity is subdued and departed from, there is the transforming process of which the Apostle here speaks, whereby we become renewed in the spirit of our mind. In other words, the Holy Spirit, by his work upon the soul, renews the life of God, revives faith, hope, love, prayer, praise, spirituality of mind, with every tender feeling and every godly sensation that stirs and moves in a living heart. As, then, the Spirit of God renews his work upon the heart, he brings us out of this worldly conformity. He discovers to us the evil of it; he makes and keeps the conscience tender and sensitive; he shows us that if we get conformed to the world we lose our evidences; that they become dulled and obscured; that we are soon deprived of communion with God, of comfortable access to our best, our heavenly Friend; that our taste and appetite for spiritual things get palled; and that our very profession itself becomes a burden. As the conscience then gets more and more awakened to see and feel these things, we become convinced that we do but reap what we have sown; and the Spirit of God by pressing the charge more closely home, shows us, and sometimes by painful experience, such as long days of darkness, and heavy, dragging nights of desertion, the evil of worldly conformity.

Now, as he thus brings us out of worldly conformity, by showing us the evil of it, and that by this miserable cleaving to earth we rob ourselves of our happiest hours, our sweetest hopes, and our

dearest enjoyments, he draws the soul nearer to Christ; and as he keeps renewing us in the spirit of our mind, by dropping one precious truth after another into the heart, he revives faith, renews hope, communicates love, draws forth prayer, bestows spirituality of mind and affection; and by these means a transforming process takes place, whereby the soul is brought out of worldly conformity, and is transformed into the likeness of a suffering Jesus.

How we need, then, the blessed Spirit of God to be renewing us daily in the spirit of our minds, and thus transforming us into the suffering image of the sorrowing Son of God. For there is no medium between spirituality and carnality, between the image of Christ and conformity to the world. As there is no middle path between the strait road and the broad one, so there is no middle way between fruitfulness and barrenness, prayerfulness and prayerlessness, watchfulness and carelessness, repentance and hardness, faith and unbelief, the life of a Christian and the life of a worldling.

September 20

"That you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

The will of God is "good, perfect, and acceptable." How are we to prove personally and experimentally that it is all this? That good and perfect will runs counter, over and over again, to my natural inclinations, sets itself firmly against my fleshly desires. God's will calls for self-denial, but I want self gratification; it requires obedience, but my carnal mind is the essence of disobedience; it demands many sacrifices, but my coward flesh revolts from them; it bids me walk in the path of suffering, sorrow, and tribulation, but my fleshly mind shrinks back, and says, "No, I cannot tread in that path!"

As long, then, as I am conformed to the world, I cannot see the path, for this worldly conformity has thrown a veil over my eyes; or if I do dimly and faintly see it, I am not willing or able to walk in it, because my carnal mind rebels against all trouble or self-denial, or anything connected with the cross of Christ. But, on the other hand, if by any gracious operations of the Spirit on my heart, I am drawn out of this worldly conformity, am renewed in the spirit of my mind, and transformed into the likeness of the suffering Son of God, then "that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God" becomes commended to my conscience.

This good, and acceptable, and perfect will is far, far out of the sight of the carnal eye, out of the sound of the worldly ear, out of the touch of the worldly hand; but is made manifest to the spiritual eye, listened to by the spiritual ear, and laid hold of by the spiritual hand. To realize this for ourselves, we shall find it good sometimes to look back and see how that divine will has, in previous instances, proved itself acceptable to our renewed mind. We can see, also, how supremely that will has reigned, and yet how supreme in all points for our good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to our injury, but all things, according to the promise, have worked together for our good.

But one thing we must deeply bear in mind, that as we cannot deliver ourselves from worldly conformity, so we cannot renew ourselves in the spirit of our mind. The blessed Spirit must do both for us, and work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. But as we are led to feel the misery of the one state, and the blessedness of the other, we shall seek after these gracious operations and

divine influences; and as the blessed Spirit from time to time brings the soul out of this worldly conformity and transforms it into the suffering image of Christ, it sees more and more the beauty and blessedness of walking in this path; and cleaving to Christ and his cross with its tenderest affections proves for itself the goodness, acceptability, and perfection of the will of God.

September 21

"But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you." 1 John 2:27

All the powers of earth and hell are combined against this holy anointing, with which the children of God are so highly favored. But if God has locked up in the bosom of a saint one drop of this divine unction, that one drop is armor against all the assaults of sin, all the attacks of Satan, all the enmity of self, and all the charms, pleasures, and amusements of the world. Waves and billows of affliction may roll over the soul; but they cannot wash away this holy drop of anointing oil. Satan may shoot a thousand fiery darts to inflame all the combustible material of our carnal mind; but all his fiery darts cannot burn up that one drop of oil which God has laid up in the depths of a broken spirit. The world, with all its charms and pleasures, and its deadly opposition to the truth of God, may stir up waves of ungodliness against this holy anointing; but all the powers of earth combined can never extinguish that one drop which God has himself lodged in the depths of a believer's heart.

JONAH had it locked up in the depths of his soul when he was in the whale's belly; but not all the waves and billows that went over his head, nor even the very depths of hell itself, in whose belly he felt he was, could wash away that drop of anointing oil which God had lodged in his soul. DAVID sank deep into sin and remorse; but all his sin and misery never drank up that drop of anointing oil that God the Spirit had dropped into his heart. The PRODIGAL SON goes into a far country; but he never loses that drop of anointing oil, though he wastes his substance in riotous living. HEMAN complains out of the depths of his affliction; but all his troubles never drank up that holy anointing oil that God had put into his soul. HEZEKIAH on his apparent death-bed, when he turned his face to the wall, was severely tried, and almost in despair; yet all his affliction and despondency never drained the holy drop of anointing oil.

And so it has been with thousands and tens of thousands of the dear saints of God. Not all their sorrows, I may say more, not all their sins, backslidings, slips, falls, miseries, and wretchedness, have ever, all combined, drunk up the anointing that God has bestowed upon them. If sin could have done it, we would have sinned ourselves into hell long ago; and if the world or Satan could have destroyed it or us, they would long ago have destroyed both. If our carnal mind could have done it, it would have swept us away into floods of destruction. But the anointing abides sure, and cannot be destroyed; and where once lodged in the soul, it is secure against all the assaults of earth, sin, and hell.

The saints of God feel that it abides; for it springs up at times in prayer and desires after the living God; and it breaks forth into faith, hope, and love. Thus it not only abides as a divine reality, but as a living principle, springing up into eternal life. Were it not so, there would be no revivals, no fresh communications, no renewed testimonies, no breakings forth, no tender meltings, no breathings out of desire for the Lord's presence, no mourning over his absence. But the anointing abides, and this preserves the soul from death, and keeps it alive in famine.

September 22

"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me--for you loved me before the foundation of the world."
John 17:24

How great, how elevated above all utterance or all conception of men or angels, must the glory of Christ be--as the Son of the Father in truth and love! And not only is the Lord Jesus Christ glorious in his essential Deity as the Son of God, but glorious also in his holy, spotless humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. For this, though the flesh and blood of the children, was "that holy One who was begotten of the Holy Spirit," and was taken into union with his eternal Deity, that he might be "Immanuel, God with us." The purity, holiness and innocence, the spotless beauty and complete perfection of this human nature, make it in itself exceedingly glorious; but its great glory is the union that it possesses and enjoys with the divine nature of the Son of God. The pure humanity of Jesus veils his Deity, and yet the Deity shines through it, filling it with unutterable brightness, and irradiating it with inconceivable glory. There is no blending of the two natures, for humanity cannot become Deity, nor can Deity become humanity; each nature remains distinct; and each nature has its own peculiar glory. But there is a glory also in the union of both natures in the Person of the God-man. That such wisdom should have been displayed, such grace manifested, such love revealed, and that the union of the two natures in the Person of the Son of God should not only have, so to speak, formerly originated, but should still unceasingly uphold, and eternally maintain salvation with all its present fruits of grace, and all its future fruits of glory, makes the union of the two natures unspeakably glorious.

And when we consider further that through this union of humanity with Deity, the Church is brought into the most intimate nearness and closest relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, what a glory is seen to illuminate the Person of the God-man, who as God is one with God, and as man is one with man, and thus unites man to God, and God to man; thus bringing about the fulfillment of those wonderful words, "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us." And again, "I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Thus there is the glory of Christ as God, the glory of Christ as man, and the glory of Christ as God-man. And this threefold glory of Christ corresponds in a measure with what he was before he came into the world, with what he was while in the world, and with what he now is as having gone to the Father, according to his own words (John 16:28). Before he came into the world his chief glory was that belonging to him as the Son of God; while in the world his chief glory was in being the Son of man; and now that he is gone back to heaven his chief glory is that of his being God and man in one glorious Person.

This latter glory of Christ, which is, in an especial sense, his mediatorial glory, is seen by faith here, and will be seen in the open vision of bliss hereafter. The three disciples on the Mount of transfiguration, Stephen at the time of his martyrdom, Paul when caught up into the third heaven, John in Patmos, had all special and supernatural manifestations of the glory of Christ; that is, surpassing what is generally given to believers. But the usual way in which we now see his glory is by the Holy Spirit "glorifying him by receiving of what is his, and showing it to the soul." This divine and blessed Teacher testifies of him; takes away the veil of ignorance and unbelief which hides

him from view; shines with a holy and sacred light on the Scriptures that speak of him; and raising up faith to believe in his name sets him before the eyes of the enlightened understanding, so that he is looked unto and upon; and though not seen with the bodily eye, is loved, believed, and rejoiced in with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus seen by the eye of faith, all that he is and has, all that he says and does is made precious and glorious. His miracles of mercy, while here below; his words so full of grace, wisdom, and truth; his going about doing good; his sweet example of patience, meekness, and submission; his sufferings and sorrows in the garden and on the cross; his spotless holiness and purity, yet tender compassion to poor lost sinners; his atoning blood and justifying obedience; his dying love, so strong and firm, yet so tried by earth, heaven, and hell; his lowly, yet honorable burial; his glorious resurrection, as the first-begotten of the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power; his ascension to the right hand of the Father, where he reigns and rules, all power being given unto him in heaven and earth, and yet intercedes for his people as the great High Priest over the house of God. What beauty and glory shine forth in all these divine realities, when faith can view them in union with the work and Person of Immanuel!

September 23

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Deuteronomy 8:3

This is the grand lesson which we have to learn in our wilderness journey--"that man does not live by bread alone," that is, by those providential supplies which relieve our natural necessities. Thanks be to God for any bread that he gives us in his kind and bountiful providence. An honest living is a great mercy. To be enabled by the labor of our hands or by the labor of our brain to maintain our families and bring them up in a degree of comfort, if not abundance, is a great blessing. But God has determined that his people shall not live by bread alone. They shall be separated from the mass of men who live in this carnal way only; who have no care beyond earthly possessions, and the sum of whose thoughts and desires is, what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and with what they shall be clothed; who never look beyond the purse, the business, the daily occupation, the safe return, the profitable investment, and how to provide for themselves and their families.

God has planted in the breast of his people a higher life, a nobler principle, a more blessed appetite than to live upon bread alone. We bless him for his providence, but we love him for his grace. We thank him for daily food and clothing, but these mercies are but for time, perishing in their very use, and he has provided us with that which is for eternity. What then does he mean the soul to live upon? "Upon every word that proceeds out of his mouth." But where do we find these words that proceed out of the mouth of God? In the Scriptures, which is the food of the Church, and especially in Scripture as applied to the heart, in the words that God is pleased to drop into the soul by a divine power, which we receive from his gracious mouth, and lay hold of with a believing hand. That is the food and nutriment of our soul; the truth of God applied to our heart and made life and spirit to our souls by his own teaching and testimony. And see how large and ample the supply is. Look through the whole compass of God's revealed word, and see in it what a store there is of provision laid up for the Church of God. How this should both stimulate and encourage

us to search the Scriptures as for hid treasure, to read them constantly, to meditate upon them, to seek to enter into the mind of God as revealed in them, and thus to find them to be the food of our soul. If we were fully persuaded that every word of the Scripture came out of God's mouth, and was meant to feed our soul, how much more we would prize it, read, and study it.

September 24

"His going forth is prepared as the morning." Hosea 6:3

It is to the living soul walking in darkness, and unable to find God, that this text speaks--"His going forth is prepared as the morning." There is an appointed time for the Lord

October

October 1

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Isaiah 2:11

How does the Lord humble? By discovering to man what he is; by opening up the depth of his fall; by making him feel what a vile and guilty wretch he is before the footstool of mercy; by breaking him to pieces; by slaughtering and laying him low; by making him abhor himself in dust and ashes. Was not that the way the Lord took with the saints of old? How did he humble Isaiah? Was it not by some discovery of his divine Majesty, to make him cry, "I am a man of unclean lips!" How did he humble Daniel? Was it not by manifesting himself in his almighty purity, and turning Daniel's loveliness into corruption? How did he humble Hezekiah? By laying him upon a sick-bed, and laying his sins and iniquities with weight and power upon his conscience. None of these men produced humility in themselves. How did the Lord humble Job? By sifting him in Satan's sieve, and discovering as that riddle moved to and fro in Satan's hands the pride, peevishness, and self-righteousness of his carnal mind.

There are many who cannot bear to hear the malady touched upon. They cannot bear to hear the corruptions of the heart even hinted at. But what real humility can a man have except through a knowledge of himself? How can I be humbled except I feel that in myself which covers me with shame and confusion of face, and makes me loathe and abhor myself before the eyes of a heart-searching God? Therefore the more the glorious majesty of heaven is pleased to unfold itself in all its divine purity in my conscience, and the deeper discovery I have of what I am as a fallen wretch, a guilty sinner, the more will my heart be humbled, the more shall I be lowly and abased, the more shall I loathe myself in dust and ashes.

October 2

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." 2 Peter 1:2

If we do not know Jesus for ourselves, by some spiritual discovery of his Person and work, what testimony have we of a saving interest in his grace? Because, there is no grace except that which flows through him, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This is what we should ever labor after.

Our daily, hourly desire and prayer should be, to have spiritual discoveries of Christ; to see him by the eye of faith; to enter into his glorious Person and finished work; to realize his presence, taste his love, and know him and the power of his resurrection. This is what Paul so earnestly labored after (Phil. 3:10); and for the excellency of this knowledge he suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung that he might win Christ. To know him as our Surety and Sin-bearer, our Advocate and Intercessor, our Friend, Husband, and Brother; to know our saving interest in him,

and our union with him; our place in his heart, our name on his breast, our memorial on the palms of his hands--what can surpass the blessedness of such a knowledge as this?

Through this spiritual, experimental knowledge of him, grace flows. As a watercourse opening upon a river brings down its irrigating stream into the parched meadow, so a knowledge of Christ opens up a channel through which the grace that is in him flows into the barren, parched soul. Thus, as through grace alone we know him, so every fresh communication of grace not only makes him better known, but flows in through that very knowledge.

The grace that comes through this knowledge of him brings also peace; for he is "our peace." He has "broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two, one new man, so making peace." He, therefore, came and preached peace "to those who were afar off and to those who were near." His blood speaks peace to a guilty conscience; his voice says peace to the winds and waves of the surging heart; his last legacy was, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;" his dying promise was, "In me you shall have peace;" and, as the Prince of peace at God's right hand, he is able to fill us with "all joy and peace in believing," for his kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And thus, through a knowledge of him as our Lord, "grace and peace" are both "multiplied."

October 3

"Your life will I give unto you for a prey in all places where you go." Jeremiah 45:5

There is a life given to the elect when the blessed Spirit quickens their souls--a life eternal, communicated to them out of the fullness of the Son of God. This life is a personal, individual life; and thus there seems to be a sweetness contained in the expression, "your life." "Your life will I give unto you for a prey." This life which is treasured up in the fullness of Christ is breathed into the soul in the appointed time by the Holy Spirit, is kept alive there by his almighty power, and will burn brighter and brighter in the realms of endless day.

But we may observe, from the expression made use of in the text, that this life which is given to the child of God, is given to him in a peculiar way. "Your life will I give unto you for a prey." The word "prey" points out that this life is an object of attack. We hear of "beasts of prey," and of "birds of prey," and the expression implies a carnivorous animal. Thus the words, "Your life will I give unto you for a prey," imply that there are ravenous beasts that are continually seeking to devour this life, voracious enemies upon the watch, who are eager to prey upon this life, which God the Holy Spirit has kindled in the soul. How accurately and how experimentally do these words describe the inward kingdom of God! Eternal life is given by God; and kept by him when given; preserved by his power from ever being extinguished. And yet preserved by a perpetual miracle, like a burning lamp set afloat upon the waves of the sea; or, to use a figure that I have somewhere seen, like a lighted candle carried over a hill in the midst of a gale of wind.

Thus, "our life is given us for a prey;" and the power, faithfulness, and wisdom of God are manifested in keeping this life unhurt amid all its enemies. As Daniel was preserved in the den of lions; and as the three men were preserved in the burning fiery furnace; so the life of God is preserved in the soul, in the midst of lions, as David says, "My soul is among lions" (Ps. 57:4), and amid the fires, "Glorify you the Lord in the fires" (Isaiah 24:15). So that the life of the child of God is

one continual conflict between faith and unbelief, between enmity and love, between the grace of God and the rebellion of the carnal mind, between the sinkings of the drooping spirit and the liftings-up of the light of God's countenance.

October 4

"Where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." Hebrews 6:20

How blessedly did the Lord comfort his sorrowing disciples when he said to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions--if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He has gone to take possession beforehand of his and their everlasting home; for he is ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He has, as it were, filled heaven with new beauty, new happiness, new glory. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His glorious Person as Immanuel has become the object of heaven's praise and adoration. The elect angels adore him as God-man; and the spirits of just men made perfect worship him in company with the angelic host. What a view had holy John of heaven's glorious worship, when he saw the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb; when he heard their new song and the voice of many angels round about the throne, and all saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain--to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Heaven itself is waiting for the completion of the great mystery of godliness, when the whole Church shall be assembled around the throne; when the marriage supper of the Lamb shall come; when the headstone shall be brought forth by the hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel, with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it. Earth itself is groaning under the weight of sin and sorrow; and the souls of those under the altar who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, are crying with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" No, the very signs of the times themselves are all proclaiming as with one voice that it cannot be long before the Lord will come a second time without sin unto salvation.

October 5

"Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Lamentations 3:39

We must not understand by the word "punished," anything of a vindictive nature. God never punishes the sins of his elect penally; that is, not as he punishes the sins of the reprobate. The eternal covenant forbids this. "Fury is not in me, says the Lord." The elect are accepted in Jesus, are pardoned in him, are complete in him. This is their eternal and unalterable covenant standing--the fruit and effect of their everlasting union with the Son of God. But though this forbids punishment in its strictly penal sense, it by no means excludes chastisement. Thus we are not to understand by the word "punishment" in the text the infliction of God's righteous wrath, that foretaste of eternal damnation with which, sometimes even in this life, he visits the ungodly; but it signifies that chastisement which is the privilege of the heir, and distinguishes him from the bastard. It is under this chastisement, then, that the living man is brought to complain, and he will often see in the afflictions that befall him the rod of the Lord as the chastisement of sin. When he thus sees light in God's light, he may justly say, "WHY should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Are they not chastisements, not punishments; the rod of a father's

correction, not the vindictive stroke of offended justice?

Perhaps his property is lost through unlooked-for circumstances, or the roguery of others; and he is brought down from comparative affluence to be a poor man. When he can see that this is a chastisement for his pride and carnality in former days, he is able to put his mouth in the dust. Or if the Lord afflicts him in his body so that he shall scarcely enjoy a day's health, when he sees and feels how he abused his health and strength when he possessed them, and at the same time perceives from how many hurtful snares his bodily affliction instrumentally preserves him, he is able at times to bear it meekly and patiently.

He may also have serious afflictions in his family, or find, like David, "his house not so with God" as he could wish; but when he sees that a sickly wife or disobedient children are but so many strokes of chastisement, and far lighter than his sins demand, when he sees that they come from the hand of love, and not from eternal wrath, that they are the stripes of a Father, not the vindictive strokes of an angry judge, he feels then that love is mingled with chastisement, and his spirit is meekened, and his heart softened, and he is brought down to say, "Why should any living man complain?"

Now, until a man gets there he cannot but complain. Until he is brought spiritually to see that all his afflictions, griefs, and sorrows are chastisements and not punishments, and is able to receive them as the stripes of love, he must and he will complain. But, generally speaking, before the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance upon him, before he gives him a sense of peace in his conscience, he will bring him "to accept," as the Scripture speaks (Lev. 26:41), "of the punishment of his iniquity." He will thus receive these strokes of chastisement with a subdued spirit; he will confess that they are justly deserved; and his obstinacy and rebelliousness being in a measure broken, he will lie as a poor and needy supplicant at the foot of the cross.

October 8

"Persecuted, but not forsaken." 2 Corinthians 4:9

Whatever injury persecutors may do or attempt to do to a Christian, they cannot rob him of his God. They may destroy his body; they cannot destroy his soul. They may wound his reputation; but they cannot wound his conscience. They may strip him of all his earthly goods; but they cannot lay their unhallowed hands upon the treasure which God has lodged in his breast. Yes, all may forsake him as they forsook his divine Master; but God has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Why, then, need we dread persecution for righteousness' sake? If the Lord be on our side, whom need we fear? And who can harm us if we be followers of that which is good?

But bear in mind that it must be persecution for righteousness' sake. Do not call it persecution if you are buffeted for your faults. Do not think yourselves persecuted if by your inconsistencies you have brought upon yourselves the reproach of men, or the just censure of those who fear God. But if your persecutions are brought upon you from doing the will of God from the heart, you will find the approbation of God in your conscience; no, you will find that your very persecutions will draw down more into your soul a blessed sense of the sympathy of your great High Priest, so that as your afflictions abound, so will your consolation.

Sad indeed it would be for the Church of God, if, amid her persecutions, the Lord added to the weight of her trouble by withdrawing from her the light of his countenance and the consolations of his sensible presence. But she never more sensibly reclines on his bosom than when he gives her to drink of his cup, and thus conforms her to his suffering image.

October 7

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes."
Matthew 11:25

Whatever religious knowledge, whatever carnal wisdom, or whatever worldly prudence a man may be possessed of, if he is devoid of the life of God in his soul, he is destitute of the workings of godly fear, he has no solemn awe or reverence for Jehovah, he has never seen his sins in the light of God's countenance, he has never trembled at "the wrath to come," he has never prostrated himself with a reverential spirit before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah, who sees into the secret recesses of his bosom.

But all his knowledge, and all his wisdom, and all his prudence leave him just where they found him--unconverted carnal, sensual, worldly, "dead in trespasses and sins." All his wisdom never reached beyond the surface; it never broke up the crust of unbelief, so as to enter through that seared crust into the conscience, and produce living effects in it, as made tender by the touch of God's finger. But his knowledge, his wisdom, his prudence are all floating in his mere judgment, and never descend into the depths of his heart.

God hides then the workings of spiritual fear from those who are "wise and prudent." He does not condescend to manifest himself to them; he does not show them light in his light; he does not reveal himself to their consciences; he does not come with power into their hearts; he does not take the veil of unbelief and blindness from their carnal minds, and show them himself; he takes them not where he took Moses, into the cleft of the rock, "where his glory passed by;" he deals not with them as he dealt with Isaiah, when he manifested to him the glory of the Lord in the temple; he discovers himself not to them as he did to Job, when "he abhorred himself in dust and ashes." All their knowledge of God, therefore, is an external, intellectual knowledge, a mere exercise of the faculties of the mind, without any spiritual teaching, or any special revelation of the presence, power, glory, and majesty of God to their consciences.

But the babe, the living babe in Zion has "the fear of the Lord," in his soul, "as the beginning of wisdom." And therefore, having this fountain of life within, he has it springing up in spiritual exercises. As the Apostle speaks, he "serves God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;" he dare not rush with presumption into his holy presence. When he comes into his sanctuary a solemn dread from time to time falls upon his spirit. He has the feelings of Isaiah when he cried--"I am a man of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" the feelings of Jacob when he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place!" the feelings of Moses, when he stood by the burning bush, and put his shoes from off his feet, for the spot whereon he stood was holy ground; the feelings of the high priest in the temple, on that mysterious day of atonement, when he entered alone, "not without blood," into the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and beheld the Shechinah, the Divine presence as a cloud resting on the mercy-seat.

The babe, then, has these exercises of godly fear, which carnal, unhumiliated, worldly-wise professors know nothing of. And though the babe, at times, seems to have no religion which he can really call spiritual or which satisfies himself, yet he has that tenderness, awe, and reverence which the carnal professor, however high in doctrine, however soaring in vain confidence, is utterly unacquainted with.

October 8

"Until the redemption of the purchased possession." Ephesians 1:14

The Church has been redeemed by price, but is not as yet fully redeemed by power. Christ has bought with his precious blood both the souls and bodies of his people, but he has not yet redeemed them openly. This redemption is still future, and will not be accomplished until the glorious resurrection morn, when the bodies of the dead saints will be raised, and the bodies of the living saints changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. This, therefore, is "the redemption of the purchased possession;" and this being future we have to wait for it, as the Apostle speaks, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:25).

Our body is not yet redeemed from its native corruption. But, in the resurrection morn, when the dead will be raised incorruptible, then the redemption of the body will be complete. Then the inheritance will be fully entered into. The risen and glorified saints will inherit Christ, and Christ will inherit them; and his purchased possession will be forever delivered from every foe and every fear, from every sin and every sorrow, from every corruption of body or soul, and be crowned with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Unto this day of redemption the Holy Spirit seals all the living family of God (Ephes. 4:30), not only by assuring them of their saving interest in the inheritance, and himself being the earnest of it, but as thereby securing to them the most certain possession of it.

October 9

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked--who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9

The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing. We read of the mystery of iniquity as well as of the mystery of godliness; and the former has lengths, depths, and breadths as well as the latter; depths which no human plumb-line ever fathomed, and lengths which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out. Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep, and at other times to awake up with renewed strength, its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature, the many shapes and colors it wears, the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels, the corners into which it creeps, its deceitfulness, hypocrisy, craftiness, persuasiveness, intense selfishness, utter recklessness, desperate madness, and insatiable greediness are secrets, painful secrets, only learned by bitter experience.

In the spiritual knowledge of these two mysteries, the mystery of sin and the mystery of salvation, all true religion consists. In the school of experience we are kept, day after day, learning and forgetting these two lessons, being never able to understand them, and yet not satisfied unless we know them, pursuing after an acquaintance with them, and finding that they still, like a rainbow, recede from us as fast as we pursue. Thus we find realized in our own souls those heavenly

contradictions, those divine paradoxes, that the wiser we get, the greater fools we become (1 Cor. 3:18); the stronger we grow, the weaker we are (2 Cor. 12:9, 10); the more we possess, the less we have (2 Cor. 6:10); the more completely bankrupt, the more frankly forgiven (Luke 7:42); the more utterly lost, the more perfectly saved; and when most like a little child, the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4).

October 10

"And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." Romans 5:5

How the Scriptures speak of "a good hope through grace;" and call it "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." What a blessed grace must that be which thus enters into the very presence of Christ! How, also, the word of God speaks of it as the twin sister with faith and love (1 Cor. 13:13); and declares that it "makes not ashamed," because it springs out of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit!

Now we learn what "a good hope through grace" is, by being tossed up and down on the waves of despondency, and almost at times sinking into despair. Evidences so darkened, the heart so shut up, the mind so bewildered, sin so present, the Lord so absent, a nature so carnal, sensual, idolatrous, and adulterous--no wonder that amid so many evils felt or feared, the soul should at times sink into despondency. But at such seasons the blessedness of "a good hope through grace" is found; and when this anchor is cast into and enters within the veil, taking hold of the blood and righteousness of the great High Priest, how strongly and securely it holds the ship, so that it shall not be utterly overwhelmed in the billows of despair!

October 11

"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6

What heart can conceive, what tongue express what the holy soul of Christ endured when "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all?" In the garden of Gethsemane, what a load of guilt, what a weight of sin, what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall as sweat from his brow. The human nature in its weakness recoiled, as it were, from the cup of anguish put into his hand. His body could scarcely bear the load that pressed him down; his soul, under the waves and billows of God's wrath, sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him (Ps. 69:1, 2).

And how could it be otherwise when that sacred humanity was enduring all the wrath of God, suffering the very pangs of hell, and wading in all the depths of guilt and terror? When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us, he endured in his holy soul all the pangs of distress, horror, alarm, misery, and guilt that the elect would have felt in hell forever; and not only as any one of them would have felt, but as the collective whole would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God. The anguish, the distress, the darkness, the condemnation, the shame, the guilt, the unutterable horror, that any or all of his quickened family have ever experienced under a sense of God's wrath, the curse of the law, and the terrors of hell, are only faint, feeble reflections of what the Lord felt in the garden and on the cross; for there were

attendant circumstances in his case which are not, and indeed cannot be in theirs, and which made the distress and agony of his holy soul, both in nature and degree, such as none but he could feel or know.

He as the eternal Son of God, who had lain in his bosom before all worlds, had known all the blessedness and happiness of the love and favor of the Father, his own Father, shining upon him, for he was "by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8:30). When, then, instead of love he felt his displeasure, instead of the beams of his favor he experienced the frowns and terrors of his wrath, instead of the light of his countenance he tasted the darkness and gloom of desertion--what heart can conceive, what tongue express the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Surety under this agonizing experience?

October 12

"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Psalm 91:16

It is not in the number of our years that we shall find preparedness for death. It is not the longer a man lives the more will he be satisfied. No such thing. Then what can the promise mean? Why, that God will satisfy his people with their length of life, whether long or short. God takes his children home at all ages, and he always satisfies them. He always brings them to see and feel that this life is empty and vain, and that it is better, far better, to live in his presence. You may be harassed by the thoughts of death, and be in bondage through the fears of death; and you may be saying, "How will it be with me then?" I will tell you.

If you are a child of God, I firmly believe you will not be removed unwillingly and reluctantly, but you will be willing in the day of the Lord's power. You will be willing to breathe out your soul into his dear hands, to whom you will commend your spirit; you will be willing to be with Christ, which is far better. You may not now be willing. If you pluck at an unripe apple, it resists the touch, but let it be fully ripe, how little, how slight a touch will cause it to drop from the tree. You shall be gathered as a shock of corn in its season. Why, a farmer will not gather in his grain until it is fully ripe; and do you think the Lord will gather his grain into his heavenly garner and it be in an unfit and unripe state? We cannot think it. Be that thought far from us, as it is far from the Lord.

"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Ah! the soul will never see it unless the Lord shows it him; but the Lord will show it him. He says he will. "I will show him my salvation." What can he want more? All that he may want, all that he may need in his journey through this wilderness is there. Is there not a sufficiency? Is there not that which he feels is enough? If these promises be mine, be yours, and if they be fulfilled to you and to me, what more can we possibly want?

October 13

"But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." John 14:26

If the Lord has given to any of you eyes to see and hearts to receive this divine Comforter, praise, bless, and adore your God and Father, and most merciful Benefactor, for his distinguishing grace in giving you to know him as your Comforter; and if he has ever dropped into your soul any of his

sweet teachings, bless him that you have received him also as the Spirit of truth into your conscience. What but sovereign grace, rich, free and super-abounding, has made the difference between you and the world who cannot receive him? But for his divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death. Oh, it is a mercy if but one drop of heavenly consolation has ever been distilled into your soul, if ever you have felt or found any relief in your sorrows and distresses from the work and witness of the Holy Spirit; if you have ever gathered any solid comfort from any promise applied with power, from any text dropped into your heart with a sealing testimony, from any manifestation of the love and blood of Christ, or from any communication of liberty, joy, or peace such as are produced by the operation and influence of the Spirit of God.

It may have been but little, nor did it last long; but it has given you a taste of its blessedness, and made you long for another sip, another crumb, another visit. But look to it well and examine carefully whether it be real, and whether, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, you have good ground for believing that what you received with such comfort to your soul was distilled into your heart by the Comforter, and that the truth which you have felt and believed, as well as professed, has been opened up to your conscience by the Spirit of truth.

October 14

"And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philippians 3:9

Here are the two righteousnesses clearly laid down--in one or the other of which we must all stand before God--the righteousness which is of the law, and the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ. But bear this in mind, that a righteousness to be available before God must be a perfect righteousness. This righteousness no man ever did or could produce by his own obedience to the law, for no man ever yet loved God "with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself;" and if a man does not thus love God and thus love his neighbor, he is accursed and condemned already by that righteous law which curses "every one who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Now the Apostle felt that as this righteousness could not be yielded by himself as a fallen sinner, he must necessarily fall under the condemnation and curse attached to that holy law. Trembling, therefore, in his conscience, as feeling that the wrath of God was revealed against him, and all unjustified sinners in a broken law, and knowing that he must sink for ever under the terrible indignation of the Almighty, if he had no covering for his needy, naked soul but his own righteousness, he fled out of it to find justification and acceptance, mercy and peace in the righteousness of Christ. Thenceforth he "was determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and Jesus became to him his "all in all." When once he had been favored with a view of the righteousness of the Son of God, he wanted no other for time or eternity. He saw by faith the words and works of the God-man, and he beheld Deity stamped upon every thought, word, and action of that pure humanity with which it was in union, and thus investing them with a merit beyond all conception or expression of men or angels. He saw him by faith bearing his sins in his own body on the tree, and by his active and passive obedience working out a righteousness acceptable to God, and such as he and all the redeemed could stand in before the great white

throne without spot or blemish.

As a traveler overtaken by a violent thunderstorm gladly flies to a house by the wayside wherein he may find shelter from the lightning-stroke and the sweeping rain; or as a ship threatened with a hurricane bends every sail to reach the harbor of refuge in time, so does the soul terrified by the thunders and lightnings of God's righteous law, seek for shelter in the wounded side of Jesus, and hide itself beneath his justifying obedience. This righteousness is here called "the righteousness of God;" for God the Father contrived it, God the Son performed it, and God the Holy Spirit applies it; and it is said to be "by faith" and "through the faith of Christ" because faith views it, believes in it, receives it, and gives the soul a manifested saving interest in it.

October 15

"My teaching shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Deuteronomy 32:2

We have in our text an ascending scale--the dew, the small rain, the rain, and the showers. And this graduated scale of heavenly moisture shows that there are degrees of spiritual blessing. We must not expect all to be blessed to the same extent, nor all to receive the same measure. Yet all are of the same nature. Examine "the dew," it is water; "the small rain," it is water; "the rain," it is water; "the showers," they are still water. You cannot find any difference between the water of the dew, of the small rain, of the rain, and of the showers--they are all alike pure water, distilled from the sky.

So it is with the blessing of God upon the soul. It may fall upon one as the dew, upon another as the small rain, upon a third as the rain, on a fourth as the showers; yet all are equally and alike spiritual and divine. It is the same God that gives; through the same Jesus it comes; by the same Spirit it is communicated. All produce more or less the same effects--to soften, to moisten, to fertilize, and to revive; and all descend from the heaven of Christ's gospel; all fall from the same skies of grace, mercy, and truth, love, blood, and salvation.

The teaching, therefore, that testifies of Jesus; and the speech that proclaims him to be a Rock, and his work to be perfect, and no other teaching, "drops as the rain and distills as the dew." There is a power in truth, when God is pleased to apply it to the heart; and whether it come in large or in small measure, whether it be in dew or shower, it is equally a proof of his mercy and love, and equally a proof that his power attends his own divine truth to our soul.

October 18

"Your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3

There is nothing so deep, nothing so hidden, as the life of God in the soul. It seems to be enshrined in the lowest depths of a man's heart. It does not float upon the surface, like a cork upon the water, but sinks deep, very deep, into the very bottom of the soul. Therefore is it hidden from the eyes of a profane world; hidden from the professing world; and what is more, sometimes hidden from the subject of it himself. A child of God often cannot see his own faith, nor can he discern the life that is bubbling and streaming up in his own bosom. It is not a lake, spread abroad in the meridian sunshine to attract every eye; nor is it a brook that flows babbling on over the clear pebbles; but it is a well. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up

into everlasting life." Therefore it is hidden from view.

The best part of our religion is that which is least seen. The secret cries, groans, tears, confessions, supplications, and breathings after God do not for the most part come abroad; the despondency, heart sickness, trials, perplexities, and powerful temptations with which many a dear saint of God is exercised do not come to view. No; nor his fears, sinkings, guilt, misery, and self-condemnation. Yes, the best part of his religion is hidden from view, for the weightiest ever sinks the deepest. And as it is with the dealings of his soul with God, so it is with the dealings of God with his soul, making and keeping his conscience tender, reviving the fear of God, drawing the heart upward into prayer and meditation, watering his spirit and bedewing it with the secret dew and rain of his grace. Thus, the best part, because the spiritual part of a man's religion, is hidden from the eyes of all, except as the fruits thereof are manifest.

Take your stand upon yon hill, and see that thread of verdure spreading itself through the barren plain. Whence comes that green strip which you see? Coming down to examine it, you find a little brooklet threading its way through the barren plain. It is this brooklet that, watering the roots of the grass, gives it that verdure; yet the brooklet itself is hidden until the eye is brought close to it. So it is with the life of God in the soul. We see the effects the verdure produced by the brooklet; but the brooklet itself, the life and grace of God in the innermost soul is hidden, "hidden with Christ in God."

And if not merely hidden, but hidden with Christ in God, what a sacred, what a holy, what a truly divine life it must be! If this be spiritual religion, that it dwells with Christ himself in the bosom of God, what a divine thing, what a heavenly possession! how full of eternal blessedness must the religion of a child of God be! It is locked up in two distinct places, yet united with each other by virtue of the humanity of Christ, and the faith that embraces it. If I may use the expression, one end is in the bosom of God, and the other in the believer's breast! Compare man's paltry, beggarly religion with this supernatural life of God in the soul, Christ himself formed in the heart the hope of glory. Words would fail to express the eternal distinction between them.

But the word "hidden" will carry another idea, out of reach, treasured up, therefore SAFE. What would have become long ago of the life of God in the soul, if it could have been robbed, trodden out, or lost? But this it never can be, for it is locked up in the Person of the Son of God. It is, therefore, out of the reach of Satan, sin, death, and hell; safe in Christ's keeping, locked up in his eternal bosom. Were it otherwise, where should you and I long ago have been? Where would our religion have gone to, unless we had reason to believe that it had been kindled by the power of God, and was maintained by the same power which first gave it birth? This is the grand consolation of a child of God--to believe that he has the life of God in his soul; and to feel, day by day, that he who gave that life maintains it in firm and living exercise.

October 17

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." 1 Peter 1:2

When we see and feel how we need GRACE every moment of our lives, we at once perceive a beauty in the blessing thus asked for in an abundant, overflowing measure. We cannot walk the length of the street without sin. Our carnal minds, our vain imaginations, are all on the lookout for evil. Sin presents itself at every avenue, and lurks like the Arab in the wilderness, or the prowling

night thief for every opportunity of open or secret plunder. In fact, in ourselves, in our fallen nature, except as restrained and influenced by grace, we sin with well-near every breath that we draw. We need, therefore, grace upon grace, or, in the words of the text, grace to be "multiplied" in proportion to our sins. Shall I say in proportion? No, if sin abounds, as to our shame and sorrow we know it does, we need grace to much more abound. When the deep tide of sin flows in with the mud and mire, we need the spring tide of grace to flow higher still, to carry out the slime and filth into the depths of the ocean, so that when sought for they may no more be found.

Thus we need grace, free grace; grace today, grace tomorrow, grace this moment, grace the next, grace all the day long; healing, reviving, restoring, saving, sanctifying; and all this multiplied by all our needs and woes, sins, slips and falls, unceasing and aggravated backslidings. We need grace to believe, grace to hope, grace to love, grace to fight, and grace to conquer; grace to stand, grace to live, and grace to die. Every moment of our lives we need keeping, supporting, holding, and withholding grace; for, as a good man has said, "If the Lord leaves us for one moment, he leaves us that one moment too long."

But to "grace" the Apostle adds "PEACE." Sin breaks our peace, and sets our souls at a distance from God; trials, also, and temptations, sins and sorrows, occur every day to mar our rest; so we need peace to be multiplied as well as grace. Peace like a river, of which the stream is ever flowing; peace like the sea, of which the tides, if they do ebb, yet rise higher than they fall. We need peace, also, to establish our hearts in the truth, and in the love of it, so as to prevent our being carried about with every wind of doctrine. We are often entangled in the wily snares of Satan, and we need peace to be restored to our soul. When it is thus sadly broken, and sin has filled us with guilt and terror, we need peace to come and heal all those wounds, and establish our souls firmly in the gospel of peace.

And when we shall be called upon to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, how then we shall need "peace to be multiplied," that we may fear no evil, but find the comforting staff and supporting rod. Thus we never can have too much grace or too much peace. The more we know of sin the more shall we need grace, and the more we know of sorrow the more we shall need peace.

October 18

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent." John 6:29

Oh! how many a living saint is there who wants to believe in Jesus, who longs to trust in his holy name; and yet he cannot, so plagued, so pestered is he by the risings of inward unbelief. He knows that he does not yet so believe in him as to obtain deliverance; for he has an inward testimony in his conscience, that if he believed in the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, it would bring the love of God into his heart, extract the sting of death, and fill him with joy and peace. But as long as he feels condemned by the law and his own guilty conscience, he has an inward testimony that he has not as yet that living faith in Christ which, he is persuaded, would save and deliver him from all his guilty fears and dismal apprehensions. Therefore he labors after this special, this peculiar faith in the Lord Jesus, that he may attain unto it, or rather that God would, of his infinite mercy, bestow it upon him.

Here, then, is the main labor of faith, to believe in Jesus Christ so as to obtain pardon, peace, and deliverance. Many a poor soul is laboring hard at this work, yet with a deep and increasing conviction that it is a work which he cannot perform except by the immediate power of God. So powerful an antagonist is unbelief, that, with all his attempts, he feels that he cannot subdue it, nor raise up one grain of that true faith whereby Christ is experimentally brought into the heart. But this very struggle plainly shows that there is life within, a work of God on his soul; for, from the movements of his grace, and the opposition of his carnal mind to them, all this conflict proceeds. When, then, in due time, the blessed Spirit brings Christ near to his eyes and heart, reveals him within, takes of his atoning blood, and sprinkles it on his conscience, brings forth his righteousness and puts it upon him, and sheds abroad the love of God, then he raises up that special faith in the Lord Jesus, whereby the soul hangs, and if I may use the expression, hooks itself upon his Person, as God-man, upon his blood as cleansing from all sin, upon his righteousness as perfectly justifying, upon his grace as super-abounding over all the aboundings of evil, and upon his dying love as a balmy cordial against all the woes and sorrows by which it is distressed. This is believing in the Son of God; believing in Jesus Christ to the salvation of the soul.

October 19

"Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the Lord your God when he led you in the way?" Jeremiah 2:17

No man knows better, I believe, than myself, that we cannot do anything of a spiritual nature to bring ourselves near to God, but I am equally sure that we can do many things that set us very far from him. Let all the shame and guilt be ours; all the grace and glory are God's. Every drop of felt mercy, every ray of gracious hope, every sweet application of truth to the heart, every sense of saving interest, every blessed testimony, every sweet indulgence, every heavenly smile, every tender desire, and every spiritual feeling, all, all are of God. If ever my heart is softened, my spirit blessed, my soul watered, if Christ is ever felt to be precious, it is all of his grace; it is all given freely, sovereignly, without money and without price.

But can it be denied--I for one cannot deny it--that by our carnality, inconsistency, worldly-mindedness, negligence, ingratitude, and forsaking and forgetting the God of our mercies, we are continually bringing leanness and barrenness, deadness and darkness into our own souls? Thus we are forced to plead "Guilty, guilty!" to put our mouth in the dust, acknowledge ourselves to be vile, and confess ourselves indeed "of sinners chief, and of saints less than the least."

Yet thus does God, in his mysterious dealings, open up a way for his sovereign grace and mercy to visit the soul. The more we feel ourselves condemned, cut off, gashed, and wounded by a sense of sin and folly, backslidings and wanderings from God, the lower we shall lie, the more we shall put our mouth in the dust, the more freely we shall confess our baseness before him. And if the Lord should be pleased, in these solemn moments, to open our poor blind eyes to see something of the precious blood of the Lamb, to apply some sweet promise to the soul, or to bring to the heart a sense of his goodness and mercy, how sweet and suitable is that grace, as coming over all the mountains and hills of our sin and shame. Thus is the goodness of God, as it were, reflected on and by our baseness and vileness, as we see the sun sometimes shining on and reflected by a black cloud. The black cloud of our vileness but serves to heighten the glory of the rays of free grace and the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness.

October 20

"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 2:3

"You therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2 Timothy 2:3

How is the Christian soldier made? By going to chapel, by reading the Bible, by singing hymns, by talking about religion? Just as much as the veteran warrior is made by merely living the barracks. He must go into the battle and fight hand to hand with Satan and the flesh; he must endure cruel wounds given by both outward and inward foes; he must lie upon the cold ground of desolation and desertion; he must rush up the breach when called to storm the castles of sin and evil, and never "yield or abandon the field," but press on determined to win the day, or die. In these battles of the Lord, in due time he learns how to handle his weapons, how to call upon God in supplication and prayer, to trust in Jesus Christ with all his heart, to beat back Satan, to crucify self, and live a life of faith in the Son of God.

Religion is not a matter of theory or of doctrine--it is to be in the thick of the battle, fighting with the enemy hand to hand, foot to foot, shoulder to shoulder. This actual, not sham, warfare makes the Christian soldier hardy, strengthens the muscles of his arm, gives him skill to wield his weapons, and power sometimes to put his enemies to flight. Thus it "works endurance," makes him a veteran, so that he is no longer a raw recruit, but one able to fight the Lord's battles and "to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." What then have been your best friends? Your trials. Where have you learned your best lessons? In the school of temptation. What has made you look to Jesus? A sense of your sin and misery. Why have you hung upon the word of promise? Because you had nothing else to hang upon.

Thus, could you look at the results, you would see this, that trials and temptations produced upon your spirit these two effects; that they tried your faith, and that sometimes to the uttermost, so that in the trial it seemed as if all your faith were gone; and yet they have wrought patience, they have made you endure. Why have you not long ago given up all religion? Have your trials made you disposed to give it up? They have made you hold all the faster by it. Have your temptations induced you to let it go as a matter of little consequence? Why, you never had more real religion than when you were tried whether you had any; and never held faith with a tighter grasp than when Satan was pulling it all away. The strongest believers are not the men of doctrine, but the men of experience; not the boasters, but the fighters; not the parade officers in all the millinery of spotless regimentals, but the tattered, soiled, wounded, half-dead soldiers that give and take no quarter from sin or Satan.

October 21

"Behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, says the Lord." Jeremiah 45:5

The Lord may be said spiritually to "bring evil upon all flesh," when he lays trouble and calamity upon the flesh, and upon all that the flesh loves. The blow falls upon the fruits of the flesh, when it cuts down fleshly religion, and roots up false hopes, vain confidence, and self-dependence. The effect of these strokes is to lay the soul poor and needy at the footstool of mercy; and as the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes to see, quickens the soul to feel, and raises up power to ask, there is now a seeking after real things--substance as opposed to shadows. Thus pardon, mercy, the

testimony of God in the soul, the lifting up of the light of his countenance, the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon the conscience, with all the other spiritual blessings revealed in the gospel, are sought after, valued, and prized.

It is not enough now that they are heard from a minister, assented to in the judgment, or received on the testimony of others. They are only now so far enjoyed as they are tasted, felt, and handled in the depths of the heart. I believe I can say for myself until evil came upon me in this way, chiefly through a long illness, (though if I have life now, I had it before that visitation), yet until trouble came, and I was brought low in body and soul, I was never seeking as I have done since, the visitations and manifestations of the Lord's favor. Deceived by Satan and my own heart, I was seeking rather to make myself wise in the letter, than to feel the power of vital godliness in my soul. But ever since then, amid many discouragements, and with many alternations and changes, I have felt led, as I never knew before, or at least not from the same pressing sense of need, to seek after the visitations and manifestations of the Lord's favor; the dew of his Spirit, the application of his atoning blood, and the inward testimonies of his love and grace. Nor can I rest for salvation upon anything else. I am not, therefore, speaking at a peradventure; I know the ground, for I have traveled it; I have lined it with laborious footsteps; and therefore having tracked it out, I speak in my measure, that which I know; and testify that which I feel.

When the Lord, then, thus brings evil upon our flesh, it is not to sweep away any real religion that we may possess. It is to sweep away our false religion. This winnowing fan is to fan away the chaff, and leave the pure grain. This keen knife of the heavenly Surgeon is only to cut away the disease and unhealthy tumors, and leave the sound parts uninjured. When the Lord brings distress into the soul, it is not to destroy any one grace that has been communicated by the blessed Spirit, but to fulfill that word, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." He puts his "vessels of gold and silver" into the furnace to take away their dross, that they may be "sanctified, and fit for the Master's use." For he has chosen his Zion in the furnace of affliction; and he "sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, that he may purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3).

October 22

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14

The glory of Christ, in his suffering manhood, was veiled from the eyes of all but those who were taught by the blessed Spirit and enlightened to see it. And what glory is still to be seen by believing eyes in an incarnate God! The grandeur of Deity, tempered by the weakness of humanity, and yet shining through it, as the noonday sun shines through the clouds, which so far veil his rays that though they permit him to be seen they do not dazzle nor blind the eye! The Son of God in the babe of Bethlehem; the "only begotten of the Father," sweating great drops of blood in the Garden, and hanging upon the cross at Calvary; yet in his lowest state, when covered to man's eye with ignominy and shame, glory streaming from every pore of his sacred body, majesty and beauty shining forth from every lineament of his marred countenance, and love and mercy characterizing every word issuing from his languid lips! None will ever see the glory of a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ in the open bliss of heaven who do not first see him on earth in his humiliation as a

suffering Christ; and indeed it is his suffering glory which is now so blessed and so suitable to a guilty sinner. To see this suffering glory of the Son of God revealed to his soul by a divine power, made over to him as his salvation, and containing in it the essence of all his present and future happiness; this is the glory that a redeemed and regenerated saint longs to see and feel.

What glory can the world give compared with the glory of the marred countenance of the suffering Son of God? By the side of his cross all earthly glory pales, withers, and dies; for death puts an end to everything naturally bright and glorious. Well has God spoken of the end of all human glory--"Therefore hell has enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoices shall descend into it" (Isaiah 5:14).

But that glory which begins with the cross ends with the crown; for "if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together." To see this glory of a suffering Christ by the eye of faith; to feel the heart deeply penetrated and inwardly possessed by it; to have it for our daily bread and our daily drink; to come as led by the Spirit to this ever-spread table of the flesh of Christ, this ever-flowing fountain of his atoning blood, and hear the Lord himself saying, 'Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved.' Here is food to feed your immortal soul; here are streams of pardon and peace; here the rivers of eternal life--'Let him that is athirst come; and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely;' to see, to enjoy, to feel, and experience this in his own dry, thirsty and weary bosom, this is to see the glory of God, as revealed in the Person, work, blood, obedience, and love of his dear Son.

October 23

"Even to him shall men come." Isaiah 45:24

The Lord has given an absolute promise that "in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." And no less absolute is the addition, and as it were divine corollary to that promise, "To him shall men come." And who gives them will and power to come? The Father himself, according to the Lord's own words, "No man can come to me except the Father who has sent me draws him." But will the Father draw all the chosen vessels of mercy to Jesus? Surely he will; for the Lord adds, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me" (John 6:45).

Every act of faith whereby you look to Jesus is a coming. Every beam and ray of hope in his blood and righteousness is a coming. Every sigh, groan, or tear; every contrite feeling, every breathing desire of a broken heart, all are a coming. So that though you may not be able to realize as fully as you could wish a saving interest in the former part of the promise, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" yet there is wrought in your soul by a divine power that secret coming whereby you have a manifested saving interest in the second part of it, "Even to him shall men come."

We cannot come until we are drawn. "Draw me," says the bride, "we will run after you" (Song Sol. 1:4). "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." When we are drawn, then we come, and cannot but come. It is good to come. Even those who have received must be ever coming. We get nothing but by coming. Our daily life, as one of faith and hope, is a life of coming. Our continual prayer is a continual coming. For the language of the Church still is, "And the Spirit and the bride

say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Thus must we be ever coming that we may be ever receiving; and so everything that makes us come has in it a real or an implied blessing. Nor will you come in vain, be you who or what you may. "For him that comes to me," the blessed Lord himself has said, "I will in no wise cast out."

October 24

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20

There are three kinds of righteousness, or at least three kinds of righteousness which bear that name. There is inherent righteousness, of which we have none. There is imputed righteousness, which is all our justification. And there is imparted righteousness, when God the Spirit makes us new creatures, and raises up in the heart that "new man, which after God" (that is, "after the image of God") "is created in righteousness and true holiness." When the Lord, therefore, said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven," he did not mean only an external righteousness wrought out by his obedience to the law for them, but an internal righteousness wrought out by the Holy Spirit in them. Thus we read of the inward as well as the outward apparel of the Church, "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." Two kinds of righteousness belong to the Queen; her imputed righteousness is her outward robe, "the clothing of wrought gold;" but imparted righteousness is her inward adorning, which makes her "all-glorious within." This inward glory is the new man in the heart, with all his gifts and graces, what Peter calls "the divine nature," "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

October 25

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John 5:20

When the Lord Jesus is pleased in some solemn hour to reveal himself to our soul, when he graciously condescends to take the veil from off our heart that we may behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, when he kindly favors us with some manifestation and discovery of himself as the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his Person, then we know that the Son of God has come.

How do you know that the sun rose this morning? By the light which rose with it. So we may say, spiritually, "How do you know that the Son of God has come?" By the Sun of righteousness arising upon you with healing in his wings and the shining light which he diffuses in your heart. So the Lord speaks to Zion--"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." That is the way in which the darkness is dispersed; for he adds, "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you." Did not our blessed Lord say, "I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes on me should not abide in darkness?" And has he not promised, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life?" Now as God is light, when he is pleased to shine into the soul, we walk in the light as he is in the light, and then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. This is the best, this is the

surest, this is the safest way to know that the Son of God is come.

We know also that the Son of God is come by his presence; by his power put forth on our behalf; by the answers which he gives to prayer; by the way in which he appears in dark and gloomy hours, making crooked things straight and rough places plain, discovering himself to us as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, showing unto us that in him there is rest and peace, solid, abiding happiness, and in no other. He thus draws and fixes our eyes upon himself, where he sits at the right hand of the Father in the fullness of his grace, glory, and majesty. Thus we know that the Son of God has come. Every prayer, every petition, every sigh and cry, every longing look that you cast up to him, and every word of his grace, every sweet promise, every glimpse or glance of the King in his beauty, which you receive out of his fullness, are all so many testimonies that the Son of God has come, and that you know that he has come.

October 26

"These wait all upon you; that you may give them their food in due season." Psalm 104:27

The "food" which God's children long after, is to have "the truth as it is in Jesus," in its various branches, revealed with power to their heart. Not merely to see a certain truth in God's word--that is like a hungry beggar looking at savory provision through a window, from which he is barred out; such a sight whets his appetite rather than satisfies it. The food that God's people are longing after, and the only thing which can assuage their spiritual hunger, is "the truth as it is in Jesus" manifested, revealed, discovered, and applied with power to their souls; dew, unction, savor, sweetness, life, light, liberty accompanying the word, so that truth falls as heavenly manna into their hearts. It is not sufficient that the Holy Spirit should create the appetite, but he must overshadow the soul with his divine influences, breathe abroad a heavenly savor, and fill it with some sensations of his presence, with some meltings of heart at the feet of Christ, with some drawing forth of affection to God; and thus communicate an inward reception of the truth, and an enjoyment of its sweetness and savor.

"You give them." It is not to be taken out of the Bible, because it may be read; not to be caught up, as the minister throws it forth, because it may be heard; not to be got out of books; but to be bestowed by the holy hand of Jehovah himself, and received in the posture of a penitent, in the attitude of a suppliant, a sinner prostrate at the foot of the cross, without anything in self but wounds, condemnation, and guilt.

But there is a due season--"You give them their food in due season." There are many living souls, who are hungering after divine blessings, but the "due season" has not come. "The times and the seasons the Father has put in his own power." You are not yet fit for it; the Lord has to bring you lower; you will have to travel through darker paths, to pass through sorer exercises. There is a "due season" for the manifestation of gospel blessings; there is a fitting time, which the Searcher of hearts knows. And that Searcher of hearts knows that many of the true Church of God are at this present time in that state, that he will not manifest to them his greatest and richest blessings. There is a "due season," in which they are revealed and manifested to the soul; and that season will be as suitable to all its wants, as it will be most glorious to God. That "due season" will most probably be when the soul will least expect to receive it. The promise having been so long delayed, it seems as though it would never come; the blessing having been so long withheld, it

appears as though the Lord would never bestow it; having denied his countenance so long, it seems as though he had drawn a black cloud over the throne, and through that cloud the rays of the sun would never shine.

But it is a "due season;" it will surely come; "though the vision tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." There is a "set time to favor Zion," and when that set time arrives, the Lord will build up Zion and appear in his glory, for "he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

October 27

"Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." 1 Corinthians 3:22

"LIFE," says the Apostle, is "yours." But how can this be? In two ways. Life present and life future, both are the Christian's, according to the words, "Godliness is profit

November

November 1

"The entrance of your words gives light." Psalm 119:130

The blessed Spirit is pleased sometimes to give some testimony concerning Jesus, to open up some passage of Scripture which speaks of Jesus, to cast a divine light before the astonished eyes, and to throw some of the blessed beams of gospel truth into our souls, whereby we see Jesus. We are brought sometimes in soul feeling to the desires of those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast, and went to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus;" and from some apprehension of his beauty and loveliness, we pour out our soul before God, and say, "We would see Jesus." We want to feel his love, to have our eyes anointed to behold his glory, to look upon him as crucified for us and bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, that we may have a sweet and blessed fellowship with him as our suffering Surety, and thus, by faith, enter into the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of his "that passes knowledge."

Wherever there is a work of grace upon the soul, there will be this pining after Christ. The soul that is really taught of God can never rest satisfied short of Jesus. "There remains a rest to the people of God," and they can never be satisfied short of that rest, which consists in an experimental knowledge of the Son of God, as revealed by the Holy Spirit to their souls. But before the enjoyment of this spiritual rest, there is often long delay; clouds of darkness for months and years together often envelope the mercy-seat; the cross of Christ cannot be seen; the Holy Spirit does not fulfill his covenanted office in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul; and in the absence of these heavenly manifestations, we cannot realize our saving interest in the things of salvation, nor can we feel our hearts sweetly composed and settled down in the blessed assurance, that when this life shall come to a close, we shall inhabit mansions prepared for us before the foundation of the world. When "with clouds he covers the light, and commands it not to shine by the cloud that comes between," there are many doubts and fears, suspicions, surmises, and jealousies whether we are not deceived and deluded altogether. At such seasons, everything seems to be against us, and to stamp us as being nothing but nominal professors.

It is in such dark and gloomy seasons as these that "the entrance of God's words gives light." For instance, some such promise as this is made sweet to the soul--"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As that promise is brought home with power to the heart, and is shed abroad with some sweetness in the soul, it draws forth and strengthens faith, and the toiling pilgrim comes to the Lord, feeling himself "weary and heavy laden," and as he comes, he is indulged sometimes with a few sweet moments of rest. He is enabled to look out of fallen self, with all its miseries, and to look upon Jesus in his grace and beauty. He is favored to cast himself simply, as he is, upon Jesus, and some sense of his atoning blood, dying love, and complete atoning sacrifice for sin is opened up to his heart. Faith springs up to lay hold of and embrace it, and he begins to taste the savor and sweetness and healing efficacy of a Savior's blood and love.

Thus "the entrance of God's words gives light," and he feels by the divine coming in of what God has externally revealed, that inward light is shed abroad in the recesses of his soul, and he can, in some measure, realize the power of the cross of Jesus in his heart.

November 2

"And such were some of you--but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11

Justification and sanctification are distinct blessings. The first springs out of, and is connected with, the finished work of the Son of God; the other springs out of, and is connected with, the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul. Sin has defiled our persons externally, as well as polluted our souls internally. We cannot, therefore, stand before God unless washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. This righteousness forms our title to heaven, as holiness constitutes our fitness. The former is our wedding robe, the latter our spiritual qualification. The hymn well draws this distinction--

"Tis he adorned my naked soul,
And made salvation mine;
Upon a poor, polluted worm
He makes his graces shine.
And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Savior wrought,
And cast it all around.
The Spirit wrought my faith, and love,
And hope, and every grace;
But Jesus spent his life to work
The robe of righteousness."

Without these two qualifications, what entrance could there be into heaven, or what happiness there, could entrance be gained? For consider not only the infinite purity and holiness of God, but the blazing splendor of his immediate presence, the piercing ray of his deep-searching eye. Who or what can live in his presence but what is absolutely perfect without and within? But this the Church could not be, unless she were washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of God's dear Son, and perfectly sanctified by the operations and indwelling of his Spirit. We therefore read--"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

November 3

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."
Lamentations 3:26

The Lord does not bring his poor and needy children to a throne of grace, and send them away as soon as they have come. But his purpose is, to show them deeply what they are, to make them value his favors, to sink them lower and lower in self, that they may rise higher and higher in Christ, to "teach them to profit" (as the Scripture speaks), to write his laws upon their hearts in lines of the Spirit's drawing, in deep lines, "engraved with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever;" not characters traced out in the sand, to be washed out by the rising tide, or effaced by the wind, but in characters as permanent as the soul itself.

The work of the Spirit in the hearts of the redeemed is radical work, work that goes to the very bottom; nothing flimsy, nothing superficial, nothing which can be effaced and obliterated springs from him, but that which shall have an abiding effect--that which shall last for eternity. The Lord is fitting his people for eternity, and therefore his work in them is thorough work; it goes right through them; it leaves nothing covered up and masked over, but turns all up from the very bottom, "discovering the foundation unto the neck" (Hab. 3:13), and doing in a man spiritually what the Lord threatened to do in Jerusalem literally, "I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:13).

Therefore he does not answer the prayers of his children immediately when they come to his throne of mercy and grace, but rather he deepens those convictions that he has implanted; he makes the burdens heavier that he has put upon their back; he hides himself instead of discovering himself, and draws back further instead of coming nearer. Now this is intended to make them wait with greater earnestness, with more unreserved simplicity, with more absolute dependence upon him and him alone to communicate the blessing, with greater separation of heart from all the strength of the creature, with a firmer resolution in the soul to cast away all its own righteousness, and to hang solely and wholly upon the Spirit's teachings, and Jesus' sweet revelation of himself.

November 4

"Love is of God." 1 John 4:7

Love is a gift which the risen Mediator has received that he may freely communicate it out of his fullness to his people. And we must be brought to feel that it is a gift. Could we produce or keep it alive in our own hearts, we would burn incense to our own skill or our own care. Some perhaps will scarcely believe that a child of God can feel enmity against Christ; but his carnal mind is unmitigated enmity against him. And oh, what a cutting feeling it is for a follower of the Lamb to have a principle in him which hates Christ; hates, bitterly hates his Person, hates his holiness and purity; which could join in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," and push and strike him with the Roman soldiers and the Jewish rabble. Unless painful experience convinced us that there was such a dreadful principle within, we could not believe that there was this devilish enmity in our heart against him whom our souls desire to love and adore.

But what know we about love, if we have not all this enmity, carnality, and coldness to try it? When we have been exercised with all these wretched feelings, and the Lord begins to drop into our hearts a little mercy and grace, and to draw forth our affections unto him, we then begin to feel what a sweet thing love is. Love is the sweetest balm man can taste in this life. It is so naturally. There is a sweetness in love. When we love our wives, our children, our friends, there is a sweetness and tenderness in the very feeling, that is--as moralists say of virtue--its own reward. Coldness, dislike, envy, prejudice, jealousy, suspicion, peevishness, quarreling--these sparks of hell burn and torture every spot on which they fall. And so, if ever there is a hell in a man's bosom, it is when full of hatred against God and his people. But if ever we feel a foretaste of heaven, it is when the Lord kindles some meltings of love, some drawings of affection toward Jesus and to those who are his. Then enmity and prejudice flee away; and we feel as if we could take all the people of God into our bosom, and say, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

November 5

"A time to weep." Ecclesiastes 3:4

Does a man only WEEP once in his life? Does not the time of weeping run, more or less, through a Christian's whole life? Does not mourning run parallel with his existence in this tabernacle of clay? for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Then "a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up" must run parallel with a Christian's life, just as much as "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Living souls will know many times to weep; they will have often to sigh and cry over their base hearts; to mourn with tears of godly sorrow their backslidings from God; to weep over their broken idols, faded hopes, and marred prospects; to weep at having so grieved the Spirit of God by their disobedience, carnality, and worldliness; to be melted into contrition at the feet of a dying Lord, so as in some measure to be led into the path in which Jesus walked as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." They will have to bewail the falling off of those friends whom once they looked upon as bidding fairer for the kingdom of God than themselves; to weep at the cruel arrows of calumny which are shot against them by professors; to mourn over the low state of Zion, how few there are who really serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and adorn the doctrine in all things.

But above all things will they have to weep over the inward idolatries of their filthy nature; to weep that they ever should have treated with such insult that God whom they desire to love and adore; that they should so neglect and turn their backs upon that Savior who crowns them with loving-kindness and tender mercies; and that they bear so little in mind the instruction that has been communicated to them by the Holy Spirit.

There is many a weeping time for God's children; and if there be one frame of mind in soul experience more to be coveted than another, it is to be weeping at Jesus' feet. We have two sweet instances of the Lord's manifesting himself to those who were weeping--one to "the woman who was an immoral sinner," who stood behind him, and washed his feet with her tears; the other was to Mary Magdalene, who "stood outside the sepulcher weeping."

Oh, how different is the weeping, chastened spirit of a living soul from the hardened, seared presumption of a proud professor! How different are the feelings of a broken-hearted child of God

from the lightness, the frivolity, the emptiness, and the worldliness of hundreds who stand in a profession of religion! How different is a mourning saint, weeping in his solitary corner over his base backslidings, from a reckless professor who justifies himself in every action, who thinks sin a light thing, and who, however inconsistently he acts, never feels conscience wounded thereby! "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

November 6

"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41

Why is flesh so weak? Because it is fallen, because it is sinful, because it has an alliance with the temptation which is presented to it. It is weak against temptation for the same reason that a man who loves strong drink is weak against the offered wine. If we had no inward lusting after evil, no pride, no rebelliousness, no fallen nature, no carnal mind, no vile affections, nothing in us earthly, sensual, or devilish; would we fear temptation? No; for then we would be armored against it; it would be like dipping a match in water. Here our weakness lies. If we could always resist we would conquer, but resist we cannot, except by the special power of God. This is a lesson we all need to learn. The weakness of the flesh manifests itself continually in compliance, in nonresistance, in giving way, in yielding, often almost without a struggle, no, sometimes in acting a worse and more wicked part still. How striking are the words of Deer— "That mariner's mad part I played, who sees, yet strikes the rock."

Is there any one that knows and fears God who can say he has never played that mad part; never seen the rock ahead, and yet run upon it; never mourned, sighed, cried, groaned and repented, and yet been again overcome; never seen the evil of the snare, never felt the rope round his neck, and yet been entangled--I was going to say strangled? It is through these things that we learn the weakness of the flesh; weak to believe, weak to hope, weak to love, weak to fight, weak to resist, weak to overcome, weak to watch, weak to pray, weak to stand, weak to everything good; strong to everything evil. The flesh indeed is weak. What are all resolutions, all promises, all desires, all endeavors, all strugglings, all strivings, except the soul is held up by the mighty power of God?

And yet "the spirit is willing." Here the child of God is distinguished from those who are given up as a prey to temptation. He has a willing spirit, which they have not. But how is the spirit willing? It is made "willing in the day of God's power." It is a new spirit, a free spirit, a holy spirit, a gracious spirit, and therefore a willing spirit. But what is it willing to do? Willing to obey, to watch, to pray, to be conformed to the will of God, to crucify the lusts and affections, to put off the old man and to put on the new. And how does it show its willingness? By the very struggles it maintains against the flesh; flesh and spirit pulling contrary ways; the spirit all willingness, the flesh all weakness; flesh twining around spirit, spirit struggling under the firm and strong embrace of flesh.

Hence the conflict; the spirit willing to read God's word, to pray and seek God's face, and pour out the heart before him; the flesh weak, and finding prayer a burden. The spirit willing to make sacrifices, endure persecutions, bear afflictions, carry the cross, suffer with Jesus, resist even unto blood striving against sin; the flesh weak, dragging the spirit down with it, unable to stand a single moment, complying with every suggestion to evil, listening to every insinuation of Satan breathed into the ear, hearkening to the tempter, and almost as bad as he.

This then, the willingness of the spirit and the weakness of the flesh, is the reason why there should be watchfulness and prayer. If there were no willing spirit, there would be no need of watchfulness; it would be useless; nor of prayer, for it would not ascend with acceptance into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. If there were nothing but flesh, the believer would be all weakness; possessing spirit, there is in him some willingness, and this God looks at.

November 7

"My people has been lost sheep." Jeremiah 50:6

When God the Holy Spirit takes a soul in hand, just as the fingers of a man's hand wrote a sentence of condemnation upon the wall of the palace of the king of Babylon, so does the blessed Spirit write the word "lost" upon the conscience of every vessel of mercy; and when he has written this word with power on their consciences, they carry it about with them branded as it were in letters of fire, in such a manner that the impression is never to be erased, until it is blotted out by the atoning blood of the Mediator.

And thus in the teachings of the Holy Spirit in the consciences of God's family, "lost, lost, lost" is written on their heart; "lost, lost, lost" is the cry of their lips; "lost, lost, lost" is the deep feeling of their soul. And none was ever found who had not the feeling lost, written more or less deeply upon his heart. None was ever gathered into the arms of the heavenly Shepherd; sought out upon the mountains and the hills, laid upon his shoulders, and brought home with rejoicing; none was ever brought into a spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, so as to enjoy communion with him, who had not sighed and groaned and cried under a sense of his lost state, as a guilty sinner before God.

Now when the soul has been taught by the Holy Spirit, to feel as well as to see and know itself to be without strength to deliver itself from the wrath to come, and is in consequence sunk down into despondency and dismay, then is the time when the Holy Spirit usually gives it some discovery of the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We find this sweetly set forth in that remarkable chapter, Ezekiel 16. The vessel of mercy is there delineated under the figure of a new-born babe, abandoned by its mother, and "cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born." As unpitied, as abandoned, as polluted, as helpless, as perishing, as wretched an outcast is the quickened soul. But it is not left to perish. "When I passed by you," says the loving Redeemer, "and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you" (the sign of espousal, Ruth 3:9), "and covered your nakedness--yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine."

November 8

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7

Gold and silver, those precious metals, take no injury, receive no spot of corruption from the vessel in which they are contained; let them be buried in the damp earth, no tarnish or rust forms upon them.

So spiritually, the grace of God in the heart, surrounded as it is with corruption, is not tarnished by it, the heavenly treasure is not contaminated, though lodged in an earthen vessel. Christ in the heart is not defiled by the inward workings of depravity, and by the base thoughts that strive perpetually against his grace, any more than the gold of the Bank of England is defiled by the dark

and damp cellars in which it is stowed.

And what a mercy it is, that our corruptions cannot tarnish the grace of God; that our unbelief cannot mix with, and adulterate the faith of God's elect; that our despondency cannot spoil and ruin a gospel hope; that our deadness, darkness, coldness, and rebellion cannot mingle with and defile the love of God in the soul! This heavenly treasure remains still as unpolluted and pure as when God first put it there; being a part of "the divine nature," it remains uncontaminated by the filth and corruption that surround it.

Is not this a mercy for God's tried people, that spiritual knowledge, living faith, gospel hope, heavenly love, and the fruits and graces of God's Spirit in the soul can never be defiled; but, like the streams of a fountain, are ever gushing forth in pure water? What a blessing it is, that the pure grace of God in a man's heart cannot be contaminated by the filthy streams that are dashing from a vile nature against it, like the torrents of water from a fire-engine against a burning house, but remains as pure as when God the Spirit first breathed it into the soul.

November 9

"And he said, I will not let you go, unless you bless me." Genesis 32:26

What a strange intermixture there is in a believing heart of everything to cast down and yet of everything to encourage! How there is everything on the one side to perplex, to confuse, and put the soul to its wits' end, and yet how on the other there is everything to hold up its head, strengthen its faith, support its hope, and encourage it to hold on to the last gasp! Now this is that very trial of faith which is more precious than of gold that perishes, for faith is not a dead, sluggish grace, and is never more active than when it is being tried as with fire. You cannot give up from what you have felt and experienced, for that is the grand evidence, the persuasion that you have the life of God in your soul, and compared with that how worthless and valueless all other things seem to be in your eyes, because to give that up is to give up all your hope.

Here, then, is the grand mystery, to hang and hold on, to hold out, and not allow oneself to be cast away, but the more the Lord would seem to put us away, the more to cling to him. Was not this the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman, who, so to speak, would not take "No" for an answer? or, like the faith of Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave you?" or, like the faith of Hannah, when "she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore?" Does not this faith resemble that of Heman's, when he cried out, "Will you show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise you?" and that of Asaph, when his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well-near slipped?

Thus the more the Lord seems to put us away, the more we cling to him. The viler we are, the more we need his grace; and the very magnitude of our sins only makes us hang more upon his atoning blood and cling more closely to his word and promises as suitable to our case. Nor will anything induce us to give up our hope or relinquish our hold of his mercy.

November 10

"In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain." Proverbs 16:15

What is religion without a living faith in, and a living love to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dull and dragging, how dry and heavy, what a burden to the mind, and a weariness to the flesh, is a 'round of forms' where the heart is not engaged and the affections not drawn forth! Reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversation with the saints of God, what cold, what heartless work where Jesus is not! But let him appear, let his presence and grace be felt, and his blessed Spirit move upon the heart, then there is a holy sweetness, a sacred blessedness in the worship of God and in communion with the Lord Jesus that makes, while it lasts, a little heaven on earth.

It is this inward sense of the blessedness of his presence and the misery of his absence, the heaven of his smile and the hell of his frown, that makes the sheep of Christ seek communion with him. He has won their heart to himself by discovering to them his beauty and his love, and they having once seen the glory of his Person, heard the sweetness of his voice, and tasted the grace of his lips, follow him wherever he goes, seeking to know him and the power of his resurrection, and counting all things rubbish and loss that they may win him, and have some manifestation of his love.

What is to support the soul under those trials and temptations that at times press it so sore, relieve those cruel doubts which so disquiet, take away those fears of death which so alarm, subdue that rebelliousness which so condemns, wean from the world which so allures, and make it look beyond life and time, the cares of the passing hour, and the events of the fleeting day, to a solemn and blessed eternity, but those visitations of the blessed Lord to the soul which give it communion with himself? Thus were the saints of God led and taught in days of old, as the Holy Spirit has recorded their experience in the word of truth. Remembering the past, one says, "Your visitation has preserved my spirit." Longing for a renewal, another cries, "O when will you come unto me?" and under the enjoyment of his presence the Church speaks, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

November 11

"But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the law." Galatians 5:18

If we are led of the Spirit by walking in him; if he be our Guide and Teacher; if he be continually operating upon our heart, and bringing near the influences of his grace; if he be in us and with us, guiding us into all truth, making and keeping us believing, loving, prayerful, tender, watchful, humble, contrite, and sincere; if we are thus led by the Spirit, we are not then under the law. Now while the conflict is going on in your bosom, you are often in your feelings under the law. The law's curse is ringing in your ears, the law's condemnation piercing your conscience. The flesh in some unguarded moment, it may be, prevails--you are entangled in some evil; you slip and fall into something which brings guilt upon your conscience. Now the law thunders; inward condemnation re-echoes its peals; and the soul falls into bondage, doubt, and fear.

But if you are led by the Spirit--if that blessed Guide is pleased to lead you out of yourself into Christ's blood and righteousness; if you are experimentally favored with his blessed teachings and sweet influences, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, the law has no more curse for you; it cannot condemn you to hell, nor send your soul to lie forever under the curse of God. For being led by the Spirit you are delivered from the curse of the law into the blessing of the gospel; from the bondage of the law into the liberty of truth; from law charges into gospel mercies; from the

accusations of a guilty conscience into the witness of a good conscience, because a purged and sprinkled conscience, and to sum it all up in one sentence, are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Oh the blessedness of walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit!

November 12

"You will subdue our iniquities; and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19

Sin subdued is the next greatest blessing to sin pardoned; and wherever God pardons sin, he subdues sin; for the same grace which saves sanctifies; the same grace which casts sin behind God's back, puts its foot upon the corruptions of the believer, and prevents iniquity from having dominion over him.

The Scripture is very plain and express upon this point. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "Because you are not under the law," which gives sin its strength and power, "but under grace," which is able to subdue its dominion. Nor do I believe that any child of God can ever rest satisfied except by the subduing of his sins as well as the pardoning of them. To have his unbelief, infidelity, worldly-mindedness, pride, and covetousness subdued by the grace of God, its power taken out of it, its dominion dethroned, its authority destroyed, and its strength weakened and diminished, that he may not be under the dominion of any lust, or carried away by the strength of any secret or open sin, but may walk before God in the light of his countenance, as desirous to know his will and do it--this is the desire and breathing of every one that knows sin in its guilt, filth, and power. How gracious, then, is the promise, how sweet the favor, that the Lord has promised to subdue our iniquities by the same grace as that whereby he pardons them; that, as we receive the blood of Christ to sprinkle the conscience, so we receive the grace of Christ to sanctify and renew the soul, and the strength of Christ to overcome all our inward and outward foes.

November 13

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:15

It is no evidence against you if you are subject to bondage; it is no mark against you if you cannot look death in the face without doubt or fear. Is it not "the children" who feel the bondage? And did not the Lord come to deliver them from it? Are you then not a child because you fear death? If you had no sense of sin, no tenderness of conscience, you would be as careless about death as most other people are. Thus your very bondage, your very fears, if they make you sigh and cry for deliverance, are marks of life. And the day will surely come when the Lord will remove these chilling fears and put an end to these killing doubts. As you draw near to the brink of Jordan, the Lord will be with you to deliver you, who, through fear of death, are now subject to bondage; he will extract its sting, and rob the grave of its victory, enabling you to shout "Salvation!" through his blood, even at the moment when nature sinks lowest and the last enemy appears nearest in view.

Oh, what a blessed Jesus we have; what a heavenly Friend; what a divine Mediator between a holy God and our guilty souls! What love he displayed in taking our flesh and blood; what kind condescension, what wondrous depths of unspeakable grace! He loved us sufficiently to lay down his life for us. Did he not for our sakes endure the agony of the cross, the hidings of God's face,

the burden of sin, the pangs of hell? And if he has done all this for us on earth, will he leave his work undone in heaven? Has he quickened you into life, made you feel your sin, taught you to seek for mercy, raised up a good hope in your heart, applied a promise to your soul, given you a testimony? He may have done all this, and yet at times your conscience may be held down in bondage and imprisonment. But it is only to make further way for his grace; to open up more and more of his willingness and ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is only to make himself in the end more precious to you; to show you more of his finished work, more of his dying love and atoning blood, and more of what he is able to do in delivering you from all your fears.

Thus, as the Adam fall was overruled by the wisdom of God to make manifest the riches of his eternal love, mercy, and grace, so your very doubts, fears, and bondage will be blessedly overruled to give you further discoveries of Christ, to wean you more from an arm of flesh, and to make you know more experimentally what the Lord Jesus Christ is to those who seek his face and hang upon and trust him and him alone.

A man who believes that he may live and die, and that safely, without an experimental knowledge of Christ, will never seek his face, never call upon his name, never long for the manifestations of his love. But he who feels that he can neither live nor die without him, who knows that he has a soul that only Christ can save, who has sins which only Christ's blood can pardon, iniquities that only Christ's righteousness can cover, will be often crying to the Lord to visit his soul with his salvation, and will find no rest till Christ appears; but when Christ appears to the joy of his soul, will bless and praise him with joyful lips. And oh, what a glorious trophy will that man be of Christ's eternal victory over sin and Satan, when he will reign with him and with his assembled saints in one immortal day!

November 14

"Having a good conscience." 1 Peter 3:16

We cannot often see our faith, but we can sometimes see our conscience. We cannot always rejoice in the Lord, but we can see whether we fear his great name. We cannot always triumph over our enemies, but we can sometimes observe whether there is a sentinel upon the look out. Thus, if you want to know whether you have faith, look at faith's companion, see what faith is attended by; and if you don't find a "a good conscience," write death upon your religion. Throw away your sword; it is useless; it is of human manufacture; it will break in pieces when you have to encounter your enemy, the king of terrors; God's lightning will shatter it then.

But if the Lord has given you "a good conscience," a tender conscience, a pure conscience, he will strengthen your arm to fight the good fight of faith. You will often think your sword is so short, and your arm so weak that you cannot fight the Lord's battles. But if he has given you "a good conscience," a conscience tender in his fear, he has put into your hands the sword of faith, and he will one day manifest it clearly, that he has himself equipped you with it, by giving you victory over all your foes. Oh, may the Lord raise up in our hearts some sweet testimony that we have "a good conscience," and then we shall have this blessed consolation, that concerning faith we shall not make shipwreck.

November 15

"My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 10:29

In that most sublime and touching prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father before he shed his precious blood on the cross, there is one petition, or rather an expression of his holy will, which is full of unspeakable blessedness. "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world." The change from 'petitioning as a Priest' to 'willing as a King' is very remarkable, and casts a gracious light on the nature of Christ's mediatorial intercession at the right hand of God. On the footing of his covenant engagements, atoning sacrifice, and finished work, as well as from the perfect equality of his divine nature with that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, he utters the expression of that sovereign will which was and is identically the same with the eternal will and fixed decrees of his heavenly Father.

And oh, how full and comprehensive, how gracious and condescending is the will of Christ as thus expressed! How it embraces in its firm and sovereign grasp all the members of his mystical body, all the sheep of his pasture and the flock of his hand, all that the Father gave him to be eternally his own! Yes; all the countless millions who before the foundation of the world were given to him--as his joy and crown, as his eternal inheritance, as the delight of his heart, and the promised reward of his incarnation, sufferings, and death, were included in this expression of his holy and unchanging will. Whatever be their state and condition here below, whatever sins and sorrows they may have to sigh and groan under, whatever opposition they may encounter from earth or hell, this will of Christ holds them up so that they cannot fall out of his hand, or be deprived of their glorious inheritance.

November 16

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

What a word this is! "Everything!" You are privileged, saint of God, to go to the throne of God with everything. What, with every little occurrence? Yes. What, with things that people call trifles? Yes. With your daily concerns? Yes. If you feel that there is a God who can hear you, it is your privilege to go to him in everything. All things are comprehended; nothing is excluded. In everything, and that by prayer and supplication. Sometimes we pray, sometimes we supplication.

Prayer is something more gentle than supplication, less earnest, less fervent, less powerful; yet not less effectual. I have sometimes compared prayer and supplication to two things in nature. The one to a river--a stream, such as we see in our low country that flows with gentle course to the sea; the other to the torrents found in mountainous countries, that leap from precipice to precipice. The one is the calm prayer of the soul, the other the fervent cry, the earnest supplication, the breathed agony of the spirit rushing along into the bosom of God with many a broken sigh and many an earnest groan.

Here the two seem contrasted. There is prayer, calm and gentle, the simple pouring out of the soul into the bosom of God; and then there is supplication, which is earnest, and calls upon the Lord as though the soul must be heard. We see it in the blessed Jesus himself. We read on one occasion

that he went into a mountain the whole night to pray. Now we have no reason to believe he prayed on that occasion in the same way that he prayed in the garden and upon the cross. In the one case he had sweet union and communion with his Father; in the other he cried with groans and tears and was heard. The one was prayer; the other supplication.

When your soul is calmed by the presence of God, and you feel the breath of prayer to enter your bosom, then you can pray to the Lord with sweetness and with spirit. But there are times and seasons when the soul, under the attacks of Satan and a terrible sense of guilt and shame, is obliged to cry as one that must be heard, and that is supplication. But there is another thing which is to be mingled with it, and a thing much omitted, and that is thanksgiving. These are the three constituents of a spiritual service--prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

November 17

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us." 2 Peter 1:1

What a thought it is, that if you and I possess one grain of living faith, the same precious grace is in our hearts that was in the hearts of all the saints of God, from Abel the first martyr, in all the saints of the Old Testament, in all the prophets, and martyrs, and servants and apostles of God; and will exist in the bosom of every saint down to the remotest period of time. There is but "one faith," as there is "one God, one Lord, and one baptism;" and it is by the possession of this "like precious faith" that all the family of God are knit together into one glorious body, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the risen Head. You, in yourself, may be very poor and needy, for faith makes us to feel our poverty and need; you may think and feel yourself unworthy of the least notice of God's favoring eye; but if the blessed Spirit has raised up one grain of living faith in your soul, you stand on the same holy platform with saints, apostles, prophets, and martyrs, and you are as much "accepted in the Beloved," as much loved of God, and as much a member of the mystical body of Christ, as though you were the Apostle Peter, Paul, Enoch, Abel, Isaiah, or any of the prophets.

November 18

"And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life." Hebrews 7:15-16

We may say of the life which the Lord Jesus lives in the courts of heavenly bliss that it is a threefold life. There is, first, his eternal life, by which I mean the eternal life of God in his divine nature. This he lives IN HIMSELF; for "as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26). He is hereby "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." And this life is the foundation of all his acts of mediation, as being God over all, blessed forever.

But there is a life which he lives FOR HIMSELF, that is, a life of inconceivable glory in his human nature. This is the life which he laid down that he might take it again. This life is the cause of, and is attended with all that ineffable glory which he now enjoys in heaven. This life he lives for himself, his reward, and the glory and honor with which he is crowned; as the Psalmist says, "You set a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of you, and you gave it to him, even length of days

forever and ever" (Psalm 21:3, 4).

But there is another life which he lives--a mediatorial life, a life FOR US. Thus we read, that "he was made a priest on the basis of the power of an indestructible life;" and he says of himself, "I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). Now this life does not differ essentially from the second life, of which I have spoken, the life of glory in the human nature; but it differs in this point, that when the work of mediation is accomplished, he will cease to live a mediatorial life; for he will then "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:24).

November 19

"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead." 2 Corinthians 1:9

What is life naturally and what is death naturally? Is not that life in which there is breath, energy, movement, activity? And what is death but the utter cessation of all this moving activity and vital energy? To die is to lose life, and by losing life to lose all the movements of life. Thus, when the Lord takes, as it were, out of our heart and hands everything in which we once had life, in which we lived and moved and seemed to have our earthly, natural, and enjoyed being, and condemns it by his holy word, so as to record therein, and in our conscience as an echo to his voice, a continual sentence of death against it, he delivers us over unto death.

And you will observe that none but the living family of God are so delivered--"For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake;" and observe also that the reason for this mysterious dispensation is to bring to light the hidden life of Jesus within, for the Apostle adds, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And observe also the connection which this sentence of death has with the death of Christ--"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

We must suffer with Jesus if we are to be glorified with him; must die with him if we are to live with him. His death is the example--the model and the means of our own; and as he had the sentence of death in himself upon the cross, so must we be crucified with him, that we may be conformed to his suffering, dying image. Thus not only is there a death by, under, and unto the law, so as to kill the soul to all creature hope and help, to all vain confidence, and all self-righteousness; but in the continual teachings and dealings of God upon the heart, and especially in times and by means of heavy affliction, painful trial, and powerful temptation, does the Lord by his Spirit and grace execute a sentence of death in all those to whom he is giving to drink of Christ's cup and to be baptized with Christ's baptism.

November 20

"For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Isaiah 54:5

As in the marriage union man and wife become one flesh, and, God having joined them together, no man may put them asunder, so when the Lord Jesus Christ, in "the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," betrothed the Church unto himself, they became before the face of

heaven, one in indissoluble ties. As he undertook in "the fullness of time" to be "made of a woman," she became one with him in body by virtue of a common nature; and becomes one with him in spirit when, as each individual member comes forth into a time state, the blessed Spirit unites it to him by regenerating grace. Such is the testimony of the word of truth. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Her union, therefore, with his flesh ensures to her body conformity in the resurrection morn to the glorified body of Jesus; and her union with his spirit ensures to her soul an eternity of bliss in the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and love. Thus the union of the Church with Christ commenced in the councils of eternal wisdom and love, is made known upon earth by regenerating grace, and is perfected in heaven in the fullness of glory.

The Church, it is true, fell in Adam from that state of innocence and purity in which she was originally created. But how the Adamic fall, in all its miserable consequences, instead of canceling the bond and disannulling the everlasting covenant, only served more fully and gloriously to reveal and make known the love of Christ to his chosen bride in all its breadth and length and depth and height! She fell, it is true, into unspeakable, unfathomable depths of sin and misery, guilt and crime; but she never fell out of his heart or out of his arms.

Yet what without the fall would have been known of dying love or of the mystery of the cross! Where would have been the song of the redeemed, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Where the victory over death and hell, or the triumphs of super-abounding grace over the aboundings of sin, guilt, and despair? Where would have been the "leading captivity captive," the "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself?" What would have been known of that most precious attribute of God, mercy? What of his forbearance and long-suffering; what of his pitiful compassion to the poor, lost children of men?

As then the Church's head and husband could not and would not dissolve the union, break the covenant, or alter the thing that had gone out of his lips, and yet could not take her openly unto himself in all her filth, and guilt, and shame, he had to redeem her with his own heart's blood, with agonies and sufferings such as earth or heaven never before witnessed, with those dolorous cries under the hidings of his Father's face, which made the earth to quake, the rocks to rend, and the sun to withdraw its light. But his love was strong as death, and he endured the cross, despising the shame, bearing her sins in his own body on the tree, and thus suffering the penalty due to her crimes, reconciled her unto God "in the body of his flesh, through death, to present her holy; and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight."

Having thus reconciled her unto God, as she comes forth from the womb of time, he visits member after member of his mystical body with his regenerating grace, that "he may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and thus eventually "present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

November 21

"Make me not the reproach of the foolish." Psalm 39:8

Who are these "foolish?" I think the best answer to this question is given by our Lord himself, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. "The foolish" were those who had oil in their lamps, but

none in their vessels. By "the foolish" in the text, therefore, we may understand those who have the light of knowledge in their heads, and the lamp of profession in their hands, but no oil of grace in their hearts. They are "foolish," because they know neither God nor themselves, neither sin nor salvation, neither the depth of the fall nor the greatness of the remedy. They are "foolish," as regards themselves, in thinking that light and knowledge will save them, without life and grace; and they are "foolish," as regards others, for lack of an experimental acquaintance with the heart. They know nothing, therefore, of the temptations of a child of God; how he is beset on every hand; how Satan is ever thrusting at or enticing him; how his own heart is continually prompting him to evil; and how snares are in every direction laid for his feet. "The foolish" know nothing of these trials; they are Pharisees, who "make clean the outside of the cup and platter," who whitewash and adorn the sepulcher outside, while within it is "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

David knew well, and every child of God knows well, that if he were allowed to slip, if he were allowed to say or do anything unbecoming, these would be the very first to make him an open reproach. "The foolish" can, and will, make no allowances for the least slip of tongue or foot, for they themselves are ignorant of the weakness of the flesh, the subtlety of Satan, the strength of sin, and the power of temptation. Were he to stumble and fall, "the foolish" would be sure to point the finger of scorn at him. In breathing forth, then, this petition, we may well suppose him to say, "Lord, whatever temptations I may be called upon to endure, whatever snares of Satan or lusts of the flesh may beset my path behind and before, O keep me, keep me that I may not be 'the reproach of the foolish;' that they may have nothing to take hold of, to make me a bye-word, and through me to reproach your name, cause, and truth."

November 22

"But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." Luke 24:21

What a trial to their faith must the death of Jesus have been to his disciples and believing followers! When their Lord and Master died, their hopes, for the time at least, seem almost to have died with him. And indeed to the eye of sense--truth, holiness, innocence, all fell crushed by the arm of violence as Jesus hung on the cross. To the spectator there, all his miracles of love and mercy, his words of grace and truth, his holy, spotless life, his claims to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, with every promise and every prophecy concerning him were all extinguished when, amid the triumph of his foes, in pain, shame, and ignominy, he yielded up his breath.

We now see that, by his blood-shedding and death, the blessed Lord wrought out redemption, finished the work which the Father gave him to do, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciled the Church unto God, triumphed over death and hell, vanquished Satan, magnified the law and made it honorable, exalted justice, brought in mercy, harmonized every apparently jarring attribute, glorified his heavenly Father, and saved millions with an everlasting salvation.

But would we have seen this as we see it now, had we stood at the cross with weeping Mary and broken-hearted John, heard the railing taunts of the scribes and Pharisees, the crude laughter of the Roman soldiery, and the mocking cries of the Jewish mob, viewed the darkened sky above, and felt the solid earth beneath rocking under our feet? Where would our faith have been then? What but a miracle of almighty grace and power could have sustained it amid such clouds of

darkness, such strength of sense, such a crowd of conflicting passions, such opposition of unbelief?

So it ever has been, so it ever will be in this time state. Truth, uprightness, godliness, the cause of God as distinct from, as opposed to error and evil, have always suffered crucifixion, not only in the Person, but in the example of a crucified Jesus. It is an ungodly world; Satan, not Jesus, is its god and prince; and therefore, not truth but falsehood, not good but evil, not love but enmity, not sincerity and uprightness but craft and deceptiveness, not righteousness and holiness but sin and godlessness prevail and triumph as they did at the cross. This tries faith; but its relief and remedy are to look up, amid these clouds, to the cross, and see on it the suffering Son of God. Then we see that the triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment; that though truth is now suffering, it is suffering with Christ; and that as he died and rose again, so it will have a glorious resurrection, and an eternal triumph.

November 23

"Who against hope believed in hope." Romans 4:18

Hope is a fruit of the Spirit; and the absence of hope, the thorough, complete absence of hope, stamps death upon that nominal branch, in which the absence of all hope is found. But some will say, "Are not the children of God often plunged into despair?" No; not into despair. They are often very near it, they are on the borders of it; they go to the very brink of it; the gusts from that pestiferous land may so blow their blasts upon them, that in their feelings they shall be in despair; yet no living soul ever set his foot beyond the brink, no child of God ever stepped beyond the border, so as to get into the regions of despair. If he got there, he would no longer be in "the land of the living;" if ever he set his foot over the border that separates the land of hope from the land of despair, he would be no longer calling upon the Lord to save his soul from the lowest hell, but he would be at once overwhelmed by those torrents, which would sweep him away into endless perdition.

Hell is the place of despair, and of the conscience of the reprobate, before he is cast into those devouring flames; and therefore, unless you know what the very feelings of the damned in hell are (which you can never be certain you do, however you may think you know them), or unless you have gone into the very feelings of despair in the conscience of the reprobate before hell opens its jaws to receive him forever, however near you have been to the borders of that dreadful land, you never can say your foot has crossed the threshold. No; there is a "Who can tell?" a secret support of "the everlasting arms;" there is a band, a tie, wreathed round the soul by the God of all grace; there is a golden chain let down by God himself from the everlasting throne of mercy and truth, which keeps the soul from ever being drawn into that whirlpool, going down those tremendous cataracts, and being swallowed up in the boiling abyss below. There is an invisible arm that preserves the soul from being swept away by the water-floods; and this secret help is manifested by a lifting up of the heart oftentimes in prayer, and the relief sometimes experienced in pouring forth the soul in fervent cries, upholding all who feel it from being overwhelmed in the torrent of despair, when the sluices of God's wrath seem pulled up to hurry it into eternal misery. And therefore there is no child of God that has been quickened by the Spirit, but has some degree of hope, which keeps him from making shipwreck altogether. So that we do not go too far in saying that the absence of hope altogether stamps death upon a man.

November 24

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." Hebrews 10:39

The Scriptures have brought certain marks not only to test, but also to comfort God's people. But in order to keep them tremblingly alive to the fear of being deceived; in order to set up an effectual beacon lest their vessel should run upon the rocks, the blessed Spirit has revealed such passages as we find in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Hebrews. They seem set up by the Spirit of God as a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbor. Is it not so naturally? Some shoal or sand-bank often lies near the entrance of a port, which the mariner has to guard against. How is he guarded? A light-house is erected on or near the spot, which warns him of the shoal. Now I look on the sixth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews as two light-houses standing near the entrance of the harbor of eternal safety. And their language is, "Beware of this shoal! Take care of that sand-bank! There are gifts without grace; there is profession without possession; there is form without power; there is a name to live while the soul is dead."

The shoal naturally often lies at the very entrance of a harbor--and as the ship makes for the port, the sandbank lies in her very course; but when the harbor is neared, the friendly beacon not only warns her of the shoal, but also points out the safe passage into the haven. And so spiritually, from these two chapters many of God's people have seen what shoals lie in the way, and have, perhaps, before they were warned off, come near enough to see the shipwrecked vessels. The gallant barks that sailed from the same port with themselves they have seen wrecked on the rocks, the freight lost, and the dead bodies and broken fragments floating on the waves.

But these never looked for the lighthouse, nor saw the bank; they were intoxicated, or fast asleep; they were sure of going to heaven; and on they went, reckless and thoughtless, until the vessel struck on the shoal, and every hand on board perished. These dreadful warnings and solemn admonitions seem to me so written that they may scrape, so to speak, as nearly as possible the quick of a man's flesh. And they appear couched in language of purposed ambiguity that they may be trying passages; no, the very beauty and efficacy of them, and the real good to be wrought by them, is in their ambiguity, so that the people of God may take a more solemn warning by them, and may cry unto the Lord more earnestly that they may not be deceived.

Then it is not the poor, desponding children of God who are tried by these passages, that have reason to fear them; their being thus tried shows that their conscience is tender in God's fear, and that they are "the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and bringing forth herbs fit for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God;" and that they are not that "which bears thorns and briers, which is rejected, and is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." And thus, these very fears and suspicions, by which many of God's people are exercised, causing strong cries unto the Lord, that he would teach, guide, and lead them, are so many blessed marks that they are not graceless persons, but partakers of the grace of God, and at the same time prove, "that he who has begun a good work in them" will carry it on, and "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," and bring them into the eternal enjoyment of God, that they may see him for themselves, and not another.

November 25

"There is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen." Job 28:7

Growth in grace is not progressive sanctification and fleshly holiness on the one hand, nor a false and delusive establishment on the other. The narrow path lies between these two extremes. On the one side is Pharisaic holiness, on the other Antinomian security; and between these two sharp rocks lies the "path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen." From dashing on either of these rocks a living man is kept only by the mysterious dealings of God with his spirit, and the internal exercises through which he continually passes. A constant acquaintance with his own vileness preserves him from a self-righteous holiness in the flesh; a daily cross and a rankling thorn keep him from careless presumption. His path is indeed a mysterious one, full of harmonious contradictions and heavenly paradoxes. He is never easy when at ease, nor without a burden when he has none. He is never satisfied without doing something, and yet is never satisfied with anything that he does. He is never so strong as when he sits still, never so fruitful as when he does nothing, and never so active as when he makes the least haste. All outstrip him in the race, yet he alone gains the goal, and wins the prize. All are sure of heaven but himself, yet he enters into the kingdom, while they are thrust out. He wins pardon through guilt, hope through despair, deliverance through temptation, comfort through affliction, and a robe of righteousness through filthy rags. Though a worm and no man, he overcomes Omnipotence itself through violence; and though less than vanity and nothing, he takes heaven itself by force. Thus amid the strange contradictions which meet in a believing heart, he is never so prayerful as when he says nothing; never so wise as when he is the greatest fool; never so much alone as when most in company; and never so much under the power of an inward religion as when most separated from an outward one.

November 26

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:11

We are very eager to put our hands to work. Like Uzzah, we must needs prop up the ark when we see it tumbling; when faith totters, we must come to bear a helping hand. But this is prejudicial to the work of God upon the soul. If the whole is to be a spiritual building; if we are "living stones" built upon a living Head, every stone in that spiritual temple must be laid by God the Spirit. And if so, everything of nature, of creature, of self, must be effectually laid low, that Christ may be all--that Christ, and Christ alone, may be formed in our heart, the hope of glory.

How many trials some of you have passed through! how many sharp and cutting exercises! how many harassing temptations! how many sinkings of heart! how many fiery darts from hell! how many doubts and fears! how much hard bondage! how many galling chains! how often has the very iron entered into your soul! Why? That you may be prevented from adding one stone by your own hands to the spiritual building.

The Apostle tells us that "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," even Jesus Christ. He then speaks of those who build "wood, hay, and stubble," as well as of those who used "gold, silver, and precious stones;" and that the "wood, hay, and stubble" must be burned with fire. It is after the Lord has laid a foundation in the sinner's conscience, brought him near to himself, made Jesus precious to his soul, raised up hope and love in his heart, that he is so apt to take materials God never recognizes, "wood, hay, straw, stubble," and rear thereby a flimsy superstructure of his

own. But this gives way in the trying hour--it cannot stand one gust of temptation. One spark of the wrath to come, one discovery of God's dread majesty, will burn up this "wood, hay, and stubble" like straw in the oven.

The Lord's people, therefore, have to pass through troubles, trials, exercises, and temptations, doubts and fears, and all that harassing path that they usually walk in, that they may be prevented from erecting a superstructure of nature upon the foundation of grace--"wood, hay, and stubble" upon the glorious mystery of an incarnate God.

November 27

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:10

We need two things in lively operation; a spiritual death and a spiritual life. We need death put upon the flesh, upon sin, upon everything which is ungodly, that it may not reign or rule; and we need also the communication and maintenance of a divine life which shall act Godwards, exist and co-exist in the same breast, and be in activity at the same moment.

Here is sin striving for the mastery; but here also is a view of the cross of Christ; here is a testimony of bleeding, dying love. This puts a death upon sin. But as death is put upon sin and the lust is mortified, crucified, resisted, or subdued, there springs up a life of faith and prayer, of hope and love, of repentance and godly sorrow for sin, of humility and spirituality, of a desire to live to God's praise and walk in his fear. The cross gives both. From the cross comes death unto sin; from the cross comes life unto righteousness. From the cross springs the healing of every bleeding wound, and from the cross springs every motive to a godly life. Thus, in God's mysterious wisdom, there is a way whereby sin can be pardoned, the law magnified, justice exalted, the sinner saved, sin subdued, righteousness given, and the soul made to walk in the ways of peace and holiness.

Oh, what depths of wisdom, mercy, and grace are here! Look where you will, try every mode, if you are sincere about your soul's salvation, if the Lord the Spirit has planted the fear of God in your heart, you will find no other way but this. There is no other way that leads to holiness here and heaven hereafter; no other way whereby sin can be pardoned and the soul sanctified. It is this view of salvation from sin not only in its guilt but also in its power, this deliverance from the curse of the law and well-spring of all holy, acceptable obedience, which has in all ages so endeared the cross

December

December 1

"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love--having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Ephesians 1:4, 5

It is a very solemn but a very true assertion, that no man can quicken his own soul; and it is an equally solemn, we might almost say, a tremendous truth, that the gospel only comes in power to those whom God has chosen unto eternal life. Indeed the one flows from the other; for if no man can quicken his own soul, it necessarily follows it must be of sovereign grace that it is quickened at all. Once allow the fall, and acknowledge that a man is by nature so thoroughly dead in trespasses and sins that he cannot raise himself up out of this state to newness of life, and the doctrine of election necessarily follows.

A living soul may reason thus--"Am I quickened? Yes. Did I quicken myself? No. I could not; for I was dead in sin. Did God then quicken me? Who but he could have given life to my dead soul? But why did he quicken me, when dead in sins? Because he loved me, and chose me in Christ to be an heir of his eternal glory." Whether, however, you can speak thus or not, there is no doubt that the Lord has a people who are dear to him, and to whom he makes himself dear. These, though despised of, or unnoticed by men, are the elect of God; and if you are a vessel of mercy whom he has thus chosen to eternal life, the gospel either has already come, or, in his own time and way, will be made to come with power to your heart and conscience.

December 2

"He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." Romans 3:26

Every created thing, every finite intelligence, must sooner be annihilated, than Jehovah can sacrifice, or allow the slightest tarnish to come over any one of his eternal attributes. Yet God can be just, infinitely just, scrupulously just, unchangeably just--and yet, preserving his attribute of justice unchanging and unchangeable, he can still be "the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus." The way by which this was effected will take a countless eternity to understand, and a boundless eternity to admire and adore.

But what is meant by the expression, "the justifier?" "The justifier" means, that God can count man as righteous, can freely pardon his sins, can graciously accept his person, can impute to him righteousness without works, and can bring him to the eternal enjoyment of himself. And who is the character that he thus brings to himself by justifying him? "those who believe in Jesus."

What simplicity, and yet what sweetness and suitability is there in the gospel plan! Say it ran thus, "That he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that works, that pleases God by his own performances, that produces a righteousness satisfactory to the eyes of infinite purity." Who then

could be saved? Would there be a single soul in heaven? No; such a sentence as that would trample down the whole human race into hell. But when it runs thus, "That this is the mind and purpose of God, that this is his eternal counsel, which cannot pass away; that he is 'the justifier of those who believe in Jesus,'--the poor, the needy, the exercised, the tempted, the distressed, and the perplexed, that believe in Jesus, that look to Jesus, that lean upon Jesus, and rest in his Person, blood, righteousness, and love for all things; that these are justified, that these are pardoned, that these are accepted, that these are graciously received, and saved with an everlasting salvation,"--how sweet, how suitable, does the gospel that declares this become to the living, believing soul!

December 3

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"He is faithful and JUST." Oh, what a word is that! There is scarcely to my mind such a word in the Bible as that; so great, so glorious, so comforting--"He is faithful and just." "Just?" say you, "why I know that God's mercy and God's grace can pardon sinners; but how can God be just, and pardon transgressors? Does not God's justice demand the punishment of sin? Does not God's justice blaze forth in eternal lightnings against the soul that transgresses his holy law? How, then, can it be true, that God can be just, and yet forgive a confessing sinner?"

But it is true, divinely True, blessedly, eternally true. And in it is locked up that grand mystery of redemption by the blood and obedience of God's co-equal Son. It is locked up in this one word--"just." "But how?" it may be asked. In this way. The Lord of life and glory became a security and substitute for those whom his Father gave to him. He entered into their place and stead. He endured the punishment that was due to them. For them he fulfilled the whole law by his doings and by his sufferings. For them he bled, and for them he died. For them he rose again, and for them ascended up to the right hand of the Father. And now justice demands the sinner's pardon, and puts in its righteous plea. And see the difference. Mercy begs, justice demands--mercy says, "I ask it as a boon;" mercy, as a part of God's character, looks down with pity and compassion on the mourning criminal; but justice says, "It is his due; it is his right; it belongs to him; it is his because the Redeemer has discharged his debt, because the Surety has stood in his place, because the Savior has obeyed that law for him which he could not obey in his own person." So that when we can receive this blessed and glorious truth, that to those who confess their sins, "God is faithful," and not merely "faithful," but also "just to forgive them their sins," how it draws out of the bosom of Jehovah a full, free, and irrevocable pardon of all transgressions, and especially of those transgressions that the sinner confesses at his footstool!

December 4

"For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me." Psalm 109:22

The needy is a character who is not merely poor, empty, and naked before God, but who is feelingly in need of spiritual blessings applied to his soul. Some people can rest on temptations, and take temptations as evidences. Others can build on doubts and fears, and rest on doubts and fears as evidences. Some can take powerful past convictions, or present convictions, and lean on them as evidences. Others can look to a profession of religion, and take that as an evidence. But a

living soul must have heavenly blessings communicated immediately to his heart and conscience from the mouth of God. He must have deliverance manifested to his soul as a reality; he must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his conscience with divine power, to purge it from filth and dead works; he must have his eyes anointed with eye-salve to see Jesus; yes, his soul pants to be led up into sweet communion with Jesus; he needs to be taken spiritually into fellowship with Christ, that he may see him with the eyes of his soul, that he may look upon him whom he has pierced, mourn over him, and for him, and with him, and have some sweet, spiritual, and supernatural manifestation of his dying love to his soul.

A nominal Christ will never do for a needy sinner, but it must be Christ made spiritually known by the power of the Holy Spirit, sweetly revealed and coming into his heart with all his blessed efficacy, and shining into his soul like the sun in his strength, beaming forth blessed rays of grace and mercy. Nothing but this will ever satisfy a soul that has life in it.

December 5

"Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." Hebrews 12:6

Does not James say, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation?" And again, "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations?" Why? Is there any joy in trials, any pleasure in sorrow? No, none. But in the deliverance from the Lord; in the power of God put forth to bring the soul out; there is joy there. And, therefore, we have to walk in a dark path to make the light dear to our eyes; we have to pass through trials to taste the sweetness of the promises when applied with power; we have to endure temptations, that we may enjoy the sweetness of deliverance. And this is the way, be sure of it, that God deals with his people.

Is your conscience made honest? Does that monitor in your bosom speak the truth? Tell me what it says. Does it not say, "Few trials, few consolations; few sorrows, few joys; few difficulties, few testimonies from God; few sufferings, few discoveries of love and blood?" Does not the Apostle say, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ?" (2 Cor. 1:5.) And does he not say, "Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation?"

And does he not tell us to be mindful not to forget what the Lord says when he speaks to his people, that the lot of a child is to endure chastisement? He says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement," (O solemn word! O how applicable to thousands!) "whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons."

December 6

"O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in you." Psalm 84:12

Trust in God implies total self-renunciation. The moment that I trust in myself, I cease to trust in God. The moment I take any portion of my confidence away from the Lord and put a grain of it in myself, that moment I take away all my trust in God. My trust in God must be all or nothing. It must be unreserved and complete, or else it is false and delusive. Is not the Lord worthy to be trusted?

And if he is worthy to be trusted at all, is he not worthy to be trusted with all? What real confidence could a man have in the wife of his bosom if he could trust her with one key, but not with all? Is that full confidence? So, if we can trust God for one thing and not for all, it shows that we have no real trust in him. A man has no real trust in his wife who cannot give her all the keys.

A man has no real trust in God who cannot give him all his heart, and put everything into his hand; family, property, body, and soul. The province and work of true faith is to put everything into the hands of God, keeping back no part of the price. It is this secret reserve that God hates; there is hypocrisy on the very face of it. Trust in God for nothing; or trust in him for all. God will not take a divided heart. Give him all, or none. And is he not worthy of it? Has he ever disappointed you whenever you have really put your trust in him? Does he not say, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto you?" (Jer. 2:31.)

But David saw how few there were that with all their hearts did trust in God. This feeling seems to have made him say, "Blessed is the man," that peculiar man, that rare individual, "that trusts in you!" The blessing of God rests upon that happy, that highly-favored man. He is blessed for time and for eternity. He has the blessing of God even now in his soul. Oh! how rare it is for us to be in that sweet, blessed frame when we can put our trust wholly in God; trust him for life and death; trust him for all things, past, present, and to come. Yet without a measure of this faith, there is no solid peace, no real and abiding rest. And to this you must sooner or later come; for you cannot carry your own burdens without their breaking your back. But when you can cast your burden on the Lord, then you will surely find sweet relief.

May we not, then, join heart and voice with David, "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in you"? Such a one will never be disappointed. The Lord will hear his prayer; the Lord will bless his soul; will be with him in life, support him in death, and take him to be with him in eternity.

December 7

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things." Revelation 21:7

"He shall inherit all things." When? In eternity? Yes. But only in eternity? O no! In time also. There is a twofold inheritance, though one and the same; one in time, another in eternity; one the firstfruits, the other the harvest; one the pledge, the other the full sum. There is an inheriting here below, and an inheriting above; and he that never receives any portion of his inheritance below will never receive an inheritance above. Now, just in proportion as we overcome, are we put in possession of this inheritance. What are we to inherit? Riches, glory, honor, power, praise? These are worldly things; let the world enjoy them. In inheriting "all things," we are to inherit the things of God; the favor of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the glory of God; all that a covenant God gives in giving himself; peace here, glory hereafter; pardon below, salvation above; the beginning of rest on earth, the fullness of rest in heaven.

Now, while we are overcome, there is no being put into possession of this eternal inheritance. Does sin overcome us? Do we inherit pardon in being overcome? No; we inherit shame and confusion, guilt, fear and wrath. But do you, do I, ever overcome sin by the fear of God in our soul, as Joseph did? Do I ever overcome sin by looking to the Lord of life and glory to sprinkle his blood upon my conscience? Do I ever overcome sin by the leadings and teachings of the Spirit in my

heart? No sooner do I thus overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony, than I enter into the inheritance. So that there is a connection, a beautiful, an experimental connection, between overcoming here below, and inheriting here below.

But in order to enter into this inheritance, we must be perpetually reminded that we have no strength of our own. And thus our slips, our falls, our backslidings, our frailties, (though we would not, dare not justify them,) are mercifully overruled among the "all things" that work together for our good. They teach us our weakness, and by teaching us our weakness, lead us up to Christ's strength; and by leading us up to Christ's strength, to "inherit all things;" for in inheriting him, we inherit all that he is to God's people.

December 8

"And I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:7

What a promise! That the God of heaven and earth will be our God, our Father, our Benefactor, our eternal, almighty Friend! and that we, in overcoming, shall receive the adoption of sons; shall be manifested as the "sons and daughters" of the Almighty, and receive the inheritance reserved for the children of God! The promise runs in connection with "him that overcomes." If we do not overcome, the promise is not for us. The promise of sonship is connected with overcoming, in the same manner as that of "inheritance" is connected with it. Do I need to receive into my heart the Spirit of adoption? Do I need to feel the love of God the Father shed abroad in my soul? Do I need to establish a blessed title to the inheritance that he gives to his children? How am I to get it? How is it to be obtained? By making myself religious, becoming holy, subduing my lusts in my own strength? This sets me farther from God than I was before. This makes me a god to myself! If I am saved by my own holiness, by my own strength, by my own righteousness, I worship myself; and in worshiping myself, I become my own god. That is idolatry, damnable idolatry; so that he who lives and dies in the worship of self, will live and die under the wrath of God as an idolater.

Then how am I to receive adoption? By overcoming, not in my own strength, but in the strength of the Lord of life and glory. If I am shut up in self, I inherit self; nothing more. If I inherit the world, I have no more than the world. If I inherit sin, I inherit death, which is the wages of sin. Nothing more. But if I overcome; if weak, helpless, and defenseless, I yield myself up to the hands of the Lord, as clay in the hands of the Potter; not seeking my own will, but looking to the Lord to make known his will in my conscience, and to work in me that which is well-pleasing in his sight--if I have this, I have an evidence of sonship; and where that evidence is, there will be a further evidence of it in the Spirit of adoption, enabling the soul to call God "Father." And he that calls God "Father" here below, will call God "Father" above, where he will enter into the full enjoyment of it, and bathe in the consolations of Father, Son, and Spirit to all eternity.

December 9

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was--and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7

Nature shrinks from death, even apart from that which following after death, makes it to so many a king of terrors. Even where grace has set up its throne, and mercy rejoices over judgment, many unbelieving, infidel thoughts at times will cross the mind and perplex the judgment about the

separation of body and soul, and the launching of the spirit into an unseen, unknown world. Faith, it is true, can subdue these perplexing thoughts, better hinted at than described, but faith needs some solid ground on which to build and rest. If, then, the soul is blessed with any assured hope or sweet persuasion of saving interest in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to remove guilty fears, how strengthening to faith is a view of his death, not merely as the only sacrifice for sin, but as the exemplar, so to speak, of our own.

We shall all have to die, and therefore to look by faith at the death of Jesus may be a profitable subject of meditation as a relief against the perplexing thoughts to which we have before alluded. Into his Father's hands the dying Lord commended his spirit. The Father received it, for him the Father hears always (John 11:42); and thus his spirit returned unto him who gave it. Thus, by the act of dying, the soul and body of the blessed Redeemer were, for a time, fully and actually separated--as fully and actually as ours will also be at death. But follow by faith that soul of Jesus when he breathed it forth, and view it at once and immediately entering paradise, into the blissful presence of God. What food for faith is here! How strengthening, how encouraging to a believing heart which has often been perplexed by such thoughts as we have named, to view the soul of Jesus thus passing at once into paradise.

And may we not, by faith, view the soul also of the believing malefactor, when the time of release was come, winging its flight into the same paradise where the soul of Jesus had preceded it? If we know anything painfully and experimentally of the assaults of unbelief, the arrows of infidelity, and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and how they are all quenched by the shield of faith, we have found that faith, in order to stand firm, must have the word of truth, a "Thus says the Lord," upon which to rest. Let us now, then, see how this stands as connected with the death of the blessed Lord. Fortified by his holy example, if blessed with faith in his Person, blood, and righteousness, the dying believer may commend his spirit into the hands of Christ as did martyred Stephen, in the same confidence that the Lord Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

December 10

"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Psalm 42:2

Has your heart ever panted after the Lord Jesus as the deer pants after the water brooks? Do you ever lie in the dust mourning over your sins against the bleeding, dying love of Jesus? Do you ever ask God to kindle in your soul an intense desire to have Jesus as your Christ, that he may be your delight here and your portion forever? Surely there is that in him which is not in anything below the skies, and which if not found here will not be found hereafter. If you have no love or affection for him, why is it but because he has not endeared himself to your soul? But if he has manifested himself to you, you have seen and felt enough of his blessedness to convince you that there is no real peace or happiness out of him.

It is true that you may have many trials and temptations to encounter; many perplexities and sorrows may be spread in your path; but be not dismayed, for the love of Christ, if you have ever felt that love shed abroad in your heart, will bear you more than conqueror through them all. The Lord make and keep us faithful to the truth as it has been made known to our consciences; and may the goodness and mercy of God shine into our hearts and shed abroad its rays of light and joy in our darkest moments and under our severest trials. And O to be found in him at the great day,

as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, to be found the Lord's "peculiar treasure" in that day when he makes up his jewels! And O then, where will be those who are not found in the Lord Jesus? They will call upon the mountains and the rocks to "fall on them and hide them from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

December 11

"But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way." Nehemiah 5:15

We can never praise God sufficiently for his restraining grace; for what would we be without it? What an unspeakable mercy, then, it is, that you cannot be what you would be, nor act as you would act, nor speak what you would speak, nor do the things you would do, because there is in you who fear God, a spiritual principle which holds you up, and keeps you back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. How this spirit of grace and godly fear kept Joseph in the hour of temptation! How it preserved David when he had Saul in his power as he lay asleep in the cave! How it kept Nehemiah in the fear of God from extortion and oppression! And how, in thousands of instances, it has preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

December 12

"I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance." Proverbs 8:20, 21

Whence springs it, that God causes his people "to inherit substance," by "leading them in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment?" When he leads them first into the way of righteousness by opening up his holy law, it drives away all shadows. We had been heaping together, with great toil, chaff and hay and straw and stubble; we had been like the man spoken of in Scripture, who "dreamed, and behold! he ate, but he awoke and his soul was empty;" so we were dreaming our life away continually with shadows, with a name to live, with a formal religion, with a mere external show of godliness, content with a few ordinances and sermons, and thinking that these would shelter us in the day of wrath.

These were only shadows; of no more avail to deliver our souls from the wrath to come, than the shadowy form of a mountain in the morning sun. But when the Lord began "to lead us in the way of righteousness," these shadows vanished. Something was then needed to conciliate the favor of God; something was needed, whereby the soul could escape those piercing eyes that looked it through and through; and the soul began to look after "substance," needed realities, needed a voice within from the Lord himself, a testimony of his eternal favor, and a manifestation of his love. There was "substance" needed.

The soul began to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," to pant and long after the manifestation of Jesus' love, and to be restless and discontented and weary of everything short of the work and witness of the Holy Spirit. When the "mouth is stopped, and the soul has become guilty before God," it wants pardon, peace, mercy, blood, and love; nothing else can satisfy it, and after this it pants with unutterable longings.

And when Jesus leads his people "in the way of righteousness" by showing to them his glorious righteousness, they begin to "inherit the substance" after which they were panting. There is no substance under the law--it is but a preparing the soul to receive substance; it is emptying the soul that it may be filled; it is stripping the soul that it may be clothed; it is wounding the soul that it may be healed; bringing down the soul that it may be lifted up. But when he "leads in the way of righteousness," that wonderful way whereby the soul is justified by his imputed righteousness, he causes that soul to "inherit substance," to inherit it even now upon earth, to have a taste of it, the beginnings of it, the pledge of it, and the firstfruits of it.

Oh! what a dreamy, shadowy thing is a mere profession of religion! And what a delusive cheat is all the pleasure to be gained by sin! How it leaves a soul naked and bare, wounded, stripped, and guilty before God! We have often promised ourselves pleasure in sin; and what have we found? The wormwood and the gall. All the anticipated pleasure vanished; and its flight left us full of guilt and shame.

But if ever God indulged our souls with sweet communion with him, if ever he brought our affections to center in himself, if ever he melted our souls at his feet, if ever he blessed us with the communications of his eternal favor and distinguishing love, there was substance in that, there was weight, there was power, there was the foretaste and pledge of a never-ending eternity.

December 13

"And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Zechariah 3:1

It is the object of Satan to keep those secure who are safe in his hands; nor does God see fit to disturb their quiet. But on the other hand, where Satan perceives a work of grace going on, where he sees the eyes sometimes filled with tears, where he hears the sobs heaving from the contrite heart, where he observes the knees often bent in secret prayer, where his listening ear often hears the poor penitent confess his sins, weaknesses, and backslidings before God, (for by these observations we have reason to believe Satan gains his intelligence,) wherever he sees this secret work going on in the soul, mad with wrath and filled with malice, he vents his hellish spleen against the objects of God's love. Sometimes he tries to ensnare them into sin, sometimes to harass them with temptation, sometimes to stir up their wicked heart into desperate rebellion, sometimes to work upon their natural infidelity, and sometimes to plague them with many groundless doubts and fears as to their reality and sincerity before a heart-searching God.

So that while those who have no work of grace upon their hearts at all, are left secure, and free from doubt and fear, those in whom God is at work are exercised and troubled in their minds, and often cannot really believe that they are the people in whom God takes delight. The depths of human hypocrisy, the dreadful lengths to which profession may go, the deceit of the carnal heart, the snares spread for the unwary feet, the fearful danger of being deceived at the last--these traps and pitfalls are not objects of anxiety to those dead in sin. As long as they can pacify natural conscience, and do something to soothe any transient conviction, they are glad to be deceived.

But, on the other hand, he that has a conscience tender in God's fear knows what a dreadful thing it is to be a hypocrite before God, to have "a lie in his right hand," and be deluded by the prince of darkness; and therefore, until God himself with his own blessed lips speaks with power to his

conscience, and establishes him in a blessed assurance of his saving interest in Christ by "shedding abroad his love in his heart," he must be tried and exercised in his mind, he must have these various tossings to and fro, for this simple reason--because he cannot rest satisfied except in the personal manifestations of the mercy of God.

December 14

"He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." 1 John 5:10

The grand point to have decided in a man's bosom is, whether he is Christ's or not; and this is a problem which none but the Lord himself can solve. Blessed is he who has the witness in himself; and this he can only have by believing on the Son of God, as John speaks, "He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." This is the internal witness of the Spirit, as the Apostle declares, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." What witness have you ever had in your bosom that you are a child of God? Or if you have not had this special witness, what marks or evidences, what tokens for good has the Lord bestowed upon you? Can you not remember something that the Lord has done for you in times past, some promise applied, some manifestation of his presence, some look of love, some softening touch of his gracious hand, which melted you into the dust, and brought sweet peace and assurance with it? It might not last long, or be very deep, but it was an evidence when felt that you belonged to Christ.

You remember the time and the circumstances, the darkness, distress and bondage before, and the deliverance into sweet liberty then enjoyed; but still you are dissatisfied. You want the Lord once more to appear; you want another smile, another word, another look, another promise, another testimony, and without it your soul often sinks down into doubt and fear.

Now this is the path in which most of God's saints walk; I will not say all, because some are more favored with an abiding testimony, though even they have great sinkings and heavy trials. But with most it is a very chequered path. Thus, sometimes they are indulged with a smile, and then such darkness of mind falls upon those who they can scarcely see a single evidence. Then the sun shines again; but darkness once more covers the scene, and down they sink again into doubt, guilt, and fear. Then the Lord appears again, and then they love, and hope, and rejoice again; and so they go on, the scene ever changing, like an April day. Still on they go until they come at last to the closing scene, when the Lord usually appears, scatters all their doubts and fears and darkness, and gives them a blessed dismissal into his own bosom of eternal rest and peace.

December 15

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17

The Hebrew word "glory" literally signifies "weight;" and the Apostle seems to have some allusion to that circumstance by connecting, as he does, the two words together. There is indeed a natural connection between what is weighty and what is solid and substantial. He would thus represent future glory as something solid, lasting, and durable, and therefore utterly distinct from the light, vain trifles of time, and even the passing afflictions of the day or hour.

But he seems chiefly to be alluding to the exceeding greatness of that glory which is to be revealed as compared with our present faculties of body and mind and all our present conceptions.

It is as though he should say, "In our present imperfect state, with our limited faculties of mind, and our weak, frail tabernacle, we could not bear the weight of that immortal glory which is prepared for the saints in the realms of bliss." "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him."

Heaven, with its opening bliss, would crush our present body and soul at once into the dust. "No man," said God to Moses, "can see me and live." When John in Patmos had a view of the glory of his risen Lord, though he had lain in his bosom at the last supper, yet he fell at his feet as dead. Therefore, we must have our soul purified from all stain of sin and expanded to the utmost of its immortal powers, and our body glorified and conformed to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that soul and body may alike be able to bear the weight of eternal glory with which they are to be clothed. As the Apostle speaks, "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

But there is something in the word "glory" that I must not pass by. The Lord, in that touching chapter, John 17, thus prays, or rather thus expresses his heavenly will, "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me." This is the "weight of glory" that the Apostle speaks of, not merely freedom from sin and sorrow, not merely seeing Christ as he is, but beholding and enjoying that unutterable glory which the Father gave him, which is all the glory of Godhead as revealed in, and shining through his human nature. The fullness and perfection of this glory is reserved for the saints of God to enjoy when they shall see him as he is, and know even also as they are known. We see a gleam of it when Christ is revealed to the soul; when the heavens are opened to faith; when his beauty and blessedness are manifested to our heart by the power of God. But the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" can never be fully comprehended in this present life.

December 16

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory, for your mercy, and for your truth's sake." Psalm 115:1

Many of God's dear children cannot get much beyond gentle intimations of his mercy, passing touches of his gracious hand, and softenings of heart under a sense of undeserved goodness and love; yet they feel sensibly relieved by what their faith thus lays hold of and brings in, and give glory to God. Sometimes again, as they hear the preached word and get a blessing under, it, or some precious promise comes home to their soul with divine power, or they are favored in secret prayer, and light and life break in upon their mind, they see such a glory in what is thus made known to them, that they glorify God for what they see and feel. But more especially when the way of salvation is opened up to them; when Christ is revealed to their soul by the power of God; when they see that wondrous plan unfolded, how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus; then as they view in the greatness of the mystery of the Person of Christ the blessed solution of the problem which has so exercised their mind, they freely and fully give all the glory to God. "Lord," they cry, "who and what am I, that you should have had pity and compassion upon me, should have touched my heart by your grace, should have planted your fear in my breast, led me to pray and seek your face, and listened to my feeble cries, should thus have given me to hope in your mercy, and blessed my soul with a manifestation of your dear Son? Oh, who and what am I to be thus favored, when thousands are left to perish in their sins? Oh, how glorious

are you! what a good God! how your mercy melts my heart, and your goodness softens my soul! To your name be all the honor and praise, both now and forever and ever."

Here is giving glory to God. Thus, true faith will always give God the glory; will never take an atom of its own praise to itself, but will ascribe the whole glory to God as its sole author and finisher, until blessings here end in blessings hereafter, and streams of grace on earth issue into the boundless ocean of glory in heaven.

December 17

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2

How are we to set our affections on things above? Can we do this great work of ourselves? No; it is only the Lord himself manifesting his beauty and blessedness to our soul, and letting down the golden cord of his love into our breast, that draws up our affections, and fixes them where he sits at God's right hand. In order to do this, he captivates the heart by some look of love, some word of his grace, some sweet promise, or some divine truth spiritually applied. When he thus captivates the soul, and draws it up, then the affections flow unto him as the source and fountain of all blessings. We are not flogged into loving him, but drawn by love into love. Love cannot be bought or sold; it is an inward affection that flows naturally and necessarily towards its object and all connected with it; and thus, as love flows out to Jesus, the affections instinctively and necessarily set themselves "on things above, and not on things on the earth."

But what are these "things above?" They are all things stored up in Christ, that breathe of Christ, and come out of Christ. Pardon, peace, righteousness, love, "joy unspeakable and full of glory," with strength against sin, victory over death and hell; power against besetting lusts and temptations; in a word, every blessing with which God has blessed his people "in heavenly places in Christ;" these are the "things above," that the soul has to set its affections upon. But we must have some view by faith of the Person of Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal Father; he must be revealed to our soul by the power of God before we can see his beauty and blessedness, and so fall in love with him as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." Then everything that speaks of Christ, savors of Christ, and breathes of Christ, becomes inexpressibly sweet and precious.

This is "the golden oil" that flows into the heart; this is the sweet-smelling myrrh which drops upon the handles of the lock; this is "the aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces;" this is "the love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown;" and by an experience of this the affections become set on things above.

And in no other way can they be lifted up from earth to heaven. We cannot control our affections; they will run out of their own accord. If then our affections be earthly, they will run towards the earth; if they be carnal and sensual, they will flow toward carnal and sensual objects. But when the Lord Jesus Christ, by some manifestation of his glory and blessedness, or the Holy Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the soul, sets him before our eyes as the only object worthy of and claiming every affection of our heart, then the affections flow out, I was going to say naturally, but most certainly spiritually towards him; and when this is the case, the affections are set on things above.

December 18

"God is the Lord, who has showed us light." Psalm 118:27

The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "God is the Lord, who has showed us light." He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life." This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural.

He did not say, This light came from creature exertion, this light was the produce of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted by some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long and assiduous cultivation. But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole Author and the only Giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever showed you and me the same light which he showed his servant of old, we carry about with us more or less a solemn conviction that we have received this light from him.

There will, indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive his work, at times and seasons when he condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto himself, to bring us into his presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of his hand, and give us access unto himself; at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts, fears, and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter-workings and underminings, we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

December 19

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1

The Christian who has known what it is to worship God in spirit and in truth has a God to help him in his direst extremities; for as long as the spirit of prayer abides in his bosom--and that spirit once given is never taken away--he can at times and seasons pour out his heart before God, and find help and strength in him. This, then, is one of his blessed resources, that he has a God to go to, the Lord Almighty, into whose ears his cries may enter. But besides this, all the promises are on his side, which are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. Nor is he without sword or shield, or the whole armor of God. Nor is he without faith and hope, or secret supplies of strength made perfect in weakness. Nor is he without a knowledge of the truth, nor destitute of evidences of a saving interest in it.

Thus, let a Christian be involved in the greatest perplexity, there is still the voice of prayer in his bosom, and still the goings up and actings of a living faith upon the Son of God who has been

manifested to his soul, still the firm anchorings of hope within the veil. He is not like a sailor cast upon a wide ocean without rudder, chart, or compass. He knows what to do; he knows what course to steer; he knows the land to which his eyes are ever directed. Let him sink into the greatest perplexity, he still knows there is at the right hand of the Father a Jesus, upon whom help is laid as one that is mighty.

Still, still the solemn fact is recorded deep in his mind, an ineffaceable impression has been left upon his soul from former discoveries of the King in his beauty, that this Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. Thus he is not left without resource, help, or hope.

December 20

"The love of Christ, which passes knowledge." Ephesians 3:19

That eminent saint, the Apostle Paul, who had been in the third heaven, and there saw glorious sights, and heard unspeakable words, though he exhausted human language to set forth the surpassing excellency of the love of Christ, comes at last to this point--"It passes knowledge." Indeed it must pass knowledge. Is it not infinite? What measure, then, can be assigned to the love of Christ? If Christ be God, and as such the equal of the Father, his love is as infinite as Deity.

Our love is the love of the creature; the love of God is as great as Deity, as infinite as the self-existent I Am; it must needs therefore pass knowledge. You may wonder sometimes--and it is a wonder that will fill heaven itself with anthems of eternal praise--how such a glorious Jesus as this can ever look down from heaven upon such crawling reptiles, on such worms of earth--what is more, upon such sinners who have provoked him over and over again by their misdeeds. Yes, that this exalted Christ, in the height of his glory, can look down from heaven his dwelling-place on such poor, miserable, wretched creatures as we--this is the mystery that fills angels with astonishment.

But it is the glory of Christ thus to love; it is his special glory to take his saints to heaven, that they might be witnesses of his glory and partakers of it. Therefore, it is not because we are such crawling reptiles, that we are such undeserving creatures, that we are so utterly unworthy of the least notice from him, we are to put away all this matchless love from us, and say, "Can Christ love one like me? Can the glorious Son of God from heaven his dwelling-place cast an eye of pity and compassion, love and tenderness upon one like me, who can scarcely at times bear with myself; who see and feel myself one of the vilest of the vile, and the worst of the worst? Oh, what must I be in the sight of the glorious Son of God?" And yet, he says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." This love has breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights unknown. Its breadth exceeds all human span; its length outvies all creature line; its depth surpasses all finite measurement; and its height excels even angelic computation.

Now this is the very reason why this love is so adapted to us. We need a love like this; a love to spread itself over us, to come down to our lowest depths; a love that can land us safe in heaven. A love short of this would be no love at all. We would exhaust it by our sins if this love were not what it is here represented. Long ago we would have out-sinned this love, and drained it dry by our ingratitude, rebellion, and misdoing. But because it is what it is, love so wondrous, so deep, so long, so broad, so high; it is because it is what it is, that it is so suitable to every want and woe.

December 21

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil--for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Psalm 23:4

Death, the gaunt king of terrors; Death, who with his scythe in his resistless hand, mows down whole millions of the human race; Death, who awaits his victims at every corner; Death, that must soon lay you and I low in the grave, casts a shadow wherever he comes. He visits the sick room, and casts a shadow there; he hangs over the cradle, and his shadow falls on the infant's face; he comes in the letter from abroad, or with the black seal and mourning envelope put into our hand at home; and these tidings or these tokens cast a deep shadow over our hearts. Indeed, where is the place where death does not cast his shadow? where the house where this shade has never fallen? In fact, he never comes without it. He is "the last enemy;" he is the final fulfillment of the original curse.

And though death, to a saint of God, is stripped of its terrors, robbed of its sting, and disarmed of its victory; though, to the expiring believer it is but a portal of life into the mansions of eternal bliss, yet, say what we may, the portal casts a shadow. Even David, though full of sweet confidence that "the Lord was his shepherd," at the very time when "his cup ran over" with the Lord's goodness and love, calls it "the valley of the shadow of death." "The rod and the staff" comforted him, and he "feared no evil," but it was still "a valley," overhung by frowning mountains and dark, overarching woods, and "the shadow of death" was spread upon it from the entrance to the end. And yet it is but a "shadow."

To the graceless, the Christless, the impenitent, the unbelieving, it is a substance, for the wrath of God, which burns to the lowest hell, awaits them at the end of the valley, to plunge them into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But to those who die in the Lord, in the sweet enjoyment of peace through his blood, it is but a passing shadow. For them the substance died when Jesus died. It was buried in his tomb, but did not rise with him, for he destroyed it when he "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light."

December 22

"That you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." James 1:4

The word "perfect" in the Scripture does not mean, as applied to a saint of God, anything approaching to the usual idea of perfection, as implying spotless, sinless holiness, but one who is 'matured' and ripened in the life of God, no longer a child but a grown man. As a tree grown to its full stature is said to have attained perfection; so when the Lord the Spirit has brought forth the work of patience in your soul, as far as regards that work you are perfect, for it is God's work in you; and so far you are "entire," that is, possessing all which that grace gives, and "lacking nothing" which that grace can communicate.

To submit wholly to the will of God, and be lost and swallowed up in conformity to it, is the height of Christian perfection here below; and he that has that, lacks nothing, for he has all things in Christ. What, then, is the greatest height of grace to which the soul can arrive? Where did grace shine forth so conspicuously as in the Lord Jesus Christ? and where did grace manifest itself more than in the gloomy garden and on the suffering cross? Was not the human nature of Jesus more

manifestly filled with the Spirit, and did not every grace shine forth in him more conspicuously in Gethsemane and on Calvary than when enraptured upon the Mount of Transfiguration?

So there is more manifested grace in the heart of a saint of God who, under trial and temptation, can say, "Your will be done," and submit himself to the chastening rod of his heavenly Father, than when he is basking in the full beams of the Sun of righteousness. How often we are mistaken in this matter; longing for enjoyment, instead of seeing that true grace makes us submit to the will of God, whether in the valley or upon the mount!

December 23

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us--and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish it." Psalm 90:17

What is this beauty? "The beauty of the Lord our God." It is, therefore, the beauty of the God-man; the loveliness, the holiness, the perfection, and glory that ever dwells in the Son of God. Now "days of affliction, and years of evil" have marred all creature loveliness. There was a time, perhaps, when we could take some pleasure and delight in what we were, or what we vainly fancied we would be. Our own righteousness had a beauty and loveliness to us; and our religion was amiable and pleasing in our own sight. But what has become of it? Marred, marred; totally marred. By what? "Days of affliction, and years of evil." These have effectually ruined, defaced, and polluted all creature loveliness. In a word, we were once deeply in love with self; but self has been shown to us such a hideous monster, in so vile and despicable a light, that we have fallen out of love with him altogether; and we have seen, at times, such beauty, glory, loveliness, and suitability in the Son of God, that as we have fallen out of love with self, we have fallen in love with Jesus.

Thus as all our own beauty and our own loveliness have been marred and defaced, the beauty and loveliness of the Lord have risen in due proportion. So that this has become the desire of our soul, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. Let us stand accepted in it; let it be put upon us by the imputation of God himself; let us be clothed with it manifestly before the eyes of a heart-searching Jehovah. Let the beauty of Jesus' atoning blood, the beauty of his perfect righteousness, the beauty of his dying love, the beauty and holiness of his glorious Person be upon us, covering all our filth, guilt and shame, spreading itself over all our nakedness, sin and pollution, that when God looks upon us, he may not see us as we are--marred, defaced, and full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; but may see us standing accepted in the Beloved, with 'the beauty of the Lord our God' upon us." Oh, what a matchless robe is this! It outshines angels'--for it is the righteousness of God's only-begotten Son! And if we stand with "the beauty of the Lord our God" upon us, we can bid defiance to all law-charges, to all the accusations of a guilty conscience, and to all the darts from hell.

December 24

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Titus 3:5

To view mercy in its real character, we must go to Calvary. It is not sufficient to contrast the purity of God with the impurity of man. That indeed affords us some view of what mercy must be to reach

the depths of the fall--a side face of that precious attribute. But to see its full face shining upon the redeemed, we must go by faith, under the secret teachings and leadings of the Holy Spirit, to see "Immanuel, God with us," groveling in Gethsemane's garden. We must view him naked upon the cross, groaning, bleeding, agonizing, dying. We must view Godhead and manhood united together in the Person of a suffering Jesus; and the power of the Godhead bearing up the suffering manhood. We must view that wondrous spectacle of love and blood, and feel our eyes flowing down in streams of sorrow, humility, and contrition at the sight, in order to enter a little into the depths of the tender mercy of God. Nothing but this can really break the sinner's heart.

"Law and terrors do but harden,

All the while they work alone;

But a sense of blood-bought pardon

Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

Law terrors, death and judgment, infinite purity, and eternal vengeance will not soften or break a sinner's heart. But if he is led to view a suffering Immanuel, and a sweet testimony is raised up in his conscience that those sufferings were for him--this, and this only will break his heart all to pieces. Thus, only by bringing a sweet sense of love and blood into his heart does the blessed Spirit show a sinner some of the depths of the tender mercy of God.

December 25

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God--but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Philipians 2:6, 7

The humanity of our blessed Lord was actual flesh and blood from the moment of its conception, a perfect human body, to which was united a perfect human soul; both without sin, or else he could not be the Lamb without blemish; both without sin, or his pure humanity would not have been that "holy One" born of the Virgin, who should be called the Son of God. Thus he came forth as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. Well indeed might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness." Here as in a mirror we see the wonderful love of Jesus, that he who is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, a sharer of the Father's essence, of the Father's glory, should stoop so low to lift us up so high; that he should condescend to unite to his glorious Person our nature, flesh and blood; to wear a human body like our own; to feel as we do, to speak as we do, to walk as we do, to eat and drink and hunger and thirst and weep and sigh and mourn as we do; yet all the while be the Son of God, and should have a divine nature in as close union with human nature as our soul has with our bodily frame.

We cannot tell how our soul is in union with our body. We know it is so, but how we cannot tell. We only know the fact, but we cannot explain the mode. So we cannot tell how Christ's divine nature is in union with his human nature; we know it is so by the testimony of God, by the express revelation of his word. That revelation to a believer answers all inquiry. But if any man says to me, "Can you explain the mystery of the two natures in Christ?" I ask in my turn, "Can you explain the mystery of your own existence? Can you explain to me how you are able to lift up your own hand, see with your own eye, hear with your own ear, move with your own foot? No man has ever yet been able

to explain this apparently simple thing; a feat which every child can perform, but a fact which no philosopher can understand. Can you tell me how mind can act upon matter? how you wish to do a thing with your mind, and can do it instantaneously with your body? When, then, you can explain your own existence and unravel the mystery of your soul acting in union with your body, then I will allow that you may unravel the mystery of the union of Deity and humanity in the Person of the Son of God, as he lived upon earth, and as he now lives in heaven." Beautiful upon this mystery are the words of Deer— "How it was done we can't discuss; but this we know, 'twas done for us."

Happy those who can use these words without a wavering tongue!

December 26

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1

What an eminent grace is the grace of faith! I call it, sometimes, the Queen of graces; for faith seems to lead the van, though hope and love follow almost side by side. But still, faith, as the Queen, seems to go in the foremost rank, and to claim the most eminent place. Now, what is faith? That is a question of questions, for on it hangs heaven or hell. God himself has given us a clear definition of it, where he says, "faith is the substance of things hoped for." In other words, faith in the soul gives a realization to the things in which we are brought to hope, takes what to most men are airy shadows, mere words and names, and gives them a substantial existence, a firm abiding place in the heart and conscience. The Apostle calls it also "the evidence of things not seen." That is, faith, by believing the testimony of God, is to us an internal eye, whereby we see those things, which to the natural eye are invisible.

Thus adopting the Apostle's definition, we may call faith the eye of the soul, as we read, "By faith he endured, seeing him who is invisible." For it is only by faith that we see either God, or the precious things of God. It is only by faith that we feel their power. It is only by faith that we know they have a real subsistence, or that we ourselves have a substantial saving interest in them. But this faith is the special gift of God. It is not the exercise of any intellectual faculty. It is not the result of reasoning or argument. Nor does it spring from any historical proof. It is a special gift of God, a grace of the Spirit raised up by the power of God in the soul, and acting upon the truth of God as the blessed Spirit draws it forth. Jesus is the Author; Jesus is the finisher of it; and we have no more, and I believe no less faith, than he himself, by his almighty power, is pleased to grant and to sustain.

But, looking at faith and some of its properties, we may branch out a little in describing how faith acts. There is an expression of the Apostle's that casts a sweet light upon the work of faith, where he says, "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." Here he brings forward a special operation of faith, in that it mixes with the word of truth. And it does it thus. God the Holy Spirit applies God's word to the conscience. He thus raises up the grace of faith; this grace of faith embraces God's testimony, and so intermingles itself with this testimony that it enters into it, appropriates it, and gives it a substantial realization and personal indwelling.

See how this was done in the instance of Abram. God comes to him in the night visions, and says to him, "Fear not, I am your shield and exceeding great reward." But Abram, in a fit of unbelief, says, "What will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eleazar of

Damascus?" The Lord then takes him abroad and shows him the stars of the sky, and tells him, "So shall your seed be." Now here was the testimony of God in a certain promise to Abram's conscience; upon this, faith immediately sprang up in his soul; for we read, "Abram believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." When God spoke to his soul, Abram believed it by the operation of God's Spirit on his heart. So it is with every child of God. He believes what God speaks to him, he inwardly, spiritually credits it, because he feels what God the Spirit, applies to his soul with power; for the same Spirit that applies God's word to his heart raises up the faith in his soul that mixes with the word applied, and thus gives the word a substantial realization, a firm abiding place in his conscience.

December 27

"They shall mount up with wings as eagles." Isaiah 40:31

It is said of the eagle, that he mounts up towards the sun; and that of all birds, he is the only one which can gaze upon the sun with unshrinking eye. So with faith in the soul. The Lord's people alone can look by faith upon the "Sun of righteousness," gaze upon a glorious Immanuel at the right hand of the Father, and see a precious Jesus ever interceding for them, and drawing them near to his bosom. And when this blessed Jesus communicates a measure of his love and blood to their consciences, and raises up and draws forth faith in his name, then the soul begins to mount up with these wings like eagles, soaring higher and higher, until it comes into the presence of God; mounting up in higher and higher circles of spiritual flight, until it penetrates into the very sanctuary of Jehovah.

Now, has not your soul thus soared sometimes as upon eagle's wings? Have there not been those communications of divine life and light, those mountains of faith, those anchorings of hope, those goings forth of love, whereby your soul was enabled to mount up and find delight in Jesus, and felt his name, love, and blood precious? Have you not mounted up too, not only in the exercise of living faith and hope, but also of heavenly affection?

Sometimes we are so fastened down to this earth, this valley of tears, this waste-howling wilderness; so chained down to it, that we are like a bird with a broken wing, and cannot mount. We are swallowed up in the world, forgetting God and godliness. But are there not times and seasons when the soul is delivered from these chains and fetters, when earthly cares drop off from the mind, when our wings are strong, and fresh pinions as it were given, when the world and its temptations, sin and its snares are left behind, and there is a sweet mounting up in the feelings of heavenly affection? This is to "mount up with wings as eagles," and the soaring soul never ceases to mount until it comes into the very presence of the Three-One God of Israel.

December 28

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Acts 20:32

Not only did Paul "commend" the church at Ephesus "to God," but he commended them also in an especial manner "to the word of his grace." There is a difference between "grace" and "the word of his grace." Nothing but grace can save the soul; nothing but super-abounding grace can blot out and hide from the view of justice our aggravated iniquities. But "the word of his grace" is that word

which brings this grace into the heart, which communicates life and power to the soul, which the Spirit by his inward teaching and testimony seals on the conscience, and by which he reveals and sheds abroad that favor of which he testifies. This is what the Lord's people need. It is "the word of grace" that reaches their soul. It is not reading of grace in God's word that brings peace into their hearts; it is "the word of his grace," when he is pleased to speak that word with a divine power to their souls, that brings salvation with it.

Now, the Lord's people are continually in those trying states and circumstances, out of which nothing can deliver them but "the word of God's grace." If the soul has to pass through severe trials, it is not hearing of grace that can deliver it out of them. If it be beset with powerful temptations, it is not reading about grace that can break them to pieces. But "the word of his grace," when the Lord himself is pleased to speak with his own blessed lips, and apply some promise with his own divine power, supports under trial, delivers from temptation, breaks snares to pieces, makes crooked things straight and rough places plain, brings the prisoner out of the prison-house, and takes off the yoke by reason of the anointing.

December 29

"For the preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

Has the gospel ever come to you in power? If it has, it has done something for you. Has it ever, then, dispelled your many doubts and fears? Has it ever made Jesus precious to your soul; ever brought with it light, life, liberty, and love; ever given yo

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