

GOSPEL NARRATIVES

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Wolston's collection of gospel narratives using stories and illustrations to present the message of salvation, including the account of a young woman who attempted Christian work while unsaved herself before coming to genuine conversion and peace in Christ.

10 Chapters

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01. A Student Story;

A Student Story; or Bread Cast Upon the Waters The shades of winter evening were rapidly deepening, and flinging obscurity over the subjects which lay upon the tables of a well-known London dissecting-room, a quarter of a century ago, as a group of medical students might have been seen standing round one of these tables, evidently, for the moment, deeply engaged. The fading light, shut books, closed dissecting cases, and somewhat grave faces of the dozen listeners, showed that anatomy was not the topic in hand, as a seated student, who had till then been busy with his "Part," replied to the queries that came from every quarter of the group. The conversation had been begun by S-, a typically thoughtless, and careless, young would-be medico, who, in passing the seated dissector — known to be a Christian — had railingly said, "Well, Spurgeon, how many have you baptized lately?" Medical students are notorious for their love of bestowing a sobriquet on all and sundry, from professors downwards; so the student thus addressed had, soon after he joined the college, and it leaked out that he occasionally preached the gospel, been dubbed with the name of the well-known and popular preacher.

"I do not baptize; I only preach the gospel, when, and as best I can," was the rejoinder.

"Oh! you don't baptize, you only preach. Come, tell us what you say;" and the loud tone of banter in which this was said quickly gathered, as it was intended it should, a little coterie of kindred spirits, expecting some fun from the roasting of the young Christian. At that moment, however, the senior demonstrator of anatomy, a grave demure man, of whom the students stood rather in awe, joined the group, and took part in the conversation later on.

"You want to know what I preach, do you? I preach glad tidings; the love of God to ruined man; the death and resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus, and that faith in Him alone secures salvation; that man is guilty, undone, lost; and that the 'Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' Human efforts are all in vain. Man's so-called good works are all valueless to win salvation. 'Salvation is of the Lord,' and 'the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles;' whosoever will may have it, without money or price. 'The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The last time I preached I spoke on the 10th of Acts, where it says about the Saviour, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.'"

"And do you mean to say that your sins are all forgiven, and that you are saved, Spurgeon?" continued his first interrogator.

"Through God's grace I can most certainly say so. I have had that joy for more than a year now."

"Well, that is presumption, and no mistake," "Did you ever hear the like?" "That's rather good to believe," put in a chorus of voices at once.

Nothing daunted, the assailed one replied, "How can it be presumption to believe God? If my salvation depended on my good works, I might well be filled with doubt and uncertainty; but if it

depend, as it does, on the perfectly finished and accepted work of the Lord Jesus for me, it would be presumption to doubt that salvation, when God says so plainly in His Word to every believing soul, 'Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace' (Luke 7:1-50). When an awakened sinner once asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' God's Spirit replied, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' And further, He has said in Ephesians 2:1-22, 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.' It surely cannot be presumption to believe the God of truth, when He says He sent His Son to save me, and that when I trust in Him I am saved."

"But you do not give sufficient place to our works," put in the senior demonstrator, who had been listening quietly till now.

"If God gives them no place, sir, had we not better leave them out of consideration? It says in Romans 4:1-25, 'If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. But what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' Our works are either 'wicked' (Colossians 1:21) or 'dead' (Hebrews 9:14), and certainly they cannot save us. Christ's work is finished, by it God has been glorified; and it is due to Christ that the one who forswears his own works, and trusts alone in Him, should partake of the benefits and fruits of that atoning work of His, by which alone can sin be put away."

"Ah! that makes it far too easy," said one; "Depend upon it, Spurgeon, you are all wrong," said another; and with varying other such comments the gathering broke up, and the dissector was left alone to pack up his tools in quietness, wondering, the while, what God would bring out of the incident. The bread of life had been simply presented; whether any were hungry enough to eat thereof, was a question. At any rate, the young believer found comfort to his heart in the words, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1), and, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Two days later this young student was again busy with his scalpel and forceps, sitting alone at a table, when one of his seniors, named J-, brought his "part," instruments, and book, and seated himself opposite to him, and began to dissect. Work went on quietly for a little, and then J- said, "That was strange stuff you were telling the fellows the other afternoon. I said nothing at the time, but I don't believe what you were saying. I don't at all pretend to be a religious chap myself, but I am sure a man would need to work hard to get to heaven. Your way of it would not be mine at all, if I cared for that sort of thing, which I don't."

"It is not my way, J-, it is God's, and that makes an immense difference. When the Lord was upon earth, and the Jews came and asked Him, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' do you know what He answered them?"

"No. What?"

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent' (John 6:29). To believe in the Son of God is all that you or I have to do to get saved."

"But, man, it stands to reason that we ought to do something ourselves. Why, by your way everybody may get saved. Do you believe they will?"

"No, I believe nothing of the sort; for alas, all will not take the place of being lost sinners, and hence do not feel their need of a Saviour, and so do not trust Him. His words are true: 'They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' The whole, the righteous — or those who think they are such — need Him not, but sinners are welcome to Him. As one of the latter, I have received Him, and He has saved me out and out, blessed be His name!"

"Oh, that's easily said, but I don't believe in your way of salvation at all, and you will never convince me that that is the way to be saved;" and so saying J- relapsed into silence, shortly after left the table, and for the rest of their student life took uncommon good care not to give an opportunity for a tête-à-tête with the man who knew Christ had saved him.

Some years rolled by; student days ceased, the ardently longed-for diplomas and degrees were possessed; and while J- went into practice in the far West, the other went north of the Tweed, to extend his knowledge, while filling the post of house physician in a large hospital. To that same city, in course of time, who should come but J-, attracted, as he supposed, by certain medical advantages of which he would avail himself; but led doubtless by the gracious hand of God, who had not taken His eye off him since the day an arrow, shot at a venture, had pierced the worldly coat-of-mail he wore in the London dissecting-room. Great was J-'s surprise to find his former acquaintance chief in those wards where he wanted to gather clinical information. Flung thus across his path again, J-'s friend felt greatly interested in him, and one Lord's Day said, "Do you ever go to hear the Word of God preached now?"

Sometimes; but I have not been since I came north. Where do you go?"

"I? Oh! I go to — Street."

"Who preaches there?"

"The preachers are various."

"Do they preach well?"

"That would be an open question. I believe they preach the truth, and that is what you and I want. You might do worse than come;" and so saying, a little notice of the meeting was handed to him, which he took, with the remark, "Perhaps I will turn in some night." That evening the preacher was reading the 7th of Luke, when the door gently opened, and the unbelieving, but evidently interested, young doctor entered. His surprise was not small to find in the preacher the one who had invited him; but the Lord's sermon of twelve words: "THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN. THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE; GO IN PEACE," soon riveted him; and though he did not go "in peace," he left impressed, and aroused to a sense of his need and danger, such as he had never experienced before. The next Lord's Day found the doctor again present, as an aged and grey-haired servant of God sweetly unfolded the touching parable of Luke 15:1-32, and showed how, when man was lost, Jesus came after him; when he was dead, how the Spirit quickened him; and when he returned repentant, how the Father welcomed and rejoiced over him. Conviction of sin was now evident in the young physician, and two Lord's Days later, when he again heard his medical friend preach

from the words, "Wilt thou go with this man?" he felt he must decide for Christ that night. He stayed to the second meeting for anxious inquirers; and then in converse with his friend, as they walked towards the hospital together, admitted that he had never been easy since the conversation in the dissecting-room. Persuaded in his mind that what he had heard was not true, he had gone home, searched the Bible for support, only to find that he was wrong himself, and that what he had heard was the truth. Convinced that he was wrong, and that God's salvation was free to all, by simple faith in Jesus, he had balanced the blessings of the gospel against "the pleasures of sin for a season", the devil had kicked the beam the wrong way, so he shut up the Bible, and turned again to the world with its sin and folly, but had never had an hour's peace. Now he saw he was lost, and was asked, "Do you believe that Jesus came to save the lost?"

"I do; I believe He came to save me, and I believe in Him."

"Then are you not saved?"

"That is just the difficulty. I don't feel sure."

"Well," said his friend, "if God is worth believing on two counts, why not on the third? When God says in His Word you are a lost sinner, what say you?"

"I believe Him," he replied.

"Good. And when He says He sent His Son to die for you, and that if you trust in Him you shall be saved, what do you say?"

"I believe Him, with all my heart."

"Quite right. Now then, when He says, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life' (John 3:36), are you going to doubt Him?"

"That won't do. If He speaks truly on the two counts, He must speak as truly on the third. Yes, I see it. I believe in His Son, and I have everlasting life. He says it, and it must be true. Thank God, I am saved, forgiven, — without any works of my own, — by simple faith in Jesus."

"One question more: 'Wilt thou go with this man?'" "I will go!" was the emphatic reply; and the doctor started for glory, and is yet on his road, sure of the end through grace.

Reader, have you started yet? If not, just start at once.

"We know there's a bright and a glorious home, Away in the heavens high, Where all the redeem'd shall with Jesus dwell But will you be there, and I? In robes of white, o'er the streets of gold, Beneath a cloudless sky, They walk in the light of their Father's smile But will you be there, and I? From every kingdom of earth they come To join the triumphal cry, Singing, 'Worthy the Lamb that once was slain;' But will you be there, and I?"

If you take the loving Saviour now, Who for sinners once did die, When He gathers His own in that bright home, Then you'll be there, and I.

If we are shelter'd by the cross, And through the blood brought nigh, Our utmost gain we'll count but loss, Since you'll be there, and I."

02. Noah's Carpenters.

Noah's Carpenters.

You don't look at all like a patient, Miss Emmie," I said, as a fresh, rosy-cheeked girl of seventeen, the very picture of health — the daughter of Christian parents — came one day into my consulting-room.

"No, Doctor. I'm not come for advice, but mamma said that she thought you would help me with a little subscription;" and at the same time she produced a collecting-book, entitled, "Indian Vernacular Society."

"What is the object of this society?"

"Oh, its object is to teach the little boys and girls in India to read the Bible in their own language; and I am doing all I can to help it forward," she answered most eagerly.

"A capital idea," I replied. "I suppose, then, the real object is that the children may hear of Jesus, and be brought to believe in Him, and thus be saved, and know that they are?"

"Exactly so."

"Well, I hope the Lord will use this effort to the blessing of many of them," I replied; "but before going further, may I ask you, Miss Emmie, did you ever hear of Noah's carpenters?"

"Noah's carpenters! No; who were they?" she replied, rather uneasily.

"They were people who may have helped to build the ark, by which others were saved, and yet never got in themselves."

"I never thought of them before."

"Very likely. But do you not think you are somewhat like them? Here you come trying to help other people to be saved, and yet, so far as I have ever heard, you are not saved yourself. Tell me, do you think you have ever yet come to Jesus yourself, and had your sins washed away? To put it plainly, are you saved?" This query was followed by a lengthened silence; her face flushed crimson, her eyes filled, and then, with a burst of tears, she replied:

"No, I know I am not saved. I see, I have been like Noah's carpenters." The bow drawn at a venture had truly entered the joints of the harness, and she was from that moment a spirit-wounded, and convicted sinner. A long and interesting conversation followed, which I need not relate. We looked at the Word of God, and she found out to her utter dismay and distress, that all her own righteousnesses were but as filthy rags in the sight of God, and that she was an utterly lost soul, needing cleansing and pardon. In this awakened state, after prayer with her, she left me.

Some weeks rolled by, and I was wondering what had been going on in my young friend's soul, when she again came at my consulting hour. Her pale anxious face betrayed what her words soon

confirmed, viz., that since we parted she had passed through days and nights of deep soul-anguish.

"Mamma said she thought I might come and see you again, for I am so miserable and wretched I don't know what to do;" and, indeed, she looked all she said.

"I am most glad to see you, Miss Emmie. I suppose today you want something for yourself, not for others? "

"Yes. I am most anxious to be saved, if I only knew how to come to Jesus; but I am so wicked, and my heart so hard, and I feel so dead."

"You must just come to Him as you are — in all your sins — for He has said, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' just believe Him simply. Take Him at His word."

"I do believe on Him, but I don't get any good from it. I don't feel any different."

"You must not look at your feelings; you must just hear what He says, and give heed to His word. Now, look at this verse," and I turned to John 5:24. "Mark what Jesus says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.' Now, tell me, who is speaking here?"

"Jesus."

"And to whom is He speaking?"

"To me."

"Well, do you hear His word?"

"Yes."

"And do you believe Him that sent Him? Do you believe that God sent Him to save you, to die for you, and to wash away your sins?"

"Yes, I truly believe He did."

"Now, then, see, you have complied with the two conditions given, you have heard and believed; listen to the three blessed consequences that the Lord says accrue to the one that hears and believes. Such an one 'hath everlasting life,' that is a present possession. Inasmuch as you hear and believe, what does Jesus say you now possess?"

"He says I have 'everlasting life.'"

"Good. Stick to that. But there is more in the verse. He says he that heareth and believeth 'shall not come into condemnation.' That, you observe, provides for the future. There can be no condemnation for the one who believes in Jesus, because He Himself, on the cross, bore that condemnation. Now, since you have heard and believed, what does He say as to your future?"

"He says 'shall not come into condemnation.'"

"If He says you shall not, do you think you ever can?"

"No; of course not. He would not tell me what is not true. He cannot lie."

"Exactly so. Thus you see He meets the present and the future in this verse. Nor is that all. We all lay in death; we were each one 'dead in trespasses and sins,' and out of that state we pass the moment we hear His voice, for He quickens us by His word; and so He adds here that the one who hears and believes 'is passed from death unto life.' Nothing could be simpler or more blessed."

Yes, I see it now. I have heard and believed, and, therefore, I have 'passed from death unto life.' Oh, how simple it all seems now!" and the pent-up feelings again got relief in a shower of tears, not now tears of conviction and distress, but those joyous, gladsome tears that will flow down the cheeks of a redeemed, pardoned, blood-washed sinner, when God's grace is tasted and enjoyed. I prayed with her, and thanked God for His grace in saving her; and she left full of peace and joy in believing.

Many years have elapsed since my young friend found Jesus, but I rejoice to know she holds on her way, a bright, happy witness of the Lord's grace, and is an earnest labourer for Christ, and a true soul-seeker in her own quiet sphere.

Reader, where about are you? Are you a Noah's carpenter or a real genuine Christian? Let not this hour pass away and leave you as it found you. Did it find you unsaved? As you value your soul, let it not pass away and be for ever a witness against you and your unbelief Be persuaded to come to Jesus now. Then shall your future be bright and joyous, for you shall be saved, sanctified, and satisfied.

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

NOTHING, either great or small;

Nothing, sinner, no Jesus did it, did it all,

Long, long ago. When He from His lofty throne Stooped to do and die, Everything was fully done, Harken to His cry "IT IS FINISHED!" Yes indeed, Finished every jot.

Sinner, this is all you need Tell me, is it not?

Weary, working, burdened one, Wherefore toil you so?

Cease your doing; all was done

Long, long ago.

Till to JESUS' WORK you cling By a simple faith;

"Doing" is a deadly thing "Doing" ends in death.

Cast your deadly "doing" down —

Down at Jesus' feet;

Stand "IN HIM," in Him alone, Gloriously "COMPLETE!"

03. Divine Openings.

Divine Openings.

"Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." — Luke 3:21-22.

HEAVEN OPENED ON JESUS. This scripture presents to us a very wonderful scene, — a Man on the earth on whom heaven is opened. Supposing the heavens were opened again now, and you became conscious that the eye of God rested on you, that He was close to you, how would you feel, my reader? Do you think God could speak of you, as of this blessed One here, as "well pleased" with your ways? God's delight in Jesus was attested by the gift of the Holy Ghost. He was the seal of the Father's delight in the perfect humanity and spotless ways of that lowly, praying Man. The Holy Ghost came on the Lord without blood, without redemption. The believer gets the Holy Ghost now as the direct result of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is the seal of certain redemption, as having been cleansed by His precious blood.

There had never been anything up to this moment, in the history of man, to equal this scene. The birth of Jesus was wonderful, and a messenger from heaven might and did announce His birth; but now the heaven is opened as He emerged from the water, and the voice of God, the Father, is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." He was the only sinless, holy, perfect, blessed man in this scene of whom God could say, "In thee I am well pleased." Oh! the Christian's heart is refreshed by the sight, so unique, but so perfectly comely and fitting. There is no "hear him" at this point, as in the transfiguration on the Mount. Why? Because His moral worth and blessed words ought to have gained Him every ear, and it is taken for granted that He would be listened to, Further on in the Gospel, the Father's voice is again heard saying, "This is my beloved Son," but adding emphatically, "hear him" (Luke 9:35).

Jesus was about thirty years of age. Time — the true test of all — had been given to show what He was. Here was One of whom the world was utterly ignorant. God's Son was in their midst, and they knew Him not. Here it is no question of a man coming, and testifying to Him, as John the Baptist had already done, but the Father of that Son speaks, saying, "This is my beloved Son."

Reader, what think you of Him? Can you answer and say, "This is my beloved Saviour." It is a sad thing if you cannot.

Having seen thus heaven opened on the Son of God here on earth, I will now point out to you a few other things in the Word of God that are opened; and I trust, as the result, that your heart may be opened, for if your heart be not opened to receive Christ, hell will yet open its mouth to receive you. AN OPENED BOOK. In Luke 4:1-44 Jesus is seen, in the power of the Holy Ghost, led into the wilderness, there utterly vanquishing Satan, morally, by dependence and obedience. Thereafter "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom, was, he

went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read" (ver. 17). He begins at home, where He is known. "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book."

Now the passage, from which this is a quotation, goes on thus: — "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2). But look at the grace of Christ; the moment he gets to that comma — and for the unsaved sinner there is really nothing but a comma between him and hell — He closes the book. If the Lord were to now open the book, it would be all over with you, unsaved reader, for "the day of vengeance" come, "the acceptable year of the Lord" has ended. Now is the "acceptable year of the Lord," — the day of grace, of mercy, of pardon, and salvation; when the Lord again opens the book, it will be "the day of vengeance," and then, where will you be? When Jesus came to this comma, why does He not read on? Because He says, as it were, the day of judgment is deferred, put back, while grace utters her lovely messages. How long is the acceptable time called? A year! But it is "the day of vengeance." judgment will come in a moment, when you are not thinking of it. judgment is short and swift, — a day suffices for it. It is a year of grace, and will you, therefore, trifle with it? I beseech you not to. Does a "broken-hearted" one read this? God sent His Son to heal your broken heart. Are you a "Poor" sinner? God sent His Son to enrich you with all the blessings of the Gospel. Have you been a captive to sin and Satan? Jesus came "to preach deliverance to the captives." Oh! it is worth while to have one's heart broken to know what it is to have Him bind it up. Would Mary and her sister have been without those four days at Bethany? "Oh, no," they would say, "our very sorrow, and misery, and necessity, gave an opportunity for showing what He was. We saw the tear in His eye, we heard the words of comfort from His blessed lips, we saw the work of power of His hand; no, those days we would not have been without."

Christ came, He says, "to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." Christ opens everything. Are you blind? He opens your eyes. Are you in prison? He opens the door and sets you free. Are you in the grave? He unlocks its hold, and lets you out. What could man do for Lazarus? Lay him in the tomb. What could Jesus do for him? Call him out of the tomb, and then say, "Loose him, and let him go." It is life and liberty. This is the gospel. Do you know it? Have you been healed, delivered, set free? This is the day in which Christ can bless you, in which the Lord can receive you, — it is "the acceptable year of the Lord," and it still goes on.

I love to think it was the Lord Himself first came to preach these glad tidings. The listeners were interested for a moment, and "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (ver. 22). But presently, when He began to touch their consciences, it was another thing. God must reach the conscience, for while you learn that He is good, you must also learn that you are utterly bad; while you learn that "God is love," you must also learn that your heart is full of hatred against Him. If you learn the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must also learn that He is the truth too. Thus, though the people wondered at His grace, they could not bear the truth, so they "rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong" (ver. 29). Awful exposure of their heart's hatred! What does

He do? "He, passing through the midst of them, went his way" (ver. 30). What was His way? It was away of divine mercy and goodness to man in every conceivable condition. Did He meet hungry men — He fed them; blind men — He gave them sight; leprous men — He cleansed them; deaf men — He opened their ears; dead men — He raised them. Whatever the need was, He met it. This was His way. He was the Healer, the Helper, the Blessor, this gracious Son of God. At length men got tired of being ministered to by Christ, when, along with His grace, the truth as to man and his real state came out, and they made up their minds that they would not bear His presence any longer. They wanted, and plotted, to get rid of Him. This is what men did with this blessed One. They cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." Tired of His presence, they put Him on the cross. Perfect love and goodness personified was in their midst, and they could only say, "Away with him!" When He was presented to them as their king, they cried, "We have no king but Caesar," mocked Him with a crown of thorns and purple raiment, and then having stripped, and nailed Him to a tree, they gambled for His garments beneath His eyes! Who put Him on the cross? Men; men with hearts like yours and mine. Yes, and our sins nailed Him there. Of this expression of perfect goodness, concerning whom God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," man said, "He is guilty of death," and they put Him on the cross.

Look at the awfulness of the hardness of the heart of man. Dying, and — as they thought Jesus was — dying of thirst, when one more tender than others would have given Him something to drink, the rest said, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him." Seeing Him suffer, they say, "Let Him suffer; give Him nothing to assuage His burning thirst." And He died! And does God at once take vengeance for the murder of His Son? No; God takes that moment, as it were, to say, "I will put away everything that could come between you and Me." He rends the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom. That which stood between God and man, is taken away by God. That death of shame and agony the Saviour suffered, at the hand of man, was the actual means of putting away the very sin of those who crucified Him.

OPENED GRAVES. A work was at that moment wrought by Jesus that opened the grave itself. Nature was, as it were, more tender than the hearts of men. "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27:51-52). What took man into death? Sin. What took man out of death? Redemption. The graves were opened the moment the Saviour died. Before even Christ's own grave was tenanted, God opened the graves of the saints. Christ has robbed death of its sting, the grave of its victory. By dying, He has annulled death? How do I see that first? By an opened grave. The whole question of sin has been settled by the cross of Christ; and the opened grave and resurrection of the dead, are God's testimony to His estimate of the value of the work of Christ, and now the believer is associated with a risen Christ.

OPENED UNDERSTANDINGS. The Lord rises from the dead, the work of redemption accomplished. The proof of redemption is in the opened graves, - opened graves the moment He died, and empty graves the moment He is risen. The day the Lord rose from the dead, He took His place amongst His own loved ones, said, "Peace unto you," and "then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45). THE HEAVENS OPENED TO US. But the work of Christ opens other things besides the grave, for, having ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost, that blessed Spirit of truth indwells the believer; and we read of Stephen, that "he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into

heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). Heaven was opened then to a saint to look up and see Jesus at the right hand of God — to see a Man in the glory of God. A Man has gone in there to represent the believer in the glory of God, the Man who took his place, and bore his sins on the cross. AN OPENED HEART.

These blessed tidings, about a risen and glorified Christ, the Holy Ghost loves to spread; and Paul, led of the Spirit, in Acts 16:1-40, finds himself called to Europe to proclaim them; and at Philippi, by the river side, "a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (ver. 14). Has the Lord ever opened your heart, my dear reader? This woman heard and believed, and then took her stand out and out with the Lord's servants; for "when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (ver. 15). This woman opened her heart to the Lord, and opened her house to His servants. Her heart was the Lord's, and her house was His too.

Christ opened everything; opened heaven, opened the book, opened eyes, opened graves, opened understandings to understand the Scriptures, opened hearts and houses, — and can you have a closed heart still? Oh! listen to this, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). Now you have the opportunity of opening. It has been the Lord opening hitherto. Is your heart still shut? Look then at Revelation 4:1-11, "Behold, a door was opened in heaven." The Lord has there come, and called up His own saints; and so what John sees open, the foolish virgins of Matthew 25:1-46 will find shut.

If you refuse to open your heart to the Lord, there is yet another scene that concerns you. In Revelation 19:11, heaven is opened again, and Christ is seen coming out to "judge and make war;" and then, in Revelation 20:1-15, certain "books were opened." The book of the history of your life down here is opened by the hand of Jesus, and what does He read of you? Born in sin, lived in sin, died in sin; born in sin, lived an unbeliever, died an unbeliever. And lest there should be any doubt upon this point, God turns to His own book — the book of life; He looks down His register for your name, to see if your name is recorded there. Alas! it is not there. Oh, what a fearful thing for you! Will you not turn to Jesus today? Will you still shut your eyes to everything that He has opened? If so, you shall yet see two things, — you shall see the Lord when He opens the heavens in glory, and the books in judgment, and you shall see what may well fill you with dismay, for you will behold, and descend into AN OPENED HELL, when the prophet's woe is fulfilled on the careless pleasure-loving worldling, according as it is written, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my, people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it" (Isaiah 5:11-14).

04. "A Leap in the Dark."

"A Leap in the Dark."

"Then to you death will be a leap in the dark?"

"Well, yes, just so; I suppose it will be." The one who made this terrible confession was a shoemaker of middle age, slowly nearing the grave under the fell power of consumption. Worse than this, he was an infidel, — a determined, avowed sceptic. I had been asked to visit him in his attic quarters by an old friend, who was himself a shoemaker, but, through grace, a Christian, and naturally most anxious about his unbelieving acquaintance. His friend obtained his permission for me to call by saying that, as a physician, perhaps I could give him some prescription which would relieve his sufferings; and when he begged me go, told me briefly of the sadly darkened state of the shoemaker's mind, urging me to put Christ before him if I could.

Having carefully examined him, and thus got his confidence by the interest which I displayed in his case, he asked me, at length, if I thought his condition amenable to cure. To this I replied that I was sorry to have to tell him I did not think he could recover.

"Then, how long do you think I have got to live, doctor?" he said.

"A few months, perhaps a year," I replied.

He made no reply, and the stolid look of indifference on his gloomy face was in no way changed by my remark. As he said no more, I continued, —

"And are you ready to die, Mr F-?"

"Of course I am, as ready as you, or any one else."

"And what has made you ready? Are your sins forgiven, and all washed away in the precious blood of Christ?"

"Oh, that's all stuff. I don't believe in any of that nonsense. I'm a freethinker."

"So I regret to perceive; but your being a freethinker will not fit you for God's presence?"

"I tell you I don't believe in a God at all, so I shan't have to meet Him!"

"Your not believing in Him will not help you to evade the solemn certainty of having to meet Him. The Scripture says, 'So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.'"

"But I don't believe in the Bible. It's only fit for old women who can't reason. No reasonable man believes it in these days."

"Well, I am not an old woman, but, I trust, a reasonable man, and yet I am free to confess that I believe the Bible to be the Word of God. I believe it heartily from cover to cover."

"And what good has it done you?"

"Untold good, thank God. It has given me the knowledge of Himself in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I know from its blessed pages that my sins are all forgiven, that I have eternal life, and, though I am sure of nothing for a moment in this life, I am quite clear and happy as to the future were I to die, or the Lord to come."

"Oh, that's all a delusion. Nobody knows anything about the future. How can they? No one has come back from the dead to tell us what comes after death."

"That is a great mistake. Why, the One who died for me is the very One who has come back from the dead, to assure me as to my future blessedness, as the fruit and consequence of His death for Me."

"I don't believe a word of it. No one can know what will be after death."

"Then to you death will be a leap in the dark?"

"Well, yes, just so; I suppose it will be," was his rather hesitating reply.

"Ah, my friend!" I exclaimed, "I am far better off than you, through God's infinite grace. If I should die, death would be a leap in the light."

"How do you make that out?"

"Because I have got the light now. Christ is my Light. He said, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8:12). And He said also, 'Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness' (John 12:35-36; John 12:46). Both you and I are, alike, sinners before God, but the difference between us is this: — You do not believe in the Lord Jesus, are walking in darkness, and know not whither you are going, viz., to judgment, and the lake of fire; I do believe in Him, have got out of darkness by letting in the light, and know clearly where I am going, viz., 'to be with Christ, which is far better.' Don't you think now that I have the best of it? All I can say is, that a man who takes a leap in the dark, when he may take a leap in the light must be a downright fool. What say you to that?"

He paused a moment or two, and then replied, "Well, sir, I never looked at it quite in that way before. I won't say there's not some reason in your argument." With this our interview closed. I left him with my heart lifted to God that His Word might do its own work in his heart and conscience. I never saw him again. Upwards of twelve years have rolled away. Last June his friend, who had asked me to visit him, called to see me, and said, "Do you recollect, many years ago, visiting an infidel shoemaker in L- Street?"

"Perfectly; and what took place between us too. What became of him?"

"He died in the Royal Infirmary just a year after you saw him."

"Died an infidel?"

"Oh no, thank God, he died a happy Christian, confessing his faith in the Lord, and giving a bright testimony. He dated the beginning of the change in his heart from that morning you saw him. Something you said to him about 'a leap in the dark' stuck to him, and he was never happy till he found the Lord."

"The Lord be praised," was my rejoinder, as I heard, with deep joy, of the Lord's grace to one who seemed so fortified in unbelief. It is, however, but another illustration of His goodness, and of the truth of His Word. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:8-11). And now, my dear reader, let me, in penning a few concluding lines, ask you, Are you still in "darkness," or have you received Christ as your "light"? When you pass into eternity, will it be for you "a leap in the dark," or "a leap in the light"?

I beseech you, most affectionately, not to put these queries from you. Answer them honestly before God. If you cannot reply, "To me death would be a leap in the light," turn to Jesus now. Trust Him, as you read these lines, and your eternal salvation is sure. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness," may well win the confidence of your heart towards the blessed One who speaks, and who —

"Suffered in the shadow That we might see the light."

Yes, He tasted death that we might live; endured the darkness, that we might enjoy the light; and sustained the judgment of God, that we might be freely justified. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Again, "But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 9:26-28).

Trust Him then, simply, my reader; and then when called hence, whether by falling asleep in Jesus, or, better, His coming in the air for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), to you and to me, through infinite grace, it will be A LEAP IN THE LIGHT.

05. The Rope from Above.

The Rope from Above.

Some years since I was passing early one morning down one of the thoroughfares of Edinburgh, when I noticed numbers of people hastening rapidly in the direction in which I was going. The cause of the unusual stir I had no need to inquire, for just then the road made a bend, and full in view was a large crowd gathered before a house on fire. Sheets of flame leapt out of the windows, and dense volumes of smoke were rolling forth from the first floor.

Technically speaking, the burning house, itself the centre of a row, was "a first flat" and, fortunately or not as the case may have been, the tenants were out at the time. For the sake of my readers who are not acquainted with the "flat" system of building houses, I may say that the house in question, and two above it, entered from the street by a stair common to them all, each house having its own door opening into the stair at various levels. This being so, ingress to or egress from flats No. 2 and 3 can only be had by passing the door of No. 1, which really answers to the drawing-room floor of an ordinary house, the ground floor being usually, as in this case, a shop.

Drawing near the scene, I saw at a glance what was the state of matters. Neither fire-engine, fire-escape, fireman, nor fire-ladder were as yet at hand, while at the open windows of flat No. 2 stood two females, an aged woman and her daughter. Their dishevelled state and general attire told that from their slumber they had been awakened by the cry of "Fire," Only to find the floor beneath their feet in flames, their house filled with choking smoke, and the common stair, by which they sought escape, a miniature crater through which it was hopeless to attempt to pass.

Balked in their efforts to leave by the stairs, at the windows they now appeared in company, uttering distressing shrieks of fright, and imploring help from the populace beneath. A fearful agony was on the face of each as they cried, and looked in vain for help from below. True, the help of firemen and ladders had been sought, but they were long in coming. At such a time each moment seems an age!

It was a touching sight as, side by side, they stood, — themselves utterly helpless, — while the devouring flame below seemed only to mock their agony, and with lurid blaze ever and anon leapt madly forth and up, from the window directly beneath them, as though it would gladly devour them where they stood, or drive them back to suffocation. The breeze was fresh, and the snow-white hair of the terror-stricken mother was waving wildly in the air, a strange contrast to the black smoke and lambent flames around. Altogether it was a weird and painful sight.

Just then a cheer rang forth from the crowd, and, looking higher than the women, I saw that some kindly workmen had, by another common stair, managed to get on to the roof, carrying with them a slender rope. To fasten it round a stack of chimneys — fortunately in a direct line behind the open window — was the work of a minute or two, and then, giving the rope a coil, and a well-directed fling over the eaves of the house, right down in front of the terrified, and now surprised women (for they expected no help from above), fell their only way of escape. Loud hurrahs greeted the

providers of this way of salvation, while cries of "Lay hold of the rope," "Come down by the rope," indicated plainly to the unfortunate pair what they were expected to do. A way of escape having been provided by others, they were expected and urged at once to avail themselves of it. How right, and how simple this judgment; do you not agree with it, reader?

Quick as thought, I saw the women lay hold of the rope; but now the question arose, who should go first, — in other words, who had faith to trust this slender means of safety. From where I stood I could note an altercation as to who should first avail herself of it, and some minutes I think must have elapsed, while encouraging and hastening words rose thickly from below, — "Make haste," — "Don't waste time," — "You may safely trust it," etc. etc. At length the mother gained her point, — she was stout and heavy, it might not sustain her; the daughter was thin and fragile, she might safely trust it. A mother's love, I doubt not, was under and behind all, — a love only eclipsed by a Saviour's. The daughter took the rope in both her hands and got on to the window-sill. The crowd held its breath. The rope was pulled on first, to see if it held on above. All right. The thirty-five or forty feet beneath was looked at. The rope was long enough, and it was strong enough, and yet she lingered. I saw the reason why; when just about to launch away, doubts and fears evidently rose, and by the heels of her boots she clung to the raised sill. This lasted a moment, and then, with instinctive love, the mother gave her a push, and fairly forth she swung.

Descending too rapidly her hands "fired," and, while still some distance from the ground, she let go the rope and fell. Fearing this event, some strong men had gathered underneath, and into their arms she tumbled, receiving no harm whatever. The mother, encouraged by her child's success, and learning by her fall not to be too hasty in her descent, now committed herself to the trusty rope, and hand under hand slowly coming down, was soon by her daughter's side, right thankful for the rope from above. At the time, and since, I have often thought how this scene illustrates the state of man as a sinner, and the dealings of God with him in grace. Man has sinned, and his sin has placed him in a position of imminent danger. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This word includes you and me, dear reader. Further, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). And again God speaks thus, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). As to what this judgment is which overtakes the dead, we are left in no doubt whatever. Hear God's testimony, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12; Revelation 20:15).

Here we are told the final doom of the dead. They have no life suited to God. "Dead in sins" delineates their time condition. "Eternal life, the gift of God," they cared not then to accept; hence their eternal condition corresponds to their time state. Solemn truth! The actions of life bring forth fruit for eternity. Read what follows: "But the fearful (1:e., cowards, — those who are afraid or ashamed to trust and confess Christ), and unbelieving (those who are avowed infidels and scoffers, though outwardly moral and well-behaved, — and is it not notable that these two classes should head the list?), and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). I know men scoff at these solemn words of God. This does not make them less real or terrible, but only manifests the folly of the human heart,

which refuses to believe God's testimony as to its present guilt and godless state, and future equally godless condition for eternity, and despises the way of salvation which God in His grace has provided. The women I have written of were in as much danger while asleep and unconscious of it, as when fully alive to their critical state. Is your case different, O unsaved reader? Not one whit. But perhaps you bow to God's Word, and seeing your guilt and sin, tremble in view of "judgment to come." It is well with you if so, and better still if you are willing to take God's way of salvation. He it is who alone can save. He has, so to speak, let down a rope from above, long and strong enough to meet any and every sinner's case, no matter how many or heavy his sins may be. Christ is God's way of escape from the lake of fire, and if you would escape the due reward of your deeds, my friend, you must trust to Him.

"Lay hold of the rope," said the crowd, preaching a suited gospel to the women. "Lay hold of Christ," say I. "This is my beloved Son, hear him," says God the Father. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. Come unto me," says Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. . . . He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him," says John the Baptist. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," say Paul and Silas. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," says Peter, the fisherman. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," says John the Evangelist. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed," says Isaiah, the prophet. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him," says David, the Psalmist-king. What a cloud of witnesses to His worth! He has come down to save, — it has all come from His own side, — and is it not strange that sinners will not trust Him?

Dear reader, if you still have your heels hooked on to some window-sill of feelings or hesitancy, oh, let me give you the push just now that shall cause you simply and sweetly to trust the Lord Jesus.

Fear not that you will fall. He will hold you up, the rope will not break; and His grasp of you — when once you commit yourself to Him — will never unloose; and He will land you in glory as the fruit of His work on the cross for you.

"Look to Jesus, look and live Mercy at His hands receive He has died upon the tree, And His words are, 'Look to me.'

Come to Jesus, come and live;

He has endless life to give;

He from sin will set you free; For His words are, 'Come to me.'

Rest in Jesus, there repose, Shelter find from all thy foes;

Let His name be all thy plea, For His words are, 'Rest in me.'"

06. "Milk without Money;" or,

"Milk without Money;" or, A Lesson We Must All Learn

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." — Isaiah 55:1.

I was on an evangelistic tour through the north of Ireland, accompanied by a beloved fellow-labourer in the gospel. Being announced to preach at the town of L-, on the 14th September, two routes to our destination lay open to us, — a long detour by rail, or a direct drive of about twenty miles on an outside jaunting-car over some verdant mountains. Taking the wise advice of our host of the previous night — a beloved brother in the Lord — we chose the latter, and being well furnished with little gospel books for the journey, we started. My friend sat one side of the car and I the other, and all along our journey we scattered our precious gospel seeds, giving them to walkers, jerking them to riders in vehicles, and now and then jumping off, as our stout nag toiled up the hills; and handing them to rustic cottagers, and sun-burned reapers in the fields of golden grain which, on all hands, waved under the balmy zephyr breezes of the loveliest day I ever saw in Erin's isle. I am thankful to say our tracts were welcomed on all hands; and one feels sure the fruit of this happy service will show up, in the day of the Lord, in the persons of some precious souls blessed through these little silent messengers. The sun began to get very hot, and quite naturally, after two or three hours of this sort of work, we became rather thirsty. We had come on no very drinkable water, so, spying a little house where I knew there would be a cow or two, I asked our driver if he thought I could get some milk there. Receiving an affirmative answer, I ran to the door, which was open, and knocked. This brought out from the innermost apartment a sedate but pleasant- looking female, evidently, I should judge, the mistress of the primitive establishment. Looking at me, as much as to say, What do you want? but not speaking, I courteously said, "Will you be good enough to sell me some milk?"

She paused a moment, and then very firmly replied "No!" following up this decided negative with a pleasant smile, and "but I will give you some," putting as strong an emphasis on the "give" as she had placed on the "no." So saying, she turned back to her little dairy, while I turned to my friend, who had come to my side, saying, "Now, that's the gospel, is it not? God gives, but He will not sell, salvation." We had a most delicious draught of cold sweet milk, for which we most truly gave her thanks, accompanied by some little gospel books, and a few words about God's blessed Son and His great salvation, which was as free to her, by faith, as she had made her milk to us, and then resumed our journey.

Then, and many a time since, I have pondered over this scene as a lovely illustration of God's way of dealing with souls who really want salvation. We did not know, and therefore did not count, on the bounty of the one we appealed to. And so it is with man. Not knowing God, he knows not the grace and love of His heart; and, though needy, and owning it too, fancies he must bring an equivalent to God ere he can get from Him that which he needs. If you, my reader, are of this mistaken class, may God open your eyes to see His way of salvation. His grace provides it, and

not your works of any kind. There are two good reasons for this. First, God is too rich to sell salvation; and second, man is too poor to buy it. Hence you must get it as a gift, if you are to get it at all. The quotation I have made at the head of this paper shows this truth very simply. The "thirsty" are invited. And are not you among this number? You certainly are, if you have not yet found Jesus, for "your labour," whatever its nature, "satisfieth not," our verses say. Thirst is a craving which the suited fluid alone can satisfy. Now the thirst of an anxious soul is really for God and His Christ, though very likely it could not put it in so many words; but the Lord Jesus, who knows the heart well, says, "Whosoever drinketh of this water [the well of this world] shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:13-14). Precious words! But not more precious than true. Again, He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37); giving also this sweet assurance, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst; . . . and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:35; John 6:37).

Now, dear anxious reader, are not you invited? Do not these glorious words of the Saviour encourage you to come to Him? They ought to, if they do not. Listen again, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "But," you say, "how can I be sure it means me? Perhaps I am not thirsty enough, not anxious enough, for salvation." Very likely; no one ever was as anxious as he should have been, considering God's view of sin, and the awful danger of the unsaved sinner. But the point is not the measure of your anxiety, but the fact of your being "thirsty" or willing at all. If so, hear the word of the Lord: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. . . . Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:17). What charming words! "I will give . . . freely." That is God's side. "Let him take . . . freely." That is your side. God gives; all you have to do is to take what He gives.

"What must I bring?" say you. Nothing! Come to Jesus as you are. "He that hath no money" is the invited one. You have no equivalent for that which God dispenses, so you are bid to come and buy "without money and without price." Why "buy"? Because it supposes a person in earnest. When a person goes into a shop to "buy" an article, his very presence there shows he really wanted it, or he would not have gone to the trouble of entering the mart. Buying implies direct dealing between two parties. This is the very thing God wants. He wishes you brought into His own presence in real desire to have salvation — the water of life — Christ. You come. What then? You find all is a gift. How simple!

What earnestness is with God, when thrice in this one verse He says "Come!" I cannot refrain from quoting it again, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: COME ye, buy and eat; yea, COME, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." How blessedly falls that heaven-born word on the ear — Come! come! COME! Who could refuse such grace? Come as you are; come in your sins; come in your guilt. Come in your distress; come in your sorrow, your want, your woe, your misery, your helplessness, your nothingness, your poverty, your hardness of heart, — yea, exactly as you are, as you read these lines. Only come, come to Jesus, and you will be received, blessed, forgiven, cleansed, and saved on the very spot.

More, you will be made the possessor of a new life, for, He adds here, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." This, too, is a gift, as is all else that the soul receives from

God; for it is written, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Rest assured, if you come in any way but as a simple receiver, you must be rejected, as was Cain. Did you never notice that the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). This being so, who is to have the more blessed place, you or God? Let one speak who knew well this truth, "Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better" (Hebrews 7:7). Now, then, what do you say? I will tell you what I say: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

07. The Comfort of the Blood.

The Comfort of the Blood.

"The blood was my first comfort, and I believe it will be my last comfort. . . . I feel as though the Lord were leading me from earth to heaven, by the steps of the 23rd Psalm, 'The Lord is my shepherd, . . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'" The words came slowly from the lips of the dying man — a doctor — passing away from a loving wife and children, in the prime of life, with a rest and joy in the Lord I have never seen surpassed. A few days later he passed away, with "Bless the Lord" on his lips.

Many physicians are infidels. Why, I cannot say. I would that all such could have seen this dear friend of many years patiently pass through months of weakness, always rejoicing in Christ, and then at the last bear witness to the comfort of the despised blood of Jesus.

Ah! there is no real foundation for the soul apart from the blood of Christ. That blood cleanseth from all sin, removes every stain, purges the conscience, purifies the soul, relieves the distressed and sin-burdened heart, and sets the one who trusts it perfectly free in the presence of God. Death is robbed of its sting, the grave of its victory, and "judgment to come" has no meaning for the one who rests only on that which the Holy Ghost calls "the precious blood of Christ."

What folly can exceed that which despises God's only way of salvation — Jesus's blood? No solid real comfort is found apart from Christ and His blood.

What a portion is the Christian's! He has a title without a flaw, and a prospect without a cloud.

Infidel, what comfort will you have on your deathbed?

08. "Go to Joseph."

"Go to Joseph."

Joseph is a most beautiful and complete type of the Lord Jesus in the days of His humiliation and in the days of His exaltation. The day is not come yet, when God will compel men to give Jesus His due; because God has, what Pharaoh had not, long patience, and the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation.

Joseph, you will remember, went out in the guilelessness and love of his heart to meet his brethren (Genesis 37:1-36). They plotted against him to slay him, and at length he was sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, the price of the meanest slave. And I need not remind you of Another, who came from His Father's house to see how His brethren fared, and met with precisely the same treatment, — "His own received him not," — and at length for thirty pieces of silver He was betrayed, and sold, and then cast out of this world; not into a dungeon, but into a grave.

It is true loving hands took Him down from the cross, and placed Him in a sepulchre; but wicked hands sealed Him there, and the world hoped never to see Him again; "but God raised him from the dead." The One whom men slew God raised up.

He came in all the love of His heart; but man had no love for Him. I ask you, my reader, Have you any love in your heart for Him? Does He look in and see in your heart affection for Himself? If not, do not you be the one to judge those who cast Him out in the day of His lowliness and humiliation. As Pharaoh placed Joseph by his own side in his day, and they cried "Bow the knee" before him (Genesis 41:40-43), so God has placed Jesus at His right hand today, and commands men everywhere to bow to Him. Every knee shall bow to Jesus; but God would have you bow your knee — and more, bow your heart — to Jesus now. Have you gone down in His presence, delighted to own His value now, delighted to call Him Lord? If not, the sooner you do, the better will it be for you. The humiliation of Jesus gave Him a moral claim on God for exaltation, and He has exalted Him, and "given him a name which is above every name." There is no name like the name of Jesus. God has declared that all shall own Him Lord, — angels, men, and demons, — and you may be sure all includes you. The demons never owned Him Lord when He was on earth, but the day will come when God will compel them to own Him Lord. And for you, my reader, when is to be your day of owning Him Lord? now, when He is waiting on you in long-suffering grace, or in the day of His power, when you must bow? "Bow the knee" is God's word to you now.

Doubtless to many a proud Egyptian noble there was great humiliation in having to bow to this Hebrew servant; but the day of famine came, and neither their pride nor their parentage would meet, the pangs of famine. Then they cried to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh's word was, "Go to Joseph." And many a soul in trouble cries to God. What is God's answer, as it were? "Go to Jesus." Have you, my reader, the sense of soul hunger? God's word is, "Go to Jesus." Do you say, I know what soul hunger is; I would like to be saved, if I knew how to go to Jesus? Look, and see, in this

interesting narrative, how they came to Joseph.

He was, according to the meaning of his name ZaphnathPaaneah, "a revealer of secrets," and "the saviour of the age." And is not this what Jesus is?

Look at Him in the 4th of John, when that poor woman meets Him at the well. Does He not show Himself to her as the revealer of secrets, when He said to her, "Thou hast had five husbands"? Ah! Christ knows all about you; Christ knows every sin; and for those who believe in Him He has pardoned every one. Knowing all about us, He loved us; and loving us, He came down to save us. When the woman found He knew all about her, does she fly? No, she stays and talks with Him, and one moment she is a convicted sinner, and the next Christ reveals Himself to her, and she leaves her waterpot and goes into the city, and says, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Instead of being afraid of Him, she calls to all to come and know Him too; and they come and find He is not only the revealer of secrets, but the Saviour of the age, — the true Joseph. Have you come to this Revealer of secrets, this Saviour of the age, yet? Does your conscience answer, No; I have not come to Him yet? Why not, my reader? Perhaps you say in your heart, I do not know how He would receive me if I came.

Let us look at how Joseph received his brethren when they came to him in their need.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt" (Genesis 42:1-3). They heard that there was corn in Egypt. They heard that there was deliverance to be had if they could only get it, and they were perishing. They heard there was salvation, and they felt their need, and felt they would like to be saved, but they could not get salvation without going to the saviour. They could not get deliverance apart from the deliverer; they could not get food in their hunger save from Joseph, — Joseph the despised one, the one they had hated, the one they had cast out and sold, but the one whom God had raised up to have every resource in his power, everything that could meet their need. And you, my reader, do you feel you are in need of salvation? Have you heard of a deliverance which you would like to be yours? Is your soul hungry, and have you heard of "bread enough and to spare"? Have you heard of salvation that others have known, and would you know it too? Then you must come into living contact with the Saviour. It is from the Saviour only you can get salvation. Jesus is that Saviour, and he waits and longs to save you.

Joseph's brethren are in need now, and they come to Joseph; and you must do just the same — come to Jesus.

"And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land; and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth" (ver. 6).

They come and bow themselves down to Joseph; and it is a blessed thing when you are compelled, even by your need, to bow to Jesus, for He is the only one who can meet that need.

"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land

of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. . . . And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. . . . And he put them all together into ward three days" (vers. 7-17). His brethren did not know Joseph, but he knew them. He spake roughly to them. They thought he was a hard man. Do you think Christ is an austere man"? He will tell you what you are; tell you that you are a sinner full of enmity to God, that there is no good thing in you. People do not like that. They do not like to be shown what is in their hearts.

Joseph deals with his brethren as God does with the sinner, for God must get at our consciences, and must make us feel and know what we have been and are. So Joseph's dealings with his brethren arouse conscience, for they say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us" (ver. 21).

It is a wonderful thing when the soul is brought to this point, to own itself a guilty sinner before God. God must have reality. Have you, my reader, ever seen yourself thus in the light of God's presence? Has your conscience ever been awakened to cry, I am undone; I am verily guilty?

"And Joseph turned himself about from them and wept." And did not Another greater than Joseph weep over guilty Jerusalem; and not only weep, but shed His precious blood because of the love of His heart to guilty man?

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack" (ver. 25). What is the lesson of the money in the sack? That if you are to get salvation, you cannot buy it. You are too poor to buy it, and God is too rich to sell it. Salvation must be God's free gift, and you must have it as a gift, or not have it at all.

Joseph's brethren come back, and tell their father all that Joseph had said; and Jacob refuses to let Benjamin go down with them, for he says, "His brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." But the famine increases. Their need increases; food they must have or die. Judah offers to be surety for his brother, and Jacob is constrained to let the lad go; but he says, "Do this: take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present. . . . And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man" (Genesis 43:11-14). This is man's way of getting salvation. People think they are going to be saved by propitiating God. They will work and give alms, and what not. But it will not do. No money will buy salvation, and God does not want appeasing. He is waiting to be gracious, waiting for the moment when He can display what is in His heart, which is only love.

Joseph's brethren came down again to him, and when he saw Benjamin he gave commandment that they should be brought into his house. "And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house." Yes, the soul wakes up to learn it is guilty, and then it fears the presence of God. But Joseph spake comfortably to them to win their hearts, and they sat at meat with him. "And the men marvelled one at another. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him;

but Benjamin's mess was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him."

Then in Genesis 44:1-34 they have to confess their sins. Judah says, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (ver. 16). This is the point God would bring us to. Not only conscience making us see our state, but also there is the owning of that state. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So said David in Psalms 32:1-11, and so must every soul that really turns to God. In Genesis 45:1-28 the wonderful climax is reached. Joseph reveals himself to them. "I am Joseph." The Joseph they had sold as a slave stood before them as ruler over all the land, but meeting them in all the grace of his heart. He caused every one else to go out, and the guilty were left alone in the presence of the saviour. What a lovely picture of divine grace follows: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt" (Genesis 45:4). When the work in the conscience is done, then the Lord can come near and reveal Himself. He never comes and reveals Himself till the sinner takes his true place — is angry with himself.

"Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither," he says: "for God did send me before you to preserve life." You have been guilty, Joseph says, but God had a purpose in it. And man was guilty of nailing the Saviour to the cross; but God had His own thoughts, His own meaning in it all, and that very death, on the cross, of the Saviour, becomes the basis and groundwork, through atonement, of the great deliverance Christ accomplishes for the sinner; salvation for him is the fruit of the sufferings of the Saviour there. But after all this display of the heart of Joseph to his brethren, and after seventeen years of caring for them, and giving them the best of everything, and rewarding them only love for their hatred, the last chapter of Genesis shows they still did not fully know Joseph.

"When Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him" (Genesis 50:15-17).

All this is like some doubting, fearing, unhappy Christians, who tell me they believe on the Lord, and yet they have not peace. They are full of fears; they are not sure He has received them and forgiven them: they do not know His heart; and another thing, they have never had all out with Him. Have no reserves, my reader. Have it all out with Jesus, and do not you be the one to make our Joseph weep; for the heart of the Lord Jesus feels today your lack of trust in Him, after all He has done for you, all the kindness and the love He has shown to you. Wound not then His loving heart by any lack of confidence in Him.

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not." That is just the way the Lord Jesus loves to comfort the soul. To get the confidence of the heart, He says to the trembling one, "Fear not: I am Jesus."

Joseph says again, "Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." And that is what Jesus says; for we are not only sheltered by His

blood, but saved by His life. He will nourish and care for each one all the way along. Oh, my reader, believe Him simply, and never wound His heart again by one single doubt.

SWEET was the hour, O Lord, to Thee, At Sychar's lonely well, When a poor outcast heard Thee there Thy great salvation tell.

Thither she came; but, oh! her heart, All filled with earthly care, Dreamed not of Thee, nor thought to find The hope of Israel there.

Lord! 'twas Thy power unseen that drew The stray one to that place, In solitude to learn from Thee The secrets of Thy grace.

There Jacob's erring daughter found Those streams unknown before, The water-brooks of life, that make The weary thirst no more.

And, Lord, to us, as vile as she, Thy gracious lips have told That mystery of love revealed At Jacob's well of old. In spirit, Lord, we've sat with Thee Beside the springing well Of life and peace, and heard Thee there Its healing virtues tell.

Dead to the world, we dream no more Of earthly pleasures now; Our deep, divine, unfailing spring Of grace and glory Thou! No hope of rest in aught beside, No beauty, Lord, we see;

And, like Samaria's daughter, seek, And find our all in Thee.

09. "Which line are you on?"

"Which line are you on?"

"You don't think he'll get better, Doctor, do you? I'm sure I don't; he seems like dying tonight."

"While there is life there is hope in a fever case, so we must relax none of our efforts," was my reply. The sick man had brought a delicate wife from New Zealand to see a noted physician. On arriving in Edinburgh, he found that death, at too early an age, had just swept the illustrious man from the land of the living, and then himself contracting typhus fever, his condition on the fifteenth day quite warranted the remark just given. The speaker was a kindly but shrewd lodging-house keeper, who had offered to the worn-out wife, and nurse of the sick man, to relieve them for a little, wait my midnight visit, and receive any directions I might give, while they got a rest.

Much interested in the welfare of his lodger, he was rather cheered by my reply, and readily took my orders. Seeing this, I added, "Whether he lives or dies is very doubtful, and all will depend on the nursing of the next twenty-four hours; but any way, I can tell you this, that Mr A- is ready to die. He is a true simple believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, has long rejoiced in the knowledge of the Lord, and of a present and eternal salvation; and if he departs, it will be to be with Christ for ever."

"Oh yes, sir, I am sure he's ready to die; he's a very good man," was the rejoinder.

"And I hope you are ready too, my friend," I said, turning to him, "for typhus fever is an ugly occupant of a house, and is no respecter of persons."

"Well, as to that I really can't say; in fact I don't think any one can know that he is ready in this life."

I did not stop at the moment to point out to him the contradiction of his two last speeches, — in one breath assuring me that he was sure the dying man was "ready," and in the next asserting that no one could know he was "ready" while here. It is worthy of notice, however, that this curious condition of matters is very common, when you begin to apply any special truth to a sinner's conscience. Perhaps, my reader, you feel there is safety (it is only fancied safety,) in generalities, and therefore avoid personalities and individualising. But let me assure you, that you must individualise yourself, and find out really where you are.

"Then, in plain language, you are not yet saved?" I went on.

"No; I could not take it on me to say that," was his reply.

"I see. But if you are not yet saved, have you found out that you are lost?"

"Lost? Me lost? No, God forbid! I shouldn't like to think I was lost."

"Well," I argued, "that is strange. You are not saved, and you will not own that you are lost."

"Certainly not. Of course I am not as good as I ought to be, — no one is, — but I am respectable and religious; that is, I go to church now and then; and though I can't say I'm saved, I shouldn't at

all like to think I was lost. Because a man is not saved, it surely does not follow that he is lost." At this moment the shrill whistle of a railway locomotive, about to move in the Waverley Station near by, disturbed the midnight silence of the air.

"What is that?" I exclaimed, hoping to shunt him to a subject which would just illustrate my point.

"That is the whistle of a railway engine."

"So I thought. By the way, can you tell me how many lines there are on a well-conducted railway?"

"Two, of course."

"And what do you call them?"

"The up line and the down."

"Exactly so. Now tell me, did you ever see a man with one leg in an up train and the other in the down?"

"No, of course not, and I never expect to. If a man is on the rails at all, he is either in the up, or in the down train; he can't be half in one and half in the other."

"I quite agree with you; and now I would just ask, Which line are you on? You are either an unbeliever or a believer. If still an unbeliever, you are in your sins, and steadily going on your way towards death, judgment, and the lake of fire, — the awful terminus of the down line. If, on the other hand, you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are certainly on the up line, and soon will find yourself in the glory to which the Saviour's blood brings every redeemed sinner at last. Now, be honest with yourself, which line are you on?" The appeal laid hold of his conscience, and after a moment's silence, during which I saw he was convicted, he replied, "I admit your illustration is very apt; I never thought of it in that way before, but I must see to the matter in future."

Whether the Spirit of God used this to his awakening and conversion, I cannot say, as I did not meet him again, but my patient through mercy recovered. And now, my reader, let me ask you, "Which line are you on?" It is the merest evasion of the truth, and the veriest folly, to say you cannot tell. If your lips will not utter the truth, let God's Word witness against you. Did not David say, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me?" (Psalms 51:5.) Are you other, or better, than the sweet Psalmist of Israel? But, again, he testifies, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalms 53:2-3). He convicts himself of sin in the first passage, you and me in the second. How solemn!

Hear another witness. What says Isaiah? "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). This testimony is tremendously solemn as to the natural state of every one.

Again, hear the words of our Lord Christ, and He spoke to a most respectable, religious, and morally excellent man, when He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6-7). What an inexorable "must" is that! It applies

to the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the moral and the immoral, the religious professor and the careless scoffer, to prince and peasant, peer and pauper. It embraces all, and excludes none, from the necessity of the new birth; and it is manifest that all are yet on the "down line" who have not been born again by the Word and Spirit of God.

But, further, the Lord says to Nicodemus, — "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-18). Now nothing can be plainer than this. The man who has not truly and really believed in the Son of God, who has not, in other words, been "born again," and turned to God through faith in Jesus, is "already condemned." He is not on trial, and the state of his soul an open question. The trial is over. The judge has spoken. The verdict is given. The unbeliever is "condemned already." The only thing future, is the execution of the sentence, — death; and "after this the judgment," — the lake of fire for ever, "the second death." The testimony of Scripture then, my reader, is clear as to the line you are upon, if still an unbeliever. You are already a lost sinner, and as such you are treated and addressed by God, in the gospel. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," is the glorious news which Jesus Himself first proclaimed, and which the Holy Ghost yet carries forth. As an evangelist, it is my joy to tell you this. You are lost, but Christ came for such as you. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, I beseech you, let Him save you. If He does not save you now, He must execute judgment on you in a day not far distant. Which shall it be? Will you have salvation, or judgment, from the hands of Jesus? "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Friend, I urge you, with all the energy of my soul, to open your eyes, see that you are on the down line, call a halt on the spot, turn to Jesus just now, and join that blessed company of saved sinners, who, having believed simply in the Son of God, are "not condemned," and "shall not come into condemnation," but "have everlasting life," and are consequently, through grace, on the "up line."

Just listen simply to the words of the blessed Lord, and believe what He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed [from the down line to the up] from death unto life" (John 5:24). In view thus of the Word of God, any honest soul can tell, with the greatest certainty, its real spiritual whereabouts and direction. So I beg you, my beloved reader, just look this matter full in the face. If you are not yet Christ's, do not lose a day without turning to Him. If His, through grace, seek to serve and follow Him faithfully.

Reader, "Which line are you on?"

PASSING onward, quickly passing;

Yes, but whither, whither bound? Is it to the many mansions, Where eternal rest is found?

Passing onward —

Yes, but whither, whither bound?

Passing onward, quickly passing, Nought the wheels of time can stay Sweet the thought that some are going To the realms of perfect day Passing onward Christ their Leader — Christ their way.

Passing onward, quickly passing, Time its course will quickly run Still we hear the fond entreaty Of the ever gracious One"

Come and welcome, 'Tis by Me that life is won."

10. A Bright Sunset.

A Bright Sunset.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." These familiar words fell on my ear, rapidly, and repeatedly uttered, as, at noon on Monday, December 22, 1884, I drew up at a house where I was attending a lady. Another doctor's carriage, and a cab standing at the door, made me think that something was amiss, and I was left in no doubt that something had happened, as again and again "Bless the Lord, O my soul," came from the lobby within. On the floor of that lobby, his head and snowy locks only supported by a pillow, was the speaker, the owner of the house, my aged and valued friend of many years' standing, Mr B-. I soon learned that he had gone out for a walk that morning, and had just been brought home in a cab, and a passing physician called in. The frost being keen and the cold intense, we rapidly got the old man, for he was nearly eighty-two, into a bed close at hand, and, surrounding him with hot bottles, hoped that, with other suitable measures, he might get over the deadly chill which was apparent in every member. While thus ministered to, his lips ceased not saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." This continued for a little, when he interposed, "Give me air, air, oh for air!" Fanning him briskly with one hand, I rubbed his icy cold hands with the other, which brought forth, "That's good, that's good, thank the Lord, that's fine. Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Judging that he was capable of replying to my queries, I said, "Open your eyes, Mr B-; do you know me?"

"Know you? of course I do. You are my kind friend Dr W-. You've come at the right time; the Lord sent you, I am sure, and He's taught you just what to do for me. Rub away, rub away, that's fine, and doing me good. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.' Bless Him, bless Him, 'and forget not all his benefits.'"

"Ay, that's right, we can't bless Him too heartily," I replied, "but tell me what has happened; have you had a fall?"

"No, I did not fall; I was just quietly walking over George IV. Bridge when I felt something queer at my heart, so I just slid gently to the ground, and when I came to I asked a gentleman who came to me to call a cab and bring me home, and here I am, and you're looking after me;" and "Bless the Lord, O my soul," again rang through the chamber. It was a touching and never-to-be-forgotten scene, for the joyous and praiseful spirit of the old saint was lovely to witness.

After a little while he again said, "Air, air, give me air;" and putting his hand to his heart, added, "What is this heavy weight I feel here, doctor? I feel something I never felt before, but my dear wife, just before she passed away, said she felt it. Doctor, I think I'm going to follow her. I think I'm going now, going to be with Jesus, going to see my precious Lord Jesus, who loved me and died for me. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.' I should like to say 'good-bye' to my dear children, but if I can't, never mind. I shall meet them again in glory. I'm only going a little before. The Lord is coming

soon, and then we'll meet again. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.'" His strength now began to fail, he said little more, and, as the clock struck one, he quietly passed away to be with his Lord and Saviour, whose love he had known for nearly half-a-century here, and will taste for ever on high. The worshipful departure of this dear old saint reminds one of the patriarch, of whom it is written, "By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph: and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Hebrews 11:21).

Reader, could you depart thus? I have little doubt you say, "I would like to." But let me remind you it is of no use joining company with Balaam, and saying like him, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" unless you are numbered with those whom God counts righteous now, by faith in Christ Jesus. As a man lives, so does he usually die. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

How different to what I narrated may be your end. Auld Peggie's was different. A Christian friend of mine called, and pressed Christ on her. She put down her pipe, and weighed the matter a little; then, with callous unmoved face resumed her smoking, as she slowly said, "Na, na; I've lived without Him seventy years, and I can live without Him the rest o' my days." Shortly after she was found dead in bed, the pipe broken on the floor, and her withered arms thrown above her head, as if there had been fearful conflict with some unseen foe. Will you imitate Caesar Borgia? who said, "I have provided, in the course of my life, for everything except death; and now, alas, I am to die, although entirely unprepared." A dying colonel said, "I would gladly give thirty thousand pounds to have it proved to my satisfaction that there is no such place as hell." Friend, are you going there? A wealthy manufacturer hearing of the death of an acquaintance, said, "Is he dead? It is very different with me; for my part I am so engaged in business that I could not find time to die." Scarcely were the words uttered than he fell on the floor, a corpse. Sharp work this, my reader; are you ready? You may go next, mind. A dying queen's last words were, "All my possessions for a moment of time." She had it not, and you may not have another granted to you. How solemn for an unsaved soul!

How terrible to die like Gibbon, saying, "All is dark and doubtful."

Better far be like the one whose sudden and unlooked-for end I have narrated. Another dear friend of mine passed away saying, "As I may not be able to express myself distinctly by-and-by, I wish now to state that I am in perfect peace, resting alone on the blood of Christ. O precious blood of God's Son, which cleanseth from all sin! I find this amply sufficient to enter the presence of God with. 'When I see the blood I will pass over.' Oh the precious, precious blood of Christ!"

Friend, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is God's way of salvation. You have only to believe. Works cannot save. Faith in Jesus can. Trust in Him then. Trust Him now, just now, as you read this. Delay is dangerous, nay more, it is the veritable doorway to hell. Millions are there who never meant to be, but died just before they believed the truth. They, believe it now, fast enough, when it is too late to avail them. Don't join their company, I beseech you.

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