

GRACE QUOTES

by Miscellaneous

A curated collection of quotations on grace and Scripture from various Christian authors and theologians, emphasizing doctrinal principles and spiritual truths about God's unmerited favor toward sinners.

278 Chapters

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Grace Quotes

The Golden Key! The Golden Thread!

from Octavius Winslow's, "Christ, the Alpha and Omega"

Jesus is the one great theme both of the Old Testament and the New. The whole Bible is designed to testify of Christ, "You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to Me!" In Christ the Messiah, in Jesus the Savior, in the Son of God the Redeemer, all the truths of the Bible center.

To Him all the types and shadows point!

Of Him all the prophecies give witness!

While all the glory of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, culminates at the cross of Christ.

The Bible would be an inexplicable mystery apart from Christ, who unfolds and explains it all.

He is the one, the golden Key which unlocks the divine treasury of revelation!

Until He is seen, the Bible is, in a sense, a great conundrum. But when He is found, it is a glorious revelation; every mystery opened, every enigma explained, every discrepancy harmonized, and every truth and page, sentence and word, quickened with a life and glowing with a light flowing down from the throne of the Eternal God.

Christ is the substance of the Gospel. All....

its divine doctrines,

its holy precepts,
its gracious instructions,
its precious promises,
its glorious hopes, meet, center, and
fill up their entire compass in Jesus.

He is the Alpha and the Omega of the Bible, from the
first verse in Genesis to the last verse in Revelation.

Oh, study the Scriptures of truth with a view of learning Christ.

Do not study the Bible as a mere history.

Do not read it as a mere poem.

Do not search it as a book of science.

It is all that, but infinitely more.

The Bible is the Book of Jesus!

It is a Revelation of Christ!

Christ is the golden thread
which runs through the whole!

The Old Testament predicts the New; and
the New fulfills the Old; and so both unite
in testifying, "Truly, this is the Son of God!"

Blessed Lord Jesus! I will read and study and dig
into the Scriptures to find and learn more of You!

You, Immanuel, are the fragrance of this divine box of precious
ointment.

You are the beautiful gem sparkling in this divine cabinet.

You are the Tree of life planted in the center of this divine garden.

You are the Ocean whose stream quickens and nourishes
all who draw water out of this divine well of salvation.

The Bible is all about You!

This heavenly light of truth

(John Angell James)

"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The doctrines of Scripture are facts, which involve corresponding emotions and principles of action, and must, from their very nature, if believed, be operative upon the heart and the life.

If the doctrines of Scripture . . .

exert no godly influence,

carry with them no practical weight,

exert no moral power,

they are not truly believed.

The doctrines of Scripture are at once . . .

the source of consolation, and

the means of sanctification.

The doctrines of Scripture . . .

come into the mind as knowledge,

produce peace and love in the heart,

and spread the beauties of holiness

over the character and conduct.

The doctrines of Scripture are light; and like the

rays of the sun, they sustain life at the root of

the vine, and produce fruit on its branches.

This heavenly light of truth gives . . .

spiritual vitality to the soul,

and holy conduct to the life.

"For our gospel came to you not simply with

words, but also with power, with the Holy

Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thes. 1:5

"Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth."

John 17:17

A shelf in my head?

Spurgeon, "Christ- The Power and Wisdom of God"

Before I knew the gospel I gathered up a heterogeneous mass of all kinds of knowledge from here, there, and everywhere-- a bit of chemistry, a bit of botany, a bit of astronomy, and a bit of this, that, and the other.

I put them altogether, in one great confused chaos.

When I learned the gospel, I got a shelf in my head to put every thing away upon just where it should be.

It seemed to me as if, when I had discovered Christ and him crucified, I had got the center of the system, so that I could see every other science revolving around in order.

From the earth, you know, the planets appear to move in a very irregular manner- some are progressive, retrograde, stationary, etc. But if you could get upon the sun, you would see them marching round in their constant, uniform, circular motion.

Likewise with human knowledge. Begin with any other science you like, and truth will seem to be amiss.

But if you begin with the science of Christ crucified, you will begin with the sun- you will see every other science moving around it in complete harmony.

The greatest mind in the world will be evolved by beginning at the right end.

The old saying is, "Go from nature up to nature's God."

But it is hard work going up hill.

The best thing is to go from nature's God down to nature;

and if you once get to nature's God, and believe him and love him, it is surprising how easy it is to hear music in the waves, and songs in the wild whisperings of the winds; to see God everywhere, in the stones, in the rocks, in the rippling brooks, and hear him everywhere, in the lowing of cattle, in the rolling of thunder, and in the fury of tempests.

Get Christ first, put him in the right place, and you will find him to be the wisdom of God in your own experience.

A peculiar, indescribable, invincible power

(Philpot, "The Word of Men and the Word of God")

"Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thes. 1:5

The gospel comes to some in word only. They hear the word of the gospel, the sound of truth; but it reaches the outward ear only—or if it touches the inward feelings, it is merely as the word of men. But where the Holy Spirit begins and carries on His divine and saving work, He attends the word with a peculiar, an indescribable, and yet an invincible power.

It falls as from God upon the heart. He is heard to speak in it—and in it His glorious Majesty appears to open the eyes, unstop the ears, and convey a message from His own mouth to the soul.

Some hear the gospel as the mere word of men, perhaps for years before God speaks in it with a divine power to their conscience. They thought they understood the gospel—they thought they felt it—they thought they loved it. But all this time they did not see any vital distinction between receiving it as the mere word of men, and as the word of God.

The levity, the superficiality, the emptiness stamped upon all who merely receive the gospel as the word

of men—is sufficient evidence that it never sank deep into the heart, and never took any powerful grasp upon their soul.

It therefore never brought with it any real separation from the world—never gave strength to mortify the least sin—never communicated power to escape the least snare of Satan—was never attended with a spirit of grace and prayer—never brought honesty, sincerity, and uprightness into the heart before God—never bestowed any spirituality of mind, or any loving affection toward the Lord of life and glory. It was merely the reception of truth in the same way as we receive scientific principles, or learn a language, a business, or a trade. It was all . . .

shallow,
superficial,
deceptive,
hypocritical.

But in some unexpected moment, when little looking for it, the word of God was brought into their conscience with a power never experienced before. A light shone in and through it which they never saw before . . .

a majesty,
a glory,
an authority,
an evidence

accompanied it which they never knew before. And under this light, life, and power they fell down, with the word of God sent home to their heart.

When then Christ speaks the gospel to the heart—

when He reveals Himself to the soul—when His word,
dropping as the rain and distilling as the dew, is
received in faith and love—He is embraced as the
chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely
one—He takes His seat upon the affections and
becomes enthroned in the heart as its Lord and God.

Is there life in your bosom?

Has God's power attended the work?

Is the grace of God really in your heart?

Has God spoken to your soul?

Have you heard His voice, felt its power,
and fallen under its influence?

"And we also thank God continually because,
when you received the word of God, which you
heard from us, you accepted it not as the word
of men, but as it actually is, the word of God,
which is effectually at work in you who believe."

1 Thes. 2:13

As your Biblical knowledge widens

(John Angell James, "Christian Progress" 1853)

There are many who regard an increasing acquaintance with the text of the Bible, as an evidence of growth in grace.

Ask yourselves the solemn question. In proportion as you store your minds with biblical texts and biblical ideas--are you all the while seeking to have your heart filled with biblical feelings, and your life with biblical actions?

As you grow in acquaintance with the character of God--do you reverence Him more? As your ideas brighten on the person of Christ--do you love Him more? As you become more acquainted with the perfection and spirituality of God's Word--do you delight in it more? As you see more clearly the evil of sin--do you hate it with a more intense hatred?

As your Biblical knowledge widens, do you become . . .
more profoundly humble,
more tenderly conscientious,
more gentle,
more spiritual?

Unless this is the case, you are in a fatal mistake by supposing that you are making progress in the divine life, merely because you are advancing in biblical knowledge.

Everything that was written in the past

(Anne Dutton's Letters on Spiritual Subjects)

I humbly think that the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, under Pharaoh and his task-masters, was typical of the cruel bondage of the people of God in a state of nature, under the tyranny of sin and Satan and a broken law of works.

Their deliverance from Egypt and passage through the Red Sea were typical of our deliverance from the power of darkness, and translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son at our first conversion.

Their journeys through the desolate wilderness were typical of our travels through this world of trouble.

Their Land of Promise was typical of our promised rest.

Their passage over Jordan into Canaan was typical of our of our passing from this world of sin and sorrow into the world of joy and glory as our everlasting rest.

"All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." 1 Cor. 10:11

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us." Romans 15:4

The Bible

(Henry Law, "Beacons of the Bible" 1869)

The Bible is the richest treasure of the world.

Without it the palace is a dark blank.

With it the humble cottage sparkles with celestial light.

It is the transcript of God's heart.

It tells, what human reason is weak to find.

It is pure truth without one shade of error.

It gives knowledge on all things

needful for time and for eternity.

It is a safe guide through life's entangled path.

It is a compass . . .

through shoals and rocks;

amid winds and waves;

to heaven's eternal rest.

The sage is ignorant without it.

The peasant learns from it salvation's road.

It is a solace for every hour.

It is a companion always ready to converse.

It cheers when other comforts fail.

It is arrayed in every charm for intellect.

It never wearies.

It is always fresh.

Its oldest truths cannot grow old.

Its readers become more wise; more holy.

Other books may puzzle and corrupt. The

Bible is from heaven, and leads to heaven.

It enters the heart with purifying grace.

The more you search the Bible, the more your
minds will wonder, and your hearts will love.

Read it as literally true. Then no human
philosophy will beguile you.

Ponder its characters. You will find on
them the intrinsic stamp of truth.

Human guidance?

(from Winslow's, "The Fragrance of Christ's Name")

We have need to be on our watch against the powerful influence of spiritual mentors, lest, fascinated by the fame of some popular leader, we become the willing dupes of a childish superstition, or the blind followers of a fatal error.

Do not take your views of Divine truth from man; draw them primarily from God's Word. Do not study the Bible through your theological system, but let your system be taken from, and faithfully weighed with, the Bible. Our theological system must not be allowed to give its complexion to, or to be the interpreter of, revealed truth. But, on the contrary, God's Word is to suggest and mold and tint all our thoughts and opinions and systems.

We must not set the sun by our watch; but our watch by the sun. In other words, we must not attempt to make God's Word dovetail with our creed, but must test every doctrine we hold, every opinion we receive, every principle we maintain, the hope we cherish, by the unerring standard of revealed truth. This will give a Divine and proper complexion to our views.

If we receive the light of the sun through a tinted lens, the light will necessarily reflect the hue of the medium through which it passes. So, if we receive the light of God's Word through any theological system whatever, it will necessarily reflect the error and imperfection, if such there be, of that system. And thus we shall fail to receive the teaching of God as it flows pure and simple from His Word, as light flows from the sun, and as streams from the fountain.

The Bible is our rule of faith and our only and ultimate appeal. By the law and the testimony let every doctrine, and system, and hope for eternity be tried.

Do not be, then, carried away by the learning, the influence, or even the piety attaching to a popular name. Allow no human leader the mastery of your mind and conscience.

Yield yourself meekly and obediently to the authority and teaching of Christ, accepting human guidance only so far as it comes with a "thus says the Lord" as its divine endorsement.

Our only safeguard in a matter of such infinite moment as our future well being, is God's pure Word; our only secure place, the feet of the Savior. Sitting there as His lowly disciple, the Holy Spirit will lead our minds into the truth, even "the truth as it is in Jesus," as it emanates from Jesus, as it speaks of Jesus, as it strengthens our faith in, and inspires our love to, Jesus, and as it prepares us to go and be with Jesus forever.

The one, precious, all absorbing theme!

from "The Precious Things of God" by Octavius Winslow

The Word of God must ever be transcendently precious to the believer. The Bible is, from its commencement to its close, a record of the Lord Jesus. Around Him the divine and glorious Word centers; all its wondrous types, prophecies, and facts gather. His Promise and Foreshadowing, His holy Incarnation, Nativity, and Baptism, His Obedience and Passion, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection, His Ascension to heaven, His Second Coming to judge the world, are the grand and touching, the sublime and tender, the priceless and precious truths interwoven with the whole texture of the Bible, to which the Two Witnesses of Revelation, the Old and the New Testaments bear their harmonious and solemn testimony.

Beloved, let this be the one and chief object in your study of the Bible—the knowledge of Jesus.

The Bible is not a history, a book of science, or a poem; it is a record of Christ. Study it to know more of Him, His nature, His love, His work. With the magnanimous Paul, "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord."

Then will God's Word become increasingly

precious to your soul, and its truths unfold.

In every page you will,
trace the history of Jesus,
see the glory of Jesus,
admire the work of Jesus,
learn the love of Jesus, and
hear the voice of Jesus.

The whole volume will be redolent of His
name, and luminous with His beauty.

Oh, what is the Bible to us apart from its
revelation of a Savior! Is there not great
danger of studying it merely intellectually
and scientifically, of reveling among its
literary beauties and its grandeur, blind
to its true value, and without any desire
to know that precious Savior who died for
sinners, that Divine Redeemer who
purchased the ransom of His Church
with His own blood; that Friend who
loves us; that Brother who sympathizes
with us, that enthroned High Priest who
intercedes for us within the veil?

Do we study the "Word of Christ" spiritually
and honestly, as those whose souls hunger
and thirst for this the bread and water of life?

Do we search it diligently and earnestly as
for hidden treasure; treasure beyond all price?

Can we say with David, "O how love I your
law! it is my meditation all the day."

Do we read it with a child like mind, receive it with a believing heart, bow to its teaching with reverence of soul, and receive its decisions in all questions of faith and practice as decisive and ultimate?

In a word, do we search the Scriptures humbly, prayerfully, depending upon the guidance of the Spirit, to find Jesus in them?

Of these Scriptures He is the Alpha and the Omega, the substance, the sweetness, the glory, the one, precious, all absorbing theme. Yes, Lord! Your word is precious to our souls, because it reveals to us Your glory, and tells us of Your love!

What a treasure!

from Thomas Reade's, "Christian Experience"

What a treasure is the Word of God!

Here we have....

Light, to dissipate our darkness;

Truth, to guide us amid the mazes of error;

Consolations, to gladden us in a world of misery.

The Bible is....

the Revelation of our Father's love;

the Expression of Jehovah's grace to sinners;

the Depository of heavenly blessings;

the Charter of our highest privileges;

the Religion of true Christians;

the Glory of our churches;

the Poor Man's Friend.

Everything sublime in conception, and tender in expression, it is to be found in the sacred Scriptures.

The Eternal Jehovah has there revealed Himself as....

clothed with majesty and honor;

glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;

of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;

in whose sight the heavens are not clean.

In the sacred Scriptures, he has manifested forth his glory, as mighty to save; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

In that blessed volume, Mercy is seen to arrest the arm of Justice, and all the tenderness of the Father is displayed in the person of the Son.

Love breathes throughout its sacred pages.

The believer's rule of life

(J. C. Philpot, "The Precepts of the Word of God")

Were there no precepts in the New Testament, we would be without an inspired rule of life, without an authoritative guide for our walk and conduct before the Church and the world. We rightly discard and reject the 'law of Moses' as the believer's rule of life.

What, then, is our rule? Are we a set of lawless wretches who may live as we desire, according to the libelous charge of the enemies of truth? God forbid! We have a divine, authoritative rule of life, a code of directions of the amplest, fullest, minutest character, intended and sufficient to regulate and control every thought, word, and action of our lives; and all flowing from the eternal wisdom and will of the Father, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son, and inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit.

When, then, it is thrown in our teeth that, by discarding the 'law of Moses' as our rule of life, we prove ourselves licentious, lawless Antinomians; this is our answer, and let God and His word decide whether it be not a sufficient one. We have a rule of life as far exceeding the 'law of Moses' as the new covenant of grace and truth--exceeds and outshines the old covenant of works; and as much as the ministration of the Spirit, of life, and of righteousness--excels in glory the ministration of the letter, of death, and of condemnation. (2 Corinthians 3:6-11)

The gospel, not the Mosaic law, is the believer's rule of life.

In a word, the precepts of the New Testament, in all their

fullness, minuteness, and comprehensiveness, are the believer's rule of life.

Most of the old Puritan and Reformed writers have entered largely and fully into the preceptive parts of the word of God.

But as they hold the Mosaic law as the believer's rule of life, their views were necessarily legal, confused and imperfect.

Philpot's "The Precepts of the Word of God" is the most balanced and Biblical treatment on the believer's rule of life that we have ever read. Many 'Reformed' people tend to hold legalistic views.

Many 'Sovereign Grace' people tend to hold antinomian views.

"The Precepts of the Word of God" is must reading for all pastors.

The love of the truth

(J. C. Philpot, "The Valley of Achor" 1861)

"They perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." 2 Thess. 2:10

There is a receiving of 'the truth', and a receiving of 'the love of the truth'. These two things widely differ.

To receive the truth will not necessarily save; for many who receive the truth, never receive 'the love of the truth'.

Professors by thousands receive the truth into their judgment, and adopt the plan of salvation as their creed; but are neither saved nor sanctified thereby. But to receive 'the love of the truth' by Jesus being made sweet and precious to the soul, is to receive salvation itself.

"Yes, He is very precious to you who believe." 1 Peter 2:7

Wrought with divine power

(J. C. Philpot, "The Veil Taken Away" 1844)

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words,
but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and
with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Most men's religion is nothing else but

'a round of forms' . . .

some have their 'doings',

some have their 'doctrines',

and others have their 'duties'.

And when the one has performed his doings,
the other learned his doctrines, and the third
discharged his duties—why, he is as good a
Christian, he thinks, as anybody. While all the
time, the poor deceived creature is thoroughly
ignorant of the kingdom of God, which stands
not in simply in word—but in power.

But as the veil of ignorance is taken off the heart,
we begin to see and feel that there is a power in
vital godliness—a reality in the teachings of the
Spirit—that religion is not to be put on and put
off as a man puts on and off his Sunday clothes.

Where vital godliness is wrought with divine power
in a man's heart, and preached by the Holy Spirit into
his conscience—it mingles, daily and often hourly,
with his thoughts—entwines itself with his feelings
—and becomes the very food and drink of his soul.

Now when a man comes to this spot—to see and feel what a reality there is in the things of God made manifest in the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit—it effectually takes him out of dead churches, cuts him off from false ministers, winnows the chaff from the wheat, and brings him into close communion with the broken-hearted family of God.

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5

All doctrine, all experience, all precept

(J. C. Philpot, "The Precepts of the Word of God")

All doctrine, all experience, all precept center, as one grand harmonious whole, in the glorious Person of the Son of God. From Him they all come; to Him they all flow.

Severed from Him . . .

doctrine is seen to be but a withered branch;

experience but a delusive dream;

precept but a legal service.

But His light enlightening, His life quickening, His power attending the word of His grace--doctrine is seen to be no longer doctrine dry and dead, but glorious truth; experience to be not a mere matter of fluctuating feeling, but a blessed reality, as the very kingdom of God set up with a divine power in the heart; and obedience not a legal duty, but a high, holy, and acceptable service.

The power of divine teaching

(J. C. Philpot "Meditations on Ephesians")

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thes. 1:5

The main reason why men boggle to understanding the Scriptures, is from lack of an experience of the truths set forth in them. They lack the right key which fits this intricate lock, and therefore uselessly poke at it with false keys, which, though they cannot spoil the lock, plainly show the ignorance of the workmen.

Unless, by the power of divine teaching, we can enter in some good measure spiritually and experimentally into the grand and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, we can neither see their peculiar beauty, nor feel their peculiar sweetness and blessedness.

The 'Illuminated' Bible!

From Spurgeon's, "The Holy Ghost- the Great Teacher"

Do any of you have an 'illuminated' Bible at home?

"No," says one, "I have a morocco Bible; I have a Polyglot Bible; I have a marginal reference Bible."

Ah! that is all very well, but have you an illuminated Bible?

"Yes, I have a large family Bible with pictures in it."

There is a picture of John the Baptist baptizing Christ by pouring water on his head, and many other nonsensical things; but that is not what I mean: have you an illuminated Bible?

"Yes, I have a Bible with splendid engravings in it."

Yes; I know you may have; but have you an illuminated Bible?

"I don't understand what you mean by an illuminated Bible."

Well, it is the Christian man who has an illuminated Bible.

He does not buy it illuminated originally, but when he reads it

"A glory gilds the sacred page,

Majestic like the sun

Which gives a light to every page,

-It gives, but burrows none."

There is nothing like reading an illuminated Bible, beloved.

You may read the Bible to all eternity, and never learn anything by it, unless it is illuminated by the Spirit; and then the words shine forth like stars!

The book seems made of gold leaf; every single letter glitters like a diamond.

Oh, it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Spirit!

Heavenly dew

(J. C. Philpot, "The Doctrine which Drops as the Rain, and the Speech which Distills as the Dew")

"My words descend like dew." Deuteronomy 32:2

The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall.

Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head.

Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression . . .

softening the heart when hard,

refreshing it when dry,

melting it when obdurate,

secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is neither withers

up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace.

"May God give you the dew of heaven." Genesis 27:28

Hidden treasure!

(J. C. Philpot, "Meditations on the Holy Spirit")

"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long!" Psalm 119:97

"Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold!" Psalm 119:127

"Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight!" Psalm 119:111

To a spiritual mind, sweet and soul-rewarding is the searching of the Word as for hidden treasure.

No sweeter, no better employment can engage heart and hands than, in the spirit . . .

of prayer and meditation,

of separation from the world,

of holy fear,

of a desire to know the will of God and do it,

of humility, simplicity, and godly sincerity,

to seek to enter into those heavenly mysteries which

are stored up in the Scriptures; and this, not to furnish

the head with notions, but to feed the soul with the

bread of life!

Truth, received in the love and power of it . . .

informs and establishes the judgment,

softens and melts the heart,

warms and draws upward the affections,

makes and keeps the conscience alive and tender,

is the food of faith,

is the strength of hope,

is the mainspring of love.

"My child, listen to Me and treasure My instructions.

Search for them as you would for lost money or

hidden treasure!" Proverbs 2:1,4

Fly to the Word of God!

from "The Preciousness of God's Word" by Octavius Winslow

As a system of 'consolation' Christianity has no equal. No other religion in the wide world touches the hidden springs of the soul, or reaches the lowest depths of human sorrow, but the religion of Christ.

When your hearts have been overwhelmed, when adversity has wrapped you within its gloomy pall, when the broken billows of grief have swollen and surged around your soul, how have you fled to the Scriptures of truth for succor and support, for guidance and comfort! Nor have you repaired to them in vain. "The God of all comfort" is He who speaks in this Word, and there is no word of comfort like that which He speaks.

The adaptation of His truth to the varied, the peculiar and personal trials and sorrows of His Church, is one of the strongest proofs of its divinity. Take to the Word of God whatever sorrow you may, go with whatever mental beclouding, with whatever spirit sadness, with whatever heart grief; whatever be its character, its complexion, its depth unsurpassed in the history of human sorrow, there is consolation and support in the Word of God for your mind.

God will not leave you in trouble, but will sustain you in it, will bring you out of, and sanctify you by it, to the endless glory and praise of His great and precious name!

Christian mourner, let me once more direct your eye too dimmed perhaps by tears to behold this divine source of true, unfailing comfort. God's Word is the book of the afflicted. Written to unfold the wondrous history of the "Man of Sorrows," it would seem to have been equally written for you, O child of grief! God speaks to your sad and sorrowing heart from every page of this sacred volume, with words of comfort, loving, gentle, and persuasive as a mother's. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

The Bible is the opening of the heart of God. It is God's heart unveiled, each throb inviting the mourner, the poor in spirit, the widow, the fatherless, the bereaved, the persecuted, the sufferer, yes, every child of affliction and grief to the asylum and sympathy, the protection and soothing of His heart. Oh, thank God for the comfort and consolation of the Scripture! Open it with what sorrow and burden and perplexity you may, be it the guilt of sin, the pressure of trial, or the corrodings of sorrow, it speaks to the heart such words of comfort as God only could speak.

Have you ever borne your grief to God's Word, especially to the experimental Psalms of David, and not felt that it was written for that particular sorrow? You have found your grief more accurately portrayed, your state of mind more truly described, and your case more exactly and fully met, probably in a single history, chapter, or verse, than in all the human treatises that the pen of man ever wrote.

Fly to the Word of God, then, in every sorrow! You will know more of the mind and heart of God than you, perhaps, ever learned in all the schools before. Draw, then, O child of sorrow, your

consolation from God's Word. Oh, clasp this precious Word of comfort to your sorrowful heart, and exclaim, "It is mine! The Jesus of whom it speaks is mine, the salvation it reveals is mine, the promises it contains are mine, the heaven it unveils is mine, and all the consolation, comfort, and sympathy which wells up from these hidden springs, is MINE."

Beware of light reading!

from Horatius Bonar's book, "FOLLOW THE LAMB"

Beware of light reading!

Shun novels; they are the literary curse of the age. If you are a parent, keep novels out of the way of your children. But whether you are a parent or not, neither read them yourself, nor set an example of novel reading to others. Don't let novels lie on your table, or be seen in your hand. This light reading has done deep injury to many a young man and woman.

The light literature of the day is working a world of harm; vitiating the taste of the young, enervating their minds, unfitting them for life's plain work, eating out their love of the Bible, teaching them a false morality, and creating in the soul an unreal standard of truth, and beauty, and love.

Let your reading be always select; and whatever you read, begin with seeking God's blessing on it.

But see that your relish for the Bible be above every other enjoyment, and the moment you begin to feel greater relish for any other book, lay it down till you have sought deliverance from such a snare, and obtained from the Holy Spirit

an intenser relish, a keener appetite for the
Word of God.

A hundred doctrines floating in the head

(J. C. Philpot)

By five minutes real communion with the Lord . . .

we learn more,

we know more,

we receive more,

we feel more, and

we experience more

than by a thousand years of merely studying

the Scriptures, or using external forms, rites,

and ceremonies.

One truth written by the Spirit in the heart,

will bring forth more fruit in the life, than

a hundred doctrines floating in the head.

Read as an act of worship

(by Joel Beeke)

Read as an act of worship. Read to be elevated into the great truths of God. Be selective about what you read, however. Measure all your reading against the touchstone of the Scripture. So much of today's literature is froth. Time is too precious to waste on nonsense. Read more for eternity than time, more for spiritual growth than professional advancement.

Before picking up a book, ask yourself--"Would Christ approve of this book? Will it increase my love for the Word of God, help me conquer sin, offer abiding wisdom, prepare me for the life to come? Or could I better spend time reading another book?"

Of what value is all our knowledge of truth?

(Octavius Winslow, "Evening Thoughts")

Of what value is all our knowledge of truth . . .

if it does not lead us to Jesus;

if it does not expand our views of His glory;

if it does not conform our minds to His image;

if it does not increase our love to Him,

if it does not quicken our obedience to His commands,

if it does not quicken our zeal for His cause;

if it does not mature us, by a progressive holiness,

for the enjoyment of His beatific presence?

Extract the honey from the Word!

(Winslow, "Retirement, The School and Discipline of Spiritual Life")

The frivolous and frothy literature of the day, of which, alas! the press is so prolific, is exerting a most baneful influence upon the spiritual life of many Christian professors.

In numberless cases the exaggerated fiction; the sensational story; the high wrought romance; is supplanting those works contributed by the most highly cultivated, spiritual minds.

The effect of this upon the Christianity of the age, must be deteriorating and disastrous in the extreme.

Hence the sickly life exhibited by many religious professors!

The prevailing taste for this vapid, worldly literature lowers the intellectual powers of the mind, and impairs the spiritual powers of the soul.

What, then, is the great antidote to this far circulating moral poison?

We unhesitatingly answer; the private and devout study of God's word. We believe that the Bible can only be spiritually and experimentally understood as the student retreats from the arena of religious controversy, into the privacy of his chamber, and there, as upon his knees, invoking

the aid and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

It is not always in the crowd, and amid the voices of conflicting interpreters, or even from the pulpit, that the literal and spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is understood; but, when we withdraw into the privacy of the closet, or the solitude of the sick chamber, He explains to us, and causes us to understand, the mind of the Spirit in the Word as at no other time and in no other way.

And, oh! in the quietude of that separation; in the stillness of that hour; you may have closer communion with God; know more of Christ and understand more of the truth, than at any previous period of your spiritual life! "And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples."

Oh, it is thus when sequestered from man, and only with God, we excavate the gold and extract the honey from the Word!

Babylonian books!

by Spurgeon

To forego your Bible reading for the perusal even of good books would soon bring a conscious descending of the soul.

If you read the 'Babylonian books' of the present day, you will catch their spirit, and it is a foreign one, which will draw you aside from the Lord your God.

You may also get great harm from divines in whom there is much pretence of the Jerusalem dialect, but their speech is half of Ashdod: these will confuse your mind and defile your faith.

It may happen that a book which is upon the whole excellent, which has little taint about it, may do you more mischief than a thoroughly bad one.

Be careful; for works of this kind come forth from the press like clouds of locusts. Scarcely can you find in these days a book which is quite free from the modern leaven, and the least particle of it ferments until it produces the wildest error. In reading books of the new order, though no palpable falsehood may appear, you are conscious of a twist being given you, and of a sinking in the tone of your spirit; therefore be on your guard.

But with your Bible you may always feel at ease; there every breath from every quarter brings life and health. If you keep close to the inspired book, you can suffer no harm; say rather you are at the fountain-head of all moral and spiritual good. This is fit food for men of God: this is the bread which nourishes the highest life.

Shut up!

Thomas Reade, "Christian Experience")

They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies.

Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what He has to say."

Isaiah 30:10-11

O what a deluge of evil has sin brought upon the earth!

The heart of man naturally revolts against the faithful exposure of its enormities.

Our pride fondly shelters itself under the 'dignity of human nature'.

We cannot bear to be told how wicked we are, how very far gone, even as far as possible, from original righteousness.

But the Bible is no flatterer!

It is a faithful mirror, in which we may clearly see, (if we have eyes to see) our real state, divested of all paint and covering.

This offends our pride.

We cannot endure the sight!

Therefore we turn away with disgust from this Holy Book, and consider it our enemy, because it tells us the truth.

They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies.

Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what He has to say."

Isaiah 30:10-11

More scarce and precious than a bar of gold!

(adapted from Octavius Winslow's, "The Redeemer,
the Revelation of the Father's Glory" October, 1844)

"The time is surely coming," says the Sovereign Lord,
"when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine
of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord."

Amos 8:11

Already has this famine of the true word of God commenced!

How few, forming their ministry upon the apostolic
model, can affirm with Paul, "My speech and my
preaching are not with enticing words of man's wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power!"

How few, disdain artificial embellishment, and
scorning the applause of men won by a vain show
of intellect and eloquence, preach that simple truth
of which Jesus is the Author, the Substance, the
Glory, the Power, and the End; purely, boldly,
faithfully, affectionately, uncompromisingly!

How few who honestly and heartily desire to lift up
their Lord and Master; themselves lost behind the
glory of His person and the splendors of His cross!

How sadly, how painfully, is the Lord Jesus Christ
kept in the background! How is His glory obscured,
His beauty veiled, His honor withheld!

"The time will come, when a faithful minister
of the Gospel will be more scarce and precious
than a bar of gold!" John Owen

"The time is surely coming," says the Sovereign Lord,
"when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine
of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord."

Amos 8:11

The light, frivolous, frothy literature of the day?

(from "The Preciousness of God's Word" by Octavius Winslow)

Christian, guard against the light, frivolous, frothy literature of the day. It will lessen your conviction of what is true; it will depreciate the value of what is divine; it will impair your taste for what is spiritual; and it will bring poverty, barrenness, and death into your soul.

God speaks to you from every paragraph and sentence of this Holy Book. It is His voice that we hear, His signature that we behold, His ineffable glory, which, the more it is viewed in this bright mirror, may the more powerfully command our wonder and praise.

Oh that power might come down upon us from the Spirit of truth and grace, and beams from the Sun of righteousness break in upon our minds as we contemplate the intrinsic glories of the Bible! Let the truth and weight of these revelations sink deep into your ears.

Christian, you should have a thousand fold deeper interest in the Bible than in any other, or all other books. This Book offers to you that which most you need, that which is infinitely more to you than all other things; glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.

We cannot but look upon the prevailing indifference with which the Word of God is regarded, as one of

the evils over which we are loudly called to mourn.

You send the Bible to the ignorant and destitute, you carry it to every cottage and waft it to every country, and thanks to God that you do so. But to what extent is it studied in your churches, read in your families, taught to your children?

There is no surer evidence of living without God, than living without intimate communion with the Bible.

The Bible is inactive, inoperative; a mere dead letter?

Winslow, "The Holy Spirit Glorifying the Redeemer"

"because our gospel came to you not simply
with words, but also with power, with the Holy
Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thes. 1:5

Unaccompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, the
Bible is inactive, inoperative; a mere dead letter!

Apart from the Spirit, it cannot quicken, nor sanctify,
nor comfort. It may be read constantly, and searched
deeply, and known accurately, and understood partially,
and quoted appropriately. Yet, left to its own unassisted
power, 'it comes but in word only', producing no
hallowing, no abiding, no saving results.

It has an influence over the life

(J. C. Philpot, "The Precepts of the Word of God")

"When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which effectually works in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Where God's word effectually works in the heart, it has an influence over the life. It . . .

separates from the world and the spirit of it;

keeps the consciences alive and tender in the fear of God;

produces uprightness and integrity of conduct;

extends its influence to the various relationships of life;

subdues pride, covetousness, and selfishness;

softens and meekens the spirit;

gives tender feelings and gracious affections;

fosters prayer, meditation, and spirituality of mind; and

makes itself manifest in the life, walk, and conversation.

The best sermons?

(adapted from Spurgeon's sermon, "Christ the Glory of His People" #826. Luke 2:32.

The best sermons are the sermons which are most full of Christ.

A sermon without Christ...

it is an awful, a horrible thing;

it is an empty well;

it is a cloud without rain;

it is a tree twice dead, plucked by the roots.

It is an abominable thing to give men stones for bread, and scorpions for eggs, and yet they do so who preach not Jesus.

A sermon without Christ! As well talk of a loaf of bread without any flour in it.

How can it feed the soul?

Men die and perish because Christ is not there, and yet His glorious gospel is the easiest thing to preach, and the sweetest thing to preach; there is most variety in it, there is more attractiveness in it than in all the world besides!

The study of the Bible cannot save you!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"Help for Seekers of the Light" #884. Is. 59:9.

True salvation is not to be found through the mere reception of any creed, however true or scriptural.

Mere 'head notion' is not the road to heaven.

"You must be born again," means a great deal more than that you must believe certain dogmas.

The study of the Bible cannot save you!

You must press beyond this; you must come to the living, personal Christ, or else your acceptance of the soundest creed cannot avail for the salvation of your soul.

Salvation lies in Jesus only!

"You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to Me so that I can give you this eternal life." John 5:39-40

This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?

(J. C. Ryle, "The Gospel of John")

"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

John 6:60

Murmurs and complaints of this kind are very common. It must never surprise us to hear them.

They have been, they are, they will be, as long as the world stands.

To some Christ's sayings appear hard to understand.

To others they appear hard to believe. And to others, harder still to obey.

It is just one of the many ways in which the natural corruption of man shows itself. So long as the heart is naturally . . .

proud,

worldly,

unbelieving, and

fond of self-indulgence and sin,

so long there will never be lacking people who will

say of Christian doctrines and precepts, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

Fallen man, in interpreting the Bible, has an unhappy aptitude for turning food into poison.

There is a melancholic anxiety in fallen man to put a carnal sense on Scriptural expressions, wherever he possibly can.

He struggles hard to make religion a matter . . .

of forms and ceremonies;
of doing and performing;
of sacraments and ordinances;
of sense and of sight.

He secretly dislikes that system of Christianity which makes the state of the heart the principal thing.

There is a tendency in many minds to attach an excessive importance to the outward and visible parts of religion. They seem to think that the sum and substance of Christianity consists in public ceremonies and forms, in appeals to the eye and ear, and bodily excitement.

A sweet power

(Cudworth, 1647)

"Speaking the truth in love." Ephes. 4:15

When we would convince men of any error by the strength of truth, let us additionally pour the sweet balm of love upon their heads. Truth and love are two of the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of truth, and the silken cords of love, twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet power, whether they will or not.

Let us take heed we do not sometimes call that 'zeal for God and His gospel' which is nothing else but our own tempestuous and stormy passion.

True zeal is a sweet, heavenly, and gentle flame, which makes us active for God--but always within the sphere of love. It never calls for fire from heaven to consume those who differ a little from us. It strives to save the soul--but hurts not the body.

True zeal is a loving thing, and makes us always active to edification, and not to destruction.

God's promises!

from Spurgeon's sermon, "Three Precious Things" #931

"...He has given us His very great and precious promises..."

2 Peter 1:4

God's promises are precious because they tell of exceeding great and precious things. We have promises in the Bible which time would fail us to repeat, which for breadth and length are immeasurable. They deal with every great thing which the soul can need:

promises of pardoned sin,

promises of sanctification,

promises of teaching,

promises of guidance,

promises of upholding,

promises of ennobling,

promises of progress,

promises of consolation, and

promises of perfection.

In this blessed book you have....

promises of the daily bread of earth;

promises of the bread of life from heaven;

promises for time;

promises for eternity.

You have so many promises, that all the conditions and positions of the believer are met. I sometimes liken the promises to the locksmith's great bunch of keys, which he brings

when you have lost the key of your treasure chest,
and cannot unlock it. He feels pretty sure that out
of all the keys upon the ring some one or other
will fit, and he tries them with patient industry.

At last! yes! that is it, he has moved the bolt,
and you can get at your treasures!

There is always a promise in the volume of
inspiration suitable to your present case.

Make the Lord's promises your delight and your
counselors, and they will befriend you at every turn.

Search the Scriptures, and you shall meet with a
promise which will be so applicable to you as to
appear to have been written after your trouble
had occurred! So exactly will it apply, that you
will be compelled to marvel at the wonderful
tenderness and suitability of it.

As if the tailor had measured you from head to foot,
so exactly shall the garment of the promise befit you.

The promises are precious in themselves....

from their suitability to us,

from their coming from God,

from their being immutable,

from their being sure of performance, and

from their containing wrapped up within themselves

all that the children of God can ever need.

"...He has given us His very great and precious promises..."

2 Peter 1:4

Why is it there is so much error in the Church of God?

From Winslow's, "Learning of Jesus"

The only authoritative Teacher in the Church of God, the only true Prophet, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is it there is so much darkness and crudeness in the books we read, and in the sermons we hear?

Why is it that we see so much ignorance and obscurity in setting forth the truth of God?

Why is it there is so much error in the Church of God?

It is because men will not sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. Men would rather learn of their fellow men than of the 'God man'.

They prefer human writings to the Divine.

They prefer the school of man, to the school of God.

And this is one reason why there is so much false doctrine, the teaching that causes to err, both from the pulpit and from the press.

We may be carried away by great learning, brilliant genius, and apparently profound piety; but if we place ourselves at the feet of Jesus as a lowly disciple, and there receive our views of truth, we shall then understand those profound mysteries of God's revealed Word, which are hidden from the worldly wise and prudent, but revealed to those who become learners of Christ.

"Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:

and you shall find rest for your souls." Matthew 9:29

The dark pit of ignorance!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"The Sinner's End" #486. Psalm 73:17,18

Lack of understanding has destroyed many.

The dark pit of ignorance

has engulfed its thousands!

Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able seriously to wound.

Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord.

Private devotions!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"A Song at the Well-head" No. 776. Num. 21:16-18

You are retired for your private devotions; you have opened the Bible, and you begin to read.

Now, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter. Some people thoughtlessly read through two or three chapters- stupid people for doing such a thing!

It is always better to read a little and digest it, than it is to read much and then think you have done a good thing by merely reading the letter of the word.

For you might as well read the alphabet backwards and forwards, as read a chapter of Scripture, unless you meditate upon it, and seek to comprehend its meaning.

Merely to read words is nothing: the letter kills.

The business of the believer with his Bible open is to pray, "Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of your word, while it lies open before me; apply your word with power to my soul, threatening or promise, doctrine or precept, whatever it may be; lead me into the soul and marrow of your word."

Also, it is not the form of prayer, but the spirit of prayer that shall truly benefit your souls.

That prayer has not benefited you,
which is not the prayer of the soul.

You have need to say, "Lord, give me the
spirit of prayer; now help me to feel my
need deeply, to perceive your promises
clearly, and to exercise faith upon them."

In your private devotions, strive after vital
godliness, real soul-work, the life-giving
operation of the Spirit of God in your hearts.

Heads & Legs!

from Spurgeon's sermon, "Faith Versus Sight" No. 677.

2 Cor. 5:7. "We walk by faith..."

Oh! I wish that some Christians would pay a little attention to their legs, instead of paying it all to their heads!

When children's heads grow too fast it is a sign of disease, and they get the rickets, or water on the brain.

So, there are some very sound brethren, who seem to me to have got some kind of disease, and when they try to walk, they straightway make a tumble of it, because they have paid so much attention to perplexing doctrinal views, instead of looking, as they ought to have done, to the practical part of Christianity.

By all means let us have doctrine, but by all means let us have precept too. By all means let us have inward experience, but by all means let us also have outward "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord."

Thus Says the Lord!

from Spurgeon's sermon, "Thus Says the Lord" Ezekiel 11:5

"Thus says the Lord" is the only authority in God's Church.

The faintest whisper of Jehovah's voice should fill us with solemn awe, and command the deepest obedience of our souls.

Brethren, how careful should we be that we do not set up in God's church anything in opposition to his Word, that we do not permit the teachings of a creature to usurp the honor due to the Lord alone.

"Thus says antiquity."

"Thus says authority."

"Thus says learning."

"Thus says experience."

-these are but idol-gods which defile the church of God!

Be it yours and mine as bold warriors to dash them in pieces without mercy, seeing that they usurp the place of the Word of God.

"Thus says the Lord," -this is the motto of our standard; the war-cry of our spiritual conflict; the sword with which we hope yet to smite through the loins of the mighty who rise up against God's truth.

"Thus says the Lord God." This is the trowel, and this the hammer of God's builders; this the trumpet of his watchmen and the sword of his warriors.

Woe to the man who comes in any other name!

If we, or an angel from heaven, shall preach unto you anything but a "Thus says the Lord," no matter what our character or standing, give no heed to us, but cleave unto the truth as it is in Jesus.

To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us.

That test which we demand to be exercised upon others we cheerfully consent to be exercised upon ourselves, praying that we may have grace to forsake our errors as we would have other men forsake theirs.

We will listen to the opinions of great men with the respect which they deserve as men, but having so done, we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the Church of God, for there nothing has any authority, but "Thus says the Lord of hosts."

Yes, if you shall bring us the concurrent consent of all tradition- if you shall quote precedents venerable with fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries of antiquity, we burn the whole as so much worthless lumber, unless you put your finger upon the passage of Holy Writ which warrants the matter to be of God.

To the true Church of God the only question is this, is there "Thus says the Lord" for it? And if divine authority be not forthcoming, faithful men thrust forth the intruder as the cunning craftiness of men.

Let us use much of Scripture, much of the pure silver of sacred revelation, and no human alloy.

"What is the chaff to the wheat, says the Lord?"

Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler by opposing his "Thus says the Lord." Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall it shall grind him to powder, and whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken to his own lasting damage.

O! my brethren, I would that we trembled and stood more in awe

of God's Word. I fear that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion, but remember that opinion cannot govern in God's house.

God's Word, not man's opinion, claims your allegiance.

O for a stern integrity that will hold the Word and will never depart from it, come what may.

How to understand Scripture!

from Spurgeon's sermon, "The Golden Key of Prayer"

(This gem is primarily for anyone who teaches the bible)

John saw a book in the right hand of him that sat on the throne -- a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open or to look thereon. What did John do? The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open the book; but it is written first before the book was opened, "I wept much." Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Brethren in the ministry, you who are teachers in the Sunday school, and all of you who are learners in the college of Christ Jesus, I beg you remember that prayer is your best means of study!

like Daniel you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after that you have wept much.

"Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up the voice for understanding; if you do you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone breaker usually goes down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, too, and there is not a stony doctrine in Scripture which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith.

To have prayed well is to have studied well.

You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer.

Thoughts and reasoning may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into truth; but prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure that is hidden therein for those who can force their way to reach it.

Take care that you work with the mighty tool of prayer, and nothing can stand against you.

Sound theologians!

from Spurgeon's, "Plain Words with the Careless"

No. 778 Luke 8:28.

A man may know a great deal about true religion, and yet be a total stranger to it.

He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and yet he may be possessed of a devil.

Mere knowledge does nothing for us but puff us up.

We may know, and know, and know, and so increase our responsibility, without bringing us at all into a state of salvation.

Beware of resting in head-knowledge.

Beware of relying upon orthodoxy, for without love to Christ, with all your correctness of doctrine, you will be a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

It is well to be sound in the faith, but the soundness must be in the heart as well as in the head.

There is as ready a way to destruction by the road of orthodoxy as by the paths of heterodoxy.

Hell has thousands in it who were never heretics.

Remember that the devils "believe and tremble."

There are no sounder theologians than devils, and yet their conduct is not affected by what they believe, and consequently they still remain at enmity to the Most High God. A mere

head-believer is on a par therefore with fallen angels, and he will have his portion with them forever unless grace shall change his heart.

Biblical knowledge

"Reader, remember this: if your biblical knowledge does not now affect your heart, it will at last, with a witness, afflict your heart.

If it does not now endear Christ to you, it will at last provoke Christ the more against you.

If it does not make all the things of Christ to be very precious in your eyes, it will at last make you the more vile in Christ's eyes."

-Thomas Brooks

Darkness of ignorance, dungeons of falsehood, chains of superstition!

from Spurgeon's, "WHAT GOD CANNOT DO!"

Truth once reigned supreme upon our globe, and
then earth was Paradise. Man knew no sorrow
while he was ignorant of falsehood.

The Father of Lies invaded the garden of bliss,
and with one foul lie he blighted Eden into a
wilderness, and made man a traitor to his God.

Cunningly he handled the glittering falsehood
and made it dazzle in the woman's eyes- "God
knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your
eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods,
knowing good and evil."

Proud ambition rode upon that lie as a conqueror
in his chariot, and the city of Mansoul opened its
gates to welcome the fascinating enemy.

As it was a lie which first subjugated the world to Satan's
influences, so it is by lies that he secures his throne.

Among the heathen his kingdom is quiet and secure,
because the minds of the people are deluded with a
false mythology. The domains of Mohammed and the
Pope are equally the kingdom of Satan, and his reign
is undisturbed, for human merit, priestly efficacy,
and a thousand other deceptions buttress his throne.

The darkness of ignorance, the dungeons of falsehood,
and the chains of superstition, are the main reliance of that

monster who oppresses all the nations with his infernal tyranny!

GOD'S WORD

Spurgeon

"He sends forth his commandment upon earth:

His word runs very swiftly" (Psalm 147:15).

No language ever stirs the deeps of my nature like the Word of God, and none produces such a profound calm within my spirit.

As no other voice can,

it melts me to tears,

it humbles me in the dust,

it fires me with enthusiasm,

it fills me with pleasure,

it elevates me to holiness.

Every faculty of my being owns the power of the sacred Word.

It sweetens my memory,

it brightens my hope,

it stimulates my imagination,

it directs my judgment,

it commands my will, and

it cheers my heart.

The word of man charms me for the time,

but I outlive and outgrow its power.

It is altogether the reverse with the Word of the King of kings;

it rules me more sovereignly, more practically, more habitually,

more completely every day. Its power is for all seasons--for

sickness and for health, for solitude and for company, for

personal emergencies and for public assemblies.

I had sooner have the Word of God at my back than all the

armies and navies of all the great powers, aye, than all the forces of nature; for the Word of the Lord is the source of all the power in the universe, and within it there is an infinite supply in reserve.

Pure, unalloyed, perfect truth!

The Bible is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed
by quartz or any earthly substance.

This is a star without a speck,
a sun with a blot,
a light without darkness,
a moon without it's paleness,
and a glory without a dimness.

O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book that it is
perfect and pure, but of the Bible we can declare that all
wisdom is gathered up in it without a particle of folly.

This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail.

This is the Book untainted by any error,
but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth.

-Spurgeon

Bow to the Word!

Don Fortner

I bow to the Word of God.

There are many good creeds, confessions, and catechisms written by men, clearly setting forth the gospel of the grace of God; but I do not pin my faith to the writings of any man, or any group of men, no matter how much I may admire them.

The Word of God alone is my rule of faith and practice.

I bow my will and my reason, my experience and my feelings, to the Word of God. I do not understand all that is written in the Scriptures; but I believe it all.

I bow to the authority of Holy Scripture.

I do so unreservedly.

Let men call it bigotry, ignorance, or whatever they may,

I am not even open to the consideration of any thought, idea, or evidence which contradicts the Book of God.

Are you hungry?

from Spurgeon's sermon, "BREAD FOR THE HUNGRY"

We should come to hear the Word, like baby birds in the nest-- when the mother-bird comes with the worm, they are all stretching their necks to see which one shall get the food, for they are all hungry and want it.

And so should hearers be ready to get hold of the Word, not wanting that we should force it down their throats, but waiting there, opening their mouths wide that they may be filled, receiving the Word in the love of it, taking in the Word as the thirsty earth drinks in the rain of heaven.

Hungry souls love the Word.

Perhaps the 'speaker' may not always put it as they may like to hear it, but as long as it is God's Word, it is enough for them.

They are like people who are sitting at the reading of a will-- the lawyer may have a squeaking voice, perhaps, or he mispronounces the words, but what does that matter?

They are listening to see what is left to them.

So is it with God's people. It is not the preacher, but the 'preacher's God' that these hungry ones look to.

Why, if you were very poor, and some benevolent neighbor should send you a loaf of bread by a man who had a club foot, you would not look at the foot, you would look at the bread.

And so is it with the hearers of the Word-- they know if they wait until they get a perfect preacher, they will get no preacher at all, but they are willing to take the man, imperfections and all, provided he brings the Master's bread.

And though he be but a lad, and can bring but a few barley
loaves and fishes, yet since the Master multiplies the provision,
there is enough for all, and they feed to the full.

SO MY THEOLOGICAL FRIEND

Spurgeon, "Inexcusable Irreverence And Ingratitude"

Knowledge is of no use if it does not lead to holy practice!

So my theological friend over there,

who knows so much that he can split hairs over doctrines-

it does not matter what you think, or what you know,

unless it leads you to glorify God, and to be thankful.

No, your knowledge may be a millstone about your neck to

sink you down to eternal woe, unless your knowledge is

turned to holy practice.

The Scriptures point to Me!

(Octavius Winslow, "Morning Thoughts")

"But the Scriptures point to Me!" John 5:39

Search the Scriptures, my reader, with a
view of seeing and knowing more of your
Redeemer, compared with whom nothing
else is worth knowing or making known.

Love your Bible, because it testifies of Jesus;
because it unfolds a great Savior, an almighty
Redeemer; because it reveals the glory of a
sin pardoning God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Aim to unravel Jesus in the types, to grasp
Him amid the shadows, to trace Him through
the predictions of the prophet, the records of
the evangelist, and the letters of the apostles.

All speak of, and all lead to, Jesus!

DON'T ARGUE!

by Spurgeon

"To treat revelation as if it were a football to be kicked from man to man is irreverence."

Two educated doctors are angrily discussing the nature of food, and allowing their meal to lie untasted, while a simple countryman is eating as heartily as he can of that which is set before him. The religious world is full of faultfinders, critics, and skeptics, who, like the doctors, fight over Christianity without profit either to themselves or others; and those are far happier who imitate the farmer and feed upon the Word of God, which is the true food of the soul. Luther's prayer was, "From nice questions the Lord deliver us."

Questioning with honesty and candor is not to be condemned, when the object is to "Test everything. Hold on to the good;" but to treat revelation as if it were a football to be kicked from man to man is irreverence, if not worse.

Seek the true faith, by all manner of means, but do not spend a whole life in finding it, lest you be like a workman who wastes the whole day in looking for his tools. Hear the true Word of God; lay hold of it, and spend your days not in raising hard questions, but in feasting upon precious truth.

It is, no doubt, very important to settle the point of "General or Particular Redemption;" but for unconverted men, the chief matter is to look to the Redeemer on the cross with the eye of faith. Election is a doctrine about which there is much discussion, but he who has made his election sure, finds

it a very sweet morsel. Final perseverance has been fought about in all time; but he who by grace continues to rest in Jesus to the end, knows the true enjoyment of it.

Reader, argue, if you please, but remember that believing in the Lord Jesus gives infinitely more enjoyment than disputing can ever afford you. If you are unsaved, your only business is with the great command, "Believe!" and even if you have passed from death to life, it is better to commune with Jesus than to discuss doubtful questions. When Melancthon's mother asked him what she must believe amidst so many disputes, he, knowing her to be trusting to Jesus in a simple-hearted manner, replied, "Go on, mother, to believe and pray as you have done, and do not trouble yourself about controversy." So say we to all troubled souls, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

1 Tim. 1:4-6 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.

1 Tim. 6:4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

2 Tim. 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

2 Tim. 2:23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

Bible study by itself will not produce spiritual maturity.

In fact, it will produce carnality if it isn't applied and practiced.

-Getz

Read Your Bible!

by Spurgeon

You know more about your ledgers than your Bible; you know more about your magazines and novels than what God has written; many of you will read a novel from the beginning to the end, and what have you got? A mouthful of foam when you are done. But you cannot read the Bible; that solid, lasting, substantial, and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect; while anything that a man writes, a best seller of the day, is greedily devoured.

"I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread."

Job 23:12

The Key to Bible study...

-Spurgeon, "Christ Our Passover"

The more you read the Bible, and the more you meditate upon it, the more you will be astonished with it.

He who is but a casual reader of the Bible, does not know the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the mighty meanings contained in its pages.

There are certain times when I discover a new vein of thought, and I put my hand to my head and say in astonishment, "Oh, it is wonderful I never saw this before in the Scriptures."

You will find the Scriptures enlarge as you enter them; the more you study them the less you will appear to know of them, for they widen out as we approach them.

Especially will you find this the case with the 'typical' parts of God's Word. Most of the historical books were intended to be types either of dispensations, or experiences, or offices of Jesus Christ.

Study the Bible with this as a key.

One of the most interesting points of the Scriptures is their constant tendency to display Christ.

Suck the honey out of it!

Spurgeon's sermon, "The Minstrel"

It is wonderful the effect of a single verse of Scripture

when the Spirit of God applies it to the soul.

What power would come upon the soul,

if we would grasp a single line of Scripture

and suck the honey out of it till our soul

is filled with sweetness.

Theological studies?

Spurgeon

If the time spent over "obscure theological propositions" were given to a mission in the dim alley near the man's house, more benefit would come to the man and more glory to God.

I do not see the propriety of allowing such studies to override the commonplace activities of practical godliness.

Theological studies, unattended by active service in spreading the gospel among men, well deserves rebuke.

Cease to meddle with matters that are concealed, and be satisfied to know the things that are clearly revealed.

Bible reading...

by Thomas Brooks--

"Remember that it is not hasty reading,
but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths,
that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul.

It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers
honey, but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the
sweet.

It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will
prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian."

The best books...

Spurgeon

The best books of men are soon exhausted--

they are cisterns, and not springing fountains.

You enjoy them very much at the first acquaintance,

and you think you could hear them a hundred times over-

but you could not- you soon find them wearisome.

Very speedily a man eats too much honey:

even children at length are cloyed with sweets.

All human books grow stale after a time-

but with the Word of God the desire to study it increases,

while the more you know of it the less you think you know.

The Book grows upon you: as you dive into its depths

you have a fuller perception of the infinity which remains

to be explored. You are still sighing to enjoy more of that

which it is your bliss to taste.

The Talking Book...

Spurgeon's, "The Talking Book"

The Bible sanctifies and moulds the mind into the image of Christ.

You cannot expect to grow in grace if you do not read the Scriptures.

If you are not familiar with the word, you cannot

expect to become like Him that spoke it.

Oh, be much with the holy word of God, and you will be holy.

Be much with the silly novels of the day,

and the foolish trifles of the hour,

and you will degenerate into vapid wasters of your time.

But be much with the solid teachings of God's word,

and you will become solid and substantial men and women:

drink them in, and feed upon them, and they shall produce

in you a Christ-likeness, at which the world shall stand astonished.

A little secret...

Spurgeon, "The Holy Ghost, the Great Teacher"

Let me tell you a little secret- whenever you cannot understand a text, open your Bible, bend your knee, and pray over that text; and if it does not split into atoms and open itself, try again.

If prayer does not explain it, it is one of the things God did not intend you to know, and you may be content to be ignorant of it.

Prayer is the key that opens the cabinets of mystery.

Prayer and faith are sacred picklocks that can open secrets, and obtain great treasures.

There is no college for holy education like that of the blessed Spirit, for he is an ever-present tutor, to whom we have only to bend the knee, and he is at our side, the great expositor of truth.

Reading the Bible

by J.C. Ryle

1. READ THE BIBLE WITH AN EARNEST DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND IT.

Do not be content to just read the words of Scripture.

Seek to grasp the message they contain.

2. READ THE SCRIPTURES WITH A SIMPLE, CHILDLIKE FAITH & HUMILITY.

Believe what God reveals.

Reason must bow to God's revelation.

3. READ THE WORD WITH A SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE AND SELF-APPLICATION.

Apply what God says to yourself and obey His will in all things.

4. READ THE HOLY SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY.

We quickly lose the nourishment and strength of yesterday's bread.

We must feed our souls daily upon the manna God has given us.

5. READ THE WHOLE BIBLE AND READ IT IN AN ORDERLY WAY.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable."

I know of no better way to read the Bible than to start at the beginning and read straight through to the end, a portion every day, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

6. READ THE WORD OF GOD FAIRLY AND HONESTLY.

As a general rule, any passage of Scripture means what it appears to mean.

Interpret every passage in this simple manner, in its context.

7. READ THE BIBLE WITH CHRIST CONSTANTLY IN VIEW.

The whole Book is about Him.

Look for Him on every page.

He is there.

If you fail to see Him there, you need to read that page again.

God's books!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Substitution"

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer.

The book of 'nature' is an expression of the thoughts of God.

We have God's 'terrible' thoughts in the thunder and lightning;

God's 'loving' thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze;

God's 'bounteous, prudent, careful' thoughts in the

waving harvest and in the ripening meadow.

We have God's 'brilliant' thoughts in the wondrous scenes

which are beheld from mountain-top and valley;

and we have God's 'most sweet and pleasant' thoughts

of beauty in the little flowers that blossom at our feet.

Now, God's book of 'grace' is just like his book of nature;

it is his thoughts written out.

This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume is the heart

of God made legible; it is the gold of God's love, beaten out into

gold leaf, so that therewith our thoughts might be plated, and we

also might have golden, good, and holy thoughts concerning him.

Jelly-fish Christianity

(J. C. Ryle, "One Blood")

One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to sound doctrine. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity--a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or sinew--without any distinct teaching about the atonement or the work of the Spirit, or justification, or the way of peace with God--a vague, foggy, misty Christianity, of which the only watchwords seem to be, "You must be liberal and kind. You must condemn no man's doctrinal views. You must think everybody is right, and nobody is wrong."

The best commentator!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "LET US PRAY"

"But it is good for me to draw near to God." -Psalm 73:28

In this psalm, poor Asaph had been greatly troubled--

He had been trying to untie that Gordian knot concerning the righteousness of a providence which permits the wicked to flourish and the godly to be tried; and because he could not untie that knot, he tried to cut it, but he cut his own fingers in the act, and became greatly troubled.

He could not understand how it was that God could be just, and yet give riches to the wicked, while his own people were in poverty. At last Asaph understood it all, for he went into the house of his God, and there he understood the latter end of the wicked. And he says -- looking back upon his discovery of a clue to this great labyrinth --

"It is good for me to draw near to God."

Prayer explains mysteries!

If you would understand the Word of God in its knotty points, if you would comprehend the mystery of the gospel of Christ, remember, Christ's scholars must study upon their knees.

Depend upon it, that the best commentator upon the Word of God is its author, the Holy Spirit- and if you would know the meaning, you must go to him in prayer!

John Bunyan says that he never forgot the divinity he taught, because it was burnt into him when he was on his knees.

That is the way to learn the gospel.

If you learn it upon your knees you will never unlearn it.

That which 'men' teach you, men can unteach you-- if I am merely convinced by reason, a better reasoner may deceive me. If I merely hold my doctrinal opinions because they seem 'to me' to be correct, I may be led to think differently another day.

But if 'God' has taught them to me -- he who is himself pure truth -- I have not learned amiss, but I have so learned that I shall never unlearn, nor shall I forget.

Behold, believer, you are this day in a labyrinth-- whenever you come to a turning place, where there is a road to the right or to the left, if you would know which way to go, fall on your knees, then go on. And when you come to the next turning place, on your knees again, and so proceed again.

The one clue to the whole labyrinth of 'providence', and of 'doctrinal opinion', is to be found in that one hallowed exercise -- prayer.

Continue much in prayer, and neither Satan nor the world shall much deceive you.

Behold- before you the sacred ark of truth.

But where is the key?

It hangs upon the silver nail of prayer!

Go reach it down, unlock the casket, and be rich!

Useless doctrine?

Doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life.

It is worse than useless; it does positive harm.

Something of 'the image of Christ' must be seen

and observed by others in our private life, and

habits, and character, and doings.

--J.C. Ryle

Never neglect the Word

Never, never neglect the Word of God.

The Word will make your heart rich with truth, rich with understanding, and then your conversation, when it flows from your mouth, will be like your heart-- rich, soothing, and sweet. Make your heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from your hand will be just as rich and generous as your heart.

Above all, get Jesus to live in your heart, and then out of your heart shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christian, to the great mine of riches, and cry to the Holy Spirit to make your heart rich unto salvation. So shall your life and conversations be a boon to your fellow man; and when they see you, your face will be like an angel of God. Wise men will stand up when they see you, and men will give you reverence.

-Spurgeon

Contemplating God's greatness!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Fear Not"

Lift up your eyes, behold the heavens, the work of God's fingers-- behold the sun guided in his daily march; go forth at midnight, and behold the heavens; consider the stars and the moon; look upon these works of God's hands, and if you be men of sense, and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, you will say, "What is man that you are mindful of him?"

My God! when I survey the boundless fields of ether, and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein, when I consider how vast are your dominions- so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary- I marvel that you should look on insects so obscure as man.

I am so little that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightyness of Jehovah- so little, that the difference between the molecule and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man.

Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead; consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world; behold Him who is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.

Let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite, and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal, and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe.

The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's throne,

and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel
what base nothings, what insignificant specks we are when
compared with our all-adorable Creator.

Labor, O soul, to know your nothingness, and learn it by
contemplating God's greatness.

THE TENDERNESS OF GOD

(John MacDuff, "The Night Watches")

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isaiah 40:11

How soothing, in the hour of sorrow, or bereavement, or death, to have the countenance and sympathy of a tender earthly friend. Reader, these words tell you of One nearer, dearer, tenderer still; the Friend that never fails; a tender God!

By how many endearing epithets does Jesus exhibit the tenderness of His relation to His people.

Does a shepherd watch tenderly over his flock?

"The Lord is my Shepherd."

Does a father exercise fondest solicitude towards his children? "I will be a Father unto you."

Does a mother's love exceed all other earthly types of affection. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

Is the 'apple of the eye' (the pupil) the most sensitive part of the most delicate bodily organ?

He guards His people "as the apple of His eye!"

"He will not break the bruised reed."

When the Shepherd and Guardian of Souls finds the sinner, like a lost sheep, stumbling on the dark mountains, how tenderly He deals with him!

There is no look of wrath; no word of upbraiding; in
silent love "He lays him on His shoulders rejoicing!"

Reader, are you mourning over...

the weakness of your faith;

the coldness of your love;

your manifold spiritual declensions?

Fear not. He knows your frame! He will give
'feeble faith' tender dealing. He will "carry" in
His arms those that are unable to walk, and
will conduct the burdened ones through a path
less rough and rugged than others.

When "the lion" or "the bear" comes, you may
trust the true David, the tenderest of Shepherds!

Are you suffering from outward trial?

Confide in the tenderness of your God's dealings
with you. The strokes of His rod are gentle strokes;
the needed discipline of a father yearning over his
children the very moment He is chastising them.

The gentlest earthly parent may speak a harsh
word at times; it may be, needlessly harsh. But
not so God. He may seem, like Joseph to his
brethren, to 'speak roughly'; but all the while
there is love in His heart.

The 'pruning knife' will not be used
unnecessarily. It will never cut too deeply.

The 'furnace' will not burn more fiercely than is
absolutely required. A tender God is seated by
it, tempering the fury of its flames.

And what, believer, is the secret of all this

tenderness? "There is a Man upon the Throne!"
Jesus, the God Man Mediator; combining with
the might of Godhead, the tenderness of spotless
humanity.

Is your heart crushed with sorrow? so was His!
Are your eyes dimmed with tears? so were His?
"Jesus wept!" Bethany's Chief Mourner still wears
the Brother's heart in glory!

Others may be unable to enter into the
depths of your trial; Jesus can; Jesus does!

With such a tender God....

caring for me,

providing for me,

watching my path by day, and

guarding my couch by night,

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone,

O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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Why was His soul troubled?

(Octavius Winslow, "CONSIDER JESUS" 1870)

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow
to the point of death." Mark 14:34
In this lay our Lord's greatest suffering:
His soul sorrow. Compared with this . . .
the lingering, excruciating tortures of the cross,
the extended limbs,
the quivering nerves,
the bleeding wounds,
the burning thirst;
were, as nothing.

So long as our blessed Lord endured the gibes
and insults and calumnies of mere men, not a
complaint escaped His lips.

But, when the wrath of God, endured as the
Substitute of His people, entered within His
holy soul, then the wail of agony rose strong
and piercing, "My God, My God, why have
You forsaken Me?"

Why was His soul troubled?

He was now bearing sin and, consequently,
the punishment of sin; the wrath of God
overwhelming His soul. Divine justice, finding
the sins of God's elect meeting on His holy soul,
exactd full payment and inflicted the utmost
penalty!

Authority, glory and sovereign power!

(J. C. Philpot, "Jesus, the Enthroned King")

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns!" Rev. 19:6

The unlimited dominion of King Jesus extends over . . .

all things,

all events,

all circumstances,

all people!

All are subjected to the sovereign control of the King
of kings and Lord of lords!

Everywhere on this earthly globe--as far as waves roll,
winds blow, sun shines, or stars hold on their nightly
courses--does the scepter of Jesus sway the destinies,
and control the designs and actions of men.

"He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;
all peoples, nations and men of every language obey
Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will
not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never
be destroyed!" Daniel 7:14

MERCY!

(J. C. Philpot, "The Lord's Merciful Look Upon His People")

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me." Ps. 119:132

When shall we ever get beyond the need of God's mercy?

We feel our need of continual mercy . . .

as our sins abound,

as our guilt is felt,

as our corruption works,

as our conscience is burdened,

as the iniquities of our heart are laid bare,

as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit's light.

We need . . .

mercy for every adulterous look;

mercy for every covetous thought;

mercy for every light and trifling word;

mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;

mercy while we live;

mercy when we die;

mercy to accompany us every moment;

mercy to go with us down to the portals of the grave;

mercy to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan;

mercy to land us safe before the Redeemer's throne!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me."

Why me?

Because I am so vile a sinner.

Because I am so base a backslider.

Because I am such a daring transgressor.

Because I sin against You with every breath that I draw.

Because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves.

Because nothing but Your mercy can blot out such
iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind.

I need . . .

inexhaustible mercy,

everlasting mercy,

super-abounding mercy.

Nothing but such mercy as this can suit such a guilty sinner!

Modern manufacturers of gods?

(Spurgeon, "Joy in God" #2550, Romans 5:11)

Many are very busy trying to construct a god for themselves, such as they think God ought to be.

And it generally turns out that they fashion a god like themselves, for that saying of the psalmist concerning idols and 'idol makers' is still true,

"And those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them." Psalm 135:18

These modern manufacturers of gods make them blind because they are themselves blind, and deaf because they are deaf, and dead because they are spiritually dead.

Some quarrel with God as a Sovereign, and no doctrine makes them grind their teeth like the glorious truth of divine sovereignty.

They profess to want a god, but . . .

he must not be on a throne;

he must not be King;

he must not be absolute and universal Monarch.

He must do as his creatures tell him, not as he himself wills. Their effeminate deity is not worthy to be known by the name of God!

The perfection of God

(Newman Hall, "Leaves of Healing
from the Garden of Grief" 1891)

"As for God, His way is perfect."

2 Samuel 22:31

God's wisdom cannot err.

God's holiness cannot sin.

God's love cannot be cruel.

God's immutability cannot change.

God's eternity cannot end.

The perfection of God is a source
of sweetest consolation to us, in
our feebleness and foolishness.

If He were not Omniscient,
we might suffer and He not know.

If He were not Omnipresent,
we might cry and He not hear.

If He were not Omnipotent,
we might perish and He be unable to help.

If He were not good,
He would not care for us, or might crush us.

"He is the Rock, His works are perfect,
and all His ways are just." Deut. 32:4

Though the Lord is exalted, yet He has regard
unto the humble. He has not despised the
affliction of His afflicted children, nor hid His
face from them.

I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks
upon me. Put my tears into Your bottle.

God's presence

(John Mason's Spiritual Sayings)

The presence of God's glory is in heaven;

the presence of His power on earth;

the presence of His justice in hell;

the presence of His grace with His people.

If He denies us His powerful presence we fall into nothing.

If He denies us His gracious presence we fall into sin.

If He denies us His merciful presence we fall into hell.

Fear God for His power.

Trust Him for His wisdom.

Love Him for His goodness.

Praise Him for His greatness.

Believe Him for His faithfulness.

Adore Him for His holiness.

His unwearied care and concern

(Thomas Bradbury, "Comfort My People" 1897)

All along their journey through a world of sin,
suffering, and sorrow, the people of God are
the subjects of trial, temptation and tribulation.

The corruptions of our vile nature,
the fierce assaults of the devil,
the ways of the wicked around us,
the perplexities of God's mysterious providence,
and felt spiritual weakness,
all conspire to make our hearts disconsolate,
and cause us to sigh and cry.

But God is never at a loss to help and comfort His
weak and weary, tried and tempted, oppressed and
suffering people. His comforts abound with . . .
assistance in necessity,
help in extremity,
defense in danger,
deliverance from distress,
and infinitely more.

With all these He opens up His heart of love,
and reveals to them His unwearied care and
concern over them.

God's unchanging concern and care are beautifully
illustrated in His love to Ephraim, after Ephraim's
base wanderings from, and rebelliousness against
the God and Father who loved him so well.

"Is not Ephraim My dear son, the child in whom I
delight? Though I often speak against him, I still
remember him. Therefore My heart yearns for him;
I have great compassion for him." Jeremiah 31:20

All God's children are . . .

dear to Him,

pleasant in His eyes,

the delight of His heart.

God . . .

draws them to Himself with the cords of love,

blesses them with the sweets of divine communion,

kisses them with the kisses of His mouth,

dandles them on His knees of eternal affection,

presses them to His bosom of everlasting love,

and holds every covenant blessing ready for

whatever state or condition they may be in.

The carnal man's trinity!

("Soul Idolatry" David Clarkson, 1621-1686)

"You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a such a person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world." Ephesians 5:5

"For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:16

Pleasures, and riches, and honors are the carnal man's trinity. These are the three great idols of worldly men, to which they prostrate their souls! Idolatry is to give that honor and worship to 'the creature', which is due to the Creator alone. When this worship is communicated to other things, whatever they are, we thereby make them idols, and commit idolatry. When the mind is most taken up with an object, and the heart and affections most set upon it, this is "soul worship"--and this worship is due to God alone.

Now this worship due to God alone, is given . . .

by the savage heathen to their stick and stones;
by the papist to their angels, saints, and images;
by carnal men to their lusts.

There are two kinds of idolatry:

1. Open, external idolatry--when men, out of a religious respect, bow to, or prostrate themselves before anything besides the true God. This is the idolatry of the heathen,

and in part, the idolatry of papists.

2. Secret and soul idolatry--when the mind is set on anything more than God; when anything is . . . more valued than God, more desired than God, more sought than God, more loved than God.

Hence, secret idolaters shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Soul idolatry will exclude men from heaven, as much as open idolatry!

He who serves his lusts is as incapable of entering heaven, as he who worships idols of wood or stone!

"Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry!"

1 Corinthians 10:14

The wrath of God let loose upon His Son!

(Winslow, "The God of Holiness")

Divine holiness is best exhibited in the cross of Jesus.

Not hell itself, dreadful and eternal as is its suffering:

the undying worm, the unquenchable fire, the smoke

of the torment that goes up forever and ever; affords

such a solemn and impressive spectacle of the

holiness and justice of God in the punishment of

sin, as is presented in the death of God's beloved Son.

An eminent Puritan writer thus strikingly puts it:

"Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be

poured out upon this wicked world, nor the flaming

furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irrevocable

sentence pronounced against the rebellious devils,

nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such

a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the

wrath of God let loose upon His Son!"

Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful

and lovely than at the time our Savior's countenance

was most marred in the midst of His dying groans.

This Himself acknowledges in that penitential psalm,

when God turned His smiling face away from Him, and

thrust His sharp knife into His heart, which forced

that terrible cry from Him, "My God, my God, why

have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from

saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

...Yet You are enthroned as the Holy One." Ps. 22:1-2

Such an impressive view of God's holiness the angels in heaven never before beheld; not even when they saw the non elect spirits hurled from the heights of glory down to the bottomless pit, to be reserved in chains of darkness and woe forever!

Jesus was the innocent One dying for the guilty ones, the holy One dying for the sinful ones.

Divine justice, in its mission of judgment, as it swept by the cross, found the Son of God impaled upon its wood beneath the sins and the curse of His people. Upon Him its judgment fell, on His soul its wrath was poured, in His heart its flaming sword was plunged; and thus, from Him, justice exacted the full penalty of man's transgression; the last farthing of the great debt.

Go to the cross, then, my reader, and learn the holiness of God.

Contemplate...

the dignity of Christ;

His preciousness to His Father's heart;

the sinlessness of His nature.

And then behold...

the sorrow of His soul,

the torture of His body,

the tragedy of His death,

the abasement,

the ignominy,

the humiliation, into the fathomless

depths of which the whole transaction

plunged our incarnate God!

And let me ask, standing, as you are, before
this unparalleled spectacle, "Can you cherish
low views of God's holiness, or light views
of your own sinfulness?"

CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINITY...

From Spurgeon's, "The Immutability of God"

The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead--

The highest science,

the loftiest speculation,

the mightiest philosophy, which can ever

engage the attention of a child of God,

is the name,

the nature,

the person,

the work,

the doings,

and the existence

of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind

in a contemplation of the Divinity--

It is a subject so vast,

that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity;

so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity.

Other subjects we can compass and grapple with--

in them we feel a kind of self-content,

and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise."

But when we come to this master-science,

finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth,

and that our eagle eye cannot see its height,

we turn away with the thought, that vain man would be

wise, but he is like a wild donkey's colt; and with the

solemn exclamation--

"I am but of yesterday, and know nothing."

No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God.

Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God?

(Henry Law, "Psalms")

"Let us break their chains," they cry, "and
free ourselves from this slavery." Psalm 2:3

Self will rejects restraint.

Pride will not yield to rule.

Conceited reason lifts up defiant head.

The gentle scepter of Christ's kingdom;

His sweet, His light, His easy, and His
loving yoke; are hated as chains which
restrain, and cords which fetter.

When Jesus came, earth raised the cry,

"We will not have this man to reign over
us." It still resounds.

When will man learn that widest liberty
is true submission to the Gospel sway?

He is a free man whom the Son makes free.

He is a slave in whom unbridled lusts and passions rule.

But can proud man prevail?

Can he drive back the ocean's might with a feather?

Can he lift up his puny hand, and bid the sun conceal its rays?

Can he bind the hurricane with straws?

Can he lay mountains low, lift up the
valleys, and change the laws of nature?

Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God?

Such, doubtless, is his frantic will.

"Let us break their chains," they cry, "and

free ourselves from this slavery." Psalm 2:3

But give ear again!

"But the One who rules in heaven laughs.

The Lord scoffs at them. Then in anger He

rebukes them, terrifying them with His

fierce fury." Psalm 2:4-5

God may be silent long; but His patience

is not impunity. Reprieve brings not release.

When the appointed time comes, the

floodgates open and wrath overflows!

Who can conceive these terrors?

What must His displeasure be?

Who can endure when His anger issues forth?

What weeping! What wailing! What anguish!

What gnashing of teeth! When God arises to

execute due judgment on His foes!

The MERCY of God

(The following is by Spurgeon.)

Meditate a little on this MERCY of the Lord.

It is tender mercy!

With gentle, loving touch, he heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He is as gracious in the manner of his mercy as in the matter of it.

It is great mercy!

There is nothing little in God.

His mercy is like himself- it is infinite!

You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins of great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God!

It is undeserved mercy!

Indeed all true mercy must be undeserved, for deserved mercy is only a misnomer for justice.

There was no right on the sinner's part to the kind mercy of the Most High. Had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire he would have richly merited the doom.

If delivered from wrath, sovereign love alone has found a cause, for there was none in the sinner himself.

It is rich mercy!

Some things are great, but have little efficacy in them. But the mercy of God is--

A cordial to your drooping spirits!

A golden ointment to your bleeding wounds!

A heavenly bandage to your broken bones!

A royal chariot for your weary feet!

A bosom of love for your trembling heart!

It is manifold mercy!

As Bunyan says, "All the flowers in God's garden are double." There is no single mercy.

You may think you have but one mercy, but you shall find it to be a whole cluster of mercies!

It is abounding mercy!

Millions have received it, yet far from its being exhausted! It is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever!

It is unfailing mercy!

It will never leave you. Mercy will be with you in temptation to keep you from yielding. Mercy will be with in trouble to prevent you from sinking.

Mercy will be with you while living to be the light and life of your countenance. Mercy will be with you when dying to be the joy of your soul when earthly comfort is ebbing fast.

Justice sheaths its avenging sword in His heart!

(Henry Law, "Gleanings from the Book of Life")

"God made Him who had no sin to be sin
for us, so that in Him we might become
the righteousness of God." 2 Cor. 5:21

It is a comforting thought, that the sins thus
removed from the guilty and transferred to the
guiltless, leave the real transgressor relieved
from the weight of evil.

Thus unrighteousness is removed.

Jesus thus laden with iniquities, endures
all that sin merits and the law denounces.

He approaches the altar of the Cross.

He there presents Himself the willing victim.

He there lays down His life, the all sufficient sacrifice.

He there sheds His blood, worthy to make atonement.

Wrath pours out on Him all its vials.

Justice sheaths its avenging sword in His heart!

The law pours on His head its total curse.

He endures to the uttermost all that justice required.

Where now are the believer's sins?

That which is blotted out can no more be found.

None who are washed in His most precious blood
can be borne off to hell. Satan can offer no charge
against those on whom no sin is found.

Hallowed be Your name

(Newman Hall, "Meditations on the Lord's Prayer")

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name."

Matthew 6:9

This petition condemns much more than profane language. Whenever we introduce the Divine name in our speech uselessly and triflingly--when we employ it to turn a sentence, or give emphasis to a statement, or point to an anecdote--when we make the Divine Word the subject-matter of jokes, punning on solemn truths of Revelation, and quoting Scripture with ludicrous adaptations to provoke mirth. And even when we take this great name on our lips in worship without any endeavor to feel the homage it demands, we violate the spirit of this prayer.

"You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain. For Jehovah will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." Exodus 20:7

Life is like a painted dream?

(Winslow, "This God is Our God")

"For this God is our God forever and ever;

He will be our guide even to the end." Ps. 48:14

"The world passes away."

Everything here in this present world is changing.

"Life is like a painted dream,

Like the rapid summer stream,

Like the fleeting meteor's ray,

Like the shortest winter's day,

Like the fitful breeze that sighs,

Like the waning flame that dies,

Darting, dazzling on the eye,

Fading in eternity."

A rope of sand,

a spider's web,

a silken thread,

a passing shadow,

an ebbing wave,

are the most fitting and expressive emblems of

all things belonging to this present time's state.

The homes that sheltered us in childhood we leave.

The land which gave us birth we leave.

The loved ones who encircled our hearths pass away.

The friends of early years depart.

And the world that was so sunny, and life that was

so sweet, is all beclouded and embittered; the whole

scenery of existence changed into wintry gloom.

Such are the saddening, depressing

effects of life's vicissitudes.

But in the midst of all, "This God

is our God FOREVER AND EVER!"

All beings change but God.

All things change but heaven.

The evolutions of time revolve,

the events of earth go onward,

but He upon whom all things hang,

and by whom all events are shaped

and controlled, moves not.

"I, the Lord, do not change."

Our affairs may alter.

Our circumstances may change.

Our relations and friends may depart one by one.

Our souls in a single day pass through

many fluctuations of spiritual feeling.

But He who chose us to be His own, and who

has kept us to the present moment, is our

covenant God and Father forever and ever,

and will never throw us off and cast us away.

"For this God is our God forever and ever;

He will be our guide even to the end." Ps. 48:14

God's hand--God's heart

(Charles Spurgeon)

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11

We cannot always trace God's hand,
but we can always trust God's heart.

IMMUTABILITY

(edited from "The Bow in the Clouds" by John MacDuff)

"I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed." Malachi 3:6

The Unchangeableness of God.

What an anchor for a storm tossed sea!

Change is our portion here!

Scenes are altering. Joys are fading.

Friends! some of them are removed at a distance; others have gone to their 'long home'.

Who, amid these checkered experiences, does not sigh for something permanent, stable, enduring?

The vessel has again and again slipped its earthly moorings. We long for some secure and sheltered harbor.

"I am the Lord, and I do not change!" Heart and flesh may faint; yes, do faint and fail.

But there is an unfainting, un failing, unvarying God.

All the changes in the world around cannot affect Him.

Our own fitfulness cannot alter Him. When we are depressed, downcast, fluctuating; our treacherous hearts turning aside "like a broken bow," He does not change.

"God who cannot lie," is the superscription on His eternal throne; and inscribed on all His dealings.

"I am the Lord, and I do not change!" This forms a blessed guarantee that nothing can befall

me but what is for my good. I cannot doubt His
faithfulness. I dare not arraign the rectitude
of His dispensations. It is 'covenant love' which
is now darkening my earthly horizon. This hour He
is the same as when He "spared not His own Son!"
Oh, instead of wondering at my trials, let me
rather wonder that He has borne with me so long!
It is because of the Lord's unchanging mercies that
I am not consumed. Had He been man, changeful,
vacillating, as myself, long before now would He
have spurned me away, and consigned me to the
doom of the cumberer.
"I am the Lord, and I do not change!"

It is all mercy!

(Thomas Reade, 'Christian Meditations')

It is profitable to consider what I deserve,
and what I enjoy, to awaken self abasement,
and gratitude.

If the righteous Lord were to deal with me
according to my deservings, I would at this
moment be under the rack of excruciating pain;
or, under the pressure of most abject poverty;
thus feeling the foretaste of eternal woe.

If thus dealt with in strictest justice, Death
would receive his commission to hurl my
affrighted soul into the gulf of endless
misery, there to remain an everlasting
monument of the vengeance of a holy God.

All short of this is mercy!

Do I enjoy a portion of health?

It is all mercy!

Am I undergoing a sanctified affliction?

It is all mercy!

Do I partake of the bounties of Providence?

It is all mercy!

Do I possess dear, affectionate friends?

It is all mercy!

Do I experience the love of God in Christ,
pardoning my sins, and purifying my heart?

Oh! this is mercy beyond the power

of language to praise or to express!
Rejoice in such a Savior, who snatched
you as a brand out of the burning!

The sovereign ruler of the world!

(Jonathan Edwards, "The Final Judgment")

Wicked men question the very existence of God, who takes care of the world, who orders the affairs of it, and judges in it.

And therefore they cast off the fear of God.

Yet at the conclusion of the world He shall make His dominion visible to all, so that even those who have denied Him shall find, that God is their supreme Lord, and Lord of the whole world! The blasphemies of the ungodly will be forever put to silence.

God is the sovereign ruler of the world!

He governs the sun, moon, and stars.

He governs even the motes of dust

which fly in the air. Not a hair of our

heads falls to the ground without

our heavenly Father.

God also governs the brute creatures. By His providence, He orders, according to His own decrees, all events concerning those creatures.

And rational creatures are subject to the His government. All their actions, and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees, so that no event that relates to them ever happens without the disposal of God, according to His

own decrees.

God exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth. He reigns and does all things according to His own will, ordering all events as seems good to Himself.

God is the sovereign ruler of the world!

Microscopic love?

(John MacDuff, "The Night Dream of the Desert")

Our Omnipotent God keeps watch over the lichen
on the rock, and the lily on the mountain side.

He tempers His wind to the fragile flower as it
trembles on the lip of the Alpine glacier. He follows
the timid bird to its cleft; feeds the young raven's
brood; and notes the fall of the sparrow.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not
one of them will fall to the ground apart from the
will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your
head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are
worth more than many sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31

We see here, the personal love of God for
every individual member of His vast family.

The heavenly Shepherd has a special, particular
care for each sheep of the fold. As it utters its
apparently unheard bleat on the lonely moorland,
or amid the thorny thicket of its wanderings, He
tracks its truant footsteps, as if it engrossed all
His interest, restoring it to the green pastures by
the side of the fold.

Yes, there is surely nothing more cheering, more
sublime, than the thought of this unwearying tending
of the Great Shepherd; this individual, (if we may so
call it), this microscopic love, of our Great Father.

The multitude of Your tender mercies

(J. C. Philpot, "Man's Misery and God's Mercy" 1867)

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

Psalm 51:1

What a sweet expression it is—and how it seems to convey to our mind that God's mercies do not fall 'drop by drop'—but are as innumerable . . .

as the sand upon the sea-shore;

as the stars that stud the midnight sky;

as the drops of rain that fill the clouds before

they discharge their copious showers upon the earth.

It is the multitude of His mercies that makes Him so merciful a God. He does not give but a drop or two of mercy—that would soon be gone, like the rain which fell this morning under the hot sun. But His mercies flow like a river! There is in Him . . .

a multitude of mercies,

for a multitude of sins,

and a multitude of sinners!

This felt and received in the love of it—breaks, humbles, softens, and melts a sensible sinner's heart—and he says, "What, sin against such mercies? What, when the Lord has remembered me in my low estate, and manifested once more a sense of His mercy? What, shall I go on to provoke Him again—walk inconsistently again—be entangled in

Satan's snares again? O, forbid it God, forbid it gospel,
forbid it tender conscience, forbid it every constraint of
dying love!"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your
loving-kindness—according unto the multitude of
Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

Psalm 51:1

god?

"He who worships the true God
detests and loathes idols." (Spurgeon)

(the following is by Don Fortner)

God the Father, in eternity past, before
the world began, chose a people whom
he determined to save and sovereignly
predestinated all things that ever come
to pass to secure, absolutely and infallibly,
the salvation of his elect people.

God the Son died upon the cursed tree as
their Substitute to "save his people from
their sins" By the satisfaction of divine justice,
through the shedding of his blood, Christ has
put away the sins of his people and brought in
an everlasting righteousness for them. The Son
of God, dying for God's elect, has effectually
obtained eternal redemption for them. Those
for whom Christ suffered the wrath of God can
never, for any reason or to any degree, suffer
God's wrath. Justice will not allow it!

God the Holy Spirit regenerates, calls, and
preserves each of God's elect by infallible
grace, effectually applying the blood of Christ
to those chosen by the Father in eternity
and redeemed by the Son at Calvary.

This is our God, the effectual,

sovereign, saving God.

There is no other God but him.

Any other god, called by whatever name,
any god that is not totally sovereign,
irresistibly effectual, and completely
successful in the salvation of his people
is no God at all, but only the idolatrous
figment of man's imagination!

Idolatry is as much a problem in America as
it was among the heathen of Isaiah's day.

I say, without hesitancy or apology, that
the god of modern, Arminian, freewill religion,
the god of our families and friends,
the god many of us once claimed to worship,
is a false god, a base, abominable idol!

"He who worships the true God
detests and loathes idols." -Spurgeon

Many suck poison from this sweet flower!

(by Thomas Watson)

There is no rowing to paradise except
upon the stream of repenting tears.

Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.

Some bless themselves that they have a
stock of knowledge, but what is knowledge
good for, without repentance? Learning and
a bad heart, is like a pretty face with a cancer
in the breast! Knowledge without repentance
will be but a torch to light the way to hell.

Repentant tears may be compared to myrrh,
which though it is bitter in taste, has a sweet
smell and refreshes the spirit. So repentance,
though it is bitter in itself, yet it is sweet in
the effects. It brings inward peace.

We are to find as much bitterness in weeping for
sin as ever we found sweetness in committing it.

Surely David found more bitterness in repentance
than ever he found comfort in Bathsheba.

Tears have four qualities: they are
moist, salt, hot, and bitter.

It is true of repenting tears, they are

hot to warm a frozen conscience;

moist, to soften a hard heart;

salt, to season a soul decaying in sin;

bitter, to wean us from the love of the world.

And I will add a fifth, they are sweet, in
that they make the heart inwardly rejoice.
David, who was the great weeper in Israel,
was also the sweet singer of Israel.
Be as speedy in your repentance as you
would have God be speedy in His mercies.
Many are now in hell that intended to repent.
Satan does what he can to keep men from
repentance. When he sees that one begins
to take up serious thoughts of reformation,
he bids them wait a little longer. It is
dangerous to procrastinate repentance.
The longer any go on sinning, the harder
they will find the work of repentance.
Delay strengthens sin, hardens the heart
and gives the devil fuller possession.
A plant at first may be easily plucked up,
but when it has spread its roots deep in
the earth, a whole team cannot remove it.
It is hard to remove sin when
it comes to be rooted.
The longer the ice freezes the harder it is to
be broken. The longer a man freezes in sin,
the harder it will be to have his heart broken.
Presuming upon God's mercy
can be eternally fatal. Many suck
poison from this sweet flower!
Oh, one says, "Christ has died; He has done all
for me; therefore I may sit still and do nothing."

Thus they suck death from the tree of life!

So I may say of God's mercy, it accidentally causes the ruin of many. Because of His mercy, some men presume and think they may go on sinning.

The psalmist says, "there is mercy with God, that he may be feared," but not that we may sin.

Can men expect mercy by provoking justice?

God will hardly show those mercy who sin because mercy abounds.

Many would rather go sleeping to hell than weeping to heaven.

The Unconquerable King, part 1

Spurgeon "The Unconquerable King" Daniel 4:34,35

"His rule is everlasting,

and His kingdom is eternal.

All the people of the earth

are nothing compared to Him.

He has the power to do as He pleases

among the angels of heaven

and with those who live on earth.

No one can stop Him or challenge Him..."

Daniel 4:34-35

There was a time when the creatures were not.

They came from God as vessels from the potter's wheel.

They all depend upon Him for continuance, as

the streamlet on the fountain from where it flows.

And if it were His will they all would melt away

as the foam upon the water!

All that now exists, if so it had pleased God

to ordain, might have been as transient as a

sunbeam, and have vanished as speedily as

the rainbow from the cloud.

Everything sprang from God, and still depends

upon the necessity of His divine decree.

God is the only independent being.

We creatures must find food with which to repair

the daily wear of the body. We are dependent upon

light and heat, and innumerable external agencies,

and above all and primarily, dependent upon the outgoings of His divine power towards us.

Only the I AM is self sufficient and all sufficient!

He was as glorious before He made the world as He is now. He was as great, as blessed, as divine in all His attributes before sun and moon and stars leaped into existence, as He is now.

And if He should blot all out, as a man erases the writing of his pencil, or as a potter breaks the vessel he has made, He would be none the less the supreme and ever blessed God.

God is the only immutable being.

Immutability is an attribute of God only.

All created things were once new, but they are waxing old, they will become older still.

But the Lord has no time, He dwells in eternity.

There is no moment of 'beginning' with the Eternal God, no 'starting point' from which to calculate His age. From of old He was the Ancient of Days, "from everlasting to everlasting You are God."

Let your mind retreat as far as its capacities will allow into the remote past of old eternity, and there it finds Jehovah alone in the fullness of His glory!

Then let the same thought flash forward into the far off future, as far as unbridled imagination can bear it, and there it beholds the Eternal; unchanged, unchangeable. He works changes and effects changes, but He Himself abides the same.

God is the only invulnerable being.

There is no conceivable force that can
ever wound, injure, or destroy Him!

If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord
to be vulnerable, where is the bow and where
the arrow that could reach Him on His throne?

What javelin shall pierce Jehovah's buckler?

Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage
against God; how shall they reach His throne?

They cannot even shake His footstool.

If all the angels of heaven should rebel against
the Great King, and their squadrons should advance
in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most
High, He has but to will it, and they would wither
as autumn leaves! Reserved in chains of darkness,
the opponents of His power would forever become
mementos of His wrath!

None can touch Him!

The God whom we serve reigns as

The Unconquerable King!

He has unlimited sovereignty over all His creatures!

Let us who delight in the living God bow down
before Him, and humbly worship Him, as the God
in whom we live and move, and have our being.

"His rule is everlasting,
and His kingdom is eternal.

All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to Him.

He has the power to do as He pleases

among the angels of heaven

and with those who live on earth.

No one can stop Him or challenge Him..."

Daniel 4:34-35

The Unconquerable King, part 2

Spurgeon "The Unconquerable King" Daniel 4:34,35

Events appear to fly at random like the
dust in the whirlwind; but it is not so.

The rule of the Omnipotent God extends
over all things at all times!

Nothing is left to its own chance, but
in wisdom all things are governed.

He is reigning amid all the calamities
which sweep the globe, as much as He
shall be in the halcyon days of peace.

Never is His throne vacant!

Never is His scepter laid aside!

Jehovah is always King, and shall be King forever and forever!

This unconquerable King sits securely on His throne!

There is no doctrine to the advanced Christian
which contains such a deep sea of delight as this.

The Lord reigns!

The Lord is King forever and ever!

Why, then all is well.

Oh, happy subjects, who have such a throne to look lo!

Oh, blessed children, who have such a King to be your Father!

"His rule is everlasting,
and His kingdom is eternal.

All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to Him.

He has the power to do as He pleases

among the angels of heaven

and with those who live on earth.

No one can stop Him or challenge Him..."

Daniel 4:34-35

He will bruise His darling Son

(by Francis Covell, 1875)

"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5

What are we?

We are only lumps of sin and dirt.

But see the eternal love of God towards sinful men.

His love set His wisdom to work how to save these sinful and sinning creatures from the burning pit!

It pleased the Lord Himself to bruise His Son.

He thrust the sword of justice into the heart of His own dear Son, that mercy might flow to the "objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory."

His dear Son must suffer that they might be spared.

There was such love in God towards sinful men that many waters could not quench it. He did not spare His Son one iota. The Darling of heaven cried out, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me!"

But that we might go eternally free, and that God might look on us in justice and holiness with smiles and kisses; He bruised His own Son.

Jesus bore thousands of hells in His own sufferings in the garden and on the tree; and the Father never withdrew the sword until He cried out, "It is finished!"

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed

upon us!" to save us from a burning pit; to bring us to
the heights of bliss!

O the depths of God's love!

If He will pardon sin; if He will save a wretch, a rebel,
a man damned by the law; if He will let His heart's love
run out to save him from what he deserves; then He
must part with the love of His heart, the joy of His soul,
His only begotten Son!

Will He do that?

Is His love so surprisingly great, boundless, full,
and free, that to save an enemy, a vile and a
cursed sinner, He will bruise His darling Son?

He will! "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;

He has put Him to grief." Isaiah 53:10

God Rules!

by Don Fortner

Our God is in control of this world- absolutely in control of it (Ps. 76:10). God, and God alone, is in absolute, total control of the entire universe. We can and should trust Him with implicit confidence in all things, and with all things. The Word of God, the promises of God, the prophecies of Holy Scripture are all utterly meaningless unless our God is the God who rules everything, whose will is always performed, whose purpose stands fast, whose thoughts are irresistible!

Here is the basis of our faith and the foundation of our comfort- Our God is in control- as fully in control of Satan, the demons of hell, and the thoughts and deeds of wicked men as he is of the angels about his throne. We live in a world of woe. We are often tossed to and fro in this world, confused and perplexed by many things. Let us ever rest ourselves in our God.

"All things are of God." All things are ordered by our heavenly Father for our good. All things are arranged by God's infinite wisdom and omnipotent arm for his glory. Nothing is beyond his dominion.

If the god you trust can be controlled, hindered, or even influenced by you, by Satan, or by all the powers of earth and hell, then the god you trust is no God at all, and you are an idolater.

Our God is not a spectator or even a competitor in this world. He is the Ruler of it. Salvation is knowing him, the only true and living God as he is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ his Son, the God-man, our Savior (John 17:3).

He who is our God is the only God you can trust.

God remembers!

(Bonar, "Human Heedlessness; Divine Remembrance")

"They do not realize that I remember all their
evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are
always before Me." Hosea 7:2

What is sin? It is not . . .

an accident,

nor an imprudence,

nor a misfortune,

nor a disease,

nor a weakness.

It may be all these, perhaps; but it is something
beyond all these; something of a more fatal and
terrible character.

Sin is guilt. Sin is crime.

Man's tendency is either to deny, or to extenuate
sin. He either pleads not guilty, or he smooths
over the evil; giving it specious names.

Or if he does not succeed in these, he casts the
blame off himself; he shifts the responsibility to . . .

his nature,

his birth,

his circumstances,

his education;

even to God himself!

But human sin is not thus to be diluted or
transformed into a shadow. It is infinitely

real; true; deep; terrible in the eyes of
Him with whom we have to do.

Let us not trifle with sin, either in the conscience
or the intellect. Let us learn its true nature from
the terribleness of the wrath and condemnation
threatened by God against every sin, great or small.

God remembers our sins!
His memory never fails in anything.
Nothing escapes it, great or small.
Nothing effaces anything from it.
Time does not efface it.
Ages blot out nothing.
The past is as clear and full as the present.
Other events do not efface it.
Our own forgetfulness will not efface it.
Our memory and God's are very different.
Our forgetfulness does not make Him forget.
Though man should forget, God remembers; and
He can call up sin to remembrance. It will and
must come up at last. Men may try to forget it;
to drown all thought of it; to efface all traces of
it; but it will come up!
God remembers!
Nothing can make Him forget.
He may seem to do so; but it is only seeming.
God remembers...

the person;
the time;
the circumstances;

the thing itself;

public or secret.

God remembers our sins!

"God does not remember sin!" is the world's great motto!

"They do not realize that I remember all their

evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are

always before Me." Hosea 7:2

No chance!

(John MacDuff, "The Night Watches")

"The Lord does whatever pleases Him
throughout all heaven and earth, and
on the seas and in their depths." Ps. 135:6

How blessed that elementary truth: "The Lord reigns!"

To know that there is no chance or
accident with God; that He decrees...

the fall of a sparrow;

the destruction of an atom;

the annihilation of a world!

The Almighty is not like Baal, "asleep." "He that
keeps Israel" can never for a moment "slumber."

Man proposes; but God disposes.

"You, Lord have done it," is the history of
every event, past, present and to come.

His purposes none can change.

His counsels none can resist.

Believer, how cheering to know that all that
befalls you is thus ordered in the eternal purpose
of a Covenant God! Every minute circumstance of
your lot; appointing the bounds of your habitation;
meting out every drop in the cup of life; arranging
what by you is called its "vicissitudes;" decreeing
all its trials; and at last, as the great Proprietor
of life, revoking the lease of existence when its
allotted term has expired!

How it should keep the mind from its guilty
proneness to brood and fret over second causes,
were this grand but simple truth ever realized:
that all that befalls us are integral parts in a
stupendous plan of wisdom; that there is no
crossing or thwarting the designs and dealings
of God.

"He does all things well."

"Our God is in heaven; He does
whatever pleases Him." Psalm 115:3

When God dwelt alone...

From Spurgeon's, "Sovereignty and Salvation"

If it were within the range of human capacity to conceive a time when God dwelt alone, without his creatures, we should then have one of the grandest and most stupendous ideas of God.

There was a season when as yet the sun had never run his race, nor commenced flinging his golden rays across space, to gladden the earth.

There was an era when no stars sparkled in the firmament, for there was no sea of azure in which they might float.

There was a time when all that we now behold of God's great universe was yet unborn, slumbering within the mind of God, as yet uncreated and non-existent; yet there was God, and he was "over all blessed forever."

Though no seraphs hymned his praises, though no strong-winged cherubs flashed like lightning to do his high decree, though he was without a retinue-- yet he sat as a king on his throne, the mighty God, for ever to be worshipped, the Dread Supreme, in solemn silence dwelling by himself in vast immensity, making the placid clouds his canopy, and the light from his own countenance forming the brightness of his glory.

God was, and God is.

From the beginning God was God; before worlds had beginning, he was "from everlasting to everlasting."

Who can count the hideous specters?

(Henry Law, "Forgiveness of Sins" 1875)

"He forgives ALL my sins." Psalm 103:3

Satan will often strive to bring our sins
to remembrance. They readily appear in
frightful mass, in vast accumulation.

They swarm in all periods of life. . .

in childhood's dawn;

in blooming youth;

in the prime of manhood; and

when the shadows of declining age cast gloom.

Our sins haunt us . . .

openly committed or allowed in secret,

acted in every condition and relationship of life,

at home,

in the family,

abroad,

in solitude,

in the busy haunts of men,

in the sanctuary,

in the closet,

in prayer uttered or neglected,

in ignorance,

in clear intention,

when conscience slumbered,

and when its voice gave warning,

amid misgiving, and in daring audacity,

in defiance of convictions,

in disregard of resolves and vows!

Who can count the hideous specters which
are ready to revive and terrify the conscience?

But when all sins in all their aggravations
threaten, the multitudinous array may be
confronted with this relieving word, "He
forgives ALL my sins." Psalm 103:3

Let the emphatic monosyllable "all" be prized.

It is not said some, or few, or many; but "all."

God so completely pardons, that not
one iniquity remains unpardoned!

THE GIVER AND THE TAKER

by John McDuff

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken
away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21
Noble posture this; to kneel and to adore!
To see no hand but ONE!
Sabeans; Fire; Whirlwind; Sword; are all overlooked.
The Patriarch recognizes alone "The Lord"
who gave and "The Lord" who has taken.
What is the cause of so much depression, needless
sorrow, unchristian murmuring in our hours of trial?
It is a refusal to hear His voice; His own loving voice,
mingling with the accents of the severest storm; "It is I!"
"Is there evil in the city, and the Lord has not done it?"
Is there a bitter drop in the cup, and the Lord
has not mingled it? He loves His people too well
to intrust their interest to any other.
We are but clay in the hand of the Potter;
vessels in the hand of the Refiner of silver.
He metes out our portion.
He appoints the bounds of our habitation.
"The Lord God prepared the gourd."
"The Lord God prepared the worm."
He is the Author alike of mercies and
sorrows, of comforts and crosses.
He breathes into our nostrils the breath
of life; and it is at His summons the spirit

returns "to the God who gave it!"

Oh, that we would seek to regard our own lives
and the lives of those dear to us as a loan. God,
as the Great Proprietor, Who, when He sees fit,
can revoke the grant or curtail the lease He gave!

All mercies are....

by Him bestowed;

by Him continued;

by Him withheld.

And how often does He take away, that He may
Himself enter the vacuum of the heart and fill it
with His own ineffable presence and love!

No loss can compensate for the lack of Him,
but He can compensate for all losses.

Let us trust His love and faithfulness
as a taking, as well as a giving God.

Faith, resting on the promise, can exult, "Even
so, Father, for it seems good in your sight!"

Lord Jesus, make me . . .

(Thomas Reade, "On the Immensity of God")

Lord Jesus, make me....

humble, while I meditate on your humility;

loving, while I think upon your love;

holy, while I dwell upon your purity;

just, while I contemplate your righteousness;

merciful, while I behold your grace;

joyful, while I review your everlasting covenant.

Oh! fill my heart with gratitude, and my mouth
with praise. To you, blessed Jesus, do I look.

Remove all spiritual darkness from my mind;
all spiritual deadness from my heart.

Cause me....

to know you as my Savior;

to follow you as my leader;

to love you as my friend;

to trust in you as my atonement;

to be found in you as my righteousness;

to feed on you as the living bread;

to walk in you as the way to the Father; and

to dwell with you in heaven forever.

Oh! my God, when I contemplate your sovereign
will, which, from eternity, in highest wisdom,
consulted my welfare, I am lost in astonishment!

When I reflect upon your omnipotence, omniscience,
and omnipresence; upon your infinite holiness,

inviolable justice, and unerring wisdom; upon your faithfulness, and truth; your everlasting love, your sovereign grace, and your patience; how am I filled with awe and dread!

Yet faith can contemplate this bright display of uncreated excellence, and rejoice in the infinite perfections as exhibited and harmonized in Jesus, the incarnate Word. Here I behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Oh! that while beholding, I may be transformed into the lovely image of the Savior, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

JUSTICE!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Justice Satisfied"

God is just.

And because God is just sin must be punished.

Ah, sinner, if God did not punish your sin,
he has ceased to be what he has always been--
the severely just, the inflexibly righteous God.

The justice of God is in itself a great barrier
to the salvation of sinners.

Let old Sodom tell you how God rained fire and
brimstone out of heaven upon man's iniquity.

Let a drowning world tell you how God lifted the sluices of the
fountains of the great deep, and bade the bubbling waters spring
up and swallow man alive.

Let the earth tell you; for she opened her mouth
when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against God.

Let the buried cities of Nineveh, and the tattered relics of Tyre
and Sidon, tell you that God is just, and will by no means spare
the guilty.

And direst of all, let hell's bottomless lake declare what is
the awful vengeance of God against the sins of man.

Let the sighs, and groans, and moans, and shrieks of spirits
condemned of God, rise in your ears, and bear witness that he is
a God who will not spare the guilty, who will not wink at iniquity,
transgression, and sin, but who will have vengeance upon every
rebel, and will give justice its full satisfaction for every offence.

"Ah," says the sinner, "then I am shut out of heaven. If God is

just and he must punish sin, then what can I do? Justice, like some dark angel, strides across the road of mercy, and with his sword drawn, athirst for blood and winged to slay, he strides across my path, and threatens to drive me backwards over the precipice of death into the ever-burning lake!"

Go and take Justice with you to Gethsemane, and stand there with it--see that man so oppressed with grief, that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was a press--a vice which forced his blood from every vein, and wrapped him in a sheet of his own blood. Do you see that man there! can you hear his groans, his cries, his earnest intercessions, his strong crying and tears! can you mark that clotted sweat as it crimsones the frozen soil, strong enough to unloose the curse! do you see him in the desperate agony of his spirit, crushed, broken, bruised beneath the feet of Justice in the olive press of God!

Justice, is not that enough? will not that content you? In a whole hell there is not so much dignity of vengeance as there is in the garden of Gethsemane. Are you not yet satisfied?

Come, Justice, to the hall of Pilate. See that man arraigned, accused, charged with sedition and with blasphemy! See him taken to the guard-room, spit upon, buffeted with hands, crowned with thorns, robed in mockery, and insulted with a reed for a scepter. I say, Justice, see that man, and do you know that he is "God over all blessed forever?" and yet he endures all this to satisfy your demands! Are you not content with that? Do you still frown?

Let me show you this man on the pavement. He is stripped. Stand, Justice, and listen to those stripes, those bloody scourges, and as they fall upon his devoted back and plough deep furrows

there, do you see thong-full after thong-full of his quivering flesh torn from his poor bare back! Are you not content yet, Justice? Then what will satisfy you? "Nothing," says Justice, "but his death." Come with me, then you can see that feeble man hurried through the streets! See him driven to the top of Calvary, hurled on his back, nailed to the transverse wood? Oh, Justice, can you see his dislocated bones, now that his cross is lifted up? Stand with me, O Justice, see him as he weeps, and sighs, and cries; see his soul-agonies! Can you read that tale of terror which is veiled in that flesh and blood? Come, listen Justice, while you hear him cry, "I thirst," and while you see the burning fever devouring him, till he is dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst! And lastly, O Justice, do you see him bow his head, and die? "Yes," says Justice, "and I am satisfied; I have nothing that I can ask more; I am fully content; my uttermost demands are more than satisfied."

Unimpeachable Justice!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Unimpeachable Justice"

One of the miseries of hell will be that the
sinner himself will feel that he deserves it all.

Tossed on a wave of fire he will see written in every
spark that emanates therefrom--

"You knew your duty, and you did it not."

Tossed back again by another wave of flame,
he hears a voice saying, "Remember, you were warned!"

He is hurled upon a rock, and while he is being wrecked there,
a voice says, "I told you it would be better for

Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

Again he plunged under another wave of brimstone,
and a voice says, "He that believes not shall be damned;
you did not believe, and you are here."

And when again he is hurled up and down on some wave of torture,
each wave shall bear to him some dreadful sentence,
which he read in God's Word, in a tract, or in a sermon.

The unrepentant sinner himself will say--

"O Lord, it is true I am now tossed in fire,
but I myself lit the flame.

It is true that I am tormented,
but I forged the irons which now confine my limbs;

I made the bricks that have built my dungeon;

I myself did bring myself here.

I walked to hell, even as a fool goes to the stocks,
or an ox to the slaughter.

I sharpened the knife which is now cutting my vitals.

I nursed the viper which is now devouring my heart.

I sinned, which is the same as saying that I damned myself;
for to sin is to damn myself--the two words are synonymous."

Sin is damnation's sire!

Sin is the root, and damnation is the horrible
flower which must inevitably spring from it.

Ay, my dear unbelieving friends, I tell you yet again, there will
be nothing more obvious before the throne of God than the fact,
that God will be just when he sends you to hell.

You will feel that then, even though you do not feel it now.

That infallible Eye!

Spurgeon, "Two Coverings and Two Consequences"

Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a 'secret' sin?

Believe me, your sin is known.

Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it,

it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen.

"By whom?" say you.

Ah! by One who never forgets what he sees,

and will be sure to tell of it.

He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it.

Certainly he will one day proclaim it by

the sound of trumpet to listening worlds.

You are watched, sir; you are known.

You have been closely observed, young girl; those

things you have hidden away will be brought to light,

for God is the great discoverer of sin.

His eye has marked you;

his providence will track you.

It is vain to think that you can conceal your transgressions.

Before high heaven, disguise is futile.

Yes, the darkness does not hide you; the night shines as the day.

That infallible Eye which never mistakes, is never closed.

He knows everything; from him no secret is hid.

Why, therefore, do you imagine that you can deceive your Maker?

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

You may run the length of your tether. It is short.

The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb,

are on your trail.

Rest assured, you will be discovered.

Oh encouraging truth!

(adapted from Octavius Winslow's "Morning Thoughts")

"I the Lord search the heart." Jeremiah 17:10.

Solemn as is this view of the Divine character, the believing mind finds in it sweet and hallowed repose.

What more consolatory truth in some of the most trying positions of a child of God than this; the Lord knows the heart.

The world condemns, and the saints may wrongly judge, but God knows the heart.

And to those who have been led into deep discoveries of their heart's hidden evil, to whom have been made startling and distressing unveilings, how precious is this character of God, "He that searches the heart!"

Is there a single recess of our hearts we would veil from His penetrating glance?

Is there a corruption we would hide from His view?

Is there an evil of which we would have Him ignorant?

Oh no!

Mournful and humiliating as is the spectacle, we would throw open every door, and uplift every window, and invite and urge His scrutiny and inspection, making no concealments, and indulging in no reserves, and framing no excuses when dealing with the great Searcher of hearts, exclaiming, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."

And while the Lord is thus acquainted with the evil of our hearts, He most graciously conceals that evil from the eyes of others. He seems to say, by His benevolent conduct, "I see my child's infirmity." Then, covering it with His hand, exclaims, "but no other eye shall see it, but my own!" Oh, the touching tenderness, the loving kindness of our God! Knowing, as He does, all the evil of our nature, He yet veils that evil from human eye, that others may not despise us as we often despise ourselves. Who but God could know it? Who but God would conceal it?

And how blessed, too, to remember that while God knows all the evil, He is as intimately acquainted with all the good that is in the hearts of His people!

He knows all that His Spirit has implanted;
all that His grace has wrought.

Oh encouraging truth!

That spark of love, faint and flickering;
that pulsation of life, low and tremulous;
that touch of faith, feeble and hesitating;
that groan,

that sigh;

that low thought of self that leads a man to seek the shade;

that self-abasement that places his mouth in the dust;

oh, not one of these sacred emotions is unseen, unnoticed by God!

His eye ever rests with infinite complaisance and delight on His own image in the renewed soul.

Put to death by His own creatures!

(Spurgeon, "The Great Mystery of Godliness")

The condescension of Christ became most extraordinary when, at last, our Lord stooped to be put to death by His own creatures!

Arraigned before human tribunals, condemned as guilty of the gravest crimes, He is fastened to the accursed wood, and put to a death of deepest shame, and bitterest torture.

What a wondrous sight was the dying Redeemer!

Jesus comes to save His people from their sins, by taking the sins of His people upon Himself!

This is a mystery surpassing all comprehension!

O you whose loving eyes have looked upon the ensanguined rills which gush from the wounds of your bleeding Lord, and have delighted to behold the Lily of the valleys reddened into the Rose of Sharon with the crimson of His own blood; behold in the writhing form of the Crucified Man at once the vengeance and the love of God.

Behold divine power sustaining the load of human guilt, and divine compassion enduring such agonies for rebels so ill deserving!

God's hammer!

Spurgeon, "The Mighty Arm" No. 674.

"Powerful is your arm! Strong is your hand!

Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength."

-Psalm 89:13

God's power is perfectly irresistible.

When God puts forth his omnipotence,

who, who is there that can stay his hand?

Proud hearts are humbled,

hard hearts are broken,

iron melts, and

rock dissolves!

There is no heart so hard but what

God's hammer can dash it in pieces!

The Lord has but to will it with his omnipotent

will, and the sinner becomes a saint, and the

most rebellious cast down their weapons!

Let us never despair, while we can say

of our God, "Powerful is your arm!"

Lord, here is a great and hard rock; now wield

your great hammer, and the sparks shall fly,

and the adamant rock shall be broken into pieces.

Quarry your own stones, O God, and make them

fit for your temple, for "Powerful is your arm!"

Does God need any of us?

Spurgeon, "GOOD NEWS FOR THE AGED"

What! he who guides the stars, and keeps them revolving in their orbits by the motions of his fingers, does he need an insignificant atom like one of ourselves to serve him?

What! he whom all the hosts of angels do worship, and before whose throne the cherubim do veil their faces with their wings, does he need a tiny creature like man to give him homage and reverence?

If he did need men, he could soon create as many mighty kings and princes as he pleased to wait upon him, and he could have crowned heads to bow before his footstool, and emperors to conduct him through the world in triumph. But he needs not men; he can do without them if he pleases.

O you stars! you are bright; but you are not the lamps which light the way of God; he needs you not.

O sun! you are bright; but your heat warms not Jehovah.

O earth! you are beautiful; but your beauty is not needed to gladden his heart; God is glad enough without you.

O you lightnings! though you write his name in fire upon the midnight darkness, he needs not your brightness.

And you, wild ocean! you are mighty; but though you hymn his deep praise in your solemn chorus, your storms do not add to his glory.

You winds! though you attend the march of God across the pathless ocean; — you thunders! though you utter God's voice in terrible majesty, and track the onward progress of

the God of armies, he needs you not.

He is great without you, great beyond you, great above you;

and, as he needs you not, he needs us not.

OUR FATHER?

By Spurgeon

There are many who would like to be thought to be sons of God, and therefore every morning they wickedly say- "Our Father who art in heaven," though God is not their Father. If they were to say, "Our father," to him who is REALLY their father, they would pray to the devil, for God is no father of theirs.

And how is it that I am made to differ?

(John MacDuff, "The Prophet of Fire" 1877)

Let us adore the freeness of God's mercy,
and the sovereignty of His grace.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither
are His ways our ways. Man has generally
some reason for conferring his favors; some
claim arising from person or pedigree, from
character or attainments.

But God's sole motive in conferring favors is
His own free and gracious purpose. "It is not
of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of
God who shows mercy."

He takes a Manasseh filling Jerusalem with blood,
and makes him a monument of forgiveness.

He takes a Saul breathing out his blasphemies,
and converts him into the great Apostle.

He takes . . .

a crude heathen jailer, or

an unprincipled tax gatherer of Jericho, or

a profligate woman of Capernaum, or

a felon in his dying agonies, while

many encircled with the halo of natural virtues

or with the prestige of religious education and

training, are left to perish in their ungodliness

and unbelief and pride!

And it is the same principle we recognize still

in His dealings. He often passes by . . .
the great,
the powerful,
the rich,
the sophisticated,
the educated;
yes, even the virtuous and the amiable;
and He crowds the marriage supper of the King
from the highways and hedges;
with the poor and the illiterate;
the outcast and prodigal.

He often leaves palace and castle and stately
mansion and lettered hall; and enters the
humble cottage and the poor man's hovel.

He takes the children's bread and casts it
to Gentile dogs!

Many old companions; those at one time better
and more promising than I; have been long ago
scattered as wrecks on life's ocean, entangled
in the swirling vortex, and hurried down into
nameless depths of infamy.

And how is it that I am made to differ?

How is it that that tale of misery and ruin; that
which, in the case of others, has broken a parent's
heart, and sent him sobbing and halting to the grave;
how is it that I have escaped these dread temptations;
and that, while others have broken loose with a worse
than maniac's madness, I am this day sitting at the
feet of Jesus, clothed and in my right mind?

Not unto me, O God! not unto me!

But unto Your name be all the glory!

I read the reason, written in gleaming letters,
in the heights and depths of Your own Infinite
love. By Your grace, Your free, sovereign,
unmerited grace alone, I am what I am!

When God sang!

Spurgeon, "CHOICE PORTIONS"

There is an unrivaled picture in the word where the Lord is
even represented as SINGING WITH JOY OVER HIS PEOPLE.

Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song?

Yet it is written,

"He will rejoice over you with joy,

he will rest in his love,

he will rejoice over you with singing."

As he looked upon the newly CREATED WORLD, he spoke
and said, "It is very good," -but he did not sing.

And as he views the works of PROVIDENCE, I do not read that he sings.

But when he gazes on his people, the purchase of Jesus' blood, his
own chosen ones, the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself

no longer, but, wonder of wonders and miracle of miracles,

God, the Eternal One, sings out of the joy of his soul!

His providences may change, His heart cannot.

(Octavius Winslow, "Morning Thoughts")

"I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed." Malachi 3:6

The immutability of God forms a stable foundation of comfort for the believing soul. Mutability marks everything outside of God. Look . . .

into the church,

into the world,

into our families,

into ourselves,

what innumerable changes do we see on every hand!

A week, one short day, what alterations does it produce! Yet, in the midst of it all, to repose calmly on the unchangeableness, the faithfulness of God.

To know that no alterations of time, no earthly changes, affect His faithfulness to His people. And more than this; no changes in them, no unfaithfulness of theirs, causes the slightest change in God. Once a Father, always a Father; once a Friend, always a Friend.

His providences may change, His heart cannot.

He is a God of unchangeable love. Peace then, tried believer! Are you passing now through the deep waters?

Who kept you from sinking when wading through the last?

Who brought you through the last fire?

Who supported you under the last cross?

Who delivered you out of the last temptation?

Was it not God, your faithful, unchangeable God?

This God, then, is your God now, and your God forever
and ever! And He will be your guide even unto death!

The god of this apostate generation!

Don Fortner

The god of this apostate generation no more resembles the God of the Bible than a gnat resembles an angel. The puny, pygmy, frustrated god of our day, is an idol carved from the trees which grow wild in the dark forests of their depraved minds.

The God of the Bible is infinitely and indescribably above the gods of man's imagination.

The gods of Arminian, freewill, works religion cannot even be compared to the TRUE GOD (Isa. 46:9-11).

That God who truly is God has distinct attributes which set him apart from all the gods of men, four distinct attributes which specifically set him apart from the imaginary god of this apostate generation--

SOVEREIGNTY -Our God truly is God. He rules all things, everywhere, at all times absolutely. A god who wants or desires, or wills what he does not have, or what does not come to pass is no God at all (Isa. 45:7; 46:9-11; Psa. 115:3; 135:6).

HOLINESS - "Holy and reverend is his name." When Isaiah saw the LORD in his holiness, sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up, when he heard the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory," he fell on his face and confessed his sin before the thrice holy God (Isa. 6:1-8).

JUSTICE - The God of the Bible is, unlike all the gods of men, just and true. He always deals with all his creatures upon the basis of strict justice. He will by no means clear the guilty

(Ex. 34:7). Yet, this great sovereign, holy, and just God is infinitely and indescribably gracious.

GRACIOUS - He says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." He found a way to deliver his chosen from going down to the pit (Job 33:24). That way is the satisfaction of justice by the substitutionary sacrifice of his own dear Son (Isa. 53:4-6, 8, 9-11; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Why an infinitely gracious God permitted sin and suffering to enter the universe.

from Spurgeon's sermon, "The Spur" #943. John 9:4

A young convert, after finding peace with God, was heard to say, "I rejoice that I was a lost sinner."

Strange matter to be glad about, you will say, for of all things it is most to be deplored; but here was her reason: "Because God's infinite grace, and mercy, and wisdom, and all His attributes, are glorified in me as they never could have been had I not been a sinner and had I not been lost."

God has allowed moral and physical evil to come into this world to cause His infinite wisdom, grace, power, and all His other attributes, to be the better seen by the whole intelligent universe.

Sin, somehow or other, desperate evil as it is, will be overruled to display God's goodness.

Were there no sin there had been no Savior;

if no death, no resurrection;

if no fall, no new covenant;

if no rebellious race, no incarnation, no

Calvary, no ascension, no second advent.

Though we do not know, and perhaps shall never know the deepest reason why an infinitely gracious God permitted sin and suffering to enter the universe, yet we may at least be

encouraged this practical thought: God will be glorified in the overcoming of evil and its consequences.

Why does God allow the wicked to live and prosper in the world?

(from Edwards sermon, "The Final Judgment")

The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world must necessarily hate wickedness. Yet we see many wicked men flourishing. They live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. God allows so much injustice to take place in the world. Now it seems a mystery that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world is perfectly just. But at the final judgment all these wrongs shall be righted.

Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, have by their wickedness been the pests of mankind.

Many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honored as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, if we look no further than the present state, these things appear strange and

unaccountable. But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits.

God sometimes allows some of the holiest of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The wicked rule, while they are subject. The wicked are the head, and they are the tail. The wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed, yet are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets!

These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should allow it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment. And then the mystery is unraveled. For although God for the present keeps silence, and seems to let them alone; yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness. They shall then receive just punishment.

There are many things in the dealings of God towards men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them.

Though God allows things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course always. Comparatively speaking, the

present state of things is but for a moment.

When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honored, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed and put under their feet.

However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall at last have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

O man, plunge into this river!

(adapted from Spurgeon's sermon,

"Precious, Honorable, Beloved" #917.)

"I have loved you." Isaiah 43:4.

Come, heir of heaven, listen a moment.

God has loved you eternally. Before the stars

began to shine, and before the sun knew his

place and poured forth his oceans of light,

God loved you in particular!

He has loved you actively and effectually,

giving the unspeakable gift of His Only Begotten

Son for you! He has given you everything in Him;

a boundless ocean of love!

He has loved you supremely, better than the angels.

He has loved you unchangeably, never less,

and never more. In all your sin the same;

in all your sorrow still the same.

He has loved you immeasurably. You can never know

the heights and depths of your God's love to you.

O man, plunge into this river!

If you have hitherto gone wading into it up

to the ankles, now get heart high into it!

Yes, commit yourself to the fathomless

stream, and swim in it as in a sea of bliss!

"I have loved you."

Let that dwell richly in your heart, and ring out

celestial music for your comfort and delight!

Romans 8:28

(adapted from Winslow's, "All Things Working for Good")

It is palpably clear and emphatically true that all that occurs in the Lord's government of His people conspires for, and works out, and results in, their highest happiness, their greatest good.

The gloomiest and most painful circumstances in the history of the child of God, without a solitary exception, are all conspiring, and all working together, for his real and permanent good.

The painful and inexplicable dispensations, which at the present moment may be thickening and deepening around your path, are but so many problems in God's government, which He is working out to their certain, satisfactory, and happy results.

And when the good thus embosomed in the lowering cloud of some crushing providence, accomplishes its benevolent and heaven sent mission, then trial will expand its dark pinions and fly away; and sorrow will roll up its somber drapery and disappear.

All things under the government of an infinitely great, all wise, righteous, and beneficent Lord God, work together for good. What that good may be, the shape it may assume, the complexion it may wear, the end to which it may be subservient, we cannot tell. To our dim view it may appear an evil, but to God's far seeing eye it is a positive good.

Oh, truth most divine!

Oh, words most consolatory!

How many whose eye traces this page, it may be whose
tears bedew it, whose sighs breathe over it, whose prayers
hallow it, may be wading in deep waters, may be drinking
bitter cups, and are ready to exclaim: "All these things
are against me!"

Oh no, beloved of God, all these things are for you!

Do not be afraid!

Christ restrains the flood upon whose heaving bosom

He serenely sits. Christ controls the waters, whose
sounding waves obey the mandate of his voice.

Christ's cloudy chariot is paved with love!

Then, fear not!

Your Father grasps the helm of your storm tossed
bark, and through cloud and tempest will steer it
safely to the port of endless rest.

Will it not be a good, if your present adversity results in...

the dethronement of some worshiped idol;

in the endearing of Christ to your soul;

in the closer conformity of your mind to God's image;

in the purification of your heart;

in your more thorough fitness for heaven?

Will it not be a real good if it terminate...

in a revival of God's work within you;

in stirring you up to more prayer;

in enlarging your heart to all that love the same Savior;

in stimulating you to increased activity...

for the conversion of sinners,

for the diffusion of the truth,

and for the glory of God?

Oh yes! good, real good, permanent good must result

from all the Divine dispensations in your history.

Bitter repentance shall end in the experienced sweetness of Christ's love.

The festering wound shall but elicit the healing balm.

The overpowering burden shall but bring you to the tranquil rest.

The storm shall but quicken your footsteps to the Hiding place.

The north wind and the south wind shall breathe together

over your garden, and the spices shall flow out.

In a little while; oh, how soon! you shall pass away

from earth to heaven, and in its clearer, serener light

shall read the truth, often read with tears before,

"And we know that God causes everything to work

together for the good of those who love God and

are called according to His purpose for them."

What flowers of mercy!

Spurgeon, "David's Holy Wonder
at the Lord's Great Goodness"

What flowers of mercy have
bloomed in our pathway!

Let us thank God for the mercies we do
not see- the innumerable dangers from
which we are preserved; the great needs
which are supplied before we know them
to be needs; the needs which the Lord
our God is pleased to keep from us so
that we never know them.

From childhood up to youth, and on to
manhood, what flowers of mercy have
bloomed in our pathway! Superlative
love has marked out our lot.

What tender hands have led us!

What mighty arms have upheld us!

What a watchful eye has been fixed upon us!

"How precious also are your thoughts unto me,
O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should
count them, they are more in number than the sand."

The love of God!

Spurgeon, "The Love of God and the Patience of Christ"

"May the Lord direct your hearts

into the love of God..." 2 Thes. 3:5

Believer, God loves you as much as if there

were nobody else in all the world to love!

God can pour the infinite love of His heart

upon one object and yet, for all that, can

love ten thousand times ten thousand of

His creatures just as much.

Your Father loves each child as if He had no other!

Peer into this abyss of love!

Plunge into this sea!

Dive into this depth unsearchable!

Oh, that God might direct you into the

immeasurable greatness of this love!

Enter into this love by remembering its

antiquity. Some fight the great truth of

the eternal electing love of God. But to

me it is as wafers made with honey.

What music lies in that sentence, "Yes,

I have loved you with an everlasting love!"

When this great world, the sun, and moon

and stars, had not yet flashed the morning

of their little day, the Lord Jehovah loved

His people with an everlasting love.

In the Divine purposes, before the Lord

created the heavens and the earth, God
loved His own people.
He had chosen you, thought of you, provided
for you and made ten thousand forecasts of
loving kindness towards you before the earth was.
Beloved believer, you were engraved
on the hands of Christ even then!
Oh that the Lord would direct you into the
antiquity of His love. It shall make you greatly
prize that love to think that it had no beginning
and shall never, never have an end.
Again, think of the love of God as to its
infallible constancy. The unchangeable
Jehovah never ceases to love His people.
The love of God abides forever the same.
Since you have known Him He has never varied
in His love to you. When your love has grown
cold He has loved you. When you have grown
cruel He has loved you.
You have grievously provoked Him till He has
taken down His rod and made you smart. But
He has loved you in the smiting. With God
there is as much love in chastening as in caressing.
He never abates in fervor towards His ancient friends.
He has said, "I am the Lord. I change not.
Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."
I ask the Lord to direct us into the immutability
of His Divine love, for this is a great medicine in
the day of soul trouble. Whatever condition you

may be in, the Lord is still active in love towards you.

All true love goes towards purification.

And the true love of God goes that way with an invincible current that can never be turned aside. O believer, your God loves you so well that He will not let a darling sin stay in your heart. He loves you so strongly that He will not spare any iniquity in you.

The knowledge of His love will make your heart as sweet and aromatic as a chamber in which a box of precious ointment has been broken.

Oh, that you might be led into the innermost secret of the Lord's love till it shall saturate you, influence you, take possession of you, carry you away!

Beloved, let the love of God to you flow into your hearts and abide there until it settles down and bears on its surface the cream of love to God, yielded by your own heart.

The only way to love God is to let God's love to you dwell in your soul until it transforms your soul into itself.

Love to God grows out of the love of God.

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God..." 2 Thes. 3:5

An unfailing spring of joy and consolation!

"O Lord, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.

You know when I sit down or stand up.

You know my every thought when far away.

You chart the path ahead of me
and tell me where to stop and rest.

Every moment you know where I am.

You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, Lord.

You both precede and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to know!" Psalm 139:1-6

Jesus has a perfect knowledge of every event
that is transpiring in the remotest part of His
mighty empire. Heaven, earth, and hell, are all
unveiled before Him. His eyes, which are as a
flame of fire, are in every place, beholding the
evil and the good. He knows perfectly well what
is the present inclination of our minds; whether
our hearts are absorbed with the empty pleasures
of earth, or whether we love Him supremely.

This is an unfailing spring of joy and consolation
for the real Christian. How inspiring to feel that
we have a Savior who knows all our needs; whose
eye is ever upon us for good; whose ear is always

opened to our petitions. 'For the eyes of the Lord watch over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers.'

Come then, you afflicted, tempest tossed child of earth, and lay all your sorrows before an omniscient and compassionate Savior!

Make all your desires known to Him.

He has....

a willing ear to hear you,

a willing heart to love you,

a willing hand to save you!

"O Omniscient Savior, we beseech You to watch over us amid all the scenes of earth. We are still on the 'ocean of life', exposed to its storms and its tempests; but while the waves dash on every side of us, may we see Your glorious Form on the troubled sea; may we hear Your animating voice, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; do not be afraid.' May we rejoice in the belief that You know all things, and are intimately acquainted with all our ways. Guide us with Your counsel. Show us the path of life. Be our guiding Star until we reach the harbor of eternal rest. Be very near us in all the wanderings of our earthly pilgrimage."

from David Harsha's, "A Guide to the Savior"

Hell is full of the Divine holiness!

(Winslow, "Holiness, the Fruit of the Chastening of Love")

Hell is full of the Divine holiness; holiness
in the manifestation of justice; holiness in
its most glorious exercise.

How fearfully are the lost now learning this truth!
Think it not a trifling matter, unconverted reader,
to look into the bottomless pit, and to know that
there is but a step and you are there! You walk to
the end of the treacherous plank, and you are gone!
O solemn thought! but one step between you and
the quenchless flame! but one step between you
and endless torment!

Throughout eternity the lost soul will be testifying
to this truth: "God is holy; I was a sinner; I rejected
His salvation, I turned my back upon His gospel,
I despised His Son, I hated God Himself, I lived in
my sins, I loved my sins, I died in my sins, and now
I am lost! to all eternity lost! And God is righteous
in my condemnation!"

The fierceness and wrath of Almighty God!

Edwards, "Sinners In Zion Tenderly Warned"

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens will disappear with a roar, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10

The heat of that great fire which will burn the world, will be such as to melt the rocks, and the very ground, and turn them into a kind of liquid fire, so that the whole world will probably be converted into a great lake, or liquid globe of fire, a vast ocean of fire, in which the wicked shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day nor night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads.

But all this will be only an image of that dreadful fire of the wrath of God, which the wicked shall at the same time suffer in their souls.

We read in Rev. 19:15 of "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." This is an extraordinary expression, carrying a terrible idea of the future misery of the wicked.

If it had been only said of the wrath of God that would have expressed what is dreadful.

If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion,

what is the wrath of God? But it is not only said
the wrath of God, but the fierceness and wrath
of God, or the rage of his wrath; and not only so,
but the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

O what is that! the fierceness and rage
and fury of Omnipotence! of a being of
infinite strength! What an idea does
that give of the state of those worms
that suffer the fierceness and wrath
of such an Almighty Being!

Infinite!

by Matthew Mead

"Alas! it is an infinite righteousness that must satisfy for our sins, for it is an infinite God that is offended by us. If ever your sin be pardoned, it is infinite mercy that must pardon it; if ever you be reconciled to God, it is infinite merit must do it; if ever your heart be changed, and your soul renewed, it is infinite power must effect it; and if ever your soul escape hell, and be saved at last, it is infinite grace must save it."

An idol is an idol

(J. C. Philpot, "Prevailing Pleas" 1865)

"Son of man, these leaders have set up idols
in their hearts! They have embraced things
that lead them into sin." Ezekiel 14:3

An idol is an idol, whether worshiped inwardly
in heart, or adorned outwardly by the knee.

Therefore, give the people of Israel this message
from the Sovereign Lord: "Repent and turn away from
your idols, and stop all your loathsome practices. I,
the Lord, will punish all those, both Israelites and
foreigners, who reject Me and set up idols in their
hearts, so that they fall into sin." Ezekiel 14:6-7

Pride, worldliness, and covetousness

(J. C. Philpot, "Contemplations & Reflections")

Pride, worldliness, and covetousness may reign rampant, where grosser sins are not committed, or kept hidden from observation.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know!

I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives." Jeremiah 17:9-10

Disaster!

(John MacDuff, "A Book for the Bereaved")

"Does disaster come to a city, unless
the Lord has done it?" Amos 3:6

"Does disaster come to a city," to the cottage,
to the palace--is there disaster which blights
some unknown poor man's dwelling--is there
disaster which clothes a nation in mourning,
"unless the Lord has done it?"

"I create both light and darkness; I make both
blessing and disaster. I, the Lord, do all these
things." Isaiah 45:7

"This is what the Lord says: As I brought all
these disasters on these people." Jer. 32:42

"Therefore the Lord has brought all this
disaster on them." 1 Kings 9:9

"Behold, I will bring disaster upon you.
I will utterly burn you up." 1 Kings 21:21

"Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel:
Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah
such disaster that the ears of everyone who
hears of it will tingle!" 2 Kings 21:12

"Thus says the Lord, behold, I will bring disaster upon
this place and upon its inhabitants." 2 Chronicles 34:24

"Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster
upon this people." Jeremiah 6:19

God's perfect will

(J. C. Philpot, "The Living Sacrifice Presented" 1856)

"That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Romans 12:2

God's will is "perfect". In it, there is . . .

no spot,

no stain,

no weakness,

no error,

no instability.

It is and indeed must necessarily be as perfect as God Himself; for it emanates from Him who is all perfection; and is a discovery of His mind and character.

But when God's perfect will . . .

sets itself against our flesh,

thwarts our dearest hopes,

overturns our fondest schemes,

we cannot see that it is a perfect will. But rather, are much disposed to fret, murmur, and rebel against it.

God's perfect will may . . .

snatch a child from your bosom;

strike down a dear husband;

tear from your arms a beloved wife;

strip you of all your worldly goods;

put your feet into a path of suffering;

lay you upon a bed of pain and languishing;

cast you into hot furnaces or overwhelming floods;

make your life almost a burden to yourself!

How can you, under circumstances so trying and distressing as these, acknowledge and submit to God's perfect will; and let it reign and rule in your heart without a murmur of resistance to it?

Look back and see how God's perfect will has, in previous instances, reigned supreme in all points, for your good. It has ordered or overruled all circumstances and all events, amid a complication of difficulties in providence and grace. Nothing has happened to your injury; but all things have worked together for your good.

Whatever we have lost, it was better for us that it was taken away. Whatever . . .

property,

or comfort,

or friends,

or health,

or earthly happiness we have been deprived of, it was better for us to lose, than to retain them.

Was your dear child taken away? It might be to teach you resignation to God's sacred will.

Has a dear partner been snatched from your embrace? It was that God might be your better Partner and undying Friend.

Was any portion of your worldly substance taken away? It was that you might be taught to live a life of faith in the providence of God.

Have your fondest schemes been marred; your

youthful hopes blighted; and you pierced in the warmest affections of your heart? It was . . . to remove an idol, to dethrone a rival to Christ, to crucify the object of earthly love, so that a purer, holier, and more enduring affection might be enshrined in its stead. To tenderly embrace God's perfect will is the grand object of all gospel discipline. The ultimatum of gospel obedience is to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His. "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Romans 12:2

THE god OF THIS GENERATION?

by A.W. Pink

The "god" of this twentieth century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the mid-day sun.

The god who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday School, mentioned in most of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences is a figment of human imagination, an invention of over-emotional sentimentality.

The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their own carnal minds.

In reality, they are but atheists;

FOR THERE IS NO OTHER POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE BETWEEN
AN ABSOLUTE SUPREME GOD AND NO GOD AT ALL!

A "god" whose will is resisted,

whose designs are frustrated,

and whose purpose is checkmated,

possesses no title to Deity, and

SO FAR FROM BEING A FIT OBJECT OF WORSHIP,

MERITS NOTHING BUT CONTEMPT!

God's heart!

O God, I read Your heart
in the cross,
in the wounds,
in the tears,
in the anguish,
in the blood of Your Son Jesus.
Octavius Winslow

Monuments of his mercy?

From Spurgeon's, "THE SILVER TRUMPET"

Christ is a great Savior to meet the great transgressions of great rebels with a great salvation.

The vast machinery of redemption was never undertaken for a little purpose.

There must be a great end in so great a plan, carried out at so great an expense, guaranteed with such great promises, and intended to bring such great glory to God.

The 'plan of salvation' has in it all the wisdom of God.

The 'purchase of salvation' has in it the fullness of the grace of God. The 'application of salvation' is an exhibition of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, and all these three attributes in their greatness could not have conspired together for any but a great and marvelous purpose.

There is no knowing how long God's arm is, these is no telling how precious Christ's blood is, until you have felt the power of it yourself, and then you will wonder as long as you live, even through eternity, and you will be astonished to think that the blood of Christ could save such a wretch as you are, and make YOU the monument of his mercy.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PROMISES

By Spurgeon

The promises of God are to the believer an 'inexhaustible mine of wealth'. Happy is it for him if he knows how to search out their secret veins and enrich himself with their hidden treasures.

They are an 'armory', containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword.

They are a 'pharmacy', in which the believer will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs; nor lacks there an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knows how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God.

The promises are to the Christian a 'storehouse of food'.

They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise, and break them till his five thousand necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments.

Yes, they are the 'jewel room' in which the Christian's crown treasures are preserved. The regalia are his, secretly to admire today, which he shall openly wear in Paradise hereafter. He is already privileged as a king with the silver

key that unlocks the strong room; he may even now grasp the scepter, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle.

O, how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had the tongue of the mightiest of orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceeding great and precious promises of God. Nay, they who have entered into rest, whose tongues are attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even they can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure house of God-- the promises of the covenant of His grace.

The fire of God's anger!

by Thomas Vincent

The fire of God's anger before it breaks
forth into so vehement a flame may now
be quenched by the blood of Jesus Christ;
and the fire of hell may be prevented.

But hereafter it will be too late.

No sacrifice will be accepted then to
appease God's wrath, and if all the
waters of the sea could be poured upon
the flames of hell fire, they could not put
them out. This fire will be ever burning, and
the damned will be ever tormented therein.

Extremity and eternity are the two most
bitter ingredients of the damned's torments.

Who can set forth the eternity of the
wicked's punishment in hell fire?

This eternity is immeasurable.

It is incomprehensible.

How long will eternity last?

Always.

When will eternity end?

Never.

As long as heaven shall continue to be
heaven, and God shall continue to be
God, and the saints shall be happy in
the enjoyment of God; so long shall the

wicked be tormented in the fire of hell.

We may apprehend the everlastingness of
this fire of hell, but we cannot comprehend it.

Secret wickedness!

from Edwards, "The Final Judgment"

Some of you live in secret wickedness.

Consider that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practice many things, you indulge many lusts, under the covert of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do in the light of the sun, and before the world.

All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men.

Before this Judge shall be brought the most "hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart.." 1 Cor. 4:5.

All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them.

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not

be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house tops." Luke 12:2, 3

Consider, that there is a God in heaven who beholds you, and sees how you conduct yourself.

Justice shall assuredly take place at last. God on the day of judgement, will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that day will be like the fire, which burns up whatever is not true gold. Wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day.

The Judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be colored over.

"Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. For behold the day comes that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts."

Malachi 3:2; 4:1

All your secret abominations!

Spurgeon, "Plain Directions to Those Who Would Be Saved from Sin"

"The ways of man are before the eyes of
the Lord; and he ponders all his goings."

Proverbs 5:21

God is everywhere present, at all times.

He has seen all your evil ways.

No night is so dark as to hide from His eyes.

No chamber so retired as to shut Him out.

He has even read your thoughts and imaginations.

He notes all and forgets nothing.

All things are ever present to Him.

The days of your youth and the years of your
manhood lie open before Him like a book.

If you could but realize that God is there, how
could you dare to sin before His very eyes?

Will you sin in God's presence?

Can you blaspheme Him to His face?

Will you disobey Him while His eyes are fixed upon you?

Remember that this God, who is everywhere,
and sees everything, is your Judge.

He is pure and holy and cannot bear iniquity.

He is angry with the wicked every day and
will surely visit them for their transgressions.

Every sinful act shall have its recompense of reward.

God is almighty. He has but to will it and the
strongest of us would be crushed more easily

than a moth.

There is no escaping from the Lord. Neither
the heights of Carmel nor the depths of
the sea could afford shelter for a fugitive
from the Lord. Neither can any resist Him,
for none have any power apart from Him.
You have heard His thunder, and trembled
at the bolts of His lightning. Behold how
dreadful is God in his wrath!
How dare you sin against a God so great!
Trifle not, for the Judge is at the door!

NATURE

Spurgeon, "Joshua's Obedience" No. 796.

NATURE is a looking-glass in

which I see the face of God.

I delight to gaze abroad, and "Look
through nature, up to nature's God."

We may delight ourselves in the works
of God, and find much pleasure therein,
and get much advanced towards God
himself by considering his works.

Power, love, kindness, faithfulness, wisdom, goodness

Power,

love,

kindness,

faithfulness,

wisdom,

goodness

"We trust him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never wane, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution!"

-Spurgeon

Deluged with love!

God is the fountain of love, as
the sun is the fountain of light.

Every stream of holy love, yes, every drop
that is, or ever was, proceeds from God.

In heaven, this glorious God is manifested, and
shines forth, in full glory, in beams of love.

And there this glorious fountain forever flows
forth in streams, yes, in rivers of love and delight,
and these rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of
love, in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe
with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it
were, be deluged with love!

-Spurgeon

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

"Perhaps the most serious, sobering thing my mind has ever contemplated is the fact that I am always in the presence of God. God cannot be shut out anywhere. Even in the most secret recesses of my mind and the deepest, most secluded imaginations of my heart, God is there. Everything I think, say, and do is done in the immediate presence of God. This fact should cause me to be filled with reverence and godly fear and with great joy too. God is present everywhere to save, preserve, and comfort his elect."

-Don Fortner

Wonders of mercy!

Matthew Henry's comments on the parable
of the prodigal son.

His father saw him-- there were eyes of mercy;

he ran to meet him-- there were legs of mercy;

he put his arms round his neck-- there were arms of mercy;

he kissed him-- there were kisses of mercy;

he said to him-- there were words of mercy;

Bring here the best robe-- there were deeds of mercy;

Wonders of mercy-- all mercy!

Oh, what a God of mercy he is!

Oh, what a precious reception for one of the chief of sinners!

Divine Foreknowledge

By Arthur Pink

"Great is our Lord, and of great power.

His understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5

God not only knows whatsoever has happened in the past in every part of His vast domains, and He is not only thoroughly acquainted with everything that is now transpiring throughout the entire universe, but he is also perfectly cognizant of every event, from the least to the greatest, that will ever happen in the ages to come!

God's knowledge of the future is as complete as is His knowledge of the past and the present; and that because the future depends entirely upon Himself.

Were it in anyway possible for something to occur apart from either the direct agency or permission of God, then that something would be independent of Him and He would at once cease to be Supreme.

That's power!

Spurgeon, "A WILLING PEOPLE AND AN IMMUTABLE LEADER"

The everlasting God exhibits more power in 'turning a sinner from the error of his ways', than in the creation of a world, or the sustentation of a universe!

There is no power like it! Should a man command the mighty waterfalls to congeal and stand in heaps- if they should obey him, he would not have worked a miracle half so mighty as that which God works in the heart when he bids the floods of sin to cease flowing!

Could I command Mount Etna with its flames and smoke to cease its ebullitions and should it at once be still, I had not worked a deed so mighty as when God speaks to a boiling heart sending forth fire and smoke, and bids it stay.

God's people are willing in the day of his power, willing to submit to sovereign grace, to give themselves up into the hands of the Mediator, to hang simply on his cross for salvation.

Without holiness

(Stephen Charnock)

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty!" Isaiah 6:3

If every attribute of the Deity were a distinct member,
holiness would be the soul to animate them.

Without holiness . . .

His patience would be an indulgence to sin,

His mercy a fondness,

His wrath a madness,

His power a tyranny,

His wisdom an unworthy subtlety.

Holiness gives decorum to them all.

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" Rev. 4:8

PITYING LOVE

by John McDuff

"Like as a father pities his children, so
the Lord pities those who fear Him." Ps. 103:13

"Abba, Father!" is a Gospel word.

A father bending over the sick bed of his weak or
dying child; a mother pressing, in tender solitude,

an infant sufferer to her bosom. These are the
earthly pictures of God. "As a father pities." "As one
whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you!"

When tempted in our season of overwhelming sorrow
to say, "Never has there been so dark a cloud, never
a heart so stripped and desolate as mine," let this
thought hush every murmur, "It is your Father's good
pleasure!"

The love and pity of the most tender parent is but
a dim shadow compared to the pitying love of God.

If your heavenly Father's smile has for a moment been
exchanged for the chastening rod; be assured there is
some deep necessity for the altered discipline.

If there be unutterable yearnings in the soul of the
earthly parent as the lancet is applied to the body
of his child; infinitely more is it so with your covenant
God as He subjects you to those deep wounds of heart!

Finite wisdom has no place in His ordinations.

An earthly father may err; is always erring.

But "as for God His way is perfect."

This is the explanation of His every dealing with you: "Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things!"

Trust His heart when you cannot trace His ways.

Without one misgiving commit your way to Him.

While now bending your head like a bulrush; your heart breaking with sorrow; remember His pitying eye is upon you. Be it yours, even through blinding tears, to say, "Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure!"

All is well

(Henry Law, "Deuteronomy" 1858)

How varied are the stations of man's calling!

How diverse are their positions in life!

Some reign in palaces;

some toil in cottages.

Some feast at plenty's table;

some pine in poverty's contracted cells.

Purple and splendor deck the rich man;

Lazarus lies a beggar at the gate.

Some work at looms;

others in fields.

Some climb the mast;

others handle the spade.

Some exercise the mental powers;

others strain the muscles of the body.

Some soar in literature's highest flights;

some crawl illiterate to the grave.

But perfect Wisdom rules these varieties

on life's stage. No being enters or recedes,

but in accordance with God's will.

He speaks; they live.

He speaks; they die.

Entrance and exit are in His hand.

At His decree all kings, all beggars,

breathe and expire.

Both times and stations are allotted

by His mind.

He raises to the pinnacles of earth;

or veils in seclusion.

He leads to walks known and observed by all;

or hides in garrets of obscurity.

Let then the child of God live, rejoicing in his
day and lot. No change would be improvement.

He best can serve his generation, and advance
his soul concerns, by working cheerfully in his
assigned position.

Believer . . .

banish your fears;

cast out all doubts;

lift up the happy head;

clap the exulting hands;

rejoice;

give thanks.

Your heavenly Father cannot set you in wrong place.

Your loving Savior cannot lead you in wrong paths.

All is well.

The Eternal Watcher!

By Spurgeon

In all our wanderings, the watchful glance of
the Eternal Watcher is evermore fixed upon us--
we never roam beyond the Shepherd's eye.
In our sorrows, He observes us incessantly,
and not a pain escapes Him.
In our toils, He marks all our weariness and writes
in His book all the struggles of His faithful ones.
The watchful eye of the Lord encompasses us in all our
paths and penetrates the innermost regions of our being.

God's first and greatest object?

From Spurgeon's, INDEPENDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

GOD'S first and greatest object is his own glory.

There was a time, before all time, when there was no day, except the Ancient of days- when God dwelt alone in the magnificence of his sublime solitude.

Whether he should create, or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question-

"Would it be to his honor or not?"

He determined that he would glorify himself by creating; but, in creating, beyond all doubt, his motive was his own glory.

And since that time, he has ever ruled the earth, and blessed it with the same object in his infinite mind- his own glory and honor.

A lesser motive for God to have, would be less than divine.

The very highest virtue of God is for him to magnify himself in all his greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal.

Whatever, then, God permits or does, he does with this one motive- his own glory.

And even salvation, costly though it was, and infinitely a benefaction to us, had for its first object, and for its grand result, the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

It is the highest position to which you or I could attain-- to live for God.

All in all to all eternity!

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Even So, Father!"

I have all in all to all eternity, when I can call God my Father.

"Father!"

He that can lisp that word upon his knees has uttered
more eloquence than Demosthenes or Cicero ever knew!

Abba, Father! He that can say that, has uttered
better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach!

Abba, Father! There is heaven in the depth of that word!

"Father!"

There is all that I need!

All that I can ask!

All that my necessities can demand!

All that my wishes can contrive!

"Father!"

The Spirit

(David Harsha, "The Savior's Ascension")

The Spirit is given to supply the Savior's absence,
and to apply to our souls the redemption finished
on Calvary. It is His blessed work to glorify Jesus;
to testify of Him.

Through His power we are renewed; sanctified;
filled 'with all joy and peace in believing,' and
'abound in hope' of a blissful immortality.

The Spirit reveals the Savior to our souls in a
manner that renders Him exceedingly precious
in our estimation. He shows us....

His excellence;

the perfections of His divine nature, as the
brightness of the Father's glory;

His power, as the Creator of all things;

His wisdom;

His immutability;

His eternity.

The Spirit exhibits to us....

the amazing love of Jesus to sinners;

the wonders of His incarnation;

the amiableness of His life on earth;

the spotless purity of His character;

the unparalleled sufferings of His life;

the fruits of His death, resurrection;

ascension, and intercession.

The Spirit shows us His suitableness to our needs as sinners; points us to Calvary, and whispers in our ears the cheering truth, that we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.

The Spirit comforts us amid all the tribulations of earth, by assuring us that our trials are but light and momentary, by perfecting His strength in our weakness, by bringing to our remembrance the many precious words of the Lord Jesus, by communicating to us the things of God, by lifting our hearts above the world, and by pointing us to a home of rest and glory beyond the skies; where tribulation, and anguish, and death, never come.

Yes, by His divine power thus operating on our minds, He enables us to look far beyond the present; to direct faith's far reaching eye to our Father's house, and the fountains of immortal life, flowing through those 'sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,' the sight of which makes us long to be there, that we may see Jesus as He is, and taste His goodness on the shores of the promised land.

Holiness

(J. A. James, "The True Christian" 1846)

"You ought to live holy and godly lives." 2 Peter 3:11

Holiness is a very comprehensive word, and expresses a state of mind and conduct that includes many things.

Holiness is the work of the Spirit in our sanctification.

Holiness is the fruit of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Holiness is the operation of the new nature, which we receive in regeneration.

Holiness may be viewed in various aspects, according to the different objects to which it relates.

Toward God, holiness is . . .

supreme love;

delight in His moral character;

submission to His will;

obedience to His commands;

zeal for His cause;

seeking of His glory.

Toward Christ, holiness is . . .

a conformity to His example,

imbibing His spirit.

Toward man, holiness is . . .

charity,

integrity,

truth,

mercy.

Toward sin, holiness is a hatred of all iniquity,

a tender conscience easily wounded by little sins,
and scrupulously avoiding them; together with a
laborious, painful, self-denying, mortification of
all the known corruptions of our heart.

Toward self, holiness is . . .

the control of our fleshly appetites;

the eradication of our pride;

the mortification of our selfishness.

Toward divine things in general, holiness is . . .

spirituality of mind,

the habitual current of godly thought,

godly affections flowing through the soul.

And, toward the objects of the unseen world,

holiness is heavenly-mindedness, a turning away

from things seen and temporal, to things unseen

and eternal.

Oh, what a word is holiness! How much does
it comprehend! How little is it understood, and
how much less is it practiced!

Heart affecting views?

(Thomas Reade, "Christian Experience")

How difficult it is to get heart affecting views . . .

of sin,

of Christ,

of hell, and

of heaven.

We talk about them, but alas! how little

are we practically affected by them.

Nothing but the Spirit of Christ can

open our eyes to see . . .

the deformity of sin,

the preciousness of the Savior,

the misery of hell,

the bliss of heaven.

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The Spirit's work in salvation

by Spurgeon

The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell--

the human heart; and then the man stands aghast--

"I never thought I was like this!

Oh! those sins I thought were little,
have swelled to an immense stature.

What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain;
it was a hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon."

Then the man says to himself, "Oh, I will try to reform; I will do enough 'good' deeds to wash these 'black' deeds out."

Then the Holy Spirit comes and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his 'fancied' power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that-

'Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
You must save, and You alone.' "

Then his heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair.

He says, "I can never be saved. Nothing can save me."

Then the Holy Spirit comes and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and

says, "Look to yonder cross. That Man died to save sinners;
you feel you are a sinner; He died to save you."

And then the Holy Spirit enables the heart to believe,
and come to Christ.

That Heavenly Teacher

(Philpot, "Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers")

We do not learn that we are sinners merely
by reading it in the Bible. It must be wrought,
I might say, burnt into us.

Nor will anyone sincerely and spiritually cry for
mercy, until sin is spiritually felt and known . . .

in its misery,

in its dominion,

in its guilt,

in its entanglements,

in its wiles and allurements,

in its filth and pollution, and

in its condemnation.

Where the Holy Spirit works, He kindles . . .

sighs,

groans,

supplications,

wrestlings, and

pleadings

to know Christ, feel His love, taste the efficacy
of His atoning blood, and embrace Him as all
our salvation and all our desire.

And though there may, and doubtless will be,

much barrenness, hardness, deadness, and

apparent carelessness often felt; still that

heavenly Teacher will revive His work, though

often by painful methods; nor will He let the quickened soul rest short of a personal and experimental enjoyment of Christ and His glorious salvation.

The transforming power of the Spirit!

(J. C. Ryle, "The Lord's Garden")

"To all those in Rome who are loved by God
and called to be saints." Romans 1:7

Believers are separated from the world by the
effectual working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit
calls them out from the world, and separates
them as effectually as if a wall were built
between them and it. He puts in them . . .

new hearts,

new minds,

new tastes,

new desires,

new sorrows,

new joys,

new wishes,

new pleasures,

new longings.

He gives them . . .

new eyes,

new ears,

new affections,

new opinions.

He makes them new creatures. They are born
again--and with a new birth they begin a new
existence. Mighty indeed is the transforming
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The decipherer...

by Toplady

To unconverted persons, a great part of the Bible resembles a letter written in ciphers.

The blessed Spirit's office is to act as God's decipherer, by letting His people into the secret of celestial experience, as the key and clew to those sweet mysteries of grace which were before as a garden shut up, or as a fountain sealed, or as a book written in an unknown character.

Practical Predestination?

by Octavius Winslow

There are no guesses, conjectures, or contingencies with God as to the future. Not only does He know all, but He has fixed, appointed, and ordered "all things after the counsel of his own will."

It would seem impossible to form any correct idea of God, disassociated from the idea of predestination. The sole basis of predestination is the 'practical' belief that God is eternal and infinite in and over all.

Predestination is God's pre determined appointment and fore arrangement of all things beforehand, according to His divine and supreme will.

God prearranges, predetermines, and supremely rules in all the concerns of our world. He fixes a constellation in the heavens, guides the gyrations of a bird in the air, directs the falling of an autumn leaf in the pathless desert, and conveys the seed, borne upon the wind, to the spot where it should fall.

In predestination we see the everlasting love of God to, and His most free choice of, His people, to be His special and peculiar treasure. What doctrine is more emptying, humbling, and therefore sanctifying, than predestination? It lays the axe at the root of all human boasting. In the light of this truth, the most holy believer sees that there is no difference between him and the vilest sinner that crawls the earth, but what the mere grace of God has made.

One blessing accruing from the doctrine of predestination is the sweet and holy submission into which it brings the mind under all afflictive dispensations. Each step of his pilgrimage, and each incident of his history, the believer sees appointed in the everlasting covenant of grace. He recognizes the 'discipline' of the covenant to be as much a part of the original plan as any positive mercy that it contains. That all the hairs of his head are numbered; that affliction springs not out of the earth, and therefore is not the result of accident or chance, but is in harmony with God's purposes of love; and, thus ordained and permitted, must work together for good.

The radiance which predestination reflects upon the entire history of the child of God, and the calm repose which it diffuses over the mind in all the perplexing, painful, and mysterious events of that history, can only be understood by those whose hearts have fully received this doctrine. Whatever betides him; inexplicable in its character, enshrouded in the deepest gloom, as may be the circumstance; the believer in this truth can 'stand still', and, calmly surveying the scene, exclaim: "This also comes forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. He who works all things after the counsel of His own will has done it, and I am satisfied that it is well done!"

Angels damned, men saved?

From Spurgeon's sermon, "ELECTION AND HOLINESS"

God has CHOSEN to himself a people whom no man can number,
out of the children of Adam- out of the fallen and
apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man.

Now, this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider
that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's.

If God must have a chosen race, why did he not select one
from the majestic orders of angels, or from the flaming
cherubim and seraphim who stand around his throne?

Why was not Gabriel fixed upon?

Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might
spring a mighty race of angels, and why were not these
chosen by God from before the foundations of the world!

What could there be in man, a creature lower than the angels,
that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits?

Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ?

Why did he not take up angels?

Why did he not assume their nature, and take them into
union with himself? An angelic body might be more in
keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and
suffering flesh and blood. There were something congruous
if he had said unto the angels, "You shall be my sons."

But, no! though all these were his own, he passes
by the hierarchy of angels, and stoops to man!

He takes up an apostate worm, and says unto him,
"You shall be my son," and to myriads of the same race he cries,

"you shall be my sons and daughters, by a covenant for ever."

"But," says one, "It seems that God intended to choose a FALLEN people that he might in them show forth his grace. Now, the angels of course would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there ARE angels that have fallen; there were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness for ever? Answer me, you that deny God's sovereignty, and hate his election -- how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the gospel of Christ is freely preached? The only answer that can possibly be given is this--

God wills to do it.

He has a right to do as he pleases with his own mercy.

Angels deserve no mercy: we deserve none.

Nevertheless, he gave it to us, and he denied it them.

They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved.

Why, if there were any reason to move God in his creatures, he would certainly have chosen devils rather than men--

Had the angels been reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we; they could have sang his praises louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood.

But passing by the greater, he chose the lesser, that he might show forth his sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of his divinity!

Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question- for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of election. They call it unjust, that

God should choose one man and not another. By what reasoning can this be unjust, when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race -- the race of men, and leave another race -- the race of angels, to be sunk into misery on account of sin? Brethren, let us be done with arraigning God at our poor fallible judgment seat!

God is good and does righteousness.

Whatever he does we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or not.

God's Election is marvelous indeed--

God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if he willed to make a people who should be his favorites, who should be united to the person of his Son, and who should reign with him, why did he not make a NEW RACE?

When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the earth out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it.

There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten forever!

But no! Instead of making a new people- a pure people who could not sin, instead of taking to himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot- he takes a depraved and fallen people, and lifts these up, and that, too, by costly means-- by the death of his own Son, and by the work of his own Spirit; that these must be the jewels in his crown to reflect his glory for ever!

Oh, singular choice!

Oh, inexplicable Election!

My soul is lost in your depths, and I can only pause and cry-

"Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the SOVEREIGNTY of God's grace!"

Now, when you think that God has chosen YOU,

you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn-

"Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!

Ask, O why such love to ME?"

Kings passed by and beggars chosen! Wise men left,

but fools made to know the wonders of his redeeming love!

Publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast

of mercy; while proud religious people are allowed to trust in

their own righteousness, and perish in their vain boastings!

God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men

to be a very strange one-- He has passed over those whom

we should have selected, and he has chosen just the odds

and ends of the universe, the men who thought themselves

the least likely ever to taste of his grace!

Before your sovereignty, I bow, great God, and

acknowledge that you do as you wish, and that

you give no account of your matters.

The Plan!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"A Feast for Faith" No. 715. Isaiah 28:29.

God does not work without a plan.

God has not left the world to chance.

There are some men who are always kicking against the doctrine of an eternal purpose, and who grow angry if you assert that God has settled what shall occur.

It is by the consent of all agreed that men are foolish if they work without a plan, and yet they cry out when we insist that God also, in all his working, is fulfilling a well arranged design.

Depend upon it, however, let men rebel against this truth as they will, that God has determined the end from the beginning.

He has left no screw loose in the machine, he has left nothing to chance or accident.

Nothing with God is the subject of an "if" or a "peradventure," but even the agency of man, free as it is, as untouched and undisturbed as if there were no God, even this is guided by His mysterious power, and works out thoroughly His own purpose in every jot and tittle.

God wings the thunderbolt, and shall He not guide the most passionate spirit?

God puts a bit into the mouth of the whirlwind,
and shall He not control the most ambitious will?
God takes care that even the sea shall come no
farther than He bids it, and shall not the heart
of man be equally subject to the Divine purpose?
Yielding to man his free agency, giving to him his
responsibility, leaving him as free as if there were
no purpose and no decree, yet the eternal Jehovah
works out His plans, and achieves His purpose to
the praise of His glory.

Everything that has moved or shall move in heaven,
and, earth, and hell, has been, is, and shall be,
according to the counsel and foreknowledge of God,
fulfilling a holy, just, wise, and unalterable purpose!

God is wonderful in His design and excellent in His working.

Believer, God overrules all things for your good.

The needs-be for all that you have suffered, has
been most accurately determined by God.

Your course is all mapped out by your Lord.

Nothing will take Him by surprise. There will be
no novelties to Him. There will be no occurrences,
which He did not foresee, and for which, therefore,
He was not provided. He has arranged all, and
you have but to patiently wait, and you shall
sing a song of deliverance.

Your life has been arranged on the best possible
principles, so that if you had been gifted with
unerring wisdom, you would have arranged a life
for yourselves exactly similar to the one through

which you have passed.

Let us trust God where we cannot trace Him.

In the end we shall read the whole of God's purpose as one grand poem, and there will not be one verse in it that has a syllable too much, or a word too little. There will not be one stanza or letter redundant, much less one that is erased.

But from beginning to end we shall see the master pen and the master-mind drawing forth the glorious array of majestic thoughts. And with angels, and seraphs, and principalities, and powers, shall burst forth into one mighty song, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

We shall see how from the first even to the last, the King has been ruling all things according to His own will.

A base heathenish invention!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"The Voice of the Cholera" No. 705. Amos 3:3-6.

The word "chance" should be forever
banished from the Christian's conversation.

Luck or chance is a base heathenish invention!

God rules and overrules all things,
and he does nothing without a motive.

The falling of a sparrow to the earth is in
the divine purpose, and answers an end.

Every grain of dust that is whirled from the
threshing-floor is steered by God with as
unerring a wisdom as the stars in their courses.

There is not a leaf that trembles in the
autumn from the tree but is piloted by
the plan and purpose of the Lord.

The insatiable archer of death is not
permitted to shoot his bolts at random.

Every arrow that flies bears this inscription,

"I have a message from God for you."

A purpose, consistent with the love and justice
of God, lies hidden in the harvest of death.

Hands off, wicked and profane wretches!

by Thomas White

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

For good! Yes; but it is only to those that are good.

Hands off, wicked and profane wretches!

You have no part nor lot in these heavenly consolations.

Away, base swine, to your sties, to your muck and mire!

These pearls are not for you.

Out, you dogs, to the garbage that lies upon the dunghill!

Just the facts, please...

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Jacob and Esau"

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Romans 9:15.

There is a man up in the gallery there, that, work as hard as he likes, he cannot earn more than fifteen shillings a week.

And here is another man that gets a thousand a year.

What is the reason of this?

One is born in the palaces of kings,

while another draws his first breath in a roofless hovel.

What is the reason of this? God's providence--

God puts one man in one position, and another man in another.

Here is a man whose head cannot hold two thoughts together, do what you will with him. Here is another who can sit down and write a book, and dive into the deepest of questions.

What is the reason of it? God has done it.

Do you not see the fact that God does not treat every man alike?

He has made some eagles, and some worms;

some he has made lions, and some creeping lizards;

he has made some men kings, and some are born beggars.

Some are born with gigantic minds, and some verge on the idiot.

Why is this?

Do you murmur at God for it?

No. You say it is a fact, and there is no good in murmuring.

What is the use of kicking against facts?

It is only kicking against the pricks with naked feet, and you hurt yourself and not them.

Well, then, election is a positive fact.

It is as clear as daylight, that God does, in matters of religion,
give to one man more than to another.

He gives to me opportunities of hearing the word,
which he does not give to the Hottentot.

He gives to me, parents who, from infancy, trained me in
the fear of the Lord. He does not give that to many of you.

He places me afterwards in situations where I am restrained from sin.

Other men are cast into places where their sinful passions are
developed.

He gives, to one man a disposition which keeps him back from some lust,
and to another man he gives such impetuosity of spirit, and depravity
turns that impetuosity so much, that the man runs headlong into sin.

Again, he brings one man under the sound of a powerful ministry,
while another sits and listens to a preacher whose drowsiness
is only exceeded by that of his hearers.

And even when they are hearing the gospel, the fact is
God works in one heart when he does not in another.

Though, I believe to a degree, the Spirit works in the hearts of all
who hear the Word, so that they are all without excuse, yet I am sure
he works in some so powerfully, that they can no longer resist him,
but are constrained by his grace to cast themselves at his feet,
and confess him Lord of all; while others resist the grace that comes
into their hearts; and it does not act with the same irresistible
force that it does in the other case, and they perish in their sins,
deservedly and justly condemned.

Are not these things facts?

Does any man deny them?

Can any man deny them?

What is the use of kicking against facts?

What, then, is the use of our discussing any longer?

We had better believe it, since it is an undeniable truth.

You may alter an opinion, but you cannot alter a fact.

You may change a mere doctrine, but you cannot possibly change a thing which actually exists.

There it is--God does certainly deal with some men better than he does with others. I will not offer an apology for God; he can explain his own dealings; he needs no defence from me.

There stands the fact. Before you begin to argue upon the doctrine, just recollect, that whatever you may think about it, you cannot alter it; and however much you may object to it, it is actually true that God did love Jacob, and did not love Esau.

WHY did God love Jacob?

Because of his sovereign grace.

There was nothing in Jacob that could make God love him; there was everything about him, that might have made God hate him, as much as he did Esau, and a great deal more. But it was because God was infinitely gracious, that he loved Jacob, and because he was sovereign in his dispensation of this grace, that he chose Jacob as the object of that love.

"He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy."

And rest assured, the only reason why any of us can hope to be saved is this- the sovereign grace of God. There is no reason why I should be saved, or why you should be saved, but God's own merciful heart, and God's own omnipotent will.

ETERNAL, ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION!

Spurgeon- "The Incarnation and Birth of Christ"

Oh! we love the sublime doctrine of eternal absolute predestination.

Some have doubted whether predestination is consistent with the free agency of man.

We believe that man does as he pleases, yet notwithstanding he always does as God decrees.

Man does as he wills; but God makes him do as He wills, too.

No, not only is the will of man under the absolute predestination of Jehovah; but all things, great or little, are of him.

There is nothing great or little, that is not from him.

The summer dust moves in its orbit, guided by the same hand which rolls the stars along.

The dewdrops have their father, and trickle on the rose leaf as God bids them.

Yes, the sear leaves of the forest, when hurled along by the tempest, have their allotted position where they shall fall, nor can they go beyond it.

In the great, and in the little, there is God working all things according to the counsel of his own will.

And though man seeks to go against his Maker, yet he cannot.

Everything is ordained by God!

Unto Him who guides the stars and sparrows,

who rules planets and yet moves atoms,
who speaks thunders and yet whispers zephyrs,
unto Him be glory!

Subdued by sovereign love!

(The following is by Spurgeon)

"All that the Father gives me shall come to me."

- John 6:37

This declaration involves the doctrine of election--

there are some whom the Father gave to Christ.

It involves the doctrine of effectual calling--

these who are given must and shall come; however

stoutly they may set themselves against it, yet they

shall be brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

It teaches us the indispensable necessity of faith--

for even those who are given to Christ are not saved

except they come to Jesus.

Even they must come, for there is no other way to heaven

but by the door, Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives to

our Redeemer must come to him, therefore none can come

to heaven except they come to Christ.

Oh! the power and majesty which rest in the words

"shall come." He does not say they have power to come,

nor they may come if they will, but they "shall come."

The Lord Jesus does by his messengers, his word, and

his Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come

in that they may eat of his marriage supper. And this he

does, not by any violation of the free agency of man,

but by the power of his grace.

Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments

addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons

appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of his Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he yields cheerfully to his government, subdued by sovereign love!

But how shall those be known whom God has chosen?

By this result-- that they do willingly and joyfully accept Christ, and come to him with simple and sincere faith, resting upon him as all their salvation and all their desire.

Reader, have you thus come to Jesus?

I have many people in this city!

"I have many people in this city."

Acts 18:10

(by Spurgeon)

This should be a great encouragement to try to do good, since God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who must be saved.

When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs. They are as much redeemed by blood as the saints before the eternal throne.

They are Christ's property, and yet perhaps they are lovers of the ale house, and haters of holiness.

But if Jesus Christ purchased them he will have them. God is not unfaithful to forget the price which his Son has paid. He will not allow his substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing.

Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is our comfort when we go forth to them with the quickening Word of God.

No, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I

for these alone," says the great Intercessor,
"but for those also who shall believe on me
through their word." Poor, ignorant souls, they
know nothing about prayer for themselves,
but Jesus prays for them.

Their names are on his breastplate, and
before long they must bow their stubborn
knee, breathing the penitential sigh before
the throne of grace.

The predestinated moment has not struck;
but when it comes, they shall obey, for
God will have his own; they must, for the
Spirit is not to be withstood when he comes
forth with fulness of power; they must
become the willing servants of the living God.

"He shall justify many. "

"He shall see of the travail of his soul."

"My people shall be willing in the day of my power."

Our Pilot!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

"Multitudinous Thoughts and Sacred Comforts" #883.

Remember that your way is ordered by a higher power than your will and choice.

The eternal destiny of God has fixed your every footstep. Believe that wisdom, not blind fate, but God's wisdom, has ordained the bounds of your life, and fixed your position and your condition so definitely that no fretfulness of yours can change it for the better.

In the decree of God, all your history is fixed, so as to secure his glory and your soul's profit.

Your present sorrow is the bitter bud of greater joy. Your transient loss secures your ultimate and never ceasing gain.

How I rejoice to believe that the Lord shall choose my inheritance for me!

All things are fixed by my Father's hand, by no arbitrary and stern decree, but by his wise counsel and tender wisdom. He who loved us from before the foundations of the world, has immutably determined all the steps of our pilgrimage!

Why then, should you worry yourself?

There is a hand upon the helm which shall

steer your vessel safely enough between
the rocks, and by the quicksands, and away
from the shoals and the headlands, through
the mist, and through the darkness, safely
to the desired haven.

Our Pilot never sleeps, and his
hand never relaxes its grasp.

It is a blessed thing, after you have been
muddling and meddling as you ought not to do
with the affairs of providence, to leave them
alone and cast your burden upon the Lord.

I charge you, therefore, children of God, in
times of dilemma, to roll your burdens upon
God, and he will sustain you, and make you to
rejoice in beholding his wisdom and his love.

His chosen ones?

by Spurgeon

In the very beginning, when this great universe was in the mind of God, like unborn forests in a cup of acorns; long before the echoes walked in the quiet solitudes; before the mountains were brought forth; and long before the light flashed through the sky, God loved His chosen men and women. Before there were men and women--when the heavens were not yet fanned by an angel's wing; when space itself did not exist; when there was nothing but God alone; even then, in that loneliness of Deity, and in that deep quiet and depth, His heart moved for His chosen ones. Their names were written on His heart, and they became dear to His soul.

For this God is our God for ever and ever;

he will be our guide even to the end. Psalm 48:14

Even then!

by Spurgeon

In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in
the mind of God like unborn forests in the acorn-cup,
long before the echoes walked the solitudes,
before the mountains were brought forth,
and long before the light flashed through the sky,
God loved His chosen creatures!

Before there was creatureship--when the ether was not
fanned by angel's wing, when space itself had not an
existence, when there was nothing except God alone--
even then, in that loneliness of Deity and in that deep quiet
and profundity, His love moved for His chosen people.
Even then their names were written on His heart,
and they were dear to His soul.

How ravishing is the thought!

"A Song Concerning Lovingkindnesses" #1126,
delivered on August 10th, 1873 by C. H. Spurgeon

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love!
Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

Jeremiah 31:3

How ravishing is the thought of eternal love!

Try to drink it in--if you are a believer in Christ
you were loved before time began its cycles; in
that old eternity, before the earth was born, you
were beloved of the Lord!

You were dear to Jehovah's heart when this great
world--the sun, the moon, the stars, slept in the
mind of God--like unborn forests in an acorn-cup.

He loved you with an everlasting and infinite love.

Rejoice in this and let your souls be glad. Never
forget that the special electing love of God is
the source of every blessing.

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love!
Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

Jeremiah 31:3

The softest pillow and the strongest staff?

From Spurgeon's sermon, A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT

I am persuaded that the doctrine of predestination is one of the 'softest pillows' upon which the Christian can lay his head, and one of the 'strongest staffs' upon which he may lean, in his pilgrimage along this rough road.

Cheer up, Christian!

Things are not left to chance!

No blind fate rules the world!

God has purposes, and those purposes are fulfilled!

God has plans, and those plans are wise,
and never can be broken!

Your trials always come to you at the right moment--

The language of your faith should be, "Great God, I leave my times and seasons in your hand, for well I know if you smite me again and again, and again, it is that you may multiply blessings to me, that my manifold trials may produce in me manifold blessings."

So be of good cheer, my hearer. He knows when your strength is spent, and you are ready to perish, then shall the Sun of Righteousness arrive with healing beneath his wings.

Your deliverances from trouble shall always come to you in time enough; but they shall never come too soon, lest you be proud in your heart.

Learn, believer, to be resigned to God's will.

Learn to leave all things in his hand.

'Tis pleasant to float along the 'stream of providence'.

There is no more blessed way of living, than the
life of faith upon a covenant-keeping God--
to know that we have no care, for he cares for us;
that we need have no fear, except to fear him;
that we need have no troubles, because we have cast our burdens
upon the Lord, and are conscious that he will sustain us.

THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE

by Don Fortner

"And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord:

and they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

-- Jeremiah 24:7

There are some men and women in this world whom God has chosen to salvation from eternity, who must and shall be saved (John 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13).

There is a multitude, scattered among the fallen sons of Adam, in every age, in every nation who must be saved.

The number of God's elect is so great that no man can calculate it, though it always appears as only a remnant at any given time.

The number is unalterably fixed by God.

All the elect must be saved.

Nothing can prevent their salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ has made atonement for the sins of God's elect and redeemed them from the curse of the law by his own precious blood (Gal. 3:13). Contrary to popular opinion, Christ did not die for all men. He refused to even pray for all men (John 17:9, 20). All his work was and is for his elect alone. To say otherwise is to declare that his work, his atonement, his intercession, all his work as the sinner's Substitute was and is futile, meaningless, and vain.

The death of Christ was for his particular, chosen, elect people (Isa. 53:8; John 10:11) for the satisfaction of justice on their behalf.

All God's elect, having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, shall be called from death to life by the irresistible power and almighty grace of God the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:13-14; Psa. 65:4; 110:3). Repentance toward God, faith in Christ, and eternal life are the results of the Spirit's call. These are things effectually wrought in God's elect (not offered to them) by his almighty grace. There is specific day appointed by God in which each of his elect will be called to life and faith in Christ by the gospel (Psa. 110:3; Ezek. 16:68). God will see to it that the sinner whom he has chosen will be in the place he has ordained, with his heart thoroughly prepared to receive the gospel, at the appointed time. And he will send his Word to that sinner in the irresistible power and grace of the Holy Spirit. In that day, God says, regarding every chosen, redeemed sinner, "They shall be my people."

Electing love!

Electing love has selected some of
the worst of men to be made the best.
Pebbles of the brook Grace turn into
jewels for the Savior's crown. Worthless
dross he transforms into pure gold.
Redeeming love has set apart many of
the worst of mankind to be the reward
of the Savior's passion and death.
Effectual grace calls forth many of the vilest
of the vile to sit at the table of mercy."
Spurgeon

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

(by Don Fortner)

The Lord our God is a God of purpose-
absolute and unalterable purpose.

God's purpose must and shall be accomplished.

Before the world was made, before
time began, almighty God sovereignly
purposed all that comes to pass.

Everything that is, has been, and shall hereafter
be, was purposed by God from eternity.

Everything in the universe is moving toward the
predestined end of God's eternal purpose with
absolute, precision and accuracy.

Everything that comes to pass in time
was purposed by our God in eternity.

(1.) The purpose of God is eternal.

(2.) The purpose of God includes all things.

(3.) The purpose of God has for its particular
design the spiritual and eternal benefit of
God's elect. Everything God has purposed
is for the ultimate, spiritual, and eternal
blessedness of his covenant people.

(4.) The purpose of God is immutable and sure.

That which comes to pass in time is exactly
what God purposed from eternity.

(5.) In its ultimate end, God's purpose will
accomplish the eternal salvation of his elect

and the glory of his own great name.

All God's elect shall be saved.

Not one of Christ's sheep shall perish.

Every sinner redeemed by blood shall be
saved by grace and crowned with glory.

The purpose of God demands it.

The law of God demands it.

Justice satisfied, cannot punish those
for whom it has been satisfied.

The Sovereign Electing Grace of God!

The following is from Spurgeon's sermon,

The Widow of Sarepta. #817. 1 Kings 17:8, 9.

None of us have any right to God's mercy.

Election is an indisputable truth of Christianity, and one full of the richest comfort to the child of God- one which is intended to kindle in him perpetual flames of adoring gratitude. It is a truth which lays him low, and makes him feel that there is nothing in him, and then raises him up and bids him, like a seraph, adore before the throne!

Distinguishing grace is a fact; prize this truth and hold it firmly. Thank God that you are made a partaker of his eternal love.

The sovereign electing grace of God chooses us to repentance, to faith, and afterwards to holiness of living, to Christian service, to zeal, and to devotion.

Election should be to you savory meat such as Isaac's soul loved; and as you feed upon it you will become like the three holy children in Babylon, both fatter and fairer and more lovely than those who have not received this precious truth.

Nature!

(Winslow, "The Nature and Necessity of Experimental Religion")

The spiritual mind, fond of soaring through nature
in quest of new proofs of God's existence, and fresh
emblems of His wisdom, power and goodness, exults in
the thought that it is his Father's domain he treads!
He feels that God, his God, is there.

And the sweet consciousness of His all pervading
presence, and the impress of His great perfections
which everywhere meets his eye, overwhelm his
renewed soul with wonder, love, and praise.

O the delight of looking abroad upon nature,
under a sense of pardoning, filial love in the soul
when enabled to exclaim, "this God is my God!"

"The heavens tell of the glory of God.

The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship.

Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make Him known.

They speak without a sound or a word;
their voice is silent in the skies;

yet their message has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to all the world." Psalm 19:1-4

Why did God create the world?

from Spurgeon's, "Divine Destruction and Protection"

Can your minds fly back to the time when there was no time,
to the day when there was no day but the Ancient of Days?

Can you speed back to that period when God dwelt alone,
when this round world and all the things that are upon it,
had not come from his hand; when the sun flamed not in his
strength, and the stars flashed not in their brightness?

Can you go back to the period when there were no angels,
when cherubim and seraphim had not been born;
and, if there be creatures older than they,
when none of them had as yet been formed?

Is it possible, I say, for you to fly so far back as to contemplate
God alone- no creature, no breath of song, no motion of wing-
God himself alone, without another?

Then, indeed, he had no rival- none then could
contest with him, for none existed.

All power, and glory, and honor and majesty
were gathered up into Himself.

And we have no reason to believe that he was less glorious than
He is now, when his servants delight to do his pleasure;
nor less great than now, when he has crested worlds on worlds,
and thrown them into space, scattering over the sky, stars with
both his hands.

He sat on no precarious throne;
he needed none to add to his power;
he needed none to bring him a revenue of praise;

his all-sufficiency could have no lack.

Consider next, if you can, the eternal purpose of God that he would 'create'.

He determines it in his mind.

Could any but a divine motive actuate the Divine Architect?

What must that motive have been?

He creates that he may display his own perfections.

He does beget, as it were, creatures after his own image that he may live in them; that he may manifest to others the joy, the pleasure, the satisfaction, which he so intensely feels in himself.

I am certain his own glory must have been the end he had in view! He would reveal his glory to the sons of men, to angels, and to such creatures as he had formed, in order that they might reflect his honor and sing his praise.

Praise God!

From Spurgeon's, DAVID'S DYING PRAYER

"All your works praise you, O God"

The stars still sing their Maker's praise; no sin has stopped their voice, no discord has made a jarring note among the harmonies of the spheres.

The earth itself still praises its Maker, the exhalations, as they arise with morn, are still a pure offering, acceptable to their Maker.

The lowing of the cattle, the singing of the birds, the leaping of the fishes, and the delights of animal creation, are still acceptable as votive offerings to the Most High.

The mountains still bring righteousness; on their hoary summits God's holy feet might tread, for they are yet pure and spotless.

Still do the green valleys, laughing with their verdure send up their shouts to the Most High.

The praise of God is sung by every wind it is howled forth in dread majesty by the voice of the tempest, the winds resound it, and the waves, with their thousand hands, clap, keeping chorus in the great march of God.

The whole earth is still a great orchestra for God's praise, and his creatures still take up various parts in the eternal song, which, ever swelling and ever increasing, shall by-and-by mount to its climax in the consummation of all things.

THE BOOK OF NATURE

By Spurgeon

The book of NATURE is an expression of the thoughts of God.

We have God's terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning;

God's loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze;

God's bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving
harvest and in the ripening meadow.

We have God's brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes
which are beheld from mountain-top and valley; and we
have God's most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty
in the little flowers that blossom at our feet.

All is transparent and harmonious to His eye!

(From Octavius Winslow's, "My Times in God's Hand")

We live in a world of mysteries.

They meet our eye, awaken our inquiry,
and baffle our investigation at every step.

Nature is a vast arcade of mysteries.

Science is a mystery.

Truth is a mystery.

Religion is a mystery.

Our existence is a mystery.

The future of our being is a mystery.

And God, who alone can explain all mysteries,
is the greatest mystery of all. How little do
we understand of the inexplicable wonders of a
wonder working God, "whose thoughts are a great
deep," and "whose ways are past finding out."

But to God nothing is mysterious.

In His purpose, nothing is unfixed.

In His forethought, nothing is unknown.

In His providence, nothing is contingent.

His glance pierces the future as vividly
as it beholds the past. "He knows the
end from the beginning."

All His doings are parts of a divine,
eternal, and harmonious plan.

He may make "darkness his secret place; His
pavilion round about him dark waters, and

thick clouds of the skies," and to human vision
His dispensations may appear gloomy, discrepant,
and confused. Yet He is "working all things
after the counsel of His own will," and all is
transparent and harmonious to His eye!

I follow like a little blind child

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

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Strong faith has a firm persuasion of God's over-ruling Providence--so comprehensive as to include the destinies of empires and worlds; and so minute as to extend to individuals. Strong faith believes that God's Providence is . . . ever active, ever directing, ever controlling, and ever subordinating all things to His own purposes and plans.

Strong faith is a conviction of this great truth--so deep, so satisfying, and so tranquilizing--as not at all to be shaken by the chaotic aspect of human affairs, or the prevalence of gigantic evils.

A weak faith must give way before . . . the deep mysteries, the confounding events, the defeats of what is good, and the triumphs of what is evil, which are perpetually going on in our world's history.

The stream of Providence is . . . so twisting, so dark,

apparently so murky, and
occasionally so devastating;
that it requires strong faith believe that it is the
work of God and not of chance; and that if it is the
work of God--it must be just, and wise, and good.
In the darkest dispensations of Providence affecting
ourselves, strong faith realizes that it is all from God;
and must therefore be wise, and just, and good. To be
able really say, "It is well. I am sure it is right. I cannot
tell how it is right. I do not understand why this deep
afflictive Providence came. I can find no key to unlock
the mystery. But I am as confident that it is right, as if
God's whole purpose were transparent to my reason, and
I could see the event in all its connections, bearings, and
results. I cannot see how or why--but I believe that my
deep affliction is for God's glory and my ultimate benefit. I
know that God causes everything to work together for good."
Faith assures us that the darker, the more confounding, the
more disappointing events--are all right and just, and good.
Strong faith walks on amid shadows and darkness, grasping
the arm of God, believing that He is leading us, and will lead
us right. Strong faith gives up all into His hands, saying,
"I cannot even see a glimmering of light! I cannot see where
to place my next step! But I can most implicitly trust in the
wisdom, power, and truth of God! I follow like a little blind
child, grasping the hand of his father!"
Times of great troubles and difficulties, are seasons and
opportunities for the exercise of faith. God is always the
Christian's best refuge--and often his only one! He is

sometimes reduced to extremity, and is compelled to say,
"He alone is my rock and my salvation! My help comes only
from the Lord! No one else will help me--no one else can!"
Sense and reason both fail. No door of escape presents
itself--nor any way of relief. There is nothing left for him
to do, but to take up the promise and carry it in the hand
of faith, knock by prayer at the door of mercy, and as he
stands there to say, "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone!
My hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my
salvation! He is my fortress, I will not be shaken. Yes,
Lord, You have bid me come, when I could go nowhere
else. And here according to your command and promise I
will remain--waiting, trembling, yet believing and hoping.
I am sure You will come and help me. My heavenly Father
knows the necessities of His poor helpless child, and He
will come in His own time, and in His own way, and I will
wait for him. My bread will be given me, and my water
will be sure."

Whoever complains of seasons and weather!

(William Law, A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE)

All things are in the hands of God, have Him for their Author, are directed and governed by Him to such ends as are most suitable to His wise providence.

Whoever murmurs at the course of the world, murmurs at God who governs the course of the world.

Whoever complains of seasons and weather, and speaks impatiently of times and events, repines and speaks impatiently of God, who is the sole Lord and Governor of times, seasons, and events.

When we look at those things which are under the direction of God, and governed by His providence, we are to receive them with praise and gratitude.

We must adore God in the greatest public calamities, like plagues and famines, as things that are allowed by Him, for ends suitable to His wisdom and glory in the government of the world.

There is nothing more suitable to the piety of a Christian, than thus to approve, admire, and glorify God in all the acts of His general providence; considering the whole world as His particular family, and all events as directed by His wisdom.

Laws of nature?

(John MacDuff, "Memories of Patmos")

"In an instant, I, the Lord Almighty, will come
against them with thunder and earthquake
and great noise, with whirlwind and storm
and consuming fire." Isaiah 29:6

Winds, and earthquakes, and tempests are not
the capricious outbreaks of unregulated mechanical
force. The laws of nature are, in the loftiest sense,
the exponents and expressions of God's higher will.
Let us not dethrone and undeify the great Maker
and Sustainer, by substituting for His sovereign rule
what are called the laws of nature.

The world's vast machinery, with all its varied
and intricate movements, is under His supervision
and control.

"He holds the winds in His fists."

"He gathers the waters in the hollow of His hand."

"He makes the clouds His chariot."

"He directs the snow to fall on the earth,
and tells the rain to pour down."

This offers a lesson of soothing consolation
to many a stricken heart. That lightning which
struck down my child was an arrow out of
the quiver of God!

That wave which swept him from the vessel's
side; or that hurricane which overthrew my

dwelling, and buried loved ones in the ruins,
had their pathway marked out by God!
He brings forth the lightning out of His treasures!
He gives the sea its decree!
He walks on the wings of the wind!
All things are subservient to the controlling
will and purposes of the Most High God.
"Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that both calamities and good things come?"
Lamentations 3:38

This city has so aroused My anger and wrath!

(John Angell James, "The Crisis--or, Hope and Fear
Balanced, in Reference to the Present Situation of
the Country" Sunday Morning, Nov. 28, 1819)

"From the day it was built until now, this city has so
aroused My anger and wrath that I must remove it
from My sight!" Jeremiah 32:31

Let us devoutly acknowledge both the source and
the justice of our calamities. The origin of the evils
that afflict us, is often to be found in the sins which
disgrace us.

Sin is the only thing in all the universe which God
hates, and this He abhors wherever He discovers it.
With our limited understanding, and feeble powers of
moral perception, it is impossible for us to form an
adequate idea of the evil of sin, or the light in which
it is contemplated by a God whose understanding
is infinite, and whose purity is immaculate. That law
which men are daily trampling upon, equally without
consideration, without reason, and without penitence,
is most sacred in His eyes, as the emanation and the
transcript of His own holiness. He is also omnipresent
and omniscient. There is not a nook or corner of the
land from which He is excluded. Of every scene of
iniquity He is the constant, though invisible witness.
The whole mass of national guilt, with every the
minutest particular of it, is ever before His eye!

His justice, which consists in giving to all their due, must incline Him to punish iniquity--and His power enables Him to do it!

He is the moral governor of the nations, and concerned to render His providence subservient to the display of His attributes. And if a people so highly favored as we are, notwithstanding our manifold sins, escape without chastisement--will not some be ready to question the equity, if not the very exercise of His administration?

His threatenings against the wicked are to be found in almost every page of holy Scripture. Nor are the threatenings of the Bible to be viewed in the light of mere unreal terrors, as clouds and storms which the poet's pencil has introduced into the picture; the creatures of his own imagination, and only intended to excite the imagination of others.

No! They are solemn realities, intended to operate by their denunciation as a check upon sin; or if not so regarded, to be endured in their execution as a punishment upon our sins! Scripture gives us many examples in which this has happened. It has preserved an account of the downfall of nearly all the chief empires, kingdoms, and cities of antiquity; and that, not as a mere chronicle of the event, but as a great moral lesson to the world. Scripture carefully informs us, that sin was the cause of their ruin!

Volcanoes terrify with their eruptions, and submerge towns or cities beneath their streams of lava!

Earthquake's convulsive throes bury a population
beneath the ruins of their own abodes!

Hurricanes carry desolation through a country!

Famine whitens the valleys with the bones of the
thousands who have perished beneath its reign!

Pestilence stalks through a land, hurrying
multitudes to the tomb, and filling all that
remain with unutterable terrors!

Wars have been agents in the unparalleled
scenes of bloodshed and misery!

Scripture proclaims that these are to be regarded
as a fearful exposition of the evil nature of
sin, written by the finger of God upon the tablet
of the earth's history!

Visit, in imagination, my countrymen, the spots
where many of these cities once stood, and you
shall see nothing but desolation stalking like a
specter across the plain, lifting its eye to heaven,
and exclaiming, amidst the silence that reigns
around, "The kingdom and the nation that will
not serve You, shall utterly perish!" As you stand
amidst the moldering fragments of departed
grandeur, does not every breeze, as it sighs
through the ruins, seem to say, as a voice from
the sepulcher, "See, therefore, and know that it
is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord!"

Let us devoutly acknowledge both the source and
the justice of our calamities. The origin of the evils
that afflict us, is often to be found in the sins which

disgrace us.

"From the day it was built until now, this city has so
aroused My anger and wrath that I must remove it
from My sight!" Jeremiah 32:31

Sovereign, supreme disposal

(J. C. Philpot, "Meditations on Ephesians")

"And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and He gave Him this authority for the benefit of the church." Ephesians 1:22

God has put all things, events, and circumstances under the authority of Christ! How vast, how numerous, how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the children of God here below, as they travel onward to their heavenly home! What an intricate maze they often seem, and how much they appear opposed to us, as if we never could get through them, or scarcely live under them!

Yet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which Jesus has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to His disposal.

There is not . . .

a trial,

a temptation,

an affliction of body or soul,

a loss,

a cross,

a painful bereavement,

a vexation,

a grief,

a disappointment,

a case, state, or condition,

which is not put under Jesus' authority!

He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events

and circumstances! As possessed of infinite knowledge,

He sees them. As possessed of infinite wisdom, He can

manage them. As possessed of infinite power, He can

dispose and direct them for our good and His own glory!

How much trouble and anxiety we would save ourselves,

could we firmly believe, realize, and act on this! If we

could see by the eye of faith that . . .

every foe and every fear,

every difficulty and perplexity,

every trying or painful circumstance,

every looked-for or unlooked-for event,

every source of anxiety, whether at present or in prospect,

are all under His dominion, and at His sovereign disposal--what

a load of anxiety and care would be taken off our shoulders!

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

Matthew 28:18

Pestilence! Famine! Earthquake!

(Bonar, "Man's Misconceptions of the Works of God")

"By His mighty acts He governs the people."

Job 36:31

God's purpose comes in contact with earth and its dwellers; not generally and by means of laws, but directly and minutely. His will, His voice, His hand, His arm, all come into contact with this world, as well as with all other worlds, the creations of His power.

He has not left them alone.

He sustains and rules as truly as He creates them. Not for a moment does He let go his hold.

He is the governor among the nations.

He rules by His power forever.

His eyes behold the nations. He does according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

It is with no distant, unheeding God that we have to do; but with that God who fixes the bounds of our habitation, who counts our hairs, who feeds the ravens, notes a sparrow's death, and clothes the lilies of the field.

God governs the people by means of the changes of nature. We use "nature" for lack of a better word. We mean earth and sky with all their motions, and alternations, and transformations, great and small,

all "natural phenomena" as they are called.

These phenomena, or appearances, appear to us common things; by some ascribed to "chance", by others to "laws of nature."

Here they are ascribed directly to God.

They are . . .

His voice by which He speaks to us;

His finger by which He touches us;

His rod by which He corrects us;

His sword, by which He smites us.

It seems to be the thought of many, that in none of these can we or ought we to recognize, directly and specially, the interposition of God; that it is fanaticism to interpret them so as to make them special messengers of God to us.

But the words before us are very explicit, "By His mighty acts He governs the people."

The things by which He is here said to govern the people, are the common things of the day and year--the rain, the clouds, the lightning, and such like. He uses these as His voice in . . .

warning,

or commanding,

or chastising,

or comforting.

These common things do not come by chance, or at random, or by dead law, but go out from God as His messengers. Thus everything has a divine meaning and a heavenly voice. Let

us listen and interpret and understand.

Summer speaks to us with its green fields and
fragrant gardens; winter speaks to us with its
ice and snow and frost. By these God governs
the people . . .

the pestilence,

the famine,

the earthquake,

the lightning,

the storm,

the shipwreck,

the overthrow of kingdoms and kings.

Each of these has a special message to the
nations--and to each of us. Let us see God
drawing near to us in them; showing His care
and love, manifesting an unwearied concern
for our welfare.

Woe to us if we either misinterpret them,
or refuse to interpret them at all.

The common daily changes of personal or family
life, all speak in the same way. Not only the
sweeping calamity that carries off its hundreds;
but the sickness, the pain, or the gentle
indisposition--these have a voice to us.

He who has an ear, let him hear!

We disjoin God from creation, and so see
nothing in it of divine life and power.

We disjoin God from the changes of creation,
and so find no meaning in these.

We disjoin God from the beautiful or the terrible,
and so realize nothing in them which overawes, or
attracts, or purifies, or comforts.

We have so learned to separate between God
and the 'works of God', that we seem to imagine
that they contradict each other. The fair sky,
and the clear stream, and the green hills--all
speak of divine goodness.

This separation of God from His works is one
of the awful features of human unbelief.

How much more of Him would we know, were
we to interpret His works aright, and hear His
voice in each, whether in love or discipline.

"By His mighty acts He governs the people."

Job 36:31

Building air-castle upon air-castle!

(John MacDuff, "Thoughts for the Quiet Hour", 1895)

He who goes about whining all day long about some imaginary drawbacks in the sphere which Providence has assigned him--when all the while he is situated so much better than thousands around--is a suicide of his own happiness! He is also impeaching the faithfulness of the Supreme Ordainer and Disposer.

One half of life's enjoyment is eaten out by this sinful craving after what cannot be obtained--the desire for something supposed to be better. Yes, but when "the better" is reached, there is the yearning for an imagined "better" still. This is building air-castle upon air-castle!

If in these days there be one household demon more than another which needs to be exorcized--it is the demon of discontent!

Oh, for the spirit of Paul--poor and lonely prisoner in Rome as he was--an apparent bankrupt in all that the world deems wealth and affluence--yet who could make this entry in his letter to his Philippian friends--"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. At the moment I have all I need--more than I need!"

A glory, a beauty, and a sweetness

(J. C. Philpot, "The Secret of the Lord" 1844)

How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence . . .
to look back on the chequered path that He has led us by;
to see how His hand has been with us for good;
what difficulties He has brought us through;
in what straits He has appeared;
how in things most trying He has wrought deliverance;
and how He has sustained us to the present hour.
How sweet are providential favors when they come
stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!"
How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our
very food, lodging, and clothing!
How sweet is the least thing when it comes down
to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the
sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God
gives it to him—nor the blessedness of any providential
dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me—and
given that to me." When a man sees the providence of
God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, a
beauty, and a sweetness over every day of his life!

God's providential reign

(Octavius Winslow, The Lord's Prayer)

This world is not. . .

a kingdom without a throne,

a throne without a sovereign,

or a sovereign without a scepter.

By no blind accident are the

affairs of this planet governed.

God is in the history of the world . . .

its past,

its present, and

its yet unshapen future.

The statesman and the politician may

not recognize this fact; but it is so.

God rules the kingdom of providence.

His hand is moving and controlling all events

and circumstances, national and social, public

and private; giving birth, and shape, and tint

to those phenomena in the history of nations,

and to those affairs in the history of individuals,

which to human perception are often enshrouded

in mystery so dreadful and profound.

Let this view of God's providential reign hush

all murmurings at our lot, making us content

with such things as we have, assured that He

will never leave us nor forsake us.

Let it bow our soul in meek submission to His

sovereign will, in view of those painful and inexplicable events which sometimes cast the darkest shade upon our sunniest landscape, and dash from our lips their sweetest cup of joy.

Let it incite our gratitude for the blessings loaned us so long, though now removed; and for the blessings which still remain to soothe, and gladden, and cheer us onward.

Let it strengthen our faith in the

Divine assurance that . . .

our daily bread shall be given us,
our path shielded amid encircling evil,
and our soul, guided by His counsel and kept by His power, eventually and safely conducted home to glory.

"Yes, Lord, the kingdom of providence is Yours, and I would see Your hand, and trace Your wisdom, and taste Your goodness in all the shaping and tinting of my whole history. I would deal alone with You in all the lights and shadows of my daily life. Those lights and shadows are of Your penciling, O Lord. If joy thrills my heart, it is of Your inspiration. If sorrow breaks it, it is of Your sending. Teach me that I have, in all things, to do only with You."

But God also prepared a worm!

(John MacDuff, "The Prophet of Fire" 1877)

"And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased some of his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the gourd.

But God also prepared a worm! When the morning rose the next day, it smote the gourd so that it soon died and withered away." Jonah 4:6-7

There is surely great comfort in the thought that the bounds of our life are divinely appointed . . .

Our lots in life,

our occupations,

our positions,

our dwellings,

what the fatalist calls 'our destinies',

what heathen mythology attributed to 'the Fates';

all this is marked out by Him who "sees the end from the beginning."

It is He who takes us to a place of solitude.

It is He who takes us from solitude.

It is He who takes us to our sweet shelters of prosperity, with their sparkling brooks of joy.

It is He who, when He sees fit, sends the worm.

Oh, it is our comfort to know, in this mysterious,

raveled, varied life of ours, that the Great Craftsman

has the threads of our existence in His own hands;
weaving the complex pattern, evolving good out of
evil, and order out of confusion.

THE BELIEVER'S SWEET PILLOW

From Spurgeon's sermon, "Israel at the Red Sea"

How sweet is 'providence' to a child of God,
when he can reflect upon it!

He can look out into this world, and say--

"However great my troubles, they are not so great as my
Father's power. However difficult may be my
circumstances, yet all things around me are working
together for good."

He who holds up yon unpillared arch of the starry
heavens, can also support my soul without a single
apparent prop.

He who guides the stars in the well-ordered courses,
even when they seem to move in hazy dances-
surely he can overrule my trials in such a way
that out of confusion he will bring order;
and from seeming evil, produce lasting good.

He who bridles the storm,
and puts the bit in the mouth of the tempest,
surely he can restrain my trial,
and keep my sorrows in subjection.

I need not fear while the lightnings are in his hands,
and the thunders sleep within his lips,
while the oceans gurgle from his fist,
and the clouds are in the hollow of his hands,
while the rivers are turned by his foot,
and while he digs the channels of the sea.

Surely he whose might gives wings to the angels,
can furnish a worm with strength.

He who guides a cherub will not be overcome
by the trials of an emmet like myself.

He who makes the most ponderous orb roll in dignity,
and keeps its predestined orbit,
can make a little atom like myself move in my proper
course, and conduct me as he pleases.

Christian! there is no sweeter pillow than providence!

And when providence seems adverse,
believe it still, and lay it under your head.

For depend upon it- there is comfort in its bosom.

There is hope for you, child of God!

The great trouble which is to come in your way
in your pilgrimage, is planned by love,
the same love which shall interpose as your protector.

Ordering, arranging, and controlling all.

(From Winslow's, "The Man of God Divinely Prospered")

"...the Lord was with Joseph, and whatever he did, the Lord made it to prosper." Genesis 39:23

The Lord is with His saints, ordaining and shaping their every step. The man of God advances in no uncertain, unprepared path in life. His whole career, from his cradle to his grave, is a divinely constructed map, prepared in the eternal mind, purpose, and counsel of Jehovah.

Nothing is left to contingency.

There is no divergence in his path, no event that bends, or shades, or burdens it; but the Lord is in it; ordering, arranging, and controlling all.

Dark and mysterious providences

(Octavius Winslow, "No Night There")

Our journey is often dark, long, and weary.

In the present life our path is at times draped
with gloomy, painful, and inexplicable clouds.

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform."

So strange in shape, somber in hue, and
crushing in effect, are often the events and
circumstances of our personal history, that
we are stunned and appalled, paralyzed and
awed at the 'thick darkness' in which our God
moves; at the overshadowing cloud which He
makes His chariot; wondering where the scene
will end.

What prophet will explain to us the handwriting
upon the wall? Who will interpret the symbols of
an event that has suddenly plunged us in a world
of mystery?

God is speaking to us from the 'secret place
of thunder.' He has . . .

nipped the bursting bud,

plucked the lovely flower,

broken the graceful sapling,

uprooted the strong oak,

sowing life's landscape with the snowflakes of

winter, congealing all its flowing springs, and

tincturing all its sweet rivers with the bitterness
of Marah.

Like Moses, we are awed into silence by these
dreadful emblems of His majesty and power, and
wrapping our faces in our mantle, bow our heads
in reverence to the ground.

Heaven bids us look beyond the present scene
of suffering and sorrow to that glorious world
where shall be no drapery of dark and mysterious
providences. In that glorious world, we shall . . .

read all the lessons of His love,
interpret all the symbols of His providence,
understand all the mysteries of His dealings.

How wise will then appear all the
way our covenant God led us . . .
through the wilderness,
across the desert,
home to Himself!

We shall then see that . . .
every dispensation was right,
every stroke needed,
every step an advance in our heavenly ascent,
and that every cloud that veiled God's love,
was one of its truest and holiest expressions.

And until this 'night of mystery' passes, ushering
in the 'perfect day' whose sunny sky no providential
clouds will ever darken; let us resolve all our
Heavenly Father's dealings into infinite wisdom,
rectitude, and goodness, fully assured that,

"as for God, His work is perfect."

The heathen deity of CHANCE

(MacDuff, "A Chapter in Providence and Grace")

God's providence extends to all the minute and trifling occurrences of life. Have nothing to do with the heathen deity of CHANCE.

He who wheels the planets in their courses,
marks the sparrow's fall.

Events, often apparently trivial and unimportant; what the world calls 'accidents', form really and truly the mighty levers of life, altering and revolutionizing our whole future.

Let us rejoice in the simple but sublime assurance that all that happens is ordered for us. It is for us to know, and to rejoice in the knowledge, that every event is in the hands of the Savior who died for us, and who has given us this mightiest proof and pledge of dying love, that all things (even the most mysterious) are working together for our good.

You are the one who has done this!

(James, "The Widow Directed to the Widow's God" 1841)

"They all know that the the hand of the Lord has done this. In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." Job 12:9-10

"Be still, and know that I am God." Such is the admonition which comes to you--and which comes from heaven. It is God Himself who has bereaved you--through whatever second causes He has inflicted the blow. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge--much less a rational and immortal creature. He has the keys of death, and never for a moment entrusts them out of His hand--the door of the sepulcher is never unlocked, but by Himself!

Though men may drop and die as unheeded by many, as the fall of the autumnal leaf in the pathless desert--they die not by chance! Every incident which has reduced you to your present sorrowful condition, is an individual decision of infinite wisdom. Whether therefore, the death of your husband was slow or sudden; at home or abroad; by accident or disease--it was appointed, and all its circumstances arranged, by God. Be still, therefore, and know that He is God, who does His will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth, and allows no one to question His proceedings.

Bow down before Him with unqualified submission--and find relief in acquiescence to His wise and sovereign will.

Submission forbids all passionate invective; all rebellious language; all bitter reflections on second causes; and all

questionings about the wisdom, goodness, or equity of the God of Providence. You should not only suppress all murmuring and complaining language--but all thoughts and feelings of this kind. Submission is that state of the soul under afflictive dispensations of Providence, which produces an acquiescence in the will of God--as just, and wise, and good. It expresses itself in some such manner as the following. "I deeply feel the heavy loss I have sustained, and my nature mourns and weeps. But as I am persuaded it is the Lord's doing, who has a right to do as He pleases, and who is at the same time too wise to mistake, and too benevolent to put me to unnecessary pain--I endeavor to bow down to His holy will."

Did we really believe in the doctrine of Providence, and that He who superintends its administration, unites to an arm of omnipotence--a mind of infinite knowledge, and a heart of boundless love--submission would be easy!

Christian mourner, consider God as the author of all your trials--as well as of all your comforts! View Him as your Father! Be assured that He loves you too well to do you any harm! Be confident that He is making all things work together for your good!

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

The weather

(Henry Law, "Psalms" 1878)

"He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from His storehouses." Psalm 135:7

The wild elements seem to unenlightened observation to act capriciously and without control. But His power holds them fast bound in His hands.

No clouds arise,
no lightning flashes,
no rain descends,
no wind blows furiously,
but in accordance with His sovereign will.

Let us bless God for His unbounded rule.

I am full of confusion!

(J. C. Philpot, "Joy and Gladness for Mourning Souls")

"I am full of confusion!" Job 10:15

God is the great Ruler, Director, and Controller of all things!

We must not look on the varied events that are ever taking place in this world, as a mere matter of 'chance'--a confused medley--as though these multitudinous circumstances were all thrown like marbles into a bag, and thrown back out without any order or arrangement.

God is a God of order.

In the natural world, the world of creation--all is in order.

In the spiritual world, the world of grace--all is in order.

And in the providential world, the world of providence--all is order also.

To our mind, indeed, all often seems disorder. But this arises from our ignorance, and from not seeing the whole as one definitely arranged plan.

If you were to see a weaver working at a loom, and saw nothing but the threads and needles jumping up in continual motion, you would see nothing but confusion. Nor could you form the slightest conception of the pattern which was being worked. But when the whole was completed, and the silk taken off the roller--then you would see a pattern arranged in beautiful order--every thread concurring to form one harmonious design. But all this was known beforehand by the artist who designed the pattern, and every arrangement was made in strict subserviency to it.

But if this is the case as to Gods appointments in

providence, how much more is it true of His glorious designs in grace. Every . . .

trial,

temptation,

affliction,

sorrow,

are but the result of a definite plan in His eternal mind!

Yet to us how often all seems confusion! This confusion is not so much in the things themselves--as in our mind.

Job, when surrounded by trouble, cried out, "I am full of confusion!" Yet we can see in reading his history that all his trials were working toward an appointed end. So every trial, sorrow, temptation or affliction, which has ever lain, or ever will lie, in your path--has been marked out by infinite, unerring wisdom!

Is not the commonest road laid out according to a definite plan? And does not the surveyor, when he lays it out, put every mile-stone in its proper place?

So, does not the Lord lay out beforehand the road in which His people should walk? And does He not put a trial here and a sorrow there--an affliction at this turning and a cross at that corner? All is definitely planned in His infinite wisdom, to bring the traveler safely home to Zion!

Even the little things!

Spurgeon, "God's Will about the Future"

There is a divine will which governs
all things. Nothing happens apart
from divine determination and decree.

Even the little things in life are not
overlooked by the all-seeing eye. "The
very hairs of your head are numbered."

The station of a reed by the river is as fixed
and foreknown as the station of a king!

The chaff from the hand of the winnow is
as much steered as the stars in their courses!

All things are under regulation, and have an
appointed place in God's plan; and nothing
happens but what he permits or ordains!

Disaster!

(John MacDuff, "A Book for the Bereaved")

"Does disaster come to a city, unless
the Lord has done it?" Amos 3:6

"Does disaster come to a city," to the cottage,
to the palace--is there disaster which blights
some unknown poor man's dwelling--is there
disaster which clothes a nation in mourning,
"unless the Lord has done it?"

"I create both light and darkness; I make both
blessing and disaster. I, the Lord, do all these
things." Isaiah 45:7

"This is what the Lord says: As I brought all
these disasters on these people." Jer. 32:42

"Therefore the Lord has brought all this
disaster on them." 1 Kings 9:9

"Behold, I will bring disaster upon you.
I will utterly burn you up." 1 Kings 21:21

"Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel:
Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah
such disaster that the ears of everyone who
hears of it will tingle!" 2 Kings 21:12

"Thus says the Lord, behold, I will bring disaster upon
this place and upon its inhabitants." 2 Chronicles 34:24

"Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster
upon this people." Jeremiah 6:19

Each apparently capricious turn in life's way

(John MacDuff, "COMMUNION MEMORIES" 1886)

The Christian has this promise of assured help,

"My God shall supply all your needs, according

to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!" Phil. 4:19

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow!" Matthew 6:34

Ah, that future! that unknown, sometimes dark and

chequered future, how many an anxious thought it costs!

Who can forecast the varying scenes of changeful life?

It is like walking up some sequestered dell; every

turn in the path presents something new. A cluster

of flowers here--a rotten branch or decaying tree

there; now a flowing stream--now a quiet pool--

now a sprawling cascade; now a gleam of sunlight,

now the driving rain and booming thunder.

But each apparently capricious turn in life's

way, all its accidents and incidents, are the

appointments of Infinite Wisdom!

The future with all its vicissitudes, is in His keeping

and ordering. You may work the loom--the shuttle may

be in your hands--but the pattern is all His--the

intermingling threads of varied hue, even what are

dark and somber. Do not talk of a tangled web,

when it is that of the Great Craftsman!

Confide in that heart of Infinite Love!

Shall we dream of being wiser than God? Shall we

dream of correcting His Book of Sovereign decrees?

of altering the building-plans of the Divine Architect?

No! trust His loving heart, where sense cannot
trace His hand!

Our All-sufficient God has said, "I will never leave
you, I will never, never, never forsake you." He is . . .

a rich Provider,

a sure Provider,

a willing Provider,

a wise Provider.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow!" Matthew 6:34

HEATHENISH LUCK?

by Spurgeon

"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every
decision is from the LORD." (Pr.16:33)

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. (Rev. 19:6)

"My times are in Your hands" (Psalm 31:15)

Not only are we ourselves in the hand of the Lord,
but all that surrounds us.

Everything is under divine arrangement.

We dwell within the palm of God's hand.

We are absolutely at his disposal, and all our
circumstances are arranged by him in all their details.

We are comforted to have it so.

How did the psalmist's times come to be thus in God's hand? I should
answer, that they were there according to the eternal purpose
and decree of God. All things are ordained by God, and
are settled by Him, according to His wise and holy predestination.

Whatever happens here does not happen by 'chance' but according to the
counsel of the Most High.

The acts and deeds of men below, though left wholly to their own wills,
are the counterpart of that which is written in the purpose of heaven.

The open acts of Providence below, tally exactly with that which is
written in the 'secret book', which no eye of man or angel as yet has
scanned. This eternal purpose superintended our birth- "All the days
ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

(Psalm 139:16)

In Your book, every footstep of every creature was recorded before the

creature was made. God has mapped out the pathway of every man who traverses the plains of life. It is no small comfort to a child of God that he feels that, by divine arrangement and sacred predestination, his times are in the hand of God.

It would be a hideous thought to us if any one point of our life-story were left to 'chance', or the the frivolities of our our fancy. "My times are in your hands" -then there is nothing left to chance. Events do not happen by a 'fortune' that has no order or purpose in it.

CHANCE is a heathenish idea which the teaching of the Word has cast down, even as the ark threw down Dagon, and broke him in pieces.

Blessed is that man who is done with chance, and who never speaks of 'luck'; but believes that, from the least even to the greatest, all things are ordained of the Lord.

We dare not leave out the least event. The creeping of an aphid on a rosebud is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence, as the march of a pestilence through a nation. Believe this; for if the least be omitted from the supreme government, so may the next be, and the next, until nothing is left in the divine hand.

Wars, pestilences, earthquakes?

Spurgeon, "Now, and Then")

"Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror,
but then we will see everything with perfect clarity."

1 Cor. 13:12

When we get to heaven, we shall understand the
reasons of many of God's Providential dealings.

We shall there discover that...

wars that devastated nations,
and pestilences that fill graves,
and earthquakes that make cities tremble,
are, after all, necessary cogs in the great wheel
of the divine machinery; and He who sits upon the
throne at this moment, and rules supremely every
creature that is either in heaven, or earth, or hell,
will there make it manifest to us that His government
was right.

It must come out right in the long run; it must be
well. Every part and portion must work together
with a unity of design to promote God's glory and
the saint's good. We shall see it then! And we shall
lift up our song with new zest and joy, as fresh
displays of the wisdom and goodness of God,
whose ways are past finding out, are unfolded
to our admiring view.

Submit to the appointments of our Maker!

By John Newton

How highly does it become us, both as creatures and as sinners, to submit to the appointments of our Maker! and how necessary is it to our peace!

This great attainment is to often unthought of and overlooked; we are prone to fix our attention upon the second causes and immediate instruments of events; forgetting whatever befalls us is according to His purpose, and therefore must be right and seasonable in itself, and shall in the issue be productive of good.

From hence arise impatience, resentment, and secret repinings, which are not only sinful but tormenting; whereas if all things are in His hand, if the very hairs of our head are numbered, if every event, great and small are under the direction of his providence and purpose; and if he has a wise, holy, and gracious end in view, to which everything that happens is subordinate and subservient; then we have nothing to do, but with patience and humility to follow as He leads, and cheerfully to expect a happy issue. The path of present duty is marked out; and the concerns of the next and every succeeding hour are in His hands.

How happy are they who can resign all to Him, see His hands in every dispensation, and believe

that He chooses better for them than they
possibly could for themselves!

Mysteries and perplexities

(John MacDuff, "Hospice of the Pilgrim" 1891)

"Your heavenly Father knows that you
have need of all these things." Matt. 6:32
What a rest is this for weary, burdened wayfarers!

It is the assurance not only of a 'needs be'
in whatever befalls them; but that all are
the appointments of their heavenly Father.

"Your heavenly Father!" With tender care
for the minute and lowly, He . . .
makes grass to grow for the cattle,
pencils the flower,
sculptures the snow wreath,
watches the sparrows fall,
and feeds the young ravens.

The unslumbering Shepherd keeps watch and
ward continually, whether under the infinite blue
of day, or under night with its starry galaxies.

Though mysteries and perplexities are on every
side, yet we can rely on the assurance that His are
no arbitrary dealings, swayed by caprice, marked
and misdirected by human blindness and ignorance;
but the dictates of unerring wisdom and of
unchanging everlasting love.

Mark the Savior's words. They are not "My heavenly
Father;" but "your heavenly Father." He would have
each child to know His individual, particular affection

and pity; and, despite baffling providences, to cleave
to the unforgetting love of God.

All which befalls His people is meted out by
One who is too kind to mingle an unnecessary
or superfluous drop in their cup of sorrow.

"This is the resting place, let the weary rest.

This is the place of repose." Isaiah 28:12

"Chance," "luck," or "accident"

(J. C. Ryle, "The Gospel of Luke" 1858)

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?

Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.

Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Luke 12:6-7

Nothing whatever, whether great or small, can happen to a believer, without God's ordering and permission.

There is no such thing as "chance," "luck," or "accident" in the Christian's journey through this world. All is arranged and appointed by God. And all things are "working together" for the believer's good.

Let us seek to have an abiding sense of God's hand in all that befalls us. Let us strive to realize that a Father's hand is measuring out our daily portion, and that our steps are ordered by Him.

A daily practical faith of this kind, is one grand secret of happiness, and a mighty antidote against murmuring and discontent. We should try to feel in the day of trial and disappointment, that all is right and all is well done.

We should try to feel on the bed of sickness that there must be a "needs be." We should say to ourselves, "God could keep away from me these things if He thought

fit. But He does not do so, and therefore they must be
for my advantage. I will lie still, and bear them patiently.
What pleases God shall please me."

All the mysteries of providence?

(Octavius Winslow, "Morning Thoughts")

"Now we see through a glass darkly (in a riddle),
but then face to face; now I know in part, but
then shall I know even as also I am known."

1 Cor. 13:12

The position which the Christian shall occupy
hereafter will be most favorable to a full and
clear comprehension of all the mysteries of the
earthly journey.

The "clouds and darkness," emblems in our history
of obscurity and distress, which now envelope God's
throne, and enshroud His government of the saints,
will have passed away; the mist and fog will have
vanished, and, breathing a purer atmosphere, and
canopied by a brighter sky, the glorified saint will
then see every object, circumstance, incident, and
step, with an eye unobscured by a vapor, and
unmoistened by a tear.

And what shall we know?

All the mysteries of providence.

Things which had made us greatly grieve, will then
be seen to have been causes of the greatest joy.

Clouds of threatening, which appeared to us charged
with the agent of destruction, will then unveil, and
reveal the love which they embosomed and concealed.

Oh, what a perfect, harmonious, and glorious whole

will all His doings in providence appear, from first to last; to the undimmed eye, the ravished gaze of His white robed, palm bearing Church!

One gracious purpose of mercy!

(John Angell James, "Christian Love" 1828)

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose for them." Romans 8:28

Providence is God's government of the universe.

Providence is that mighty scheme . . .

which commenced before time was born;

which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours;

which includes the history of angels, men, and devils.

Providence comprises the whole range of events which have taken place from the formation of the first creature, to the last moment of time--with all the tendencies, reasons, connections, and results of things.

Providence encompasses the separate existence of each individual, with the continuation and influence of the whole, in one harmonious scheme.

We are puzzled at almost every step, at the deep, unfathomable mysteries of Providence!

How often is Jehovah, in His dealings with us, a God who hides Himself! How often does He wrap Himself in clouds, and pursue His path upon the waters, where we can neither see His goings, nor trace His footsteps!

How many of His dispensations are inexplicable, and of His judgments how many are unfathomable by the short line of our reason!

But whatever we don't know now, we shall know hereafter.

The crooked will be made straight, the clouds of darkness will be scattered, and all His conduct towards us placed in the broad day-light of eternity.

We shall see how all the varying, and numerous, and seemingly opposite events of our history, were combined into one gracious purpose of mercy, which was most perfectly wise in all its combinations.

Delightful, most delightful, will it be to retrace our winding and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and turning, the reason of the occurrence and the wisdom of God.

Delightful will it be to discern the influence which all our temporal circumstances--all our disappointments, losses, and perplexities--had upon our permanent and celestial happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, will our short and simple history present, and what rapturous fervor will the discovery give to the song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of God and the Lamb!

Beware of that practical atheism!

(from Winslow's, "The Glory of Christ in Heaven")

Beloved, God is in history.

God in every man's history.

God is in your history.

He is in every event, and circumstance, and
incident of your life. Whatever that history be,
God arranged it, shaped it, and tinted it.

Is it dark? He penciled it, with its somber hues.

Is it bright? He has thrown upon the canvas those beautiful colors.

Are they blended? He mingled and harmonized them.

Recognize and acknowledge, adore, love,
trust, and glorify Him for all, and in all.

"Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways."

Beware of that practical atheism which excludes
God from His own world; which excludes Him
from your individual history. He is not only
present in His created universe, but He is as
much in personal events of life, shaping,
guiding, overruling each and all.

The little things of life!

(from Octavius Winslow's "Morning Thoughts")

"Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Luke 12:7

You know so little of God, my reader, because

you live at such a distance from God.

You have so little transaction with Him,

so little confession of sin,

so little searching of your own conscience,

so little probing of your own heart,

so little transaction with Him in the little things of life.

You deal with God in great matters.

You take great trials to God, great perplexities, great

needs; but in the minutiae of each day's history, in

what are called the little things of life, you have no

dealings with God whatever; and consequently you know...

so little of the love,

so little of the wisdom,

so little of the glory,

of this glorious covenant God and reconciled Father.

I tell you, the man who lives with God in little matters,

who walks with God in the minutiae of his life, is the

man who becomes the best acquainted with God; with

His character, His faithfulness, His love.

To meet God in my daily trials, to take to Him the trials

of my calling, the trials of my church, the trials of my

family, the trials of my own heart; to take to Him that

which brings the shade upon my brow, that rends the sigh from my heart; to remember it is not too trivial to take to God; above all, to take to Him the least taint upon the conscience, the slightest pressure of sin upon the heart, the softest conviction of departure from God; to take it to Him, and confess it at the foot of the cross, with the hand of faith upon the bleeding sacrifice; oh! these are the paths in which a man becomes intimately and closely acquainted with God!

Common or priceless?

(Spurgeon, "Praises and Vows Accepted in Zion")

We have our common mercies. We call them
common, but, oh, how priceless they are!

Health to be able to come here and not to
be stretched on a bed of sickness, I count
this better than bags of gold.

To have our reason, and not to be confined
in yonder asylum; to have our children still
about us and dear relatives spared still to us;
to have bread to eat, and clothing to put on;
to have been kept from defiling our character;
to have been preserved today from the snares
of the enemy! These are godlike mercies!

Every thread in the web of life

(by John MacDuff)

Every thread in the web of life is woven by the
Great Craftsman! Not one movement in these
swiftly darting needles is chance; but all is by
His direction, and all is to result in good!

Oh it is a sweet and holy life!

(Octavius Winslow, "Divine Realities" 1860)

"My times are in Your hand." Psalm 31:15

Learn to be content with your present lot, with
God's dealings with, and His disposal of, you.

You are just where His providence has, in its
inscrutable, but all wise and righteous decision,
placed you. It may be a painful, irksome, trying
position, but it is right. Oh yes! it is right!

Strive, then, to live a life of daily dependence upon
God. Oh it is a sweet and holy life! It saves . . .

from many a desponding feeling,

from many a corroding care,

from many an anxious thought,

from many a sleepless night,

from many a tearful eye, and

from many an imprudent and sinful scheme.

Thus you shall walk with God through this
valley of tears, until you exchange . . .

sorrow for joy,

suffering for ease,

sin for purity,

labor for rest,

conflict for victory,

and all earth's chequered, gloomy scenes, for the
changeless, cloudless happiness and glory of heaven!

"My times are in Your hand." Psalm 31:15

All our care, forethought, and caution

(John MacDuff, "The Prophet of Fire" 1877)

"Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and death!" (Matthew Henry)

"One day Israel's new king, Ahaziah, fell through the latticework of an upper room at his palace in Samaria, and he was seriously injured." 2 Kings 1:2
King Ahaziah was thus suddenly prostrated in the very midst of life; while manhood was yet in its glory. Let us pause for a moment, and read, from the case of Ahaziah, the impressive lesson, that all our care, forethought, and caution, cannot ward off accident, calamity, and inexorable death.

King Ahaziah was laid low by an accidental fall from an upper room at his palace. He had probably been leaning against the screen, or railing, common in Eastern dwellings; when, overbalancing himself, the slender rail or latticework had given way. He fell on the tessellated floor below, stunned and mangled, and he was carried to a couch from which he was never to rise.

Age,
character,
rank,
position,
station,
can afford no exemption from such casualties,
and from the last terminating event of all, the

universal doom of dust.

These royal robes encircled a body as perishable
as that of the lowest subject of his realm. The hand
grasping that ivory scepter, as well as the brawny
arm of the strongest menial in his palace, must
moulder to decay.

Poor and rich;

the beggar and the prince;

the slave and his master;

Dives with his purple and gold, and

Lazarus with his crumbs and rags,

are on a level here.

The path of glory and royalty, of greatness
and power, "leads but to the grave."

The lattice on which the strong man leans;
the iron railing of full health and unbroken
energy; may in a moment give way.

Sudden accident or fever may in a few
hours write Ichabod on a giant's strength.

When you are moving through life . . .

charioted in comforts;

wreathed with garlands;

regaled with music,

"Remember you are mortal!"

None dare boast presumptuously of . . .

strong arm, and

healthy cheek, and

undimmed eye.

It is by the mercy of God each one of us is preserved

from the "the terrors of the night, and the dangers of the day, and the plague that stalks in darkness, and the disaster that strikes at midday!"

And when accident or affliction does overtake us, it is our comfort to know that it is by His permission.

It is He who puts the arrow on the bowman's string.

It is He who loosens the railing in its sockets.

It is He who makes the lightning leap

from the clouds on its lethal errand.

It is He who guides the roll of that destroying billow, that has swept a loved one from the deck into a watery grave.

It is He who says, (and who can oppose!)

"You shall die, and not live!"

Ah, yes, it is easy for us in health;

when the world goes well;

when life's cup is brimming;

when the white sails are gleaming on its summer seas;

when the music of high holiday is resounding in our ears;

it is easy then to repress from thought the urgency of more solemn verities.

But wait until the 'pillow of pain' receives the aching, recumbent head; wait until the curtains are drawn, and the room darkened, and that music is exchanged for the suppressed whisper, and noiseless footfall; wait until the solemn apprehension for the first time steals over the spirit, that the sand glass is running out, life's grains diminishing, and that awful hour which we have evaded, dreaded, tampered with,

shrunk from, has come at last! How solemn the mockery to try then to give to God the dregs and remnants of a worn existence and a withered love! How much nobler, wiser, happier to anticipate the necessities of that inevitable hour, that whether our summons shall come by the fall from the lattice, or the gradual sinking and wasting of strength; whether by sudden accident, or by the gradual crumbling of the earthly framework; we may be ready, in calm composure, to breathe the saying of the dying patriarch, "I have waited for your salvation, O God."

"Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and death!" (Matthew Henry)

All our care, forethought, and caution

(John MacDuff, "The Prophet of Fire" 1877)

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The atrocities of Joshua?

(Joel Headley, "Sacred Heroes")

"They completely destroyed everything in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, donkeys—everything." Joshua 6:21

It is needless to go into a defense of what some call the atrocities of Joshua, in slaying women and children as well as warriors; in short, making a clean sweep of the inhabitants. The Lord ordered it, and that is enough.

We may be sure that, whether He obliterates a nation by war, or blots out the entire race with a flood, He has good reasons for it, although He may not choose to give them.

The extinction of one race by another, and the occupation of its land, is one of the common things in the history of the world. And whether it is done by the swift process of the sword, or by gradual abrasion, or the introduction of disease and vice, the principle and the fact remain the same.

The Lord ordered it, and that is enough.

"You are my battle-ax and sword," says the Lord.

"With you I will shatter nations and destroy many kingdoms." Jeremiah 51:20

All things!

(Philpot, "The Subjection of All Things Under the Feet of Jesus")

"You crowned Him with glory and honor and put all things under His feet. In putting all things under Him, God left nothing that is not subject to Him." Hebrews 2:7-8

See the sovereign supremacy of Jesus!

There may be circumstances in your earthly lot which at this moment are peculiarly trying. You look around and wonder how this or that circumstance will terminate. At present it looks very dark--clouds and mists hang over it, and you fear lest these clouds may break, not in showers upon your head, but burst forth in the lightning flash and the thunder stroke!

But all things are put in subjection under Christ's feet!

That which you dread cannot take place except by His sovereign will--nor can it move any further except by His supreme disposal. Then make yourself quiet. He will not allow you to be harmed. That frowning providence shall only execute His sovereign purposes, and it shall be among those all things which, according to His promise, shall work together for your good.

None of our trials come upon us by chance! They are all appointed in weight and measure--are all designed to fulfill a certain end. And however painful they may at present be, yet they are intended for your good.

When the trial comes upon you, what a help it would

be for you if you could view it thus, "This trial is sent for my good. It does not spring out of the dust. The Lord Himself is the supreme disposer of it. It is very painful to bear; but let me believe that He has appointed me this peculiar trial, along with every other circumstance. He will bring about His own will therein, and either remove the trial, or give me patience under it, and submission to it."

You may be afflicted by sickness. It is not by chance that such or such sickness visits your body--that the Lord sees fit to afflict head, heart, chest, liver, hand, foot, or any other part of your body. All things are put in subjection under Him, and He has not exempted sickness and disease! Whatever you suffer in bodily disease, He appoints and arranges it for your good. Be resigned to His holy and almighty will.

All your afflictions are put under the feet of Jesus! You may think at times how harshly you are dealt with--mourning, it may be, under family bereavements, sorrowing after the loss of your 'household treasures'--a beloved husband, wife, or child. But O that you could bear in mind that all your afflictions, be they what they may, are put under the feet of Jesus, so that, so to speak, not one can crawl from under His feet but by His permission--and, like scolded hounds, they crawl again beneath them at a word of command from His lips! Let us then hold fast this truth, for on it depends so much of our comfort.

UNVEILED MYSTERIES

John MacDuff, "The Rainbow in the Clouds"

"You do not realize now what I am doing,
but later you will understand." John 13:7

Much is baffling and perplexing to us in God's
present dealings. "What!" we are often ready
to exclaim, "could not the cup have been less
bitter; the trial less severe; the road less dreary?"

"Hush your misgivings," says a gracious God; "Do
not arraign the rectitude of My dispensations. You
shall yet see all revealed and made bright in the
mirror of eternity!"

"What I am doing" -it is all My doing, My appointment.
You have partial view of these dealings; they are
seen by the eye of sense through a dim and distorted
medium. You can see nothing but plans crossed, and
gourds laid low, and "beautiful rods" broken. But I
see the end from the beginning.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

"Later you will understand!"

An earthly father does not baffle the ear of his small
child with hard sayings and involved problems. He
waits for the manhood of being and then unfolds all.

So it is with God!

We are now in our infancy; children lisping in earthly
infancy a knowledge of His ways. We shall learn the
"deep things of God" in the manhood of eternity!

Christ now often shows himself only "behind the lattice,"
a glimpse and He is gone! But the day is coming when
we shall "see Him as He is!" when every dark hieroglyphic
in the Roll of Providence will be interpreted and expounded!

It is unfair to criticize the half finished picture;
to censure or condemn the half developed plan.

God's plans are here in embryo.

But a flood of light will break upon us from the
sapphire throne; "In your light, O God! we shall see
light." The "need be," muffled as a secret now, will
be confided to us then, and become luminous with love.

Perhaps we may not have to wait until eternity for
the realization of this promise. We may experience
its fulfillment here. We frequently find, even in this
present world, mysterious dispensations issuing in
unlooked for blessings.

Jacob would never have seen Joseph had he not
parted with Benjamin. Often would the believer
never would have seen the true Joseph had he not
been called on to part with his best beloved!

His language at the time is that of the patriarch,
"I am indeed bereaved!" "All these things are against
me!" But the things he imagined to be so adverse,
have proved the means of leading him to see the
heavenly King "in His beauty" before he dies.

Much is sent to "humble us and to prove us."

It may not do us good now, but it is
promised to do so "at our latter end."

I shall not dictate to my God what His way should be.

The patient does not dictate to the physician. He does not reject and refuse the prescription because it is nauseous; he knows it is for his good, and takes it on trust.

It is for faith to repose in whatever God appoints.

Let me not wrong His love or dishonor His faithfulness by supposing that there is one needless or redundant drop in the bitter cup which His loving wisdom has mingled.

"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7

His providences may change, His heart cannot.

(Octavius Winslow, "Morning Thoughts")

"I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed." Malachi 3:6

The immutability of God forms a stable foundation of comfort for the believing soul. Mutability marks everything outside of God. Look . . .

into the church,

into the world,

into our families,

into ourselves,

what innumerable changes do we see on every hand!

A week, one short day, what alterations does it produce! Yet, in the midst of it all, to repose calmly on the unchangeableness, the faithfulness of God.

To know that no alterations of time, no earthly changes, affect His faithfulness to His people. And more than this; no changes in them, no unfaithfulness of theirs, causes the slightest change in God. Once a Father, always a Father; once a Friend, always a Friend.

His providences may change, His heart cannot.

He is a God of unchangeable love. Peace then, tried believer! Are you passing now through the deep waters?

Who kept you from sinking when wading through the last?

Who brought you through the last fire?

Who supported you under the last cross?

Who delivered you out of the last temptation?

Was it not God, your faithful, unchangeable God?

This God, then, is your God now, and your God forever
and ever! And He will be your guide even unto death!

Every bitter cup

(John Bunyan)

"My times are in Your hand." Psalm 31:15

Afflictions are governed by God, both as to . . .

their time,

their number,

their nature,

their measure.

Our times, therefore, and our condition

in these times, are in the hand of God.

God is in all providences, be they . . .

ever so bitter,

ever so afflicting,

ever so smarting,

ever so destructive

to our earthly comforts.

Every bitter cup is of His preparing!

It is Jesus, your best friend who most dearly

loves you, who appoints all providences, orders

them all, overrules, moderates, and sanctifies

them all--and will sweeten them all--and in His

due time will make them profitable unto you,

that you shall one day have cause to praise

and bless His name for them all.

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and He

scourges every son whom He receives." Heb. 12:6

The dictionary of the atheist?

(From Octavius Winslow's, "The Banquet")

We lose much blessing and God much honor,
by not more simply and implicitly living upon
His providential care.

Those who see God's goodness in all their temporal
supplies; who recognize His superintending and
molding hand, ordering and shaping all the events;
the most minute of their personal history; shall never
be left without some marked and unmistakable evidence
of God's care and bountifulness in providing for their
temporal needs, and His wisdom and faithfulness in
ordering and directing all their temporal concerns.

Be, then, a close student of God's providence.

Seek a dislodgment from your mind of that atheism
which would exclude God from the government of
the world, and from the events and circumstances
of our individual history.

The terms 'chance', 'accident', 'contingency', as they
are employed by the world in connection with the
events of human life, should be entirely expunged
from the Christian's vocabulary. They belong solely
to the dictionary of the atheist, and should never
pass the lips of the believer.

It is the privilege of the believing mind, to see God's
hand in the most infinitesimal incident of individual life.

Tossed amid the waves of second causes, faith often

loses its anchorage on God in dark and mysterious calamities; and the believing and devout mind, thus for the moment loosed from its divine fastening, drifts away amid the breakers and the shoals of doubt and perplexity; and but for the restraining power and the restoring grace of the Divine Shepherd would become an utter wreck.

Disaster!

Spurgeon, "The Voice of the Cholera"

"When disaster comes to a city,
has not the Lord caused it?" Amos 3:6

When cholera comes to a city,
has not the Lord caused it?

It is not the cholera which has slain these
hundreds, the cholera was but the sword.

The hand which scattered death is the hand
of a greater than mere disease. God himself
is traversing London. God with silent footstep
walks the hospitals, enters the chamber,
strikes the wayfarer in the street.

God, the great Judge of all, at whose girdle
swing the keys of death and hell, the mysterious
one whose voice bids the pillars of heaven's
starry roof to tremble, who made the stars,
and can quench them at his will- it was none
other than he who walked down our crowded
streets, and entering our lanes and alleys
called one after another the souls of men
to their last account! God is abroad!

It is not the rod of disease that smites,
but God himself that uses the rod!

Why, then, these fears? Why this distrust?

(from Winslow's, "The Glory of Christ in Heaven")

Jesus has all the treasures of the everlasting
covenant, all the fulness of the Godhead, all
the resources of the universe in His keeping,
and at His disposal!

Look at the starry sky; Jesus strewed it with its jewelry.

Look at that enchanting landscape; Jesus enameled it with its loveliness.

Look at that cloud capped mountain; Jesus reared it.

Look at that beautiful lily; Jesus painted it.

Look at that soaring bird; Jesus feeds it.

He, with whom is all this strength and beauty,
is your Brother. Are you not better and dearer
to Him than these? He has loved and chosen you
from all eternity, ransomed you with His blood,
and inhabited you by His Spirit.

Why, then, these fears? Why this distrust?

All He requires of you is to bring....

to His fulness your emptiness;

to His sympathy your grief;

to His unerring wisdom your embarrassment; and

to His sheltering wing your temptations and trials.

Spread your case before Him in the humble
confidence of a child. Listen to His words:

"I am the Lord God that brought you up out
of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide,
and I will fill it."

The design of the divine Artist

(James, "The Widow Directed to the Widow's God" 1841)

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

In this present world, you may never see how the death of your husband is for good. Many go all their lives without having the 'mystifying characters' of the sad event deciphered --and the secret workings of God's love laid open. They die in ignorance of His plans--though not of His purposes.

The 'finished side' of the embroidery may never be turned to you here; and looking only at the tangled threads and dark colors of the 'back part'--all now appears to be in confusion!

But when the 'front view' shall be seen; and the design of the divine Artist; and all the connections of the finely embroidered piece shall be pointed out; and the coloring shall be shown in the light of eternity--with what adoring wonder, delight, and gratitude will you exclaim, as the 'whole picture' bursts upon your sight, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His methods! How unfathomable are His ways! All things have worked together for my good!"

You shall trace together the providential events of your earthly history. You shall learn why you were united--and why separated. You shall see the wisdom and goodness of those events, which once appeared so dark, and drew so many tears from your eyes. You shall indulge in

reminiscences, all of which will furnish . . .

new occasions of wonder;

new motives to praise; and

new sources of delight!

You shall point one another to the vista of everlasting ages opening before you, through which an endless succession of joys are advancing to meet you! And then, filled with a pure, unearthly love for each other, you shall fall down before the throne of the Lamb, and feel every other affection absorbed in supreme, adoring love to Him!

Such a scene is before you! And since it is--then bear your sorrows, afflicted widow--for in what felicities are they to result--and how soon!

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

Christian contentment

Christian contentment is that sweet,
inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit,
which freely submits to and delights in
God's wise and fatherly disposal in
every condition.

Jeremiah Burroughs

Long, habitual, and uninterrupted mercies?

(Hannah More, "Prayer")

That sun that has shone unremittingly from the day is a stupendous exertion of God's power, an astonishing exhibition of omnipotence.

In adoring the providence of God, we are apt to be struck with what is new and out of the usual course, while we too much overlook long, habitual, and uninterrupted mercies.

But common mercies, if less striking, are more valuable, because we have them always.

The ordinary blessings of life are overlooked for the very reason for which they ought to be most prized; because they are most uniformly bestowed.

They are most essential to our being; and when once they are withdrawn, we begin to find that they are also most essential to our comfort.

Nothing raises the price of a blessing like its removal, whereas it was its continuance which should have taught us its value.

We prefer novelties to awaken our gratitude, not considering that it is the duration of the common mercies which enhances their value.

We desire fresh excitements.

We consider mercies long enjoyed as things to be taken for granted, as things to which we have a sort of presumptive claim; as if God had no right to

withdraw what he has once bestowed, as if he were obliged to continue what he has once been pleased to confer.

Every particle of dust?

"I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes; that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens; that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses; that the creeping of an insect over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence; and the fall of leaves from the poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling avalanche.

He who believes in God must believe this truth.

There is no standing point between this and Atheism.

There is no halfway between an Almighty God, who works all things according to the good pleasure of his will, and no God at all!" -Spurgeon

Nature!

Winslow, "The Nature and Necessity of Experimental Religion"

The spiritual mind, fond of soaring through nature
in quest of new proofs of God's existence, and fresh
emblems of His wisdom, power and goodness, exults in
the thought that it is his Father's domain he treads!
He feels that God, his God, is there.

And the sweet consciousness of His all pervading
presence, and the impress of His great perfections
which everywhere meets his eye, overwhelm his
renewed soul with wonder, love, and praise.

O the delight of looking abroad upon nature,
under a sense of pardoning, filial love in the soul
when enabled to exclaim, "this God is my God!"

"The heavens tell of the glory of God.

The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship.

Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make Him known.

They speak without a sound or a word;
their voice is silent in the skies;
yet their message has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to all the world." Psalm 19:1-4

Infinite wisdom directs every event!

(from Dagg's "Manual of Theology")

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

It should fill us with joy, that God's infinite wisdom guides the affairs of the world.

Many of its events are shrouded in darkness and mystery, and inextricable confusion sometimes seems to reign. Often wickedness prevails, and God seems to have forgotten the creatures that He has made.

Our own path through life is dark and devious, and beset with difficulties and dangers.

How full of consolation is the doctrine, that infinite wisdom directs every event, brings order out of confusion, and light out of darkness, and, to those who love God, causes all things, whatever be their present aspect and apparent tendency, to work together for good.

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

The Providence of God

(by Don Fortner)

"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

Divine providence is the daily, constant, sovereign rule of our God over all things for the accomplishment of his eternal purpose of grace in predestination.

Predestination is the sovereign, eternal, immutable, unalterable purpose of God almighty, by which he ordained and ordered, according to his own will and good pleasure, all things that come to pass in time.

Divine providence is the accomplishment of God's sovereign will and purpose. Providence is God bringing to pass in time (sovereignly, absolutely, and perfectly) what he purposed in eternity. Predestination is God's purpose. Providence is God's execution of his purpose.

Nothing in the universe happens by luck, chance, fortune, or accident, or by blind fate. Everything that comes to pass in time was purposed by our God in eternity, and is brought to pass by his wise, adorable, good Providence. Nothing comes to pass in time that God did not purpose in eternity, in sovereign predestination. Nothing comes to pass in time except that which God sovereignly brings to pass in his Providence. And that which God predestinated in eternity and brings to pass in his Providence is for the good of his elect, and the glory of his name. This is clearly and incontrovertibly the teaching of Holy Scripture (Ps. 76:10; Pro. 16:4, 9, 33; 21:1; Dan. 4:34, 35, 37; Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 11:33-36).

Providence is God's government of the universe. If we have a proper view of God's Providence, we will see the hand of God and the heart of God in everything, in all the experiences of our lives. Believers ascribe their sorrows, the judgments of God, and even the cursing of their enemies to the hand of their heavenly Father's wise and good Providence (Job 1:21; 1 Sam. 3:18; 2 Sam. 16:11-12).

God is not idle. He never needs to rest, recuperate, or regroup! God almighty, our God and heavenly Father, is always at work, governing the world. I have frequently heard preachers and religious leaders speak of sickness, poverty and war, sin, crime and cruelty, famine, earthquakes and death, as things over which God has no control. Nonsense!

God's Providence is as 'minute' as it is 'mysterious' (Matt. 10:30). Our God has ordained the number of hairs on the heads of all. Not even a worthless sparrow falls to the ground without his decree. God's Providence is 'all inclusive'. God rules everything, great and small, everywhere, and at all times. Our God is in control of all inanimate matter. He who created all things rules all things.

Nothing in God's universe breathes or wiggles contrary to God's decree (Isa. 46:9-13).

As a wise, skilled pharmacist mixes medicine, our heavenly Father wisely mixes exactly the right measure of bitter things and sweet, to do us good. Too much joy would intoxicate us. Too much misery would drive us to despair. Too much sorrow would crush us. Too much suffering would break our spirits. Too much pleasure would ruin us. Too much defeat would discourage us. Too much success would puff us up. Too much failure would keep us from doing anything. Too much criticism would harden us. Too much praise would exalt us. Our great God knows exactly what we need. His Providence is wisely designed and sovereignly sent for our good! Let him therefore send and do what he will. By his grace, if we are his, we will face it, bow to it, accept it, and give thanks for it.

God's Providence is always executed in the 'wisest manner' possible. We are often unable to see and understand the reasons and causes for specific events in our lives, in the lives of others, or in the history of the world. But our lack of understanding does not prevent us from believing God. We bow to his will, which is evident in his works of Providence, and say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The God of Providence rules all things well. How we ought to trust him! Ever remember, our heavenly Father is God all wise, good, and omnipotent. He is too wise to err, too good to do wrong, and too strong to fail.

All dropping from the outstretched, munificent hand!

All dropping from the outstretched,
munificent hand of a loving, gracious,
and bountiful Father!

(from Octavius Winslow's "My Times in God's Hand")

Beloved, remember that all our past and all
our coming prosperity, if indeed He shall so
appoint it, is in the hand of God. It is His
wisdom that suggests our plans, it is His
power that guides, and it is His goodness
that makes them successful.

Every flower that blooms in our path,
every smile that gladdens it, every mercy
that bedews it, yes, "Whatever is good
and perfect comes to us from God above..."

Oh! for grace to recognize God in all our mercies!

How much sweeter will be our sweets,
how much more blessed our blessings,
and endeared our endearments, to see
them all dropping from the outstretched,
munificent hand of a loving, gracious,
and bountiful Father!

Oh! for a heart lifted up in holy returns
of love, gratitude and praise!

Our proper enjoyment of every earthly blessing?

Our proper enjoyment of every earthly blessing?

(Hannah More, "The Love of God")

There are three requirements to our proper enjoyment of every earthly blessing which God bestows on us:

1. A thankful reflection on the goodness of the giver.
2. A deep sense of the unworthiness of the receiver.
3. A sober recollection of the precarious tenure by which we hold it.

The first would make us grateful, the second humble, the last moderate.

Accidents, Not Punishments

by C. H. Spurgeon, September 8, 1861

There were some present at that very time who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."—Luke 13:1-5

The year 1861 will have a notoriety among its fellows as the year of calamities. Just at that season when man goes forth to reap the fruit of his labors, when the harvest of the earth is ripe, and the barns are beginning to burst with the new wheat, Death too, the mighty reaper, has come forth to out down his harvest; full sheaves have been gathered into his garner—the tomb, and terrible have been the wailings which compose the harvest hymn of death. In reading the newspapers during the last two weeks, even the most stolid must have been the subject of very painful feelings. Not only have there been catastrophes so alarming that the blood chills at their remembrance, but column after column of the paper has been devoted to calamities of a minor degree of horror, but which, when added together, are enough to astound the mind with the fearful amount of sudden death which has of late fallen on the sons of men. We have had not only one incident for every day in the week, but two or three; we have not simply been stunned with the alarming noise of one terrific clash, but another, and another, and another, have followed upon each other's heels, like Job's messengers, until we have needed Job's patience and resignation to hear the dreadful tale of woes.

Now, men and brethren, such things as these have always happened in all ages of the world. Do not think that this is a new thing; do not dream, as some do, that this is the produce of an overwrought civilization, or of that modern and most wonderful discovery of steam. If the steam engine had never been known, and if the railway had never been constructed, there would have been sudden deaths and terrible accidents, not withstanding. In taking up the old records in which our ancestors wrote down their accidents and calamities, we find that the old stage coach yielded quite as heavy a booty to death as does the swiftly-rushing train; there were gates to Hades then as many as there are now, and roads to death quite as steep and precipitous, and traveled by quite as vast a multitude as in our present time. Do you doubt that? Permit me to refer you to the chapter before you. Remember those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. What if no collision crushed them; what if they were not destroyed by the ungovernable iron horse dragging them down from an embankment; yet some badly-built tower, or some wall beaten by the tempest could fall upon eighteen at a time, and they might perish. Or worse than that, a despotic ruler, having the lives of men at his belt, like the keys of his palace, might fall upon worshipers in the temple itself, and mix their blood with the blood of the bullocks which they were just then sacrificing to the God of heaven. Do not think, then, that this is an age in which God is dealing

more hardly with us than of old. Do not think that God's providence has become more lax than it was, there always were sudden deaths, and there always will be. There always were seasons when death's wolves hunted in hungry packs, and, probably, until the end of this dispensation, the last enemy will hold his periodic festivals, and glut the worms with the flesh of men. Be not, therefore, cast down with any sudden fear, neither be you troubled by these calamities. Go about your business, and if your avocations should call you to cross the field of death itself, do it, and do it bravely. God has not thrown up the thoughts of the world, he has not taken off his hand from the helm of the great ship, still

"He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve his might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

Only learn to trust him, and you shall not be afraid of sudden fear; "your soul shall dwell at ease, and your seed shall inherit the earth."

The particular subject of this morning, however, is this—the use which we ought to make of these fearful texts which God is writing in capital letters upon the history of the world. God has spoken once, yes, twice, let it not be said that man regarded it not. We have seen a glimmering of God's power, we have beheld something of the readiness with which he can destroy our fellow-creatures. Let us "hear the rod and him that has appointed it," and in hearing it, let us do two things. First, let us not be so foolish as to draw the conclusion of superstitious and ignorant persons—that conclusions which is hinted at in the text, namely, that those who are thus destroyed by accident are sinners above all the sinners that be in the land. And, secondly, let us draw the right and proper inference, let us make practical use of all these events for our own personal improvement, let us hear the voice of the Savior saying, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish."

I. First, then, LET US TAKE HEED THAT WE DO NOT DRAW THE RASH AND HASTY CONCLUSION FROM TERRIBLE ACCIDENTS, THAT THOSE WHO SUFFER BY THEM SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.

It has been most absurdly stated that those who travel on the first day of the week and meet with an accident, ought to regard that accident as being a judgment from God upon them on account of their violating the Christian's day of worship. It has been stated even by godly ministers, that the late deplorable collision should be looked upon as an exceedingly wonderful and remarkable visitation of the wrath of God against those unhappy persons who happened to be in the Clayton tunnel. Now I enter my solemn protest against such an inference as that, not in my own name, but in the name of Him who is the Christian's Master and the Christian's Teacher. I say of those who were crushed in that tunnel, think you that they were sinners above all the sinners "I tell you, all: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Or those who perished but last Monday, think you that they were sinners above all the sinners that were in London? "I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall all likes wise perish." Now, mark, I would not deny but what there have sometimes been judgments of God upon particular persons for sin; sometimes, and I think but

exceedingly rarely, such things have occurred. Some of us have heard in our own experience instances of men who have blasphemed God and defied Him to destroy them, who have suddenly fallen dead; and in such cases, the punishment has so quickly followed the blasphemy that one could not help perceiving the hand of God in it. The man had wantonly asked for the judgment of God, his prayer was heard and the judgment came. And, beyond a doubt, there are what may be called natural judgments. You see a man ragged, poor, houseless; he has been profligate, he has been a drunkard, he has lost his character, and it is but the just judgment of God upon him that he should be starving, and that he should be an outcast among men. You see in the hospitals loathsome specimens of men and women foully diseased; God forbid that we should deny that in such a case—the punishment being the natural result of the sin—there is a judgment of God upon licentiousness and ungodly lusts. And the like may be said in many instances where there is so clear a link between the sin and the punishment that the blindest men may discern that God has made Misery the child of Sin. But in cases of accident, such as that to which I refer, and in cases of sudden and instant death, again, I say, I enter my earnest protest against the foolish and ridiculous idea that those who thus perish are sinners above all the sinners who survive unharmed.

Let me just try to reason this matter out with Christian people, for there are some unenlightened Christian people who will feel horrified by what I have said. Those who are ready at perversions may even dream that I would apologize for the breach of the day of worship. Now I do no such thing. I do not extenuate the sin, I only testify and declare that accidents are not to be viewed as punishments for sin, for punishment belongs not to this world, but to the world to come. To all those who hastily look on every calamity as a judgment I would speak in the earnest hope of setting them right. Let me begin, then, by saying, my dear brethren, do not you see that what you say is not true? and that is the best of reasons why you should not say it. Does not your own experience and observation teach you that one event happened both to the righteous and to the wicked? It is true, the wicked man sometimes falls dead in the street; but has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit? It is true that a pleasure-boat, in which men were seeking their own pleasure on the Sunday, has suddenly gone down; but is it not equally true that a ship which contained none but godly men, who were bound upon an excursion to preach the gospel, has gone down too? The visible providence of God has no respect of persons; and a storm may gather around the "John Williams" missionary ship, quite as well as around a vessel filled with riotous sinners. Why, do you not perceive that the providence of God has been, in fact, in its outward dealings, rather harder upon the good than upon the bad? For; did not Paul say, as he looked upon the miseries of the righteous in his day, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable?" The path of righteousness has often conducted men to the rack, to the prison, to the gibbet, to the stake; while the road of sin has often led a man to empire, to dominion, and to high esteem among his fellows. It is not true that in this world God does punish men for sin, and reward them for their good deeds. For, did not David say, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree?" and did not this perplex the Psalmist for a little season, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood their end? Although your faith assures you that the ultimate result of providence will work out only good to the people of God, yet your life, though it be but a brief part of the Divine drama of history, must have taught you that providence does not outwardly discriminate between the righteous and the wicked—that the righteous perish suddenly as well as the wicked—that the plague knows no difference between the sinner and the saint—and that the sword of war is alike pitiless to the sons of God and the

sons of Belial. When God sends forth the scourge, it slays suddenly the innocent as well as the perverse and froward. Now, my brethren, if your idea of an avenging and Awarding providence be not true, why should you talk as if it were? And why, if it be not correct as a general rule, should you suppose it to be true in this one particular instance? Get the idea out of your head, for the gospel of God never needs you to believe an untruth.

But, secondly, there is another reason. The idea that whenever an accident occurs we are to look upon it as a judgment from God would make the providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, a fiery shallow pool. Why, any child can understand the providence of God, if it be true that when there is a railway accident it is because people travel on a Sunday. I take any little child from the smallest infant-class form in the Sunday-school, and he will say, "Yes, I see that." But then, if such a thing be providence, if it be a providence that can be understood, manifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of providence, for in the Scripture we are always taught that God's providence is "a great deep;" and even Ezekiel, who had the wing of the cherubim and could fly aloft, when he saw the wheels which were the great picture of the providence of God, could only say the wheels were so high that they were terrible, and were full of eyes, so that he cried, "O wheel!" If—I repeat it to make it plain—if always a calamity were the result of some sin, providence would be as simple as that twice two made four; it would be one of the first lessons that a little child might learn. But Scripture teaches us that providence is a great depth in which the human intellect may swim and dive, but it can neither find a bottom nor a shore, and if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of providence, and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our folly, but we do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God. Why, look, sirs; suppose for a moment there were some great performance going on, and you should step in in the middle of it and see one actor upon the stage for a moment, and you should say, "Yes, I understand it," what a simpleton you would be! Do you not know that the great transactions of providence began near six thousand years ago? and you have only stepped into this world for thirty or forty years, and seen one actor on the stage, and you say you understand it. Tush! you do not; you have only begun to know. Only He knows the end from the beginning, only He understands what are the great results, and what is the great reason for which the world was made, and for which He permits both good and evil to occur. Do not think that you know the ways of God; it is to degrade providence, and to bring God down to the level of men, when you pretend that you can understand these calamities and find out the secret designs of wisdom.

But next, do you not perceive that such an idea as this would encourage Phariseeism? These people who were crushed to death, or scalded, or destroyed under the wheels of railway carriages, were worse sinners than we are. Very well, then what good people we must be; what excellent examples of virtue! We do not such things as they, and therefore God makes all things smooth for us. Inasmuch as we here traveled some of us every day in the week, and yet have never been smashed to pieces, we may on this supposition rank ourselves with the favorites of Deity. And then, do not you see, brethren, our safety would be an argument for our being Christians?—our having traveled on a railway safely would be an argument that we were regenerate persons, yet I have never read in the Scriptures, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we have traveled from London to Brighton safely twice a day." I never found a verse which looked like this; and yet if it were true that the worst of sinners met with accidents, it would follow as a natural converse to that proposition, that those who do not meet with accidents must be very good

people, and what Pharisaical notions we thus beget and foster. But I cannot indulge the fully for a moment. As I look for a moment upon the poor mangled bodies of those who have been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tears, but my heart does not boast, nor my lips accuse—far from me be the boastful cry, "God, I thank you that I am not as these men are!" No, no, no, it is not the spirit of Christ, nor the spirit of Christianity. While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet we can say, "It is of your mercy that we are not consumed," and we must ascribe it to his grace, and to his grace alone. But we cannot suppose that there was any betterness in us, why we should be kept alive with death so near. It is only because he has had mercy, and been very patience to us-ward, not willing that we should perish, but that we should come to repentance, that he has thus preserved us from going down to the grave, and kept us alive from death.

And then, will you allow me to remark, that the supposition against which I am earnestly contending, is a very cruel and unkind one. For if this were the case, that all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest, would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors, and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as a dreadful truth? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow's ear. Go home to her and say, "Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore he died." You have not brutality enough for that. A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adam's fall, is found crushed amid the debris of the accident. Now think for a moment, what would be the infamous consequence of the supposition, that those who perished were worse than others. You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared. Do you not perceive that the thing is radically false and I might perhaps show you the injustice of it best, by reminding you, that it may one day turn upon your own head. Let it be your own case that you should meet with sudden death in such a way are you willing to be adjudged to damnation on that account? Such an event may happen in the house of God. Let me recall to my own, and to your sorrowful recollection, what occurred when once we met together; I can say with a pure heart, we met for no object but to serve our God, and the minister had no aim in going to that place but that of gathering Tiffany to hear who otherwise would not have listened to his voice and yet there were funerals as the result of a holy effort (for holy effort still we avow it to have been, and the after smile of God has proved it so). There were deaths, and deaths among God's people, I was about to say, I am glad it was with God's people rather than with others. A fearful fright took hold upon the congregation, and they fled, and do you not see that if accidents are to be viewed as judgments, then it is a fair inference that we were sinning in being there—an insinuation which our consciences repudiate with scorn? However, if that logic were true, it is as true against us as it is against others, and inasmuch as you would repel with indignation the accusation that any were grounded or hurt on account of sin, in being there to worship God, what you repel for yourself repel for others, and be no party to the accusation which is brought against those who have been destroyed during the last fortnight, that they perished on account of any great sin.

Here I anticipate the outcries of prudent and zealous persons who tremble for the ark of God, and would touch it with Uzzah's hand. "Well," says one, "but we ought not to talk like this, for it is a very serviceable superstition, because there are many people who will be kept from traveling on a Sunday by the accident, and we ought to tell them, therefore, that those who perished, perished

because they traveled on Sunday." Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul, and this would be telling lies, for it is not the fact I would do anything to stop Sunday labor and sin, but I would not forge a falsehood even to do that. They might have perished on a Monday as well as on a Sunday. God gives no special immunity any day of the week, and accidents may occur as well at one time as at another, and it is only a pious fraud when we seek thus to pray upon the superstition of men to make capital for Christ. The Roman Catholic priest might consistently use such an argument, but an honest Christian man, who believes that the religion of Christ can take care of itself without his telling falsehoods, scorns to do it. These men did not perish because they traveled on a Sunday. Witness the fact that others perished on the Monday when they were on an errand of mercy. I know not why or wherefore God sent the accident. God forbid that we should offer our own reason when God has not given us his reason, but we are not allowed to make the superstition of men an instrument for the advancing the glory of God. You know among Protestants there is a great deal of popery. I meet with people who uphold infant baptism on the plea, "Well, it is not doing any hurt, and there is a great deal of good meaning in it, and it may do good, and even confirmation may be blessed to some people, and therefore do not let us speak against it." I have nothing to do with whether the thing does hurt or not, all I have to do with is whether it is right, whether it is scriptural, whether it is true, and if the truth does mischief, which is a supposition we can by no means allow, that mischief will not lie at our door. We have nothing to do but to speak the truth, even though the heavens should fall, I say again, that any advancement of the gospel which is owing to the superstition of men is a false advance, and it will by-and-by recoil upon the people who use such an unhallowed weapon. We have a religion which appeals to man's judgment and common sense, and when we cannot get on with that, I scorn that we should proceed by any other means; and, brethren, if there be any person who should harden his heart and say, "Well, I am as safe on one day as another," which is quite true, I must say to him, "The sin of your making such a use as this of a truth must lie at your own door, not at mine; but if I could keep you from violating the Christian's day of rest by putting before you a superstitious hypothesis, I would not do it, because I feel that though I might keep you from that one sin a little time, you would by-and-by grow too intelligent to be duped by me, and then you would come to look upon me as a priest who had played upon your fears instead of appealing to your judgment." Oh! it is time for us to know that our Christianity is not a weak, shivering thing, that appeals to the petty superstitious fears of ignorant and darkened minds. It is a manly thing, loving the light, and needing no sanctified frauds for its defense. Yes, critic! turn your lantern upon us, and let it glare into our very eyes; we are not afraid, truth is mighty and it can prevail, and if it cannot prevail in the daylight, we have no wish that the sun should set to give it an opportunity. I believe that very much infidelity has sprung from the very natural desire of some Christian people to make use of common mistakes. "Oh," they have said, "this popular error is a very good one, it keeps people right; let us perpetuate the mistake, for it evidently does good." And then, when the mistake has been found out, infidels here said, "Oh, you see now these Christian people are found out in their tricks." Let us have no tricks, brethren; let us not talk to men as though they were little children, and could be frightened by tales of ghosts and witches. The fact is, that this is not the time of retribution, and it is worse than idle for us to teach that it is do.

And now, lastly—and then I leave this point—do you not perceive that the un-Christian and un-Scriptural supposition that when men suddenly meet with death it is the result of sin, robs Christianity of one of its noblest arguments for the immortality of the soul? Brethren, we assert

daily, with Scripture for our warrant, that God is just, and inasmuch as he is just, he must punish sin, and reward the righteous. Manifestly he does not do it in this world. I think I have plainly shown that in this world, one event happens to both; that the righteous man is poor as well as the wicked, and that he dies suddenly as well as the most graceless. Very well, then, the inference is natural and clear, that there must be a next world in which these things must be righted. If there be a God, he must be just; and if he be just, he must punish sin; and since he does not do it in this world, there therefore must be another state in which men shall receive the due reward of their works, and those who have sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while those who have sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Make this world the reaping place, and you have taken the sting out of sin. "Oh," says the sinner, "if the sorrows men endure here be all the punishment they will have, we will sin greedily." Say to there, "No; this is not the world of punishment, but the world of probation; it is not the court of justice, but the land of mercy; it is not the prison of terror, but the house of long-suffering;" and you have opened before their eyes the gates of the future; you have set the judgment-throne before their eyes; you have reminded them of "Come, you blessed," and "Depart, you cursed;" you have a more reasonable, not to say a more Scriptural, ground of appeal to their consciences and to their hearts.

I have thus spoken with the view of putting down as much as I can the idea which is too current among the ungodly, that we as Christians hold every calamity to be a judgment. We do not; we do not believe that those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all the sinners that were in Jerusalem.

II. Now to our second point. WHAT USE, THEN, OUGHT WE TO MAKE OF THIS VOICE OF GOD AS HEARD AMID THE SHRIEKS AND GROANS OF DYING MEN? Two uses; first, inquiry, and secondly, warning.

The first inquiry we should put to ourselves is this: "Why may it not be my case that I may very soon and suddenly be cut off? Have I a lease of my life? Have I any special guardianship which ensures me that I shall not suddenly pass the portals of the tomb? Have I received a charter of longevity? Have I been covered with such a coat of armor that I am invulnerable to the arrows of death? Why am not I to die?" And the next question it should suggest is this: "Are not I as great a sinner as those who died? Are there not with me, even with me, sins against the Lord my God? If in outward sin others have exceeded me, are not the thoughts of my heart evil? Does not the same law which curses them curse me? I have not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them. It is as impossible that I should be saved by my works as that they should be. Am not I under the law as well as they by nature, and therefore am not I as well as they under the curse? That question should arise. Instead of thinking of their sins which would make me proud, I should think of my own which will make me humble. Instead of speculating upon their guilt, which is no business of mine, I should turn my eyes within and think upon my own transgression, for which I must personally answer before the Most High God." Then the next question is, "Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether they have or not: have I? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirit's convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve his wrath, and that his displeasure, if it light on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit, turned away from it as from a deadly poison, and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master? Am I washed in his blood?"

Do I bear his likeness? Do I reflect his character? Do I seek to live to his praise? For if not, I am in as great danger as they were, and may quite as suddenly be cut off, and then where am I? I will not ask where are they? And then, again, instead of prying into the future destiny of these unhappy men and women, how much better to inquire into our own destiny and our own state!

"What am I? my soul, awake,

And an impartial survey take."

Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of hell should be opened, shall I enter there? if now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me? This is the proper use to make of these accidents; this is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves and to our own condition. O sirs, God has spoken to every man in London during these last two weeks; he has spoken to me, he has spoken to you, men, women, and children. God's voice has rung out of the dark tunnel,—has spoken from the sunset and from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women, and he has said to you, "Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you do not think, the Son of Man comes." It is so spoken to you that I hope it may set you inquiring, "Am I prepared? am I ready? am I willing now to face my Judge, and hear the sentence pronounced upon my soul?"

When we have used it thus for inquiry, let me remind you that we ought to use it also for warning. "You shall all likewise perish." "No," says one, "not likewise. We shall not all be crushed, many of us will die in our beds. We shall not all be burned, many of us will tranquilly close our eyes." Yes, but the text says, "You shall all likewise perish." And let me remind you that some of you may perish in the same identical manner. You have no reason to believe that you may not also suddenly be cut off while walking the streets. You may fall dead while eating your meals—how many have perished with the staff of life in their hands! You shall be in your bed, and your bed shall suddenly be made your tomb. You shall be strong, hale, hearty, and in health, and either by an accident or by the stoppage of the circulation of your blood, you shall be suddenly hurried before your God Oh! may sudden death to you be sudden glory!

But it may happen with some of us that in the same sudden manner as others have died, so shall we. But lately in America, a brother, while preaching the Word, laid down his body and his charge at once. You remember the death of Dr. Beaumont, who, while proclaiming the gospel of Christ, closed his eyes to earth. And I remember the death of a minister in this country, who had but just given out the verse—

"Father, I long, I faint to see

The place of your abode;

I'd leave your earthly courts and flee

Up to your house, my God,"

when it pleased God to grant him the desire of his heart, and he appeared before the King in his beauty, then, may not such a sudden death as that happen to you and to me?

But it is quite certain that, let death come when it may, there are some few respects in which it will come to us in just the same manner as it has to those who have so lately been hurried away. First, it will come quite as surely. They could not, travel as fast as they would, escape from the pursuer. They could not journey where they may, from home or to home, escape the shaft when the time had come. And so shall we perish. Just as surely, as certainly as death has set his seal upon the corpses which are not covered with the sod, so certainly shall he set his seal on us (unless the Lord should come before), for "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." There is no discharge in this way; there is no escape for any individual by any bye-path, there is no bridge over this river; there is no ferry-boat by which we may cross this Jordan dry-shod. Into your chill depths, O river, each one of us must descend, in your cold stream, our blood must be frozen; and beneath your foaming billows our head must sink! We, too, must surely die. "Trite," you say, "and commonplace" and death is commonplace, but it only happens once to us. God grant that that once dying may perpetually be in our minds, until we die daily, and find it not hard work to die at the last.

Well, then, as death comes both to them and to us surely, so will it come both to them and to us most potently and irresistibly. When death surprised them, then what help had they? A child's card house was not more easily crushed than these ponderous carriages. What could they do to help one another? They are sitting talking side by side. The scream is heard, and before a second cry can be uttered, they are crushed and mangled. The husband may seek to extricate his wife, but heavy timbers have covered her body, he can only find at last her poor head, and she is dead, and he takes his sorrowful seat by her side, and puts his hand upon her brow, until it is stone cold, and though he has seen one and another plucked with broken bones from the midst of the ruined mass, he has to leave her body there. Alas! his children are motherless, and himself robbed of the partner of his bosom. They could not resist; they might do what they would, but as soon as the moment came, on they went, and death or broken bones was the result. So with you and me, bribe the physician with the largest fee, but he could not put fresh blood into your veins; pay him in masses of gold, but he could not make the pulse give another throb. Death, irresistible conqueror of men, there is none that can stand against you, your word is law, your will is destiny! So shall it come to us as it did to them; it shall come with power, and none of us can resist.

When it came to them, it came instantly, and would not brook delay. So will it come to us. We may have longer notice than they, but when the hour has struck there shall be no postponing it. Gather up your feet in your bed, O Patriarch, for you must die and not live! Give the last kiss to your wife, you veteran soldier of the cross put your hands upon your children's head, and give them the dying benediction, for all your prayers cannot lengthen out your life, and all your tears cannot add a drop to the dry wellspring of your being. You must go, the Master sends for you, and he brooks no delay. No, though your whole family should be ready to sacrifice their lives to buy you but an hour of respite, it must not be. Though a nation should be a holocaust, a willing sacrifice, to give its sovereign another week in addition to his reign, yet it must not be. Though the whole flock should willingly consent to tread the dark vaults of the tomb, to let their pastor's life be spared but for another year, it must not be. Death will have no delay; the time is up, the clock has struck, the sand has run out, and as certainly as they died when their time was come, in the field by sudden accident, so certainly must we.

And then, again, let us remember that death will come to us as it did to them, with terrors. Not with the crash of broken timbers, perhaps, not with the darkness of the tunnel, not with the smoke and with the steam, not with the shrieks of women and the groans of dying men, but yet with terrors. For meet death where we may, if we be not in Christ, and if the shepherd's rod and staff do not comfort us, to die must be a dreadful and tremendous thing. Yes, in your body, O sinner, with downy pillows beneath your head, and a wife's tender arm to bear you up, and a tender hand to wipe your clammy sweat, you will find it awful work to face the monster and feel his sting, and enter into his dread dominion. It is awful work at any time, and at every time, under the best and most propitious circumstances, for a man to die unprepared.

And now I would send you away with this one thought abiding on your memories; we are dying creatures, not living creatures, and we shall soon be gone. Perhaps, as here I stand, and rudely talk of these mysterious things, soon shall this hand be stretched, and mute the mouth that lisps the faltering strain, power supreme, O everlasting King, come when you may, oh! may you never intrude upon an ill-spent hour; but find me wrapped in meditation high, hymning my great Creator; doing works of mercy to the poor and needy ones, or bearing in my arms the poor and weary of the flock, or solacing the disconsolate, or blowing the blast of the gospel trumpet in the ears of deaf and perishing souls! Then come when you will, if you are with me in life, I shall not fear to meet you in death but oh, let my soul be ready with her wedding-garment, with her lamp trimmed and her light burning, ready to see her Master and enter into the joy of her Lord? Souls, you know the way of salvation, you have heard it often, hear it yet again! "He who believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who believes not shall be damned." "Believe you with your heart, and with your mouth make confession." May the Holy Spirit give the grace to do both, and this done, you may say,

"Come, death, and some celestial band,

To bear my soul away!"

What the little bird said to Luther?

From Spurgeon's, "WAITING ONLY UPON GOD"

You know what Luther said the little bird said to him.

He sat upon the spray of the tree, and he sang-

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;

God provideth for the morrow."

And it chirped and picked up its little grain, and sang again.

And yet it had no granary; it had not a handful of wheat

stored up anywhere; but it still kept on with its chirping-

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;

God provideth for the morrow."

This little idol?

Winslow, "The Sympathy of Christ"

To affirm, as the Scriptures of truth positively do,
that mankind is originally and totally depraved, is
but to portray it with every feature of its pristine
nobleness, purity, and excellence utterly spoiled!

Mankind has become the living embodiment,
the acting impersonation, the very incarnation
of fallen SELF love; SELF love in the form of
complete SELFishness.

The original Center of the soul forsaken,
man had become a center to himSELF.

The God He worshiped, was the deification of SELF.

The religion He professed, was the adoration of SELF.

The powers He cultivated were consecrated to SELF.

His whole existence was one act of service and devotion to SELF.

The Divine Center abandoned,

He knew no other god,

acknowledged no other sufficiency,

recognized no other end than himSELF.

Every faculty and thought, every affection and action,
was made to contribute to the cloud of incense which
rose as in one dense column before this little idol, SELF.

SELF the first;

SELF the last;

SELF all in all!

And is it not so now?

SELF, in some shape, is still the Deity of the natural man!

SELFishness is still the universal sin of our nature,
exhibited in one or more of its thousand modifications,
its endless forms.

All are in pursuit either of wealth, or ambition,
or pleasure, or honor, or gratification under the
'law of SELFishness'.

SELF is the only recognized principle and rule of
action which regulates the conduct of the great
majority of our depraved species.

The indictment is heavy, the picture is dark, the
sin is awful, we admit; but it is borne out by daily
observation and frequent experience, and by the
faithful, unerring Word of God, "All men seek their own."

What, we ask, is all this....

this SELF exaltism?

this egotism?

this envy and jealousy?

this attempt to supplant others in esteem, influence, and power?

this prodigality and love of worldly show?

this eager chase of wealth?

this covetousness and penuriousness?

this love of ease and sloth?

this niggardly dole of charity?

this cruel, heartless, grinding oppression?

this growing sensuality and crime?

What, we ask, is all this, and a thousand times more,
but the one appalling, cancerous sin of SELFishness
existing in the very heart of depravity, and sending

its fatal poison along all the fibers of human society?

A lump of vanity

In reality . . .

riches are but dust,

honors are but shadows,

pleasures are but bubbles, and

man is but a lump of vanity,

composed of sin and misery.

He is both depraved and condemned!

(J. A. James, "The Practical Believer Delineated" 1852)

God created man in His own image--which consisted of true holiness. No spot of guilt was upon his conscience --nor spot of depravity upon his heart.

The light of truth irradiated his understanding.

The glow of perfect love warmed his heart.

The choices of his will were all on the side of purity.

His conscience was the seat of perfect peace.

The beauties of holiness adorned his character.

His whole soul was in harmony with the untainted scenes of Paradise--in which bowers he walked in undisturbed friendship with God.

No sorrow wrung his heart.

No care wrinkled his brow.

No anxiety broke his rest.

He was happy--because he was holy.

When he sinned, his whole moral condition was altered! He fell under the condemnation of the law he had violated, and became the subject of inward corruption. An entire change passed over his nature.

He not only became guilty--but depraved!

His understanding became darkened!

His affections became selfish and earthly!

His will became prone to choose what is wrong!

His conscience became benumbed!

If he would ever be recovered from this state of

misery, he must be both pardoned and sanctified.

The covenant of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus --the glorious scheme of redeeming grace--meets the whole case of fallen man, by providing not only justification--but sanctification as well.

Wonderful gospel provision!

Pardon for the guilty!

Sanctification for the unholy!

The condition of the sinner may be likened to that of a condemned criminal shut up in prison, and infected with a deadly plague! What he needs, is both the cure of his plague--and the reversal of his sentence. Neither alone, will meet his case. If he is only pardoned--he will die of the plague. If he is only cured of the plague--he will suffer the just sentence of the law.

So it is with fallen man--he is both depraved and condemned! If he is only pardoned--his depravity will be his misery. If he could by any means be reformed --he is still under sentence of death.

The glory and completeness of the gospel scheme is, that it provides a cure for the diseases of the soul--in sanctification; as well as a pardon from the condemnation of the law--in justification!

God's most stubborn enemy!

(Jonathan Edwards, "Spiritual Pride")

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Prov. 16:5

Pride is a person having too high an opinion of himself.

Pride is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last sin that is rooted out.

Pride is the worst sin. It is the most secret of all sins. There is no other matter in which the heart is more deceitful and unsearchable. Alas, how much pride the best have in their hearts!

Pride is God's most stubborn enemy! There is no sin so much like the devil as pride. It is a secret and subtle sin, and appears in a great many shapes which are undetected and unsuspected.

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Prov. 16:5

All this loveliness of character

(J. A. James, "The Practical Believer Delineated" 1852)

"Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

An unholy person cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

There is a vast difference between sanctification--and the common morality of life. There are many people who are . . .

very amiable in their dispositions,

very just in their transactions,

very excellent in all their relationships,

very lovely in their general character;

but who at the same time, whatever esteem and

affection they may have--are not in a state of

sanctification. They . . .

have never been convinced of sin,

have never exercised faith in Christ,

have never been born of the Spirit,

have never been brought to love God.

All this loveliness of character is but the beautiful wildflower in the wilderness of unrenewed humanity.

There can be no true holiness apart from the principle of supreme love to God. Until this is implanted in the soul, we are under the dominion of supreme selfishness --and all these excellences may be traced up to self!

God's law is not obeyed; God's glory is not sought, because God Himself is not loved.

It is a melancholy spectacle, to see so much 'general excellence of character' as we sometimes witness, all

fruitless to its possessor, as regards the eternal world,
for lack of that Divine principle which transmutes all
this apparently beautiful morality, into true godliness.

Without holiness, whatever amiable and lovely qualities
of a general kind we may possess, we are still . . .

the children of wrath,

the enemies of God,

the subjects of unrenewed corruption,

the heirs of perdition; and

going on to everlasting destruction!

"Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

One truly innocent baby

(Favell Lee Mortimer, "Family Devotions")

"Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood." Genesis 8:21

"I was born a sinner--yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." Psalm 51:5

"We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's wrath." Ephesians 2:3

There never was but one truly innocent baby--it was the infant Savior.

"So the baby born to you will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35

"One who is holy and blameless, unstained by sin." Hebrews 7:26

The great idol!

(John Angell James, "Christian Love" 1828)

"People will be lovers of themselves." 2 Timothy 3:2

Selfishness is the cause of all sin--the opposite of all holiness and virtue.

The essence of man's sin, the sum of his moral depravity, is to love himself supremely; to seek himself finally and exclusively; to make self, in one shape or another, the center to which all his busy thoughts, anxious cares and diligent pursuits, constantly tend.

Self-love is the most active and reigning principle in fallen nature! SELF is the great idol which mankind are naturally disposed to worship; and selfishness the grand interest to which they are devotedly attached!

Selfishness is contrary to the habitual temper of our Lord Jesus Christ. "For even Christ did not please Himself."

The perfection of all virtue lies in unselfish love. The nearer we approach to this state of mind, the nearer we come to sinless moral excellence. "Love is not self-seeking."

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Phil. 2:3

Growing worse?

(John Angell James, "Christian Progress" 1853)

One of the last lessons we effectually learn, is that true godliness is a constant conflict in a believer's heart--between sin and holiness.

Some sincere believers mistake a clearer view, and deeper sense of their depravity, for an actual increase of sin. The Christian seems sometimes to himself, to be growing worse, when actually it is only that he sees more clearly what in fact he really is!

In the early stages of our Christian life, we have usually but a slender acquaintance with the evil of our sinfulness, and the depravity of our heart.

The mind is so much taken up with pardon and eternal life, that it is but imperfectly acquainted with those depths of deceit and wickedness, which lie hidden in itself.

At first we seem to feel as if the serpent were killed. But we soon find that he was only asleep--for by the warmth of some fiery temptation, he is revived and hisses at us again!

Nothing astonishes an inexperienced believer more than the discoveries he is continually making of the evils of his heart. Corruptions which he never dreamt to be in him, are brought out by some new circumstances.

It is like turning up the soil, which brings out worms and insects, which did not appear upon the surface.

Or to vary the illustration, his increasing knowledge of God's holy nature, of the perfect law, and the example of Christ--is like opening the shutters, and letting light into a dark room, the filth of which, the inhabitant did not see until the sunbeams disclosed it to him.

A bad tree

(Octavius Winslow, "From Grace to Glory" 1864)

"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people gather grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." Matthew 7:16-18

An unconverted state will bear fruit corresponding with its own essence. It must, in the nature of things, be so.

The enmity against God of the carnal mind,

the rejection of the Lord Jesus,

the governing principle of SELF,

the supreme ascendancy of the world,

the slavery of sin;

indicate, unmistakably, the unrenewed, unregenerate nature from which they spring. We do not expect one to yield the fruits of holiness from an unholy nature.

The life an unbeliever lives is in keeping with the unrenewed heart he possesses. He is of the earth, earthly. It is consistent with his unregenerate nature . . .

that he should be of the world,

that he should love the world,

that the world should love him and claim him as its own,

that the things of the world its pursuits, its pleasures,

its sins; should . . .

harmonize with his nature,

charm his tastes,

delight his senses, and
bind his affections in their spell.

Who really knows how bad it is?

(J. C. Philpot, "Getting and Losing" 1846)

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked! Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

Without a knowledge of the corruptions and abounding evils of our deceitful and desperately wicked heart . . .

unbelief,

infidelity,

pride,

hypocrisy,

worldly mindedness,

carnality,

sensuality,

selfishness;

there will be . . .

no humility,

no self loathing,

no dread of falling,

no desire to be kept,

no knowledge of the super-aboundings

of grace, over the aboundings of sin.

Gathering around the very cradle of his infant!

(J. A. James, "Parental Desire, Duty, & Encouragement")

The godly parent reflects on the destiny of that being which with rapture, he calls his child. He penetrates the disguise which the 'helplessness and unconsciousness of infancy' seem to have thrown around that child, and discovers the grandeur and the dignity of an immortal being! He sees in his countenance, that face which is to shine like the sun in the skies with the glory of God--OR to be clouded with the infamy and horror of the divine curse! He hears a voice which is to be forever hymning the praises of its Creator --OR to be forever venting blasphemies against its Judge! In short, he contemplates a being born for eternity; one who will be forever towering from height to height of glory in heaven--OR sinking from gulf to gulf of despair in hell! He reflects that his child is born with the latent seeds of sinful corruption in his nature, which await only the advancing 'spring of life' to vegetate, to strike root, to spring up under the fatal warmth of temptation, and bear the bitter fruits of rebellion against God.

He sees, in imagination, the world, the flesh and the devil, gathering around the very cradle of his infant, fixing their murderous eyes upon his immortal soul and going out to prepare for his ruin!

He realizes that his child possesses an immortal soul, which is in danger of being forever undone! To desire anything for him less than the salvation of his child's

immortal soul, is cruelty of the blackest kind!

He secretly wishes there was no Supreme Being

(J. A. James, "Dislike to Ministerial Faithfulness
Stated and Explained")

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God!"

(Psalm 14:1)

His sinful disposition is at deadly enmity with the perfection of the Divine character. The holiness of God is the object of his abhorrence--as long as this exists he cannot be at perfect peace. The rays of Divine purity, as often as they fall upon his disordered mind, must disturb and exasperate it. He secretly wishes there was no Supreme Being--or that He was not holy.

If his powers were equal to his desires, he would . . . wrest the sword of justice from the hand of Deity, strip the character of Jehovah of the beauties of holiness, dash in pieces the tables of His law, overturn the throne of judgment, and establish the reign of anarchy, in order that he might sin in peace, and escape the punishment of his wickedness!

The very existence of a holy God is, and ever must be, an annoyance to him, in whose mind there are combined . . . the love of sin, a dread of its consequences, and a wish to be unmolested in his course of iniquity.

The desires of the flesh and of the mind

(J. C. Philpot, "Meditations on Ephesians")

"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." Ephesians 2:3

We may observe here a distinction drawn by the Apostle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind. Both are opposed to God and godliness, both are the fruits of our fallen nature.

But the desires of the FLESH seem to be those grosser and more sensual lusts and passions which are connected, so to speak, with the lower part of our nature. The desires of the MIND are those which are connected with its higher qualities.

Thus some are steeped up to the very lips in all manner of vile abominations of sensual lust, in the gratification of which they find all their pleasure. While others, who would scorn, or at least are not tempted to the baser lusts of the flesh, carry out with equal ardour the promptings of a more refined character and disposition. Ambition to rise in the world, thirsting after power over their fellow-men, a craving for fame and distinction in any particular branch of art or science, discontent with their present situation in life, envying everyone superior to them in birth, wealth, talent, accomplishments, position, or worldly happiness; attempts, more or less successful, to rise out of obscurity, poverty,

and subjection, and to win for themselves name, fame, and prosperity--how wide a field does this open to our view, as embracing "the desires of the MIND!"

And observe how the Apostle puts upon a level the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind, and stamps them both with the same black mark of disobedience and its consequences--the wrath of God.

We look around us. We see the drunkard staggering in the street, we hear the oath of the common swearer, we view the sons and daughters of Belial manifesting in their very looks how sunk they are in deeds of shame. These we at once condemn.

But what do we think of the aspiring tradesman, the energetic man of business, the active, untiring speculator, the man who, without scruple, puts into practice every scheme and plan to advance and aggrandize himself, careless who sinks if he rise? Is he equally guilty in our eyes? What do we think of the artist devoting days and nights to the cultivation of his skill as a painter, as an architect, as a sculptor; of the literary man, buried in his books; of the scientist, devoting years to the particular branch of study which he has selected to pursue; or similar examples of men, whose whole life and all whose energies are spent in fulfilling the desires of their mind?

As far as society, public welfare, the comfort of themselves and their families, and the progress of the world are concerned, there is a vast difference between these two classes; and we would do violence to right feeling to put them upon a level.

But when we come to weigh the matter as before God, with eternity in view, and judge them by the word of truth, we see

at once that there is no real difference between them; that the drunkard does but fulfill the desires of his flesh--and the scholar, the artist, the man of business, the literary man, in a word, the man of the world, whatever his world be, little or great, does but each fulfill the desires of his mind.

Both are of the earth, earthy; both are sworn enemies to God and godliness; and could you look into the very bottom of his heart, you might find the man of intellect, refinement, and education--to be a greater foe to God and His word than the drunkard or the profligate!

The sin in both is one and the same, and consists in this, that in all they do they seek to gratify that carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. God is not in all, or indeed in any of their thoughts. Instead of living to and for Him in whom, as creatures of His hand, they live and move and have their being, they live wholly unto and for themselves, and thus are practical rebels against God, as rejecting his rightful claims upon their obedience.

Come and display your treasure!

(Henry Law, "Deuteronomy" 1858)

Ah! wretched worldling, when will you be wise!

Come and display your treasure!

Your best is but . . .

a fading flower;

a fleeting shadow;

a tottering reed;

a failing brook.

And how long can your hands retain it?

How long?

You startle.

You tremble.

You turn pale.

How long?

It perishes, while you strive to grasp it!

What will then follow?

Hell is at hand to answer!

Continually churning up mire and dirt!

(John Angell James, "Christian Love" 1828)

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waves are continually churning up mire and dirt." Isaiah 57:20

Until the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is regenerated and brought to love God supremely, there can be no true happiness or peace. As long as the heart is under the dominion of selfishness, and all those lusts and passions to which it gives rise, it must be miserable!

In the absence of Christian love, the human bosom must be the seat of uneasiness and distress.

Happiness does not arise from possessions, so much as from dispositions. Happiness is not what a man has, or where he dwells--but what he IS. The great source and springs of felicity, are rooted in our nature. There are certain dispositions, the absence of which would render heaven a place of torment to us; and others, which would raise for us an Eden in the midst of the dreariest wilderness on earth.

It is true that many, in the absence of Christian love, pretend to some kind of enjoyment, and have it too; for there are 'pleasures of sin', such as they are. But as to solid happiness--that which befits and satisfies a rational, moral, and immortal creature--it may with the greatest truth be affirmed, that the wicked are

like the troubled sea which cannot rest--but is
continually churning up mire and dirt!

As well may we expect quietude and comfort in a den
of wild beasts, or in a field of battle--as in a heart
where the vile passions of anger, wrath, malice, envy,
pride, and revenge--have taken up their abode and
predominate. How demon-like is the feeling when
these turbulent evil passions gain the ascendancy!

What agitation and what torment are the result!

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual
immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and
witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage,
selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy;
drunkenness, orgies, and the like." Galat. 5:19-21

He will become a giant in wickedness!

(Gardiner Spring, "Christian Parenting")

Parents! You must recognize a mournful fact--your child is depraved! You will fail utterly to educate him if you don't recognize this sad reality. He possesses a supremely selfish spirit! 'Self-indulgence' is his king! Worse--unless he is instructed in moral truth, he will become a slave of base appetites and unholy passions! He will become a giant in wickedness!

Little heathen?

(The following is from the biography
of Joseph Philpot, written by his son)

There was nothing my father mistrusted more than 'childhood piety.' He insisted that children should never be taught or allowed to use the language of 'personal possession' in reference to God. To sing, for instance, "Rock of Ages, cleft for ME" or, "MY Jesus".

Herein he was most logical. For by early influence and example you can train up a child to be . . .

a little patriot,

a little Catholic,

a little Calvinist, or

a little Bolshevist.

But no power on earth can make him a child of God.

He took great care that we, his children, attended the means of grace, and never missed chapel or family prayers. But he never expected us to be anything but little heathen.

We had, it is true, to be well behaved little heathen.

If not, we got "the stick", or its equivalent.

"Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13

Every child is totally depraved

(J. A. James, "The Sunday School Teacher's Guide" 1816)

It is important for you, in all your exertions, to bear in mind the total and universal depravity of the human race. By total depravity, I do not mean that people are as bad as they can be; for in general they lie under strong restraints--and most do not sin with reckless abandonment. I do not mean that they are all equally wicked; for some are less sinful than others.

I do not mean that they are destitute of everything useful, and lovely in society; for their social affections are often strong and praiseworthy. I do not mean that their actions are always wrong; the contrary is manifestly true.

What I mean by total depravity, is an entire destitution in the human heart by nature--of all spiritual affection, and holy propensities. In this view, every child is totally depraved.

To change this state of the mind, and produce a holy bias; to create a new disposition; to turn all the affections into a new channel, and cause them to flow towards God and heaven, is the work of the omnipotent and eternal Spirit!

The so-called innocence of children

(Augustine)

"Every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood." Genesis 8:21

The so-called innocence of children is more a matter of weakness of limb, than purity of heart.

"I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful."

Psalm 51:5

The filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels

(Joseph Philpot, "Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers")

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

The sin of our fallen nature is a very mysterious thing.

We read of "the mystery of iniquity". Sin has depths which no human plumbline ever fathomed, and lengths which no mortal measuring line ever yet measured out.

Thus the way in which sin sometimes seems to sleep; and at other times to awake with renewed strength;

its active, irritable, impatient, restless nature;

the many shapes and colors it wears;

the filthy holes and puddles in which it grovels;

the corners into which it creeps;

its deceitfulness;

its hypocrisy;

its craftiness;

its persuasiveness;

its intense selfishness;

its utter recklessness;

its desperate madness;

its insatiable greediness;

are secrets, painful secrets,

only learned by bitter experience.

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

The soul's natural element

(J. C. Philpot, "What Is It That Saves a Soul?")

Before the soul can know anything about salvation,
it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature
of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

It is proud, and needs to be humbled.

It is careless, and needs to be awakened.

It is alive, and needs to be killed.

It is full, and requires to be emptied.

It is whole, and needs to be wounded.

It is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self-righteous;

self-seeking;

buried deep in worldliness and carnality;

utterly blind and ignorant;

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit

and enmity;

hateful to all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is

the soul's natural element.

Some of the features of the unregenerate

nature of man are . . .

covetousness,

lust,
worldly pleasure,
desire of the praise of men,
an insatiable thirst after self-advancement,
a complete abandonment to all that can please
and gratify every new desire of the heart,
an utter contempt and abhorrence of everything that
restrains or defeats its mad pursuit of what it loves.

Education,
moral restraints,
or the force of habit,
may restrain the outbreaking of inward corruption,
and dam back the mighty stream of indwelling sin,
so that it shall not burst all its bounds, and desolate
the land. But no moral check can alter human nature.

A chained tiger is a tiger still.

"The Ethiopian cannot change his
skin, nor the leopard his spots."

To make man the direct contrary of what
he originally is; to make him . . .
love God instead of hating Him;
fear God, instead of mocking Him;
obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;
to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful
change, requires the implantation of a new nature
by the immediate hand of God Himself.

Natural light,
natural love,
natural faith,

natural obedience,
in a word, all natural religion,
is here useless and ineffectual.

Bold, unblushing audacity!

(Bonar, "Divine Love and Human Rejection of It")

"I listen to their conversations, and what do I hear?

Is anyone sorry for sin? Does anyone say, 'What a

terrible thing I have done'? No! All are running

down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse

rushing into battle!" Jeremiah 8:6

Man is blind, madly blind, both to his danger

and to his sin. Furiously he plunges on in evil,

from sin to sin,

from lust to lust,

defying God,

braving His anger,

ridiculing His threats,

scoffing at His judgments,

rushing against His sword,

mocking at His hell.

How much recklessness there is among us!

Recklessness in...

sin,

crime,

self indulgence,

pleasure,

lust.

Utter defiance of God!

Bold, unblushing audacity, which

nothing will daunt; which mocks at...

judgments,
sorrows,
trials,
sermons,
and plunges on in evil,
treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath!
"I listen to their conversations, and what do I hear?
Is anyone sorry for sin? Does anyone say, 'What a
terrible thing I have done'? No! All are running down
the path of sin as swiftly as a horse rushing into
battle!" Jeremiah 8:6

Looking down into a filthy pit!

(J. C. Philpot, "Prevailing Pleas" 1865)

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jer. 17:9

Sometimes we are so astonished . . .

at what we are,

at what we have been, or

at what we are capable of.

We stand sometimes and look at our heart, and see

what a seething, boiling, and bubbling is there!

And we look at it with indignant astonishment, as

we would look into a pool of filthy black mud, all

swarming and alive with every hideous creature!

So when a man takes a view of his own heart . . .

its dreadful hypocrisy,

its vile rebellion,

its alarming deceitfulness,

its desperate wickedness,

of what his heart is capable of plotting,

of what evil it can conceive and imagine,

it is as if he stood looking down into a filthy pit and

saw with astonishment, mingled with self-abhorrence,

what his heart is, as the fountain of all iniquity.

A man must have some knowledge of his own heart

to understand such language as this.

You that are so exceedingly 'pious' and so 'extra good',

and from whose heart the veil has never been taken away

to show you what you are, will perhaps think that I am drawing a caricature of human nature, and painting it as the haunt of thieves and prostitutes.

Could you but have the veil taken off your heart, you would see that you were capable of doing all that wickedness that others have done, or can do!

By this sight of ourselves, we learn what a wonderful God we have to deal with! Surely none so highly prize the grace of God as those who are most led into a knowledge of the fall, and the havoc and ruin, and the guilt and misery which it has brought into our own hearts.

Slaves of SELF

(J. C. Philpot, "The Master's Bounty")

In our natural state, we are all the slaves of SELF.

Self in its various forms . . .

proud self,

lustful self,

covetous self,

righteous self,

self in some shape or other, is

the idol before whom all carnal knees bow,

the master whom all carnal hearts serve.

The world is . . .

(by Horatius Bonar)

The world is . . .

blind, and knows it not;

poor, and thinks itself rich;

foolish, and thinks itself wise.

It is not aware of the extent of its

ruin, alienation, and depravity.

It is not alive to its danger, its

hopeless prospects; nor its doom.

The carnal man's trinity!

("Soul Idolatry" David Clarkson, 1621-1686)

"You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a such a person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world." Ephesians 5:5

"For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:16

Pleasures, and riches, and honors are the carnal man's trinity. These are the three great idols of worldly men, to which they prostrate their souls! Idolatry is to give that honor and worship to 'the creature', which is due to the Creator alone. When this worship is communicated to other things, whatever they are, we thereby make them idols, and commit idolatry. When the mind is most taken up with an object, and the heart and affections most set upon it, this is "soul worship"--and this worship is due to God alone.

Now this worship due to God alone, is given . . .
by the savage heathen to their stick and stones;
by the papist to their angels, saints, and images;
by carnal men to their lusts.

There are two kinds of idolatry:

1. Open, external idolatry--when men, out of a religious respect, bow to, or prostrate themselves before anything besides the true God. This is the idolatry of the heathen,

and in part, the idolatry of papists.

2. Secret and soul idolatry--when the mind is set on anything more than God; when anything is . . . more valued than God, more desired than God, more sought than God, more loved than God.

Hence, secret idolaters shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Soul idolatry will exclude men from heaven, as much as open idolatry!

He who serves his lusts is as incapable of entering heaven, as he who worships idols of wood or stone!

"Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry!"

1 Corinthians 10:14

Your filth will be washed away!

(J. C. Philpot, "The Clean Water Sprinkled" 1866)

O, what loathsome monsters of iniquity—how polluted, filthy, and vile do we feel ourselves to be—when the guilt of our sin is charged home upon our conscience! Have you not sometimes loathed yourselves on account of your abominations? Has not the filth of your sin sometimes disgusted you; the opening up of that horrible, that ever running sewer, which you daily carry about with you?

We complain, and justly complain—of a reeking sewer which runs through a street—or of a ditch filled with everything disgusting. But do we feel as much—do we complain as often—of the foul sewer which is ever running in our soul—of the filthy ditch in our own bosom?

As the sight of this open sewer meets our eyes—and its stench enters our nostrils, it fills us with self-loathing and self-abhorrence before the eyes of a holy God.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away!"

Ezekiel 36:25-26

The silly moth is caught!

(Henry Law, "Deuteronomy" 1858)

Why is this world such a wide sea of evil?

Why do earth's multitudes roll so easily to hell?

The tastes of the mass of the human race are groveling and vile. They only care to sip the vulgar cup of time and sense. Their sin soiled garments and polluted feet prove, that they wallow in defiling mire.

See the worldling.

A temptation meets him.

A gilded bait allures.

A sweet indulgence opens its inviting arms.

What follows?

The silly moth is caught!

Pleasure whispers, "Come and partake."

Desire acquiesces. Nature surrenders.

Thus Satan leads his crowds down misery's downward slope. Quickly; easily; they glide along. The rolling pebble has no power to stop.

The downhill torrent is incapable of turning.

To them, liberty is unknown. The clash of heavy chains attests their bondage. Satan drags them; and they must obey. The world gives laws; they tremblingly submit. They crouch the slaves of many an insulting tyrant.

Wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores

(Joseph Philpot, Balm in Gilead, 1852)

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither soothed with ointment."

Isaiah 1:5-6

Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin.

Every mental faculty is depraved.

The will chooses evil.

The affections cleave to earthly things.

The memory, like a broken sieve,
retains the bad and lets fall the good.

The judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge,
pronounces mindless or wrong decisions.

The conscience, like an opium eater, lies
asleep and drugged in stupefied silence.

When all these 'master faculties of the mind' are
so drunken and disorderly, need we wonder that
the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew?

Lusts call out for gratification.

Unbelief and infidelity murmur.

Tempers growl and mutter.

Every bad passion strives hard for the mastery.

O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose,
have filled earth with misery, and hell with victims;

which deluged the world with the flood; burnt
Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven; and
are ripening the world for the final conflagration!

Every sin which . . .

has made this fair earth a 'present hell';

has filled the air with groans; and

has drenched the ground with blood;

dwells in your heart and mine!

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the
Spirit of God, we feel indeed to be of all men most
sinful and miserable; and of all most guilty, polluted,
and vile. But it is this, and nothing but this, which
cuts to pieces our 'fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and
strength'; which slays our delusive hopes; and lays us
low at the footstool of mercy; without one good thought,
word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge.

It is this which brings the soul to this point:

that if saved, it can only be saved by the

free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender

compassion of Almighty God.

The ulcer that sits on a creature's heart

(Andrew Gray "Door Unto Everlasting Life")

Sin is the ulcer that sits on a creature's heart,
and robs him of all true contentment and sound
joy. Oh the secret gnawings that envy, and
pride, and covetousness give a man's soul.

Sin is the soul's disease. It . . .

blinds the mind,

hardens the heart,

enthalls the will,

defiles the conscience,

deadens the affections, and

hurls the whole man into confusion.

Sin brings more evils than either tongue

can speak—or heart can think.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin?

(Joseph Philpot, "Daily Words for Zion's Wayfarers")

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

Jeremiah 13:23

Before the soul can know anything about salvation, it must learn deeply and experimentally the nature of sin, and of itself, as stained and polluted by sin.

The soul is proud, and needs to be humbled.

The soul is careless, and needs to be awakened.

The soul is alive, and needs to be killed.

The soul is full, and requires to be emptied.

The soul is whole, and needs to be wounded.

The soul is clothed, and requires to be stripped.

The soul is, by nature . . .

self righteous and self seeking,

buried deep in worldliness and carnality,

utterly blind and ignorant,

filled with . . .

presumption,

arrogance,

conceit,

and enmity.

It hates all that is heavenly and spiritual.

Sin, in all its various forms, is its natural element.

To make man the direct opposite of what he originally is . . .

to make him love God, instead of hating Him;
to make him fear God, instead of mocking Him;
to make him obey God, instead of rebelling against Him;
to make him to tremble at His dreadful majesty,
instead of defiantly charging against Him;
to do this mighty work, and to effect this wonderful
change, requires the implantation of a new nature by
the immediate hand of God Himself!

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the
leopard its spots? Neither can you do good
who are accustomed to doing evil."

Jeremiah 13:23

Utter beggary and complete bankruptcy

(Joseph Philpot)

"O visit me with your salvation." Psalm 106:4

Salvation only suits the condemned, the lost.

A man must be lost; utterly lost; before he
can prize God's salvation.

And how is he lost? By . . .

losing all his religion,

losing all his righteousness,

losing all his strength,

losing all his confidence,

losing all his hopes,

losing all that is of the flesh;

losing it by its being taken from him,

and stripped away by the hand of God.

A man who is brought into this state of
utter beggary and complete bankruptcy . . .

to be nothing,

to have nothing,

to know nothing;

he is the man, who is . . .

crying,

groaning,

begging,

suing,

seeking,

and praying

for God's salvation to his soul.

"O visit me with your salvation." Psalm 106:4

Slaves of Satan!

"Then they will come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:26

In our natural state, we are all the slaves of Satan!

We love our foul master, hug his chain, and delight in his servitude, little thinking what awful wages are to follow.

This mighty conqueror has with him a numerous train of captives! This haughty master, the 'god of this world', has in his fiendish retinue, a whole array of slaves who gladly do his behests. They obey him cheerfully, though he is leading them down to the bottomless pit! For though he amuses them while here in this world with a few toys and baubles, he will not pay them their wages until he has enticed and flattered them into that ghastly gulf of destruction, in which he himself has been weltering for ages.

"Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe." 2 Cor. 4:4

The silkworm

(Spurgeon, "The Deep-seated Character of Sin")

Nothing is more pleasing to human nature than the attempt to do something by which it may merit salvation at the hand of God.

Man is much like a silkworm, he is a spinner and weaver by nature.

A robe of righteousness is wrought out for him, but he will not have it. He will spin for himself, and like the silkworm, he spins, and spins, and he only spins himself a shroud.

All the righteousness that a sinner can make will only be a shroud in which to wrap up his soul, his destroyed soul, for God will cast him away who relies upon his works.

To walk after the flesh

(J. C. Philpot, "No Condemnation" 1862)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1

To walk after the flesh carries with it the idea of the flesh going before us—as our leader, guide, and example—and our following close in its footsteps, so that wherever it drags or draws, we move after it, as the needle after the magnet.

To walk after the flesh, then, is to move step by step in implicit obedience to . . .

the commands of the flesh,

the lusts of the flesh,

the inclinations of the flesh,

and the desires of the flesh,

whatever shape they assume,

whatever garb they wear,

whatever name they may bear.

To walk after the flesh is to be ever pursuing, desiring, and doing the things that please the flesh, whatever aspect that flesh may wear or whatever dress it may assume—whether molded and fashioned after the grosser and more flagrant ways of the profane world—or the more refined and deceptive religion of the professing church.

But are the grosser and more manifest sinners the

only people who may be said to walk after the flesh?
Does not all human religion, in all its varied forms and shapes, come under the sweep of this all-devouring sword? Yes! Every one who is entangled in and led by a fleshly religion, walks as much after the flesh as those who are abandoned to its grosser indulgences. Sad it is, yet not more sad than true, that false religion has slain its thousands, if open sin has slain its ten thousands.
To walk after the flesh, whether it be in the grosser or more refined sense of the term, is the same in the sight of God.

Sin grasps each mother's son in its vile arms

(Henry Law, "Forgiveness of Sins" 1875)

Sin is inborn. It is a hereditary disease.

The seeds of every evil are innate in each heart.

Let this monster now be boldly faced . . .

let its hideous features be narrowly scrutinized;

let it be stripped of its deceiving mask;

let the cheating tinsel disappear;

let it be viewed in its naked deformity;

let its essence and character, and work,

and guilt be traced unsparingly.

Sin grasps each mother's son in its vile arms,

and stops not its assaults while time endures.

Sin moves with the mind's first movement;

in the cradle it begins to stir.

Sin grows with man's growth; it

walks beside him in his every path.

Sin adheres as the very skin, and

lingers in each dying chamber.

There is no lofty dwelling, and no lowly hut,

which sin does not frequent. There is no period

of day or night which can repel its step.

Sin is a universal and life long plague!

Let it be repeated, that each natural

heart is from the cradle, a hive of sin!

Why is this dark picture thus exhibited?

There is no intent to leave any trembling,

dismayed, cast down, fast bound in shackles
of despair. The true desire is to show in lovelier
form the Gospel's smile; and to win readier
acceptance for the tidings, "But the Lord our
God is merciful and forgiving, even though we
have rebelled against Him." Daniel 9:9

Sin's vile brand is upon all; but to all
the Gospel comes, with cheering voice.

A way is opened, in which, without infringement
of any holy attribute, He can pardon, restore to
favor, and remit sin's curse. Full, free, complete,
everlasting forgiveness has come forth from the
courts of heaven!

This forgiveness of sins is the cornerstone
and glory of the Gospel. Gaining validity
through Christ's death, the Gospel . . .

remits all penalties of the believer,
abrogates all demands,
relaxes all bonds,
cancels all debts,
blots out every accusing charge,
silences all threats,
blunts every weapon of wrath,
extracts the sting of vengeance,
averts all miseries,
removes all apprehensions,
opens the prison doors,
loosens all chains,
closes hell,

makes a straight path to heaven,
and crowns an innumerable multitude
with blessings of celestial favor!

The wretched idol, SELF!

(Octavius Winslow, "Christ and the Christian in Temptation" 1877)

Of all the sins common to our fallen nature, God has the most signally marked that of Idolatry, or False Worship.

Man is by nature an idolater. His sinful mind, being alienated from God, seeks some object of worship other than the true and living God.

The 'renewed' man is not entirely exempt from this sin. Hence the exhortation of the Apostle addressed to the early Christians, and in these last days addressed to us: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

Surely, it was not the gross and senseless idolatry of the heathens to which the Apostles thus refer; from this many of those saints to whom they wrote had already been delivered; but to other idols and other worship, less palpable and degrading, but not less superstitious or offensive to God.

The worship of SELF is a natural and fearful form of idolatry. It is an innate and never entirely eradicated principle of our nature, but clings to us to the very last of life. Alas! the holiest and the best of us want to be something, and to do something, when in reality we are nothing, and can do nothing.

We walk in our religious life, for the most part, upon

stilts; always appearing in the eyes of others taller than we really are!

But real greatness and true humility have ever been in alliance with entire abnegation of SELF.

Who can stand before the cross and gaze upon the Creator of all worlds impaled between two criminals, Himself dying as the chief, and not shrink into his own nothingness, bewailing that he should ever have been betrayed into the folly and the sin of burning the incense of idolatry before the wretched idol, SELF!

Beware of SELF idolatry!

It is the most insidious, hateful, and degrading form of idolism to which the soul can be subjected.

Such is the career of thousands!

(Bonar, "The Way Of Cain" 1846)

Man is weary, toiling for that which is
not bread; trying to wring water out of
the world's dry sands and broken cisterns.

Such is the career of thousands . . .

a fruitless worldliness;

a life of vanity;

a soul utterly empty;

a being wholly wasted.

No cradle holds an innocent one!

(Henry Law, "Beacons of the Bible" 1869)

When evil fills the heart,

evil effects will soon appear.

From tainted sources, tainted waters flow.

The tree proclaims the qualities of its root.

When poison permeates the veins,

the whole body sickens.

The plague begun, spreads an infecting course.

When Adam fell, the inner man became entirely corrupt. Now, corruption cannot but propagate corruption.

The parent reproduces his own likeness.

Hence every child is born in sin.

No cradle holds an innocent one!

Each offspring of the human

family steps upon earth . . .

dead towards God;

corrupt in inward bias;

prone to iniquity.

He brings . . .

no eye to see God's will;

no ear to hear His voice;

no feet to climb the heavenly hill.

He is . . .

an alien from righteousness;

a willing slave of Satan;

blinded in intellect;
a pilgrim towards a lost land;
a vessel fitted for destruction;
a current strongly rushing downwards.
His heart has many tenants; but God is no longer there. The palace once so fair is now overrun with weeds. Like Babylon in ruins, wild beasts of the desert lie there, and the houses are full of doleful creatures. Is. 13:21.
Reader, such surely is your birth state!
Has your soul realized the dreadful truth?
Do you abhor natural self?
Has the life giving Spirit quickened you with renovating might? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus? If so, surely you will bless God's rescuing grace. If otherwise, may this dark picture scare you from delusion's dream!

Pride shrinks before the appalling spectacle!

(Thomas Reade, "Christian Meditations")

"When the Spirit comes, He will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment." John 16:8

The teaching of the Holy Spirit is enlightening, convincing, purifying, and consoling. The first operation of the Spirit is light. This light, darting into the conscience, produces conviction of sin, by discovering, in all its hideousness, the monster that dwells within!

Sin becomes truly odious when viewed by the light of the Eternal Spirit. Its nature and effects are then known, and felt, and deplored.

This sight of ourselves is truly humbling.

'Self-abhorrence' is the fruit of deep conviction.

Nothing can lay the sinner in the dust of humiliation but the searching light of the Spirit. This candle of the Lord, shining into the inward parts, into the chambers of imagery, discovers the secret abominations which are practiced there.

Oh what hidden evils are made manifest by the light; evils of every name, the progeny of hell.

'Self-love' sickens at the view.

Pride shrinks before the appalling spectacle!

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jerem. 17:9

Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God?

(Henry Law, "Psalms")

"Let us break their chains," they cry, "and
free ourselves from this slavery." Psalm 2:3

Self will rejects restraint.

Pride will not yield to rule.

Conceited reason lifts up defiant head.

The gentle scepter of Christ's kingdom;

His sweet, His light, His easy, and His
loving yoke; are hated as chains which
restrain, and cords which fetter.

When Jesus came, earth raised the cry,

"We will not have this man to reign over
us." It still resounds.

When will man learn that widest liberty
is true submission to the Gospel sway?

He is a free man whom the Son makes free.

He is a slave in whom unbridled lusts and passions rule.

But can proud man prevail?

Can he drive back the ocean's might with a feather?

Can he lift up his puny hand, and bid the sun conceal its rays?

Can he bind the hurricane with straws?

Can he lay mountains low, lift up the
valleys, and change the laws of nature?

Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God?

Such, doubtless, is his frantic will.

"Let us break their chains," they cry, "and

free ourselves from this slavery." Psalm 2:3

But give ear again!

"But the One who rules in heaven laughs.

The Lord scoffs at them. Then in anger He

rebukes them, terrifying them with His

fierce fury." Psalm 2:4-5

God may be silent long; but His patience

is not impunity. Reprieve brings not release.

When the appointed time comes, the

floodgates open and wrath overflows!

Who can conceive these terrors?

What must His displeasure be?

Who can endure when His anger issues forth?

What weeping! What wailing! What anguish!

What gnashing of teeth! When God arises to

execute due judgment on His foes!

The deep ingredient of the wicked heart

(Henry Law, "Psalms")

"In his pride the wicked does not seek Him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God."

Psalm 10:4

The Spirit proceeds to draw a full blown
portrait of sin. The mask is withdrawn.

The monster is dragged forth to light.

The hideous features are revealed.

The Spirit's pen cannot exaggerate.

The dark colors are not too dark.

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