

CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS

by Thomas Reade

Reade's devotional companion for personal spiritual reflection containing meditations interspersed with original hymns, promoting serious contemplation on God's character and encouraging self-examination and an approach to Christ as the foundation for salvation.

68 Chapters

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00 CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS

CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS or

THE BELIEVER'S COMPANION IN SOLITUDE

by Thomas Reade 1841

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00 Preface

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"My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." Psalms 104:34

"But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father secretly. Then your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." Matthew 6:6

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Mark 1:35

PREFACE

This Volume is designed to be "THE BELIEVERS COMPANION IN SOLITUDE". The Meditations, interspersed with Hymns, chiefly original, are intended to promote serious reflections, silent aspirations to God, and self-examination; and thus, through the divine blessing, to lead the heart to God in Christ, as the only Foundation for a sinner's hope; and the only Fountain of a sinner's happiness. Should this important end, in any humble measure be attained, the glory will be His from whom all good proceeds.

Frequent retirement, and reading the Scriptures with meditation and prayer, are essential, through the power of the Spirit, to our growth in grace. The more we meditate on the things of God, as revealed in his holy word, the more will our minds be brought under their sanctifying influence. The religion of Christ, is the religion of the heart. It not only enlightens the understanding, but it purifies the affections. The world will lose its fascinating power, and formality its deadening effect upon us, when once we come to a saving knowledge of Christ Crucified! We shall then use the world as not abusing it, and engage in outward forms of religion, as needful for order, but not as substitutes for personal piety. We shall then live in the spirit of the vows and promises which were made in our names at our baptism, and thus evidence our new birth, by walking before God in newness of life.

In a spirit of Christian love, the author of these Meditations has dwelt on the evil of self-deception; on our proneness to confound the sacramental sign with the thing signified; on the danger of our professing to know God, while in works we deny him; and, of resting in the form of godliness, while we deny the power thereof. Surely these subjects cannot be too frequently, nor too earnestly, enforced. If we diligently study our Bible, that only rule of faith and practice, we shall be preserved from those abounding errors which darken and pervert the truth. "The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple."

May the Savior, who is love, impart his blessing to these Meditations on his Grace and Power, that he who writes, and they who read, may finally rejoice together in his kingdom of glory.

01. Communion with God

1. COMMUNION WITH GOD

"When I awake, I am still with you." Psalms 139:18

Communion with God is the privilege of every true believer. He alone can approach the mercy-seat in the spirit of adoption, and enjoy a foretaste of heaven while journeying towards it. John felt all this happiness when he wrote: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Union to God, and communion with him through the Son of his love, is the source of every spiritual blessing. This exalted privilege can only be enjoyed by the holy followers of Jesus; for the Apostle adds, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." Yes, from all our sins, "though they be as scarlet," "though they be red like crimson," crying aloud for vengeance on our souls. But, "if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;" for, "He that says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

How inseparably connected, in the word of God, is the privilege and the character of the true believer. Let none, then, dare to claim the privilege who are destitute of holiness so emphatically denominated light. "God is light," "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning." All his people are "the children of light and the children of the day." They have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Oh! that the words of Christ may be living words in the hearts of all his people: "I am the Light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes on me should not abide in darkness." "While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

All the people of God are "light in the Lord;" -but while in the body, they are renewed only in part, for thus writes John; "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Sin does not reign, though it rebels in the hearts of the redeemed; for "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." But, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins;" for "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," "that we might live through him."

All, who are united to Christ by faith- all, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them- all, who rely simply and without reserve on the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, through the Spirit, have fellowship with the Father and the Son. To them, God is a God that hears prayer; he grants the requests of their lips. As they pour out their hearts before him, so he pours his blessings into their souls. He fills them with light, he strengthens them with might, by his Spirit in the inner man- he speaks peace through the blood of Jesus- and accepts them, clothed in his righteousness; the divine image is formed in their souls, and they are made fit for the kingdom of glory.

Such is the character and experience of all who are privileged to hold communion with the Father of spirits. What honor can exceed that of being admitted into the presence-chamber of the King of kings— of holding converse with Him, whom angels worship, and before whom devils tremble! Is this the exalted privilege of the sons of men? Oh! my soul, bless, forever bless that precious Savior, who procured all this, by his blood, for you.

Oh! my adorable Jesus! enable me to make a full surrender of myself to you. Did you leave the bosom of your Father, to bleed and die for me, and shall I refuse to leave this vain empty world at your sweet call? Alas! I should refuse and spurn you too, did not your love constrain me to obedience. Oh! blessed Redeemer, I would now hold holy Communion with you. Oh! make me sincere. Give me a saving knowledge of myself. Show me my true character. Allow me not to build on a false hope, lest I cherish a false peace. Send your Holy Spirit into my heart, to enlighten my understanding, and mold my will to yours; that my affections may ever soar towards You.

Your word of truth declares, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Let me not deceive myself, Oh Savior of sinners, in a matter of such infinite importance as the salvation of my soul. Let me not fancy myself to be something, when I am nothing; or to suppose, that, because I am among the outwardly called, I shall therefore be found among the chosen; for you have yourself declared, "that many are called but few chosen." Oh! give me the searching light of your Spirit, that I may drag from its concealment, every lurking sin, and crucify every rebel lust!

Oh! my heavenly Father, wash me in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; make me your child by adoption and grace; enable me to cast away the filthy rags of my own righteousness, and to put on, by faith, the righteousness of your dear Son. Clothe me with humility. Keep me in a meek and lowly frame. Give me a patient and contented spirit- contented with such outward blessings as you are pleased to bestow- and patient under such afflictions as you know to be needful for me. Make me thankful for all your mercies. Let my heart overflow with unceasing praises for the unspeakable gift of the Lord Jesus. Here I am, Oh my God, in your presence. Look upon me in Christ for his sake, and through the merit of his blood, pardon all my offences. Seal me with your Spirit, and make me a partaker of your love. Deliver me daily more and more from the power of indwelling sin; from the fiery assaults of Satan; from the love and friendship of the world; yes, from everything that can alienate my heart from you, or unfit me for your heavenly kingdom.

Give me, blessed Lord, an increasing relish for spiritual exercises; for religious retirement; for the precious privilege of Communion with You. May the gospel of your grace be as a well of salvation to my soul, from where I may daily draw the water of life. May the Savior be continually more precious in my sight, and more endeared to my heart. Transform me anew into his holy image, and seal me yours, forever yours, a sinner saved by grace.

Without Christ, I can do nothing. All my fresh springs are in him. Great blessings are promised to faith, but faith is his gift. I cannot believe through any natural effort of my own. I may hear sermons, partake of the Lord's Supper, read my Bible, and pray much, but no means, however excellent, can of themselves work faith in my heart. You alone, Almighty Savior, are the author and finisher of faith. Your blessing must descend from on high; your Holy Spirit must be imparted before those means can be rendered effectual, which your wisdom has ordained for the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of your people. Save me from resting in forms and ceremonies, which, without your grace, are but as "clouds without water."

Oh! heavenly Father, whose love and grace are infinite, give me this precious faith, that I may hourly look to Christ as my great Atonement; flee to him as to a City of refuge; receive him as my Prophet, Priest, and King; rely upon him for the forgiveness of my sins, for righteousness to justify me in your sight, for strength to enable me to perform duty, to follow after holiness, to encounter spiritual enemies, and to come off more than conqueror, until faith is lost in vision, and the cross be exchanged for the crown.

If David could say, under the comparatively dark dispensation under which he lived: "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you, my soul thirsts for you," O! that, enjoying the bright beams of gospel day, I may feel, blessed Jesus, earnest desires after your presence, ardent longings after communion with you. There is no happiness separate from you. With you is life. Unite me to yourself. I have daily to mourn over a cold heart. When I would do good, evil is present with me. Every day affords fresh proof that I am a fallen creature. The leprosy lies deep within; my whole nature is corrupt. Nothing but grace can rescue me from perdition. I need the three-fold blessings of redemption: pardon, peace, and purity. How cheering is the assurance of your Apostle, that we have redemption through your blood, even the forgiveness of sins. To this fountain I would continually resort, that through faith, I may wash and be clean. Then shall I enjoy your presence here, and dwell with you in glory everlasting.

There is a simplicity in the gospel method of salvation which none can rightly discover but those who are taught of God. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The nominal professor of Christianity cannot enter into the rich, yet simple revelations of redeeming grace. The humble soul, emptied of self, and filled with the light of truth, can alone apprehend and feel the exquisitely delightful manifestations of that love which is free, full, sovereign, and eternal.

Man is always desirous to help save himself; to work out a righteousness of his own, that he may have something whereof to boast. But the gospel declares his total inability for this work, and points him, as a helpless, lost, guilty sinner, to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; saying in accents of mercy- "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." "Only believe" was the word of our Savior to the weeping father in the gospel. He was enabled to believe, and received an immediate blessing, in the restoration of his child. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. Turn away my eyes from all creature dependencies, from all self-confidence. Be all my hope and all my plea before the mercy-seat.

While thousands around me are rejecting your authority, neglecting your salvation, or darkening your counsel by words without knowledge, may I have grace, blessed Jesus, to wash in no other fountain but your precious blood; to walk by no other light, than the truth of your holy word; to journey heavenward in no other way, than by faith in you; to feed my soul on nothing but yourself, the living bread from heaven; to desire no other joy, than that which springs from union to You and communion with You. Then shall I partake of the cup of salvation, and praise you with the countless host of the redeemed in your kingdom of glory.

Come, O my soul, retire a while,

Withdraw your thoughts from things below;

Beneath the Savior's blissful smile,

A heaven on earth, you then shall know.
Communion with your God, how sweet!
To feel his presence- how divine!
Oh! make me for this blessing meet;
My Savior, make me ever thine.
While thousands seek their joy on earth,
Where thorns, in rich profusion, grow;
I long for joys of heavenly birth,
Which Jesus only can bestow.
Amid the tangled cares of life,
Amid the sorrows which abound,
Amid the errors, sins, and strife,
Which thickly cover nature's ground;
I would withdraw to silent shades,
And seek retirement with my God,
Where earth, with all its folly, fades,
Where I can leave affliction's load.
How precious this Communion, Lord;
With You is light, and peace, and joy;
I trust the promise of your word,
Which earth and hell can ne'er destroy.

02. THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

2. THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

"Who else among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is glorious in holiness like you—so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders?" Exodus 15:11

"Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor. Let all the earth tremble before him." Psalms 96:9

If the external evidences of Christianity prove the truth of its being a divine revelation, how much more do the internal evidences attest its divine origin. From the period of the Fall to the Prophet Malachi, promises and prophecies were proclaimed, types and ordinances were instituted, to foretell and prefigure the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Lamb of God, who, in the fullness of time, should take away the sin of the world. Holiness is the grand characteristic of the gospel of Christ- and all who are interested in its blessings are a holy people; for the announcement to Joseph by the angel was, "You shall call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins." "Be holy, for I am holy," is the command of God. "Be holy in all manner of conversation," is the apostolic injunction. Believers are described by Peter, as, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light."

There is a beauty in holiness which as far surpasses the rude features of the world's morality, as the dazzling brightness of the sun outshines the glowworm's light. The morality of the world consists in outward decency, and in rectitude of conduct towards our neighbor, while the heart is wholly estranged from God. Holiness has a special regard to God, and consists in purity of heart, and in a conformity to the divine image. This is what God demands. To this, a promise is annexed: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is what God works in believers by his Spirit; and without this, no man shall see the Lord. All religion is vain, if inward purity be lacking. No outward morality- no speculative knowledge of divine Truth- no formal observance of religious duties- can ever be accepted as a substitute for holiness by Him who has said: "My son, give me your heart."

Oh! my, soul, have you been born again? Has this divine change passed upon you? Are you renewed in righteousness and true holiness? Can you rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness? Are you laboring daily, through the Spirit, for greater purity of heart, more heavenly-mindedness, chasteness of affection, and rectitude of intention? Is love to God, your principle of action? Is his glory, your end and aim?

Oh! blessed Jesus, I have no strength in myself to do these things. Put forth your saving, sanctifying power. Breathe, oh vivifying Spirit, breathe on the dry bones, and they shall live. Shine, oh Sun of Righteousness on my barren soul, that heavenly graces may blossom and bear fruit to your praise. Angels will then rejoice over another sinner that repents; and another jewel will be added to your crown.

Give me grace to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh, to loathe sin, as I should a garment in which is the plague of leprosy. Preserve me from the lustings of carnal nature, from inordinate desires, irregular propensities, and sinful thoughts, those seeds in the soul, from where spring so many poisonous weeds. Purify every imagination of the thoughts of my heart; give me, holy Savior, the victory over myself, that every thought may be brought into captivity to a willing obedience to you. Oh! may I daily worship You in the beauty of holiness, in spirit and in truth, that "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, I may laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you, and saying- Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Glory be to you, O Lord most High."

I am now living in an enemy's country. My heart, like a besieged city, has to contend with foes without, and traitors within. Watchfulness and prayer are the sentinels which guard the holy principle within; while circumspection watches the motions of the enemy without. If I sleep at my post, or relax in my vigilance, my soul would soon be overpowered by indwelling corruptions, and be vanquished by the powers of darkness. How earnest is the exhortation of Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking those whom he may devour: resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." How encouraging is his prayer, "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen."

Self-examination, and prayer for divine illumination, are powerful auxiliaries in the Christian warfare. The Christian soldier must pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that he may be endued with strength in the inner man. He must search into his heart, and learn to know himself, that he may not be surprised by the secret machinations of indwelling sin. Oh! how arduous is the life of the believer. The 'mere formalist' knows nothing of his conflicts or his comforts. "See, then," says Paul, "that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Enable me, O Lord, to examine myself, whether I be in the faith; to prove my own self. Many deceive themselves by not scrutinizing their principles of action. Preserve me, your unworthy servant, from this fatal neglect; lest, judging from external performances, and disregarding the motives from where they proceed, I should be found, at last, to be only as reprobate silver in your sight.

Am I in the faith? True saving faith is a living, loving principle in the heart. As life manifests itself by action, so does a living faith- it works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world, it unites the soul to Christ, it apprehends his merits, and puts on his righteousness, it lives upon the promises, it realizes celestial glories, it raises the believer above the cares of life, the sorrows of the world, and all the gloomy horrors of the grave; it resists sin, it applies the death of Christ as a powerful corrosive to eat out the gangrene of corrupted nature, it raises the dead soul, by virtue of the Savior's resurrection, from the grave of spiritual death to newness of life, it enables the believer to walk with God, to worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the spirit of adoption, until he attain to the temple above, where his services and praises shall be perfected and eternal.

Have I this precious faith, this faith of God's elect, which is according to godliness? It is the gift of God; it is of the operation of the Spirit; Jesus is the author and finisher of it. Oh! blessed Trinity in unity, three persons in one Divine Essence, undivided, immutable, self-existent, and eternal; grant unto me this invaluable, indispensable blessing. Without it, I cannot please you. Without it, I cannot approach unto you with acceptance. If in Christ, I shall be precious in your sight, for his dear sake who lived and died for me. If out of Christ, I shall be viewed as a vessel of wrath, as fuel for the everlasting burning! Delay not, then, blessed Lord, delay not, to impart this precious gift of grace- a justifying faith working by love. Speak the word only, and the blessing will descend. Work in me all the good pleasure of your goodness, and the work of faith with power, that, going on from strength to strength, from conquering to conquer, I may rise superior to all my foes, glorify you here in the beauty of holiness, and shine forever as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

03. ASPIRATIONS AFTER HOLINESS

3. ASPIRATIONS AFTER HOLINESS

"With my whole heart have I sought you: O let me not wander from your commandments." Psalms 119:10

Blessed Savior! Oh lover of my soul, give me grace to love you. Never, oh, never let me forget what you have done for an unworthy sinner! Let me never forget your bloody sweat, your cross and passion, your known and unknown agonies, when you made your soul an offering for sin. Oh! that I had a heart to love you with a supreme affection. Come, blessed Spirit, shed abroad in my heart a Savior's love, and that will kindle mine. Sit as a refiner's fire, as a purifier of silver, until the dross of sin is consumed, and your holy image be reflected on my soul; yes, until I be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Give me a hatred of sin; preserve me from the wiles of Satan; deliver me from the workings of pride; save me from a worldly spirit, from a carnal mind, from sensualized affections.

Oh! fountain of all spiritual life, quicken my dead soul to act with energy in the cause of truth; give me a thirsting after holiness; strengthen my faith in the Redeemer's righteousness; my reliance on his power; my confidence in his grace; my hope in his promises; my assurance in his love. Fill me with holy joy, tranquility, and peace. Take what you will of earth away, only give me your Blessed Self, and then, through grace, I shall sing in the darkest seasons; triumph in death; and shout hallelujah in glory.

Manifest yourself, Almighty Jesus, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy, when infidelity, popery, and anarchy are combining to overthrow your church, that church, which you have purchased with your blood, that "congregation of faithful men," however differing in name, whom you have chosen out of the world. Make bare your arm as in the days of old. Stir up your people to arm themselves for the combat, with the armor of your providing for attack and defense- with the belt of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that they may be able to withstand in the evil day, and be faithful even unto death.

Preserve me, gracious Savior, from false philosophy; from that wisdom which is from beneath- the poison of the old serpent. Alas! how is your glorious plan of redemption perverted by men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth. Preserve me from that spurious charity and mistaken toleration, which would embrace in its arms every error, every false doctrine, every heresy; and from that infidel liberality, that boasted freedom of sentiment, which delights to darken the clearest truths, and would root out of the world, if it were possible, the saving knowledge of your Divinity, your Atonement, and Intercession.

Oh, Son of God, one with the Father, God over all, blessed for evermore, give me grace to build all my hopes for heaven on You, and You alone; to plead nothing before the Throne of offended Justice but your blood and righteousness; to acknowledge my sinfulness with deep contrition; to

loathe myself in your sight and my own; and to praise you by a life of loving obedience, for all that you have done and suffered for me, the chief of sinners. Give me grace to know my weakness, my worthlessness, my wretchedness, my danger. Impart unto me your Holy Spirit, that I may apprehend your saving merits; that I may taste that you are gracious; and be filled with all joy and peace in believing.

O, my soul! spread your needs before the Lord, who is ever more ready to hear than you are to pray. Lord hear my prayer, give hear to the voice of my supplication. I want to feel a greater delight in God. I want to look up to God, as my covenant God in Christ. I want a greater freedom of access to Him through the Son of his love. I want a more vigorous faith; a more spiritual understanding; a greater ardency of affection. My mind is dark; my spiritual feelings are benumbed; I seem to myself cold and lifeless! Lord quicken me according to your word. I see many around me who live only to You. Many hearts are burning with love to Christ, and zeal for the salvation of perishing millions. I behold glorious Societies flourishing in our land. Like so many trees of life, they spread their fruitful boughs over the earth, while their leaves are for the healing of the nations. O, how awful! -to be dark, in the midst of light- cold in the midst of holy fire- dead in the midst of life! Lord grant this blessing, grant that the fire of love may ever be burning on the altar of my heart, and never go out. Oh! what a precious gift is a new heart. This is the new covenant gift; "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." What a gracious command, "My son, give me your heart."

Blessed Lord, through your abounding grace in Christ Jesus, grant this request of my lips. I want a penitent heart- a heart deeply humbled on account of sin. Only the sight of a crucified Jesus can melt my frozen heart, and cause the tear of penitence to flow, as water from the smitten rock. I want a believing heart, a heart filled with lively faith, and clear views of the power and grace of Christ; a faith, which can draw the healing virtue from the great Physician. Oh! the blessed power of faith, which can make the Savior's merits mine, and place my sins on him! What joy, what peace, what sweet assurance does this economy of grace impart to the believing soul! I want a loving heart. God is love, and every one who loves is born of God, and knows God.

"Happy the heart where graces reign,

And love inspires the breast."

Oh! that my heart were the abode of holy love; the Spirit thus witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God. How I long to feel the purifying influence of this heavenly grace, which assimilates the believer to the saints in glory. I want an obedient heart, the heart of a child, whereby, with filial confidence, I can cry- Abba, Father! As love is the spring of all holy obedience, so obedience is the truest test of love. All profession is vain without obedience to the will of God. The Redeemer's character was marked by obedience to his Father's will. His active obedience, and passive sufferings, proved his entire submission as man to the will of God; while, by his obedience unto death, he wrought out a righteousness to justify my guilty soul and to save me from eternal death. O, miracle of grace! the wonder of angels! and the everlasting song of the redeemed.

I want a thankful heart, a heart to praise my God with unceasing praise. A thankful heart is a tuneful heart. Its melody is sweet in the ear of Eternal Love. It is a good thing to be thankful. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Humility will help forward the work of praise, while love will strike the chords of celestial harmony. This I indeed want- one of the richest gifts of grace, a penitent,

believing, loving, obedient, thankful heart. For this will I never cease to pray, knowing that this is the will of God and my sanctification.

Without the blessings flowing from the covenant of grace, through the precious blood of Christ, the greatest monarch, though surrounded by grandeur, is poor; and possessing these blessings, his poorest subject, though encompassed with misery, is truly rich. This truth our blessed Lord has taught us in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The blessings of the New Covenant are beyond all earthly price. Nothing could purchase them but the blood of Christ; none can bestow them but the Friend of sinners, through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. Lord look upon me in Christ, as a member of his mystical body, then will my soul be filled with your goodness.

In myself, I am nothing but sin and misery. In Christ, I have holiness and happiness, yes, and abound in all things— wisdom for my ignorance, righteousness for my guilt, sanctification for my pollution, redemption for my thralldom. Oh! delay not, blessed Savior, to shower down upon me, the abundance of your grace. Your work is salvation; let mine be praise. You know my heart, which, though hard and deceitful by nature, can be transformed by grace. Make me holy as you are holy. If I am not be a partaker of the divine nature, in all your communicable perfections of love and mercy, faithfulness and truth, righteousness and holiness, I can never enjoy your beatific presence in the realms of light. There, all is holiness, and there, all is happiness. Sin which blighted the earthly, cannot blight the heavenly paradise. There, the tree of life forever bears its celestial fruit; no cherubim, with his flaming sword, guards it from unhallowed hands; for all the ransomed throng, having entered through the gates into the city, the New Jerusalem, have right to the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God, and may eat, and live forever. Oh! that my portion may be YOURSELF, for whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of you.

Spirit of Holiness! descend and dwell,

Within a heart which pants after thee;

Of living water, You the sacred Well,

Spring up, and rise into eternity.

O! shed abroad your love within my heart,

Fill all my soul with every pure desire!

Yourself, dear Lord, in showers of grace impart,

And kindle in me the celestial fire.

Reveal the Savior to my longing soul;

His grace and beauty may I hourly see;

The force of pride and unbelief control,

And clothe me with his own humility.

Be every day devoted to your fear;

Be every moment sacred to your will;
Your voice of mercy, hourly let me hear;
And all your righteous purposes fulfill.
Then, when I draw towards earth's remotest bound,
A weary pilgrim on life's dreary road,
Oh! may my soul with Christ my Lord be found,
And spring with triumph to his blessed abode.

04.THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

4. MEDITATION AND PRAYER FOR THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

"I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways." Psalms 119:15

"Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law." Psalms 119:18

While passing through this benighted world, how happy is the man who can say with David: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." While surrounded with errors of every kind, how privileged are we, of this highly favored land, who possess the pure unadulterated Scriptures of truth. Oh! that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom. Then we shall know how to choose the good, and refuse the evil. We are too apt to draw our opinions from the writings of men, rather than from the word of God; and to range ourselves under certain theological leaders, rather than follow the mind and commands of Christ. Thus parties are formed in the Church; and charity expires on the field of battle. If I would I reach the Fountain of Truth, I must pass by all uninspired men, however venerated for antiquity; however renowned for wisdom and piety. I must pass by Milner, Scott, and Simeon; Owen, Watts, and Doddridge; Hooker, Hopkins, and Reynolds; Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer; Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin; Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Basil; Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius; yes the whole army of saints and martyrs, until I come to the Light of the World, the adorable Jesus, whose word is THE TRUTH; and to his inspired Apostles, who were guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth, and whose writings alone contain the mind and will of God under the gospel dispensation.

Here I arrive at the source of truth. Here I find the true Rule of Faith. Here all is luminous, purifying, and consoling. Here I come to the Promiser of light and guidance. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Here I am told the happy result of searching the Scriptures. "And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed, as did some of the prominent Greek women and many men." They did not receive the declarations even of Paul and Silas with a blind submission, but searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things which they spoke, were so; that is, in accordance with the predictions of the Prophets. This search was not displeasing to God, for faith is his gift, and many of them believed.

The beloved Apostle has commanded us to guard against being entrapped by error: "Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world." Our blessed Lord has given us the same caution with respect to their character: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

How are we to try the spirits? Isaiah tells us: "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them." How are we to form our judgment of character? Our Lord has taught us: "You shall know them by their fruits." "A good tree cannot bring

forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; therefore, by their fruits you shall know them."

The judicious Hooker has forcibly expressed his opinion on the subject of 'Tradition.' "When the question is, whether we are now to seek for any revealed law of God anywhere than only in the sacred Scripture; whether we do now stand bound in the sight of God, to yield to traditions urged by the Church of Rome the same obedience and reverence we do to his written law, honoring equally and adoring both as divine? Our answer is, No! Those who so earnestly plead for the authority of Tradition, as if nothing were more safely conveyed than that which spreads itself by report, and descends by relation of former generations unto the ages that succeed, are not all of them (surely it would be a miracle if they should be) so simple as thus to persuade themselves; howsoever, if the simple were so persuaded, they could not be content perhaps very well to enjoy the benefit as they account it, of that common error. What hazard the truth is in when it passes through the hands of Tradition; how maimed and deformed it becomes. Let those who are indeed of this mind, consider but only that little of things divine which the heathens have in such a way received. How miserable had the state of the Church of God been long before this, if, lacking the sacred Scripture, we had no record of his laws; but only the memory of man receiving the same by report and relation from his predecessors."

Oh! how delightful it is to open the Book of God, with the full assurance that there all is TRUTH; pure, unadulterated Truth! What, then, must we think of that Church, which would debar her members of this inestimable gift of God? Time was, when the Holy Bible, like a prisoner, was fastened by a chain in our Parochial Churches; but now it is furnished with wings, and flies from east to west, from north to south, proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God.

This blessing may be withdrawn if we slight or abuse it. Dark clouds are gathering around us. Oh! that we may be found faithful; that we may have a humble, teachable spirit; a prayerful frame of mind, to receive the revelations of God's will with an earnest desire, through the Spirit, to live under its influence. Then will Christ be formed in us the hope of glory, then we shall be prepared to dwell with him in glory everlasting.

When I read the blessed Scriptures of truth, what amazing love and mercy do I find contained in one single promise! How inconceivably great, then, is the whole treasure which lies concealed in this sacred volume. Like the rich ore in the mountain, the most precious lies the deepest, but when found it well repays the laborer's toil. When I read the writings of pious men, whether ancient or modern, I must always peruse them with caution, and bring them to the test of Scripture.

Tradition is useful for establishing a fact; but must not be exalted into the tribunal of Scripture; for Christ himself has declared, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day." Those who read the Scriptures with little attention, receive little comfort from them. But the Christian, who not only reads, but marks, learns, and inwardly digests them; who peruses them with prayer for God's Spirit to understand them, and then meditates upon them day and night, finds them a well of salvation; they become his delight and his counselor, and by them he is made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Lord! open my understanding that I may understand the Scriptures; that I may know you, the only true God, as therein revealed; and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent, as my Sacrifice, my Righteousness, my Example; to know whom is life eternal. Teach me to know myself, the vileness of my nature, the depravity of my heart, the sinfulness of my life, that I may fly out of myself to Jesus, for pardon, peace, and holiness.

Teach me to know, by blessed experience, the work of the divine Spirit, that being convinced of sin; all pride and self-love may die in me; and being led to the cross of my Redeemer, love and gratitude may fill my soul, and invigorate my endeavors to please you.

Teach me to know the vanity and emptiness of the world; its insufficiency to gratify the desires, or satisfy the longings of the new-born soul; yes, its utter inability to make its most devoted votaries happy.

Teach me to number my days, to estimate their shortness and uncertainty, that I may not procrastinate in the great work of salvation. When I think of a dream or a flower, I am reminded of the fleeting life of man. Your word is full of warnings, cautions, and admonitions, to awaken my solicitude about eternal things.

Teach me to value the bliss of heaven above all earthly joys- to dread the torments of hell above all earthly sorrow. Alas! how often do the pleasures of sense blunt our sensibilities to those things which are above; while the troubles of time obliterate from our minds the misery which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving.

Teach me, O blessed Savior, cheerfully to refuse the pleasures of sin, which end in everlasting torment; and cheerfully to endure those trials, for your sake and the gospel's, which terminate in endless glory.

Oh! my soul, remember where you are, in a world of sinners, yourself a sinner. Time is flying with rapid wing. Eternity, with all its solemn realities will soon open before you. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation; tomorrow, the door of mercy may be closed; tomorrow, your state may be everlastingly fixed. Tomorrow? Oh! my soul, boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you cannot tell what a day may bring forth. While you are forming schemes of happiness for many years, the word may have passed the lip of the Eternal: "You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you."

Call together your scattered powers, which have too long wandered amid the vanities of time. Let all your faculties be brought to ponder well the solemn truths of God. Meditate on everlasting things. Soon must your old companion, this mortal body, be consigned to the tomb, there to moulder into dust, until the all-awakening trumpet of the archangel shall rouse it from its earthly bed, to stand, re-united to yourself, before the judgment-seat of Christ. But, you, my soul, can never die. When the hour of dissolution comes, you only change your habitation, remaining ever a conscious, thinking being. Your powers, when freed from the burden of the flesh, will be more expanded, and more fitted for the extremes of bliss or pain. O then how important is the enquiry—on what state shall I then enter? in what habitation am I then to dwell?

Unfold the sacred volume, the Scriptures of the God of truth, and there you read, that the righteous shall go into life eternal, but the wicked into everlasting fire. Who then are the righteous, and who

are the wicked? This, you learn also from these sacred oracles. All, who live in open, willful sin, despising, rejecting, or neglecting the gospel of Jesus Christ; all, who will not have Christ to reign over them; all, who love the world more than God; all, who hate holiness, and die in this impenitent, unbelieving state, are denominated wicked, and shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

All, who come, as lost sinners to Jesus Christ, weary of the service, and heavy laden with the guilt of sin; all, who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; all, who are seeking with earnest solicitude, for the pardon of sin, for peace with God, for purity of heart, through the blood and Spirit of Christ; all, who through the power of the Holy Spirit, resist the devil, crucify the flesh, renounce the world, live by faith in the Son of God, esteem him precious and altogether lovely, labor to win souls to Christ, by prayer, by influence, and by example; are called righteous in the sacred Scriptures, and shall go into life eternal.

Now, oh! my soul, behold the truth spread before you. The countless millions which populate the earth are divided into only two classes by Him who searches the heart; the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, the sheep and the goats. Two states are prepared for them in the world to come: heaven and hell. No middle class is specified in the word of God; no middle state, no imaginary purgatory is revealed. Here on earth, the wheat and the tares grow together; here, pain and pleasure, sin and holiness, are strangely intermixed; but there, in the eternal world, it will be forever- unmixed bliss, or unmixed woe; unmixed evil, or unmixed holiness; joys unspeakable, or anguish beyond conception. To which of these classes do I belong? If I determine this, I shall know my future state.

Oh! eternal Spirit of Truth, enable me to examine myself as in your sight; yes, in mercy search me and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

Have I true faith in Christ?

Simon Magus believed; but he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, though by baptism a professing member of the visible Church. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. The Spirit of Christ dwells in him, to renew his soul in righteousness, to fill him with all goodness, and to prepare him, by a life of holiness on earth, for a life of happiness in heaven.

Have I put off the old man, with the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him? Is sin, in all its forms, odious in my eyes and hateful to my heart? With relentless hand, have I torn the entwining mischief from my bosom, and cherished with delight the blessed motions of the Spirit? "Those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." His servants are dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness. They serve God in all holy obedience, delighting to do his will.

Have I mortified the members of my body, and crucified all inordinate inclinations and desires? Do I never serve sin and the lust thereof? Can I freely part with it though it cost me much— the love of former friends, the esteem of the world, and the prospect of earthly gain? Do I esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord?

The true believer can say- The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world by the Cross of Christ. His heart is in heaven. He abides in Christ, and Christ in him. Have I renounced the world and all its sinful pleasures, its carnal company, its vain amusements? Are my friends, the friends of Jesus? Is Jesus the Hope, the Joy, the Treasure of my soul? Is my acceptance with the Father founded wholly on the righteousness of the Son? Disclaiming all merit in myself, have I received the gospel as a message of grace, a revelation of love to perishing sinners? Do I receive Christ into my heart by faith in all his saving offices of Prophet, Priest, and King? Do I dwell in Him, and He in me!

Am I clothed with humility?

The redeemed of the Lord are humble; they look at the rock from where they were hewn, and beholding their honored station, as living stones in the spiritual temple, they exclaim, Lord! why me? When I find, on strict examination, that many former sins are subdued, and many once neglected graces attained, can I say from the heart, by the grace of God I am what I am; in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength? Feeling the influence of holy love, am I pressing forwards in the path of holiness? Under the constraining love of Christ, am I running the race set before me, hastening with unwearied step towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

Do I bring forth the fruits of faith?

True faith is known, like a good tree, by its fruits. Do I cherish benevolent thoughts towards my fellow creatures, as well as fellow Christians? Is the conversion of sinners to Christ, the ardent desire of my soul? While preserved from the allurements of the world, can I pity and pray for those who are drawn away by them, as well as pardon those who speak reproachfully of me, because I dare not run with them to the same excess of riot; because I dare not be found in companies and places where God is not; where his Spirit does not preside, where his fear is not found?

What is my conduct with respect to relative duties?

To be really holy, I must be relatively holy; holy in all manner of conversation. In every situation of life— as a child, a husband, a father, a master, a subject, have I searched the word of God to know the duties required of me in these particular relations? Have I diligently and frequently examined myself by that holy standard, in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of myself, both as respects my attainments and deficiencies? Do I daily implore forgiveness for all my short-comings, and seek for grace to amend what is wrong? Does my heart overflow with gratitude to the Giver of all good, if, in any humble measure, I have been enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of my God and Savior Jesus Christ? Can I take encouragement from the experience of divine mercy, to pray with greater boldness for more faith, more hope, more love; knowing, that to him who has, shall more be given, and he shall have more abundantly?

Am I content to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all? Are my thoughts continually running after God as my only resting place in this ever-agitated world? Have I, in all sincerity, given my heart to God, and made a full surrender of myself to him? Have I submitted myself, through grace, to the righteousness of God, and received salvation as the gift of sovereign love, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus?

Oh! eternal God, who knows the hearts of all the children of men; you know that I desire to love you. In mercy fulfill the desires of my heart, desires of your own creating, for if I love you, it is because you have first loved me. Pardon what is amiss; restore what is defective; sanctify me wholly in body, soul, and spirit; and when the summons is given to call me hence, receive me to yourself, as an everlasting trophy of redeeming love!

05. THE PROMISES OF GOD

5. THE PROMISES OF GOD

"All the promises of God in him are yes, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God." 2 Corinthians 1:20

When I read the Scriptures, almost every page presents to my heart most precious promises, adapted to console and strengthen the mind under every trouble. But an important question arises: To whom do these promises belong? Has every one, who calls himself a Christian, a right to the comfort of them? Have I a right to appropriate them to myself? Lord enable me to deal faithfully with my own soul, lest I be deceived in one of the greatest of all concerns- for what can be compared with Eternal Salvation?

The Scriptures expressly declare, that all the promises of God, ALL, none excepted, in Christ are yes, and in him Amen. As in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so, in him, all the promises of God meet and unite as their proper center. To have a legitimate interest in these promises, I must have a saving interest in the merits of Christ. But here another question naturally arises, a question of vast importance to the peace and comfort of my soul. How can I tell, whether I have a saving interest in the merits of my Redeemer, and so have a scriptural right to the enjoyment of the privileges and promises of the Gospel?

The Bible gives me clear information on this point also. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him." From hence I learn, that if I am without the Spirit of Christ, I am in a state of condemnation, and consequently can have no claim to the consolatory promises of the Gospel. As many, and no more, as are led by the Spirit of God to the foot of the Cross, are the sons of God. And those only who have the Spirit of Christ, and therefore are in Christ, are heirs of glory.

But, if any man is in Christ, he is a New Creature; born from above; renewed in the spirit of his mind; made a temple of the Holy Spirit. This is the character of the redeemed as portrayed in the word of God; they are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ; justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his Spirit; a mansion of glory is prepared for them; they are the loved by the Father, and to them belong all the promises of grace and mercy clustering on the Tree of Life.

Now, Oh! my soul, as in the presence of the Judge of the living and dead, before whose tribunal you must shortly appear, bring all your inmost thoughts to the touchstone of his word. See how far your inward state approaches towards this exalted standard; whether you bear the infallible marks which designate his chosen people. Alas! how many deceive themselves by false marks, and by an unscriptural standard, calling evil, good; and good, evil; putting darkness, for light; and light, for darkness. Lord make me sincere and faithful to you. The heart, I well know, by painful experience, is deceitful above all things. Pride, that old leaven of my fallen nature, is ever ready to interrupt these searchings of heart, by whispering, "all is well;" and making a merit of those actions, which, if brought to the test of truth, would overwhelm me with confusion.

Blessed Savior! I desire to be yours; to follow you with a single eye, and in simplicity of spirit; to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from the power of sin, from unholy imaginations. Cause me to abound in every grace, that you may be glorified; that I may be fitted to hold sweet converse with you in solitude, apart from the noise and follies of the world. In the days of your flesh, you set your disciples a bright example of holding communion with your Father. In your word I read how you went into a solitary place, and there prayed; how you withdrew into the wilderness, and prayed; how you continued all night in prayer, separate from your disciples, on the lonely mountain. May I love retirement with You; then I shall be able to say, I am not alone, for you are with me. O manifest yourself to me at such seasons as you do not unto the world. Enable me to pluck the grapes of Eshcol, the sweet fruits of the promised land, the precious pledges of those richer fruits which grow in the paradise above. May I feel your love, though I cannot find words to express its sweetness; yes, may I feel it flowing into my soul in daily increasing streams, until all sin is borne away, by the force of this resistless torrent.

How glorious are your promises, they are yes and Amen; they are like yourself, immutable. When the enemy comes in like a flood, and suggests that I am not the Lord's; oh! in mercy lift up a standard against him. Let your Spirit bring to my troubled mind some peace-restoring promise, to confirm my faith, to confound my foes, to strengthen my heart by his heavenly consolations. In sorrow, in sickness, and in death may I trust in your faithfulness, repose on your promises, and triumph through your grace. Under every trial, like David, may I encourage myself in the Lord my God, and like him, be enabled to say- "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." Thus, upheld by your powerful arm, I shall pass over Jordan in peace; reach that happy shore, where angels will welcome my entrance into bliss; and where I shall enjoy the blessed fulfillment of your promise: "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

The promises of God have a transforming efficacy through the power of the Holy Spirit; for "unto us," writes Peter, "are given exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we should be partakers of the divine nature." How wonderful! worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, to be made partakers of the divine nature! Well may angels desire to look into these things. Man, fallen man, who lost the image of God, can now, through the Gospel of Christ, through the promises of his grace, be restored to the divine likeness. The Apostle might well call them exceeding great and precious promises; precious, beyond all price; exceeding great, beyond all calculation.

Like Peter, his "beloved brother Paul," extolled the promises of God, not only as yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, but as purifying the hearts of believers through faith. "And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from them and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete purity because we fear God."

The promises of God, when rightly embraced, never fail to quicken the speed of believers in their heavenly course. They then can run with patience the race that is set before them, looking into Jesus, while animated by the promises of his love. They are no longer slothful, but followers of

those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; treading in the footsteps of the flock, until they reach the heavenly fold. Oh! who can grasp this one thought- "inherit the promises;" yes, all the promises of life and salvation, of grace and glory, which are made to man, from Adam in Paradise, to the closing of the canon of Scripture by John? Every thing that is sublime, glorious, blissful, and holy is contained in the promises of God in Christ. To inherit the promises, is to inherit all things; all that Christ has promised out of his fullness; and all that his people are capable of enjoying, when perfected in glory. Why, then, do we grovel like worms of the earth, when we should be mounting with wings as eagles- yes, soaring, as on seraph's wings, towards the realms of light?

"My soul cleaves unto the dust, quicken me, O Lord, according to your word." Put your fear into my heart that I may not depart from you. Your ancient people, through unbelief, died in the wilderness; therefore, writes Paul to the Hebrew Christians, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left to us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." May this warning of your Apostle awaken my solicitude, and lead me to You for faith, to persevere under every discouragement; for hope, to animate my soul amid every conflict; for love, to urge me forwards with unceasing energy, through every opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Blessed Jesus! yourself the promised gift, and the Promiser of eternal blessings, give me Yourself, and then, with you, I shall inherit all things.

Sweet is the promise of your grace,
So freely made to me;
When shall I end my earthly course,
And dwell, dear Lord, with thee?
Firm as a rock your promise stands;
Your Truth and Love endure;
Oh! may I love your bless'd commands,
And make my calling sure.
The precept and the promise, Lord,
You have so fitly joined,
That in the volume of your grace,
They ever are combined.
Without the promise- all is dark;
Without the precept, vain!
Your wisdom, by their union, gives
Your people's richest gain.
O! may I love your precepts more,

Your promise more enjoy,
'Til I shall reach the world of bliss,
Secure from sin's alloy.
There will the riches of your grace,
Be like a boundless sea;
The Promise, and the Promiser,
My Portion ever be.

06. THE FALL OF MAN, AND HIS RECOVERY BY GRACE

6. THE FALL OF MAN, AND HIS RECOVERY BY GRACE

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

God is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe! He made all things by the word of his power; and for his pleasure they are, and were created. Contemplating the Sovereignty of Jehovah, Solomon declared, "Whatever God does, it shall be forever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it; and God does it, that man should fear before him." Nebuchadnezzar, when humbled under the mighty hand of God, confessed: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion." "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he does according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what do you? Let all the earth, then, keep silence before Him. Let all the world stand in awe of Him who has said: My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Those angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, God has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day, without one single ray of hope, or promise of forgiveness. Who dare deny their righteous condemnation- their just punishment, torments without mitigation, and anguish without end? Their expulsion from heaven was not an act of arbitrary power. They sinned- therefore God spared them not, but cast them down to hell- into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Man, created in the image of God, fell from his state of holiness and happiness, through the deceitful wiles of the old serpent, Satan, the adversary of God and man. By the righteous judgment of Jehovah he was doomed to die. "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." None of the children of Adam have been exempted from this sentence, for "Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned;" none, but Enoch and Elijah, who were translated, that they should not see death, as types of the ascending Savior. The Lord of life and glory, bowed his head, and died. His precious body was laid in the tomb, but death could not hold him; He saw no corruption; He burst the barrier of the grave, and rose triumphant, the Victor of death and hell. He is the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in him, though he dies, yet shall he live; and whoever believes in him shall never die. Oh! glorious revelation of grace and mercy!

The moment our unhappy parents ate of the forbidden fruit, thus rebelling against the Sovereignty of Jehovah who had a right to command, while it was their duty and happiness to obey, they became spiritually dead. The Spirit of God forsook them; the image of God departed from them. Thus forsaken by God, Satan made them his prey, and filled them with all unrighteousness. They were lost to every holy disposition, to all heavenly joy. They became the willing slaves of every sinful affection, of every hateful and hurtful lust. Such is man by nature. Such is the effect of the fall.

Grace alone can counteract the evil, and produce a new creation. Do we find mankind, at this moment, different from the awful picture drawn by the pencil of Truth: "God saw that the

wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," "evil from childhood." Is not the world still filled with Cains, and Nimrods, yes, with giants in iniquity? Ah! then let not pride deny the solemn truth, that we are shaped in iniquity, and conceived in sin; that we drink in iniquity like water, and have turned every one to his own way. O my soul, with deepest self-abasement acknowledge the justice of that sentence: "You shall surely die."

The moment Adam sinned, he not only became a dying creature, "dying, you shall die;" he not only lost the image of his Creator, but he was every moment liable to eternal death. Nothing but the breath he drew, formed the barrier- slender indeed! between time and eternity, between earth and hell!

Angels sinned and fell to rise no more. Man sinned and fell, but oh! to grace how great a debtor, daily, I am constrained to be! The hand of mercy was stretched out, the voice of mercy was heard in sweetest accents- "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." From that moment a door of hope was opened; a ray of consolation beamed on the souls of our fallen parents. "The seed of the woman" was the Gospel sound- the glad tidings of great joy- the source of hope and peace. "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus writes the great Apostle to the Gentiles, when expatiating on the love and faithfulness of God. Be deeply humbled, O my soul, while contemplating the Sovereignty of God. Let every unhallowed feeling be subdued, while looking into the deep profound.

In strictest justice, the Almighty might have left the whole human race to perish. He was therefore under no obligation to save any. The prohibition in Paradise was clear, the sentence definite- "You shall not eat of it, lest you die." Our first parents did eat and died. Adam, being the federal head of the human race, all his posterity fell in him. "In Adam all die," all, to the end of time. Thus, in strict justice, God is bound to save none; for all have sinned, and come short of his glory. But God is pleased to save some, therefore their salvation must be all of grace. None can claim this mercy as a right; all may petition for it as a free gift, through Jesus Christ.

The offer of salvation is as extensive as the human race. The seed of the woman, the adorable Jesus, when he had wrought out a full redemption for us, commanded his Apostles just before his ascension into heaven, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; assuring all the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, that whoever believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but that whoever believes not, shall be damned. Thus mercy and judgment, life and death, heaven and hell, were to be set forth by a preached Gospel, to animate the hopes, and awaken the fears of the sons of men.

All men have not faith, therefore all men will not be saved; they reject the counsel of God against themselves; they refuse his offers of mercy; they will not accept Christ as their Savior; they will not submit to him as their king: therefore, if they perish, they perish justly, and in the day of judgment they shall stand before the Lord of glory, speechless and self-condemned. Are any saved? it is through the grace of God- through the love of a dying Savior, through the operation of the Holy Spirit producing faith in their hearts to lay hold of, and delight in, the ever precious Jesus.

Have you received this gift of grace, a saving faith in the adorable Redeemer? Then, cease not, O my soul, to extol the Giver of such sovereign mercy. Why should the Sovereign of the universe condescend to visit you? Why should he pour this oil of grace, this unction from the Holy One, on you? Why convert you into a vessel of mercy fitted for the Master's use, while thousands around you are vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, through their own willful transgression? Why is this? Amazement seizes on my mind! Love and praise should fill my heart! O why is this? Because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. I must resolve all into the sovereign will, the electing love, the free grace of the Great Jehovah.

If I choose Him as my portion, it is because he has first chosen me. If I love him, it is because he has first loved me. If my heart is given to him, it is because he loved me and gave himself for me. If I am united to him, it is because he drew me with the bands of a man, with the cords of love, in fulfillment of his own most precious word: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."

Many reject this blessed truth. The pride of man cannot bear this humiliating doctrine, so subversive of human merit. But what are its genuine effects? It humbles the sinner, it exalts the Savior, and promotes holiness. That doctrine must be true, which places Christ on his throne, and the creature in the dust; which opposes the evil of sin, and delights in holiness!

To all who are taught of God Christ is precious. He is their All, in All. They receive him as their Prophet, Priest, and King. They trust in him as their Atonement, Righteousness, and Advocate with the Father. They receive the gift of the Spirit through his intercession, to renew them after the divine image; to give them persevering grace; to make them conquerors over sin and Satan; to bring them in triumph into the realms of glory, and there to place them before the throne of the Eternal, as monuments of redeeming love.

O all-glorious Jehovah! guide me into all truth. Make me to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Enable me to perceive and relish the Gospel of your grace. Take away the scales of error and prejudice from the eyes of my understanding. Remove pride and the love of sin from my heart. Give me grace deeply to bewail the corruption of my nature, as well as the transgressions of my life; to acknowledge your justice in the destruction of sinners, as well as your mercy in the glorification of your people. Impress my soul with an abiding sense of the evil of sin; and with an increasing conviction of the beauty of holiness. Cause me to abound yet more and more in faith, and love, and every grace, until rising, as on seraph's wings, my liberated soul shall mount aloft to your abode.

When I consider how soon the mind is disturbed by earthly cares, and delighted with worldly comforts; how soon the imagination is filled with scenes of promised pleasure; and how easily the affections are borne away on those painted bubbles which burst and vanish into air— I might be amazed that cares, and comforts, and pleasures of so superior a nature as those which the Gospel reveals, should make such little impression, yes, be even forgotten gotten by myriads of professing Christians, did not the Bible unfold the awful truth.

The care of the soul, which is the one thing needful; a solicitude to obtain the favor of God through the atoning blood and all-prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus; a thirsting for the consolations of the Spirit, which flow from communion with God through Christ, and which are the foretastes of

those pleasures which are at his right hand forevermore, would be the daily desire of our hearts, if sin had not so entirely blinded the judgment, debased the affections, perverted the will, and turned the whole soul out of the way of holiness into the broad road of destruction.

This is the case, not with a part, but with the whole human race without exception. All flesh has corrupted its way before God; there is none righteous, no, not one. My heart bears its own sad testimony to this scriptural truth. Everything within me bespeaks my condemnation. There is not one spark of goodness in me. As a shipwrecked mariner, I must sink beneath the waves, if help is not provided. But oh! how wonderful is the love of God against whom I have sinned. He stretches out his arm of mercy to save me from perishing. He speaks with melting kindness: "You have destroyed yourself, but in me is your help." Placed on the Rock of Ages, on Jesus, the sure Foundation, my soul is penetrated with gratitude while I listen to the gracious voice of my Redeemer— "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior." "I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Such are the expressions of Infinite Love to encourage, and comfort, every lost sinner who is enabled by grace to lay hold upon Christ crucified as his hope of glory. Exclaim, O my soul, with the enraptured Prophet: "Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy. Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!" Strike your harp with David- "You Lord are good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all those who call upon you." "I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify your name for evermore. For great is your mercy towards me, and you have delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Join in the chorus of the saints around the throne: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

07. THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

7. THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." 1 Timothy 3:16

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29

Almighty and everlasting Jehovah! clouds and darkness are round about you. Many deep and unfathomable mysteries are contained in your sacred word, yet on this my soul relies— that You O Lord are good; and that there is no unrighteousness in you. In the day of judgment, you will manifest your Justice and Truth, and silence the accusations of your enemies forever. Let me not, O Lord, indulge a sinful curiosity in prying into those things which you have wisely concealed, but keep my soul as a weaned child. Make me wise unto salvation through faith in your dear Son. Impart unto me, your unworthy servant, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of you, that the word of Christ may dwell in me richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, producing in me the peaceable fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

In your word I read, that man is born in sin, and therefore deserving of eternal death. In your word I read, that Jesus died, and through the merit of his precious blood has obtained eternal redemption for us. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

If it be asked- Will all the fallen race of Adam enter into the Ark which mercy has provided? Alas! no. As it was in the days of Noah, so it is now— the thoughtless, giddy, unbelieving world is as much occupied as the Antediluvians were, though warned by that preacher of righteousness, in eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, smiling at the superstitious fears of the faithful, and feeling no concern about the threatened judgment. But those who love the world shall perish with the world.

"As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." How, then, comes it to pass that any are lost? Because they themselves choose the path of destruction, and will what is wrong, and persist in it; for sin consists in willing wrong, and the wages of sin is death. Men will not come to Christ, that they might have life; they will not have him to reign over them, therefore thus says the Lord, "I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise."

But does not the Spirit of God graciously strive with sinners? Yes! he does strive with them, though they resist his heavenly motions, grieve him by their ingratitude, and finally quench the holy fire.

This is evident from— "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is mortal," corrupted and depraved. And with whom did he strive? With those who perished in the waters. "In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who, through the prophets, warned them about their sins. But still they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the pagan inhabitants of the land to conquer them. But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are! Also from— "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? But your ancestors did, and so do you!"

Founded on the truth, Paul thus warns the Christian converts to whom he wrote "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." "Quench not the Spirit." How pathetically does the God of all grace expostulate with his fallen creatures— "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" "Oh! that you had hearkened to my commandments; then your peace would be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." "Oh! that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments, always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone those who are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not."

Impressed with a deep sense of the blessedness of obedience, how solemnly, yet affectionately, does David charge his son Solomon: "And you Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imagination of the thoughts: if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever." Thus, all who perish, perish through willful disobedience to the divine command. The sinner will be condemned, because he willfully rejected the offers of mercy, so lovingly made to him, through Christ in the Gospel; because he stifled the convictions of the Spirit; because his will was uniformly opposed to the will of God.

"This," said our Lord to Nicodemus, "is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Paul declares: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "To be carnally-minded is death."

How, then, comes it to pass that any are saved? Because God is love. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them." "You has he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Thus the Holy Spirit overcomes the natural enmity of the will, and influences the sinner, by enlightening his understanding, to choose the way of life, opened to him through the Atonement of Christ, as revealed in the Gospel.

But, does the Spirit of God never 'force' the will of the sinner to accept of salvation? No, never. The sinner is not dragged against his will to the foot of the Cross, but he is drawn there through the sweet constraining power of love. "It is in the nature of the will, to will freely whatever it wills; for the

will cannot be compelled." Compulsion and willingness are directly opposed to each other. God, therefore, in the conversion of sinners, acts upon them, by his grace, not as machines, but as rational creatures. If man chooses death, it is owing to his moral depravity, and the fault is entirely his own, because he wills it, as a free agent. "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." But if he chooses life, it is through the enlightening and awakening influences of the Spirit of God, who works in him to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Yet, be it ever remembered, the choice is his own. It is the voluntary act of the renewed will—"When you said, Seek my face; my heart said unto you, Your face, Lord, will I seek." So, when Saul was converted, he cried out—"Lord, what will you have me to do?" He was now made willing in the day of God's power to perform a cheerful and willing obedience.

If the view now taken of man's condition here, be scripturally correct, we must come to this conclusion: that man is a free agent, a responsible being, justly chargeable with the guilt of willfully refusing the offers of divine mercy through Christ; and yet, that it is wholly of grace, if he becomes willing to accept of these offers and is finally saved.

Fallen man, if left to himself, would never love God; he would never come to God; his rebellious will would forever oppose his approach to God. On this account it was, that the Redeemer said: "You will not come to me that you might have life," and, "No man can come unto me unless the Father who has sent me draws him." "Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Now, O my soul! praise the Lord, who has showed you in his word these precious truths. Use the means which he has appointed for obtaining the blessings of salvation. Go to your God through Jesus Christ. Beg earnestly the pardon of your sins through his atoning blood. Implore the Spirit's aid to illuminate your mind, to rectify your will, to purify your affections, to take away the serpent's enmity, the serpent's poison from your heart, to guide you into all truth, to give you an unshaken faith in the Savior, a delight in holiness, a cleaving unto God while life and being last.

But, O my soul, never dare to fathom with your scanty line, the deep things of God. While standing on the brink of the vast profound, unite with Paul in his self-abasing exclamation: "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." And with David, "Your judgments are a great deep." "Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known."

Act upon this great truth— that the mysteries of redemption are revealed to us as objects of faith, not as subjects for doubtful disputation. They are made known to us for our salvation, not for the indulgence of unhallowed speculation. Vain man would be wise, but "the world by wisdom knew not God." "All your children shall be taught of God and great shall be the peace of your children," is the sweet promise made to the Church in every age. Eve wished to be wiser than infinite wisdom ordained, and her knowledge was dearly bought. Eden, with all its holiness and happiness, its peace and joy, was lost; a thorny wilderness, with cares and sorrows, disease and death, became her portion. Learn, then, O my soul! to bow with child-like submission before the Great Eternal. Though clouds and darkness veil his vast designs; Judgment and Justice form the basis of his throne—

"Not angels that stand round the Lord

Can search his secret will,

Yet they perform his heavenly word,

And sing his praises still!"

Go, and do you likewise, relying on Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for you."

08. SALVATION BY GRACE

8. SALVATION BY GRACE

"By grace are you saved. " Ephesians 2:13

Awful would have been the condition of fallen man, had he been left to work out his deliverance by the Covenant of works. The command- 'Do this, and live,' as well as the threatening- 'Transgress and die,' would have fast barred the door of hope against him. If his conformity to the divine law had been the only way of escape, despair would have made him its prey, and his doleful cry would have been: Farewell glory and happiness; farewell heaven forever!

But, blessed be God, adored be his grace— he has not left us in this hopeless, helpless, and undone condition. By his Gospel he has revealed Himself to us as a just God and a Savior; just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. A way of escape is now opened to us through the Cross of Christ. A city of refuge is prepared to receive every trembling sinner who is pursued by the avenger of blood. Lord! I feel more and more that I am a sinner; yes, the chief of sinners. Every day brings fresh proof of my corruption, and lays me in the dust before you. My just deserving is everlasting burning; nothing less than this do I deserve; nothing more than this can I ever merit. Lord, my name is sinner; my nature is depravity; my heart is sin itself. What, then, can I hope for, when I thus contemplate myself, but repulsion from your presence, when I appear before You seated on your throne of Justice, surrounded by ten thousand tines ten thousand pure and happy spirits. These angelic beings will acknowledge the justice of that sentence which frowns me into hell. Oh! my God, and is this indeed my dreadful state by nature? Alas! it is.

But on this darkened cloud, whose bosom is filled with elements of destruction, shines the rainbow of mercy. In the midst of the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire, I hear a still small voice, speaking accents of grace, and, bidding me not to fear, only to believe. Oh! my soul, can this be true? Does mercy rejoice against judgment. Can God be gracious to the vilest of the vile, and yet remain unsullied in his holiness, uninjured in his justice? Can he receive sinners, and yet manifest his hatred against sin? Well may angels desire to look into these things.

Admire, O my soul, with never-ceasing delight, the glories of sovereign grace, the riches of redeeming love, the transcendent mercy of Almighty God! A Savior is provided for you, suited to your every need. In Him, you have Wisdom, for your ignorance; Strength, for your weakness; Pardon, for your sin; Righteousness, for your guilt; Holiness, for your pollution; Redemption, for your bondage; Light, for your darkness; Life in God, for your death in sin; Hope of glory, for your dread of hell. All this, and much, much more is Jesus to you, if you can believe in Him!

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits- how shall I show forth all his praise? O my soul, give God the Father, the glory of your whole salvation, who thus freely devised this amazing plan of saving rebels from the wrath to come. Give God the Son, the glory of your whole salvation, who so willingly submitted to meet in your nature, the wrath of incensed Justice, who so patiently sustained for you its accumulated vengeance, who so graciously turned it away, though it burned

against you to the lowest hell. Give God the Holy Spirit, the glory of your whole salvation, who with such wonderful forbearance has, for years, been striving with you to draw your fugitive affections from forbidden objects, and place them on the precious Jesus; by whose almighty power, you have in some degree been brought to cleave unto, to love, rely upon, and trust in the ever-adored Savior as your only sacrifice for sin, your only justifying righteousness, your only Hope of glory. Oh! blessed Trinity in Unity, accept the praises of a poor unworthy sinner! Inflame my love, that I may praise you better both in lip, and heart, and life, until I am translated to that world of joy where praise will be unceasing and eternal.

Come, O Spirit of all grace and truth, come into my heart and take up your abode there. Oh! come and dwell in me, unworthy as I am of such a Guest. Make me willing, I humbly beseech you, to welcome your approach, to receive you with joy and gladness. Come into my heart, O Pledge of eternal blessings. Fill me with light and love. Cause the fruits of righteousness to abound in me, as a living branch in the true Vine. Come, and manifest yourself to my soul, You, who are the Seal of everlasting salvation. Let me bear the impress of your holy nature. Be the inward Witness, testifying to my conscience that I am a child of God, enabling me to cry, Abba, Father.

From first to last salvation is all of grace, whether I consider the love of the Father in devising, the love of the Son in executing, or the love of the Spirit in applying, its blessings to my heart. How wonderful is the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul. His operations are remarkably declared by our Lord when about to leave his disciples. To them, he would be a COMFORTER; to the world, a CONVINCER of sin. Meditate, O my soul, on these two characters of the divine Spirit, and adore that grace which so wonderfully seeks out the lost sinners of mankind.

Before the promised Comforter could be given, it was expedient that Christ should go away, that he should be offered up as a sacrifice for sin, that he should triumph over the powers of darkness; that he should ascend to the Father. This blessed purchase of his blood is now poured out on the sons of men, and works in mercy upon his Church and on the world.

To the world he is the CONVINCER OF SIN. "When he comes," said Jesus, "he will reprove the world of sin," "because they believe not on me." All other sins are included in the sin of unbelief. It is the root from where spring all those poisonous branches which have shed their hateful influence through every age. The fruit of this tree is death. All the miseries which have deluged the earth, sprang from unbelief. Eve disbelieved the word of her Creator, and fell. All her children have trodden in her steps, and with her, have fallen into depths of woe. How pathetic is the cry of David "Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord." The Bible is full of the vials of wrath, poured out upon an apostate world, because of unbelief. The history of nations, is but the history of human crimes, and of human miseries, because of unbelief. All the sorrows of time, all the agonies of eternity, may be traced to the sin of unbelief. Great, then, is the work of the Spirit, to convince the world of sin, because, said the Savior, they believe not on me.

When I look around me and contemplate the great mass of mankind, unbelief appears like a mighty ocean overspreading the human race. Pagans, Mohammedans, Jews, are all alike wrapped in the darkness of unbelief! That portion of the world, nominally Christian, is also covered with this blinding evil. Thousands, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, remain destitute of the Spirit of Christ. Baptized infidels, baptized profligates, scandalize the Christian name, and form a stumbling-block to Jews and Gentiles. Thousands who profess that they know God, in

works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate.

The world is their idol; at its shrine they devote themselves. Present pleasures, present honors, present profits, are the things they covet, the things for which they toil, the things for which they expend their time, their talents, their all. The future is hidden behind the thick mists of unbelief. They neither see, nor long for, the pleasures which are at God's right hand; for the honor which comes from God only; for the riches of his grace and glory. Oh! how great, how merciful is the work of the Spirit, when by his power, he enlightens the mind, touches the conscience, awakens the fears, and melts the heart of the worldling, convincing him of sin, of the deadly sin of UNBELIEF, in rejecting, despising, or neglecting, the Savior of the World.

When unbelief is removed from the heart, the next operation of the Spirit is to reveal to the sinner, (now enlightened to perceive his danger) where HELP is to be found. He displays to him, in all its glory, that Righteousness which Christ wrought out for him by his obedience unto death, and arrayed in which, as in a garment of salvation, he can stand before the throne of Justice, accepted in the beloved. He then makes known to him for his encouragement and joy of faith, the triumphs of the Savior, his victory over death and hell, and how the prince of this world is judged and overcome.

Such are the manifestations of the Spirit as promised by our Lord to the world: "And when he comes, he will convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is unbelief in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the prince of this world has already been judged." Oh adorable Redeemer, pity a world sunk in unbelief and sin. Stretch forth your almighty arm. Rescue the perishing millions of mankind from sinking into the fiery abyss of hell. Manifest yourself as in the days of old, when thousands on the day of Pentecost were cut to the heart, crying out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? who, gladly receiving the word preached by your Apostle, confessing their sins, and professing their faith in you, were baptized in your name, and added to your Church.

Now, let me meditate on those operations of the Spirit promised to the true disciples of Jesus. To them, the Holy Spirit is a COMFORTER. Delightful visitant! None but those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who have found rest in believing, whose souls repose on the bosom of their beloved Savior, can comprehend the felicity contained in this endearing name- the Comforter. Oh that my heart may daily enjoy the consoling influences of this celestial Guest, in fulfillment of that promise- "He dwells with you, and shall be in you."

He is also the Spirit of TRUTH. "When he is come, he will guide you into all truth." The Spirit guides us into the truth of all the promises, and of all the prophecies, which, centering in Christ, receive their full accomplishment in Him, for Christ is Himself the Truth, and to know Him, is to know the truth. What a blessing, in the midst of abounding errors, to have such an unerring Guide.

The Spirit is the GLORIFIER OF JESUS. "He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." The Spirit glorifies Christ, when he reveals him to us in all the glory of his nature, as God manifest in the flesh; in the glory of his character, as our Mediator, Advocate, and Friend; in the glory of his offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King; in the glory of his work, as our Redeemer and Savior of the world. Oh that I may have grace to glorify him by receiving him

into my heart by faith; by casting the burden of my sins upon him; by delighting to hold communion with him; by living wholly to him, who lived and died for me. Thrice happy they, who from the inward working of the Spirit, can say with Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

How free was the Savior's grace to the woman of Samaria: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water."

"Jesus, the gift divine I know,
The gift divine I ask of thee;
That living water now bestow—
Your Spirit and yourself, on me;
Oh, Lord, of life the fountain art
Now let me find you in my heart.
Oh, let me drink, and thirst no more,
For drops of finite happiness;
Spring up, O Well, in heavenly power,
In streams of pure, perennial peace;
In joy, that none can take away,
In life, which shall forever stay.
Father! on me the grace bestow,
Unblameable before your sight,
Where all the streams of mercy flow,
Mercy, your own supreme delight;
To me, for Jesus' sake, impart,
And plant your nature in my heart."

09. THE SUFFICIENCY OF DIVINE GRACE

9. THE SUFFICIENCY OF DIVINE GRACE

"My grace is sufficient for you." 2 Corinthians 12:9

Self-knowledge is an invaluable attainment. Without it, we resemble a vessel, driven during the midnight darkness, amid rocks and quicksands, and which is every moment in danger of being dashed to pieces. Temptations and dangers surround us on every side. The stormy gusts of passion hurry us here and there; no wonder, then, while destitute of chart and compass, if we finally sink beneath the yawning waves.

Few men know themselves. This science can only be taught in the school of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher. He alone can make us savingly acquainted with ourselves. Unbelief and pride, the love of the world and carnal inclinations, blind the mind and corrupt the heart. Many, who esteem themselves to be wise are total fools in God's estimation. Many, who call themselves righteous, are an abomination in his sight; for God sees not as man sees; man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit is enlightening, convincing, purifying, and consoling. The first operation of the Spirit is light. When darkness was upon the face of the deep, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In the new creation, light springs up at the command of God. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This light, darting into the conscience, produces conviction of sin, by discovering, in all its hideousness, the monster that dwells within. "Vice is a monster of such frightful appearance, that to be hated, needs but to be seen."

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-aborrence 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.

This loathing of sin, this prostration of soul at the foot of the Cross, is accompanied, through the power of the Spirit, with a longing after inward purity. The soul, thus enlightened, convinced, and humbled, pants after that holiness which forms so essential a part of the new creation. Everything which brings the soul into a nearer conformity to the divine image is delighted in. Holy thoughts, affections, and desires are now the natural and spontaneous workings of the new-born soul. Once it was winter, cold, barren, and gloomy. Now it is the season of warmth, fruitfulness, and cheerfulness. "For the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone. The flowers are springing up, and the time of singing birds has come, even the cooing of turtledoves. The fig trees are budding,

and the grapevines are in blossom. How delicious they smell!"

Joy and peace, like the beautiful flowers of Eden, spring up and adorn the garden of the Lord. Praise and thanksgiving with the voice of melody form a concert in which angels join. Filled with gratitude for such divine consolations, the believer thus pours out his heart: "Awake, O north wind, and come O south wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruit." Jesus the beloved one, answers to this call in accents of love: "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh and my spices." Oh! how delightful is this communion between Christ and his Church. Well may the believer say: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "My beloved is the chief among ten thousand." "He is altogether lovely."

Though reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, yet, like the Israelites of old, the believer must buckle on his armor, and prepare for the conflict, knowing that there still remains very much land to be possessed.

"Man's is laborious happiness at best,

His joys are those of conquest, not of rest."

The enemy within, will unite with the enemies without, in contending with him every inch of the way to Zion. Every day he will find that there are fightings within, and fears without, to discourage his heart, to retard his steps, to make his soul weary because of the difficulty of the way. But, as the soldier is not sent on a warfare at his own charge, so neither is the Christian warrior. Provision is made for him by the captain of his salvation, equal to his need:

"Jesus gives us in his word,

Food and medicine, shield and sword."

Oh my soul, you can never sufficiently praise the Lord your God for all his rich promises of protection and care. Many times you are cast down and sad when the enemy oppresses you; many times you tremble, as if the power of the Prince of darkness would finally overcome you. But do not be dismayed. What do you read in the word of Truth, for your support and consolation? "As your days, so shall your strength be." Do you ask, who spoke these life-inspiring words? It was not the announcement of some mighty monarch, with his fleets and armies. It was not the proclamation of some great archangel whose powers surpass all human thought. Oh delightful truth! they are the words of Him who cannot be; whose power is infinite; the Eternal Jehovah, the everlasting God, speaking through his servant Moses.

Jesus, who is God over all, blessed for evermore, is the Fountain of grace and mercy. He alone can give to his people the assurance of hope, because none but He is infinite in power, and infinite in grace. Hear his own declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "My grace is sufficient for you." Rejoice, O my soul, rejoice in this, that as none but Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, could make this promise, so, He in faithfulness will assuredly fulfill it. Blessed promise indeed! how suitable to the needs and weaknesses, the fears and failings, of his people. Away, then, unbelieving fears, since Jesus has said- "My grace is sufficient for you."

What have I now to do, but to go to the strong for strength, to go in the full assurance of faith and hope. But alas! my faith is weak, and too often wavering, when the wind of temptation blows upon it. Let me, then, without delay, plead this precious promise, founded on the truth, and sealed with the blood of Christ. With this promissory note in my hand, ever payable on demand, when presented by faith and prayer in the name of Jesus, I need not despond. I shall receive in return what will supply my every need out of the fullness which is in Christ Jesus. Out of his fullness, I shall receive, and grace for grace.

Am I tempted by small temptations? There is grace sufficient. Am I assaulted by the hottest batteries of hell? There is grace sufficient. Am I brought down into the valley of poverty? There is grace sufficient. Am I raised to the dangerous heights of earthly grandeur? There is grace sufficient. Am I treated as the offscouring of all things for Jesus' sake? There is grace sufficient. Am I brought down to the chambers of death, racked with pain, and worn out by disease? Still there is grace sufficient. My needs are many, but my supplies are infinite. Though millions of weak, tempted, persecuted, dying believers, have been invigorated in every age by this living water, yet its streams are undiminished; it still remains as it ever was- Grace Sufficient! Sufficient to relieve the needy, to strengthen the weak, to pardon the guilty, to sanctify the unholy, to support the disconsolate, to comfort and save all, however vile and worthless; who sincerely, fervently, and perseveringly seek for it, through faith in Christ.

Oh for a stronger faith. Lord give me faith, and increase it. Let the dew of your grace be ever falling on my soul, that I may blossom as the rose, that I may bear fruit to your glory. Endue me with power to withstand the temptations that surround me. Enable me to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold on eternal life. Give me persevering grace through Jesus, my only hope and stay. His grace is sufficient for me, by whose power I am rescued from the jaws of Satan, by whose blood I am cleansed from sin, by whose righteousness I am delivered from the curse of the law, and made an heir of glory. For his sake, O heavenly Father! strengthen me with strength in my soul, that I may be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus my Lord, until all my sins are subdued, Satan vanquished, and death swallowed up in victory. Then, in the glorious day of Christ's appearing, ten thousand times ten thousand voices will shout the triumphant hallelujah, praising, adoring, and blessing Him whose all-sufficient grace brought them to the realms of glory.

I will trust your promise, Lord,

Rest in your unchanging word,

Which so kindly says to me;

"As your days, your strength shall be."

Do I feel with guilt oppressed,

Rankling in my wounded breast?

Jesus sweetly calls to me;

As your days, your strength shall be.

I have borne your sins alone,

For your guilt I did atone,
Only now, believe in me,
As your days, your strength shall be.
Ask of me the Spirit's power,
In the sad, and evil hour;
Then, my goodness you shall see,
As your days, your strength shall be.
If overwhelmed with earthly care,
Banish unbelieving fear;
All my grace shall shelter thee,
As your days, your strength shall be.
When the hour of death shall come,
Hasten to your heavenly home,
Trusting on my word to thee,
As your days, your strength shall be.
Lord, I bless you for this grace,
As I run the heavenly race;
For this promise, rich and free,
"As your days, your strength shall be.

10. THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST

10. THE DYING LOVE OF CHRIST

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." John 10:11

The parable of the good Shepherd is beautiful and affecting. The Jews could fully enter into the character of a shepherd. They were well acquainted with the cares and hazards of a pastoral life, in a country where beasts of prey so often invaded the fold. This imagery was familiar to them from the Psalms of David and the writings of the Prophets. "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name." What a lovely picture of a shepherd and his flock, applied with such exquisite feeling by David to himself.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that lead Joseph like a flock; you that dwell between the cherubim, shine forth." Such was the prayer of the Psalmist to the God of Israel, that he would graciously vouchsafe to his people a shepherd's care. "Thus says the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep." "I will feed them in a good pasture." "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost." What can be more gracious than this manifestation of the divine solicitude for his chosen people.

Jesus styles himself the good Shepherd, thus bearing the very character in which the God of Israel was revealed to his Church. Christ is Jehovah our Shepherd; the good Shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. His work of love is sweetly described by himself. "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I know my sheep and am known by them." "My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. So no one can take them from me. The Father and I are one."

That heart must be harder than adamant, which can hear unmoved these gracious words from the lips of eternal love. Oh! that my heart may be melted and subdued by these expressions of infinite mercy. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." Blessed indeed are those who form a part of this redeemed flock, purchased by the blood of the good Shepherd.

The majesty and humiliation of Christ, his Godhead and Manhood, will form a subject for admiring contemplation, a theme for adoring praise, throughout the ages of eternity. How am I lost in wonder, when I begin to meditate on the grace of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might be made rich. When I consider the dignity of his nature, one with the Father, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things held together; in whom I live, and move, and have my being- when I contemplate his transcendent greatness, his infinite perfections, his immensity, his eternity- when I reflect upon his unspeakable felicity, the overflowings of his love to myriads of angelic spirits who

surround his throne, happy in his presence, and delighting to perform his will- when I thus contemplate the ever-glorious Jesus, how am I lost in wonder and amazement, when, bending down to earth, I behold him an infant of days, lying in a manger, working as a carpenter, not having a place wherein to lay his head, mocked, scourged, spit upon, and at last, with every aggravation that malice could invent, nailed to a cross, and pierced with a spear!

Great indeed is the mystery of godliness. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" that Word which was with God, and was God. How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? In the fullness of time Christ came, emptying himself of all but love, that, as the good Shepherd, he might give his life for the sheep. He came to magnify the law, by bearing the curse for us, by shedding his blood for us. He came to make it honorable, by fulfilling all its requirements in our nature, and by his sinless obedience, even unto death, to work out a righteousness for us. He came to reconcile us unto God, to save us from going down to hell, to purify our corrupted nature, and to make us partakers of his everlasting glory.

Oh my soul, never cease to love and praise this all-gracious Redeemer, whose love is unspeakable, whose riches of grace are unsearchable, whose purchased blessings are eternal. View him in his glory with profoundest adoration. View him in his abasement with deepest humiliation. Behold, by faith, the Lamb of God, that Lamb of God's providing, extended on the Tree, his body covered with bloody gore, his ears assailed with the scoffs of his executioners, his soul pierced with the sword of justice, which then awaked against the shepherd, against the man that is Jehovah's fellow. Behold this sacred victim bleeding on the altar, as a sacrifice for your sins, in dreadful conflict with the powers of darkness, groaning under the tremendous load of human guilt, which would have overwhelmed all except a God Incarnate.

Behold him in this most pitiable condition, at this mysterious hour, forsaken by his heavenly Father: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" O doleful cry! O mysterious exclamation! Sin, what have you done, you murderer of the Prince of life! For whom did Jesus bleed and die? for sinners, rebellious, ungrateful sinners; for me, the chief of sinners! Oh! my soul, melt into contrition at the foot of the Cross; behold what terrible effects your vile apostasy has produced; and never cease to love this gracious Savior, who, in boundless mercy and compassion, divested himself of his celestial glory, which he had with the Father before the world was, that he might take upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of man, might humble himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

O blessed Jesus, increase my faith, inflame my love, animate my hope, and stimulate my obedience, until my frail endeavors here below are perfected in heaven. Then shall I sing your praise in purer strains; then shall I proclaim your dying love with all the ransomed throng, who, on their golden harps, forever strike the chord, "Worthy is the Lamb."

You men of the world, grasping after sordid gain; you votaries of pleasure, dancing on the borders of destruction; you aspiring souls, whose eyes are fixed upon the pinnacles of power; you self-righteous professors, who make your works the sole foundation of your trust- look at the suffering Jesus! You hear of his dying love, but you regard it not. Ah! for a moment listen to these moving words, prophetically issuing from the lips of the pale, tortured, agonized Redeemer, who, beholding your cold, your cruel indifference to his sorrows endured for your sakes, thus addresses you: "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see if there is any suffering like

mine, which the Lord brought on me in the day of his fierce anger."

O my soul, pray earnestly for those thoughtless, senseless beings, that the Lord the Spirit may smite every rocky heart, and cause the waters of godly sorrow to gush out in plenteous streams—yourself, the hardest rock of all!

Though Isaiah complained: "Lord, who has believed our report." Though Paul reiterated the complaint; still bright days are in reserve for the church of God. The prophecies glow with descriptions of glory. Language fails to depict the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ. How rich, how varied, are the promises made to Christ, for in him, they are all yes and amen, to the glory of God. As the stars in the firmament, they shine throughout the pages of Holy Writ. Faith, standing like Moses on the top of Pisgah, views the length and breadth of Immanuel's Land.

While mourning over the world's dreary map, as presented to your view, cast your eyes, O my soul, over the predicted realm of the glorified Messiah! "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord." "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before you." "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen says the Lord of Hosts." "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in: and so all Israel shall be saved." "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying; Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Truly, when this period arrives, it will be as life from the dead. The word is spoken, and cannot be reversed; for Jesus, who is the Truth, has declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." To his ancient Church, the Almighty declared: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And what is his counsel? what is his pleasure? That the dying, risen, glorified Redeemer shall see his seed, shall prolong his days, shall see of the travail of his soul, shall be satisfied, shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities, shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, was numbered with the transgressors, bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The Man of Sin, with his anti-Christian power; the false Prophet, with his licentious code; the votaries of gods innumerable, with rites so bloody and obscene, shall fall before the Cross, shall vanish as the mist before the sun. The cry will then be heard— Babylon has fallen! has fallen, to rise no more. The Gentiles shall then cast their idols to the moles and to the bats. The proud crescent of Mahomet shall then wane and disappear from beneath these heavens. The Jews shall then embrace the crucified Messiah, as their long-expected king. Then truth and righteousness will prevail. "On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: Set apart as Holy to the Lord. And the cooking pots in the Temple of the Lord will be as sacred as the

basins used beside the altar. In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to the Lord Almighty. All who come to worship will be free to use any of these pots to boil their sacrifices. And on that day there will no longer be traders in the Temple of the Lord Almighty."

Then will all who worship God, worship him in spirit and in truth. Jesus will reign, the universal King, for "the King of the whole earth shall he be called." Lord, hasten your kingdom; take unto you your great power, until every heart shall crown you Lord of all.

Soon must I quit this transitory scene;

Soon will the sweetest bonds of love dissolve!

To cease from man, from earth my heart to wean,

Before death o'ertake me, be my firm resolve.

Great God! how just are your divine decrees;

How just the doom for man's rebellious sin;

The curse is uttered- and cold death shall seize

The race of Adam, until the world he win.

But You have said- Your right hand shall unbar

Sepulchral caverns through your Spirit's power;

Lord, we confide, amid this doleful war,

On You, whose grace shall bring Redemption's hour.

O blessed Hope! triumphant Faith divine!

'Tis Jesus calls us to partake his joy;

Christian advance- the Victory now is thine,

The conquering Savior shall your foe destroy.

He lives on high- we soon shall see his face,

Securely stationed on the heavenly plain;

Where, clad with beams of his reflected grace,

Our souls, with Jesus, shall forever reign.

11. THE WILLINGNESS OF CHRIST TO RECEIVE

11. THE WILLINGNESS OF CHRIST TO RECEIVE SINNERS

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."
John 6:37

Jesus is the great Teacher of heavenly wisdom, and simple-hearted believers are his disciples. Renouncing their own wisdom, they sit, like Mary, at his feet, to hear the words of eternal life. Like her they have chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from them. Blessed Savior, impress my heart with this great truth, "One thing is needful." May the salvation of my soul be the great object of my desire. Make me a simple-hearted believer. Let me not distract myself with things which are too high for me, but make me desirous for the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.

Your word declares, that "all have sinned." O, give me grace with unfeigned contrition to acknowledge myself a sinner, deserving of everlasting banishment from your presence. Your word declares, that there is no other name given among men, whereby they can be saved, but yours alone. May this precious name be ever my plea before the throne of Justice; my strong tower and castle of defense against the accusations of Satan, and the just demands of your most righteous Law. You have yourself declared- "Without me, you can do nothing." Do not allow me to rely a single moment upon my own strength, which is perfect weakness, but to lean wholly on your almighty arm, which can alone uphold me amid the dangers of the way, and conduct me in safety to the heavenly city.

Your word, with a solemn distinctness speaks to my heart; "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Heavenly Father! impart unto me the Spirit of your dear Son, that I may be born again of the Spirit; have your Spirit dwelling in me, as the Spirit of adoption; and be made the temple of the Holy Spirit. Then will your work of grace appear, by the transformation of my soul into your image; by my separation from a world that lies in wickedness; by my being turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Preserve me from all inward impurity, and outward impiety. O, what a world of wickedness may be in my heart, while no glaring irregularity is visible in the life. Lord make me sincere. Let my love be without hypocrisy; that so the internal purity of my heart may be evidenced by the external piety of my daily walk. Thus shall I be continually growing in faith, and love, and every grace, until grace is ripened into glory.

O my soul, pour out your grateful praises to the God of your salvation for this assurance of your acceptance. "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." Blessed Jesus! I come unto you, drawn by the cords of redeeming love. I feel a void, an aching void within, which nothing but You Yourself can fill. To you do I now come for pardon and peace; for a new nature, spiritual affections, heavenly desires. You have commanded me to come, and oh! how sweet, how endearing is your call: "Come unto me all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Lo, I come!

Through the gracious drawings of your Spirit I approach your bleeding Cross. Accept, blessed Lord, a vile, polluted sinner, whose soul is bowed down with sorrow under the load of sin, whose heart is panting, after you, as the deer pants after the water brook. Lo, I come! and oh blessed assurance, you will never cast me out. You are faithful who has promised; your word is truth, that gracious word on which you have caused me to hope, "whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

I desire, Almighty Savior, a greater conformity to you; to have more of your Spirit; more of the temper and disposition of a new-born soul. When I read of that power of faith, that fervency of love, that assurance of hope, that purity of heart, that gentleness of manners, that simplicity of life, which distinguished many of the primitive Christians from the world around them, I long for a portion of that spirit which dwelt in them, which caused them to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things. Oh that I may be a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Your arm is not shortened; the fountain of your love is not dried up. Like yourself, it is eternal- ever flowing, ever overflowing to bless a ruined world! Your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, upon those who fear you. Your grace is, in every age, sufficient for every coming sinner. Sufficient to convert the soul; sufficient to carry on the work of evangelical obedience; sufficient to complete and crown the whole with heavenly glory. Oh with what joy will the top-stone be raised, with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto it."

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

God is the Lord by whom we escape death. Conversion is his work. Of myself I can do nothing -nothing that is pleasing in his sight, or profitable to my own soul. But, this moral inability forms no excuse for sin. My inability to glorify God arises from the corruption of my fallen nature; from the darkness of my understanding, the perverseness of my will, the depraved state of my affections; and therefore is justly deserving of eternal condemnation. All mankind come into the world in this helpless state. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ assisting us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will" (Article 10).

How gracious, then, are these words of Christ: "whoever comes to me I will never drive away." As if he had said Come unto me, you trembling sinners, do not be afraid; I will give you all that you need; Come unto me, I will supply all your need out of my fullness; Come unto me, I will bless you with all spiritual blessings; I will strengthen you by my Spirit, I will comfort you with my promises; yes, I will never leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of- for, "where I am, there shall also my servant be."

O, Eternal God, I would praise you for your unspeakable mercy, for your saving power, in applying the precious balm of the Covenant to my wounded conscience; I would bless you for taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto me; for revealing Christ, as my all-sufficient Savior; for drawing me to his Cross; for uniting me to him by faith as a branch in the true Vine; for making me a member of his mystical body; for working in my heart a holy longing after you. Oh! how can I find words to speak all your praise. But alas, in the midst of these mercies, I feel deeply humbled in

your sight. That law in my members which wars against the law of my mind is continually opposing your work of grace. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I am daily taught by painful experience that my heart is deceitful above all things: that I cannot stand a moment except you sustain me; that I cannot take a single step towards heaven, but as you guide me. The whole work of my salvation is all your own; and to You be ascribed the everlasting glory! Under this feeling of impotency, how encouraging are your words, O divine Redeemer, that "whoever comes to me I will never drive away." Make me as willing to be saved, as you are willing to save me.

The enmity of the carnal mind is ever directed against the work of Christ. The moralist, the formalist, the worldling, and the sensualist, are alike opposed to the humbling, purifying doctrines of the Cross. Holiness is offensive to the unrenewed mind. The more spiritual any religious exercise or book is, the more it is disliked. Give some truly scriptural volume to a lover of the world, and how will he receive it? After glancing his eyes over a few of its pages, he will lay it down with a contemptuous smile. He will pity the enthusiast who wrote it, and the enthusiast who admires it. Give him some newly launched novel, some work replete with wit and humor, and he will devour its contents, even though it requires the midnight oil to finish it. Here, all his heart is engaged, all his passions are excited, imagination adds wings to his flight, and, soaring into the realms of fancy, into the fairy land of unreal life, he sinks into his slumbers, regardless whether he awake in time or in eternity!

O how awful is the state of every unconverted soul! "Death is the detector of the heart." When he knocks at the door, when he shakes his dart over the dismayed worldling, what terror seizes upon his mind! Some, indeed, have no worries in their death. Sin has so seared the conscience and hardened the heart. They go as the ox to the slaughter, insensible of the blow which awaits them. But, the moment the stroke is given, the moment eternity is opened before them, O who can tell the horrors of the disembodied spirit, while hurrying down into the dreadful abyss of everlasting woe? O you perishing sinner, before it be too late, while the door of mercy is open, while the voice of love is heard- listen to the Savior's words- pray for grace to obey his call: "whoever comes to me I will never drive away." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

With joyful steps, approach the Gospel sound,
Jesus the Lord invites you from his throne;
Salvation is proclaimed to all around,
The heavenly Shepherd claims you for his own.
Fear not you trembling souls, whom sins oppress,
The Savior's grace is boundless, rich, and free,
His affections yearn over all your deep distress,
In tender love he cries- Believe on me.
To seek and save our wretched guilty souls,
Down from the Father's bosom quick he flew

See, at the Cross, his dying love controls
The powers of hell- and opens heaven for you.
Come, trembling sinner, let not fell despair
Detain your footsteps from the bleeding Cross;
Come as you are- His blood can make you fair,
His endless love repay your every loss.
Filled with the hope of everlasting joy,
A pilgrim journeying to the realms of bliss;
My Savior's arm shall every foe destroy,
And kindly seal your ransomed soul as His.

12. EARNEST DESIRES FOR CHRIST

12. EARNEST DESIRES FOR CHRIST

"My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you." Isaiah 26:9

Few people are insensible to the happiness of friendship, though few, comparatively, possess a real friend. Worldly friendships are often little better than "confederacies in vice, and leagues in pleasure." Amid refined society, where all the decencies of life are practiced, and the finer sensibilities of the heart encouraged, friendship may assume its native character in an unselfish affection. But still the lovely charm is lacking. Christian friendship alone is the true panacea for human woes. Its kindly influence seems to make an almost Paradise regained. Cemented by the love of Christ, Christians possess the elements of true felicity. They have been described as one soul in two bodies, actuated by the same principle, walking by the same rule, and directed to the same end.

Many requisites are needed to make a Christian friend. Selfishness is the bane of real friendship. It cannot live in such an atmosphere. Like tender plants, it thrives best in its native soil. A heart filled with the love of Christ, a mind clothed with humility, a spirit endued with that charity which seeks not her own, is peculiarly fitted for the growth of Christian friendship. Here it expands its lovely flowers, and bears its precious fruits.

In the midst of this ever-changing, faithless world, there is a Friend that loves at all times, a Brother that is born for adversity. Jesus is his precious name. Love is his endeared character. His faithfulness never fails. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In the midst of disquietude, he can give rest. In the midst of sorrow, he can give comfort. In the midst of weakness, he can impart strength. In the midst of predicament, he can give counsel. Oh! what a friend is this! Wherever we are, he is a friend at hand to cheer and support. When we read his word, he speaks to us; when we pray, we speak to him. He is near to those who fear him, and he sheds his choicest gifts on those who love him. He dwells in them by his Spirit, and manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world. Such a friend is Jesus to his redeemed people.

What a lovely instance of holy friendship is presented to us in the family at Bethany. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" and the Savior was equally the object of their warmest love. Earthly friends are indeed blessed, when Jesus is the friend of both; when each, who loves the other, is the object of the Savior's love. A union such as this brings down a portion of heaven into the soul. A friendship such as this, like a calm and silent stream, meandering through some lonely glen, pursues its course in unobserved, but sweet retirement. The graces of the Spirit thrive like beauteous flowers in this delightful spot, until the happy souls, cemented by the love of Christ, exchange this earthly for a heavenly paradise.

There is no happiness but in Christ. He is the fountain of living water, the source from where our every blessing flows! O! my soul, never look for peace from the creature, nor expect it from yourself. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He has made peace for us through the blood of his Cross.

He alone, by his Spirit can speak peace to the troubled conscience. Through him, we have peace with God; and through him, we enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Blessed Savior! shed abroad your love in my heart; fill me with joy and peace in believing. Wash my heart from wickedness; allow no vain thoughts to lodge within me. Give me a single eye, a sincere love to you, a supreme regard to all your commandments. Preserve me, O Lord, from every false way, from false views of your Gospel, from false motives in my conduct. Enable me, O sin-bearing Savior, to cast the burden of my sins upon you; to confess them over you, as the appointed sacrifice for the transgressions of your people; and, oh! bear them away into the land of everlasting forgetfulness.

I feel more and more convinced of this important truth, that to be happy, I must be holy. "There is no peace, says my God to the wicked." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Every page of the Bible proclaims this truth by precept and example. Universal experience attests the truth of this declaration, by the hourly miseries which sin produces. How can peace dwell in the heart, when the curse of God rests upon it? "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesses the habitation of the just." When the Israelites were at peace with God, he blessed their basket and their store; when they rebelled, his curse consumed all that they had. The world may appear smiling and happy, but its appearances are deceitful. Many an aching heart is hid under a smiling face.

True peace descends from above. It is the celestial fruit of Paradise. The Holy Spirit alone can produce this blessedness in the soul; therefore, none can possess it, but the faithful in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying, comforting influences in the hearts of sinners, is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. "Except I go away," said Jesus, "the Comforter cannot come." The blessed Savior went to his eternal glory by the way of the Cross; and thus satisfying the claims of Justice, he made a way for the exercise of mercy. Oh how wonderfully does mercy shine forth in this dark world. Like the physical sun, it gives light, warmth, and fruitfulness to the soul. O divine Spirit, dispel the mists of ignorance from my mind; inflame my heart with holy love, and cause the fruits of righteousness to abound in me. Hear my inward breathings after you. Satisfy my longing desires after your presence. Manifest yourself to my waiting soul, that I may be joyful in you. "Remember me, too, Lord, when you show favor to your people; come to me with your salvation. Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones. Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage."

The eye is delighted, while ascending some lofty eminence, with the ever-varying beauties which are spread beneath it. What bounded the range of vision at the foot of the mountain is now lost in the vast expanse. So it is with the Christian traveler, when he leaves this narrow sphere of earth, and soars, by faith, into the world of glory. How wonderful is the power of faith. As the astronomer, by his telescope, discovers new worlds unseen by the natural eye: so the Christian, by faith, beholds a scene of glory which the natural man cannot discern.

The book of God unfolds to his admiring sight these bright displays of glory, when viewed, by faith, through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. No wonder that his heart is filled with longing desires after immortality; with a daily thirsting after Christ. The midnight hour, and the early dawn, find him often engaged in this search after Christ. "My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you." Present attainments are forgotten, while his eye is fixed on what

still remains to be possessed. With the Apostle he can say: "I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven."

I long to be altogether conformed to the will of God; to be transformed into the lovely image of my Redeemer. I feel a constant uneasiness and restlessness of mind. Why should I grovel here below when Jesus calls me to him? Why rest in this valley of tears, when invited to ascend the Mount of God? I desire a greater elevation of soul, a higher standard of excellence. My soul cleaves unto the dust, when it should be soaring into the skies.

Man was originally created with expansive powers; with faculties capable of knowing, and of holding converse with the Deity. He was formed for immortality. Though now fallen, his children still retain some broken fragments of the once noble structure. The heart resembles a triangle which this round globe of earth can never fill; why else that restless discontent, those disappointed expectations so visible among the votaries of the world? They pant after the possession of ideal pleasures, and when possessed their zest is gone. New delights are panted after, which, when obtained, are equally evanescent. The enjoyments of earth, like the Aurora-Borealis, are ephemeral and deceptive.

O deliver me, blessed Jesus, from unbelief and discontent, from pride and selfishness, from fleshly lusts and carnal desires, from covetousness and an earthly mind, from formality and hypocrisy, from sinful compliances and the fear of man. Save me from myself, from the power of Satan, from an evil world.

Oh! impart unto me the unspeakably precious gift of your ever-blessed Spirit, to be the Witness of my adoption, the Seal of my acceptance, the Pledge of future glory. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Hasten your chariot wheels. Come in all your salvation. Come in all the fullness of your grace and power. Oh! delay not, blessed Savior, to make my soul your dwelling-place. I long, I look for you. With you is the fullness of joy, and in your presence are pleasures for evermore. When I awake with your likeness I shall be satisfied with it. When standing before your throne, with robes made white through your cleansing blood, none, yes, none will praise you with a louder song than I.

Jesus, to You my soul aspires,

Dear Object of my best desires;

With you is life, and joy, and peace,

Without you, all is bitterness.

Reveal your glory to my soul,

O speak- and make a sinner whole;

Restore me to your image, Lord,

Renew me through your powerful word.

Come, blessed Savior, to my heart,

Your saving mercies there impart;
Preserve me from impending ill,
And let me ever do your will.
If called to pass through swelling waves,
By furnace fierce, or yawning graves;
If duty's path lies through this way,
O from it, let me never stray.
Give me a holy courage, Lord,
A firm reliance on your word;
Beneath your banner I will fight,
When clad with your all-conquering might.
Then, when the work of life is done,
The battle fought- the victory won,
Your grace will give the victor's crown;
But all the glory is your own!

13. THE POWER OF GRACE,

13. THE POWER OF GRACE, AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DIVINE FAVOR

"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him." Deuteronomy 33:12

The promises of protection to the people of God are as numerous as they are consoling. When Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, and naturally dreaded the fury of their successors, how graciously did the Almighty allay his fears, "The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." When Jacob was oppressed by the covetousness of Laban, the Lord said unto him, "Return unto the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I will be with you." When Esau came with four hundred men to meet him, and Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, the angel of the covenant blessed him, and dispelled his fears. When Joseph was unjustly cast into prison, the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper. Thus, in every age, the beloved of the Lord have dwelt in safety by him.

Moses, when blessing the tribes of Israel, for their comfort recorded the power of Jehovah: "There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you, across the skies in majestic splendor. The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, 'Destroy them!' So Israel will live in safety, prosperous Jacob in security, in a land of grain and wine, while the heavens drop down dew. How blessed you are, O Israel! Who else is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your protecting shield and your triumphant sword! Your enemies will bow low before you, and you will trample on their backs!"

In his prayer, Moses also acknowledges the faithfulness of God: "Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

How sweetly does David sing of the loving-kindness of the Lord. His heart seems too full for words to express his feelings: "I love you, Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy of praise, for he saves me from my enemies." "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret place of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me, therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord." "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in him will I trust."

Thousands can witness to this truth, that God is the refuge of his people- a present help in trouble. The eleventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews is a precious portion. There we have a host of worthies, who, being dead, yet speak to us through the oracles of God. "All these faithful ones

died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth. And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had meant the country they came from, they would have found a way to go back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them."

Who can read this beautiful record of patriarchal faith and patience, without the firm conviction, that, under all the varied scenes of life, "the beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him." Oh! what a sweet thing it is to be in the favor of God, to enjoy his peace, through the blood of Emmanuel; to have an assured interest in the righteousness of Christ; to see the way which leads unto Zion, and to walk therein. What can be called happiness if this not? This is, indeed, heaven begun below, and shall terminate in the enjoyment of heaven above.

And is all this bliss, this glory, this grace, freely offered to me, the chief of sinners? Indeed it is. The voice of mercy speaks to me- the invitation is given to me by an ever-loving Savior "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" "look unto me, and be saved." But how can I come? By his power. How must I come? Just as I am; for, if I tarry until I am better, I shall never come at all. Under a deep sense of my spiritual maladies I must come, as the lame, the blind, the dumb, and the maimed, came to the Great Physician in the days of his flesh. The longer I keep away from Jesus, the more inveterate will my disease become. All human help is vain. Nothing can reach my case, or effect my cure, but the blood of my Emmanuel.

Behold me, then, at your feet, all-gracious Savior; an humble suppliant for pardoning and restoring grace. Pity me, O gentle Redeemer, you who will never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Pity me, O sympathizing High Priest, who was in all things tempted like I am, though without sin. Stretch forth your hand. Speak the powerful word, and your servant shall be healed.

Blessed Spirit! give me faith to believe. All things are possible to him who believes. Let me not doubt the Savior's love, and willingness, and power to save, yes, even to the uttermost. Impart this living principle. I cannot believe through any force of reasoning. You, you, alone, can bestow this precious, special gift of faith. Come in your divine energy and make me from this hour, a real believer in Christ, a faithful follower of the Lamb.

Jesus was lifted up upon the Cross, that he might draw all men unto himself. A free pardon is now proclaimed. All who repent and believe the Gospel shall be saved. To apprehend this by faith is the secret of consolation. But some may ask: When can I know that I am among the redeemed? What assurance can I have that my name is written in the book of life? I answer- when you are saved from your sins- when the new name of love is written on your heart.

If a blind man is restored to sight, will he not be conscious of it? "This one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

If a man, groaning under a heavy burden, is delivered from it, will he not be sensible of the change? "Now I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks."

If a person, laboring under a painful disease, is healed of his malady, will he not experience the blessing? "Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague."

If a man is confined in prison, and is again restored to liberty, will he remain in doubt respecting his deliverance? "When Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod."

If reason and experience declare that we must distinguish between light and darkness; between slavery and freedom; between sickness and health; between imprisonment and liberty, why do we not distinguish between sin and holiness, between a state of condemnation and a state of acceptance with God?

If my blind eyes have been opened by divine grace to see my guilty, lost, and ruined condition by nature; if I have been enabled to view Jesus with the eye of faith as my Prophet, Priest, and King, as the Lord my Righteousness, as the Way of access to the Father; if I have beheld him in all these glorious offices and characters which he sustains in the covenant of grace for the redemption of his people, shall I not be conscious of it?

If the load of guilt which oppressed my soul, and filled me with direful apprehensions of the wrath to come, has been removed through faith in the blood of Christ; and if, in consequence of this faith, I enjoy peace with God, and peace in my conscience, shall I not be sensible of this delightful change?

If the power of sin, which, like an acute disease, was hurrying my soul to the second death, and filling me with the poison of corruption, has been destroyed through the mighty power of God; and my soul be renewed in righteousness and true holiness, shall I not experience this blessed effect of the healthful spirit of his grace?

If, when tied and bound by the chain of my sins, and shut up in the prison of unbelief, I not only heard the voice of mercy bidding me come forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God, but have been led by the hand of the Spirit, to Jesus, the friend of sinners; can I remain in doubt, whether I have been delivered or no? Surely not.

Well, then, O my soul, have you experienced and felt these things? Do not be deceived. It is one thing to know these truths from books and human teaching, and another to know and feel them from the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. What practical effects do I experience from these truths? Do they make me more humble, thankful, and holy? Am I daily praying to Jesus for grace to love him more, and to evidence my love by an uniform obedience to his will? Am I seeking after a more simple dependence on his all-sufficient merits?

If these be the effects produced and witnessed in my soul, by an universal change in my temper, heart, and life, then, I may take the comfort of the promises made in Christ to penitent, believing sinners; then I may enjoy the foretaste of that glory which shall be revealed in all those who believe.

For the comfort of the Church in every age, John shows, that the knowledge of our salvation is attainable, when connected with childlike obedience and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "By this we know that we know him— if we keep his commandments." "You know that he was manifested to

take away our sins." "He that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit who he has given us." "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Had these been the words of an uninspired believer, would they not, by many, have been condemned as enthusiastic and presumptuous? Even in the face of these blessed declarations of John, so descriptive of his own state, and of those to whom he wrote, an inward experience of the love and faithfulness of Christ, combined with a humble assurance of an interest in his atonement, is still treated as the visionary dream of over-heated enthusiasts.

But infidelity and indifference can never remove the rock on which our hopes are fixed. He who enjoys the sunshine of spiritual joy, can never be persuaded that he is wrapped in midnight darkness. One, in the twilight of divine revelation, could say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Paul, in the blaze of Gospel day, could add- "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." And John, to strengthen his testimony, declared- "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full." What precious words— that our joy may be full.

Can it then be unscriptural or presumptuous to take the comfort of God's word, if his love is shed abroad in our hearts; if his will is the rule of our conduct; if to please him is our sincere intention and delight? "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If we feel the godly motions of the Spirit drawing us from evil, and inclining us to good, shall we call it all delusion? Surely this must be a dishonoring of the Spirit, which none can commit, but those who are destitute of his grace.

Blessed Savior, make me wise unto salvation through faith in You. May I ever take your word as my rule and guide. May I ever repose on your faithfulness and care. Then, in the midst of abounding error, and abounding wickedness, I shall hourly experience the blessedness of the promise, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him."

Jesus, who hung upon the Cross,

And shed his blood for me,

Displays his power in every herb,

In every flower I see.

The flaming orb that lights the day,

The stars which gild the night,

The rolling sea- the rocky shore,

Proclaim the Savior's might.

The beasts that roam the woods among,
The birds which fill the air;
Each little insect on its wing,
Bespeak the Savior's care.
But man, of all his works below,
Lies nearest to his heart;
Give me, blessed Savior, in your love,
A never-failing part.
The objects of your love and care,
In safety shall abide
Beneath the shadow of your wing,
And near your sacred side.
No harm shall ever reach their souls;
No power, their hope destroy;
For you did bleed upon the Cross,
To give them endless joy.
O may I now your image bear,
From Satan's power set free,
Take up the Cross, despise the shame,
Then reign in heaven with Thee.

14. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

14. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."
Matthew 13:46

The language of true believers in Christ, though they be separated by oceans, and are personally unknown to each other, is experimentally the same. The humble follower of Jesus, who loves the Savior amid the heats of Africa, or the frosts of Labrador; who looks to him by faith, surrounded by the worshipers of Buddha, or the devotees of Mahomet, will be actuated by the same Spirit, governed by the same word, have the same inward conflict, and enjoy the same strength and consolation which his brethren in Christ experience, who enjoy the advantages of intellectual light, and who live in a land of Bibles and churches. The delightful accounts which the Missionaries write of these converted Hottentots, Greenlanders, Hindus, and Mohammedans, prove the truth of the Gospel, and display the power and grace of God.

This verifies, also, Paul's declaration; "Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church." The poor converted Negro is not endued with the same intellectual gifts as the learned but pious Professor of Theology; and yet, their spiritual graces are the same. Both are taught by the same Spirit to know themselves as sinners; both are led to Christ as their only Savior; both have grace given to them, to love and serve him; to confess him before men; to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.

And, oh! wonderful revelation of the grace of God! their eternal glory and happiness shall be the same. "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a mighty shout, 'Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!'"

The Church universal is spread over the face of the whole earth. Outward rites may differ, but the inward work is the same. There may be "differences of administration, but the same Lord." Oh! that we saw more of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," was the truly catholic prayer of Paul, whose heart was large enough to embrace all who bore the image of the Redeemer, and who worshiped him in spirit and in truth- while he commanded Timothy to turn away from such as had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof; and to withdraw himself from men of corrupt minds, who supposed that gain was godliness.

No outward service can be acceptable to God, if destitute of faith and love. The religion of Christ is the religion of the heart. In such a world as this, and composed as we are of body and spirit, Forms

are needful, to impress our minds, to fix our attention, and to enable Christians to unite in worship with each other. But, outward forms, however imposing, are but like a dead carcass, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love. "O, Lord, who have taught us that all our doings without charity are worth nothing, send your Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you. Grant this, for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

There is in all men a natural thirst after happiness. Their tastes may vary, but their pursuit is the same. This search never fails to end in disappointment, because they do not seek for it where alone it can be found. Did we see men seeking for costly pearls among the pebbles of the British shore, we should smile at their folly. To the anxious pursuers after happiness, the Almighty speaks in mercy- "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The fruitless effort of these vain pursuers is forcibly described; "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul! Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David."

True happiness flows from true wisdom. But where is wisdom to be found? that wisdom which can enrich, ennoble, and bless the soul? "'It is not here,' says the ocean. 'Nor is it here,' says the sea. It cannot be bought for gold or silver. Its value is greater than all the gold of Ophir, greater than precious onyx stone or sapphires. Wisdom is far more valuable than gold and crystal. It cannot be purchased with jewels mounted in fine gold. Coral and valuable rock crystal are worthless in trying to get it. The price of wisdom is far above pearls. Topaz from Ethiopia cannot be exchanged for it. Its value is greater than the purest gold. But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding?"

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the true Wisdom. He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." He is made unto us- Wisdom. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things." "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me, finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord."

To find Christ is to find life. For "this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son, has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life." To find Christ is to find the Pearl of great price. The vast universe, with all its treasures, cannot purchase it. The Hierarchy of Heaven, with all their united excellencies, cannot procure it for us. Infinite Justice demands a price beyond the power of heavenly intelligences to pay. Before this treasure can be obtained through the merit of the creature, whether human or angelic, works must be performed more than God has commanded, and be wrought out by a power beyond what he has bestowed. All that is short of this, will avail nothing, for thus said our Lord; "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Where is boasting then? It is excluded. Fallen man, if left to

himself, must sink into the depths of misery; and yet, what thousands toil to save themselves on the plank of their own righteousness!

O, you self-righteous professors, you, who seek to be justified by the works of the law; you who labor to obtain a righteousness of your own, and to claim heaven as the purchase of your doings, learn wisdom before it be too late. Your works, which, in your estimation, are like "goodly pearls," are beheld with abhorrence by a Holy God- those actions which you so much admire and value, are in His sight as "filthy rags."

Seek, then, by faith and prayer, through the Spirit of all grace, the Pearl of Great Price; the Lord Jesus Christ. Sell all that you have to obtain this treasure. So did Paul. "I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith." So did the Apostles; "Lo, we have left all, and followed you." And so did the primitive believers, who, for the Gospel's sake, endured a great fight of affliction, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Oh! what a mystery of grace is contained in these precious words- "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The Pearl of great price is freely given to enrich my soul.

To all who come this Pearl is free,

To Saul, to Magdalene, to me.

Yes! it is freely offered, without money and without price. And does Jesus thus give himself to my poor sinful soul? He does; and declares, by his Apostle, that to as many as receive Him, to them he gives the privilege to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name.

O! blessed Jesus— Savior of my soul, enable me now, even now, to make a full surrender of myself to you. Make me faithful, humble, and sincere. Preserve me from vain-glory and from self-dependence. Give me a single eye, and simplicity of heart. Guard me from the crafts of Satan, and the poison of my natural corruption. Alas! I have daily to mourn over the secret workings of spiritual pride. When I would speak a word for you, how soon does vanity spoil all. Oh! show me more of my emptiness and nothingness, of my guilt and misery. Teach me to prize you as my only treasure, to esteem you, as indeed You are- the Pearl of great price.

Oh! root out of my heart that evil leaven of unbelief, which mars every action; which so awfully dishonors you! Crucify this thief which robs you of your glory, and me of your consolation. Give me a deeper insight into the dark recesses of my heart. Let me descend into this sepulcher, loathsome as the sight may be. Oh! may this view of my pollution endear You to my heart, my Savior and my God. Wash me in the fountain of your precious blood; cover me with the mantle of your perfect Righteousness; purify my soul, through the cleansing influences of your Spirit. Adorn me with Yourself, O Pearl of great price, that I may appear before You as "a bride adorned for her

husband."

The more I read the Sacred Scriptures, the more I find that true religion is seated in the heart. It does not consist in outward forms, however excellent; in orthodox notions, however correct; in frames and feelings, however ardent; in morality of conduct, however admired. It consists in that faith which works by love, which purifies the heart, which overcomes the world. It consists in a vital union to Christ by a living faith; in an entire renunciation of self; in an absolute surrender of the soul to God. It consists in having the understanding enlightened by the truth as it is in Jesus; in having the will swallowed up in the will of God; in having the affections supremely set on things above; in loving God above all created things, and our neighbor as ourselves.

This great work is the operation of the Holy Spirit, and is aptly termed, a new creation-regeneration- the conversion of the soul to God.

Oh! Almighty Savior! You who bled upon the Cross for me; who there poured out your soul unto death for me, how can I adore and praise you as I ought? Alas! in this world, never! All my thoughts, all my affections, all my desires, must ever fall infinitely short of all your praise! And yet, O compassionate Redeemer, you do not reject the sigh of penitence, nor the breathings of the contrite heart. Your ear is open to the softest prayer; to the inmost longings of a loving heart. How gracious are your words; "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full." "The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: 'I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts.'" "This is what the Lord says: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? Could you build a dwelling place for me? My hands have made both heaven and earth, and they are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.'"

Rejoice, O my soul, at this revelation of love! The heaven of heavens cannot contain You, O my God, and yet You condescend to dwell in the contrite heart! Well may angels rejoice over one sinner that repents, when You, who inhabit Eternity, make his heart your dwelling-place.

What anxious thoughts, what wearying care,

The bosom of the worldling tear!

From morning light, to evening gloom,

Until death consign him to the tomb,

He labors to increase his store,

And thirsts, and longs, and thirsts for more.

Vain man! and why this constant toil,

This digging in the earthly soil?

Your fondest hope, 'tis true succeeds,

But what's the harvest? useless weeds!

Your wealth, with all its glittering store,
You soon must leave- and see no more.
The hour will come when you must die;
With rapid speed your moments fly.
Oh! then what anguish and despair,
What wasted moments, years of care,
Like spectres, will your soul alarm,
And break, of earth, the fatal charm.
There is a Treasure to be found,
A treasure sought on Gospel ground;
He is the merchant truly wise
Who can this precious Jewel prize;
Who, for this Pearl of heavenly birth,
Can give the dearest things of earth.
Jesus, my Lord, this Treasure is,
The source of pure unfading bliss;
Possessing Him, I, all possess,
That can support, and cheer, and bless.
Oh! may this Pearl lie near my heart;
'Twas Mary's choice- her better part,
Which nothing from her could remove,
The gift of God's eternal love.

15. CONVERSION OF THE HEART TO GOD

15. CONVERSION OF THE HEART TO GOD

"Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God." Jeremiah 31:18

What a wonderful work is the conversion of the heart to God. How far beyond the conception and power of the natural man. It is the work of God. Repenting Ephraim prayed, "Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God."

Almighty Father! begin, carry on, and complete this work in me, a worthless sinner. But may I ask so great favor? Your word encourages, yes, commands me to ask it of you. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." On what plea can I ask this blessing? On your own infinite mercy. You have revealed yourself in your word, as "a just God, and yet a Savior;" "just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus;" "as faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Oh! my soul, what undeserved love is this! When God created man, he formed him to show forth his praise. Infinitely happy in himself, he communicated of his own happiness to his creatures. He made man in his own image to manifest his glory. But Adam sinned, and fell! The Almighty, through the riches of his grace, in order to counteract this introduction of moral evil, devised a plan before the foundation of the world, in the execution of which his glory would be displayed, and those of his creatures restored to happiness who sought for mercy in his own appointed way. Jesus, the Savior, was revealed. In the fullness of time, he came forth from the Father, took upon himself our nature, suffered in our stead, made satisfaction to offended justice, and, just before his return to glory, declared, for the unspeakable consolation of perishing sinners- "He that believes, shall be saved." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

What adequate return could man render to the Lord for all his benefits? What compensation could he make for all this costly sacrifice? None. He was a debtor who had nothing to pay, therefore the Lord, for Christ's sake, frankly forgave him. Has man, then, no return to make? Yes, he has- a return of gratitude and love. This is what the Lord requires. "My son, give me your heart." We can give him nothing more, and he will accept of nothing less. But how must we give him our hearts? Through his own grace; through the constraining influence of His Spirit. If we love him, it is because he has first loved us. Both the will and the power to turn unto the Lord, and to give him our hearts, is the work of his grace. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Our duty is plainly revealed; we must pray without ceasing, in the name of Christ, for every promised blessing. Whatever God has promised, may be the subject of our prayer, and the object of our pursuit. If we are true believers, the Land of Promise is ours. We may walk through the length and breadth of it, and say- This is freely given to me. Oh! how rich are the inheritors of the promises.

But, how can we know when our souls are converted to God? When we are enabled, through the Spirit, to make a full surrender of ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the God of our salvation. Then we may feel assured that the work of Conversion has been wrought within us.

Lord, convert me by your grace. Lead me to the Cross. Fill me with your love, and fit me for your heavenly kingdom. O my soul! what progress have you made in your Christian course since first the Lord of all grace brought you, by his Spirit, into the good old way?

What are your views of God?

Do you reverence his Greatness, his Majesty, and his Omniscience? Are you affected with his Holiness, his Justice, his Power, and his Truth? Have these awful attributes and perfections made you tremble in his presence, when you remember that all of them are directed against you as a sinner?

What are your views of Sin?

When you mourn over its effects, as displayed in the troubles and sorrows, the sicknesses and deaths, which desolate the earth, are you far more grieved at the dishonor which sin brings to God, by lifting its rebellious arm against the Majesty of heaven; and by sinners crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame? Is sin beheld by you, as the greatest evil, from where all misery takes its rise? Are you convinced of its deceiving, hardening, and polluting nature, of its baneful, unprofitable, deadly fruits?

What are your views of Yourself?

Have you seen yourself a sinner, a rebel, an apostate creature, deserving of nothing less than eternal fire? And has this view of yourself, humbled you in the sight of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity who hates all unrighteousness, and has declared, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all those who forget God?

Have you been convinced of your utter inability to fulfill the righteousness of that law which reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; which will accept of nothing less than a sinless obedience, making no allowance for the least deviation from its requirements, but pronouncing him cursed who continues not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them? Has a deep conviction of your own sinfulness, and the utter impossibility of your ever appeasing the wrath of God, or of making an atonement for sin, made you cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" How shall I escape the damnation of hell?

What are your views of Jesus Christ?

Have you beheld him by the eye of faith as an All-sufficient Savior; as one who can relieve your needs, supply your necessities, expiate your sins, sanctify your nature, ransom you from hell, and raise you to heaven? Have you received Him as the Lord your Righteousness; by whose merits you are justified? Is he your only hope of glory, by whom you have access unto the Father? Do you believe that as man, he died for sinners, and that as God, he gave an infinite value to all his sufferings, thus glorifying the Law and his eternal Justice more than if ten thousand guilty worlds had undergone an everlasting punishment?

What are your views of the Holy Spirit?

Are you convinced that the great work of Conversion is his work? that it is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to his people; to apply first the Law to our hearts to humble us, to kill all the noxious weeds of pride and self-love; to lay us in the dust before God; to fill us with self-despair; and then, to reveal Christ to us in all his free salvation and redeeming love? Have you felt the Spirit's power in drawing you from self to Jesus, from the world to heaven, from sin to holiness, from Satan unto God? Convinced that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, have you earnestly and perseveringly sought these promised blessings, pleading the merits of the Son, and imploring the gift of the Holy Spirit to work in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power?

If you have felt the constraining influence of divine grace, inclining you to seek the Lord Jesus and salvation through him; have you been faithful to these gracious motions of the Spirit? have you assiduously cherished these workings of grace within you? have they filled you with joy, and made you long for a complete redemption from all iniquity, for an abiding union to Christ by faith?

Are you, O my soul, waiting for the coming of Christ, as Anna and Simeon waited for redemption in Israel? Is every thing here below tasteless and insipid, without an assured saving interest in the work and love of Jesus, in his blood and righteousness, in his prevailing intercession with His Father in heaven? Do you delight in the word of God, in the ordinances of God, in the people of God- yes, in all who bear his image, who promote his glory, and speak his praise, out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue? Are you looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God? Is the second appearing of the Lord Jesus a delightful expectation, when the universal Hallelujah will swell the chorus of his praise?

If these are your views, O my soul, if this be your daily desire, your daily walk, your daily hope and trust, then rejoice in the Lord always, who has so graciously drawn you to himself, and converted you from a barren desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus, make me sincere. You know that I desire to love you, to be separated from all sin. Unite me to Yourself; fill me with spiritual light; and enable me to go on from strength to strength, until delivered from the burden of the flesh, I appear before you in Zion.

How insensible is the human heart to heavenly things until touched by divine grace. How hard is my heart! Lord soften it. O that I could love my Savior above every other object in earth or heaven. Jehovah Jesus is the adoration of angels, and of the perfected saints in glory. Even on earth, though encompassed with infirmity, and seeing as through a glass darkly, the enraptured believer can say; "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." O that my heart may be given to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one God of my salvation. Never shall I feel true happiness until that blissful moment, when my will is lost in the will of God; when all my fugitive affections are fixed supremely upon Him. Blessed Lord, hasten this moment so full of bliss. May it be now, for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow may find me in eternity. O may I seek you, and find you today, as all my salvation, and all my desire.

Manifest yourself to me as you do not unto the world. Show me my saving interest in the blood of the Lamb. Give me that realizing faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Bestow upon me a broken heart, a lowly mind, a weanedness from the world, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a delight in your service, a love to everything which you love; a pleasure in everything which is pleasing unto You.

I live surrounded by Gospel light, and Gospel privileges. Yet, awful thought! I may pass by the Cross, on the way to endless misery. When invited by sovereign love to look and be saved, I may pass by on the other side; not submitting myself unto the righteousness of God. The gospel, though faithfully preached, may fall like rain on the sandy soil. I may perish within sight of the remedy. The cup of salvation may be brought to my lips, and yet I may refuse to drink it. O the blindness and infatuation of the human heart.

Such is the state of the unconverted sinner, living in the midst of gospel blessings. He sinks within sight of the harbor, dashed on the rocks of unbelief, self-righteousness, and the love of the world. Lord, save me from the power of unbelief. Enable me to look unto Jesus as my only Hope, to come to him as my only Help, to receive him as my only Savior, to rely on him as my only Righteousness, to prize him as my only Treasure, to love him as my only Beloved, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.

16. FAITH WORKING BY LOVE

16. FAITH WORKING BY LOVE

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Galatians 5:6

When Adam fell, all his posterity fell in him. The Law being holy, just, and good, condemned the fallen race of Adam, for all that the Law can do is to convince and to condemn; but, through the righteousness of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner is again received into the favor of God, and accounted righteous in his sight. The righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. In this righteousness he stands complete. In this righteousness, he claims a title to the skies. In this righteousness, he answers all the demands of the Law, silences all the accusations of Satan, and is admitted, after death, into the inheritance of the saints in light. Faith is the instrument by which the sinner apprehends this righteousness of Christ, and by means of which it is imputed to him. But faith is the gift of God, wrought in the heart of the sinner through the power of the Holy Spirit. All boasting is therefore forever excluded, since he that glories, must glory in the Lord.

As Christ trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, when he stood in the place of sinners, so will he never allow sinners to share with him in the glory of their salvation. He will not give that honor to another which is due to himself alone. Works, however excellent in their proper place, must never dare to enter into the holy of holies, where none but our Great High Priest can enter. "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Although the sinner is accounted righteous before God, through faith in the perfect righteousness of his dear Son, without his works or deserving, yet, faith, being the operation of the Holy Spirit, necessarily produces the fruits of holiness. Here, then, good works assume their proper place and office. Works, as well as faith, can claim no merit in the act of a sinner's justification before God; that being solely through the obedience of Christ; yet do they adorn our Christian profession, prove the reality of our faith, manifest its divine origin, evidence our being in a state of grace, glorify God in the sight of men, silence the aspersions of self-righteous opposers to the truth, and make us fit for the enjoyment and service of God in heaven.

Blessed Jesus! may I ever view you in this delightful character as- the Lord My Righteousness; then shall I stand with boldness in that day when all your enemies shall be covered with confusion. While I look to you as my only justifying righteousness, O grant that my faith may never cease to work by love. Let every day be employed in your service, that my hope, through faith in your blood, may be unclouded.

"Faith, which works by love," is the concise, but comprehensive declaration of Paul, when describing the nature of saving faith by its attendant love. No words can add to its preciousness. We may dwell upon it, and endeavor to amplify it by human reasoning, just as a small piece of gold

when beaten, may be made to cover a wider surface, but we too often destroy its strength and beauty. "The word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Faith in Jesus Christ begets love in the soul; the love of God shed abroad in the heart produces good works; and by works is faith made perfect. Thus the graces of the Spirit, like a chain whose links embrace and strengthen each other, are beautifully combined in the formation of the Christian character. The following passages, so descriptive of the experience of the true believer, show the beauty of Christian graces, and afford the richest matter for devout meditation. Oh! that we may read our characters in these precious lines—

"God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them. God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs." Matthew 5:3-10

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Romans 5:3-5

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

"And now, dear friends, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Php 4:8

"Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Colossians 3:12-13

"So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop these virtues are

blind or, at least, very shortsighted. They have already forgotten that God has cleansed them from their old life of sin. So, dear friends, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away. And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:5-11

"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

O! what a happy world would this be, did all, who profess and call themselves Christians, live under the happy influence of these gospel precepts. Then men would beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more, when the knowledge of the Lord, thus manifested by its fruits, should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

There is a faith which God abhors; "The devils believe, and tremble." But, Satan cannot love. "Simon himself believed;" but Peter said to him, "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." There is a faith which God approves- "the faith of God's elect," which is according to godliness; a faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and works by love. This loving faith was displayed in all its subduing power, when Jesus dined at the house of Simon the Pharisee. While a brokenhearted penitent was manifesting by her actions her love to the Savior, then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." The men at the table said among themselves, "Who does this man think he is, going around forgiving sins?" And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:44-50

Many are superstitiously attached to outward ceremonies; many, also, are as violently opposed to them. Both may be equally destitute of that faith which works by love. If bitter envyings and strife tear their bosoms, and disfigure their profession; if anathemas are hurled against each other, with all the fury of the Roman Vatican; is this, I would ask, the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus? Is this the spirit which he imparts to his followers? Is this the faith which leads to heaven?

In a spirit of love we must declare to the blinded formalist, that Christ will not accept of the form, for the power of godliness, nor the bending of the knee for the prostration of the heart. Religion without love is a mere shadow; yes, a fatal delusion. It is a road of Satan's making; and many, alas! are walking in it. Man is naturally legal. The sinner labors to save himself. No privations are too great to be endured; no mortifications too painful to be suffered, if only the tormented conscience can find rest. But, the severer the penance, the severer is the sting. Peace flies from the wretched soul which seeks for reconciliation with God, by the endurance of self-inflicted austerities. Never can rest be found until the awakened sinner casts himself without reserve on the crucified Redeemer, looking for pardon only through the merit of his blood. Then ceremonies, when used, will be used only as a means to an end. He will not rest in them, as though they

possessed some saving virtue to be obtained by the mere observance of them. Or, if he worships God by some simpler form, he will not ascribe any merit to himself, by adopting what he supposes to be a purer mode of worship, knowing that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," but "the keeping of the commandments of God."

The garment of Christ was a seamless vest, emblematical of what his church should be. But alas! in every age it has been rent by schisms and divisions. Paul deeply lamented over this evil in the Corinthian church; "Is Christ divided?" "You are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men?" In this our day, the same rending of the Church proves the carnality of our hearts, and manifests the absence of that faith which works by love. Oh! when will Christians love as brethren! Tares alas cover the gospel field! We know what enemy has done this.

Blessed Jesus, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of prevailing errors, in the midst of schisms and divisions, heart-burnings and angry contentions, enable me to embrace your truth as revealed in your word; to worship you in spirit and in truth; to walk in truth, and to follow You with a single eye, who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. While drawing near to you in the great congregation, may my affections be spiritualized, that I may ever escape the sin of those who draw near to you with their lips, while their hearts are far from you, and who, having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof. Preserve me from the extremes of contending religionists. Keep me in the path of your commandments. Increase in me more and more that faith which works by love, and which assimilates my soul to You—

How blessed is the saint who can trust in the Lord,
Whose heart and whose hope can repose on his word;
Though tempests and storms shall his vessel assail,
His peace is secure, and his joys never fail.
His house is well founded, 'tis built on a Rock,
Though mountains may fall, he can stand the rude shock;
Midst burnings and wastings of earth and of sky,
He lifts up his head, for his Savior is nigh.
Can riches, can honor, can pleasures afford
Such joy, and such peace, as our merciful Lord
Vouchsafes to his people, and now will impart,
To all who approach him with faith in the heart?
How bless'd is the man, who, redeemed from sin,
Has Christ in the soul, and the witness within;
His walk will be steady, through faith in the word,

His heart will be steadfast, through trust in the Lord.
Thus keep me, bless'd Savior- whate'er may betide,
Your presence can cheer, and your Spirit can guide;
And when life is o'er, and its sorrows are fled,
Unite me to You, as my glorified Head.

17. WALKING WITH GOD

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"Enoch walked with God." Genesis 5:22

The word of God, unlike any other book, has this remarkable feature- that materials for a volume are often compressed in a few words; "God is love." Here is matter for eternal contemplation. All the understandings of men- all the capacities of angels will never exhaust the inexhaustible fullness of this short sentence.

"Enoch walked with God," expresses in its condensed form the principles and practice, the privileges and perseverance, of the true believer. These few words may be expanded, until volumes are written to display in all its loveliness the character so concisely exhibited by the apostle. "It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—suddenly he disappeared because God took him. But before he was taken up, he was approved as pleasing to God. So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."

Enoch possessed a principle of faith. He believed in the great sustaining promise of the patriarchal age- in the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. "He pleased God;" but without faith it is impossible to please him, therefore Enoch was a believer. He was justified by faith, and by works was his faith made perfect. His practice condemned the world; so also did his prophecy. For, says Jude— "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men (of the apostates in the latter days): "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Paul declared the same truth— "And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power when he comes to receive glory and praise from his holy people. And you will be among those praising him on that day, for you believed what we testified about him."

John saw in vision the same overwhelming judgment; "Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war. His eyes were bright like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him, and only he knew what it meant. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword, and with it he struck down the nations. He ruled them with an iron rod, and he trod the winepress of the fierce wrath of almighty God. On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords." "Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and

all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

Thus, in every age, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. "Enoch walked WITH GOD." He enjoyed the privilege of adoption. He could call God, Father. He lived in a state of communion with the God of his salvation. But how can two walk together except they be agreed? Enoch pleased God, and was made happy in His love. He was in a state of reconciliation through faith in the promised seed; for all who lived before the advent of Christ were delivered from the curse through faith in the Savior to be revealed- Jesus Christ, the Righteous- the same yesterday, today, and forever. Oh! how great are the privileges of the saints!

"Enoch WALKED with God." This implies PROGRESSION. He persevered in the ways of holiness. He did not grow weary in well-doing. He was not offended with revealed truths, like those who walked no more with Jesus when he declared himself to be the food of their souls. He endured unto the end; and God took him, by an immediate translation, from earth to the Paradise above.

How wonderful are the ways of God, and yet how gracious! Each period of time, Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian, was blessed by the manifestation of the divine goodness. Adam was driven out of Paradise. By his transgression, heaven was barred against him; but Mercy, in the person of the Eternal Son, opened the gates of heaven to all believers. To animate the hopes of the redeemed, and to assure them of another and a better world, Enoch was translated during the Patriarchal age; Elijah during the dispensation of Moses; and the blessed Redeemer, when he had finished his work of love, ascended up on high- thus manifesting his victory over death, and entering as our forerunner into the kingdom of glory.

Do not be deceived, Oh! my soul, by false appearances. It is one thing to profess the Gospel of grace, and another thing to possess the grace of the Gospel. It is not the noisy talker about Jesus, but the humble walker with Jesus, who is the beloved of the Lord. The heart of Paul was deeply wounded by hollow professors of the truth. "Dear friends, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. Their future is eternal destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and all they think about is this life here on earth." "For there are many who rebel against right teaching; they engage in useless talk and deceive people. This is especially true of those who insist on circumcision for salvation. They must be silenced. By their wrong teaching, they have already turned whole families away from the truth. Such teachers only want your money."

The gifts of eloquence and learning may raise a man in the estimation of the world, even though he is destitute of the Spirit of Christ. The humble, but despised Christian, adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great value, will be owned by the Searcher of hearts, while the pompous professor is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. He that says he abides in Christ ought himself also so to walk even as he walked. Are these things so? Then, O my soul, unfold the sacred volume, and examine which is the way to heaven, and how you must walk therein. Jesus is the way- the only way, to Heaven. Hear his own blessed words; "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man comes unto the Father but by me."

Gracious Savior! I bless you, I praise you for this soul-invigorating declaration. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven, and You are that Way. Oh! that I may never leave this true, this living, this consecrated way, on which the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and Saints, have journeyed to the celestial Canaan. But how may I be assured that I am walking on this sacred road; that I am in the way to everlasting glory? You have said; "Search the Scriptures; for in them you think have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

O, blessed Jesus, open my understanding, that I may understand the Scriptures. Show me Yourself in all the fullness of your power- in all the freeness of your love. Guide me by your Spirit, for it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. Study, O my soul, the records of eternal life. There you will discover, through the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, whether you are a pilgrim on the road to Zion. In that precious Book you are informed how you are not to walk, if a believer in Jesus—

Walk not after the flesh.

Walk not after the course of this world.

Walk not in darkness.

Walk not by sight.

Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.

These important passages stand as beacons, to guard you against the threatened danger. Whatever your profession may be, if you are walking in any of these downward ways, you are going, with hasty steps, to the torments of hell!

Lord! you have said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Fulfill this gracious promise to your servant, who is now seeking to walk in the light of your countenance, and by the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Cause me to walk in your statutes faithfully unto the end. Renew my strength that I may run and not be weary, and walk and not faint; yes, that I may mount with wings like an eagle, until I reach your abode of glory.

Search the Scriptures again, O my soul, and learn from these oracles of truth, how you are to walk as a believer, and how you may be assured that you are a believer, if your walk be correspondent to these sacred marks—

Walk with God.

Walk after the Spirit.

Walk in Christ.

Walk by faith.

Walk in love.

Walk in truth.

Walk in wisdom toward those who are without.

Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

Walk in the light.

Walk as a child of light.

Walk in the fear of the Lord.

Walk worthy the vocation with which you are called.

Walk in newness of life.

Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

Walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory.

Walk as Christ walked.

Thus must you walk, if you will be a disciple of Jesus— a child of God— a temple of the Holy Spirit. And if, through grace, you thus walk and endure unto the end, hear what the Lord says for your unspeakable comfort. "You shall walk with me in white." "You shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your head; you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Blessed Emmanuel! you know that I desire to walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, but to walk with my whole heart "in the way of your laws, and in obedience to your commandments," to walk by faith in your blood and righteousness, to the honor and glory of your holy name. Like Enoch and Noah may I walk with you. Like Abraham may I walk before you with a perfect heart. Like David may I set the Lord always before me.

Oh! allow me not to walk in the vain imagination of my heart; but in mercy teach me the good way wherein I should go. Then when I walk in the midst of trouble you will revive me; yes, when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for you will be with me, your rod and your staff they shall comfort me. O God, who declares your Almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity; mercifully grant unto me such a measure of your grace, that, running in the path of your commandments, I may obtain your gracious promises, and be made a partaker of your heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Oh! that like Enoch I may walk

With God in fellowship divine,

Enjoy the witness of his love,

And in his blessed image shine.

When you shall call me hence away,

I then shall prove the promise true;

While hastening to the eternal world,

Your glory, Lord, bursts on my view.

Like Abraham may I talk with You,
As friends converse who dearly love,
And taste the comforts of your grace,
'Till I shall reach the world above.
As blessed Elijah, strong in faith,
Was borne aloft on wings of fire,
So may my heart on You be fixed,
Ascending on intense desire.
O may I walk with You in love,
And live, as ever in your sight,
Until far removed from sin and woe,
I walk with You arrayed in white.

18. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE BELIEVER

18. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE BELIEVER

"All things are yours." 1 Corinthians 3:21

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."
John 14:16

How inconceivably great is the goodness of God to his believing people! In his holy word, he assures them, that through his over-ruling Providence, all things shall work together for their good; that he loves them with an everlasting love; that they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; precious to him as the signet-ring on his right hand; that he will be to them as a little sanctuary in all countries where they shall come; that he will never leave them nor forsake them. He denounces a woe on all who offend them, and pronounces a blessing on all who give them only a cup of cold water for his name's sake.

Oh! how great is the goodness of the Lord, which he has laid up for those who fear him, which he has wrought for those who trust in him, before the sons of men! All the promises of the New Covenant are primarily made to Christ, who merited every blessing by his obedience unto death; and they are secondarily made to every believer in Him, who, standing complete in his righteousness, becomes savingly interested in all the promises of God, both as respects this world and that which is to come. Amazing privilege!

Every believer in Jesus is an HEIR OF GOD through Christ! He inherits Him as his portion, in whom he lives and moves and has his being; by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist. He inherits Him, who fills heaven and earth with His glory; who is the Fountain of all felicity; in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore!

O! my soul, never can you thirst enough after this exalted privilege. In yourself, you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; in Christ, you are happy, and honorable, and rich, and glorious! In yourself, you have nothing but sin and misery; in Christ, you are clothed with the garment of salvation; renewed in the spirit of your mind; and filled with peace and joy. In yourself, you are an heir of hell; in Christ, O wonderful thought! you are an HEIR OF GOD. How bright, how dazzling, how surpassing the splendor of the mid-day sun, is this inconceivably great and glorious privilege to be an heir of God!

Give me, O Lord, the steady eye of faith, that as the eagle soars aloft, fixing its eye upon the sun, so I may rise in heart and affection above this lower world, looking unto Jesus the Sun of Righteousness. By faith, enable me to substantiate the things hoped for, and to realize the things not seen. By faith, may I daily anticipate that glorious period, when, aroused by the Archangel's trumpet, my sleeping dust will leave its bed of clay, and with my enraptured soul, be made a blessed vessel in your courts above, there to be filled with your everlasting love!

"All things are yours." Well might Paul say, "God is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us.... That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Well might he say- "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." A heart penetrated with a sense of the love of God, will be overwhelmed at the view of such amazing mercy. What mind can conceive the fullness of this assurance; "All things are yours." On what is this expansive declaration founded? "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Oh! then, my soul, rejoice if grace has united you to the Savior. To every believer, to all the churches of the saints in every age, the Apostle writes; "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

When Jesus was drawing near to the time when he would go to the Father, he promised to his sorrowing disciples another Comforter. As heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, they were not left comfortless. The bodily absence of Christ was to be more than compensated by his spiritual presence. "If any man loves me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "If I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." "He dwells with you, and shall be in you." "When the Comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me."

Oh! my soul! have you received this heavenly Visitant? Important enquiry! since without the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. Contemplate the various operations of the Eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Examine with minutest scrutiny, whether any of these operations have been wrought in you, thereby proving that you are indeed united to Christ, according to the Apostle "He who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit;" and may the Lord assist you in this important search.

It is the work of the Spirit to convince the world of SIN; to open the eyes of the understanding, that we may see our pollution, wretchedness, and danger; to apply the Law to our consciences, and from a deep conviction of our innumerable transgressions against it, to fill our souls with anguish; to drive us to self-despair, destroying all our towering hopes of gaining heaven by our own deservings; bringing us to the borders of eternal ruin, and there, in the view of everlasting torments, forcing us to cry out with heartfelt exclamation; "What must I do to be saved? how shall I escape the damnation of hell?"

Have you ever experienced these powerful convictions of the Spirit? Have you seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Are you made deeply sensible of your great depravity, of your amazing distance from that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Have you been deeply humbled at the view of yourself as a fallen, guilty, polluted creature? And has this view humbled you in the dust before God? Has it filled you with true contrition? Has it emptied you of all self-dependence? Has it, in the spirit of true repentance and humiliation, made you cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

It is the work of the Spirit to reveal the LORD JESUS CHRIST to every contrite sinner, as an all-sufficient Savior, willing, and able, and ready to save all that come unto him, be they ever so vile and worthless. Jesus graciously said— When the Spirit of truth has come, he shall testify of me.

He shall glorify me. He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me. Thus the Spirit applies the reviving cordial of the Gospel to every sin-sick soul. He manifests to every trembling sinner the freeness of Christ's love, the fullness of his salvation, the greatness of his power, the riches of his grace, the efficacy of his righteousness, the preciousness of his blood, the prevalency of his intercession, and to crown all, his willingness to save, even to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.

He kindles a flame of love in the sinner's heart; moves him to pray to God for pardon through the merits of His Son; inclines him to seek earnestly for a saving interest in this precious Savior; enables him to lay hold on Christ by faith; and transforms him from a rebel, into a humble, loving believer in the Lord Jesus. Thus the Spirit glorifies Christ, by applying the blessings of his salvation to the hearts of sinners, drawing them out of the fatal bondage of corruption, delivering them from the power of darkness, and Making them heirs of glory through faith.

Have I been thus brought to Jesus through the sweet constraining influence of the Spirit of grace? Have I had this view of Jesus as One mighty to save? And believing in him, have I experienced his saving power in my soul, inspiring me with humble boldness to draw near to the mercy-seat? Have I pleaded before God the all-prevailing merits of his dear Son; and have I felt a joy springing up in my heart from a sense of blood-bought pardon? Do I feel the terrors of the Law supplanted by the consolations of the Gospel? Are all my hopes of happiness and heaven derived from the death and sufferings of Christ, and Christ alone?

It is the work of the Spirit to guide believers into all truth; to renew their natures, to sanctify their hearts, to illuminate their minds, to rectify their wills, to purify their affections, to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of holiness. Through his transforming power, the church is all glorious within, a temple prepared for the residence of the God of heaven.

Oh! how great are the privileges of the saints. They are as a royal diadem in the hand of their God. Well might angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Have I been led by the Spirit into the truth as it is in Jesus? Have I experienced a change of heart? Is it now my chief delight to live by faith upon the Son of God, to meditate upon his work of redemption, and to show my love by a prompt, cheerful, unreserved obedience to all his commandments? Is holiness the element in which I move? Is sin odious in my eyes, and hateful to my heart? Am I daily seeking for a more entire deliverance from its power? Do I find the great work of sanctification progressively advancing in my soul? Have old things passed away; are all things become new?

It is the work of the Spirit to ANIMATE, COMFORT, AND STRENGTHEN the faithful in Christ Jesus. Hence he is styled the COMFORTER; the Spirit of consolation, a quickening Spirit. By his gracious influences he sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of believers; fills them, at times, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and gives them a peace that passes understanding. He supports them under the severest trials; enables them to rejoice under the greatest tortures; preserves them from the power of evil; guards them from the attacks of Satan; upholds them on their journey through the wilderness, and brings them triumphant to the heavenly Canaan.

Have you, O my soul, experienced these delightful influences of the Spirit of grace, the Comforter? When the enemy comes in like a flood, do you experience this precious promise- "The Spirit of the

Lord shall lift up a standard against him?" Under the various crosses and trials of life, what have been your consolations? Have they been all drawn from the Fountain of living Waters, flowing in a sacred stream of peace and joy? Are the fruits of the Spirit exhibited in all their loveliness in your daily walk? With the Apostle can you say; "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all my tribulation?"

The Spirit of Christ is the seal of our adoption, the pledge of future glory. As all who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ, do not belong to Christ. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they alone are the sons of God. Believers, who are the temples of the Holy Spirit, are commanded to cherish his godly motions, to abstain from all appearance of evil, lest, by too near an approach to sin, they be drawn aside by its influence from the path of duty, and so grieve the Spirit of God. They are exhorted to beware of willful transgression lest they quench the holy flame, and thus provoke the Spirit to depart from them, for God has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

Am I sealed with this glorious seal of heaven? Is the image of Jesus impressed upon my soul by the Spirit of holiness? Have I received this divine pledge of the heavenly inheritance? Is the private seal of my adoption into the family of God made manifest by the broad and public seal of my sanctification? Am I afraid of offending, grieving, and quenching the Spirit of my beloved Savior? Do I cherish the godly motions, and pray without ceasing to be more faithful to the outward calls and inward convictions of the Holy Spirit?

Lord, you know all things, you know how I desire to be yours. Impart to me this blessed Spirit, without whom all profession is hypocrisy. May I never separate the precept from the promise, nor the character from the privileges of your people. You have declared, "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Descend, blessed Spirit, into my longing soul. Take up your abode within me. Convince me of sin. Show me my true character. Lead me to Jesus Christ. Work in me faith and love and every grace. Destroy the power of evil in my soul. Infuse all good desires. Bring them to good effect. Be my guardian and guide; my support through life; my consolation in death; my everlasting portion in heaven. Oh! shine with beams of love on my soul, until I am made, through sovereign grace, to shine as the sun in the kingdom of my Father.

My soul enjoys a sweet repose,
Beneath the Savior's sheltering grace;
A solace for its direst woes,
Amid the beamings of his face.
Detached from earth's deceitful joys,
Allured by His attractive love,
I seek a world which never cloys,
A world of light and bliss above.

Instruct your servant, gracious Lord,
Your easy yoke with joy to bear;
Enlightened by your faithful word,
To shun each error's fatal snare.
Oh! may I close each passing day,
With humble love, with holy fear;
Enjoy your presence on the way,
And ever find your succour near.
By faith, it is, that I am thine,
Powerful Savior, faithful Guide;
Oh! stoop upon your work to shine,
And never let my footsteps slide.
Come, Lord, with your Almighty grace,
Confirm my faith, my strength renew.
Until I shall win the heavenly race,
And gain the glorious prize in view.
Yes! Lord, your goodness, and your love,
Already hears and answers prayer
The Light descending from above,
My soul with holy comforts cheer.
How rich the favor- how divine,
Jesus is mine, and I am his;
All glory be forever thine,
You Fountain of eternal bliss.

19. THE SUPERIORITY OF GRACES TO GIFTS

19. THE SUPERIORITY OF GRACES TO GIFTS

"But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." 1 Corinthians 12:31

"Let love be your highest goal." 1 Corinthians 14:1

One man may have great gifts while destitute of saving grace. Another may have great grace, and yet possess few gifts. Which of the two is the most to be desired? The enlightened Christian who knows himself, and who has experienced the power of the Gospel, will not be long in determining. Supernatural gifts, such as "working of miracles," "speaking with tongues," "discerning of spirits," etc., which were bestowed upon some of the first Christians; and a special knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, an eloquence in conveying scriptural truths, and an aptitude to acquire languages which some Christians now possess, only tend to puff up and exalt the gifted individuals, if unaccompanied with the graces of humility, self-denial, and love. Hence gifts may be exercised by people who never will enjoy the glories of heaven.

The Scriptures are clear on this point. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied (or preached) in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity."

"When Jesus had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." Among this number was "Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed him." But what did our Lord say of Judas? "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" And what did Peter declare concerning him at the election of another apostle to fill his office? "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." And what place that was, we learn by implication from our blessed Lord. "For I, the Son of Man, must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for my betrayer. Far better for him if he had never been born!" These words would never have been uttered had Judas' own place been the place where the penitent thief on the cross was to meet Jesus; "Today shall you be with me in Paradise." Judas, like Lot's wife, stands as a monument of God's wrath, and as a warning against false profession.

Grace, however humble be its possessor, though a poor diseased Lazarus, will never be rejected. Grace is the sterling coin of the kingdom, bearing the image of the Sovereign King. When knowledge shall vanish away, when tongues shall cease, and miracles are no longer needed, grace will shine with increased splendor, for glory is but grace perfected. The grace of faith in Christ, love to his name, devotedness to God, activity in his service, self-denial, and spiritual-mindedness, will then receive the smiles of the Great Judge of the living and dead. Oh! that I may daily follow after love, without which all my doings are nothing worth.

Superior gifts make a man more known to the Christian world, and, by some, to be regarded as a kind of oracle. This distinction is highly gratifying to the natural heart; and the more gratifying it is to any one, the more dangerous it becomes to his soul, because spiritual pride is fostered, and self is exalted in the place of Jesus. The graces of the Spirit are of a more silent, unobtrusive nature; they tend to make a man low in his own eyes; they lead him into retirement and spiritual communion with God, and cause him to avoid rather than court the observation of mankind. From hence it is evident that all are not Israel who are of Israel, and that there is no necessary connection between gifts and graces.

The kingdom of God consists not of gifts and ceremonies, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is not the able talkers about religion who will be rewarded at the last day, but the humble walkers with Jesus. Many, who are now despised on account of their slender capacities and weak intellectual attainments, or regarded as half Christians, because they cannot win a debate against a witty infidel, or define some mysterious doctrine of Scripture; but whose lives are the most convincing arguments for the power and truth of the Gospel, whose hope is founded on Christ alone, who strenuously oppose all sin, and labor, through the Spirit, to perfect holiness in the fear of God, will receive the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord!"

While the gifted, but unsound professors of religion, will be frowned into hell. This, the Great Judge himself has declared; "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Truly I say unto you, I know you not." "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away." "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

It is very desirable to "covet earnestly the best gifts," to increase in wisdom and knowledge, to be able to speak acceptably to others about the things of God; but still, Peter places grace before knowledge; "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," for, adds Paul, "Knowledge puffs up, but love build up."

Lord, I humbly beseech you to give me grace to be faithful. Impart unto me this invaluable blessing experienced by the early Christians, when "great grace was on them all." May the grace of Christ dwell in my heart, destroying sin and the power thereof, and exciting me to childlike obedience to your will; may the light of Truth irradiate my path, and your Spirit guide me along the consecrated way, until I reach the heavenly world, where all is light, and life, and love forever.

"Follow after Love," -delightful exhortation; as if the Apostle had said- follow after happiness and glory; follow after that, which will form your blessedness in time and eternity. "God is love," and "every one that loves is born of God." Come, O my soul, and think upon redeeming love, until all your powers are lost in this ocean of grace, this infinity of mercy. What? did the Great Jehovah condescend to veil himself in human flesh to save rebellious worms from endless woe, and can I, for whom he lived, and bled, and died, feel no concern about my eternal state? no return to Him, of grateful and adoring praise? no hatred of those sins for which he suffered? no fear of hell? no longings after heaven?

Amazing hardness-dreadful insensibility! Lord, take away this heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, a heart susceptible of your mercies. Draw me with the cords of love, and bind my

wayward affections to your Cross. Give me a weanedness from the world, that while my hands are diligently employed in the way of duty, my heart may be set on things above. Impart unto me a spiritual mind, a constant relish for heavenly employments. Let me live in the spirit of this petition; "May your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Create in me a new and contrite heart; a heart deeply convinced of its own depravity, earnestly seeking for pardon of all sin, through the precious blood of Jesus, and daily growing in holiness through the Spirit of His Grace.

Lord, increase my faith, that being united to Christ, I may become a living branch in the true Vine, a member of his mystical body, a sheep of his pasture, a child of his family, a partaker of the divine nature, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Oh! how wonderful are the revelations of your love; how glorious are the privileges of your people. Lord increase my faith to lay hold on this hope set before me in the Gospel of your Son.

Give me, heavenly Father, I humbly beseech you, an earnest desire to do those things which you have commanded, to avoid whatever you have forbidden, and to obtain those blessings which you have promised to every true believer. Give me a single eye to your glory. May your glory be the end and aim of all my actions. Preserve me from all pride and vain-glory; and make me a little child in humility and simplicity, seeking your honor and glory above every other object in the world.

Fill my heart, O God, with gratitude, and my mouth with praise for all your mercy, grace, and love granted to one so vile and worthless. Oh! that I might every moment live for you, think on you, and speak for you; then would my heart be pure, and my conversation be always seasoned with grace, good to the use of edifying. Happy will that period be when all these obtrusive cares of life will have an end, and nothing will be found to interrupt the work of adoration through the ages of eternity. Come, blessed Spirit, prepare me for your abode of glory; wean my heart daily from this wicked world; impress the Savior's image on my soul, that when he shall appear, I may be like him, when I see him as he is.

20. THE BLESSEDNESS OF A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT,

20. THE BLESSEDNESS OF A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT, AND A GRATEFUL HEART

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6

No language can adequately express the condescension and forbearance of God towards his rebellious creatures; "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the Lord says: "The children I raised and cared for have turned against me. Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand." Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They are loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help." "The Lord Almighty says to the priests: 'A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. I am your father and master, but where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have despised my name!'" "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord." "Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." "If you will return, O Israel, says the Lord, return unto me."

The Almighty addresses us in the character of a tender Father, but of a father, slighted and disobeyed. What parent, who has experienced the ingratitude and disobedience of his children, piercing his heart with grief, can read, unmoved, these pathetic appeals? But, while his own soul has been bowed down with sorrow by the conduct of his children, has he not been acting a similar part towards his heavenly Father? And may not the very trials which afflict him, be sent in judgment for his own rebellions against the Father of mercies? How often do we read our sin in our punishment.

Who, then, can fully estimate the blessedness of a childlike spirit? See a family, where the children honor and obey their parents, and where the parents love and watch over their children, and there you behold a lovely oasis, a green spot in this desert world. In such a family, where God is worshiped in spirit and in truth, where love, like a golden belt, binds each heart to the other, you have a little heaven upon earth. But look into a household, where the children resist the authority of the father, and despise the admonitions of the mother; where the brothers and sisters quarrel with each other, and kindle a daily fire of discord- and there, you have a picture of that place where each, hating the other, shall be miserable forever.

The world is ready to stamp with baseness an act of ingratitude towards an earthly benefactor, who may have shown us some occasional favor, or afforded us some seasonable relief; but, it passes over, as a venial fault, our forgetfulness of God. This is bad; but surely it is worse when those who make a profession of religion act as the world does. "My people have forgotten me days without number." "They have forgotten the Lord their God." "They have forgotten their resting-place."

The sin of ingratitude is unspeakably criminal when manifested towards the Almighty Father of mankind, by whom we were created, by whom we are preserved, and from whom we receive every blessing. Happy, indeed, are they who live in the spirit of adoption, and under the influence of grateful love. Blessed Lord, be pleased to give me a thankful heart to taste your gifts with joy. Enable me to trace every mercy to its proper source, even to your Covenant Love in Christ Jesus; to see your hand in all the changing events of life; and to acknowledge your goodness in the bestowment of my daily comforts. But above all, O eternal God, pour into my heart the spirit of praise and adoration for your unfathomable love in the redemption of the world.

Never can I sufficiently extol the grace of God the Father, in devising such a glorious plan of salvation as that revealed in the Gospel; for giving his Son, his Well-beloved, to sufferings, and to death! Oh! the length and breadth, the depth and height of this love, which passes knowledge!

Who can find words to magnify the grace of God the Son, in so freely leaving the bosom of his Father, descending from the heights of glory to the lowest depths of human misery, taking upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, fulfilling all righteousness for ruined sinners, dying the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, and ascending up on high as the ever-glorified God-Man, there to appear in the presence of God for us, to intercede for us with the Father, and to perfect, by his living care, what his dying love began!

Where shall we begin our praises to God the Holy Spirit, by whom we are enabled to believe in Jesus, to love Jesus, and to bear his holy image; by whose quickening power we are raised from a death in sin to a life of righteousness; by whose almighty aid we are enabled to contend against our spiritual foes; and by whose refreshing, enlivening, comforting, and sanctifying grace, we are supported and animated under all our trials, and made to rejoice in hope of the glory of God?

These mercies, O my soul, demand your loudest praise, for, like their Author, they are immutable and eternal; "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." "Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall never be confounded world without end." "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Well might Jeremiah say, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

Are we groaning under a deep conviction of our wretchedness; and do we see ourselves to be nothing but sin and pollution? Let us praise God, who has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, even the precious blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin.

Are we hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Let us bless God for this spiritual appetite, remembering that in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; that Jesus is the bread of life; that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and that we are invited to receive out of his fullness and grace for grace.

Are we lamenting our spiritual nakedness, and afraid to appear before God? Let us rejoice that God has provided a garment for us, even the goodly clothing of our Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose righteousness the Church is clothed, and by whose graces she is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Are we laboring under inward corruptions and indwelling sin? Let us praise God for those rich promises of his word, which tell us that his grace is sufficient for us; that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear; that if we draw near to God, he will draw near to us; that if we seek him, he will be found by us; that sin shall not have dominion over us; that he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly; and that he will make us more than conquerors through Him who has loved us, and given Himself for us.

O my soul, bless the Lord for these abounding mercies. Cease not to praise his holy name. Let every day, as it increases your obligations, stimulate your gratitude and love. But yet remember, that mere verbal religion is unavailing in the sight of Him who demands the heart. Lord give me grace to glorify you in my body and in my spirit which are yours; that, while I offer unto you the sacrifice of praise continually, I may not forget "to do good, and to give," since with such sacrifices you are well pleased, when presented to you on that altar which alone sanctifies the gift- the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not forget, O my soul, "to do good." Compassionate precept, little understood, and less practiced. The worldly professor of religion may perform many benevolent actions; so also do those who deny the Divinity of Christ; but a work, though beneficial to others, will be unacceptable to God, if done without regard to his will and his glory. The afflicted may be bountifully relieved, even by an infidel or an atheist, acting on the mere impulse of natural sympathy; but, can such an act be acceptable to God? Surely not. How strong is the language of the Almighty to the rebellious house of Israel; "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burned offerings, I will not accept them."

How gracious are the words of Christ to those who do good for his name's sake; "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." But, to those who give alms from ostentation or self-righteousness, no blessing is imparted; "When you give a gift to someone in need, don't shout about it as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I assure you, they have received all the reward they will ever get." "All their works they do for to be seen of men." The quantity cannot supersede the quality of our actions, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profits me nothing."

A work, to be really and scripturally good, must proceed from a right principle, be done by a right rule, and be directed to a right end. The ROOT of all acceptable obedience is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we can do nothing pleasing unto God; but by virtue of our union with him through faith, we receive grace from above, and are made fruitful in every good work. The RULE by which our actions are to be regulated is, not the traditions of men, but the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, which alone are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Jesus Christ. The END to which all our doings must be directed, is the glory of God, and the present and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures.

We must seek in all things to promote the honor and praise of Him who has called us with a holy calling, by employing our talents in his service, laying out ourselves for usefulness, relieving the needy, and comforting the disconsolate, strengthening the weak, and confirming the strong, admonishing the wavering, and reproving the profane in a spirit of Christian meekness and love, that the kingdom of the Redeemer may be extended, through the divine blessing on our labors, by

the suppression of vice, and the promotion of true religion and virtue.

"Lord of all power and might, the Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How blessed is he who warmly feels

The witness of a Savior's love;

To whom the Spirit, Christ, reveals,

And draws his heart to joys above.

With child-like love, and holy fear,

He lowly bends before the throne;

He views his Heavenly Father near,

And pleads the merit of his Son.

In grateful strains, he pours his heart

To Him who died his soul to save;

He knows that he will ne'er depart,

Nor leave him in the silent grave.

By faith he views Redemption's hour,

When Christ, descending from above,

Shall raise him by his mighty power,

And fill his soul with endless love.

Oh! may this blessedness be mine

This child-like spirit now be given;

Then shall the praise be ever thine,

My Savior in the highest heaven.

21. THE HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN GRACES

21. THE HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN GRACES

"I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Jeremiah 32:39

When we contemplate the Church of God as described in the Holy Scriptures, we must be struck with that unity of principle, and that union of heart, which form its beauty and stability. Our Lord thus intercedes for his believing people; "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me." This unity was beautifully exhibited by the church at Jerusalem; "They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved."

The apostolic exhortation enforces this oneness of faith and practice which would unite the Church of Christ, and make it a holy phalanx, against which the gates of hell could not prevail. "Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace. We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all."

This lovely feature of the Christian Church was soon disfigured. Paul had to mourn over, and admonish many, whose minds were corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ- "And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things that are contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people." "Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your arguments, dear friends." "For you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord. When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I prefer Apollos," aren't you acting like those who are not Christians?"

Thus rapidly did tares spring up among the wheat. Happy would it have been for the Church of Christ if this work of the enemy had been confined to the primitive age; but alas! every age has

exhibited his work of destruction. As union is strength, so the arch-enemy well knows, that disunion is weakness.

How glorious will that period be when the universal Church shall experience the fullness of the promise, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me."

The graces of the Spirit harmonize and combine together. Like the links of a chain they mutually encircle and strengthen each other. How different are the vices of the human heart. They are, for the most part, discordant. Yet, while they appear to run in opposite directions, and in many cases to oppose each other, they all meet in one point- the destruction of the soul. What can be more opposed, in appearance at least, than the miser and the spendthrift, the libertine and the formalist, the man whose heart is full of the cares of life, rising early, and late taking rest that he may amass a fortune, and the man of pleasure who says to his soul- "Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Yet, these different vices all conspire the eternal ruin of the soul, and often reign, at different seasons, in the same breast. The libertine in youth often becomes covetous in old age; and the profane character, when wearied with licentious courses, sometimes assumes that of a religious devotee, hoping to atone for his past transgressions, and to merit a reward by a round of formal duties.

How desperately wicked is the human heart. Sin blinds the understanding and perverts the judgment. Men appear to be wise in every thing but religion. Here, they discover themselves to be very fools, and would be ashamed to act in temporal, as they do in spiritual things. What a convincing proof is this of the truth of Scripture, which declares, that the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Oh! my soul, renounce your own imagined wisdom, righteousness, and strength, which in the sight of God is foolishness, guilt, and helplessness. Pray for grace to know yourself, and to receive the truths of the gospel with the humility and simplicity of a child.

That delightful harmony which exists between the various graces of the Spirit is beautifully set forth in the word of God. Blessed is that soul in which the graces of faith, hope, and love; meekness, humility, and patience; self-denial, long-suffering, and resignation, dwell and flourish. Lord create my heart anew, and make it your dwelling-place.

It is important to consider every precept in the Bible, as forming a part of the Christian character. The true believer in Jesus is not presented to us in one entire figure, in any portion of the Holy Scriptures, but the lineaments of it may be traced throughout the sacred volume, as drawn by the pencil of Eternal Truth.

Thus, "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word." Contrition and poverty of spirit form a part of the believer's character.

"Always be zealous for the fear of the Lord." The fear of God is another part of this holy character.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." Love to God is also an essential part of it.

And so with every promise to which peculiar dispositions are attached. The blessings promised to the poor in spirit; to those who mourn; to the meek; to those who hunger and thirst after

righteousness; to the merciful; to the pure in heart; to the peacemakers; to them who suffer for righteousness' sake, are so many blessings promised to those who have the character of a child of God. The Bible, when read with this view of discovering the full length portrait of the real Christian, affords abundant matter for daily self-examination; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." "If you love me, keep my commandments." "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." Thus, self-denial, watchfulness, a prayerful spirit, obedience, and brotherly love, form so many component parts of the Christian character.

Oh! blessed Spirit of truth and love draw these sacred lines upon my soul, that I may become more and more like Jesus, in the whole frame and disposition of my heart. Fill me with every gracious affection. Subdue every evil, selfish principle and passion, and cause me to grow and abound in all the fruits of righteousness. Lord, renew my soul, and make me a monument of your grace.

Who can study the Bible with prayer to understand it aright, and not be convinced that all true religion is seated in the heart? Truly to love the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the essence of Gospel holiness, and the perfection of the Christian character. If I love the Savior in sincerity, my will must be molded into his, and all my powers become subservient to his glory. The influence of this divine principle will operate on every thought, word, and action. When it does not so operate, it is because this principle has grown weaker, or is opposed by some strongly counteracting evil in my heart. This evil is unbelief, pride, the lust of the flesh, and the love of the world. As this evil predominates, so is the man.

If it reigns in his heart, he is carnal, and under the wrath of God; if it only rebels, and is not allowed to rule, it marks a character renewed by the Spirit of Grace, struggling with those remnants of corruption which will never cease to harass the believer until death ends the warfare, and place the victorious Christian

"Where sin and flesh no more control

The sacred pleasures of the soul."

But, the very circumstance of this evil still dwelling within us, calls forth the graces of watchfulness and prayer. There is no period in the Christian life when watchfulness and prayer become unnecessary. Where can a passage be found, from Genesis to the Revelation, which countenances relaxation in duty, or a freedom from the exercise of vigilance and circumspection? The Bible, on the contrary, is full of exhortations, admonitions, and warnings; declaring that he only who endures unto the end shall be saved; that if any man looks back, God will have no pleasure in him; that he that overcomes shall inherit all things; and that to him who is faithful unto death, Christ will give the crown of life.

How sweet is a life of faith. Oh! that I could live such a life. It brings along with it holiness and happiness. God, who is the Author of it, is glorified by it, and the good of mankind in general is eminently promoted. A true believer in Jesus loves his Lord and Master; he esteems that day as lost which is not devoted to his service; he deems no sacrifice too great for him, who gave himself a sacrifice for sin; all his mental powers are exercised in the cause of his Redeemer, and when he hears of any good being done, through his feeble instrumentality, he rejoices, and gives God the

glory.

Lord enable me thus to feel, thus to act, and thus to live. Undertake for me, that, through your over-ruling Providence, I may become a humble instrument in your hands, of promoting the spread of genuine religion. Shed abroad your love in my heart. Reign the Sovereign of my affections. Make me vigilant and prayerful. Preserve me from unbelief and pride, sensuality and covetousness. Keep my feet in your paths, and bring me to the kingdom of your dear Son, there to employ my perfected powers in loving, serving, and adoring you through the blissful ages of eternity.

22. THE BLESSING OF PEACE

22. THE BLESSING OF PEACE

"Then said Jesus to them again; Peace be unto you." John 20:21

"Fools make a mock at sin." Possessed, it may be, of wealth and power, they glory in their shame, despise the godly, and dare even the vengeance of God. The loud laugh, the shafts of ridicule, the finger of scorn, are contemptuously directed against the humble Christian. The battery of infidelity is opened against his principles and hopes. He is held up as weak in intellect, superstitious in his fears, and unfit to be the associate of a man of substance. But it will not be always so.

The time will come when the arrows of the Almighty shall drink up their spirits; and when, awakened to a sense of their danger and of the blessedness of the believer, they shall exclaim, "We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor; how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness has not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction; yes, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it. What has pride profited us? or what good has riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow, and as a runner that hastens by; and as a ship that passes over the waves of the water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the pathway of the keel in the waves; or as when a bird has flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found, but the light air being beaten with the stroke of her wings, and parted with the noise and motion of them, is passed through, and therein afterwards no sign where she went is to be found; or like as when an arrow is shot at a mark, it parts the air which immediately comes together again, so that a man cannot know where it went through....The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest, and passes away as the remembrance of a guest that tarries but a day. But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand; for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them."

O! that every thoughtless sinner might thus be led to reflect on his own state, and on the blessedness of the despised Christian. In the midst of gaiety and dissipation, the sinner feels a thorn rankling in his bosom. The word of God has declared it, and it cannot be reversed; "There is no peace unto the wicked." "They are like the trouble sea, when it cannot rest." Satan is a hard master; his wages are present and future misery. The sensualist is a slave to his lusts. He is bound with fetters. Hurried on by his passions, he plunges from one sin into another, until, satiated with worn-out indulgences, enfeebled in body and mind, seared in his conscience, and hardened in heart, he dies, the wretched victim of his love of sin.

"What scenes of horror and of dread,
Await a sinner's dying bed!
Death's terrors all appear in sight,
Presages of eternal night.
His sins in dreadful order rise,
And fill his soul with sad surprise,
Mount Sinai's thunder stuns his ears,
And not one ray of hope appears.
Tormenting pangs distract his breast,
Wherever he turns he finds no rest,
Death strikes the blow- he groans, he cries,
And in despair and horror dies!
Not so the heir of heavenly bliss,
His soul is filled with conscious peace,
A steady faith subdues his fear,
He sees the heavenly Canaan near.
His mind is tranquil and serene,
No terrors in his looks are seen;
His Savior's smiles dispel the gloom,
And smooth his passage to the tomb."

Happy believer! who lives in the sunshine of heavenly love; who dies beneath the smiles of the Prince of Peace! To him, what is earth with all its vanities? Thorns and thistles may spring up around him, but they hurt him not. The cares and afflictions of life are sanctified to him, while he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Under every trial, the peace of God rules in his heart, and fortifies him against the attacks of Satan. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. Through the power of the Spirit he follows after peace with all men; and when called from this world of strife, he enters into peace, into that peaceful region, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

Peace is a precious gift. It is the fruit of the Spirit, the legacy of Christ to his people, the portion of God's children, the promised blessing to his Church. "All your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children." Paul styles the Almighty, the God of Peace. Under this endearing title the richest mercies are conveyed. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "May the God of peace sanctify you wholly." "May the God of peace make you

perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." No wonder, then, that the Apostle should close his Epistles with this holy desire, "May the God of peace be with you."

Our blessed Lord, in his gracious discourse with his disciples, spoke words of peace and love; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you." "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." How true, and yet how supporting to every real believer- "In the world you shall have tribulation" "In me you shall have peace."

Tribulation springs from many sources; the malice of wicked men, the assaults of wicked spirits, the corruption of our wicked hearts. Where is the Christian who has not to mourn over the sin that dwells in him? Who is not tempted by Satan? Who does not experience the hatred of the world? The more faithful we are to Christ, the more devoted we are to his cause, the more we exhibit his holy image by the holiness of our lives, and the more we shall suffer from the united attacks of men and devils. But oh! precious promise- "In me you shall have peace." Abiding In Christ by faith, enjoying the indwelling of his Spirit, and resting in our heavenly Father's love, we shall rise superior to every tribulation, like the Alpine traveler who ascends until he leaves the storm beneath his feet.

After his resurrection, Jesus was the same peace-bestowing Savior. When little expected, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared in the midst of his sorrowing disciples, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. The loving Redeemer said to them the second time, "Peace be unto you." And, as if to show them the abundance of his grace, he appeared again, after eight clays, and said, "Peace be unto you." Can we be insensible to such love as this? Oh! that every heart may be softened by the Savior's love. What can exceed the touching history of the resurrection, as given us by John, when the question is put, "Do you love me?" May all who read these searching words reply, with Peter's warmth and Peter's sincerity, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Blessed Jesus! enable me by faith to cleave to you in every trying hour. When the waves of affliction run high, and threaten to overwhelm my little vessel, may I, through grace, firmly confide in your power and love. Allow me not for a moment to doubt your goodness. You, O blessed Savior, can be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. You, my compassionate High-Priest, will plead my cause on high. Pour the balm of consolation into my soul. Strengthen me with faith in your promises, and in mercy overrule all the vicissitudes of life for my spiritual good. Enable me at all times to look unto you. Give me grace to perform the duties of today, and to leave with you, in faith, the events of tomorrow. Preserve me, O Lord, from all unreasonable cares and anxieties, knowing that without you not a sparrow falls to the ground.

"In me you shall have peace." Sweet declaration! Oh! that my heart were filled with your peace! Adorable Redeemer, take full possession of my soul, that I may be wholly, unreservedly, and forever yours. Make me a habitation for yourself. I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but, O, for your mercy's sake, dwell in my heart by faith, then shall I experience the joys of your salvation, and the unutterable blessings of peace and love; then shall I walk before you in newness of life, and be daily preparing for that new heaven and that new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Sweet is the peace which Christ bestows,
A peace the worldling never knows;
'Heart's-ease' grows on Emmanuel's ground,
Which only near the Cross is found.
Though great my trials, grief, and care,
My Savior will the burden bear;
His grace and promise never cease,
He kindly utters words of peace.
Let not your troubles make you fear,
Believe in me- I'm always near;
Though while on earth, you tried shall be,
Yet still, your peace is found in me.
Should waves dash over your fragile bark,
And all around be wild and dark,
My word can bid the tempest cease,
And all be calm- and all be peace.
Oh! precious words of love divine,
What rays of bliss around me shine;
My grateful song shall never cease,
Since Jesus calls Himself my Peace.

23. THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

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"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8

The work of conversion was never more wonderfully displayed than in Saul of Tarsus. The man who thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, and persecuting the followers of Christ, even unto death; boldly preached the faith which once he destroyed. From a proud Pharisee, he became, in his own eyes, less than the least of all saints; and from a reviler of the Gospel, and a despiser of the Gentiles, he was made a chosen vessel to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation before kings and rulers, and to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The heart of Paul was full of the loving-kindness of the Lord! Language seemed too weak to express his debt of gratitude, or to speak his Savior's praise. Enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, he saw in Jesus all that was gracious and glorious. Christ was the theme on which he loved to dwell. Christ crucified was his glory. In the midst of philosophers, he determined to know nothing but Christ crucified. In the synagogues of the Jews, he feared not to declare, the only foundation of the sinner's hope, the only name whereby one can be saved. Christ, crucified was the Alpha and Omega of his commission. He was sent, and he delighted in his mission, to preach both to Jews and Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

It would have been well for the Christian Church, if all her ministers, in every succeeding age, had drank into the spirit of the Apostle, and made Christ Crucified the great subject of their preaching. Take this Truth away, and the key-stone is removed from the arch. The Church, destitute of this foundation, is built upon the sand. In this Truth, all the prophecies and promises unite; and from this Truth, as from a center, all the consolations which gladden, and all the divine influences which purify the heart, proceed. The whole of Revelation, before the coming of Christ, was but an unfolding of the Covenant of grace. In the fullness of time Christ appeared as God manifest in the flesh. To him, who is the end of the Law for righteousness, gave all the prophets witness. He died upon the cross. He made an end of sin. He brought in everlasting righteousness. He glorified the Love, Justice, and Holiness of God, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

How unsearchable are the riches of Christ. How wonderful, how surpassing all human conception are the mysteries of grace. Oh! that I could feel my soul softened under the beams of mercy, which emanate from Eternal love, and shine with so mild a glory in the person of Jesus Christ.

"Stronger his love than death and hell,

Its riches are unspeakable;

The first born sons of light,

Desire in vain its depth to see;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height."

Nothing but sovereign grace and power can save me from sin and hell. When I look into my heart, what do I there behold? A den of wild beasts; a cage of unclean birds; a nest of vipers; a loathsome sepulcher. Pride turns from the view. Self-love sickens at the sight. Can I recover myself from this abject state. Alas! no! All ability to perform any thing that is good and acceptable to a holy God was lost in Adam, from whom I have derived a nature altogether sinful and corrupt. Power, indeed, I have to provoke my Creator, and to rebel against the sovereignty of God, but none to serve Him aright. What, then, can such a creature expect? Infinite justice demands my destruction to vindicate the holiness of God, whose law I have broken times without number. All excuses fail. In the bitterness of self-reproach I can only confess, that I have destroyed myself, that God is just, that I deserve to feel the heaviest stroke of his righteous indignation.

But, oh! my soul, contemplate the unsearchable riches of Christ, in extending a free unmerited pardon to you; yes, even to you; promising to blot out all your sins, if you will only believe in his word and trust in his grace. Lord, enable me to believe, to receive you by a loving faith; to live upon you day by day; yes, every fleeting moment, for strength to conquer inward corruptions, to subdue my enemies, and to perfect holiness in your fear. Put forth your power in my soul. Dispel the mist of ignorance and error. Dissipate the dark cloud of doubts and fears. Arm me with strength for the performance of every duty, however arduous, and with might to withstand my spiritual foes, however violent their opposition. And oh! divine Savior, complete the unsearchable riches of your grace in the consummation of all felicity, even an everlasting deliverance from the guilt and power of sin; an everlasting enjoyment of your glorious presence in heaven; an everlasting resemblance to all your moral perfections; an everlasting union to all the blessed saints and angels; an everlasting separation from sorrow, pain, and death. Oh! may these unsearchable riches be my present and future portion! May I know, and love, and serve you here, and then see you as you are, and love and serve you as I ought, in your kingdom of bliss and glory.

The unsearchable riches of Christ, which are the portion of every true believer, are neglected, forgotten, or despised by an unbelieving world. Pleasure, wealth, and power, form the world's trinity. Before these idols they bow down in adoration. All their thoughts, time, and talents are employed in their service. No sacrifice is deemed too great to obtain possession of these vanities. Thousands, who call themselves Christians, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, and who make a nominal profession of Christianity, worship these idols which Satan has set up. Everything to which we give the heart, becomes our idol. This was the sin of the Israelites of old- They set up their idols in their heart.

The low views which men in general have of the infinite Holiness of God, is the chief reason why they consider sin as a light thing, and seldom trouble themselves about it until death opens their eyes, and the terrors of hell get hold upon them. Too many, alas! even in their departing moments, feel no bands in their death; but die with the same unconcern in which they lived. The soul-destroying errors of Socinianism spring from this fatal source- inadequate views of the justice and Holiness of Jehovah, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The Holiness of God is one of his brightest attributes. Mercy may be withheld, as in the case of the fallen angels and impenitent sinners, "He did not take upon him the nature of angels." They are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Justice, also, may be satisfied, and sheath the sword of vengeance. Christ suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. But holiness cannot be dispensed with. This perfection of Deity is glorified both in the salvation of the believing penitent, and in the destruction of the wicked. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is the angelic note of praise- the adoring theme of the hierarchy of heaven.

At the Cross of Christ, Holiness shines forth in all its brightness; while love kindly raises the sinner from the lowest depths of wretchedness to the highest seat in glory. "Today shall you be with me in Paradise." Oh! my soul, stand still and behold the salvation of God. Pray without ceasing, that these unsearchable riches of Christ may extend even to you. Then shall you become a monument of redeeming grace, and mingle your everlasting praises with the ransomed hosts above.

Blessed Jesus! out of your fullness may I daily receive wisdom and strength. The riches of your grace are unsearchable, but not inaccessible. Never can I comprehend the height and depth of your redeeming love, yet every moment I can taste its sweetness, and feel its sustaining power. Oh! how vast are your designs, how glorious your purposes, as revealed in the covenant of grace. All is infinite. Your love is an everlasting love. Your covenant is an everlasting covenant. From everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Oh! that my heart may now commence the never ending song- "Worthy is the Lamb!" Hallelujah! Amen!

"This God is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that's to come."

24. AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF

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"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Hebrews 3:12

Truly, a heart of unbelief is an evil heart. Out of such a heart every EVIL proceeds. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet water. An unbelieving heart is the laboratory of Satan! "in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."

Unbelievers are the slaves of Satan; they "are taken captive by him at his will." When the glorious gospel of our God and Savior shines around them, they see it not. As the meridian sun is hidden from the naturally blind, so is the gospel hidden to those who are lost, through the blinding influence of unbelief. "Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ."

Contradictory as it may seem, many virtues approved by men, may be exhibited by those that are lost. Generosity, sympathy for the afflicted, elegance of manners, patriotic displays of courage in defense of his country, and such like popular virtues, may form a wreath around the brow, or emblazon the tomb, of the unbeliever. But, what is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God, if faith working by love is lacking in the heart. The trumpet of fame has sounded the praises of many, even to the ends of the earth, who, at the last trumpet, shall hear these words sounded out before an assembled world; "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

How empty is the breath of human praise! And yet, how many pant after it, and even risk the salvation of their souls to obtain it. Oh! that men were wise, that they would consider their latter end! Lord teach me heavenly wisdom. Give me to see and feel, that all true honor comes from you. To be your child, to form a part of your redeemed church, to know and serve you in the gospel of your Son, to esteem Christ precious, and to love him with all the heart, is infinitely above the smile of monarchs, or the plaudits of the world.

What a DESTRUCTIVE sin is unbelief. It is like a dungeon in which the prisoner is enclosed without any possibility of escape. Nothing but the mighty power of God can "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and those who sit in darkness out from the prison house." Unbelief is the root of all evil. Its effects in the soul are of the most deadly nature. The whole human race is tainted with it, yes, is become radically corrupted by it. From Adam to the present time, and from this period to

the last hour of man's existence upon earth, multitudes have been, are, and will be defiled and destroyed, through the subtle poison of unbelief. "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" We read indeed of brighter days and purer times, when Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; blissful period! when Christ shall reign in the hearts of his people, as the Universal King; when he shall reign before his ancients gloriously; but soon, alas! does this happy period draw to its close. Satan shall be again loosed out of his prison. He shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. The enemies of Christ, innumerable like the sand of the sea, shall compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, when fire shall come down from God out of heaven, and devour them. Wickedness will therefore once more deluge the earth.

But He, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of his Son. Then will the heavens pass away with a great roar, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Then will be seen the great white throne and him who sits on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven will flee away. Before the King of Glory will then be gathered all nations. The dead, small and great, shall stand before God. The books shall be opened; and the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works; and whoever is not found written in the Book of Life, will be cast into the lake of fire.

How consoling to the tempest-tossed believer are the words of Paul; "For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died. I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever." "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years." "Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living! You should look forward to that day and hurry it along—the day when God will set the heavens on fire and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world where everyone is right with God. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life."

This future glory is of necessity encompassed with clouds. But enough is revealed to animate our hopes, to stimulate our exertions, to inflame our love, to strengthen our faith, though we cannot chronologically arrange the glorious events which shall follow each other until the final consummation of all things. Different views are taken, but every view should lead us to the conclusion of Peter; "Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living!"

Oh! that I may have grace with deep humility to contemplate this dreadful, yet, to every believer, delightful period, when Jesus shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also

which pierced him, when he shall be surrounded by all those who love his appearing, on whom he will then pronounce the sentence of blessedness, and receive them into the joy of their Lord.

Infidelity is the enemy of man. It robs him of his support, of his consolation, of his hope. It presents before him a dreary waste-land, at the end of which is nothing but darkness and despair. Though all are not infidels, properly so called, rejecting the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and scoffing at the revealed plan of salvation through Jesus Christ; yet, all are by nature under the power of unbelief. Thousands, who profess to receive the Bible as the word of God, and who would take offence at being called infidels, act as though they did not believe it. While they profess that they know God, they in works deny him; while they call him Lord, Lord, they do not practice the things which he commands. It is sad to think how much practical infidelity is concealed under the garb of a religious profession. "They say, and do not."

Unbelief, like a mighty stream, runs through the whole territory of our fallen world. Its spring is found in Paradise, where our deceived parents ate of the forbidden fruit. As their posterity increased, this river of death grew wider and wider. Wherever a human being is to be found, whatever be his country, language, or color, there we shall find a portion of this stream, whose pestiferous exhalations destroy the fair beauty of the moral world, and convert the whole earth into a waste howling wilderness.

Blessed be God! there is a river, whose streams make glad the city of God, the Church of the Most High. This river, pure as crystal, proceeds from the fountain of Eternal Love, and flows down to earth, through the adorable Redeemer of mankind. When the dreadful flood of unbelief burst forth in Paradise, threatening to overwhelm the new creation, this life-giving stream of Sovereign Love began to flow. A spiritual Eden was graciously commenced. Trees of righteousness were planted and nourished. A people was formed who should show forth the Redeemer's praise. The eleventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, most beautifully describes this garden of the Lord. Thousands in every age have borne witness to the truth, by faith and love, by patience and hope; exhibiting in their lives the fruits of the Spirit, and the grace and power of the adorable Savior.

Oh! that I may become one of these highly-favored plants, that all who are near and dear to me may be trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified; yes, that all mankind may bear fruit to the glory of God. If I am a child of God, I shall implicitly believe his holy word. If I truly believe his revealed will, I shall labor through grace to obey it. If I obey it from the heart, my whole walk and conversation will evidence my obedience. I shall then hate what God hates, and love what he loves. I shall not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I shall not set my affections on earthly, but on heavenly things. I shall willingly take up my cross and follow Christ, though the path lie through the reproach of men, and tribulation for the gospel's sake.

Knowing that circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a New Creature, I shall be mainly anxious to experience the power of godliness, while maintaining the form. I shall dread the state of those who rest in a dead formality, who substitute the shadow for the substance, the sign for the thing signified. "The kingdom of God 'is not food and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.'" "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Lord, enable me to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, that I may have a clear and undoubted evidence that I am born from above, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and made a temple of the Holy Spirit. Perform in mercy, this work of love on my soul, through your own rich grace, and for the sake of that beloved Savior who died for the chief of sinners, to whom I may look with hope and confidence for pardoning, purifying, and glorifying grace. Oh! how great is your unspeakable, unsearchable love. Like yourself, it is infinite and eternal! "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

25. The Evil of Pride

25. The Evil of Pride

"God resists the proud." James 4:6

There are two principles which rule and govern the hearts of natural men- Pride and sensuality. These two evils are continually in operation, the one, against the soul-humbling, the other, against the soul-purifying, doctrines of the Gospel.

Salvation by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ, is most offensive to the pride of the natural man. The idea of being wholly indebted to another for admission into the kingdom of heaven, is extremely disgusting to self-love. Such an idea is rejected with disdain by every heart, unhumbled and untaught by the Spirit of God. Fallen man needs to have some share in the great work of salvation, to have something whereof to boast. But God has declared that this shall not be. No flesh shall boasts in his presence. "He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord."

From this principle of self-righteous pride have arisen all those perversions of the Gospel which have abounded in every age, and which Paul so warmly reprobates in his Epistle to the Galatians. It is a principle deeply rooted in our fallen nature, and which nothing but the Holy Spirit can eradicate. It forms a part of that remnant of corruption which believers feel and bewail, and against which they daily fight and pray. In proportion as it operates, it occasions obscurity in their views of divine truth, and deadness in their affections to spiritual things. It grieves the Holy Spirit, and tarnishes the glory of the Cross. Pride, assuming every form, either worldly or religious, can go with us into our closets, or attend us at the sanctuary. Like a subtle poison, it can insinuate itself into our prayers and praises. Unseen, and unsuspected, it mars our best duties, and creates that self-admiration, that desire for human applause, which corrupts the heart, and steals it away from God.

O blessed Jesus, what need have I to look unto You for grace and strength. Save me from pride and vain-glory. Often do I feel and lament their baneful influence. If I speak for you, O, how does the poison work unseen by every eye but Yours! As you alone can behold this hidden evil of the heart, so do you in mercy destroy its influence. To You, blessed Savior, do I look. You know what is in me. Your eyes are on all my ways. Oh! wash me in the cleansing fountain of your precious blood. Purge me from this foul stain of corrupted nature. Make me truly humble and abased before You. Purify my soul, then shall I become as a little child in simplicity, teachableness, and humility. The work is all your own. To You be all the praise.

The more exalted views I have of the Holiness and Purity of God, and of the extent and spirituality of the divine Law; the deeper sense I have of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human nature; the more shall I value the precious doctrine of Justification by faith only, through the blood and righteousness of Christ; the more shall I feel the necessity of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, and the more shall I acknowledge salvation to be all of grace, flowing freely from the love of God the Father, displayed in the voluntary sufferings of God the Son, and made savingly

known to sinners, through the power of God the Holy Spirit.

But, if I reverse all this, if I have low views of the divine Holiness, making the Almighty such an one as myself; if I consider the Gospel merely as a mitigated law, lowering the standard of holiness, that all may be admitted into heaven- if I have high conceptions of the dignity of human nature, and inadequate views of the evil of sin; in that proportion the glory of the Gospel will appear dim in my eyes, the righteousness of Christ will be considered as a make-weight in the scale of human merit, and the operation of the Holy Spirit as nothing more than an auxiliary to the natural powers of man.

The former view exalts the glory of God, and humbles the sinner, while holiness is promoted; but the latter, springing from pride, eclipses the splendor of the Deity, obscures the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, like a dark cloud intervening between us and the orb of day; while the wretched worm of the earth, inflated with pride, sinks into endless woe. Which of these two statements, I would ask, may we reasonably suppose to be a revelation from God? Let conscience speak. Let the word of truth speak. Let the convinced sinner speak. All will proclaim, "Let God be glorified."

Oh! what cursed pride dwells in the heart of man. But what will become of proud looks, and proud pretensions, when Christ shall sit on the throne of his glory, and render unto every man according to his works? Then will the contrite soul, who, while on earth was trodden down by the foot of pride, be exalted to the heights of glory; then will the proud sinner, once admired and applauded, be hurled into the depths of hell.

Lord, clothe me with humility. Empty me of all overweening thoughts of myself. Make Christ more precious to my heart. Draw me to Yourself. Then shall I form a part of your little flock; and be found among your people, in the day when you make up your jewels.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall;" but, "before honor is humility." By nature, I am blind to my real state and character. Pride and self-love form an impenetrable veil, which hides me from myself. Others can see, and point out my defects. Hence arises the value of a faithful friend. Blessed Spirit of Holiness, remove the veil, open my understanding, and discover to me the true state of my soul.

It is a fact, in spiritual things, that we never know that we are blind, until we are taught by the Spirit. The Pharisees said to our Lord, "Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you should have no sin; but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains." These very men, who said, "We see," were addressed by our Lord as blind. "Woe unto you, you blind guides." "You blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within." It is only when the Spirit opens the eyes of our minds, that we see and feel our ignorance, and can mourn our spiritual darkness. Until then, we fancy ourselves to be very wise and good, notwithstanding we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

O you lowly Savior! impart unto me lowliness of mind. When on earth, "your voice was not heard in the streets." You abstained from every display of your almighty power, except when called forth in acts of love and pity. All your miracles were wrought to bless our race, or to manifest forth your glory. Devils and diseases fled at your command; winds were hushed to silence; and the raging waters sank into a calm. At your all-powerful voice, the dead arose; and nature, through all her

realm, confessed You to be the Lord. But man confessed You not! The world was made by you, and the world knew you not. You came unto your own, and your own received you not. Oh! give me grace to receive you in faith and love, that I may have the privilege of becoming a child of God, being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Hide pride from me. Give me a single eye, which aims at nothing but your glory. Keep me from the proud insinuations of Satan, from the swellings of a corrupt and carnal heart.

It is of great importance in the Christian life to obtain a right knowledge of ourselves. This can only be obtained by earnest prayer for divine illumination, by a diligent study of the Word of God, and by frequent and impartial, self-examination. While thoroughly searching our hearts, we shall find much within us to mortify our pride; but the more we are enabled to discover the hidden evils of our hearts, and to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, the more we shall value and delight in the Gospel plan of Salvation. At the Cross of Christ we shall learn to know ourselves, and Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write. We shall see, in letters of glory, those messages of grace, which proclaim a free pardon and everlasting life to all who believe in, and receive, Christ crucified.

Oh! that I could, at this moment, throw wide the doors of a willing mind to admit the Lord of Glory, that he may henceforth reign as King supreme over every affection of my heart. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Though the heart be renewed by divine grace, the infection of nature does remain in those who are regenerated, and too often rebels, notwithstanding the watchfulness and care of the believer. "In me," says Paul, "(that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." This indwelling sin may not, through grace, be allowed to break out into open acts of vice, but it struggles and fights within; "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." This inbred evil excites to pride, sloth, spiritual indifference, earthly-mindedness, fleshly lust, self-confidence, carnal ease, and a thousand other evils destructive to our peace, and grieving to the good Spirit of our God.

To whom, then, can I look for deliverance from these evils, but to Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for you." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This is the great and gracious promise of the New Covenant, for which I am encouraged to pray in the name, and through the merits, of the blessed Jesus. Lord, vouchsafe this blessing, the pledge of every other blessing which flows to our ruined world through the death and intercession of your dear Son.

26. ON HYPOCRISY, AND DEADNESS TO THE WORLD

26. ON HYPOCRISY, AND DEADNESS TO THE WORLD

"In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." Matthew 23:28

"You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3.

The Bible addresses the hypocrite, and the sincere worshiper of God, in words which cannot be misunderstood. Each is painted in his true colors, by that hand which cannot err. He who looks at the heart cannot be deceived by outward appearances. He sees through the veil which conceals the motive from our view. Man may deceive his fellow man, and often does. That charity which hopes all things forbids mistrust, until facts expose a character which even charity can no longer screen. How often is religion wounded in the house of her friends. The falls of the sincere, as well as the scandals of hypocrites, give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and bring a reproach upon that Gospel, whose command is, "Abstain from all appearance of evil.."

There is scarcely a grace in the true believer, which does not find its counterfeit in the hypocrite. A hypocrite is nothing but 'a pretense' of something excellent. He plays a part, and impersonates a character, which is not his own. Were there no excellencies in religion, or were those excellencies not held in estimation, there would be no hypocrites. Hence we find, in seasons of fiery persecution, but few, if any, who will be hardy enough to risk their worldly interest, ease, or reputation, to obtain a name which is branded with obloquy, and followed by death. But when religion obtains credence in the world, when the profession of it raises a person in the general esteem, and when it opens the door to some valuable place, or preferment, then these hypocrites abound, like summer flies, fluttering in the beams of the mid-day sun.

We may use an old adage, "All is not gold that glitters." There is a living faith, and a dead faith; a blessed hope, and a false hope; a fervent love, and a mere verbal affection; "with their mouth they show much love;" a filial fear, and a slavish fear; a spiritual joy, and carnal excitement; a peace which passes understanding, and a delusive peace; a godly sorrow, and a worldly sorrow, which works death; a genuine humility, and an hypocritical humiliation. We read also of a desire to be something when we are nothing; and of a vain endeavor to appear esteemed in the eyes of men; and yet, to stand, on acceptable terms with the Great Searcher of hearts.

Alas! that we should take such pains to impose upon ourselves, and deceive others. Wretched, indeed, is our state, when insincerity and deception are hourly needed to prevent exposure and disgrace. Truly pitiable is that man, who, conscious of his falls, and dreading to have them known, is alive to every 'whisper'. Oh! how invaluable is simplicity and godly sincerity; a heart full of the love of Christ, and a life on which slander cannot justly breathe! Such a one is conscious of much evil over which to lament. He mourns in secret, with Daniel, over his transgressions; with Paul, over the sin which wars in his members; with Isaiah, he cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips;" and with Peter, I am a sinful man, O Lord." But before men

his walk is blameless. He shines as a light in the world. He dares to be singular, though made a by-word and a proverb of reproach.

Lord, have mercy upon me, a poor, fallen, miserable sinner! Oh! allow me not to lie on the couch of carnal security, or to be bound by the chains of that false hope and false peace, which Satan throws around the souls of countless millions. Without your almighty power I must perish; for nothing, O blessed Jesus, but your grace can rescue my soul from death and hell. When I look into my heart, I may well turn from the sight. What swarms of evils do I discover, unknown and unseen by the world. I do indeed loathe and abhor myself. O give me grace to repent before you in dust and ashes. I sigh for deliverance. I long for your presence. I want the enjoyment of your favor. It appears like winter in my soul. Darkness covers me. I know, and precious is the knowledge, that You, O blessed Jesus, are the Savior and Friend of sinners. Be pleased to say, "I am your salvation," and the joyful tidings conveyed by the Holy Spirit to my soul, will cause light, and life, and joy, and gladness, to abound within me. Methinks I hear the distant sound of mercy sweetly advancing towards me; oh! let me believe, and not despair. Let me trust, and not be afraid. Let me lie at the foot of your Cross, and there behold your bleeding wounds, until every wound in my soul be healed, and all be holiness and peace within.

As the hypocrite lives for the world, so does the true believer live unto God. The one is ever seeking the praise of men; the other, the approbation of God his Savior. The hypocrite's hope perishes with the earth; the hope of the believer will be realized when sublunary things shall have passed away. O! that I could feel my heart dead to all things here below, and alive only unto God.

This desire to die unto all things here below, may appear to many, to be inconsistent with our natural state, as inhabitants of earth, where various objects require our close attention, and call forth continual application; where relative duties demand our anxious care; and public duties our active labors. Yet still the desire is a Christian desire. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Without this spiritual deadness to the world, I shall never be able rightly to fulfill the duties which God requires of me. A heart, glued to the world, a heart enchained by its pleasures, profits, and cares; a heart, in which the world sits enthroned, can never be a heart acceptable unto God. Such a heart can never serve both God and Mammon. Two masters so opposite in their commands, can never, by the same servant, be wholly and universally obeyed. A man might as readily hope to reach the North Pole, while steering towards the south, as to think of attaining to the favor of God, while seeking, with all his powers, the favor of the world.

The first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." But how can I even aim at this high command, if created objects have the upper, or equal place in my affections? To be dead to the world, is to be weaned from it; to live above it, and not to be captivated by it. This deadness to the world may exist with the greatest vitality, as regards the fulfillment of relative duties. I may be all alive and active in the performance of duties which are more immediately connected with the world, and yet, at the same time, as respects my heart and affections, be dead to it. Oh! this is a great attainment- to be in the world, and yet not of the world. Without this, I cannot be a Christian. Jesus said to his disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

And in his intercessory prayer, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours." "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."

To be, then, a worldly Christian, is a contradiction in terms. Nothing can be more evident than this; that every true disciple of Christ, like his Lord and Master, is not of the world. He is different in spirit and in practice. As Jesus went about doing good, so do his faithful servants. Avoiding the superstitious abstractions of monkish indolence, and the distracting pursuits of nominal Christians, the true believer, with his heart in heaven, labors with prayerful zeal to glorify, in every station, his God and Savior.

If it be asked- How can this be done? The reply is ready. Through the grace and power of Christ, sought for by diligent prayer. Oh! how encouraging is the Savior's command; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find." "All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Faith, working by love; faith, overcoming the world; will set all inferior objects in their due place and order. A heart, in which Christ reigns, knows well how to estimate the vanities of time, and the glories of eternity; as the artist can appreciate the exquisite touches of the master, while he passes by the rude attempts of the mere learner.

The second great commandment is; "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This command calls forth, at once, all the energies of the mind, and all the best feelings of the heart. This beautiful order of the commandments is most important. When I can love God supremely, then I place the world and all things in it at the foot of his throne, and look unto, and worship, and place all my dependence upon, and seek all my happiness from, God and God alone. This is to honor him, in some humble measure, from whom I have received my being, and on whose will I every moment depend.

When I can love my neighbor as myself, with a pure heart fervently, then selfishness is destroyed, that weed of fallen nature, which so rankly covers the soil of the natural heart, and chokes the good seed which may be sown upon it. Alas! when I examine my affections, and all the secret springs which move and guide my outward actions, what cause have I to be humbled and confounded before my Almighty Creator! What spiritual idolatries, what backslidings in heart, what worldly motives, what wandering affections, what selfish principles, what evils of every name, too often rise and rebel in the heart of the true believer! He groans, being burdened. He cries out- "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Lord! purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Sprinkle my conscience with the atoning blood of Jesus. Elevate my motives, spiritualize my affections, and wean me from the world. You can supply my every want out of your fullness. Blessed Lord, I want to love you supremely, and my neighbor as myself. I want to be made conformable to your Will, to be renewed after your Image. O, perform this great, this gracious, work upon my soul. Deliver me from all iniquity. Purify my heart by faith, and fill me with holy, heavenly love, to the praise of your own everlasting grace, through Jesus Christ my Savior.

27. HUMAN CORRUPTION AND ABOUNDING GRACE

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"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

All orthodox Christians agree on the doctrine of the Fall; that the whole human race fell in Adam, as their federal head; and that we are by nature the children of wrath. They agree in this truth, that death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned, and therefore lie under condemnation, and are exposed to the righteous judgment of God. The Scriptures are most clear on this solemn subject. This doctrine militates against the pride of our darkened understandings, and the boasted morality of the world. Some treat this doctrine as monstrous, others as fanatical. But all, who are taught of God, receive it in deep self-abasement. Lord give me grace to embrace, in the simplicity of faith, all those humbling truths of your holy word, which, at once, crucify self love, and prepare the heart to receive Jesus as the only Savior from guilt and condemnation.

The doctrine of the Fall and its direful consequences, may, in some small degree, be exemplified by what we witness around us. In how many families are certain maladies perpetuated, which are styled hereditary, descending from father to son, yes, even to children's children. How frequently have the profligacy and prodigality of parents entailed upon their posterity disease and poverty. What millions of our fellow-creatures have groaned from age to age under the iron yoke of one bloody conqueror. The conquests of Mahomet have to this day held in bondage the Christian churches in the East, while the spiritual despotism of Popery enslaves its millions in the West. When I compare the present state of man with his original formation- when I view him as he once was, perfect in holiness, peace, and love, and as he now is, full of iniquity, disquietude, and enmity, I feel the force of my Savior's words to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again."

When I contemplate the Almighty Creator in all his infinite perfections, and man in all his vileness; when I survey the spotless mansions of glory, and the polluted habitations of earth; I am constrained to say, Amen, to my Savior's declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Let me well observe this important truth, I must be born again, not of water only, but of the Spirit. What does this teach me? Surely that a great change must necessarily take place, before a mass of corruption can be made fit to inherit incorruption. The change is great, but the power which effects it is omnipotent. The cause of this change is the sovereign love of God. With Him this blessedness originated, and by Him it is performed, otherwise it could not be said, "By grace are you saved." "Salvation is of the Lord." The means for effecting this change were ordained by infinite wisdom, and are revealed and applied to a lost world through the Holy Spirit. The end of this change was designed by the Father of mercies, to display the divine perfections, to destroy the powers of darkness, and to diffuse unnumbered blessings, in time and eternity, through the redemption of sinners by the death and glorification of His beloved Son.

Oh! how transporting will the heavenly anthem be! "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Lord! be graciously pleased to effect this unspeakably blessed change in my soul. I have daily to mourn over an evil heart of unbelief. I feel so much of self, mixing with my better motives; so much of earth, mixing with my spiritual duties; so much of distrust and slavish fear, mixing with my professed faith in you, that I may well exclaim with Job, "I abhor myself."

Lord! undertake for me. Hold me up and I shall be safe. Create in me a new and contrite heart. Wash away all my corruptions. Cover me with your spotless righteousness, and make me fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Lord, enable me daily to come unto you, to spread all my needs, and sorrows, and sins before you; yes, to lay them all by faith at the foot of the Cross, where grace, and mercy, and truth unite to save, and bless such a hell-deserving sinner as I am. Oh! how sweet is your call of love- "Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me, and be saved." "Do not be afraid, only believe."

Lord enable me to come on the warrant of your word; for you have said, "Him that comes to me I certainly not cast out." Make my soul joyful in your salvation. Put a new song into my mouth, even a Psalm of thanksgiving unto my God.

How deadly are the fruits which unbelief produces; insensibility to eternal things; the alienation of the heart from God; a love for carnal delights. We naturally turn away from that which never captivates our affections. We choose darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. The only obstacle to loving God supremely, arises from the rebelliousness of our will to his holy law, and from an aversion to the humbling method of salvation, as revealed in the Gospel. This state of mind constitutes our guilt in his sight, and renders us deservedly the objects of his wrath.

Every day I have to mourn over this spiritual insensibility. I want to feel my heart all alive to God. I want to feel my soul melted with godly sorrow, and expanded with holy joy. I want to experience that indescribable emotion of contrition and peace which sweetly blends in the heart of the penitent believer, and excites the soul to praise, even when the eye is moistened with the tear of grief. Sorrow for sin, and joy in the Savior, form that peculiarity of feeling which a stranger cannot understand. Lord! may I daily know more of it. Give me a saving knowledge of yourself, and a growing taste for spiritual blessings.

All the angelic beings are under the perpetual influence of the highest love and reverence for God, and all of them delight to do his will. All the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, are actuated by the same exalted principle of love. The Church on earth is taught by her divine Lord to pray, "May your will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The families in heaven and earth are one. If, then, a soul under the influence of this guilty disinclination of heart to love and serve God, should, in such a state, be called out of time into eternity, how could it be fit for the society of saints and angels, whose bosoms burn with everlasting love? How could such a soul enter into their enjoyments or employments? Heaven would be worthless, so far as he is concerned. It would be no place of happiness to such a soul. Every thing around it would run counter to the evil principle within him; and hence it is evident that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There are few delusions which men more successfully practice upon themselves than this- the hope of going to heaven when they die. This, like some healing plaster, is universally applied to ease the conscience. No matter how evil the life may be; Satan still whispers, as he did of old- "You shall not surely die." The sinner, trusting in the father of lies, goes on in his wickedness; thinks that God is too merciful to punish through eternity, the failings committed in time; and that all will end well at the last. Hell is truth learned too late!

O, my soul, pray without ceasing to be saved from these wiles of Satan; from this wretched state of alienation from God. The more I meditate on this important subject, the more I see the necessity for my being made a New Creature in Christ Jesus, before I can possibly relish or delight in the purchased possession. Many are apt to suppose, they must necessarily be happy, if they can only gain admittance into the celestial city, without considering what constitutes the bliss of heaven. Without love to God, without a delight in his service, without a hatred of sin, heaven would be no heaven to them, even if they could be admitted into it. "The pure in heart shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Vain, then, are the hopes of the hypocrite. "Nothing evil will be allowed to enter—no one who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Against such, the door will be forever shut. Lord, renew my soul in righteousness. Give me a delight to do your will. Guard me against the deceitful workings of unbelief. Enable me to resist the wiles of the devil. Shine upon my path, and guide me, by your Spirit, to the realms of glory.

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Blessed declaration! Had it not been so, wretched would our condition now have been! We would have lain in the darkness of despair, waiting for the blackness of darkness forever! But, light has sprung up; the voice of mercy is heard, and sinners may rejoice in God their Savior. The God of all grace invites us to the mercy-seat. The Spirit of Grace conducts us there. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

How wonderful is the work of grace in the heart! It is a progressive work. It springs from God, and leads to God. The first operation of the Spirit in the soul of the sinner is LIGHT. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This light being a spiritual, searching light, produces conviction of the evil and turpitude of sin. This CONVICTION being of an awakening, softening nature, causes the feeling of deep contrition on account of original and actual transgression. CONTRITION, when abiding, leads to confession, to a humble, heartfelt acknowledgment of guilt and misery. CONFESSION, when flowing from a believing view of the Cross of Christ, ends in a blessed CONVERSION of soul to God, an entire surrender of the heart to him who claims it. When conviction, contrition, confession, and conversion, have formed the new creature in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, then comes CONSOLATION, a loving spirit; a joyful spirit. Consolation being of a strengthening nature, produces CONFIRMATION in the ways of God, stability and strength. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The whole ends in a full and final CONSUMMATION of all blessedness in the region of celestial glory.

How precious are the ascending steps from earth to heaven. How glorious is the work of grace in the soul of man. Here wisdom, power, and love, are richly displayed. Pride has no share in this blessedness. God is the Author and Finisher of Salvation. To Him be all the praise throughout all ages. Amen and Amen.

28. INDWELLING SIN

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"But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin dwelling within me is doing it." Romans 7:20

Sin, in all its forms, is hateful to God. He beholds it with abhorrence, and has declared that "the soul that sins, it shall die." All men are dead under the Law, because all have sinned. And had not God graciously sent his dear Son into the world to pay the penalty due to sin, and to die the just for the unjust, the whole human race must have perished everlastingly. Even now, none shall be saved, who have the blessing of a preached Gospel, and of the Scriptures of Truth vouchsafed to them, except they repent and believe in Jesus, are born from above, and walk before God in newness of life. The state of the heathen, who have never heard the joyful sound, and to whom Christ is unknown, will be righteously determined by Him, all of whose ways are just, and whose paths are equity and truth. Enough is revealed, to awaken our fears respecting them, and to quicken our endeavors, to make known unto those that Savior, who so graciously said to Saul of Tarsus, "I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

How clearly is the state of the heathen described by the Savior of the world. In unison with this message to Saul, was that given to all the Apostles just before the ascension of our Lord. "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Had the ignorance of the Gentiles been their security, this message need not to have been delivered. The very words of Christ convey the strongest expression of danger, and the necessity for his being declared the Only Savior of Sinners, to the ends of the earth.

It is not uncommon to hear people speak of the comparative safety of the heathen, since the heathen cannot reject what is not offered, nor disbelieve what is not made known unto them. Thus, many excuse themselves from aiding Missionary Societies, as if we were carrying a curse instead of a blessing to the Gentiles, inasmuch as their guilt will be greater by refusing the offered Savior. This reason would equally have operated against the coming of Christ into our world, because all men have not faith, and millions, to whom the Gospel is preached in vain, will perish! Unbelief lies at the bottom of these objections. How different were the feelings of the angelic host on their announcement of the Savior's birth to the shepherds, when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." How different were those of Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Oh! that my heart may be warmed with love to the Savior, and with a tender concern for the perishing millions of mankind. Blessed Lord, let me never desire to be wise above what is written, or to set my reason against your Wisdom, or my will, against your Sovereignty. May I receive the Gospel by a loving faith, and labor to make it known with a loving heart. You have said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Enable me to offer up this prayer, for the extension of your kingdom, and for the increase of faithful ministers, in reliance on your grace, and in dependence on your power. Oh! hasten your kingdom, accomplish the number of your elect, and fill the earth with your glory.

Those who believe the Gospel, who receive Christ into their hearts by faith, ascribe all their salvation to sovereign grace. They are made the temples of the Holy Spirit, and serve God with delight in the Gospel of his Son. But while they remain in the body, they must struggle against the remainders of sin. Sickness, adversity, unkind treatment, persecution, with various other ills of life, are not joyous, but grievous; yet, God, is often pleased to bring his children into these furnaces, to purify them from the dross of sin, and to make them instrumental in producing the peaceful fruits of righteousness to the glory of his grace.

But sin is ever abhorrent to a holy God, and distressing to a renewed mind. Can the believer, then, derive any benefit from the sin which he hates, and against which he hourly combats? These Canaanites in the land, though grievous to the spirit of a true Israelite, as thorns are to his flesh, may be overruled by Infinite Love to teach him many lessons.

These Canaanites remind him of his former condition, of the rock from where he was hewn, and of the hole of the pit from where he was dug; of his natural depravity, wretchedness, and misery, that so, he may loathe himself in his own sight.

These Canaanites constrain him to acknowledge the grace of God in saving him, when he had nothing to expect but fiery indignation and judgment without mercy.

These Canaanites make him distrust him self, through the constant experience of his own weakness in resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil.

These Canaanites cause him to trust altogether in the divine power of his Savior, from the repeated victories which he obtains over indwelling sin, by looking with a single eye to Jesus, the Captain of his salvation.

These Canaanites bring into exercise the graces of faith and patience, courage and self-denial, watchfulness and prayer. The weapons of his warfare are not suffered to rust, having daily to fight the good fight of faith.

These Canaanites make him value the blood and righteousness of Christ, which rise in value, in proportion to the true and saving knowledge which he acquires of himself. Thus, the more he is convinced of his sins and imperfections, the more earnestly does he seek after a better righteousness to justify him in the sight of God, even the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ.

These Canaanites make him long more ardently for the rest which remains for the people of God; for that pure world, where sorrow cannot enter, where indwelling sin will never harass the soul, but where he will forever behold his adorable Redeemer, and be made like him, when he shall see him

as he is.

Indwelling sin, thus uniformly opposed, hated, and watched against, and more and more overcome and rooted out of the soul, shall not be allowed to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The promise is most precious to every true believer; "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

Blessed Jesus! grant that sin may be increasingly hateful to my soul, as it is hurtful to my peace. Enable me to grow in all the graces of the Spirit, resisting the motions of sin in my flesh, and crucifying every evil affection and lust, until I lay my body in the grave, and ascend to You, my life and my all, my treasure, and my eternal home!

29. THE INWARD CONFLICT

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"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." Romans 7:18

How varied is the life of the true believer. At one time on the mount, at another time in the valley. Sometimes he can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, at other times, he groans being burdened, and is almost tempted to say with David, "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." There are seasons of peculiar mental distress with which the tried believer is alone acquainted. At such a season, it seems as if Satan were let loose upon his soul to agonize it with his fiery darts; as if the foul sediment of inbred corruption were stirred up from the very bottom of his heart.

When the Christian would fondly enjoy the tranquil delights of peace and spiritual consolation, how often is he constrained to say—

"Instead of this, he made me feel,

The hidden evils of my heart,

And let the angry powers of hell

Assault my soul in every part."

Can he be easy under such distressing experience? Oh! no!

"Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,

Will you pursue your worm until death?"

Hear, O my soul, the gracious answer, so accordant with the revealed word—

"This is this way, the Lord replied,

I answer prayer for grace and faith."

If you should ask; Why in this way so painful to endure? "These inward trials I employ,

From self and pride to set you free,

And break your schemes of earthly joy,

That you may seek your all in me.

This is indeed a trying dispensation; but even this inward conflict, painful as it is, is often sanctified to us by that divine Spirit, who can turn our darkness into light, and make crooked things straight. What Satan intends for evil, the God of love and power can overrule for good.

When the believer, through neglect of watchfulness and prayer, has fallen into a state of spiritual apathy; when the cursed leaven of self-love and self-righteousness have secretly been working their way into his duties; when the world has, by insensible degrees, gotten a hold upon his heart; then some sudden assault of the Devil sets his soul in alarm. Awakened by his fears, he is driven to earnest prayer. His rebel lusts, now in arms, and led on by Satan, threaten to overcome him. Terrified, and overwhelmed at the sight of his sins, and at his utter inability to help himself, he cries out in the agony of his soul; "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He loathes and abhors himself. He seeks for pardoning mercy at the cross of Christ. And there he obtains forgiveness, and comes off more than conqueror, through him who loved him and gave himself for him. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," is his song of triumph.

The believer, by these repeated struggles, is convinced of his constant liability to Satan's temptations; of the proneness of his heart to depart from God; and of his daily need of sanctifying, sustaining grace. His language now is—

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love;

Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,

Seal it from your courts above."

By trials inward and outward, the children of God are taught, that this poor world is not their rest, because it is polluted; that they are traveling through an enemy's country; that they must fight their way to glory, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, remembering that he, and he only who overcomes, shall obtain the crown.

Happy is he who learns wisdom from his own trials, and those of others. Oh! that my spiritual armor may be always bright. Indolence and supineness is the rust which blunts the edge of the sword, and gives the enemy an advantage over us. I know that my foes are mighty, but my Redeemer is almighty. I know that I am weak, but my Savior's grace is all-sufficient. Oh! that I had faith, strong faith, to lay hold upon his promised aid. Then would I put my enemies to flight; for the encouragement to the fighting Christian is, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Let me never forget, that if I yield to a small temptation, the enemy will present one more powerful, as my spiritual strength will be weakened to resist it. Thus, by degrees, and often rapidly, the unwatchful Christian is hurried into frightful sins.

God does not will the death of a sinner. He does not will that any should perish. His pathetic exclamation by the Prophet is- "Why will you die?" How strange, that any creature should be so infatuated, as to reject the gracious offers of pardon and peace, when God incarnate, crucified and slain, and now risen and glorified, stands with outstretched arms, with arms of love and pity, to receive and bless us forever! Yet such a creature am I! O my soul, be ashamed and confounded in the dust. You, even you, would still reject this bleeding love, if God himself had not first loved you, and drawn your affections through the sweetest, softest influence, to choose Him for your portion, and seek your all in Him. Oh! wondrous Love! Oh! love beyond degree! Lord, shed more and more of this love abroad in my heart. Give me more of your blessed Spirit's grace and influence. Subdue

my rebel lusts. Preserve me from the attacks of Satan, from self-sufficiency and pride. Keep me humble, watchful, and thankful; pure, meek, and holy. Defend me from the contagion of a wicked world, from the fear of man, from all dissimulation, hypocrisy, and deceit. Make me simple and sincere, upright and without duplicity before you. Cause me to abound yet more and more in knowledge, faith, and love, until all my powers are perfected in glory.

Sin is the dishonor, the disease, the death of the soul. It brings, in this world, disgrace and condemnation; and in the next, shame and everlasting torment. Oh! how I long for entire sanctification. Blessed Jesus, you alone can wash away my crimson sin. Nothing but your precious blood can remove the foul pollution. To you I come, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Lord, plunge me beneath this sacred flood, that I may come out of it pure and clean.

Oh! Almighty Purifier, Oh, eternal Spirit of Holiness, sit upon my soul as a refiner's fire. Kindle a flame of love in my heart, that may burn to your glory. Allow me to see the preciousness of Jesus, his beauty and adorable perfections. Enable me to walk in his footsteps, to copy his example, to delight in his commandments. Root out of my heart all pride and worldly lust, and implant in their stead, humility and a heavenly mind. Give me a relish for spiritual employments, holy meditation, and fervent love.

"Faint, yet pursuing," was the state of Israel of old. I feel my spiritual weakness. How difficult it is to have the mind wholly fixed upon God. The clouds are not so shifting, nor the winds so fleeting, as my thoughts. I try to fix them upon heavenly things; for a few moments they seem to settle upon objects of eternal interest, and then they slide insensibly away, until starting as from a reverie, I am grieved to find, that my thoughts have wandered to the ends of the earth. Oh! the deceitfulness and instability of the heart!

Blessed Jesus, bind my heart to your Cross with the cords of love. Let not the enemy allure my affections from you, or fill my mind with vain imaginations. Let me be wholly taken up with you. Enable me to keep eternity in view; to live and act as one who must shortly appear in your presence. O blessed expectation to the true believer! Do I love your appearing? Am I longing to behold you without a veil between? Then shall I be admitted into your presence, where is fullness of joy. But, have I truly believed on the Son of God? Am I united by faith to the living Vine? Do I daily receive the vivifying sap, the grace of the Savior, that I may bear the fruits of holiness? Has the Spirit sealed me unto the day of redemption?

Blessed Lord! make this sure to my soul by your inward work of grace, and by my outward conformity to your will. I wait upon you. You have promised to bless the waiting soul. Your word is truth. Then I will trust and not be afraid, for You, You only, are my salvation.

"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." What swarms, not only of wandering, but of foolish thoughts, crowd into the mind, when we want to be abstracted from the world and wrapped up in holy meditation. All this proves the depravity of the heart, and shows what corrupt creatures we must appear in the sight of God, when we appear so vile in our own.

What a blessing it is to know that this spiritual malady may be healed; that Jesus came into the world to save the lost. All are sick unto death. All, are lost. But Jesus, the kind Physician, the good Shepherd, has come to raise the dead, and to restore the lost. Hasten, then, O sinner, to this adorable friend. He has said, "Come unto me," yes, he has given you this blessed assurance, that

him that comes, he will never cast out. Why then, this backwardness to come to Jesus? He is the tenderest of Friends, the most ready of Benefactors. Let him not have to say in your case, "You will not come to me, that you might have life."

Ah! but he has declared- "No man can come to me, except the Father, who has sent me, draws him." And why can you not come? It arises, not from any secret decree which foreordains your destruction, and presents an impenetrable barrier to your approach to the Savior; but it springs altogether from yourself. Unbelief, pride, prejudice, the love of sin, and the love of the world, the fear of man, and carnal security, keep you from closing in with the offers of salvation. In the day of judgment every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world shall become guilty before God. No excuses will then be made, which now pacify the conscience. No pleas will then be put forward in arrest of judgment, which now lull the sinner to sleep on the lap of carnal security. All shall then acknowledge the justice of the sentence; "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Remember, O sinner, that the very circumstance of your not being able to come of yourself to the gracious Savior, proves you to be a child of the Fall, and in a state of guilt and misery, since it arises solely from the rebelliousness of your will, and the total alienation of your heart from God. Beware, then, lest you make this moral inability, which is the fruit of the Fall, an excuse for keeping you away from Christ. Rather say, I cannot, because I will not. My stubborn will, like a chain, binds me to sin and Satan, and nothing but almighty power can set me free. Under this deep conviction of your lost and undone condition, cry fervently to the compassionate Savior, that he would plead his precious blood in your behalf before the eternal throne, that the Father of mercies may send the Holy Spirit into your heart, to lead you to the Cross; and there by uniting you to the blessed Jesus, cause you to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This is the way, the only way to obtain peace and purity, when pardon is sealed to the conscience by the Holy Spirit. Yes! when Jesus says, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven," then the Comforter sheds abroad the love of God in the heart; a sweet peace is enjoyed in the soul, and purity reigns within. Oh! how happy is such a believer. Worlds cannot purchase his inestimable blessings. He beholds the 'treasures of earth' as the dust beneath his feet, when he compares them with the love of his Savior, and an assured hope of heaven.

Lord give me this willing heart to come to you; this humble faith to receive you; this holy love to rejoice in you; this full assurance of hope that I shall reign with you forever. Then will my joy be full; I shall glory in tribulation, and daily experience the felicity of Paul, which his own words so feelingly express, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Inward calmness I desired,

Hope, this pleasing dream, inspired,

Long, I sought from earth to gain,

Joy, which earth could not contain.

Conscience filled me with dismay,

Fear consumed me night and day
All my sins, before me spread,
Seized my soul with guilty dread.
More, I panted for repose,
More, I added to my woes;
If a calm appeared to reign,
Guilt awoke the storm again.
Without Jesus- far from peace,
Wandering through this barren place,
Often I said with deepest sigh,
Sinner, you are doomed to die.
Precious Savior! heavenly Friend!
All my wanderings You did end
From your Cross, Salvation flows,
There I find a sweet repose.
There, by precious blood divine,
Cleansed from sin, and sealed thine,
Justice did my debt remove,
Cancelled by Eternal Love.

30. MOURNING OVER SIN AND HATRED OF IT

30. MOURNING OVER SIN AND HATRED OF IT

"I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning." Psalms 38:6

A lover of the world will perhaps say, If the effect of religion is to make me like a mourner bowed down with grief at the funeral of some beloved friend, let me escape it. Life is given us for enjoyment. Our natural appetites were formed to be gratified. Therefore, as the time is short, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

All this might seem reasonable, did we die like the beasts that perish. But, even were this the case, formed as we are with minds capable of improvement, and living as we do under a Divine Moral Government, where cause and effect are made to operate for our weal or woe, would it not increase our temporal enjoyment to cultivate the virtues of temperance, sobriety, and prudence, with all the charities of domestic and social life? Every day's experience proves the truth of this, from the destructive consequences which result from a life of thoughtless dissipation, and those anti-social crimes which desolate the earth.

The whole framework of society, with its complicated changes, demonstrates a Moral Governor of the world, who has established laws over which the libertine, the spendthrift, and the infidel have no control. Do men throw the reins upon the neck of their lusts? They fall unhappy victims to their excesses. They live not out half their days. Do they squander away their property in splendor or dissipation? They sink into the depths, either of poverty or disease. Do they deny the immortality of the soul, or a day of future retribution? They are emboldened in crime, until, violating the laws of their country, they pay the penalty by dying an ignominious death.

If these things are so, what a friend is true religion to mankind. What unnumbered blessings follow in her train. But what is true religion? It is the religion of Jesus Christ, as revealed to us in the word of his grace. The entrance into this way of life is indeed strait, and the path in which we must walk is narrow; but, though it be commenced with tears and sorrow, the tears of repentance, and sorrow for sin, it will terminate with songs and everlasting joy.

The way of the world, on the contrary, allures the heart by its gaieties and pleasures, but its end is eternal death! "Blessed," then, "are those who mourn; for they shall be comforted." "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." "What sorrows await you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now. What sorrows await you who are satisfied and prosperous now, for a time of awful hunger is before you. What sorrows await you who laugh carelessly, for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow."

What an evil and bitter thing is sin! How dreadful are the polluting injections of Satan. But here lies the believer's comfort, that the Spirit of Light is greater than the spirit of darkness; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. As God is a sin-hating, and a sin-avenging God; so is sin a soul-tormenting, and a soul-destroying evil. We behold its direful effects in our fallen world, under

every form of misery. But at the Cross of Christ, the awful character of sin is written in letters of blood! There we learn its dreadful nature, so offensive to a God of Holiness, so rebellious against a God of Justice. Either the Eternal Son of the Most High must suffer in our stead, or a world of sinners must perish everlastingly!

Oh! may a view, a saving view of the Cross of my Emmanuel, melt my whole soul into contrition and love. Crucify, O Lord, your enemies and mine. Slay them all before you. Let no Agag, no first-born of the flock, be spared. Fortify my heart against the inroads of Satan. Enable me to keep a constant watch against those inbred corruptions, from which nothing but death will wholly rid me.

Mourning over sin may appear to some, as little better than the cant of the enthusiast. The language of humiliation does not necessarily prove the heart to be humbled. But when the soul, like David's, is truly broken and contrite, it will express its feelings, without regard to the opinions of men; it will pour out its sorrows to God, who hears and answers prayer. "I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning," is not the language of the nominal, but of the deeply tried and experienced Christian. It is most important to examine ourselves, for nothing is so easy as self-deception.

When sin is working within us, do we allow the enemy quietly to carry on his work of destruction, or do we fly instantly to the throne of grace for strength to resist him? The efficacy of believing prayer is truly wonderful. When the soul is troubled; when it is bowed down under the weight of conscious guilt; the prayer of faith, resting on the promises, and pleading the merits of Christ, obtains deliverance, and is turned into a song of praise.

The liberated Christian, though released from his fetters, does not forget his state of bondage, nor does he cease to humble himself before his pardoning God. The language of his heart is, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you. I long for your sanctifying grace. I mourn over my abominations. I desire the indwelling of your Spirit. I pant after a greater conformity to your will; an increased delight in the way of your commandments. I wait for your call to leave this world, and enter into the heavenly rest, where all your saints enjoy a state of perfect holiness, an eternal separation from all evil, an everlasting enjoyment of your presence and love.

If these, O my soul, be indeed your real feelings and desires, fear not the malice of Satan. These longings after Christ, and holiness, and heaven, if genuine, are the undoubted marks of your adoption into the family of God, however much they may be derided by an ungodly world. The voice may be Jacob's voice, when the hands are the hands of Esau. Hypocrites can speak with oily smoothness, when war is in their hearts. They can speak the language of piety, while indulging in every vice. Surely, then, it is needful to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation- lest we deceive ourselves.

O, tempted believer, know for your comfort, that sins hated and opposed, though they distress, will not be allowed to destroy you. Temptations resisted, shall not hurt you, if, like Jesus, you can repel the Tempter by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Your safety lies in resting continually on the faithfulness of Jesus; in living in a spirit of watchfulness and prayer. Temptations prove that an enemy is near. In a moment, he can attack you with the battery of hell. Be vigilant; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; then shall you be able to stand in the evil day, for when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.

Come, O blessed Spirit of Grace, with all your saving power. Descend into my soul, destroy every rebellious inclination, erect the standard of the Cross within me, and when you have enabled me to resist the devil, to crucify the flesh, and to renounce the world, then, O then, receive me into the happy region of glory, where all the church triumphant shall sing the conqueror's song.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," is the believer's motto. Godly sorrow and holy joy are blended in his daily experience. He acknowledges his vileness, and esteems Christ precious in his Nature, his Person, his Offices, his Character, and his Work.

Oh! that I may have grace more deeply to enter into the views and feelings of the true believer. Blessed Jesus! speak peace to my conscience, create purity in my heart, destroy the seeds of evil, implant the living principle of faith, and make me wholly to live to you. Seal salvation to my heart. Give me the inward witness, the Spirit of adoption, the earnest of the future inheritance. Leave me not for one moment, lest I fall; and bind me to yourself by the strong, indissoluble bonds, of redeeming, everlasting love!

How precious is the Grace of God. All blessings flow from this eternal fountain. Lord! pity a poor polluted worm, who now looks to You as the God of all grace, mercy, and peace. Take away the heart of stone, my hard, rebellious, heart, which yet pants after You. O, make me sensible of your infinite mercies, and of those innumerable transgressions which are known only unto You. Save me from my secret faults, faults to which I may be blind, through the deceitfulness of sin. Give me self-knowledge. Cause me to know the worst of myself, however humbling, however painful, the disclosure may be. I have no hope but in the atonement of Jesus, my only Savior. May I ever trust in his blood, who is God manifest in the flesh. May I ever be found in him, who is the Lord my Righteousness.

Oh! heavenly Father, send down the Spirit of your Son into my heart, that I may be filled with light and love. Save me, blessed Lord! from the captivating influence of earthly things. My foolish heart is ever wandering from You, the true, and only center of felicity. Everything around me is fleeting and unsatisfying; yet assuming an importance which it does not possess. My soul is boundless in its desires, being formed for immortality. It seeks after happiness, and what but your infinite goodness can satisfy the cravings of my never-dying soul? O, in mercy, draw my heart, and fix it in Yourself. Unite all my scattered affections to fear your name. Let every thought be submissive to your sway.

Satan is never idle. His suggestions are perpetually presented to the mind in one form or other. If gross sin be hateful, and a temptation to it would drive the believer to fervent prayer, the arch enemy craftily avoids such an awakening temptation. He, therefore, attacks the believer in another way. By a constant succession of trifling, unprofitable, suggestions; by presenting images of earthly things before the eye of the mind, by filling the imagination with a thousand dreams and fancies, he labors quietly, and without alarm, to draw away the heart from God. He thus distracts the mind, dissipates the thoughts, and entangles the affections, until, at length, the grieved Spirit of God withdraws his comfort, and leaves the unwatchful believer in a state of darkness, bordering on despair.

O, blessed Jesus, you mighty Conqueror of this enemy of my soul, shield me by your grace; arm me with your power, and enable me to resist and overcome this dreadful foe. Lord, I am

helplessness itself. Undertake for me. I am nothing but guilt and misery, save me, for your mercy's sake.

31. THE BURDEN OF SIN DEPLORED

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"For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened." 2 Corinthians 5:4

The worldly-minded professor and the formalist, are alike insensible to the evil of sin. With their lips, indeed, they can say, "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable," while they neither feel sorrow for sin, nor groan under the weight of it. From the table of the Lord, the one can pursue his pleasures, and the other his covetous desires. The one clothes his vices with specious names; the other covers the evil of his heart with a punctilious observance of outward duties. Both stand on the same level in the sight of God, though each despises the other. The formalist considers the worldling as profane; the worldling views the formalist as hypocritical. Pride reigns in both. The love of God dwells in neither.

If we calmly survey what passes around us, we cannot but be pained, if taught of God, to see what trouble people take to impose upon themselves. Everyone has some excuse to make for what he does. If you speak to a man of the world, he will soon tell you, that it will not do to be singular; that we must conform to the maxims, customs, and fashions of the world, if we would avoid the odious name of 'saint'.

If you converse with the formalist, he will extol, as of the first importance, the rites and ceremonies of his Church, while he sneers at experimental religion, the religion of the heart, as being enthusiastic, and carrying things too far. Even among real Christians, those, whose hearts have been converted to God, but differing from each other on some points of church discipline and government, we too often see a lamentable lack of that charity, which is the bond of perfectness. This is truly a mournful sight! Oh! that the enemies of the Gospel could say of us, as the persecutors of the Church once did, "See how these Christians love one another."

Few, alas! in this evil day, when divisions distract the Church of Christ, are able, in a spirit of brotherly love, and Christian fellowship, to unite with Paul in his Catholic prayer; "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The extreme of all parties seize upon the keys in a spirit of Popedom, and open or close the door of admission into the Church, as they think proper. There is a Pope in every heart. How many are turned out of the church, whom Christ will own when he makes up his jewels. Oh! what an unspeakable blessing it is to know, and to feel assured, upon the inspired truth of God, that Christ alone holds the keys of Sovereign Authority and Power. "All power," said he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "I am the first and the last; I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." "These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens."

It may be replied; Did not our Lord say to Peter- "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall

loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." He did, and Peter was peculiarly honored in being the first to open the door into the Christian Church, both to Jews and Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost, through his preaching, three thousand souls were added to the Church, from among the assembled Jews at Jerusalem. And, in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit was imparted, and repentance unto life was granted to the Gentile company, who also heard from the lips of Peter the words of eternal life.

Peter, in common with the other Apostles, was inspired to declare the will of God, which should be binding on the Church in every age. To him, as well as to the rest of the Apostles, was given power to exercise a salutary discipline in the Church, and to separate from it, heinous offenders. This being done, according to the revealed Will of God, would be ratified in heaven.

Paul, "called to be an Apostle," though, as he expresses it, "as one born out of due time," had an equal commission with the twelve. He use this apostolic authority in the Church of Corinth, by cutting off, for a time, an offending member. "Also in the Church of Thessalonica. The same discipline he exercised over Hymeneus and Alexander. The power thus delegated by our Lord, as Head of his Church, was not for destruction, but for edification. Peter, therefore, writes, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." So also writes Paul; "To spare you, I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." "I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up, not to tear you down."

These passages clearly show how the Apostles used the keys of authority in the Church, and expose the arrogant pretensions of the Church of Rome, as if she were the sole proprietress of the keys, the mother and mistress of all churches, and the Pope, the successor of Peter, and the Sovereign Pontiff, to open and shut the kingdom of heaven as he pleases. Instead of employing ecclesiastical authority for the edification of the Church, the Papal Hierarchy employs it for the sole purpose of establishing their own power, of filling their own coffers, and of persecuting even unto death (when able so to do) the saints of the Most High, who dare not conform to their idolatrous rites, nor receive their anti-Christian dogmas.

Instead of teaching her sinful members to look unto Jesus for pardon and peace, and to trust only in the merits of his blood for acceptance with God, who fulfilled all the righteousness of the law for us; she sends them to the Priest, who, at the confessional, puts himself in the place of God, and then absolves them in the plenitude of his power. They return pacified in their consciences, by this priestly quietus, regardless of the One Atonement which Christ made for sin.

Instead of directing her members to the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and whose intercession alone can prevail with God; this Apostate Church sends her blinded votaries to the Virgin Mary, as "the Mother of divine grace," "the Queen of all saints" thus lowering the majesty and glory of the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And, as if this did not sufficiently eclipse the Sun of Righteousness, she multiplies her intercessors, and fills her sanctuaries with the images of her idol saints!

Happy would it be, if many in the Protestant Church did not tread so near the multiplied errors of the Church of Rome. We are ever prone to extremes. There is a danger of undervaluing the blessed instituted sacraments of our Lord; and there is also a danger of unduly exalting them, beyond the design for which they were appointed. The only fountain of grace is God in Christ. All grace flows down to, us from the ever adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither creatures nor sacraments have any inherent virtue in themselves to confer grace, They are not the fountain, but channels or golden pipes, through which the golden oil of grace is conveyed to the believing soul, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Without faith in the heart of the recipient the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, will be but an empty channel, through which no living water will pass to the soul.

Oh! what a blessing it is to be a Bible Christian, to bear the Image of Christ, to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Without this, no forms of religion, however excellent; no Church, however pure, to which we may have nominally belonged, can help us when Christ comes to judgment. We may then say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?....and in your name done many wonderful works?" but the Great Searcher of hearts will answer- "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." We may now loftily exclaim, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we", but, at the righteous revelation of God, we shall be found to be no better than heathen temples, in which the idols of self-righteousness, pride, and persecuting zeal have had the homage of our hearts.

Oh! my soul, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of errors and heresies, keep near to your Almighty Savior. I groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within me? Oh! that they may be forever removed. I trust I can say- "I hate vain thoughts," and yet, alas! how they swarm, at times, like locusts, darkening the air, and devouring every green herb of the field. It was said by the Prophet, "O, Jerusalem! will you not be made clean? when shall it once be?" Lord, make me clean, even now. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Holiness is happiness. I want to feel every evil motion subdued, every thing contrary to the will of God entirely done away. I know that there is no arriving at sinless perfection in this life.

But, perfection is the Christian's aim. It was Paul's desire for his converts; "This also we wish, even your perfection." An absolute freedom from all sin, in mind, affection, will, and conduct, forms one of the glories of heaven, where, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, will be gathered, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. There they shall be arrayed in linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of saints. Their sanctification will then be complete when they see Jesus, and are made like him in the perfection of holiness.

Is there a point at which the Christian may stop striving? No, there is not. While running the heavenly race, we must forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and thus press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "As many as be perfect," all who have attained to a ripeness in Christian graces, and who have come to "full age" in Christian experience, will be thus minded.

The two great commandments are, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and you shall love your neighbor as

yourself." Where is the soul in this corrupted world, who, before conversion, truly loved the Lord? The question will be intuitively answered, "It cannot be found." And where is the soul who, after conversion, has never had occasion for one moment to mourn over cold affections, or wandering desires after earthly things? Where is the man who can boldly affirm, I have never, since the hour of my conversion, in any one instance, sinned against God. He who can say so is lamentably ignorant of himself.

Oh! that I may have grace to humble myself in the presence of Him who looks at the heart. I have no ground for self-complacency, no reason for self-exultation. I have daily cause for mourning when I review my own heart— that vile, deceitful, hateful thing. And yet, I have daily cause to rejoice in the Lord, whose faithfulness and truth, whose forbearance and patience, whose pity and love, are like himself, infinite, unbounded, unsearchable.

Oh! that I had a vigorous, lively, active, faith. This, like the strong west wind in Egypt, which drove the locusts into the Red Sea, would drive away the hated evils from my heart. Guilty fears, painful apprehensions, dire forebodings, misgiving thoughts, anxious cares, tumultuous imaginations, with all the swarms of worldly lusts, carnal desires, and whatever else is formed and fostered in my wretched heart, would then be all destroyed like Pharaoh's army, through the almighty power of Jesus.

Be glorified, O Lord, in my complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption and the dominion of sin. Fill me with spiritual light. Bring me into the glorious liberty of the Gospel, and at last conduct me safely through the Jordan of death into the celestial Canaan. While a sojourner in the wilderness, guide me by the pillar of fire; screen me with the overshadowing cloud; feed me with the heavenly manna; refresh me with the waters from the smitten rock. Give me a holy courage in your cause, a holy confidence in your mercy, a holy consolation in your exceeding great and precious promises. Strengthen me to fight manfully under the banner of the Cross, to face my enemies without fear, knowing that He, who is with me, is greater than all they who are against me. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, may I have grace continually to advance, never to retreat.

In your divine armory, you have furnished me with the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, but nothing is provided for the back. The cowardly Christian, who flies from his foes, is exposed to the fiery darts of Satan, and may fall vanquished on the field of battle. "Go forward," was your command to Moses, when Israel was enclosed by mountains, the army of Pharaoh behind them, and the Red Sea before them. They obeyed your word, the waters were divided, they passed in safety between the liquid walls, they saw their enemies dead on the sea shore, and sang a song of gladness unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, who had made the host of Pharaoh to sink as lead in the mighty waters.

Oh! give me grace to "go forward," to follow the Captain of my salvation, strengthened by his promise, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

32. TRUE WISDOM THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

32. TRUE WISDOM THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.... Happy is every one that retains her." Proverbs 3:17-18

Earthly things can never satisfy the enlarged desires of an immortal soul. This is the reason why worldly people are so restless and changeable. Temporal objects soon cloy and satiate, therefore they fly from flower to flower like vagrant butterflies, until death closes their idle chase after an unreal happiness.

Did they possess true wisdom, they would discover the source of true felicity. Christ and happiness are inseparable. If we find true happiness, it is because we have found Christ; for, if we find Christ, we must be happy. The pardon of sin, peace with God, purity of heart, and the hope of glory, cannot fail to render the believer blessed.

The first lesson which we learn in the school of Christ is HUMILITY. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Many are eager to dive into the deep things of God, before they have well learned the first principles of the gospel of Christ. Hence arises that caution of Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, respecting the ordination of men to the ministry; "Not a novice, (one newly come to the faith) lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

There is something dangerously pleasing in exercising our ingenuity, and in disputing about the hidden mysteries of our holy religion. But this unhallowed spirit not infrequently leads to unscriptural theories, and even to skepticism itself.

Another lesson which we learn in the school of Christ, after the knowledge of our own nothingness, and the all-sufficiency of the Savior, is the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all his pleasure." Through his word, the Almighty has communicated his will concerning us. We know no further than he has been pleased to make known his ways unto us; therefore, to argue, and draw inferences, and make deductions, and come to conclusions upon those things, around which infinite wisdom has drawn an impenetrable veil, is presumptuous and sinful. True wisdom is ever accompanied with humility.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is a responsible creature, possessing an immortal spirit. He is treated as such by all those arguments, warnings, threatenings, promises, encouragements, and entreaties, which are scattered throughout the sacred volume, to alarm and allure him, to rouse and draw him to the fountain of happiness, to his God and Savior, from whom he has revolted, to whom he is invited, and through whose sovereign love alone he can be saved.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is in a state of spiritual death; utterly helpless, and unable to repent, believe, and obey, through any natural power or willingness of his own; that if left to himself he must inevitably perish, like a man tied hand and foot and thrown into the sea. We are

tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and if not saved by another, must be lost forever.

The Scriptures also declare, that God's foreknowledge is infinite; that he sees the end from the beginning; that nothing can happen without his command or permission. This is proved by prophecies clearly foretold, and minutely accomplished, without forcing the human will; the guilt of the accomplishment resting upon the sinner, who acts freely, while the counsels of heaven are wisely and mysteriously fulfilled. "Him," said Peter to the Jews, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

This short view should teach us the impropriety, yes, the impiety, of refusing to admit any truth of Scripture, because it does not exactly square with our preconceived ideas of the Christian system. Hence arises the necessity of continually reverting to our first lesson, HUMILITY. Like the letters of the alphabet, this sweet grace of the Spirit forms the basis of true heavenly knowledge, from the first rudiments to the highest attainments in the school of Christ; yes, the higher we advance in heavenly wisdom, the lower we shall fall in self-abasement. "Children, young men, and fathers," must all be clothed with humility, but more especially the matured Christian. In heaven, the angels veil their faces with their wings. In heaven, the saints cast their crowns before the throne.

Blessed Lord! give me the spirit of a little child. Let me never reject your counsel, nor rebel against your sovereignty. Clothe me with humility, fill me with love. Teach me to do your will. What I cannot comprehend, give me grace to believe. It is enough that You have said it. Enable me daily to repose my soul on your promises. I know that all good comes from you; all evil from myself. You are the source of true felicity, the fountain of living waters; in the fullness of your grace you have invited me to come, that I may "take the water of life freely." Lord, I come at your command, and by your power; O save me for your mercy's sake.

Without attempting to explain and make clear the deep, yet holy decrees of the Almighty, or to reconcile by human arguments those truths which, however apparently at variance, are in perfect unison with each other, let us rather study the divine word as a practical book, showing us what we must believe and do, in order to obtain eternal life. The wisdom of God is not confined within the narrow limits of our contracted conceptions, no more than his creation is contained within the circle of our powers of vision. All the sublime revelations of Jehovah throw a glory around his justice, holiness, and love. All his perfections blend and harmonize at the Cross of Christ. The blessings of redemption are promised by the Father, purchased by the Son, and bestowed through the Holy Spirit. All proceed from the unmerited, sovereign grace of the Triune Jehovah. Sinners lying under the curse of a broken law, and bound by the chain of a will at enmity with God, are now redeemed and restored to the image of God, and a child-like obedience to his will.

If our hearts have been humbled, if we have been brought under a consciousness of guilt and misery to the foot of the Cross, if we have been led to renounce our own fancied righteousness, and, if we have been enabled to lay hold upon Christ as our Savior, as our Advocate with the Father, as our only hope of glory; and if, in consequence of this apprehension of Christ by faith, we feel our hearts drawn to him in love, choosing him as our portion, and walking in him as our way, in opposition to all worldly portions and ways, not fearing his reproach, but glorying in the Cross- then we have discovered the source of true happiness, then we possess that inward witness of which John speaks; that testimony of the conscience, and that witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, of

which Paul speaks; and that manifestation of Christ to our hearts, of which He himself speaks to his disciples. Then we may look back to our election in Christ, and forwards to our being with him in glory. Where is boasting? It is excluded. Where is license to sin? It is forever banished from this holy ground, where proud reason must put off her shoes from off her feet.

Here nothing can stand, but what is humble. Here none can walk, but the redeemed of the Lord. Holiness and humility flow from the electing love of God, not from the natural working of the heart. God alone shall be exalted, who alone is to be adored. Woe to that rebellious worm who shall dare to tear the laurels from the Savior's brow, and place them on his own. Man fell through pride. He is saved through humility, for

"Christ will sooner abdicate his own,
Than stoop from heaven to give the proud a throne."

Oh! gracious Savior, may I ever look to you in a spirit of humility, follow you in a spirit of humility, and seek to glorify you by a spirit of humility. Preserve me from the pride of reason, and the pride of works. Empty me of self, and replenish me out of the fullness of your love. Direct me aright through the mazes of this erring world. Allow me not to lose, through sloth or unbelief, the pleasures of heavenly wisdom. Shine upon my soul, and increase my trust in you, while passing through this contentious, sinful region, to your abode of glory.

What can more conduce to the happiness of the soul than to know that we are the Lord's. This knowledge, blessed be God, is not unattainable; it is a knowledge essential to our peace. Some may call it presumptuous, but so did not John, or he would not have said, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." Again he wrote; "Hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us." Oh! happy experience.

The Spirit's witness does not consist in mere rapturous feelings, ecstasies, and impulses, which are often the offspring of a heated imagination, strong passions, and enthusiastic emotions; but it consists in those filial dispositions of love, and fear, and reverence, which are accompanied with joy and peace in believing, and cause the happy believer to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh! that this may be my blessed experience! Paul, who enjoyed this precious witness, declares, that "experience works hope; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us." We cannot, therefore, have a well-grounded hope of glory, through the righteousness of Christ, if we have not the inward experience of the love of God in our souls, which is the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, "Abba Father," and to draw near unto God in Christ, as the Father of mercies, yes, as our Father, and the God of all consolation. In this way, the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God, by filling us with love to God, and transforming us into the image of God; that, being made his children by adoption and grace, we may bear a resemblance to our heavenly Father in righteousness and true holiness.

The religion of Jesus is a religion of love, from its promulgation to its consummation. God is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The work of Christ is love. Oh! that I may live under the constraining influence of love,

"This is the grace which lives and sings,
When faith and hope shall cease,
'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings,
In the sweet realms of bliss."

The more we possess of this grace, the more we shall resemble God the Father, Son, and Spirit; the more we shall enjoy of heaven in our own souls; the more we shall create a little heaven around us; and the more we shall be fitted for that pure world, where love reigns eternal in every redeemed, in every angel's breast.

Oh! happy state! the work of sovereign grace. Compared with this blessedness, how beclouded are the prospects, how unsatisfying the pleasures and pursuits of a fallen world. True wisdom is the only source of true felicity. To cultivate these views and feelings, these principles and affections, is far better than to spend our time in vain researches after those things which the human mind can never fathom; or to spend our breath in disputations which can yield no profit.

A pious and humble search after truth, a holy contemplation and discourse upon the sublimities of Christian doctrine; a reverential meditation on the deep things of God, into which even angels desire to look, is not forbidden. But a disputatious spirit, a love of controversy, a war of words, a desire of victory, a pertinacity in maintaining our own opinions, a readiness to judge those who differ from us as unbelievers, betrays an unhumbled, an unsanctified heart. Such a spirit engenders strife, sows discord, divides the church of Christ, fosters vain-glory, and, like a nipping frost, checks the growth of the heavenly plant, and destroys those brotherly affections which characterize the children of God.

To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, is a Christian duty, but we must contend in a spirit of love. The revelation of the divine will was not made to promote our natural love of curiosity, but to show us our state and our duty, and to bring us, through the operation of the Spirit, to a child-like conformity to this revealed will. Our blessed Lord evidently proves this, when he says; "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight." The worldly-wise are allowed to remain in the darkness of their boasted wisdom, while humble, docile minds are enlightened from above. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Under the darkest cloud, and in the deepest waters, may these gracious promises support and comfort me- "Do not fear; for I am with you." "When you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "All things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." "What I do, you do not know now; but you shall know hereafter."

Blessed Lord, be pleased to impart the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know You as my covenant God and Father, and Jesus Christ as my friend and Savior; that I may receive the truth in love, not daring to dive into your decrees, those secret things which you have wisely concealed from man. Teach me what I ought to do; show me the path of life, and enable me to walk therein. Give me an increase of faith and love, of peace and joy, until my soul, made happy in your love, shall take its flight beyond the shadows of this world, to where the glories of redemption will be unfolded to the Church triumphant, amid songs of never-ending praise!

Would you be happy here below?

Let not your heart on earth remain;

Can fleeting pleasures, mixed with woe,

A solid happiness contain?

Would you be happy here below?

Beware of pleasure's gilded snare,

Its painted vanities forego,

Which end in tears and dark despair.

Would you be happy here below?

Seek not the wealth which worldlings prize,

A nobler treasure seek to know,

Eternal in the blissful skies.

Would you be happy here below?

Avoid false honor's empty name-

A glare, a momentary show,

Which leads to everlasting shame.

Would you be happy here below?

To heaven direct your warm desire,

There, let your constant footsteps go;

There, let your wishes all aspire.

Would you be happy here below?

Oh! love the Savior—Prince of Peace;

Then anguish you shall never know,

Your joy in Him will never cease.

33. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

33. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

"Unto you who believe, he is precious." 1 Peter 2:7

Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has taught us what is truly precious.

"You were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ."

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

"Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious."

O! that Christ may ever be precious to my soul in all his offices, characters, and relations, which he bears in the covenant of grace to his believing people. Faith, which receives Christ into the heart, is also a precious gift of God. Thus writes the Apostle, "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." "You greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The experience of God's children is the same in every age. David, in the overflowings of his love, sang- "How precious is your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings." "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we shall daily feel him to be precious. His righteousness is our garment of salvation. His Truth our shield and buckler. All this blessedness we freely enjoy, without money and without price. O what can be more transporting than the assurance that Christ is mine, and I am his. What would we be without Christ? Miserable and undone! To make us value the Savior, the Spirit makes us feel our ruined state. He shows us our wretchedness, and causes us to feel it, that we may long for deliverance.

Were we not sinners there would be no need of a Savior, for the whole need not a physician, but only those who are sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. Hence we find, that to feel our malady, to feel our need of Jesus, is requisite to our believing application of Him, and our believing dependence upon Him. "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious."

Some people are apt to think that something must be done, in order to render them fit to receive grace; that something like a price must be brought in their hand. This is the leaven of Popery, the leaven of self-righteousness. This is the barrier which prevents many from coming to Christ. Oh! the deep-rooted legality of our fallen nature! They cannot conceive that Jesus will receive the vilest who come unto him. Hence they try to remove their 'leopard spots', their 'Ethiopian blackness', by outward reformation, while the corruption lies deep within. Wearied with the vain attempt to keep the innate evil from ripening into outward acts of wickedness, they are led through grace, to throw themselves in self-despair at the feet of Jesus, crying— "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord save me, or I perish."

And are they repulsed? Oh! no! The loving heart of the Savior receives them; the loving arms of the Savior embrace them, as the father did the returning prodigal; they obtain a full forgiveness, through faith in his blood; they are clothed with the robe of his righteousness; they receive the ring of reconciliation; a feast of fat things is provided for them; and they are filled with peace, and purity, and joy.

Thus, while nature is always moving in a circle, and never reaching the center of happiness, grace, by a direct line, leads the sinner at once to Christ. "As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit always leads the sinner to the Cross, where we are admitted into the family of God; for, says Paul, "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

How invaluable is a childlike spirit; to feel our will acquiescing in the will of God. This spiritual feeling is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to guide us into all truth. No power of reason, no stretch of intellect, no determination of the will, left to its natural action, can raise us above the effects of the Fall. As water, by its own power cannot rise above its own level, no more can we.

To receive Christ into the heart by faith is the sole operation of the Spirit; for John declares that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Christ is the author and source of all blessedness. Where can rest be found but in Him whose precious name is Emmanuel, God with us? None who trust in him shall ever be confounded. To suppose such a thing, would be to contradict his own word. It is the natural unbelief of our hearts which keeps us away from Christ, and consequently from holiness and happiness.

Did all the world truly believe, all the world would assuredly be saved; for the command of Christ to his disciples was, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." If all had believed the word of his grace, all would have been saved, to whom the Apostles declared the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There are many shades in the moral character of mankind, some lighter, some darker, but all, without exception, are naturally unbelievers in heart, and while remaining in this awful state, they exclude themselves from those blessings which a merciful God has provided for us through the gift of his Son. How precious is faith, and because precious, how rare a thing it is! The boasted virtues of worldly morality are as common as the pebbles in the brook; while the graces of the Spirit, like precious stones, are only here and there to be seen.

O! that my heart were overflowing with love to Jesus, and ardently longing for his salvation. He is precious to those who believe. Do I esteem Christ as the pearl of great price? Am I willing to part with all that the world and the flesh hold dear, to obtain this inestimable treasure? Lord impart Yourself to me. Dwell in my heart, as in a temple consecrated to your glory. May the fire of holy love ever burn on the altar of my heart, and never go out.

What daily need we have to watch against spiritual lukewarmness. This evil state of heart will creep insensibly upon us without much watchfulness and prayer. A daily humbling sense of our sinfulness, a daily feeling of our need of Jesus, a constant looking unto him, and a believing application of his precious blood and righteousness, can alone keep us in a lively, dependent, loving, obedient frame of mind. O that we may be in earnest about salvation, then will our peace flow as a river.

The God whom we serve is a God of love. How marvelously has he manifested forth the glory of his grace in the redemption of the world. But, alas! we have heard so long, and so often, about the dying love of Jesus, that it ceases to affect our hearts with that intensity which those feel who are first awakened to a sense of their danger and deliverance. Should it be thus with us? Is not this leaving our first love? Must it not be grievous to an infinitely loving, and precious Savior? Oh! that I may hourly mourn over this lamented, this hated coldness, at the foot of the Cross, until I become like the burning seraphim, a flame of love.

What a wonderful provision has a God of mercy made for our present and future happiness. He wills our good. We, strange to say, seem to will our own misery, for thus said our Lord, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." Oh! how much we forsake our own mercies, when we forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The reason why people in general are so averse to true religion, must be from their wrong apprehensions of it. They look upon it as a system of restraints, a withholding from them the beloved enjoyments of the world. But, what can be so consonant with right reason, as to devote ourselves to the service of that God from whom we receive our being, and every other good thing connected with our existence? It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being; and it is to Him we are indebted for all our comforts as traveling pilgrims. But, how immensely is our obligation to live to his glory increased, when we consider, that we are not our own, being bought with a price, and that price no less than the precious blood of his own dear Son. Nothing but the blinding, hardening, deceiving nature of sin, and the influence of Satan on our minds and hearts, can keep us from this most reasonable devotedness of ourselves to God. Herein lies our guilt. From hence, arises our misery.

O that I may now be like my Savior in holiness; live near to him in daily fellowship; and when released from the body, dwell forever with him in glory.

34. THE LIFE OF FAITH

34. THE LIFE OF FAITH

"The just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2:4

The life of the redeemed through Christ Jesus is a life of faith. Being united to the glorified Head of the mystical body, the Church, believers receive all their spiritual life, all their vital influence from above. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. All his people live by and through Him. He is their hiding-place, their refuge from every danger; their life is hidden with Christ in God; because he lives, they shall live also. Thousands call themselves Christians, who know nothing of the life of faith. They are zealous for their Church, but it is a party zeal. Some floating images of the truth pass through their minds, but no abiding principles of the Gospel influence or sanctify their hearts. There is a wide difference between speculative and experimental religion. The one, is the religion of the head, the other, the religion of the heart. If the mind is merely enlightened, the soul resembles a star-lit night in winter- clear, but cold. When the heart is brought under the influence of the Sun of Righteousness, the soul, abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, presents the lovely appearance of summer- all is warmth and beauty.

The merit of works is the doctrine of the Church of Rome. The doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, is the peculiar characteristic of the gospel, and forms a touchstone whereby to judge of the soundness or unsoundness of Protestant churches. The doctrine of justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ, as it brings the highest glory to God, so it secures the best interests of holiness in the heart of the believer. The fact is, at once, both true and striking, that the very individuals who renounce their own works in the article of their justification before God, and therefore are charged with encouraging licentiousness, are the very individuals who, from their anxiety to maintain good works as the fruits of faith and evidences of their justification, are stigmatized as methodistical, and being righteous over-much, by the self-righteous boasters of good works. But the tree is known by its fruits.

God is infinitely just, therefore he demands an infinite satisfaction from his rebellious creatures. His law is holy, and demands a sinless obedience to all its requirements. What we esteem a small breach of the commandments, is punishable with eternal death- "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Can a finite creature give an infinite satisfaction? Can a being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, with a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, keep the law of God whole and undefiled? It is impossible. The attempt is vain. Let a person try for one day to keep the entire law of God, reaching as it does to the thoughts, purposes, desires, and affections of the heart, without the least possible deviation from its demands, and he will, in one hour be led to cry out, if sincere, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Man has devised many ways to escape the way of God's appointment; but after all his labors, he remains a guilty sinner still. Penances cannot remove guilt, neither can the Purgatorial fire, that

unscriptural ordeal of the Romish church, purge it away. Superstition may use its whips and scourges, its rough-haired garments and frequent fastings, to mortify the body and propitiate heaven, but all in vain -the old Adam gathers strength by the very means employed to subdue the inbred evil. All prove, at last, to be no better than a spider's web, a refuge of lies.

O blessed Redeemer, preserve me from the fatal leaven of self-righteousness; from the wily crafts of Satan. Lead me to a saving knowledge of myself. Teach me the good and the right way to the mercy-seat. You are the way. Oh! may I daily walk with you by faith; holding sweet communion with you, and deriving all my strength from your fullness. While renouncing every work which would dare to join itself with you, in my acceptance with the Father, may I be ever zealous of good works, thus proving myself to be among that little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. Save me from Romish errors, from every anti-christian doctrine which would raise man and depress you. Oh! make me faithful in maintaining the truth, and fearless in boldly confessing you before men.

Almighty God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised a plan which his love and power have executed, and which, through his grace, he has revealed to us in the gospel of his Son. By an act of inconceivable mercy, he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus being made under the law, became our righteousness, by fulfilling in our nature all its requirements, and by suffering in our stead all its penalties. The moment, therefore, that we truly believe, and receive him into our hearts by faith, we are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. All that the law can do, is to convince and to condemn. It is the gospel alone which enlightens and saves the soul.

Precious faith, the inestimable gift of God, is what we need. This grace, by uniting us to Christ, puts us in possession of all his merits, makes us interested in his salvation, and opens a direct way of access to God, who views us in his Son, as his adopted children. Oh! what a blessed revelation of mercy and grace! No wonder, if Satan strive to hide it from our view. Happy are they who, tasting the sweetness of this redemption, can sing with David- "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

As 'justification by faith alone' strikes at the root of human pride, it is no marvel if the proud sinner, as well as Satan, rise against it. It requires no small degree of humility to renounce all creature dependence, all our fancied excellence, and to trust solely in the finished work of Jesus for acceptance with God. This blessed state of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. He can so take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us; he can so guide us into all truth, as to make us delight in every thing which we naturally dislike; that is, an entire renunciation of our own supposed goodness, and an entire reception of Christ and his righteousness.

When this glorious work is wrought in our souls, then we become the very members of Christ's mystical body; we pass from death unto life, we are made the heirs of eternal glory. Oh! transporting privilege! the heirs of perdition to be made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ! Truly this is the rest, and this is the refreshing. How delightful are the words of Paul; "We which have believed do enter into rest." Yes! even now, in this tumultuous world, we enter into rest. We rest in the love of God; we rest on the bosom of our Redeemer; we rest in the promises of his grace, and thus coming to him, and relying upon him, we find rest unto our souls. Christ is the only resting-place for the weary soul. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." But, "in me,"

says Christ to his people, "you shall have peace."

The carnal heart naturally hates this revelation of grace, and the character which it produces. Religion in its present form is so uncongenial to the natural man, that it requires not the aid of moroseness or austerity to render it unpalatable. Though it come to him clothed with humility, with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and smiling with benignity and love, yet he turns with aversion from this lovely object. Thus it was when He, who was the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely, came unto his own; his own received him not; they saw no beauty in him, nothing that they should desire him.

If the natural heart dislikes the religion of Jesus, how careful should real Christians be, lest by a lack of the due exhibition of Christian graces, they should prejudice the ungodly against Christianity itself. True religion is lovely in its native character. We disfigure it too often by unchristian tempers, and thus impede its influence in the circle in which we move. Bad temper, like an impure dross, sullies the crystal cup of domestic comfort. What contradictions we often hear- "He is an excellent Christian, and would be quite a pattern, if it were not for his temper, which often carries him beyond the bounds of moderation!" Nothing is more common than such an observation among professors of religion! He is a good man- but this spoils all.

Oh! did we live a life of faith in the Son of God, we would live in the daily cultivation of heavenly tempers. Our study and aim would be to tread in the steps of the meek and lowly Savior; to drink deep into his spirit; and by a life enhancing godliness, to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Knowing from where these blessings flow we should "wait on the Lord." How expressive is the Hebrew word for wait. "It implies the extension of a right line from one point to another. The first point is the human heart, the line is its intense desire, and the last point is God, to whom the heart extends this straight line of earnest desire. He who, while he waits on God, keeps his way, is sure to have the further blessings of which he is in pursuit."

Oh! that my wandering heart may thus be led to proceed in one unbroken line of holy, heavenly desires, towards my God and Savior. Blessed Jesus! the work must be yours. You, you alone can bind my runaway affections to Yourself. You, who are the Life, O quicken me to live a life of faith in you. Perform your work of love in me, and then, through all eternity, my work of praise will never cease.

How precious is a life of faith,

In Jesus' never-failing word;

To credit all the Savior says,

To trust the promise of the Lord.

It gives a calm, a sweet repose,

Which gilds the varying scenes of life;

A peace, the true believer knows,

While passing through this world of strife.

His mind is kept in perfect peace,
When stayed upon his faithful God;
While terrors on the sinner seize,
Beneath Jehovah's vengeful rod.
When judgments, like the thunders roll,
And nations quake through guilt and fear;
When earth is shook from pole to pole,
Believers feel their Savior near.
They walk with Jesus, and are blessed;
They walk in love, and can rejoice;
They walk to their celestial rest,
Their souls' delightful, happy choice.
Along this consecrated way,
Which all the saints of old have trod,
I hasten to the eternal day,
To you, my Savior, and my God.

35. SEEKING AFTER GOD

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"O God, you are my God; early will I seek you." Psalms 63:1

The real value of a thing is not to be estimated by the eagerness with which it is sought. If this were to be our rule of judging, we would be sadly deceived.

To amass wealth, men rise early, and late take rest. To obtain this object of their desire, they navigate oceans, traverse deserts, endure privations, and often risk life itself.

To gain worldly glory, the warrior braves the cannon's mouth, combats in the blood-stained field, snatches the laurel-wreath from the very hand of death, and expires amid the shouts of victory.

To immortalize his name, the man of science wastes the midnight oil, and wastes still more the oil of life. Health droops beneath the mental toil; he lights the torch of fame, and dies!

To tread the flowery paths of pleasure, multitudes devote their days. Each thought, each hour, is drawn into the circle of dissipation. Like summer-flies, they bask in the sun-beam of delight; and like these insects of a day, they quickly disappear, unregretted by the world.

In this anxious search for riches, glory, fame, and pleasure, so all-absorbing, so incessant, God is forgotten. That Being, who is the First Great Cause of all, man seeks not. How powerful are the calls of Infinite Love; "Seek my face." "Seek the Lord while he may be found." "Seek me, and you shall live." But the gracious sound falls unheeded on the ear.

Oh! Heavenly Father, give me grace to seek you with my whole soul, to seek you with the best affections of my heart, the best powers and faculties of my mind. May all my talents, my time, my tongue, my worldly substance, be employed in your service; for only of your own can I render unto You. To You be all the praise, O source and giver of every good.

As the wild uncivilized Indian barter the precious metals of his country for worthless beads and trinkets, so, many professing Christians, though baptized in the name of Christ, barter their precious souls for the empty baubles of the world. Did we know God through the teaching of his Spirit; did we know the value of our own souls, oh! how differently we would act. Then would our language be that of the Psalmist, proceeding from the fullness of our hearts, "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you."

Truly delightful is the contemplation of the love of God in Christ. Here all is light and life. Multitudes are enveloped in darkness, because they hate the light of truth. But, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, when the light of life bursts upon their souls, when Jesus reveals himself to them, in all the fullness of his salvation; then the mists of unbelief fly before the beams of Truth, and their souls are filled with peace and joy.

"God is love." Precious revelation of his grace! Calculated to call forth every expression of thankfulness, and to awaken every grateful feeling. Oh! that my cold heart could resemble the seraphims above, who, burning with sacred fire, surround the throne of Jehovah. As God is love, so all his purposes towards his people are love. He wills their happiness. His tender mercies are over all his works. His law is love, forbidding nothing, but what, if indulged in, would harm us; and commanding nothing, but what, if obeyed, will make us happy. How hateful, then, is rebellion against infinite love! How justly deserving everlasting punishment.

All God's afflictive dispensations are the fruit of his love. They are correctives, for the spiritual health of his children. The Gospel of Christ affords the most sublime exhibition of divine love. All our thoughts are lost in this infinity of grace. Oh! that I may have these quickening views of the boundless love of God more vividly impressed on my soul. To every humble penitent, the Scriptures breathe nothing but peace. It is to the hardened infidel, and to the proud Pharisee, that they speak in language of severity. And yet, even to such characters, expostulations are made and pardon offered, if they will only turn to the stronghold, as prisoners of hope. Thus all our misery springs from ourselves. Oh! how supporting it is, under a conscious feeling of innate corruption, to know, that God desires not the death of a sinner; that he is waiting to be gracious; that he can, and will, subdue our iniquities, if, through grace, we apply to him for the balm in Gilead, if we go to him as the Physician there.

Unbelief, interwoven with pride, the love of the world, and the lust of the flesh, forms the barrier between our souls and God. What need, then, there is for humiliation and self-loathing before the slighted Majesty of heaven! Humility, love, and purity, were the holy features of the Redeemer's character while on earth; and if we ardently seek after his blessed image, we shall, even here, be like him in the beauties of holiness.

How gracious is the promise; "You shall seek me, and find me, when you search for me with all your heart." What words can more clearly express the entire affection of the heart. A divided heart will never obtain the blessing; we must seek with all our heart, if we would find God. There is something peculiarly forcible in the monosyllables of the Bible. "You shall find me when you search for me with all your heart " "You are my friends," said Jesus, "if you do whatever I command you." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "If we love one another, God dwells in us." "If we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Most delightful also are the possessive pronouns, when we can make them our own. "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me; you are my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God." "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation." "All things are yours."

Precious truth! if believers in Jesus, heaven will be our eternal home. Both the negative and positive felicity of heaven afford matter for the sweetest meditation. "There shall be no more curse." "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." "There shall be no night there." Such is the negative happiness of heaven.

How glorious is the positive felicity. "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "His servants shall serve him. They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. The Lord God gives them light; and they shall reign forever and ever."

Oh! who would not seek after God with all the heart, to enjoy, through the Savior's grace, such blessedness as this! But, we must have a spiritual perception and a spiritual taste to know and relish heavenly pleasures. No man ever went to heaven whose heart did not go before him. "Where your treasure is," said our divine Redeemer, "there will your heart be also." We find it to be so in earthly things; and it is equally so in spiritual things.

O my soul, are your affections placed on things above? Is Jesus the supreme object of your love? Are all created treasures lost in the one eternal Treasure, the Savior of mankind? Can you truly say "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." What are the common actings of sincere attachment? They are these five-

1. We love to think upon the friend who is dear to our hearts.
2. We love to speak affectionately of him to others.
3. We love to converse with the person whom we esteem.
4. We love to dwell with the beloved object of our regard.
5. We love to do all acts of kindness, and to endure much self-denial, for his sake.

Can you, O my soul, transfer all this to the Savior, and feel, by holy experience, these actings of love towards him? Happy, indeed, are they who daily love to think of Jesus; to speak of him; to converse with him by prayer and reading his word; to dwell with him by faith; and to do and suffer with cheerfulness, all his righteous will. Such "disciples indeed," have heaven let down into their souls, and ascend by these steps to the courts above.

How different is the experience and conduct of mere nominal professors, who, though called Christians, are only heathens in disguise. They never truly seek after God, nor confess their sins with brokenness of heart. They endeavor to conceal their sins, not knowing, or not heeding, the inspired caution, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper." They cover their sins by forgetting them; but God has them in remembrance. They cover their sins by denying them; but God will declare their iniquity. They cover their transgressions by framing excuses for them; but God will stop their mouths in judgment. They cover their iniquities by hypocrisy; but God will make manifest the secrets of their hearts. Surely, then, such conduct cannot prosper. It must bring down the wrath of the Almighty; while he who confesses his sins with humble penitence at the foot of the Cross, and heartily forsakes them through the power of the Holy Spirit, shall have mercy.

O adorable Savior of sinners, manifest Yourself to My soul. Like David may I seek you early. With Daniel may I set my face unto You the Lord my God, to seek by prayer and supplication your pardoning and restoring grace. You have promised to be found by those who seek you with their whole heart. O may I have grace in my search for happiness, to find You the very source and center of felicity. Your presence is heaven below, while journeying to the heaven above. Fill me

with your Spirit; and when my days on earth are ended, receive me to Yourself, where joys unspeakable will never cease.

Gracious is my heavenly King,

Sweet employ his praise to sing;

Ever loving, ever kind,

He has bid me, seek and find.

I would seek Him in his Son,

Who, by grace my heart has won;

Seek Him through his Spirit's power,

Every day, and every hour.

Lord, to me Yourself impart,

Cheer and bless my waiting heart;

Give me mercy, grace, and peace,

Foretaste of eternal bliss.

May I now your love possess,

Traveling through this wilderness;

Until I reach your dwelling-place

And behold you face to face.

There with glorious sons of light,

Clad in pure celestial white,

With my harp of gold I'll sing,

Endless praises to my King!

36. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

36. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"Salvation belongs unto the Lord; your blessing is upon your people." Psalms 3:8

Moses, who saw with inspired vision the blessedness of the righteous, might well exclaim while blessing the children of Israel; "Happy are you, O Israel who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord!" "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long."

Man makes many attempts to save himself, but "Salvation belongs unto the Lord." "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Savior." "I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, who shall save his people from their sins; therefore Jesus is Jehovah. Oh! that I may unite in heart with David- "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Protect them, so all who love your name may be filled with joy. For you bless the godly, O Lord, surrounding them with your shield of love."

If we have a saving interest in this redemption which is by Christ Jesus, how calmly may we repose on the promises of God; how quietly rest under the shadow of his wings. When the shades of night advance, we can say, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for you only, Lord, make me dwell in safety." If surrounded by enemies; "I will not be afraid of ten thousands that have set themselves against me round about." If living in times of national convulsions; "God is our refuge therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." When threatened with persecution- "When I am afraid, I will trust in you." When awaiting the hour of dissolution; "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me."

The man who can thus possess his soul in patience; who can thus confide in the faithfulness, power, and love of God, is truly blessed. In the midst of storms he enjoys a calm; and when men's hearts are failing them for fear, he can lift up his head, knowing that his redemption draws near. In times of national degeneracy, when, in the expressive language of Micah, "the best of them is a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge;" when the caution is given; "Trust not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide; keep the doors of your mouth from her that lies in your bosom;" and when "a man's enemies are the men of his own house;" in such a time of iniquity and trial, the believer can say with unshaken confidence; "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light unto me."

Truly this is the triumph of faith! The believer's sky is not always free from clouds, but though unseen, the sun is still in the heavens. Jesus ever lives, the Sun of righteousness never sets. The beams of grace on earth, and the beams of glory in heaven, shine with undiminished luster. Faith can pierce through the darkening vapor, and rejoice even in a cloudy day. "There is not a case of

discouragement for which the word of God does not provide a remedy. There is no darkness which Christ cannot remove; no guilt which he cannot take away; no corruption which he cannot subdue." Oh! what a Savior is Jesus Christ.

Well might Peter say- "Unto you therefore who believe, he is precious." How precious is the blood, the righteousness, the intercession of Christ. What a mercy, that there is a fountain opened, not sealed; that we, have an Advocate with the Father, not an accuser. For these blessings we should offer unceasing praise. Our Christian experience must have long since taught us, that this world is not our rest; that here joys and sorrows are mysteriously blended together; but that in Christ is peace, and in heaven is unsullied bliss. True happiness is inseparable from the love of God in Christ. How can earthly things, however splendid or profuse, which "perish in the using," satisfy the desires of an immortal mind? Wealthy people are not, by consequence, happy, simply because they have wealth. A glare is thrown around them, which dazzles the eyes of common beholders; but the eye of faith can discover vanity and vexation of spirit beneath the gaudy equipage, the lordly mansion, and the show of wealth.

Oh! that the peace of God which passes all understanding, may now and ever be my portion. There is something extremely delightful in enjoying the blessings of Providence, not only as pleasant in themselves, but as the gifts of covenant love. This gives a double relish to all the innocent enjoyments of life. But Jesus has said, "Whoever of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple." When tried by this touchstone, O what worldly alloy will be found in our hearts, in the midst of much religious profession. Lord! make me sincere; make me wholly yours. Whatever I love, may it be in subordination to my love to you; and never allow me for one moment to set up an idol in my heart. Reign in me as the Sovereign of my soul. Sway all my powers, until mortality be swallowed up of life.

That man is truly blessed who can say with David, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." With the Lord as our portion, we shall have abundant cause to sing, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." Our gracious Savior, of whose resurrection this Psalm is strikingly prophetic, will show us the path of life, and finally, through his sovereign grace, lead us into his presence, where is fullness of joy, and place us at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore. Should the doubting Christian ask- And can all this blessedness be mine? Can such a sinner as I be admitted to this glory? Is it not rather a pleasing dream? Jesus himself answers the question, to all who truly love him; "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Thus all is "substantial and sincere." If Christ is our portion; if we persevere unto the end, he will receive us to himself, as His portion, in the day when he makes up his jewels.

Oh! that I may have grace to lean only on the hope of his heavenly mercy. Jesus can cause the swelling Jordan to open its waters before me, that I may have a safe passage into the celestial Canaan. At that eventful hour, Faith can make a cheerful heart, and Hope a smiling face, while Love sheds its sunshine of delight over the soul. John Newton beautifully observes, that "Faith is nothing else than the soul's venture. It ventures to Christ, it ventures for Christ; and it ventures in Christ." While possessing this simplicity of faith, I may boldly venture, like Peter, on the boisterous lake, and feel its liquid pavement to be as a rock beneath my feet.

To the true believer, afflictions are blessings in disguise. If the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, shall we shrink from the Cross? It has been well remarked, that "God had one Son without sin; but, that he has none without suffering." The school of the Cross is the school of light, and there must all the children of God be taught, to fit them for the perfect state of glory. An ignorant person, who sees the mariner heaving such a weight of ballast aboard his ship, would suppose he intended to sink her at sea. Just so, whatever the world may think, the troubles and trials of the saints shall never sink them, but keep them from being overturned by every squall, that they may arrive with safety at the haven of rest, having their anchor fixed "within the veil."

Every trial is intended for my good. My foolish heart would be too much attached to earth if the spade were not inserted to loosen the fibers, and disengage the root, that when transplanted, I may bear a richer fruit in the Paradise above. My heavenly Father, whose love and wisdom are infinite, knows exactly what I need, and how much suffering is needed to promote the spirituality of my mind. Shall I then repine at his dispensations of love? To say practically from the heart, "May Your will be done," is not the result of nature, but of grace. How blessed, how peaceful is the believer, who can thus drink into the spirit of his Redeemer!

A murmuring spirit increases every evil. It doubles the affliction. It adds a sting to sorrow. If our hearts are in heaven, the trials of earth will be light and momentary, for love can sweeten every care, and lighten every cross. A Savior's love disarms affliction of its sting.

Oh! that we may learn wisdom by every dispensation of Providence; and yield more fruit by every application of the pruning knife. The divine husbandman prunes every branch in Christ, that it may bring forth more fruit. Whatever makes us more like unto God in his communicable perfections, whatever brings us into a nearer communion with him, through faith in his beloved Son, must increase our holiness and augment our happiness. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of grace and glory. "It should be joy to us, that the eternal Son should come to seek and save us; that he has made a full atonement for our sins; that he has conquered sin and death; that he lives as our Intercessor and Advocate with the Father; and that he will come again to perfect and glorify his persevering believers.

Those, therefore, live below the use and end of the Christian Revelation, who are not filled with spiritual joy. Believers should rejoice in their happy relation to God the Father, as his adopted children; in their happy relation to the Son of the Father as being members of his mystical body and co-heirs with himself; in the pardon of their sins; in the sanctification of their natures; in the prospect of grace and glory that will be revealed at the return of their Lord and Head from heaven. Were they confirmed in their holy faith, how would they rejoice. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

O, God of my salvation, enable me to glorify you by an unshaken faith in your promises; and an undeviating walk in the way of your commandments. Under every trial, may no murmur escape my lips, no hard thought of you be indulged in my heart. As love is inscribed on all your dispensations, so may love be visible in all my actions. Give me daily to experience the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; unto whom you will impute no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deception.

37. THE BELIEVER'S PATH TO GLORY

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"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

When I consider how short-sighted we are, and that all which lies before us is "a dark unknown," it is our happiness, as well as our safety, to be guided by One who cannot err, who sees the end from the beginning, who knows what is best for us, and who has promised, if we love him, to make all things work together for our good. Yet, alas! how unwilling we are to acquiesce in his will. How much we want the completion of our own wishes, as if every disappointment was necessarily a discomfort.

With what tender forbearance does our heavenly Father treat his wayward children. If he crosses their inclinations, it is for their good, that he may subdue their rebellious wills to himself. Oh! that mine may be subdued unto him.

We are journeying to the place of which the Lord has said He will give to us. At every stage of our journey we should erect our Ebenezer; our grateful monument of praise. "Hitherto has the Lord helped us," must be the inscription; "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," our traveling promise for support.

The Christian pilgrim is commanded to look backward; "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not." And, also to look forward; "Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared."

It is important thus to retrace our steps, that, reviewing the Lord's dealings with us, we may be filled with humiliation and thankfulness; and to look heavenward, that our faith and hope may be strengthened. We are too apt to forget our sins, as well as our mercies; and to neglect our preparation for the future, in the midst of present occupations, trials, or enjoyments. It is good to be humble, thankful, contented, resigned, and dependent. The more we sit loose to the world, and the more we shall enjoy its lawful blessings. But, the more we idolize it, and the more it will be made our cross. These lessons we learn in the school of Christian Experience.

We naturally shrink from trouble, though born to it as the sparks fly upward. Trouble is both penal and medicinal. Evil pursues sinners; but, though "many be the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord delivers them out of them all." How gracious is the voice of covenant love; "You shall consider in your heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him."

This is the end and design of the Lord's chastisements. He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. It is not for his pleasure, as if he delighted in our pain; but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Oh! that my heart may be molded into the will of God. Nothing

but almighty grace can subdue our rebellious wills, and bring them into a state of child-like submission. David knew this well by happy experience; "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept your word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes."

How often do our affections, like silly, wandering sheep, stray from the Good Shepherd. And as it is said of sheep, that when they once lose their way, they cannot retrace their steps, so is it with our foolish hearts. When once we leave the fold we would never return, if left to ourselves; therefore David in his pastoral Psalm, says; "He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." And in the 119 Psalm; "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant; for I do not forget your commandments." Our blessed Lord, who is himself the "Good Shepherd," has described his love to us by the parable of the lost sheep; and the joy of angels over our salvation. What a kind, compassionate, faithful Shepherd is Jesus, who gave his life for the sheep, and has declared "that they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand." O that I may love him more and more.

When afflictions are sanctified to us, they are indeed good. "The Lord gives medicine to heal our sickness." His precious declaration is; "I am the Lord that heals you." "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." "Bless the Lord, O my soul who heals all your diseases." While walking in this consecrated way to glory, our hearts can sing in unison with that of David; "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

It does, at first sight, seem surprising, that mercies should not lead us to God as powerfully as judgments. But perhaps the reason may be, that afflictions tend to embitter the world to us, whereas prosperity gilds it with a brighter line. Being naturally prone to love the world, and tasting, in seasons of prosperity, some of these many blessings which sweeten life, we are apt to rest at the cistern, and to forsake the fountain. This state of heart forms one of the plainest indications of the Fall.

When God in mercy opens our eyes to see our real condition, then we find that our cistern is broken, and that He only can impart the Living Water. There is, alas! much selfishness in thus coming to God, only that he may heal us. While he smiles upon us by his bounteous Providence, we remain contented with the creature. How dishonoring to our gracious Benefactor!

Oh! how patient is our compassionate God and Savior! There is something most elevating and ingenuous in David's experience; "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." To fear God because he is ready to pardon, manifests a highly spiritual frame of mind. Nature is rebellious, but grace is submissive. To justify God in all his dealings is the very essence of genuine piety. "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right." But the carnal mind complains. We are naturally murmurers and complainers. The natural man is ever ready to find fault with the divine proceedings, and especially if they affect himself. How different was the state of David's mind, who could add, "I know, O Lord, that you in faithfulness have afflicted me;" afflicted me according to covenant love, covenant promise, and covenant truth. Happy state, indeed!

Such assurance as this, enabled a dear servant of Christ to say, when about to leave this world "My pleasures are all to come." To produce such blessedness, the Gospel must be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. Nothing human can impart such peace and joy, at a

time when nature is sinking into the arms of death. Oh! that I may never rest, until I obtain this blessed assurance of faith and hope, which is the sweet attendant on the Christian pilgrim as he journeys towards the heavenly Zion.

If the desire of grace, is for more grace, for it is from God alone, that "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed;" I humbly hope I have some evidence of being in the way to glory. But when I look at the matured Christian, as exhibited in the word of God, and contrast this picture with my own infantile state, I have abundant cause for deep humiliation, but none for despondency. All praise to sovereign grace. There is treasured up in Jesus such a fullness of mercy and power, and such a freeness of will to bestow, that I am encouraged to come relying on his faithful word, and to feel assured that I shall not be sent empty away. O what a privilege to be thus invited and encouraged to cast myself simply upon the covenant mercies of God my Savior. Jesus never said to the seed of Jacob; "Seek me in vain."

It is one of the Lord's dealings with his beloved children, to make them feel their weakness and his power; their pollution and his holiness; their nothingness and his all-sufficiency. The more we are brought under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, the more we shall find the truth of this remark. It is the great design of God in the Gospel dispensation, to humble our naturally proud hearts, to bring down our naturally self-righteous spirit, to root out our naturally idolatrous affections. And while He does this through his almighty power, he clothes us with humility, he covers us with the Savior's righteousness, he implants in us a supreme love to Himself, thus destroying the old man of sin, and raising up in us the new man, which is renewed in knowledge and true holiness.

While journeying through this wilderness, we must expect vicissitudes. Many things may occur to repress our spiritual exhilaration. At one time, "Jesus wept." At another, He "rejoiced in spirit." At one time he could say, "Father, I thank you." At another, "Why have you forsaken me?"

If we are founded on the Rock, Christ Jesus; if we have His Spirit dwelling within us; then we may, and ought, to cultivate that peace which the world cannot take away, and which can only be really shaken by willfully allowed transgression. Oh! that I may have a firm hold on the promises. They are in Christ yes, and in Him, Amen, to the glory of God. We change as the wind, in the state of our feelings; sometimes high, sometimes low, now on the mount, now in the valley, but our Divine Redeemer is ever the same. His love is infinite, his mercy is everlasting on those who fear him. In Him we may safely confide. However rough the waves which dash against our fragile bark; however boisterous the winds which oppose our passage heavenward; Jesus can speak the word- "Peace, be still," and all is hushed into a calm. How often has He to say to my trembling heart- "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

If it be asked; Has the believer no seasons of dejection except what arise from the weakness of his faith? He has. In the spirit of Christian sympathy, he can weep with those who weep; and mourn over the sins of others. How touching is the compassion of the Almighty as recorded in the tenth chapter of Judges; "The children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned, and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." A different kind of grief was manifested by our Lord respecting the hypocritical Pharisees; "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts."

The tender-hearted Paul was often pained by the insincerity of some, and the unbelief of others. He could weep over the falls of professors, and the obstinate rejection of Christ by the Jews; "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears," was his language to the Corinthians.

Bodily infirmity will depress the spirits. From bodily weakness our spirits may be weak; but this feeling of depression, as it arises, not from spiritual, but natural causes, forms no ground for our writing bitter things against ourselves. The Lord "knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust." Jesus did not say, He that rejoices shall be saved, but, "He that believes shall be saved." If, then, we truly believe with the heart unto righteousness; if we love the Savior with a supreme affection; if we desire and endeavor to do the will of God from the heart, we may possess our souls in peace, though, from much bodily sickness, we cannot realize the ecstatic triumphs and joys of faith. This spiritual elevation is delightful, but not indispensable to our safety.

Some have a naturally optimistic temperament, and can rise above the lowering effects of disease. Others, from nervous affections, are soon cast down, and see every thing through a gloomy medium. But, in all these cases, God looks at the heart. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He will, at all times, speak peace to his people; and enable them to glorify him in the fires, either by a song of thanksgiving, or by a calm and childlike resignation to His will.

Here, then, is solid ground on which to stand. Our salvation does not rest on feeling, but on faith; not on our works, but on sovereign grace. The tried believer longs to die, and to be with Christ. It has, however, been asked- Is it right to indulge anxious desires to depart and to be with Christ, when so many duties require our stay? If this desire arise from a mere wish to escape the troubles of life, it is not a Christian desire. The longing desire after heaven which the believer feels, must always be subservient to the Divine Will. Ready to depart, yet willing to stay, is the proper position of a child of God- willing to stay and do the work, however arduous, assigned to him by Infinite Wisdom; and yet, ready to depart from dearest, tenderest friends, when the Lord calls him to his kingdom of glory. O ! what a blessed preparation of soul is this. How much should we seek after it. It is a compound of faith, love, spiritual-mindedness, hope, resignation, obedience, and joy.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." This must be true, whether it arise from the "thorn in the flesh;" the malice of Satan, the enmity of the ungodly, or the remainders of sin in our heart. Here lies our comfort, that chastisement is the expression of our heavenly Father's love; that every affliction is administered by the hand of parental affection. What can be more soothing than to recognize a Father's hand in every infliction of his providence? There is no mixture of wrath in the cup prepared by a loving parent. It may be bitter, but it is medicinal. Its effects may be painful, but they are not penal. This assurance reconciles the mind, and enables the obedient child to say- "The cup which my heavenly Father gives me, shall I not drink it?" "Father, not my will, but your be done." Such a spirit as this is most pleasing to God. It is the product of his own grace. The more we possess of it, the more we resemble the divine Jesus, who has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.

Blessed Jesus! enable me to glorify you by bearing your cross along the consecrated path to glory. Give me a holy courage in your cause; a fearless determination to confess you before men; a cheerful resignation to your will under every tribulation. Save me from lukewarmness. Keep me

from embracing error, however adorned, or by whomsoever sanctioned. Enable me to discern the chaff from the wheat; to distinguish between the doctrines of men, and the truths of your own word. Preserve me from a temporizing spirit, from a wish to please men at the expense of principle. At all times, and in all places, may I boldly declare my trust in you, my love to you, and my zeal for you. In seasons of national defection, may I be found faithful; and at last, when death shall shake his dart over me, enable me, in the fullness of faith, to exclaim, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How happy the saint of the Lord, Whose heart to the Savior is given,

While crossing the valley below,

His treasure and hope are in heaven.

He feels the sad burden of sin,

And longs to depart and be free;

he knows where true rest can be found,

My Jesus! 'tis only in thee.

Oh! may I with longing desire,

Pursue the bright path to your throne;

And leaving all idols behind,

Be sealed, by You, as your own.

Whom have I in heaven, but Thee?

And on earth, what, with you, can compare;

Oh! when this frail body shall fail,

Let me rise all your glories to share.

Your word has pronounced the bliss;

When shall I this blessedness see?

"Where I am enthroned in light,

There, my servants enthroned shall be."

38. THE BELIEVER'S PORTION

38. THE BELIEVER'S PORTION

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32

Who can grasp the fullness of this revelation of mercy? The Possessor of all things, if we are his children through the Son of his love, will freely give us all things! We cannot possess a greater gift than the Creator himself; and this gift shall be ours if we truly believe. Paul, whose heart glowed with love, has assured us of this; "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." To confirm this precious truth, the adorable Savior has promised; "He who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son." "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."

What a boundless prospect of glory lies before the humblest believer in Jesus! However low he may appear in the eyes of the great ones of the earth, he is beheld as a KING'S SON by the inhabitants of heaven. It is truly a blessed sight to behold the poor, "rich in faith," and the rich, "poor in spirit." "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." For both, the same Savior is provided, the same Spirit offered, the same volume written, the same promises are given, and for both the same heaven is prepared. All stand on the same level before God. The rich and the poor are liable to the same diseases, to the same diversified trials and temptations. They are alike hastening to the same dust of death, to the same bar of judgment, to the same eternity, to the same abodes of bliss or misery. Shall, then, the foot of pride spurn away the lowly Lazarus? It may; but, before long, when death shall lay the despiser and the despised in the grave, the one, though here the child of poverty, if a child of God, shall shine in robes of glory; while the other, though now surrounded by the glare of splendor, if an enemy of God, shall be enveloped in flames of fire. "To the poor the Gospel is preached," was one of the blessed marks of his Messiahship which Jesus gave to the messengers from John the Baptist.

A more pitiable sight cannot be seen, than a man sunk in poverty and disease, and, at the same time, sunk in the depths of sin. He has nothing but wretchedness here, and nothing but torment in the world to come. Oh! that the spirit of grace may lead every such child of woe to that friend of sinners, whose blood cleanses from all sin, and whose love can rescue the vilest who flee unto him.

The pleasure-loving sinner, having all that heart can wish, and withholding himself from no joy; casting off the fear of God, and breaking through every restraint, either of conscience or religion, is an object of deepest pity. He may, for a time, fare sumptuously, be flattered, and envied by others; but soon the pleasing dream will end. The rich and the poor, if rebels against God, though separated from each other while on earth, shall meet together in that place where wealth and poverty are disregarded, where proud distinctions shall be lost; and where all shall be blended in

one common ruin.

The privileges of the believer in Jesus are treasured up in the name of Jehovah, so graciously proclaimed to Moses; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." David delighted to dwell on this precious name- "You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious; patient, and plenteous in mercy and truth." "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all those who call upon you." "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know your name will put their trust in you; for you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you."

Oh! what abundant cause have we to bless the God of our salvation, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever; who changes not. The book of Psalms is a rich treasury; a casket full of precious jewels. The experience of the true believer is there recorded with peculiar faithfulness, whether he be on the mount of praise, or in the valley of humiliation. The Church in every age has been enlightened, comforted, and strengthened by these songs of Zion.

Happy are they who can unite with David, and say, "Save your servant who trusts in you." "I cry unto you daily." "Unto you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." "In the day of my trouble I will call upon you." If this be our prayer, then our rejoicing will be that of David; "I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify your name for evermore. For great is your mercy toward me; and you have delivered my soul from the lowest hell." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."

The believer, thus brought into covenant with God, has access by faith into this grace wherein he stands, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. Through the indwelling Spirit, he enjoys the peace of God. By faith he is made a child of God, and receiving the Spirit of adoption, can cry- Abba, Father. The promises are his portion. They are as wells of salvation, out of which he draws the waters of comfort. The perfections of God in Christ are his Tower of Strength. The Almighty is his shield, and his exceeding great reward. Through life, he lives in the smiles of his Savior; and through eternity, he shall dwell in his presence and glory.

Oh! my soul, are you thirsting after these blessings of grace? What can the world give you in lieu of these glories? Earthly crowns and scepters are but baubles, when compared with the unfading crown of glory. Soon will all the splendors of royalty pass away, and the grandeur of the great be forgotten; but not so, the dignity of the children of God, for whom a kingdom is prepared. "Come, you blessed of my Father," will the King of Glory say to his now despised subjects, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To such he now says; "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Surveying this heavenly glory, so richly prepared for the saints, the beloved Apostle breaks out into an anthem of praise, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

The Christian, who lives in the enjoyment of these privileges, will be anxious that others shall enjoy them too. He will labor in his humble measure to spread the savor of the Redeemer's name, which is as ointment poured out, yielding a sweet fragrance. The promises of God cheer his heart, and animate his endeavors. He knows in whom he has believed, and is assured, that every word of God is true, that His counsel shall stand, and that He will do all his pleasure. He opens the sacred volume, and reads with delight, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." His heart responds—Amen! to the desire of David, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

He reads again; "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one." "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen says the Lord of hosts." "They shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." "They shall teach no more, every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

He reads again- "All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, when they hear the words of your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord; for great is the glory of the Lord." Oh! precious declaration or Eternal Truth. Not merely one or a few, but "all the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord." And when will this blessing be accomplished? "When they hear the words of your mouth." Not, when they shall hear the words of fallible men, but, "the words of your mouth;" your own infallible word of Truth; the Truth of the everlasting Gospel.

Oh! that this word may run and be glorified by the conversion of kings unto You. Then will they "sing in the ways of the Lord;" rejoice in your salvation, and stir up their subjects to praise you too. Yes, then shall your Church be protected and nourished; for kings shall be her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers; when all flesh shall know that you are the Lord, her Savior, and her Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

What can effect so great a work? nothing but almighty power. He, whose name is "wonderful," can alone bring upon the earth so vast a blessing. The work will be as rapid, as it is great- "Who has ever seen or heard of anything as strange as this? Has a nation ever been born in a single day? Has a country ever come forth in a mere moment? But by the time Jerusalem's birth pains begin, the baby will be born; the nation will come forth." "Rejoice with Jerusalem! Be glad with her, all you who love her and mourn for her." "I will comfort you there as a child is comforted by its mother." Oh! how sweet! "As a child is comforted by its mother;" -with all the tender feelings, and sympathies, and affections of a loving mother, "so will I comfort you."

The God of nature is the God of grace. Suppose a person, blind from his infancy, to be restored to sight in the depth of winter, when all was leafless and barren, and the ground covered with snow; and suppose his blindness to return, but again to be removed during the height of summer, when

all is clothed with verdure, and the earth enameled with flowers; would he not conceive himself to be placed in some other world? The change is not greater than that which will be experienced, when Satan shall be bound, and the Spirit poured out from on high; when Jesus shall reign in righteousness, when he shall have dominion from sea to sea; when all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him; when his name shall endure forever, and be continued as long as the sun; when men shall be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed.

Oh! what a cheering, supporting grace is faith in the truth of the unchangeable Jehovah. If He withdraws his presence, we shall resemble the barren waste; but if He grants his smile, we shall be like the fruitful Eden, lovely in flower, and sweet in fragrance. "You are like a private garden, my treasure, my bride! You are like a spring that no one else can drink from, a fountain of my own. You are like a lovely orchard bearing precious fruit, with the rarest of perfumes: nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, perfume from every incense tree, and every other lovely spice."

O! Adorable Savior! how can I sufficiently bless You for these revelations of your Truth, for these promises of your grace. Satan may now be called the god of this world, for alas! millions acknowledge his sway. But, before long, you will take to Yourself your great power and reign as Lord Supreme, for you only are Jehovah, and of your kingdom there shall be no end. Reign now, blessed Jesus, in my heart! Take up your abode within me. Give me this pledge, this foretaste of the millennial blessedness. May my every thought be brought into captivity, my every desire be bounded by your will. Enable me to realize the privileges of your people until I reach the temple above, where nothing will be heard but songs of praise, where nothing will be seen but sights of bliss.

Jesus, your boundless love to me

No thought can reach, no tongue declare;

O knit my thankful heart to thee,

And reign without a rival there;

Yours wholly, yours alone, I am;

O be alone my constant flame!

O grant that nothing in my soul

May dwell, but your pure love alone

O may your love possess me whole,

My joy, my treasure, and my crown;

Strange flames far from my heart remove;

My every act, word, thought, be love!

O Love, how cheering is your ray!

All pain before your presence flies;

Care, anguish, sorrow, melt away,
Wherever your healing beams arise;
O Jesus, nothing may I see,
Nothing desire, or seek, but thee!
Still let your love point out my way!
How wondrous things your love has wrought!
Still lead me, lest I go astray;
Direct my word, inspire my thought;
And if I fall; soon may I hear
Your voice, and know that love is near.
In suffering be your love my peace;
In weakness be your love my power;
And when the storms of life shall cease,
Jesus, in that important hour,
In death as life O be my guide,
And save me, who for me have died.

39. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

39. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

"Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds." 1 Peter 3:8

What a lovely object would the Church of Christ present to the world, did all its members live in the spirit of the gospel. The conversion of the world to the faith of Christ would then be hastened, if all who believe in Jesus were cemented together by holy love, and actuated by the Holy Spirit. The declarations of Scripture are clear and decisive on the beauty and blessedness of Christian fellowship. "By this," said our Lord, "shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." To the Thessalonians Paul wrote; "But I don't need to write to you about the Christian love that should be shown among God's people. For God himself has taught you to love one another. Indeed, your love is already strong toward all the Christians in all of Macedonia. Even so, dear friends, we beg you to love them more and more." "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." Peter exhorted the Christians, to whom he addressed his epistle, to add "to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

Did all the churches of Christ, in the apostolic age, manifest to the world the graces of brotherly kindness and charity? Were there no disfiguring traits in the character of the primitive believers? Alas! we have to mourn over the corruption of the heart, even in the purest age of Christianity! With the apostolic admonition, "Love must be sincere," Paul had to warn the church at Rome, "I beseech you, brethren, mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them." For the Corinthians, he drew with the pencil of truth, guided by the Eternal Spirit, the most beautifully finished portrait of Christian love. And yet, over this very church, for which, on some accounts, he could thank God, he had also deeply to mourn—"There are contentions among you." "There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions." "You wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." "It's not the Lord's Supper you are concerned about when you come together. For I am told that some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk." "For I am afraid that when I come to visit you I won't like what I find, and then you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfishness, backstabbing, gossip, conceit, and disorderly behavior."

Can this be the picture of a primitive church? Alas! it is. If we ask, while surveying these tares, who has done this? Our Lord has told us in his parable; "An enemy has done this?" Satan busily sowed his weeds among the wheat at the very formation of the Christian church. Though admitted by baptism into the society of the faithful, they proved by their works whose children they were. And so it is now. Hypocrites, deceivers, false brethren, heretics, and schismatics trouble the church. This condition of the visible church, painful as it is, verifies the words of the apostle, when writing to the church at Corinth, "In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there

are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval." To such faithful souls, Jesus sent a word of comfort by his servant John; "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. Look, I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown." Truly this is a word in season. Oh! that we may be found faithful when the sifting time arrives.

The images employed to describe the unity of the church are beautiful— The harmony which is experienced in the human frame, where, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; the union which subsists between the foundation and the superstructure of a building; the tender oneness of the marriage state; are all employed by the apostles to set forth the union of believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Head, his people are the members of his mystical body. Jesus is the Foundation, his people, the living stones in the spiritual building. Jesus is the Husband, his people, collectively, form the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Perfection is a plant which bears its fruit in heaven. Here we may and ought to cultivate it with unceasing care, but still the precious fruit can only be enjoyed in the paradise above. While journeying there, "it is absurd to expect perfection; but it is not unreasonable to expect consistency." Did Christians act up to their principles, did they do to others, as they, in reason and justice, would wish others to do to them, we would behold a blessed change in the so-called religious world. Uprightness and sincerity formed the perfection of the Old Testament saints. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

Maturity in Christian experience, and ripeness in Christian graces, compose the perfection of believers in Jesus. "Brethren," says Paul to the Corinthians, "stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults (perfect, or of a riper age.)" And to the Hebrews he writes, "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature (perfect), who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Blessed Jesus! your nature was perfect, your soul spotless, your whole life without sin, when you condescended to become man, and to die the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. Grant that I may be renewed in the spirit of my mind; that I may be transformed into your holy image; and walk before you in newness of life. Give me the graces of simplicity and godly sincerity. Cause me to grow up into you in all things. Enable me to forget past attainments, and to reach forth unto those things which are ahead. Deliver me from presumptuous sins. Strengthen me to fight the good fight of faith. Shield me by your grace; and preserve me, as a vessel of mercy, unto your eternal kingdom and glory.

Next to communion with God, there cannot be a more refined felicity than the communion of saints. Everything holy in principle, and exalted in prospect, is associated with the assurance, that the friends whom we love upon earth, shall be our friends in the presence of God our Savior. Worldly attachments resemble the summer showers, which rapidly swell the brooks, but soon pass away; while Christian friendship, the communion of saints, is like a perennial spring. The love of Christ towards his people is the ever-flowing the ever over-flowing fountain of blessedness, whose refreshing streams are the most abundant when most needed.

Oh! that I may daily partake of these waters of salvation! How sweet it is to taste that the Lord is gracious. His consolations are neither few nor small. When we forsake Him, we forsake our own mercies. And yet, alas! how prone we are to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to "hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." This conduct is our folly, as it is made our misery.

Our roses grow on prickly stems. Everything, even our choicest comforts, have some admixture of sorrow, to remind us of the fall. There is, O blessed assurance! a world where all is perfect, where pleasures flow like a river, pure as crystal, from the throne of God; where Christian friends, united here in Christ, shall meet, in perfect holiness, to part no more. Oh! what a resplendent view is opened to us through the gospel. What pure delights those people lose, who have no relish for communion with God, no participation in the communion of saints. The friends of Jesus, are the friends of each other. They love each other for His sake, who is their beloved and their friend. With united voices they can sing,

"Bless'd be the tie that binds

Our hearts in Christian love;

The fellowship of kindred minds

Is like to that above."

There is something magnetical in genuine Christian love. It attracts heart to heart. In such a world as this, how invaluable is a Christian friend; one, on whom we can rely, and into whose bosom we can freely pour those thoughts and feelings which occupy our own. This world, like "a peevish April day, is made up of rain and sunshine." Here, we are called to endure; in heaven, we shall be privileged to enjoy. Brethren in Christ, whose hearts are knit together in love, shall, before long, meet around the throne, united to their glorified Head.

How delightful is the thought of being forever with the Lord. How composing under every trial is the assurance of seeing Him as he is, and being made like Him in the perfection of love. O that my heart were more and more assimilated to my divine Lord. Holiness is the health of the soul. Holiness is happiness. Holiness is heaven begun. Heaven must be a place of unspeakable bliss, where God our Savior manifests his glory; where the holiest affections will be in their highest, perpetual exercise; where all the excellent of the earth shall be assembled; and where, the very element of the place, is Eternal Joy!

Bless'd is the tie which closely binds

In friendship sweet two kindred minds;

This sacred chain is light and free;

The joy of Christian liberty.

Jesus, of all the friends, most dear,

Is ever to his people near;

They feel his presence in their hearts,

He never from their souls departs.
In gloom, and sickness, grief, and care,
Their burden he will kindly bear;
And if their sun shines clear and bright,
Jesus is still their Chief Delight.
How dangerous worldly friendships are,
Of sin and guilt the fatal snare;
While Christian fellowship and love,
Unite us to the saints above.
This grace divine, so freely given,
Cements the Church in earth and heaven;
Oh! may this grace be ever mine!
My Jesus, seal me ever thine!

40. Christian Perseverance

40. Christian Perseverance

"Faint, yet pursuing." Judges 8:4

The journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan affords an instructive history to the Christian pilgrim. The opposition, dangers, trials, and temptations, which beset his path; the unbelief, misgivings, fears, and rebellions of his own heart; the love, power, patience, and truth of his covenant God, are all set before him in this faithful record of the ancient church. He can read his history in that of Israel of old, and thus obtain a deeper view of his own corruption, and of God's everlasting love.

We read, that "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the difficulty of the way." Canaan was indeed before them, but the way was rough and thorny. "We went," said Moses, "through all that great and terrible wilderness." "Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with poisonous snakes and scorpions, where it was so hot and dry." But God was with them; the pillar of fire gave them light by night; and the cloudy pillar shaded them from the sultry heat of day. When they had passed over Jordan, their victories gave strength to their faith; but there remained yet very much land to be possessed, and their motto might be, "Faint, yet pursuing."

"Faint, yet pursuing," is truly descriptive of the wearied pilgrim anxious to reach his place of rest; and of the Christian warrior who fights, under much weakness, to obtain the crown. Though helpless in himself, he is strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and thus is enabled to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to persevere in his heavenly course; and to put his enemies to flight. Often does he realize the blessing of Israel to Joseph; "But his bow remained strong, and his arms were strengthened by the Mighty One of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel; even by the God of your father, who shall help you." He remembers the divine declaration, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." He knows that God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Hence he renounces his own wisdom and strength, and relies on the power and grace of Jesus.

O! my soul, what is your aim, your great design? Though often faint, through manifold infirmities, are you still striving to enter into that rest which remains to the people of God. Are you fighting the good fight of faith, that you may lay hold on eternal life? Can you say with David, respecting your rebel-sins, "I chased my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until they were conquered. I struck them down so they could not get up; they fell beneath my feet. You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet."

Have you experienced the promise of the Savior by his inspired Apostle— "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace." "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "We are more than conquerors, through him who loved us."

Alas! I feel my utter weakness, and total insufficiency even to think a good thought. I am faint by reason of indwelling sin, for when I would do good, evil is present with me. What a corrupt fountain is my heart. Lord cleanse this polluted spring. I long after absolute holiness, unspotted purity. I know that to be like my Savior is to be blessed. Oh! that I may have grace rightly to answer these important questions. "O Jerusalem! will you not be made clean? when shall it be?"

Lord, it is my heart's desire to be cleansed from all sin, through the precious blood of Jesus. "When shall it be?" O let it be now, this very moment, for "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." I cannot be happy too soon, and if I have You for my portion, if I am transformed into Your image, I must, I shall be happy. "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved; how long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?"

Blessed Redeemer! wash me thoroughly from my sin in the fountain of your blood. Let me not be principally anxious about external washing, but may I seek above all things for internal purification. My words may be correct, when my heart is like a cage of unclean birds. My attendance at your house of prayer may be punctual, and yet I be "in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." The whited sepulcher appears fair and beautiful, though full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. I may outwardly appear righteous before men, while filled with hypocrisy and iniquity. Oh! grant that my heart may be washed from wickedness, and then my outward walk and conversation will be according to godliness.

Preserve me, O Lord, from resting in the externals of religion. Allow me not to trust in ordinances, or any other means of grace, as if some inherent virtue were lodged in them, apart from the state of mind of those who use them. Give me true repentance and faith, that I may rightly receive the blessings which you have promised to impart, through the ordinances of your gospel. Impress upon my mind this truth, that they are only the channels, and not the source of grace. You, and You alone, are the fountain of all grace. From You, all good proceeds. Oh! keep me from the fatal error of the Church of Rome; and from every departure from the truth of the gospel.

Oh! "Lord of peace, give me peace always by all means," and "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Let me not be satisfied with a name to live, with a reputation for piety, while dead in your sight. Impart unto me your Holy Spirit; enable me to tread in your footsteps, while passing through the trials and persecutions of the world. "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?" Oh! not for a moment. Too long, alas! has my foolish heart been a lodging-house for vain thoughts! Too long have I entertained these enemies to my peace, these traitors to my Savior. But, let the time past suffice to have wrought such madness. Lord drive out these hated inmates. Let them not remain a moment longer to defile your temple. Fill my soul with Yourself, as you did by your presence, fill the Temple of old with glory.

O! that I were wholly freed from every, the least unhallowed desire! The fullness of this blessedness is reserved for your heavenly kingdom, where nothing can enter that defiles. Yet, blessed Lord, in your strength, may I lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset me, looking unto you continually, until freed from the burden of the flesh.

Here I resemble the troops of Gideon, "faint, yet pursuing." I must wrestle, and fight, and pray, and persevere in the strength of Jesus, the Captain of my Salvation. The enemy of souls has an alarming power, a mysterious access to the mind, imagination, and desires. He can cast his fiery

darts into the citadel of the heart, and set the soul on fire. Oh! what burnings of fleshly lusts, what covetous desires, what hard thoughts of God are created by the powers of darkness. Nothing but the blood of Christ, applied by faith, can quench these raging fires. Lord! undertake for me. Save me, a helpless worm, from the malice of my spiritual foes! Your grace is Sufficient for me. Through your strength I shall prevail.

We cannot prevent the intrusion of vain thoughts. They may be presented to our minds in a moment, at a time when we wish, and are laboring to fix our hearts on God. Then it is, that Satan will try to disturb our peace, to distract our thoughts, to distress our hearts. His aim is to hinder spiritual meditations, to drive us from the mercy-seat. To stop the current of holy aspirations, he will bring old sins to remembrance, or something more recently transacted, to fill the soul with shame, and to suggest the doubt— Am I indeed a child of God? This arch enemy will leave nothing untried, that may check the spirituality of the mind, or draw us back again into his snares. His object is the destruction of the soul. But, oh! my Savior, You who were tempted in the wilderness, and who know what temptations mean, arm me by your power to resist the devil, that he may flee from me.

Oh! what agonizing pains does the believer feel, when an evil thought fastens itself for days and weeks upon his mind. How does he pray, and grieve, and weep, as if he were standing on the brink of despair. But, when darkness covers his soul, light springs up. The Spirit of the Lord lifts up his standard, and sighs are turned into songs of praise.

A truly pious, but poor disciple of the blessed Jesus, rich in experience and Christian love, once said, "what strugglings have I had with evil thoughts. Nobody can tell my griefs on this account. But the Lord has delivered me. Once they were inmates, but now, blessed be God, they are only like people passing by my window; they do not lodge within me." She then spoke of the great help which she got through the Spirit, by setting the Lord always before her; by living, as seeing Him who is invisible; by realizing the presence of God, as Hagar did when she exclaimed, "You God, see me." She said, that whenever any evil thought was suggested to her mind, she betook herself instantly to prayer, and wrestled with her Savior, like Jacob of old, until she obtained the mastery over the temptation. She would often say, "It is good to be a wrestling Jacob." This is truly living a life of faith; it is bringing into action the principles of godliness; and the end of such a life is peace. She died with a triumphant song of victory.

Oh! that like this aged saint, I may never cease to pray, until prayer is turned into praise; the conflict ends in conquest; and the cross is exchanged for the crown. My Savior cheers me onward, for he says, "Do not be afraid, only believe." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." He who has promised, is the Faithful and True Witness, the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb of God, the King of saints, the Lord of glory. O for faith, a strong and vigorous faith, to lay hold upon the promise, to cleave to the Promiser, whose word shall abide, when every earthly refuge has passed away.

"Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Rejoice, O my soul, in your God and Savior, for he has said, and his word cannot be broken, "Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Rejoice, yes, again rejoice, for Jesus has declared, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of

my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

O! my soul, do you believe this? "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Increase my faith in your unchanging word. Let me daily hear your voice, and follow you. Though often faint, through the weakness of faith, allow me not to shrink from the cross. May I, like Israel of old, though faint, still pursue, contending with my foes, until I vanquish the hellish legion. Like the mariner, homeward bound, may I pursue my onward course, fearless of storms, until I reach the wished-for port. Yes, like the Christian pilgrim, may I brave the toils and dangers of the road, knowing that heaven is the Christian's home, his Father's house, his Paradise of rest!

The Lord he is good,
My spirits to cheer;
In all my distress,
My Jesus is near;
His love and his promise
Forever shall stand,
Through storms, and through tempests
He'll bring me to land.
Then why should I fear
The wild foaming wave,
When Jesus has promised
His servant to save?
His arm is extended
To give me relief;
His love is proclaimed
To banish my grief.
Though Satan may rage,
And earth may combine
To ruin my soul,
Yet, still I am thine,
Your favor, bless'd Jesus,
My portion shall be;
In death and in danger,

I'll triumph in thee.

41. THE CHARACTER AND THE PROMISE,

41. THE CHARACTER AND THE PROMISE, INSEPARABLY CONNECTED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

But all will be well for those who are godly. Tell them, "You will receive a wonderful reward!" But say to the wicked, "Your destruction is sure. You, too, will get what you deserve. Your well-earned punishment is on the way." Isaiah 3:10-11

There is no evil we have more to fear than self-deception. Pride, naturally begets self-sufficiency. Many are ready enough to apply to themselves the cordials of the gospel, who have no right to them; while numbers of contrite believers refuse to be comforted, although the gospel speaks nothing to them but words of peace.

We find in the word of God the most amplified description of the characters, both of the righteous and the wicked; with the promises made to the one, and the threatenings denounced on the other. If we examine closely the book of God, we shall find our exact character depicted there; and to this character we shall find annexed either a blessing or a curse. Surely, then, it must be the duty of every one to examine himself by the word of Truth, that he may know his real character, either for his conviction or consolation.

'Tis a point I long to know,

Often it causes anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his, or am I not?

Lord, decide the doubtful case!

You who are your people's Sun,

Shine upon your work of grace,

If it be indeed begun.

How important is the question; Am I in the Faith? Do I bear the marks of God's children? Have I the Spirit of Christ, as the Seal, the Pledge, the Witness of my salvation? If this is made clear to my mind and conscience, through the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, then I may freely and fully take the promises for my portion.

The Christian professor who neglects this inward search, this looking into the glass of God's word, that he may see his spiritual character, as a man beholds his natural face in a mirror, will be ready to fancy himself to be something when he is nothing, and thus miserably deceive himself. Such a work of self-examination will be deemed legal, and tending to bondage, though it be the duty enforced upon him by an inspired Apostle; "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith;

prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates." Respecting the Lord's Supper, Paul also says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that Cup."

Heavenly Father! make me sincere in my self-examinations. May I come to the light, that so, my whole heart being searched by "the candle of the Lord," every lurking evil may be discovered and rooted out, crucified, and destroyed.

Happy are they who can discern, with humility and a thankful heart, their own state, as justified and sanctified believers in Christ Jesus. All the promises scattered throughout the sacred volume, like the stars in the firmament, are theirs. Every thing that is needful for life and godliness, for support and protection, is theirs; for "Jesus gives us in his word, food and medicine, shield and sword."

Oh! my soul, be thankful for such a Savior, who has said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." "Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good? He who is the Truth will never disappoint the hopes which he has raised, or the promises which he has made.

"How flow firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,

Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

For Jesus has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The following passages set forth the character of God's people, and the promises annexed to that character. The graces of the Spirit, like the spokes in a wheel, all meet in the heart of the believer. Without the indwelling Spirit, we have no spiritual life. All profession is vain, and religion but an empty sound. Oh! my soul, these precious portions of God's word may well cause you to make diligent search, whether you are indeed in the way of life- whether you possess these features of the new creature in Christ Jesus.

FAITH. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed." "He that believes on him shall not be confounded."

REPENTANCE. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

LOVE. "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4 "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." John 14:21

OBEDIENCE. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." Exodus 19:5 "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." John 15:10 "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

TRUST. "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever." Psalm 125:1 "Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." Proverbs 16:20 "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe." Proverbs 29:25

FEAR. "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." Malachi 4:2

HONOR. "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained." 1 Samuel 2:30

PRAYER. "call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Psalm 50:15 "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Joel 2:32 "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21:22

HUMILITY. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:10 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." 1 Peter 5:6

MEEKNESS. "He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his way." Psalm 25:9 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5

PURITY. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Matthew 5:8

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12

PERSEVERANCE, OR STEADFASTNESS IN THE FAITH. "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Matthew 10:22 "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." Rev. 2:10 "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." Rev. 21:7

These beautiful passages delineate the New Creation of God. However plausible our profession of religion may be, if we bear not these marks of discipleship, we have no right to Christian privileges, Christian promises, or Christian prospects of future glory. Though sprinkled with water at the baptismal font; though regular communicants at the table of the Lord; though zealous assertors of certain opinions, and warm adherents to some favorite minister; we are, in the sight of God, if destitute of love, no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Lord! bestow this adorable gift of your divine Spirit, this heavenly love, on me your unworthy servant. Impart it to all those who have it not, and increase it in those who have received it, that your image may be visibly discerned in the hearts and lives of all who call themselves Christians, that they may hold the faith in unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

If I have received the grace of faith, of repentance, love, obedience, trust, fear, humility, meekness, and purity; if I honor God before men; if I live in a spirit of prayer; if I suffer, for righteousness' sake; if I continue steadfast in the faith; I am a member of Christ's mystical body, and all the promises annexed to these graces are my portion.

As the word of God reveals to us our real state and character, so is it admirably adapted, through the Spirit, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and to pour the oil of gladness into the wounded heart. The sorrowful sighing of the humble and contrite, the longing desires of the loving believer, are answered in so gracious a manner, as would forever banish despondencies and fears, were not unbelief and distrust so deeply rooted in our hearts. Lord, remove from me every root of bitterness, that I may not be faithless, but believing.

The following is a specimen of some of the precious answers to prayer, with which the Holy Scriptures abound, for the refreshing and strengthening of Christian pilgrims—

REQUEST— "Save me, O God, by your name." Psalm 54:1. ANSWER— "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." Acts 16:31. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

REQUEST— "But you, O Lord, do not be far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me." Psalm 22:19. ANSWER— "For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13

REQUEST— "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men." Psalm 43:1. "O my God, do not delay." Psalm 40:17 ANSWER— "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

REQUEST— "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." Psalm 51:11. ANSWER— "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." John 6:37

REQUEST— "I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!" Isaiah 38:14. ANSWER— "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

REQUEST— "Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior." Psalm 27:9. ANSWER— "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

REQUEST— "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end." Psalm 119:33. ANSWER— "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

REQUEST— "O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress." Isaiah 33:2. ANSWER— "Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed." Isaiah 49:23. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2

Cor. 12:9

REQUEST– "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge."

Psalm 16:1. ANSWER– "But now, this is what the Lord says– he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3

These are sweet and precious answers to the prayer of faith. So long as the words, "Ask, seek, knock," remain in the sacred volume, so long we may be assured, that all who seek shall find. Lord, vouchsafe to me a praying spirit, that I may approach You in the simplicity of faith, trusting in nothing but Jesus Christ, and desiring nothing so much as to know, and love, and serve you; whom to know is life eternal, and whom to love and serve, is heaven begun.

42. THE DANGER OF EXTREMES IN

42. THE DANGER OF EXTREMES IN MEN'S ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no light in them." Isaiah 8:20

People, in general, are acquainted with almost everything but themselves. The common affairs of life are thoroughly understood; and the various characters of mankind are freely canvassed. They seem to be everywhere at home, but in their own hearts. There, they are strangers. They know all men, but themselves. From this self-ignorance arises a great deal of self-conceit. As "all men think all men mortal but themselves," so do they esteem themselves to be wiser than others. "We are they who ought to speak," is the language of their hearts, if not always of their lips.

Pride and vain-glory are the natural products of the human heart. They grow with luxuriance in nature's soil. Surely it is most important to observe the state of our own minds. The great things of God, like himself, are unchangeable. The realities of the invisible world are always the same. Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell, are now as they were when Adam sinned. If we are, at one time, deeply impressed with the view of eternity, and with the relation which every thing in us and around us bears to eternity and if, at another time, these considerations make but slight impressions upon our minds, what inference must we draw? Not that ETERNITY has become less important in itself, or less real in its bearings on our future destiny, but that our hearts have become less sensible of its importance. Should this insensibility continue, its deadening effects would increase, until we would, at length, hear with indifference, those very truths which once awakened all our solicitude, and set in motion all our apprehensions.

I see, therefore, the need for watching against this natural declension of the heart from God; and for praying constantly for the influences of the Holy Spirit, to preserve my mind in a solemn, practical, yet lively, frame.

O God, my inmost soul convert!

And deeply on my thoughtful heart

Eternal things impress;

Give me to feel their solemn weight,

And tremble on the brink of fate,

And wake to righteousness.

Everything around me is calculated to deaden the heart, and everything within me naturally opposes the work of grace. Blessed Lord! all saving, abiding impressions, are from you. Melt my hard heart; and mold it to your will. Enlighten my dark mind; and fill it with your truth. Keep me from the path of error, from proud reasoning; from false and perverted views of my real condition, as a

fallen, ruined creature, lying under your curse, and deserving of everlasting fire. Lead me to the Savior; unite my soul to him; and make me a monument of your everlasting love.

Men are apt to run into extremes, especially in matters of religion. The opinions held by different religionists are as widely separated as the Arctic is from the Antarctic Circle. The ever-varying sentiments of mankind resemble the inhabitants on our globe; they are of different hues, and different dialects; yes, they are often the very antitheses of each other. Hence arise controversies and contentions, strifes and heart-burnings, to the disgrace of religion, and the triumph of scoffing infidels. The Church of Rome, indeed, boasts of her unity, but it is the unity of error, perpetuated by the assumed infallibility of that apostate church. With her, Truth has fallen, and cannot enter within her portals. All who dare to hold the torch of truth, must be either tortured on the rack, or be consumed by the flaming faggots of her spiritual despotism. Such was her conduct in the plenitude of her power. How soon that power may regain its deadly influence is known only to Him who has said, "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent." Oh! that Protestant Britain may listen to the Savior's voice, before the vial be poured out for our abuse of his unspeakable mercies.

There are two extremes into which men are apt to run, when speaking of the present condition of mankind. Some extol the native powers of the human soul to such a degree, that one would imagine they had never heard or read of the Fall; or that they had resided among a race of mortals allied in power and spirit to the angels above. They talk of good hearts, and good intentions, and good dispositions, and good actions, and good everything. They magnify the power of the will, as if it could accomplish all that is great and noble. They eulogize the powers of the mind, as if they were equal to fathom the deepest, or to reach the loftiest subjects, in natural and revealed religion.

Others there are, who, in their zeal to debase human nature, make man no better than a mere machine, acted upon by a dire necessity; so that every sinful action, instead of being the product of his own rebellious will, and thus deserving of eternal punishment, is attributed to some secret impulse, over which the man has no control. He does, what he does, because, as they express it, "He is fated to do it." Such doctrine opens the flood-gate of iniquity. If men can believe that they are not responsible for their conduct, they are prepared for every work which Satan urges them to perform.

These two statements are equally opposed to the Scriptures of Truth. The path of truth lies between the two extremes. To those who unduly extol human nature, I would say- Man is a fallen creature, yet still possessing some relics of his original glory. He is endued with an immortal spirit; with a mind which can soar among the stars, measure their distances, and span their mighty bulk. He is like 'a palace in ruins'. The powers of the human mind are indeed vast, when exercised upon natural things. How wonderfully has Newton discovered the laws which regulate and govern our solar system. With what discriminating judgment has Locke unfolded the various faculties of the understanding. All this proves that man, though fallen, is a being far superior to the rest of animated nature. He can look before and after. He can reason, reflect, and draw conclusions.

Yet, his natural understanding is dark respecting the things of God. His will is averse from the will of God. His affections recoil from the holy law of God. The pride of his reason rises against "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." He spurns at the sublimity of those evangelical doctrines which are calculated to humble him in the dust, and to exalt the Redeemer on the throne

of his glory. Hence, it is evident, that "the world by wisdom knows not God;" that mere science, unaided by light from above, will never lead the philosopher to the foot of the Cross, or transform him into a little child, into an humble, docile learner in the school of Christ. Yet, blessed be God, his grace has accomplished even such a wonder as this!

Newton, the prince of philosophers, consecrated his master-mind to the service of religion, which has thrown a halo of glory around his name. He was of a very meek disposition, and a great lover of peace. To his other great qualities, he added a serious and devout reverence for religion. His favorite study was the Bible; the prophecies of which he illustrated by his researches. He conformed to the Church of England, but he lived in friendship with good men of all communions; and he was an enemy to every kind of persecution. It is beautiful to behold philosophy as the handmaid of religion, to see the loftiest scientific mind lowly bending at the foot of the Cross.

If it be asked, can unassisted reason find out God? Can it find out the Almighty to perfection? Paul has answered the question; "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Our spiritual ignorance, then, is so great through the Fall, and the enmity of our will to divine truth so bitter, that nothing can remove the one or destroy the other, but the Spirit of God himself. Whenever this operation takes place in the soul, it is altogether undeserved on the sinner's part, and consequently an act of sovereign grace on the part of the Almighty. Salvation is of the Lord. Destruction is from ourselves.

To those who represent man as a mere machine, acting from necessity, I would say, It is true man has no power to come to Christ for life and salvation, without the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit; but where arises this inability to come to Christ? Properly to understand this point, would prevent many fatal errors. Man does not labor under a natural incapacity, but under a moral inability in the performance of divine things. He who said, "No man can come to me, unless the Father, who has sent me, draws him," said also, "You will not come to me, that you might have life."

God made man perfect. He endued him with an understanding capable of contemplating the Author of his existence; with a will ready to obey his commandments; with affections to love him and delight in him; with a memory to retain whatever things were pure and lovely; with speech to extol and praise him; and with a body in every way calculated to promote the end and design of his creation.

When Adam fell through willful transgression, these various powers and faculties of soul and body became perverted and corrupt. The blinding, hardening nature of sin, in conjunction with the power which Satan had over him, through yielding to his temptation, was the sole cause of his inability to love and serve his Creator. The image of God, in which he was originally created, departed from him, and the image of the evil one was impressed upon him.

His mind became darkened; his heart, hardened; his will, obstinate; his affections, carnal; his memory, the storehouse of evil things; his tongue, an instrument of mischief; his whole body, polluted and unclean.

Thus man is an object of the divine displeasure, a child of wrath, an heir of hell! His opposition to the will of heaven arises from the deeply-rooted enmity of his will to God and goodness; and

herein principally lies the guilt and turpitude of sin, whereby man renders himself peculiarly obnoxious to eternal holiness and justice. Is it not, then, evident that man does not perish from the want of any natural power or capacity to serve God, but from the determined opposition of his depraved and rebellious will to the rich grace and mercy so freely offered to him in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Describing the state of the heathen world, Paul declares, "Their foolish heart was darkened....God gave them up unto vile affections....God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

Take the most inveterate sinner, and ask him, Have you not an equal power of body to walk into the church, as into the tavern or the theater? Or, does all natural strength fail, as soon as the temple of God is proposed to be visited by you? Have you not as much power to read the Bible, as to read a novel and a newspaper? Or, do your eyes grow naturally dim the moment you open the sacred pages? Have you not as much power to beg of God to help you in time of need, as to seek it from an earthly friend in seasons of distress? Or, does some strange fit seize you at the moment of commencing prayer, and render you incapable of imploring aid?

The answer to these questions is self-evident. No one can say, that any sinner has a natural incapacity to perform these outward duties. Why, then, does he not perform them? Because he WILL NOT. The impediment lies solely in the will. His inability is altogether of a moral nature, and consequently he is without the least shadow of excuse.

It may be said, and scripturally so, that should the sinner perform these duties with ever so much exactness, yet, without the grace of God, ordinances, would be to him as "clouds without water;" as food, without nourishment; that the Bible would be as a sealed book, and prayer no better than an empty sound. This is true, for, by "grace are we saved," and not by any works of our own. Without Christ we can do nothing that is good; nothing that is acceptable, or well-pleasing unto God. But, is not this, I would ask, an additional argument why we should seek this help, and implore this salvation? Ought not this conviction of our helplessness to drive us to him who is almighty to deliver? And is not this salvation freely offered in the gospel to every seeking soul?

Oh! that men would but act in spiritual, as they do in temporal things. If they were as careful of the soul, as they are of the body, we would not be troubled with so many subtle distinctions, and disputations, about the freedom and bondage of the will; such extremes in setting forth the dignity and the debasement of man, such darkening of the plainest and simplest truths of the gospel. How strong are the exhortations of Paul to sleeping sinners; "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

Men scruple not to use the ordinary means for preserving the health of the body, and to apply proper medicines to restore it, when disordered. An efficacious remedy is gratefully received and carefully administered. Why are they less solicitous about their immortal souls? God has provided means of grace, and healing medicines, for every spiritual disease. There is balm in Gilead. There is a Physician there. Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? It is, because the remedy is not sought for, nor applied. And why is it not diligently used? Because men dislike the means which infinite wisdom has ordained for their recovery. They have no relish for them; no faith in them. They would rather remain in their state of natural corruption, and risk its consequences, than come to Christ, through the appointed means, to be saved out of it. Their language is, We love strangers, and after them will we go. We love our darling lusts, and will not part from them.

Throughout the Bible no mention is made of any secret decree of reprobation, sealing a portion of mankind to eternal death, irrespective of their character. Let no one, then, complain of natural incapacity, or of any necessity laid upon man to sin. The cause of human misery lies in man, and so does his destruction. The inveteracy of the will is the grand barrier between the sinner and Christ; and so strong is the current of the sinner's will to evil, that he cannot come to Christ, the Fountain of Holiness, in true faith and love, except the Father draws him by his grace and Spirit.

But yet, notwithstanding this, every man has a natural power to use the outward means and ordinances of the gospel. He can hear the preached word. He can read the Scriptures. He can offer up his daily supplications at a throne of grace, if not in words of his own, yet in suitable forms of prayer provided for him. Let these be duly and constantly performed on the warrant of the following delightful promises and assurances of God's holy word, and in due time a divine power will be communicated from on high. "If you seek the Lord your God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul." "Your heart shall live that seeks God." "Seek the Lord, until he comes and rains righteousness upon you." "The Lord is good unto those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him." "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."

Let sinners only persist in the use of the appointed means of grace, waiting with patient hope and perseverance for the promised blessing, and "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," "for the Lord never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain." No! the experience of all ages testifies to this sacred truth, that no one ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded.

Almighty God! who know the vileness of my nature, the stubbornness of my will, the darkness of my understanding, the depravity of my heart, and my proneness to seek for excuses to cover my sins. Stretch forth your mighty arm of salvation; and for your tender mercy's sake in Jesus Christ my Lord, enlighten my mind, rectify my perverse inclinations, regulate my disordered passions, and make me a new creature to the praise and glory of your grace. Impart a seeking spirit, to me your unworthy servant, and to every perishing sinner of mankind. Carry on, O Lord, your work of grace with power, until every soul is filled with gladness, and every mouth with praise; until Christ, the hope of glory, is formed in every heart; until all the world is subject to yours way.

43. THE SCRIPTURE VIEW OF THE PRESENT

43. THE SCRIPTURE VIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF MAN

"The Lord looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if there is even one with real understanding, one who seeks for God. But no, all have turned away from God; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not even one!" Psalms 14:2-3

Amid conflicting opinions, and contradictory statements, it is only from the word of God that we can attain to a true knowledge of ourselves. And even this holy book would not instruct us to any saving purpose, without the divine illumination and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Hence, we see the necessity of reading the Scriptures, with prayer for the guidance of the Spirit, whose office it is to guide the followers of Christ into all truth, as well as to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

We cannot read our Bible with any suitable degree of attention, without being struck with the great stress which is laid upon the inward state of the heart. In the very beginning of divine revelation, when the dreadful effects of the Fall began to deluge the earth with violence, it is recorded, that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And again, "The Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

By the prophet Jeremiah, "the Spirit of truth gives this humbling description of the inner man, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jesus, who needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man, has declared, "It is the thought-life that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God."

The heart of man, while in a state of nature, is described throughout the Scriptures in a variety of ways, in order to impress the sinner with a deep Sense of his wretched condition, and to convince him of the absolute necessity of an entire and radical change. Oh! that beholding our native deformity, we may be led to loathe and abhor ourselves, and to seek to that gracious Giver of all good things, who alone can prepare us for his kingdom and glory. As holy men of old spoke and wrote under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, so what they have recorded respecting the human heart, must be considered as the divine testimony.

Solomon declares, "Deceit is in the heart of those who imagine evil." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." What can be more decisive than such declarations? Who can look for holy principles and affections, holy motives and purposes, holy conduct and conversation, in, and from, a heart full of evil? Surely, if there were no other testimony, this alone is sufficient to cast down

proud imaginations, and every high thing which exalts itself, against the knowledge of God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden.

Lord give me a humble spirit. May I receive your testimony with self-abasement. O cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name.

By the prophet Hosea, the Almighty declares of his professing people, that "their heart is divided." This is highly displeasing to God, who has said, "My son, give me your heart." Not a part, but the whole, for the command is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." And what can be more reasonable, more delightful, than to love, with supreme affection, the Author of our being, the God of our salvation, the Bestower of all our mercies ? But, foul ingratitude marks the character of our fallen nature. Thus God expostulates with the rebellious house of Israel; an admonition extending to every creature, even to me; for how prone is my deceitful heart to evade the personal application under the wide extensive survey of human corruption- "Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand." "The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." "The stork knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the Lord requires of them."

We sin, and forget the sin, but God remembers all our wickedness! Awful, awakening thought! Every impure imagination, every unhallowed affection, every wicked purpose, though unripened into action; every secret, and to men, unknown and unseen iniquity, is all remembered by that omniscient God, who will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Yes, who will judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus, and render unto every man according to his works; to those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil.

O! what a tremendous day will that be, which tears the mask of hypocrisy from the face of sin; which rolls away the stone from off the white-washed sepulcher; which discloses the chambers of imagery, and discovers the hidden evils of a heart once admired, but now abhorred, by an assembled world.

In that day the wicked will bewail in bitter reproaches their forgetfulness of God, and their love of sin; but this bitterness of soul being utterly destitute of every gracious feeling, will only enhance the sharpness of their torment, and give additional strength to the sting of that worm which never dies. Thus their self-reproach will be co-exist with eternity. Hating God, and hating themselves, and hating the fiends who torment them, they will be wretched beyond all conception. "From everlasting damnation, Good Lord deliver us."

The rebellion of the human heart is most forcibly described by the prophet Jeremiah; "Do you have no respect for me? Why do you not tremble in my presence? I, the Lord, am the one who defines the ocean's sandy shoreline, an everlasting boundary that the waters cannot cross. The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the bounds I set. But my people have stubborn and

rebellious hearts. They have turned against me and have chosen to practice idolatry." What language can more forcibly depict the amazing power and force of human depravity, breaking through every restraint, and passing over every barrier? By the prophet Ezekiel, the unrenewed heart is called a heart of stone, hard and insensible. These are a few of those scriptures which, like a mirror, show us to ourselves. Oh! that the sight of such deformity may humble every proud pretension to moral excellence, and cause us to seek to that divine and gracious Savior, who so lovingly gave himself to redeem us from this lost condition.

Lord, unite me to yourself, that I may show forth your praise, by a life of true humility, purity, and love. Be pleased to give me a new heart and a new spirit; a heart of flesh. Renew my soul in righteousness. Create me anew after your image. Dwell in my heart by faith. Crucify every unholy affection. Mortify every unhallowed inclination. Wean my heart, O God, from earth, and bind my soul to you. Be the center of all my desires. May they all settle on you. Give me clearer views of my real condition as a fallen creature; clearer apprehensions of your grace in Christ Jesus; and clearer manifestations of your purposes and love towards my poor sinful soul, that in the full assurance of faith and hope, I may go on from strength to strength, until I appear before you in Zion.

Every humble student of the Holy Scriptures, that pure fountain of truth, must be convinced that mere head knowledge of the gospel will profit him nothing. However orthodox our opinions may be, they will avail nothing if they merely float on the mind, but never descend into, or influence the heart. However punctual our attendance on the ordinances of religion may be, we shall only resemble the lip-serving Pharisees, who drew near unto God with their mouths, while their hearts were far from him. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." These are severe words, but they were spoken by Him who is Love, and who knew what was in man.

Paul points out the difference between the outward rite, and the inward grace, which applies as much to Christian baptism, as it does to Jewish circumcision. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." With this accords the command of Moses; "Circumcise your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." Also the promise of sanctification; "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live."

This distinction between the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace, is made by Stephen when addressing an assembly of circumcised Jews; "You stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." When all this is brought to the test of facts, we may ask; Was there no difference between the character and spiritual state of John, the beloved disciple, and Judas, the traitor? Yet both were ordained by Christ to the office of the Apostleship. Was there no difference between Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit," and Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Spirit? Yet, they were equally professing members of the Church at Jerusalem? Was there no

difference between the inward state of the baptized Cornelius, to whom was granted repentance unto life; and Simon Magus, who, after baptism, was declared, by the inspired Peter, to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?

If this distinction of character be apparent, even in the primitive Church, should it be deemed an unwarrantable assumption, as some zealous maintainers of baptismal regeneration affirm, to divide baptized people, composing the visible Church of Christ, into the godly and the profane?

Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition on the Holy Catholic Church, (the ninth Article in the Apostle's Creed) did not think so. " We must observe," writes this learned prelate, "that the Church, as it embraces all the professors of the true faith of Christ, contains in it not only such as do truly believe, and are obedient to the word, but those also which are hypocrites and profane. Many profess the faith, who have no true belief; many have some kind of faith, which live with no correspondence to the gospel preached. Within, therefore, the notion of the Church, are comprehended good and bad, being both externally called, and both professing the same faith. This is that ark of Noah, in which were preserved beasts clean and unclean. There are many called of all which the Church consists, but there are few chosen of those which are called, and thereby within the Church."

From this statement of the Bishop, in accordance with the parables of our Lord, and to which he himself alludes, it is evident, that if we are mere nominal Christians, our admittance by baptism into the visible Church, will only aggravate our condemnation. The sin of Hophni and Phineas was augmented by the sacred office which they held. The crime of David was enhanced by the favors which a God of love had heaped upon him. The condemnation of the cities, where our Lord preached and wrought his miracles, was increased by the light vouchsafed to them.

Abused mercies, like the blood of Abel, cry out for vengeance. Sin is deepened in its atrocity, when committed against Light and Love. "What horrors await you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have sat in deep repentance long ago, clothed in sackcloth and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. I assure you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on the judgment day than you! And you people of Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to the place of the dead. For if the miracles I did for you had been done in Sodom, it would still be here today. I assure you, Sodom will be better off on the judgment day than you."

All are equally responsible for the privileges conferred upon them, but are all equally impressed with the importance of their responsibility? Has not our blessed Lord made a distinction between the man who improved his talent, and the slothful servant who hid it in a napkin? Did he not pronounce an encomium of "Well done" upon the one, and a censure, "You wicked servant" on the other? This distinction was not made from the inward state of the heart only, but from the diligence of the one, and the slothfulness of the other, agreeably to his own revealed rule of judging; "By their fruits you shall know them."

As the Judge of the living and the dead, the Almighty Savior has reserved to himself the work of separation between the sheep and the goats. He knows the secrets of all hearts. He can discern his people in the midst of their frailties; and the hypocrite beneath his specious virtues. This is His prerogative. But, he has even now drawn a line of demarcation between the godly and the

profane. Did not the Lord say to Moses, respecting Korah and his company, "Separate yourselves from this congregation?" And did not Moses command the people "Depart, I beg you, from the tents of these wicked men."

What said the Lord to Jeremiah? "If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as my mouth." What was the complaint of the Almighty to Ezekiel, when speaking of Jerusalem? "Her priests have violated my law; they have made no difference between the holy and profane." Thus is the conduct of those priests condemned, who considered all people, if circumcised, as standing on the same level. When the God of Israel revealed to Ezekiel in vision, the new city and temple, which are thought to be emblematical of the millennial times, he declared the altered conduct of the priests; "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane." What can more strikingly show the duty of ministers to take forth the precious from the vile.

If Circumcision was to the Jewish Church, what Baptism is to the Christian, an initiatory rite, abounding with New Covenant blessings, precious privileges, and promises to those who rightly received it; and if the Jewish priests were condemned by the Almighty for making no difference between the holy and profane members of their church; must it not be equally blamable if Christian ministers abstain from dividing the mass of baptized people into those who serve God, and those who serve him not?

After delivering his beautiful sermon on the Mount, our Lord divided his hearers into two classes, by the striking parable of the two builders. Those who heard his word and kept it, built upon a rock. Those who heard and disregarded it, built upon the sand. It is therefore of great importance in preaching the gospel, to discriminate between the different characters to whom the message is delivered, and to separate the precious from the vile. If this is neglected, the wicked will hold fast their delusions, and the righteous continue in bondage to their fears; but, if ministers are faithful in the discharge of this part of their duty, those among whom they minister will be led to a knowledge of their own proper character and condition.

The Church of Rome accounts all those to be her faithful children, who are baptized into the Holy Mother Church; who celebrate the mass; make confession to, and obtain absolution from, the priest; who rigidly observe the fasts; and blindly obey her dictates. To such she extends her soothing power, even in their dying moments, by administering the extreme unction, and promising that prayers shall be offered up for their departed souls! The Church is everything. The Priest is all in all. Is this Christianity?

Oh! that our Protestant Churches may ever guard against the fatal error of thus quieting the conscience, by the mere observance of external rites, crying "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Would not this be opening a by-path into the Church of Rome? Would it not be a descent into the darkneses of Papal superstition? Is there no danger of such a descent? Nothing but sovereign grace can keep us from apostatizing from the truth.

As soon as we leave the plain path of Scripture, we get into the labyrinth of error. It is humbling to think how tenaciously some cleave to error, because it is 'silvered with age'. Our Lord condemned the Jewish rulers, because they taught for doctrines the commandments of men; thus making void the commandments of God by their traditions. It is the arrogant pretensions of the Church of Rome, that her unwritten traditions, and the decrees of her councils, are as binding on the

consciences of her members as the revealed written word of God, even though some of those decrees contradict that word. This she founds on her Infallibility. The Rev. Dr. Milner, the Roman Catholic Bishop, in his Sixth Letter to James Brown, Esq., says, "The Catholic rule of faith is not merely the written word of God, but the whole word of God, both written and unwritten; in other words, Scripture and Tradition, and these propounded and explained by the Catholic Church. This implies that we have a two-fold rule or law, and that we have an interpreter, or judge to explain it, and to decide upon it in all doubtful points." From the Fifth Letter. "Supposing the divine authority of the sacred books themselves to be established; how do you know that the copies of them translated and printed in your Bible are authentic?" "Manifold is the cause of the obscurity of holy writ." The object of the Bishop is summed up in the words of Vincent of Lirans; "The children of the Church must carefully observe the rule laid down by the holy men referred to- they are to interpret the divine text according to the Tradition of the Catholic Church."

By some Protestants it is now received, that Catholic tradition is the only true interpreter of Scripture, even though it is well known that many of the ancient fathers, being uninspired, and therefore fallible men, were dark in some of their views of Gospel truth. Councils and Churches have erred. Where then is infallibility to be found? No where, but in the unerring word of the living God, the Scriptures of truth. Where is light to be obtained? Only from the promised Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth, if we implore his teaching through the merits of Christ.

To appreciate the labors of good men, and especially of those who lived nearest to the times of the Apostles, is what every right-minded Christian would do. But to make them his STANDARD for doctrine and practice, is what every enlightened Christian could not do. He will follow them, so long as they follow Christ; but when they deviate from the revealed path, he dare not tread in the steps even of the immediate successors of the Apostles. He calls no man, Master, upon earth. He has one Master, even Christ, whose inspired word is his only RULE and LAW.

Truly we live in sifting times. The mere form of godliness will profit nothing. The true believer must not only dare to be singular in his conduct before the world, by the holiness of his walk, but he must dare to be bold in the confession of his faith, before those who are masters in Israel. Much courage will be required to maintain his ground, much humility to keep him dependent on divine teaching, much love to preserve him from bitterness of spirit, or uncharitable judging of others.

Oh! that the glorious doctrines of grace may be living principles in our hearts, humbling our souls before God under deep views of sin; inspiring us with faith, while beholding the precious Savior; kindling our love towards him, who so marvelously loved us; and creating a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and that renewal of the soul, without which faith is dead, and religion an empty name.

Oh! Almighty and all-quickening Spirit, make me your temple. Take away the love and power of sin. Fill me with gracious and heavenly desires, with holy longings after Christ, my beloved and my friend. I want to feel my soul to be all on fire, the fire of celestial love; my affections to be all in motion, ever on the wing towards Christ; my will to be ever inclined to choose his law, to bear his yoke, and to prefer the most arduous duties, the most self-denying commands, for his sake, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

But where can I find strength sufficient for these things? Not in myself, for in my flesh dwells no good thing. Not from the best of men, for they cannot communicate grace to others. I will look unto the hills from where my help comes from. Oh! blessed Savior, all my fresh springs are in you. Without you I can do nothing. In you dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily fullness of wisdom, power, and love. Replenish my longing soul out of your fullness. Pour into my heart those living streams which make glad the city of God. Remembering that "God is a Spirit", may I ever worship you in spirit and in truth. Preserve me from the dangerous error of resting in the form, instead of seeking after the power of godliness. Make me sincere in all my intentions, and fruitful in every good word and work, until my vile body shall be made like unto your glorious body, and my soul be perfected in your presence, according to the working of your mighty power, whereby you are able to subdue even all things unto yourself.

44. THE BLESSINGS FLOWING FROM

44. THE BLESSINGS FLOWING FROM THE COVENANT OF GRACE

"He will ever be mindful of his covenant." Psalms 111:5

In the Covenant of Grace, entered into by the three Divine persons in the one Jehovah, before the world began, is treasured up every blessing. Sinners are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ who was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." "He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Such are the inspired declarations of Peter, John, and Paul.

The first blessing which the God of all grace bestows upon a ruined world is, the gift of his SON. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The second blessing which flows to us through the Son is, the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT. "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth."

The third blessing which is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit is, the gift of the SCRIPTURES. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." "When the Spirit of truth has come," said Christ to his Apostles, "he will guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you."

The fourth blessing which we receive from the God of mercy is, the gift of a NEW HEART. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "I will give them one heart, and one way."

The fifth blessing which believers in Jesus shall finally enjoy is, the gift of ETERNAL LIFE. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "Father glorify your Son that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." "Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "These go into life eternal." O Blessed Savior, you have said, "My sheep shall never perish," "I give unto them eternal life."

By death and hell pursued in vain,

To you the ransomed seed shall come;

Shouting, their heavenly Zion gain,

And pass through death triumphant home.

The covenant made with Adam was broken through disobedience, but the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus is an everlasting covenant. All its requirements have been fulfilled through the incarnation, obedience, and death of the Son of God, and therefore cannot be disannulled. It is perfect, comprising every blessing; and eternal, perpetuating those blessings. Nothing can prevent the final salvation of the believer but these two things, either God's turning away from him, or his departing from God. Now infinite love has assured us, that neither of these shall ever happen to his redeemed people.

This assurance is contained in these blessed words; "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Here salvation is secured. God in his sovereign love will not turn away from the objects of his redeeming grace. He has pledged himself by this promise, which shall be accomplished when all his sons are brought, through Christ, by the Spirit, into his kingdom and glory.

The way whereby they are kept from final apostasy, to which the degenerate heart is continually prone, is by the fear of God being put into it as a holy preserving principle. Hence arise those exhortations to fear, which are scattered throughout the sacred volume. This holy fear is the beginning of wisdom; and is sweetly blended with hope and love through the whole of the believer's experience. Many precious promises are annexed to this state of filial fear. It is a new covenant blessing. Thus we find that the eighth chapter to the Romans, which describes the believer's privileges and character, begins with, "No condemnation" and ends with "no separation." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

How happy, then, ought the believer to be, when he thus views the nature of that covenant, which by faith he embraces, as containing the foundation of hope, and the fountain of felicity; for Christ is the sum and substance, the sun and center, of this covenant. Believing in Jesus, he obtains the Spirit of truth, the Comforter; and finds this blessed Spirit to be the Witness, the Seal, the Pledge of every blessing.

Oh! that I could feel my cold hard heart renewed in righteousness, and filled with faith and love. I seem like a lifeless corpse in the midst of living bodies; like ice in the midst of summer's heat. Oh! that I could feel something like vitality and warmth in religion.

Lord, pity a poor, miserable, wretched worm of the earth. You could crush me in a moment, and send me down quickly into hell. And in so doing you would be infinitely just, and your goodness remain unimpeached. But oh! cast an eye of pity upon my soul. You know my miserable state, and my complete inability to save myself from the power of the least transgression. I am tied and bound with the chain of my sins, let the pitifulness of your great mercy loose me. Pour down your blessed Spirit upon me. Deluge the earth with showers of blessings. Cause the living waters to flow in copious streams through all the desert places of the earth, until every heart be divinely changed, until all acknowledge you to be the Lord.

The need of prayer for the Holy Spirit's influence is allowed by all who hold the truth as it is in Jesus, but the attention of Christians in general, is not sufficiently drawn to this important subject. "Those who honor me I will honor," stands upon record in the word of God. We honor the Father, when we honor the Son. And we honor the Father and the Son, when we honor the Spirit. It would

be daringly presumptuous in a poor worm to talk of honoring the Almighty, if he had not condescended to declare himself honored by our unworthy praises. "Whoever offers praise glorifies me."

We live in a day of great religious exertion. There is a sacred movement in the Christian Church, which bespeaks some important issue. But what are all our labors, if unaccompanied by the divine blessing? Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God only gives the increase. No zeal, however great; no love, however ardent; no eloquence, however persuasive; no sacrifice, however costly, can ever win over a rebellious soul to Christ, if the Holy Spirit withholds his convincing, converting grace. This is a truth which should be engraved on all our religious institutions. The more we cease from man, and trust in God, the more will success appear.

Hence arises the necessity of uniting in humble prayer, that the Great Head of the Church would be graciously pleased to fulfill his own promise; "If I depart, I will send him unto you," and "he shall abide with you forever." Oh! that this divine promise may have its full accomplishment; then the weakest efforts will become powerful in operation, and God shall be glorified throughout the earth.

The reason, perhaps, why so little spirituality exists among professing Christians, is owing to their not honoring the Spirit in his office-relations. He is the Sanctifier, as well as the Comforter. All means are like 'clouds without water', unless He imparts the holy influence. When He descends in gentle dews upon the soul, then the seed of the word takes root, grows up, and bears much fruit. We should therefore never read the Scriptures, hear the gospel preached, engage in pious conversation, or enter upon meditation or secret prayer, without imploring the gracious influences of the divine Spirit.

The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord in the semblance of a dove. The 'dove' is the emblem of purity and love, and is remarkable for its timidity. So all in whom the Spirit dwells are noted for their love and purity. But every deviation from these graces, grieves the Holy Spirit. Like the timid dove, he then retires and withdraws his comforts from the soul which dares to indulge in contrary vices. This is strikingly declared by the Apostle in the fourth chapter to the Ephesians, where the grieving of the Spirit is described as in consequence of hatred, anger, and impurity being allowed to agitate and pollute the soul.

O! how rich in blessing is the covenant of grace! No past sins, however great, will be any obstacle to our obtaining pardoning mercy, if we only have grace to believe on the Son of God. We are commanded, yes invited, to look and be saved; to come unto Christ just as we are, because "the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

If we tarry until we're better,

We shall never come at all.

Nothing but unbelief will exclude us from the blessings of the covenant of grace, and from the benefits of Christ's death. "He who believes shall be saved." "Him that comes to me I will never cast out." All who truly believe, will cordially love and fear God. Love, when first implanted in the heart, does not always produce such violent emotions as the common passion of fear. Fear has been compared to a cannon ball, which at first moves with great speed, but as it proceeds,

gradually loses its force, until at last it falls spent to the ground- while love resembles the needle, which increases in velocity, the nearer it approaches the magnetic attraction.

The unregenerate man cannot love Jesus. He sees no beauty in the Savior. The lovely character of Jesus, as delineated in the Gospel, is to such a person like a beautiful picture hung up in a dark room. Its beauty cannot be discovered, until light is admitted; nor fully seen, until the room is sufficiently filled with its rays. The application is plain and practical.

The regenerate love to contemplate the character of God, revealed to us in Christ Jesus, with all the high mysteries of his grace as unfolded to us in the work of redemption. This view of infinite love, when connected with the knowledge of our own state and character, as perishing sinners, will tend to melt our hearts, inflame our love, excite our obedience, and transform us into the image of Christ. The work being a divine work, we must daily supplicate the gift of the Holy Spirit, who alone can take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

How lovely does the character of our Redeemer appear in his interview with the woman of Samaria, when sitting on Jacob's well. How great was his benevolence and condescension, his tenderness and forbearance, his love and gentleness, in leading this benighted woman to a feeling conviction of her sinful state; and then to an acquaintance with those blessings, which he, as the Savior of the world, was ready to bestow. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." Alas! she neither saw the beauty, nor felt the need, of this precious spiritual blessing, until Jesus probed the wound, and convinced her that he was the Messiah.

Like the divine Redeemer, we should be always ready to seize every opportunity of doing good; for opportunity, well improved, is the golden spot of time. Our Lord knew the character of this Samaritan woman, but he did not reproach her with it. His question and subsequent answer were designed to remove the veil from her mind. With eagerness she made her neighbors acquainted with the joyful news, that she had found the Christ. They heard for themselves, and believed in the Lord. Was not this a blessing flowing from the covenant of grace? "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

What a striking contrast between wrath and mercy is presented to us in Genesis and Malachi. In Genesis, we read, "The windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. In Malachi, "Prove me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Thus God can, with the same ease, deluge a world either with judgment or mercy. So it is with respect to spiritual blessings; the Almighty can, if he please, enlighten the whole race of mankind in a moment, by the power of his Spirit, with the same facility with which the earth is daily illumined by the beams of the sun; or, as when our sleeping dust shall be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

As the blessing is from God, we must wait upon him in humble faith and prayer, using the means which he has appointed, and firmly believing that "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "He that believes shall not make haste." "Tarry the Lord's leisure; be strong, and he shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

If we feel our hearts drawn to seek God by secret prayer, let us ever cherish this motion of the Spirit; and, if prevented, then to lift up our souls in silent yet fervent prayers, darting heavenward, as from a heart on fire. This ready following of the Spirit will increase our desires after communion with God, and make us more spiritual in the general habit and frame of our minds.

Blessed Spirit of all grace, You who are the Sanctifier and Comforter of perishing sinners, lead me to Jesus Christ; enable me savingly to believe in Him who is my only atonement for sin, the only Way of access to God. Create me anew, and lead me in the paths of righteousness.

Blessed Trinity in Unity, fill me with peace and joy. How wonderful are the mysteries of your grace! How vast the designs of your infinite love! My mind is lost in the boundless extent of uncreated goodness. Oh! how unspeakably great will my bliss be, when brought by the hand of love into the Temple above. I shall see your face; be glorified with your glory; and enjoy the blessings which flow onwards, through endless ages, from the Covenant of Grace.

45. A CHRISTIAN INDEED

45. A CHRISTIAN INDEED

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit." John 1:47

We read of some who have a name that they live and are dead. It will profit us nothing to be called Christians, if we are destitute of the Spirit of Christ; if we have not the mind of Christ; if we have never put on Christ; if we are not made conformable to his death; if we know him not in the power of his resurrection. To call ourselves Christians, members of the Universal Church, which Christ purchased for himself, out of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, through his precious death upon the cross; and yet, to live in the habitual exercise of unholy tempers, unsanctified dispositions, and evil practices, is the height of hypocrisy and self-delusion!

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to purify unto himself, through the Spirit, a peculiar people, zealous for good works. All, then, who are saved by Jesus Christ, are redeemed from the power, as well as from the guilt of sin. They are made New Creatures, abounding in all the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God. The true Church is not content with external reformation. Her members are not white-washed sepulchers. Christ, her Head, demands the heart, and will accept of nothing less than an internal, spiritual regeneration.

Have we, then, been born again, not merely by the sprinkling of water, which is the work of man, but by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which is the operation of sovereign grace? Do we evidence our regeneration by bearing the image of Christ? Have we been made partakers of the divine nature? Are we grafted into Christ by faith? Are all our hopes of glory founded on his meritorious cross and passion? Have we received Christ into our hearts as our Prophet, Priest, and King? Do we come unto the Father, only by him? Is he the daily food of our souls? Is he all our joy, our glory, our righteousness, and our strength? These are most important questions. To talk of being living members of Christ without the scriptural marks of spiritual life, is as unreasonable as to grasp at a shadow, and then to maintain that we hold the substance.

Happy is the man who knows from sweet experience that he is a child of God; who feels the inward witness of the Spirit, by an increasing hatred of sin; an increasing enjoyment of peace; a growing love to the Savior; and an abiding assurance of his acceptance with God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ. What prospects of glory are unfolded to such a happy believer in the Holy Scriptures! He can rejoice in the blessed appropriation of the apostle's words; "All things are yours."

Lord! make me a member of Christ's mystical body; a branch of the living vine; a living stone in your spiritual building. Then shall I have joy and peace in believing; then shall I overcome my spiritual adversaries; then shall I triumph in death, and be glorified in You through a blissful eternity. Why should I not be such a Christian Indeed? It is your will that I should be such an one; for this is your will, even my sanctification. Oh! make me willing in the day of your power; subdue all my oppositions to your will; then shall mine be the comfort, and yours the everlasting praise.

The name of 'Christian' (like that of 'friend') is too often stamped on counterfeit coin. Hence it passes current in the world, until detected by an exposure of its base metal. Hypocrisy, in every age, has assumed a character not its own. "Burning lips," -burning with the professions of love and friendship, "and a wicked heart," -insincere and full of evil designs, are like "a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot." Thus an odium is brought upon Christianity, as if it sanctioned such baseness, while the enemies of the Lord triumph and blaspheme. Woe be to the man by whom the offence comes, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Blessed Lord, deliver your servant, I earnestly beseech you, from hypocrisy and deceit. Your word declares, that "he that covers his sins shall not prosper," that he who tries to conceal them may be sure that his sin will find him out. Give me grace to confess and forsake my sins at the foot of the cross, that I may there find mercy, through the blood of Jesus, which speaks better things than the blood of Abel- the blood of Abel cried for vengeance- the blood of Jesus cries for mercy; "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Oh! save me for Jesus' sake. Hear his intercession in my behalf. Give me grace to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; to walk worthy of him who has called me to his kingdom and glory.

To be a Christian in the Scripture sense of the word, is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." How important, then, is the question; Am I a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Examine yourself again and again. O my soul, that you may determine a point on which your peace and safety so much depend; but examine with prayer for the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is so common, and yet nothing more dangerous, than to deceive ourselves. Hence arises the Apostle's injunction; "Let no man deceive himself."

"Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost."

Have I seen my undone state by nature? Have I seen the Holiness of God in the mirror of his divine law? Has the conviction of my guilt and misery laid me in the dust before him? Am I emptied of all self-dependence, self-seeking, and self-righteousness? Under a deep sense of my own helplessness and wretchedness, have I fled to Christ for life and salvation? Can I rejoice that through him there is blood to atone, righteousness to justify, grace to sanctify, strength to support, and consolation to cheer in every time of need?

"Faith purifies the heart."

Have I that faith in Christ which purifies the heart? Do I feel indwelling corruption to be the very grief and burden of my soul? Am I daily striving and warring against it in the strength of my Redeemer? Do I find its power grow weaker, and holy affections become more vigorous and powerful, more constant and natural, more ardent and abiding?

"Faith works by love."

Does my faith work by love? Is Christ the first object of my desire, the very joy and rejoicing of my heart? Do I love God the father, who showed such love to me, in giving his only Son for my redemption? Do I love God the Son, who so willingly became man, that he might bleed and die for me? Do I love God the Holy Spirit, who so graciously applies this great salvation to my soul, and who brings me into the bonds of the everlasting covenant? Does my love to the ever-blessed

Trinity manifest itself by a lively gratitude, a uniform obedience, and an earnest endeavor to promote the glory of God?

Lord, how defective is my obedience, how cold is my love, how feeble are my endeavors! What sin rises in my mind! What idle words pass my lips! What inconsistencies mark my actions! When I come to examine what I ought to be, yes, what I must be, if ever I am saved, and compare this with what I am, Oh! what cause do I find for humiliation and sorrow. What need do I see of a precious Savior, to work in me all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. When viewed in the sight of my sins, how precious does Jesus appear. He is, indeed, the Unspeakable Gift.

Does my faith work also by love to man? Are my friends the friends of Jesus? Do I love all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, by whatever name they may be called among men, or in whatever country they may dwell? Is my heart so contracted that it can only contain those of my own religious communion; or, can it embrace the 'Christian indeed', though in some non-essentials he may differ from me? Do I love the image of Christ wherever I behold it? Are all the true, living members of Christ's mystical body regarded by me as brethren? Do I, with joy, anticipate the period when, saved by grace, I shall join the ten thousand times ten thousand and the thousand of thousands gathered out of all nations and kindred, and people, and tongues who shall swell the everlasting chorus with, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

Can I now sing in hope of this heavenly blessedness: 'We praise you O God, we acknowledge you to be our Lord. All the earth worships you, the everlasting Father. The holy Church throughout the world acknowledges you, the Father of an infinite Majesty, your honorable, true, and only Son; also the Holy Spirit the Comforter.' Can I, from the heart, pray for the good estate of the Universal Church, that it may be so guided and governed by the Holy Spirit; that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life? Is it my heart's desire that the Divine Majesty would inspire continually the Universal Church with the Spirit of truth, unity, and concord, that all those who confess his holy name, may agree in the truth of his holy word, and live in unity and godly love?

If this spirit of brotherly love, which breathes throughout the services of the Church of England, but influence all who call themselves Christians, we would behold a revival of primitive unity in the essentials of Christianity, and a return of that primitive charity which compelled even the persecuting heathens to exclaim; "See how these Christians love one another."

Does my faith work by love, even towards those who may spitefully use me, and say all manner of evil against me falsely for Christ's sake? Do I love them so as to pray for them, and to be at all times ready to do them good? Is sin the only object of my hatred, both in myself and others? Can I pity the sinner while I abhor his sin? Is holiness the object of my wishes, and the subject of my prayers? While I cherish a love of complacency towards all the children of God, do I feel a love of compassion towards his enemies and mine?

"Faith overcomes the world."

Does my faith enable me to overcome the world? Have I learned in the school of Christ, the shortness, the emptiness, the vanity, the insufficiency, the uncertainty of all earthly comforts,

pleasures, honors, riches, and delights? Has this knowledge had a practical effect, by causing me to renounce the world both in heart and affection? While I am in the world, can I, with sincerity, say that I am not of the world? While my hands are engaged in the diligent prosecution of my lawful calling according to the will of God, is my heart totally disengaged, and disentangled from earthly idols, and wholly given up to God, through Christ?

Have I come out from among the carnal part of mankind, which in Scripture is called the world, though nominally Christian, and have I joined myself to that little flock, that part of the true Church who are traveling Zionward, and of whom Christ said; "It is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom?"

If faith has produced these blessed effects in any soul, or if these gracious operations of the Spirit are daily ripening and coming to maturity, then is that person a Christian indeed. He is a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory. He is an heir of God, and a part heir with Christ.

Oh! Almighty Savior, make me one of your disciples, a Christian indeed. Perfect the good work of your grace in me, and when you have prepared me for yourself, receive me into the place prepared for me. Impress my mind with this truth, that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; that all who are redeemed by your blood are made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light; that all who serve you here shall follow you, wherever you go; for with you is heaven, and joy, and love.

Oh! how rich, how extensive are your promises! The Christian parent may well rejoice, while viewing his offspring and your gracious purposes of mercy "I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." Oh! that the young plants in your vineyard may all become trees of righteousness, bearing abundant fruit to your glory!

You tender youths, whose opening day

Of life, will quickly pass away

Would you rich in virtue be,

Faith, and sweet humility,

Come to Jesus- near his side,

You will find a faithful Guide.

Allured by folly's tempting ways,

Forgetful of a Savior's grace,

Often the young, by promise fair,

Caught in pleasure's fatal snare,

Mourn their choice with bitter tears,

Through a range of following years.

Happy the youth whose first desires,
To Jesus and his grace aspires
Blessed portion shall he find,
Constant pleasures of the mind,
Peace, sweet peace, will Christ bestow,
Peace, which worldlings cannot know.
The Spirit dwelling in his heart,
Will every glorious gift impart,
Heavenly Wisdom he will give,
How to die, and how to live.
Thus shall pure and holy Truth,
Guide and guard the pious youth.
The Savior calls- O hear his voice,
Make him your delightful choice;
Then your soul shall surely know
Where the living waters flow;
From the Mount of Calvary,
Where He bled and died for thee.

46. THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE

46. THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE

"We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have been honest and sincere in all our dealings. We have depended on God's grace, not on our own earthly wisdom. That is how we have acted toward everyone, and especially toward you." 2 Corinthians 1:12

To have a good conscience is an unspeakable blessing. But what is it that makes the conscience good? Saul of Tarsus thought that he had a good conscience, while he was blindly persecuting the Church of Christ. When enumerating his legal grounds for confidence, he mentions "zeal, persecuting the Church." In his powerful appeal before Agrippa, he declared; "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." To the Galatians he writes "Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it." In all this, Saul of Tarsus fulfilled the words of Christ; "The time comes, that whoever kills you will think that he does God service." And where this fiery zeal arise? Our Lord tells us; "And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." It arose from ignorance of God and of Christ. When the eyes of Saul were enlightened by the Spirit, he saw himself to be a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; yes, the chief of sinners.

How different were his views and feelings when he became an Apostle of Jesus Christ. While beholding the council, before whom he stood as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, he could say; "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." To Festus he boldly said; "But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a sect. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the books of prophecy. I have hope in God, just as these men do, that he will raise both the righteous and the ungodly. Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and everyone else."

A good conscience is the sunshine of the soul. It is the work of grace. When the sinner is awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger; when he is led to see the all-sufficiency of the Atonement of Christ; when he is enabled by faith to receive the atonement; and when the precious blood of Christ is applied to his conscience by the Spirit, then the soul, bowed down under a sense of guilt, obtains rest, and the conscience, goaded by tormenting fears, enjoys peace. The conscience, thus pacified and purified, becomes, in the scriptural sense of the term, a good conscience. Almighty God is no longer dreaded as an enemy, but feared as a father; and sin is no longer cherished as a friend, but resisted as a foe.

Paul describes this happy state when exhorting the Hebrew Christians to steadfastness in the faith; "And so, dear friends, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's people, let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with

pure water. Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise."

To Timothy, the Apostle also writes; "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Happy, then, are they who hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," a conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God.

A good conscience is tender, alive to the approach of evil, and sensible of the subtle workings of indwelling sin. It is the faithful monitor of the soul. It speaks for God, and in accordance with his word. A scrupulous conscience is always inconsistent. It strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. A seared conscience is devoutly to be dreaded; it is the presage of eternal death. "Ephraim is joined to idols let him alone!" The true believer in Jesus can rejoice in the testimony of his conscience, this inward witness to the sincerity of his profession. He can say with Peter; "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." And with Paul; "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience."

Lord give me an enlightened conscience, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, jealous of sin, and ever awake to the motions of the enemy. Keep me watchful, and prayerful, and dependent on your grace. Preserve me from all blindness and hardness of heart. Teach me your way, and enable me to walk therein, even that way of holiness, in which all the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles walked; that way in which all the redeemed are found, as they pass from the earthly to the heavenly Canaan.

Simplicity and godly sincerity are two precious ornaments which adorn the Christian character. Faith is the uniting grace; love is the active principle, which keeps the wheels in motion; hope is the sustaining grace. How wonderful is the work of God in the soul of man. When a divine light irradiates the understanding, directs the will, and spiritualizes the affections, the sinner becomes a new creature. Oh! that this blessedness may be mine.

Lord! pity a poor wanderer from your fold. Without you I must perish. "O save me for your mercies' sake." "Remember me with the favor that you bear unto your people; O visit me with your salvation; that I may see the good of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance." I want, O Lord, to love you. I want to feel my heart continually drawn to you. I am miserable when my heart wanders from you, and yet, alas! I am perpetually wandering. Restore my soul; lead me in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake. Lord! unite my heart to fear your name. Uphold my goings in your way. Preserve me, O God, from hypocrisy and vain-glory. Let me ever remember that You are a Spirit; that true religion is altogether of a spiritual nature; and therefore, that you must be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

Guard me from the subtle poison of praise and flattery. Make me deeply sensible of my guilt and wretchedness, and of your righteousness and fullness. May I never seek the praise of men, nor be grieved if I am despised for your sake. But may I rather rejoice, when I am counted worthy to suffer shame for your name. Give me grace to live to you and for you. May I delight in your will.

Keep me from a worldly spirit. I have daily to mourn over the workings of a worldly spirit. O! wean my heart from earth, and fix it upon yourself alone. Enlarge my views of holiness and heaven. Increase my longings after purity and peace. Let me not rest until my desires be abundantly satisfied in your presence where fullness of joy is, and at your right hand where are pleasures for

evermore. Until that happy period arrive, may my rejoicing be this, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I live my life in the world.

To set the Lord always before us is the great secret of holy living. This we can only do, by living a life of faith in the Son of God; for faith is the eye, which, by steadily looking unto Jesus, keeps the soul in the narrow path which leads unto life eternal. We must draw an evidence of our real state and character, not so much from our public, as from our private conduct; not so much from our words, as from our thoughts. In the company of truly pious people, where a holy atmosphere surrounds us, we are constrained to assume an air of decorum and sobriety; but, when we are in the midst of worldly people, if we then throw off the garment of restraint, and enter into their spirit and conversation, we have an indisputable evidence that our hearts, whatever our outward profession may be, are not right with God.

When no eye sees us but the omniscient eye of God, are we as circumspect as when surrounded by our fellow-creatures? If we are not, we may surely conclude, that the fear of man, and the love of human estimation, is more operative in our souls than the fear of God; and that our consciences are asleep, or in an unenlightened state.

So also with respect to thoughts, which are unknown to those around us; if we are secretly indulging thoughts which are all intimately known to the heart searching God, while we would not dare to utter those thoughts to friends about us; must we not conclude, that with all our professions of piety, we are practicers of iniquity, and in the utmost peril of everlasting damnation? The pure in heart, shall see God. To keep the heart with all diligence, to set the Lord always before us, to live as seeing Him who is invisible, to act at all times with an eye to his approbation, is the very essence of true religion, the very evidence of the simplicity and sincerity of our motives.

This state of heart is the work of the Spirit; a progressive work. It meets with much opposition from our carnal nature, and the force of indwelling sin; but still it goes on toward perfection. In heaven the work is complete when the law in the members shall no longer war against the law of the mind. Until then we must fight, and wrestle, and struggle by faith and prayer. Jesus is almighty. Through Him we shall overcome. His grace is sufficient for us, and he has promised that it shall prevail.

If we are sincere in our desires after the attainment of the truth; if we have simplicity of intention in our search for it, we shall be savingly anxious to know these four things;

1. The state of our own hearts;
2. The way of salvation by grace, through Jesus Christ;
3. The path of duty as revealed in the Gospel;
4. The means for growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To know these experimentally and practically, will enable us to glorify God by a life of holy obedience. We shall then daily realize the presence of God; have an eye continually to the providence of God; and draw comfort and strength from the promises of God. In prosperity we shall be humble, in adversity resigned, in all conditions thankful and dependent.

Oh! blessed Lord, impart unto your poor unworthy child these spiritual blessings. Give me an insight into myself. Preserve me from self-delusion and hypocrisy. Let me never aim at mere appearances before others, but labor after simplicity and godly sincerity. Make me ever an humble suppliant at your mercy-seat, a thankful recipient of your bounties. Watch over me, O Lord, for good. Guard me from the snares and wiles of the devil. Keep me from a covetous mind. Wean my affections from this vain world, and cause me to set them on things above. May you be my portion. Make me more spiritually-minded, more alive to you, more solicitous about the good of others. May it be my daily intention to please you, my daily endeavor to glorify your name. Give me the blessing of a good conscience, a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, a conscience enlightened by the Spirit of truth. Shine on me with beams of love, until, through your grace, I shine in the heavenly temple with beams of glory.

47. THE CHRISTIAN'S REST

47. THE CHRISTIAN'S REST

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

As there is a heaven in going to heaven, so there is a rest, before we enter into the rest of Paradise. The soul which loves Christ supremely, which abides in him by faith, and in which Christ abides by his Spirit, enjoys while here a heavenly rest. Jesus is the believer's resting-place, his place of refuge. It is the believer's delightful privilege to hold communion with the Savior, to taste his love, to possess his peace. Oh! how sweet is true religion when felt in all its regenerating power! Lord grant that I may thus experience the joys of your salvation.

This world is indeed but a wilderness of worries; the region of sin and sorrow. Troubles, like thorns and thistles, spring up around us, and alas! too frequently they spring up within us. Unbelief, slavish fear of God, distrust of his providence, indulged lustings of the flesh, pride, and such like poisonous weeds, corrupt the soul and fill it with vexation.

Where, then, can true rest and peace be found in the midst of such anxieties? Surely no where but in Jesus. How true is his declaration; "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows." How unspeakably refreshing is his promise; "In me you shall have peace." Here, under all circumstances, we must expect to meet with trials. It is therefore our wisdom to fortify ourselves against them, by flying to the Strong for strength, and to the Comforter for Consolation.

What we need is faith, that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit, that faith which is called "the faith of God's elect." Without this faith it is impossible to please God; because, whatever springs not from this true faith in Christ, is sin. The indwelling of this holy principle is known by its fruits. It transforms the whole inner man, through the power of the Holy Spirit, into a likeness to Jesus Christ. It purifies the soul through the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It works by love through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It enables the believer to renounce the vanities of a world at enmity with God. It opens to his view eternal glories, and gives him a foretaste of that rest which remains to the people of God. What a blessing then is faith, and yet how rare a gift to man; and why? because he desires it not; he asks not for it; he refuses to return.

Awful, indeed, are the words of Jesus; "When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" We seem to be approaching a time of trial. At this moment there is a restlessness, a desire for change, not alas! from sin to holiness. The minds of men are anxious to throw off ancient restraints and to breathe what they term the air of freedom. Delusive expectation! so long as the heart is enchained by sin. The political freeman is too often Satan's bondman. While he throws off the salutary bonds of social order, he puts on the galling yoke of unbridled passions, and wild licentiousness. Infidelity revels in the storm, and tracks its path with blood!

The Church of Rome has long held the world in spiritual bondage. She has studiously withheld the light of truth from her members, and thus has fostered infidelity in her bosom. To elevate her

traditions, and enforce her decrees, she lowers the book of God. She raises doubts and mistrusts respecting the blessed Scriptures. She starts difficulties of interpretation, and obscurities without number, that her members may blindly follow the Church, hear the Church, and believe nothing but what the Church teaches. By this means she raises her priesthood above the oracles of God, for to deny the decretals of her Popes, Cardinals, and Councils, is the way into the dungeons of the Inquisition, to the fires of the Auto de fe. (The following are extracts from a Defense of Roman Catholic Principles, in a Letter to a Protestant Minister, by Gallitzin.)

"We believe that Jesus Christ has established the holy Catholic Church as the supreme tribunal to regulate our faith, or, in other words, to keep the precious deposit of Revelation unaltered, to explain to us (without any possibility of error the meaning of every part of holy writ necessary for salvation, and likewise to preserve and transmit to posterity undefiled, all that part of Christ's divine doctrine which was only delivered by word of mouth either by Christ or his Apostles."

"We believe that the unwritten word of God, transmitted to us by tradition, is entitled to the very same respect as the written word."

"When the Church has pronounced, the controversy is settled, doubts vanish, and we are as certain as if Jesus Christ himself had spoken!!"

"Holy writ (although certainly God's word) was not intended to be our Supreme Judge in matters of faith."

"We believe that the Catholic Church is this living, visible, and supreme Authority."

"We believe this authority resides in the body of Christ's Ministers, the pastors of the Catholic Church, and the lawful successors of those pastors whom Jesus Christ appointed and invested with full authority to discharge the functions of his ministry. To that body of pastors we look for heavenly instructions, in them we see the successors of Jesus Christ, invested by him with the same authority which he himself had received from his heavenly Father."

"The Spirit of truth never has, and never will depart from the pastors of Christ's Churches."

Such are the dogmas of the Church of Rome, founded on her infallibility. And woe be to those who (when she has power) dare to resist her authority. The venerable Bishop Hall by a familiar simile strikingly shows the folly of these Popish tenets, which would substitute the decisions of fallible men for the infallible wisdom of God— "The Scripture is the sun; the Church is the clock, whose hand points to, and whose sound tells us, the hour of the day. The sun we know to be sure, and regularly constant in his motion; the clock, as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. We are used to look at, and listen to the clock, to know the time of the day; but where we find the variation sensible, to believe the sun against the clock, not the clock against the sun. As, then, we should condemn him of much folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun, so we cannot but justly tax the miscredulity of those who will rather trust to the church than to the scriptures."

If this conclusion, which the pious Bishop of Norwich draws from his simile is correct, it cannot be consistent with sound Protestantism, with the doctrines of the Reformation, or with the Articles of the Church of England, to assert that there is an infallible interpreter of Scripture, the Holy Catholic Church, since Churches and Councils have erred and do err to this day. Witness the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, and other Christian Communions.

When a ray of light darts into this region of darkness from the torch of human reason or philosophy, by which her members are led to see the craft of her priestly domination, and the mummery of her services; then a spirit of emancipation is created, and being ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, they fly from superstition to infidelity, from the despotism of Popery to the anarchy of atheism. Witness France and all her revolutionary horrors, the offspring of an infidel philosophy, bursting the barriers of Papal despotism, and plunging into a sea of blood. The Church of Rome, it has been said, may perhaps, die from the sting of infidelity, that viper which she has nurtured in her own bosom. Such is often the retributive justice of God. How remarkably was her power weakened, for a season, by the reign of infidelity in France.

Nothing but heavenly truth can guide men aright through this tempestuous world. If once we leave our divine Compass, the Word of God, we are at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, we are carried here and there, as the tide or storm may drive us, and at length are dashed against the rocks and perish. Lord! graciously preserve your true Church amid every tempest. Increase the light of Truth, and bring all nations to the obedience of faith. Preserve our Protestant nation from the dangers which threaten it; from the united efforts of Popery, infidelity, and anarchy, which are now assuming an attitude of fearful aspect, resembling the three unclean spirits, like frogs, which John saw in vision to come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the month of the false prophet. Oh! that your warning voice may be effectual in awakening our slumbering churches— "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

It seems evident, both from prophecy and the signs of the times, that the millennial glory will be preceded by awful convulsions. The dragon that old serpent, who is the devil, will not be chained, without a desperate, permitted, struggle. But this conflict with the Church of Christ will end in his confusion, and the Church's triumph. "And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And all the vultures of the sky gorged themselves on the dead bodies. Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon—that old serpent, the Devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he would be released again for a little while."

The glorious predicted period will then dawn upon the world, like the sun shining without an intervening cloud. All will be holiness, happiness, and security. Yes, holiness will be universal, and true piety enter into all the minutia of life. "On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: 'Set apart as Holy to the Lord.' And the cooking pots in the Temple of the Lord will be as sacred as the basins used beside the altar. In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to the Lord Almighty." Thus all the Lord's people, with all their powers and possessions, shall be consecrated to the glory of God. True religion will not be confined within the precincts of the temple, but extend itself through every habitation, and sanctify every occurrence and occupation.

This glory will be preceded by a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For this we must constantly pray, in accordance with the written word of God. While seeking after this blessing, saying, "Lord Jesus, come quickly; hasten your work of glory," we must seek after personal holiness, that we may be ready to meet the Lord at his coming.

Great revivals in religion, and an extensive increase of it, have generally been a period of outward trouble. At such a time how often may it be said, "A man's foes are they of his own house." Then, not infrequently, have "the rulers set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed." So long as the sun shines, and the waters flow smoothly, the human mind is naturally satisfied with present things. It is when the sky darkens, and the waves swell, that men's fears begin to operate, and to make them feel the uncertain nature of earthly things. Times of great trouble are frequently employed as means for awakening men out of their death-like slumbers, and causing them to cry out with the trembling Jailor, during the earthquake, "What must I do to be saved?"

Happy, indeed, when this is the case. We seem to be drawing near to some portentous crisis. The period seems to be fast approaching which will try men's principles, of what sort they are. It will be a touchstone to try the faith of many, who now wear the garb of sanctity. The Lord is about to put His church into the furnace, and when it is tried, it shall come out as gold. We have had a long season of outward ease. Profession has grown profusely, but true piety, is still, as it ever was, a rare plant. It grows not in nature's soil. It is an exotic. Our defiling, chilling world, is little congenial to its growth; but He, who plants it in the prepared ground of the heart is Almighty; He waters it by his Spirit, casts upon it the warm beams of His love, and renders it fruitful to His glory.

Oh! how soothing are the words of Christ "Come unto me and I will give you rest. Come unto me and you shall find rest unto your souls." The believer only can tell the blessedness of this invitation, and of the rest to which he is invited. It is a rest from guilty fears, from sinful desires, from vain pursuits. It is a rest in the love, faithfulness, and truth of Christ. It is a rest in his Atonement, Righteousness, and Intercession. It is a rest in his sovereignty, power, and willingness to save. It is a rest which yields to his soul comfort and peace. It is the foretaste of that Rest which remains for the people of God.

How comforting also are the words of Christ— "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me." Oh! that I had a heart to believe in Jesus, with the full assurance of faith. Then, like the Apostles of old, I might take up serpents, and they shall not hurt me. The keenest stings of slander, the most poisonous rancor of malice, endured for Christ's sake, shall no more harm me, than the viper did Paul, when it fastened on his hand at Melita.

"Let not your heart be troubled." Blessed words! On that memorable night, when the winds and the waves seemed ready to consign the infant Church of Christ to a watery grave, the disciples were filled with fear, and awoke their Master, exclaiming, "Don't you care that we are perishing?" How majestic, how godlike, was the conduct of Jesus. He calmly arose, rebuked the wind and the sea, saying— "Peace, be still." And then, turning to his disciples, gently reproved them; "Why are you so fearful? how is it that you have no faith?"

The winds of disorder are now beginning to soar; the waves of discord are now beginning to swell. The Church of Christ, like the ark of Noah, and the little vessel of the disciples, may be tossed on the tumultuous waters, but He who is with his Church is Almighty! But with Christ in the vessel, we

smile at the storm.

A heart under the influence of pride and passion, envy and jealousy, can never enjoy rest. Such a heart resembles the troubled sea, which casts up mire and dirt. How different is the heavenly rest. An angel's bosom is a stranger to conflicting passions. In that holy residence, dwells nothing that opposes the purposes of Jehovah, or disturbs the celestial harmony. There, all is obedience, purity, peace, and love. It is only in the breast of fallen man that rebellion is found, in conjunction with his tempters, the apostate spirits of darkness. The new creature in Christ Jesus is a restoration to pristine excellence. Much, indeed, still remains to be purged away; yet notwithstanding these remnants of corruption, the true believer is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

O! happy change. Oh! blessed transformation. The work is inward and unseen, but its effects are visible; just as the sap which, rising unobserved by man, diffuses itself throughout the tree, producing leaves, and flowers, and fruit. How wonderful are the operations of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. Have I experienced their efficacy and blessedness? Has the Lord drawn me to himself by the cords of love? Has he manifested himself to me, as he does not unto the world? Am I a follower of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises; dwelling in the smiles of the Redeemer, and enjoying a Sabbath of eternal rest?

Jesus, the ever-adorable Jesus, is the fountain of this felicity. His precious blood is the purchase price of our redemption. The claims of justice are satisfied, and mercy encompasses the believer as with a shield. Streams of undeserved blessings are continually descending upon him from the throne of God and of the Lamb, filling his heart with joy and peace.

Whatever holiness we possess, whatever peace we enjoy, all must be traced to Jesus, the purchaser and bestower of every good and perfect gift. All the spices of Arabia cannot equal in sweetness the fragrance of his sacred name. It is as ointment poured forth. It is a balm for every wound. All that we can conceive of excellence and beauty, of glory and perfection, is to be found in Jesus, who is the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One. He is the Believer's Rest.

Dear Friend of friendless sinners hear,

And magnify your grace divine;

Pardon a worm that would draw near,

That would his heart to you resign

A worm, by self and sin oppressed,

That pants to reach the premised Rest.

With holy fear, and reverend love,

I long to be beneath your throne;

I long in You to live and move,

And entrust myself on You alone.

Teach me to lean upon your breast,
To find in You, the promised Rest.
You say, you will your servants keep
In perfect peace, whose minds shall be
Like newborn babes, or helpless sheep,
Completely stayed, dear Lord, on thee.
How calm their state, how truly blessed,
Who trust on You, the promised Rest.
Take me, my Savior, as your own,
And vindicate my righteous cause;
O be my portion, Lord, alone,
And bend me to obey your laws;
In your dear arms of love caressed,
Give me to find your promised Rest.
Bid the tempestuous rage of sin,
With all its wrathful fury die
Let the Redeemer dwell within;
And turn my sorrow into joy.
Oh! may my heart, by You possessed,
Know You to be my promised Rest.

48. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

48. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

"My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:10

Nothing is so calming and comforting to the Christian pilgrim, as the assurance of Divine Guidance in every, even the most minute circumstances which befall him. Without this perception of his heavenly Father's care, a thousand intricacies must beset his path. He must be staggered at almost every step. But when he beholds, by faith, the unerring hand of infinite wisdom, wielding the stupendous machine of human events, and causing everything to promote the spiritual good of his people; then he quiets himself as a little child, and can say with cheerful resignation; "Father, not my will, but yours be done." Like the cabin-boy during the storm, he is kept in peace, while all is terror around him; and if asked why? his reply is that of the artless boy, "Because my father is at the helm."

In such a world of change and trial, how inestimable is a calm reliance on the wisdom, power, and love of God. It fully compensates for the lack of temporal ease and wealth. While destitute of this holy frame, riches is poverty, and honor an empty sound. That man is poor indeed, though surrounded with affluence, whose heart is a stranger to the blessings of true religion.

Lord be pleased to impart unto me, your unworthy servant, this spirit of confidence in you. May I see your hand in all the events of life; ordering the bounds of my habitation, and the duration of my earthly pilgrimage. May I recognize your hand in the minor as well as in the greater movements of your Providence. This watching and waiting for the manifestations of your guardian care, will fill me with thankfulness for all my mercies, and make me patient under all my trials. Oh! for more faith, humility, and hope. Pour out of your fullness these heavenly blessings, that my soul may daily ripen for the enjoyment of the Paradise above.

If, without our heavenly Father not even a sparrow can fall to the ground; if the very hairs of our head are all numbered, how composed should we be. We have nothing to fear but sin. While acting faith upon the promises, we have everything to hope for; yes, every thing to enjoy. The reins of universal nature are in the hands of Infinite Love. This vast complex machine is guided by Infinite Wisdom and Power. The Almighty Ruler of the sky cannot be taken by surprise. Nothing unforeseen can happen to cross his purposes or thwart his designs. All worlds are open to his view. All hearts he naked before him. All the busy thoughts of men, with all their multiplied perplexities, ever in restless motion, are to him distinctly known. He knows every motive, the cause of every action. Thoughts deeply buried in the heart, are clearly recognized by his all-searching eye. By him actions are weighed. He tests the spirits. He searches the imaginations, and the heart, that, as the Righteous Judge of all, he may render unto every man according to his work. Nothing is too great for his power, nothing too secret for his omniscience. Hence he could declare, that "Every imagination of the thoughts," remarkable expression; every outline, or sketch, or first formation of the thoughts, is "only evil continually."

And again; "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." If this Great and Glorious Being be our Father and our Friend, through his own sovereign grace, enabling us to believe in his beloved Son; then our privilege is to rejoice at all times, and in everything to give thanks.

Are we tried? We may be sure that there is a needs-be for it, that it is sent in love, and that the whole process of affliction is under the direction of a loving Father. This assurance, if truly felt in the heart, will cause the soul to fall with childlike acquiescence, into the hand of God. This David felt when he said, under a perplexing choice, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man." It will still the rising murmurs of impatient nature, and mold our will into a conformity to the will of God. Oh! blessed Lord, how much, how very much, do I need this simple, humble, submission of the heart to You.

While journeying heavenward, we are called to the exercise of faith and patience. The children of Israel had much of this lesson to learn in the wilderness. Their history is indeed instructive. "In this way, they traveled at the Lord's command and stopped wherever he told them to. Then they remained where they were as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle. If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed for a long time, just as the Lord commanded. Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days. Then at the Lord's command they would break camp. Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and moved on the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and followed. Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on. So they camped or traveled at the Lord's command, and they did whatever the Lord told them through Moses."

Thus, it is evident that the Israelites were not to exercise their own will. They were to wait for, and to follow the will of God, as manifested to them by the resting and moving of the cloud. This subjugation of our will to the will of God is contrary to our natural independence and hastiness of spirit. We want to be moving, when God would have us rest; and we wish to remain, when he bids us to depart. Truly our heavenly Father has to bear with wayward children.

Though we have not, like the Israelites, a visible token of the divine will respecting our earthly movements; yet we must watch the movements of his Providence, and pray to be directed by his Sovereign Will. How many precious promises are scattered throughout his word to encourage our faith and hope, our patience and reliance, on the divine guidance and care! "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with my eye." "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you." "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you." "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," were the words of Christ to his Apostles, before he ascended to the throne of his glory. How consoling and encouraging is the assurance that the blessed Redeemer of my soul is the Great Sovereign of the Universe. Without his permission nothing can happen in the vast dominion over which he sways his scepter. To his will every creature must bow, either in willing obedience or in just and endless punishment.

When I survey the earth on which I live, and contemplate the millions of human beings which cover its surface, what an imposing scene presents itself before me. Each, among these millions, is occupied with his own individual concerns, while the Lord of creation watches over the concerns of all his creatures. Each is planning schemes of future happiness, while the Lord may be preparing events for future trials. Each is losing the present opportunity in the future prospect; building for tomorrow, and depriving himself of the benefit of today, when the sentence may have gone forth; "You fool! this night your soul shall be required of you."

Felix thus put off the favored period for seeking repentance; trembling under the terrors of a judgment to come, he said to his intrepid prisoner "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you." This convenient season never returned- a season for breaking off his sins by repentance.

It is dangerous to resist the motions of the Spirit. What we feel today, if slighted, may never revisit us more. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." "Because I have called, and you refused, I will mock when your fear comes." The Sovereign Jehovah speaks as a sovereign; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." He "works all things after the counsel of His Own Will!"

Among the busy tribes of men, a thousand arts are employed to gain their purpose, either for ambition, gain, or pleasure. Hence all the corrupt affections and passions of the depraved heart are brought into continual exercise; spreading misery and confusion, bloodshed and distress, over every part of the habitable globe.

In the midst of all these schemes for aggrandizement, or pleasure, the Almighty Sovereign is forgotten; his will is neglected, his laws are broken, his threatenings are slighted, his mercy is despised, his power is dared by open rebellion, and infidels attack his Majesty and Glory.

In the midst of this universal degeneracy, the Great Sovereign displays his dreadful judgments, by deluging a world of rebels; burning up wicked and polluted cities; pouring plagues of desolating varieties upon a persecuting kingdom; destroying entire nations of vile and abominable offenders; punishing his own professing people with multiplied and varied judgments; chastising individuals in their bodies, properties, and families; permitting wars to devastate, and pestilences to desolate, the regions of the earth. And all this on account of SIN.

These, and a thousand other evils receive their commission from that Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, whose Power none can withstand, whose Counsel none can defeat, whose Will none can thwart. And yet, rebellious man dares to lift his puny arm against Omnipotence, as if he could command events, and make the future to crown his wishes.

Those who have perused with attention the pages of history, or studied the page of their own experience, must have learned how little human wisdom can depend upon its own foresight, or human power upon its own achievement. The fairest plans are often blasted, when nearest their accomplishment. And many, who, with laboring steps have reached the summit of their expectations, have been hurled from their eminence, just when stretching out the hand to grasp the golden prize. Well may we exclaim with Solomon; "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Haman, in the Book of Esther, affords a striking instance. He erected a gallows- for himself!

"Be still, and know that I am God" is the soothing accent of mercy to the believers in Jesus. If we know God in all his adorable perfections, in the greatness of his power, and in the fullness of his love, as manifested in the gift of his Son, we shall be still, calm, and composed, amid the agitations of a restless world. "For only when you come to judge the earth will people turn from wickedness and do what is right."

Oh! my soul, look now unto your God. Dark, indeed, is the cloud which covers our political horizon, and fearful the storm which is ready to burst upon our favored island. Popery, Infidelity, and Anarchy are forming a bomb-mine which may involve thousands in ruin. Our national sins are great, and so are our national mercies. This aggravates our ingratitude and increases our guilt. The divine bow of wrath is bent, the arrow is on the string, ready to fly in vengeance, and what withholds it? the arm of mercy, the intercession of Jesus.

Oh! my soul, do not forget that your sins form a part of the nation's guilt; sins, as numerous as the stars of heaven. How inconceivable, then, must be the sum of human guilt, when multiplied by millions of men in succeeding generations, all born in sin, all living in iniquity, until renewed by the Spirit of grace? Surely nothing can so strikingly display the forbearance of God. This David felt when he sang- "God is a judge who is perfectly fair. He is angry with the wicked every day."

Lord impart unto me, your very sinful creature, the grace of true repentance. Give me an genuine abhorrence of all sin, and an entire cleaving of my heart to you. Oh! do mercifully withhold our deserved judgments, and pour out upon us a flood of undeserved mercy. For the sake of your beloved Son, hear the supplications of your people, who would now approach your mercy-seat with deep humiliation. Be, O Lord, entreated for our land, and pity your people. We are, indeed, O Lord, a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children who are corrupters. But, oh! pour out upon us a spirit of true repentance, faith, and love. Give not your heritage to reproach. You are righteous, and we are wicked. Your rod is the rod of judgment; but Oh! let it become a scepter of mercy, ruling our hearts by love. Draw all hearts to yourself, subdue every rebellious will. Great, indeed, and frightful is the iniquity which abounds. Your holy word is blasphemed; your Gospel is rejected; your beloved Son is disowned; and what will the end be? I hear you say; "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Lord! may I and mine be safe under your feathers; shielded by your power; and comforted by your love. Whatever storms may blow upon our land, be you to us "as a little sanctuary," a place of refuge, a tower of strength. Spread your wing over us, until the storm is past. But should it be your will, that any of us should fall under the devouring sword, still may we be safely lodged in your arms; and, like Elijah, be carried from the discords of earth to the harmonies of heaven!

How soothing in this world of woe,

Where tempests rage, and wild winds blow,

To know that He who guides the storm

Is God In Christ- in human form;

All power to Jesus Christ is given,

O'er all on earth, and all in heaven

He can create a storm at will;
Or speak the word- and all is still!
The rolling orbs obey his law
As round the sun their paths they draw;
The little insect of an hour,
Obeys the same Almighty Power.
The stony heart his word can break;
His grace support the poor and meek;
Ah! who can all his wonders tell?
Our Jesus, He does all things well.
My soul! repose beneath the wing
Of Israel's Shepherd, Lord, and King,
No harm can reach you, sheltered there,
While safe beneath the Shepherd's care.
But, should you see th' uplifted rod,
Be still and know that Christ is God
The cloud which guilty sinners dread,
Shall break in blessings on your head.
Yet, should you feel his chastening hand,
Which sweeps across a sinful land,
Still all is sanctified to thee,
If you the friend of Jesus be.
Soon will the mighty Judge descend,
The trumpet sound- and time shall end.
His Wrath, each foe, shall then destroy;
His Love, each saint, receive with joy.

49. ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE

49. ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29

"For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God." Acts 20:27

Humility, faith, and prayer, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, are essential to the right reception of divine Truth. A peculiar state of heart, rather than much strength of intellect, is required in order to comprehend the gospel. Its sublime truths, though hidden from the wise and prudent, are revealed unto babes; "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Thousands have been led astray by "philosophy and vain deceit," by "science, falsely so called." The pride of human reason has always opposed the humiliating revelations of the Spirit. The fall of man and its direful consequences on the human race; the redemption of sinners, through the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God; the regeneration of the soul, through the power of the Holy Spirit; the sovereignty of God in the bestowment of his gifts, having mercy on whom he will have mercy; the utter inability of man to save himself; and his everlasting obligations to the free grace of God, through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, are subjects which fill heaven with praise; and the volumes of the philosophical skeptic with doubts and ridicule!

The unhumbléd heart, continually rises against the doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace. Man is naturally self-righteous. He seeks to find in himself the meritorious cause of his future hoped-for felicity. Heaven is an object of his desire, because it is a place of rest; not because it is a state of holiness. The man of the world understands neither the nature of heavenly bliss, nor the way to attain it. If he is a professing member of the Christian Church, he observes her ceremonies, and practices some moral duties. On these he rests his hopes of heaven. As pain and hell are united together, he naturally shrinks from the idea of torment; and yet, he lives in sin, the sure road which leads into the fiery gulf! So blind, so inconsistent is fallen man!

In treating on the great doctrine of Election, one of the fruits of sovereign grace, much controversy and angry disputes have been carried on between different sections of the Christian Church; some almost excommunicating and anathematizing those who differ from them. But "wisdom is justified of all her children." The true believer, who is "clothed with humility;" whose heart is as a weaned child; weaned from the pride of intellect, from the shackles of human systems, from a vainglorious display of theological attainments, will receive with meekness all that the Lord reveals.

He may, indeed, when contemplating the mysteries of grace, be led to exclaim with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" Or with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and

knowledge of God!" but the declaration; "Thus says the Lord," ever satisfies his mind. This sacred seal, placed upon the most abstruse revelations of the mind of God, is quite sufficient. He needs no more. And what is the result? He enjoys the peace of God; the sweet assurance of his love; the hope of glory, through the atoning blood of Christ.

It is then at our peril, if we add unto, or diminish anything from, the word of God. As there were "Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life;" so, lest the unhallowed hands of reasoning pride should mutilate or encumber the Scriptures of Truth, they are guarded, both by a command and a threatening, "You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

"Dangerous it is for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom although to know is life, and joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know him not as indeed he is, neither can know him; and our safest eloquence concerning him, is our silence, when we confess without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behooves our words to be wary and few." (Thomas Hooker)

The humble believer, who is taught of God, will receive the mysteries of the kingdom, as the Spirit has been pleased to reveal them; and instead of endeavoring to explain them by his finite capacity, will rest satisfied with the divine assurance; "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." This composed the mind of the inspired Paul; "Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now."

We should never meditate upon the doctrine of Election, but with the profoundest reverence, humility, and child-like dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We know nothing of this mysterious truth but by the Scriptures. It is therefore the safest way to receive it, just as it is recorded, without endeavoring to supply, by our shallow comprehension, what Infinite Wisdom has thought fit to conceal.

From all eternity, God saw the end from the beginning. There is no 'before' or 'after' to the divine mind; it is one 'eternal present'. Nothing new, nothing unforeseen, or unknown, can happen to that Omniscient Jehovah, who made all things, and who holds all creation together. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." To this fundamental truth, declared by James, every orthodox Christian must subscribe. He, who inhabits eternity; He, who fills heaven and earth with his presence; He, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; He, who knows all the secrets of the heart, and beholds all the ways of men, cannot be taken by surprise, or thwarted in his purposes and plans.

If this fundamental truth be granted, then it must necessarily follow, that God foresaw the fall of our first parents, and fore-ordained his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, to become the Savior of our fallen race. The sin of Adam was his own. It sprang from a willful

disobedience to the divine command. JUSTICE pronounced the sentence of death on the guilty pair; but MERCY proclaimed pardon through the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. How inconceivably great are the riches of sovereign grace. This was a redemption as unexpected, as it was unsought. Truly, mercy rejoiced against judgment. The Almighty declared himself to be a just God, and yet a Savior. His own arm brought salvation.

From Genesis to the Revelation, salvation is revealed as the free unmerited work of God. The Fountain of Grace is in God Himself. The copious streams flow down to us through Jesus Christ, and all our services ascend with acceptance only by, and through Him. We "are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." And true believers are said to have their names "written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Paul broke out into an anthem of praise on this account; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes." He told the Roman converts that, whom God "did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." And to the Thessalonians he said; "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." To Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, Paul thus writes; "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

To Titus, his "own son after the common faith," the Apostle expresses his view of the divine sovereignty; "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior." Peter also addressed the strangers scattered abroad by the rude hand of persecution, as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

If we receive these inspired declarations, which contain the will of God respecting his redeemed people, in their plain grammatical meaning, apart from prejudice, and unwarped by human philosophical systems, surely we cannot fail to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in his acts of grace.

But alas! the pride of fallen reason rises against the sovereignty of Jehovah. The natural heart cannot stoop so low, as to accept of salvation through the righteousness of another, and irrespective of any foreseen goodness in the recipient. But, however wretched man may oppose the freeness of divine grace, the Apostles declare, in unequivocal language-- that God is the Author of Salvation; that his gifts are sovereign, flowing from everlasting to everlasting; that he will

have mercy on whom he will have mercy, to the praise of the glory of his grace. He is debtor to none, "for all have sinned, and come short of his glory;" all, therefore, deserve to perish. If any are saved, it is not through any righteousness of their own, "for there is none righteous, no, not one," but through the unspeakable love of God. None can claim salvation as a right; all may, and must petition for it, as an unmerited gift. None who seek for it through the merits of Christ, with earnest prayer, and by humble faith, shall be rejected. The promise is full and clear; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Humility will embrace this great salvation; when pride expires at the foot of the Cross.

Our destruction is altogether from ourselves. The Omniscient Jehovah foresaw the issue of Satan's temptation, and in his inscrutable wisdom permitted man to fall, but in doing so, he remained the same holy and good Being, and can be in no way chargeable with his creature's transgression. To believe otherwise would be blasphemy in the extreme. Man was created a rational being, a free agent. When he ate of the forbidden fruit he did it with the consent of his own will. Satan could not force our first parents to eat. The act was their own. He presented the alluring bait; he proposed specious arguments; he threw in doubtful insinuations respecting the divine prohibition; the poison operated, the temptation succeeded, and they fell through yielding to Satan's infidel suggestions. They disbelieved the words of their Creator, and fell from the heights of holiness and happiness, into the depths of sin and woe!

As a child partakes of the nature of the parent, so, when Adam fell, all his posterity fell in him. He became the head of a fallen race. Original sin having tainted the fountain, it embittered and polluted all the streams. "In Adam all die." Human pride revolts at this humiliating truth, though it forms the basis upon which redemption rests. The glorious doctrines of grace, like the rainbow, shine the brightest in the darkest cloud.

All, then, are sinners without exception. The violated Law of God condemns the whole human race. Hence it follows, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified. Where, then, is salvation to be found? Only in and through the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. As we are lost under the covenant of works, so we can only be saved under the covenant of grace.

Will, then, the whole human race be saved? The Scriptures tell us, that none, to whom the gospel is preached, will be saved, but those who truly believe in Jesus; who receive him into their heart by faith and love; who mourn over and forsake their sins; and who bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. With respect to the Heathen, who have never heard the gospel, nor enjoyed the means of hearing of a Savior's love, the Judge of all the earth will do right.

The carnal mind is enmity against God. With a darkened understanding, a rebellious will, and corrupt affections, the natural man, like Naaman, turns away in a rage from the simple, but efficacious remedy of God's providing. Every man, woman, and child, in every age, would thus reject Christ and his great salvation, if God did not, in his rich mercy, incline the hearts of some to embrace Jesus as their only Savior. If left to ourselves, we would never come to Christ. And so powerful is this corrupt bent of the will to evil, that we never could come to Him, if God did not make us willing in the day of his power, if he did not draw us by the secret but constraining influences of his Holy Spirit.

The God of all grace does not force us to come to Christ against our will; but he sets before us our lost condition by nature, the hatefulness of sin, and all its direful consequences; the suitableness of Christ to all our needs; his loveliness and preciousness in all his offices and characters; the beauty of holiness, and the bliss of heaven; and then, by an all-illuminating and attractive energy, he convinces and captivates our minds to embrace freely and fully, Jesus Christ, as all our salvation, and all our desire. "By grace are you saved," was the delightful theme of Paul.

Such a soul, thus choosing Christ as its portion, is a vessel of mercy, "sanctified, and made fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Such a soul is declared in Scripture to be "chosen in" Christ "before the foundation of the world;" for wherever the doctrine of election is mentioned, it is invariably connected with holiness. These holy souls, transformed by divine grace into the image of Christ, form, collectively, the true Church, the body of Christ, of which he is the head; the spouse to whom he is the husband. They are called the people of God; the children of God; the heirs of God. They are admitted to a delightful fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. They are the temples of the Holy Spirit; the habitation of God through the Spirit. They are the wheat among the tares; the good fish among the bad; the wise among the foolish virgins; the fruitful among the unfruitful branches, as declared by our Lord in his parabolical descriptions of the visible Church, in which the good and the evil mingle together until the day of final separation, when the people prepared by the Lord, shall forever inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

How monstrous, then, are the objections made by some people to this doctrine of grace, who assert that if any one is elected he will be saved, however unholy his life may be.

As the Bible is designed for the instruction of all mankind, so all may read their character in that sacred volume. The whole human race is divided into two great classes, believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, the righteous and the wicked; those who serve God, and those who serve him not. In one or other of these distinctive classes will all be ranged at the judgment day, when Christ will separate the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. To each of these two broadly defined characters, the blessing and the curse; the promise and the threatening, is made. Hence it is said; "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not, shall be damned." The wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Should any one, through divine grace, become a believer in Jesus, he changes his state before God, he becomes entitled, through the merits of Christ, to the blessing and the promise; is made a member of Christ's mystical body; and thus, by the work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, evidences his election of God.

The way and means for the salvation of sinners, was fore-ordained; even the incarnation, sufferings, death, and glorification of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; as also our sanctification through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith is likewise the divinely-appointed instrument, by which the sinner is enabled to lay hold on Christ as his Savior and Advocate with the Father; and the moment any one is empowered through grace to believe from the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed and set forth in the Scriptures, he passes from death unto life, is adopted into the family of God, becomes a member

of the Church militant, reads his title to glory in the work of Christ, and, through the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, progressively advancing in his soul, makes his calling and election sure.

In Scripture this exalted blessing is not offered to a few; no! blessed be God, the offers of salvation are made alike to all; the invitation is general, the command to preach the gospel is unlimited; "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." None are excluded, but such as through unbelief exclude themselves. The destruction of sinners is the fruit of their own voluntary choice; the free act of their own rebellious wills, in opposition to the sweetest calls of mercy, the gracious strivings of the Spirit, the powerful checks of conscience, the solemn alarms of Providence, and the recorded threatenings of Scripture. Thus man is the author of his own misery, and willfully judges himself unworthy of eternal life.

Whatever excuses men may now make for their sins, a day is coming, a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, when he will render to every man according to his deeds. Then will every unbeliever, every unconverted sinner, like the man without the wedding garment, stand speechless and self-condemned before the Judge of the living and the dead; while all the happy members of Christ's family, his Church redeemed from the earth, shall appear before him without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," giving to God the glory of their salvation, and praising and adoring the Lamb that was slain; who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God.

The Scriptures of truth, and the preaching of the Gospel, are the two great instruments in the hands of the Spirit for enlightening the world and turning sinners from the power of Satan unto God. It is, therefore, our duty, as it is our privilege, to sit under a faithful ministry, and to read the word of God with earnest prayer, that the promised blessing may accompany the means.

The Spirit always addresses us by the word, and treats us as rational creatures; therefore, we are proper subjects for invitations, warnings, cautions, directions, etc. To enter into the niceties of controversy tends to confuse the mind, not to edify it. The way of salvation is plain and clear. The mode of effecting it is far beyond our conception. The incarnation of the Eternal Word, and the secret operations of the Holy Spirit on the human soul, are subjects which will forever occupy the meditations of the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. Here "we see through a glass darkly," and yet, quite clear enough to condemn us, if we miss the heavenly road.

What we need is a humble, childlike spirit, to receive the great truths of the Gospel as Practical Truths, which are revealed, not to make us disputers, but disciples of Jesus Christ, to restore us to the love and favor of God through faith in his blood; and to a holy conformity to that divine image which we lost by the Fall. This is the new birth, the new creation, that transformation which passes upon every soul before it can be admitted into the Paradise above.

It is of great spiritual importance that we consider all the doctrines of the Gospel in this practical view. They were not given us as subjects for speculation, but as most precious truths, on the right embracing of which our everlasting salvation depends. What will it avail that I fancy myself to be one of the elect of God, if I am destitute of their character as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures? We are told, an painful experience teaches us, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." This heart must be changed by divine grace, before we can have any scriptural hope of enjoying heaven; and if our hearts are changed, it will be effected by the grace

and power of Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith, the giver of true repentance, and the fountain of all spiritual blessings, which he sheds abundantly on every contrite heart.

The doctrine of Election, as revealed in the word of God, is very sweet to humble holy souls, in an hour of darkness or affliction; whereby they are enabled to trust in the Lord, and to rest themselves upon their God. But it is dangerous for carnal people, lacking the Spirit of God; for they convert the children's bread into poison, and thus, to them, the word of life becomes the savor of death unto death.

Let us, then, seek for those graces which are the undeniable evidences of saving faith, and the indisputable marks of the elect of God. These the Apostle mentions; "Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Happy, indeed, are they who can read their own character, in some humble measure, in this concise description of true believers. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they, (and they only), are the Sons of God;" for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him."

Oh! all-gracious Father, whose love and power are infinite, enable me, while a sojourner on mercy's ground, to seek you where alone you can be found, in Christ my Savior. Stretch forth your arm, and save me from sinking beneath the waves of destruction. Draw me to your mercy-seat. Speak peace to my soul. Destroy all evil in my heart. Fill me with light and love, and with all the fruits of the Spirit. Unite me to the Savior by a living faith. Make me a member of your true Church, that, being chosen in Christ through your sovereign grace, I may glorify you here, by a life of holiness, and then at death enjoy a life of happiness in your blissful presence, where is fullness of joy; and at your right hand, where are pleasures for evermore.

How can the world true bliss bestow,

Where thorny cares and sorrows grow?

On Christ alone, my hope is laid,

Whose love the great Atonement made.

His blood can peace and joy procure,

His faithful word is ever sure.

If Satan comes in evil hour,

Jesus helps me by his Power;

He, by his Cross, the foe subdues,

While faith, the bleeding Savior views.

Through Him, my soul each foe defies,
And happy in his grace relies.
If I forsake the living way,
And careless from my Savior stray;
An awful gloom is soon o'erspread,
For Jesus to my heart has said
"Did I expire upon the tree
That you the friend of sin should be?"
A pilgrim here, I often sigh,
Overwhelmed with grief and misery;
I then exclaim; "no light I see,
My Jesus has forgotten me."
But still my Lord does pity take,
Though earthly parents should forsake.
To this dear Friend I will repair,
Whose love can all my burdens bear;
His grace can cheer affliction's hour,
His Spirit give the strengthening power,
Oh! until he come from heaven above,
May I abide in Jesus' love.

50. THE UNSATISFYING NATURE OF EARTHLY

50. THE UNSATISFYING NATURE OF EARTHLY THINGS, AND THE BENEFIT OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION

"But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere." Ecclesiastes 2:11

"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." Hebrews 12:11

Paul was in a happy frame when he could say "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Wealth breeds cares. One staff is a help to the weary traveler; a hundred would press him down. There is much wisdom as well as mercy in the precept; "Let your moderation be known unto all men. Don't worry about anything." Excess often creates engorgement. The man who lives continually in the midst of splendor, views with indifference those costly objects which attract the admiration of strangers. Solomon withheld his heart from no joy, but the fruit of all his toil was, "vanity and vexation of spirit."

The blessings of Providence are more evenly dealt out than is supposed. There are temptations and trials peculiar to every condition of life. James calls our attention to his important question "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? And Paul, in like manner, addresses the Corinthians; "Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God. " For, this is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

O! my soul, earth and heaven are spread before you. Each are inviting you to closer union. God and Mammon are demanding your service; but both you can not serve. Choose this day whom you will serve, God or the world. You have seen that, when the world has poured its envied greatness upon any individual, he is still every moment liable to the sorrows of the heart, to the diseases of the body, to the stroke of death; and, if unregenerate, to the worm that does not die, and to the fire that never shall be quenched. Your powers are vast, though weakened and corrupted through the Fall. Allied to angels by your spiritual nature, you are ever soaring beyond the boundaries of time, and longing for a something yet unpossessed, a happiness which earth can never give. This restless search for happiness shows you, O my soul, that He who formed you, made you for a

holier, happier state than this. When the world has lavished on you all its bliss, the aching void still remains. God alone can satisfy those enlarged desires which stretch themselves into immortality.

Be wise, then, O my soul, look unto that glorious Being who inhabits eternity, who is the fountain of all blessedness, the only source of true, unmingled felicity. Behold him in the person of Jesus Christ; behold, believe, and love! This gracious Emmanuel left the mansions of glory to save you from the abodes of misery. He became poor, that you, through his poverty, might be rich. Oh! tear your affections from these transient scenes, and fix them upon Him who loved you even unto death. Make him your choice; your portion; your everlasting all. He can make poverty, abundance; and abundance, satisfying; for with him you shall have all things and abound. With him is treasured up all bliss and glory; all happiness and felicity; all joy and peace; every delight, and every precious thing.

Come, blessed Redeemer, Savior of sinners, Friend of the lost and wretched, be my present and eternal portion. Oh! make me willing to choose you, and to love you, and to serve you with all my powers. Take full possession of my heart. Enter, heavenly guest, and take up your abode within me. Wash me from all my sins in your cleansing blood. Clothe me with the spotless garment of your Righteousness. Fill me with the grace of your Spirit; and enable me to live to you alone; to seek my all in you; to devote my every power to you; to commit myself, body, soul, and spirit, into your hands, to be sanctified, governed, and preserved through your grace, to the glory of your holy name.

Nothing is more common than to approve of what is good, and yet to follow that which is evil. Few, comparatively, are faithful to their convictions. None can deny the uncertainty of life, and yet all live as if life were at their command. Schemes of future bliss are devised with as much security, as if the fond projectors were building their fabric on a rock. But soon the illusion vanishes like the mirage of the desert, which leaves the disappointed traveler, when advancing as he hoped towards some refreshing waters, with nothing but the burning sand.

Everything here below is fleeting and transitory. While journeying through this wilderness of troubles, few verdant spots are to be found, on which the weary traveler can repose. The earth lies under the curse. Thorns and thistles cover the ground. Storms and tempests agitate the air. Disease and death dissolve the dearest ties. Yet, in the midst of all this fluctuation, the heart of fallen man would never seek its rest in an Unchangeable Savior, did not the sovereignty of grace reveal the blessing, and make the sinner willing to repose under the shadow of his wing.

Everything around me bespeaks the Fall, and testifies that this is not my rest. Why, then, should my foolish heart repose itself on any creature comfort? Have I still to learn that all of this world, is less than nothing, and vanity? How greatly should I prize the blessed Bible, which reveals the way of reconciliation, and points to the Lamb of God, who alone can take away the sin of the world. Here is rest and peace for the troubled soul. Jesus has brought in an everlasting Righteousness, which is freely imputed to every humble believer. It is gratuitously offered in the Gospel "unto all," and is then placed "upon all those who believe;" so that the vilest sinner, thus receiving Christ by faith, is "accepted in the Beloved," and through the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit, is made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

This is the Gospel. It brings "Glory to God in the highest." All the divine perfections harmonize and shed their united splendor around the Cross! It proclaims "Good-will toward men." Through the preaching of the gospel, through the holding up of Christ crucified, sinners are entreated to come; yes, are powerfully drawn to God, being assured, from this manifestation of his grace, that he wills not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It diffuses "Peace on earth." The contending sinner lays down his hostile weapons, and through faith in the blood of Christ, obtains peace with God. The stormy conscience is hushed; the rough disposition is softened; and these blessed effects of the peaceful reign of Jesus will never cease to operate, until nations shall war no more.

Oh! that this happy period, this antepast of heaven, may be hastened on the earth. Lord grant that this millennial blessedness may now be felt and enjoyed in my own soul. Oh! blessed Jesus, Prince of Peace, reveal yourself to my heart; soften, melt, and renew it. Consume all the dross which it contains, and transform it, wholly, after your image; that, while surrounded by evils of every name, and sorrows of every kind, which abound in this rebellious, dying world, I may enjoy the light of your countenance, and the purifying influence of your love.

These, O divine Redeemer, are indeed great blessings which I am now asking for; but am I not encouraged to enlarge my desires, to expand my heart, to stretch forth the hand of faith, that I may receive out of your fullness, and grace for grace?

You, who are the fountain of living waters, have said; "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Fill me with your love; satiate my soul with your goodness; and make me an everlasting trophy of your grace.

Blessed Savior! I am quite unable to love and serve you, by any natural will or power of my own. At your command, I would work out my own salvation, by the diligent use of appointed means; and yet, with fear and trembling, from a consciousness of my own depravity, and the deceits of Satan. But you must work in me to will and to do of your good pleasure, for without You I can do nothing. As you condescended to visit the humble dwelling of Lazarus, be pleased to look down upon a family of sinful worms, who now entreat the favor that you bear unto your people. Oh! visit us with your salvation, that we may daily rejoice in you.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous; afflictions peculiar to themselves. They partake, indeed, of bodily and temporal trials, in common with their brethren of mankind; but they are often called to endure tribulations from which the worldly are exempt. They suffer for righteousness' sake. They take up the cross and follow Christ, through evil report and good report. They submit to have their name cast out as evil; to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things. Their inward trials are known only to themselves, and to Him who searches the heart. They have to struggle against indwelling sin; against the law in the members, which wars against the law of the mind. They have to contend against the suggestions of unbelief, the workings of pride, the lustings of the flesh, and the love of the world. There are seasons when darkness seems to overspread their souls, and hope to suffer an eclipse.

At such a period, Satan casts into the citadel of the heart, his fiery darts, and opens all his dread artillery to dismay and overcome the afflicted believers in Jesus. But all-prayer in the name of Christ prevails; for "when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a

standard against him." The foe is foiled— the darkness is dissipated; and light and joy once more fill the souls of the conquering saints.

If it be asked, Why is this? It is because the Lord, whose wisdom and love are infinite, is pleased to overrule these trials to humble and purify his people. By these afflictions, their faith is strengthened; the spirit of prayer is quickened; their humility is increased; their love inflamed; and their dependence rendered more simple and entire.

The dearest children of God have been deeply afflicted by family trials, as well as by inward conflicts. Adam, had his Cain. Noah, his Ham. Abraham, his Ishmael. Jacob, his ten unnatural sons and erring daughter. Aaron, his Nadab and Abihu. Eli, his Hophni and Phineas. Samuel, his Joel and Abijah. David, his Amnon and Absalom. Jehoshaphat, his Jehoram. Jotham, his Ahaz. Hezekiah, his Manasseh. Josiah, his Jehoiakim.

A pious parent cannot produce a pious offspring. The taint of original sin pollutes the streams which flow downwards from fallen Adam. Grace alone can effect the change. These fatherly chastenings are all sanctified to the people of God. For the present, they are not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. He corrects us like a wise and loving parent, for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.

Blessed Lord! enable me to be calm and passive under your chastening hand. I know that you do all things well; and that it shall be well with those who love and fear you. Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me under the shadow of your wing. Wean my heart from all earthly vanities, and cause me to wing my way towards You. You can embitter every comfort; and sweeten every cross. Preserve me from all idolatrous attachments to the things of this world. Reveal Yourself to me in the fullness of your love, through a believing view of the truth as it is in Jesus. I know, O Lord, that in very faithfulness, you cause me to be afflicted. But oh! how gentle is the stroke of your rod; how loving are your corrections. I might justly experience the weight of your wrath; instead of this, I am only called to bear the easy yoke of parental discipline. And shall I murmur or complain? O that songs of praise, and feelings of joy, and expressions of gratitude, may ever manifest the state of my heart. You, O Lord, are worthy to be praised. Your loving-kindness is great. Your mercy is infinite. Your grace is unbounded. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; for his name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

How great, O worldling, is your dread mistake,

How fatal sin's inebriating power;

Are you content, for wealth, for honor's sake,

To bear the anguish of a dying hour?

Its pain, your treacherous heart will quickly feel;

Soon must you leave the fairest scene below;

Your peace will bleed, as on the pointed steel,

When death shall hurl you to the world of woe.

In flaming fire, with majesty arrayed,
The Lord will call you to his awful throne;
Then earth, with all its dazzling joys, will fade
Beneath the terrors of Jehovah's frown.
Worldling! be wise; awake, awake from sin!
Ah! think how vain the pleasures of an hour;
The voice of mercy calls- it speaks within,
And bids you trust in Jesus' Grace and Power.
Fly to the Cross- the Savior you invites;
A gracious Father calls you to his Son;
Believe the Message, which his love indites,
Reject the Mercy-and you are undone.

51. GOD THE REFUGE FOR HIS PEOPLE

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"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust." Psalms 91:2

What a marvelous truth, that God, against whom man has sinned, should himself become the sinner's Refuge from the guilt and punishment of sin. Here, you behold, O my soul, the length and breadth, the depth and height, of infinite, everlasting love! The way in which God can receive sinners into his favor, consistently with his holiness and justice, could never have been discovered by the highest archangel, much less by the reason of man. The Scriptures of truth alone reveal this amazing mystery. There we learn, that God in Christ reconciles the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; that through his incarnation and death, he can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; having fulfilled the righteousness of the law for man, and paid the penalty due to eternal justice, by shedding his own most precious blood upon the Cross.

He is now revealed as a just God, and yet a Savior. His law is magnified and made honorable, and all his perfections encompass the believing sinner, as with a shield. Oh! what a refuge for the oppressed; what a refuge in time of trouble! Yes! every poor sinner, who flies to a covenant God in Christ, has now a strong-hold, a tower of strength, into which he runs, and is safe. To him, Christ is "as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Those, to whom Isaiah wrote, knew well the preciousness of this description of the "King that shall reign in righteousness;" of the "Man," thus prefigured by the Spirit of prophecy. They knew how to value a hiding-place from the death-spreading whirlwind; a covert from the wild tornado; springs of water in the sandy desert; and the shadow of a great rock, to screen them from the burning rays of a tropical sun.

Have you, O my soul, fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel? Have you made God your Rock and Support at all times, and on all occasions? Are your comforts drawn from earthly sources, and your hopes built on earthly dependencies; or, are they derived from God in Christ, the Fountain of true felicity; and founded on Him, the Rock of Ages? Oh! happy is the man whose hope the Lord is, and whose fresh springs, blessed Jesus, are in You!

While vessels, on a tempestuous ocean, are every moment in danger of being swallowed up by the yawning waves; the man, whose house is built upon the rocky shore, can view the storm, fearless and undismayed. So the Christian, whose refuge is the mighty God, can calmly contemplate the tumultuous sea of life, and smile amid the wildest uproar of the maddening multitude. This is the portion of the true believer. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." David enjoyed this peace, when he sang; "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!" And what caused the Psalmist thus to feel peaceful in the midst of conflicting elements, and a warring world? He tells us; "The Lord reigns; he is clothed with majesty." "The

Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble."

The believer in Jesus, opening the book of God, is quieted from fear of evil. He reposes on the promises of Him, who is the Amen; whose word is eternal Truth; whose counsel shall stand; and of whose government and peace there shall be no end. He knows that God is the Ruler of the universe, the wise Disposer of all events; that nothing can happen without his order or permission; therefore, he is cheerful and happy under all the dark dispensations of providence, remembering that the Lord God Omnipotent reigns; that the Judge of all the earth will do right, though clouds and darkness are round about him, and veil his bright designs.

He knows that God, who is rich in mercy, desires not the death of a sinner; that he is waiting to be gracious that his arms are ever open to welcome the returning prodigal, and to become a city of refuge to all who flee unto him through his dear Son Jesus Christ.

He knows that God has power as well as will to save him; that his willingness was manifested at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, at Golgotha; that his power is daily displayed in the conversion of sinners, and the preservation of his saints.

He knows, from daily experience, that God is indeed a refuge, a place of defense against his spiritual enemies; he finds Jesus to be a near refuge to flee unto; for thus says the Lord; "Am I not a God at hand?" "He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Yes! the believer finds the Lord Jesus to be, not only "as a little sanctuary," while on earth, but also his Eternal Refuge.

Moses animated the journeying Israelites by this delightful view of the God of their fathers; "The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you." In life, in death, in trouble, and in joy, the true believer finds a sure, a strong, a near refuge in Jesus Christ. "But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall, or like the relentless heat of the desert."

Oh! blissful truth— Jesus is the believer's refuge, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. At that awful hour, when the wicked shall call in vain upon the rocks and hills to cover them, and to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; the joyful saint shall lift up his head, knowing that his redemption, his complete glorification, draws near.

Washed from his sins, through faith in the blood of Christ; clothed with the garment of salvation, the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; purified and made fit for glory, through the power of the Holy Spirit; the now perfected believer is admitted through the gates into the city, and amid the hallelujahs of saints and angels, receives the crown of glory. Then will "the voice of harpers harping with their harps," fill the heavenly temple with celestial harmony; then will the mighty chorus, from "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of ransomed spirits, swell the anthem of praise unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!

O! my soul, delay not a moment to seek an interest in Jesus Christ. Fly to this friend of sinners. Go unto God the Father by him. Plead before the throne of grace the merits of your Savior. Cease not day and night to pray and cry unto the Lord, that you may be lodged in the ark of the everlasting

covenant; be safely concealed in the cleft of the Rock, in the covenanted mercies of God in Christ.

How good, how gracious is the Lord. Infinite love directs the vast machine of providence, and makes all things work together for his people's good. If present dispensations be dark, they soon shall be clothed with light; and if his people are now sad, they shall before long be filled with joy. The designs of God, with respect to his Church, are full of mercy and truth. None of his purposes can fail of their accomplishment. He can make even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. The mighty conqueror is but as a rod in his hand, the staff of his indignation, which he can wield or break at his pleasure. Satan may plot, and his agents execute their schemes; but in every age the Lord reigns. He can still the madness of the people, or open the flood-gates of national judgments. He will do all his pleasure. Infidelity may pour forth its poisonous waters; Popery may forge its despotic chains; and Anarchy light up the torch of discord; yet, in the midst of all these enemies to truth and righteousness, Jesus is the King of Zion; he shall reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet, and God be all in all.

O! my soul, cleave then unto the Lord your God. Make him your refuge, your hiding-place, until the indignation be overpast. Yet, alas! what cause have I to mourn over a cold, unfeeling heart. How strangely do I feel. I want to be all life, all love, all energy for Christ, and yet I seem more like a statue than a living creature. Why am I thus? Oh! what a depth of evil there is in the heart. Satan knows this well, and fails not to work upon it. But, of this I am persuaded, that the word of promise can never be reversed; "Say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." Believers, if need be, are now in heaviness through manifold temptations; but this is their happiness, that God is with them; this is their security, that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. As the sheep of Christ, they are lodged in his fold, they are safe under his protection, and shall never perish.

In myself, I have no spiritual strength. Of myself, I can do nothing. I cannot stand upright a single moment, I am not able to move a single step towards heaven. By nature I am full of guilt and misery, far from God, from happiness, from heaven. But how precious is the Gospel of the grace of God. There I behold Jesus, in the character of the good Samaritan, hastening to my relief; pouring into my heart the wine and balm of the covenant of grace, and saying to my soul; "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. I am your salvation. I have paid your debt. I will give you greater riches than the world can bestow, or Satan offer, as a lure to bind you to their service."

O! Spirit of all grace, enable me to open the arms of faith to embrace this loving Savior. Give me a heart of love to cleave to this compassionate Redeemer. Make me decided in my attachment, firm to my choice, and unshaken in my allegiance to my Almighty Sovereign.

My soul, upon the Savior build,

Then will you bear the rudest shock;

The powers of hell no more can harm,

Than dashing waves, the solid rock.

How feeble, Lord, my best desires,

How weak my frail, inconstant heart;

If left by you, the strongest saint,
From you that moment would depart.
Oh! let me, with untiring zeal,
In my dear Savior's footsteps go;
Take up his cross, and firmly leave,
All fading glories here below.
Jesus can make my burden light;
To his dear bosom I would flee.
Oh! blessed retreat! removed from fear;
There, would I tranquil live to thee.
Perfect, O Lord, my peace in thee,
Oh Rock of Ages- God of might;
In every storm my haven be,
My Refuge in death's dreary night.

52. THE RELIGION OF THE HEART

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"For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

If we are faithful, we shall be tried. Every true Christian must carry his cross; he must endure tribulation for Christ's sake. Let all them who would follow the Savior, "sit down, and count the cost." We must prepare for the conflict with Satan and the world. Our blessed Lord has told us what we must expect if we are his faithful followers; "When the world hates you, remember it hated me before it hated you. The world would love you if you belonged to it, but you don't. I chose you to come out of the world, and so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? 'A servant is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you! The people of the world will hate you because you belong to me, for they don't know God who sent me."

Shall we, then, shrink from the cross? Shall we be ashamed to confess Christ crucified? Alas! We would both shrink and be ashamed, if left to ourselves. Nothing but the Spirit of Christ can make us dauntless in our Master's cause. How encouraging are the words of Peter— "Be happy if you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God will come upon you." "So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you."

Faith without root will wither away. "The rocky soil represents those who hear the message with joy. But like young plants in such soil, their roots don't go very deep. They believe for a while, but they wilt when the hot winds of testing blow." Mere animal excitement cannot withstand the storm and tempest. It has been quaintly remarked that many will follow religion while she walks in silken slippers; who will forsake her, when she is compelled to walk in iron shoes. When the venerable Cranmer was spreading his hospitable table at Lambeth Palace, he was surrounded by admiring guests; but when enclosed between the dreary walls of a Papal dungeon, few cared to visit him there. Thus it was with Cranmer's Lord and ours. In the hour of his extremity, the disciples forsook him, and fled!

Head knowledge, and zeal for ceremonies, can survive in the sunshine; but they cannot endure the faggot or the rack. No, they shrink beneath the lash of ridicule, and the pointed finger of scorn. Grace alone can render us triumphant over every enemy, and strengthen us in the hour of death and danger. Let us, then, seek for the religion of the heart; that internal principle which will raise us above the agitations of the world, and prepare us for the enjoyment of Christ in glory. "Be faithful unto death," said the glorified Redeemer, "and I will give you a crown of life."

The visible Church abounds with thousands of religious professors, but with comparatively few possessors of real godliness. It is much easier to observe an outward form than to crucify a beloved lust. The Church of Rome, though loaded with ceremonials, is proverbially corrupt. God

requires truth in the inward parts. He looks at the heart, and will be worshiped in spirit and in truth. No ordinance can, of itself, confer a benefit apart from the grace of God, and the state of heart of the worshiper. To suppose otherwise, is to return from Protestantism to Popery. The graces of repentance and faith are declared in Scripture to be essential to the right and saving reception of the Gospel. The impenitent and unbelieving cannot partake of the salvation which God has provided. Would it not, therefore, be dangerous to urge men to approach the Lord's Table, without a due preparation of heart; or, to lead them to suppose that they are privileged to come, because they were regenerated in baptism, and consequently are to be regarded as saints, though they give not the least evidence of spiritual regeneration?

True religion is seated in the heart. A man may have very clear notions of the doctrines of grace, but if the grace of those doctrines does not influence his heart, and shine forth in a holy life, all his knowledge will profit him nothing. A person may speak well and fluently upon religion, and yet be quite dead to the power of that Gospel, on which he speaks so well. Something more is requisite to form the true Christian than head-knowledge and religious conversation. And yet, how many, alas! content themselves with these attainments, and imagine themselves to be saved, when in God's estimation they are no better than sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. Being vainly puffed up, they assume the character of teachers, before they know themselves, or the very first elements of Christianity, even their own ignorance, helplessness, and corruption.

Blessed Savior, deliver me, I humbly beseech you, from spiritual pride and self-confidence. Lead me by the footsteps of your chosen flock, which has ever followed You the Chief Shepherd, through the valley of humiliation, where alone are to be found the still waters of comfort, and the rich pastures of your promised grace.

It is plainly revealed in Scripture, that "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God." Two things are required, which God alone, by his Holy Spirit, can bestow, and which, through the merits of Christ, he is willing to impart to all who sincerely seek for them, through faith in his beloved Son.

The first is- The divine illumination of the understanding.

The second is- A relish for, and delight in, spiritual things.

Without the first, an awful darkness respecting the things of God, would envelope the mind. And, without the second, no pleasure could be found in them, even if the eyes of the understanding were enlightened to perceive their value. The visible Church contains within itself, many painful instances of those, to whom it may be said; "Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself?" Others there are who resemble the stationary guide-post. They only point out the road. How blessed are they who with Paul can say; "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." And with Moses, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you; come you with us, and we will do you good."

Through a spiritual discernment we perceive the excellencies of the gospel; and by a spiritual taste we enjoy them. Faith is the appropriating grace, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; that faith which is ever looking unto Jesus; that faith which receives him as revealed in the gospel; that faith which lives upon him, and is continually tasting that the Lord is gracious. The baptized worldling, the orthodox formalist, knows nothing of this

saving grace. It is wrought in the heart, solely through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord increase my faith. If I have it not, delay not in mercy to bestow it, before the night of death overtakes me. If I have in any measure received the precious gift, make it more evident to myself and others by its holy fruits. Pardon my importunity, for you have said; "Ask, and it shall be given to you." "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."

Two things I would daily seek- to love Christ above every other object; and, to obey his will above every other law. Love and obedience form the brightest evidence of discipleship. Without these fruits of righteousness, faith is dead; a mere notion of the head; the mere utterance of the tongue. Many who now shine in their circle of religious friends, will, at last, be found no better than potsherd of earth covered with silver dross.

Oh! that I may seek after the religion of the heart. Lord make me humble and sincere. Grant to me the faith of your elect. Give me that spiritual perception, and that spiritual relish of heavenly truths, which is the blessed portion of your children here, and the foretaste of their future glory.

How solemn are these words of the blessed Jesus "Some who are despised now will be greatly honored then; and some who are greatly honored now will be despised then." Our Lord also declares, that "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." How should professors of the gospel look well to themselves.

These declarations, O my soul, speak forcibly to you. I profess to be a Christian, attend the ordinances of the Gospel, associate with pious people, have family worship, abstain from places of worldly amusement; so far is well. But all this may be done, while the heart remains unchanged. The Pharisees went farther than this, in their austerities; but He, who knew the heart, said to them, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." And to his listening disciples; "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

A person, living in a round of outward duties, may be esteemed first by many who look only at the outward appearance, while he is viewed as last by the Searcher of hearts. A talking, forward professor, may attract attention, and gain admirers; but it is the humble, meek, self-denying believer, who studiously avoids all public notice, while he is laboring with all his might to advance the interests of the Gospel, that will be owned by Jesus in that great day, when true faith will be made manifest by its genuine fruits. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

HUMILITY is the peculiar characteristic of the people of God. The converted sinner is so deeply humbled on account of his former transgressions, that he is completely stripped of all self-righteousness and self-dependence; and so charmed with the love and grace of the Redeemer, that he is willing to spend and be spent in his service. He acknowledges himself, and feels himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. Hence he gives God all the glory for his salvation; trusts in nothing but the finished and complete righteousness of Jehovah Jesus; and declares with the fullest conviction of his own insufficiency and vileness, and of that Savior's unspeakably glorious merits and power, "by the grace of God I am what I am."

He desires to be nothing in his own esteem, and the esteem of others, that Christ may be glorified. All his aims are directed to promote the exaltation of the Savior, and to debase the idol 'self', more and more. He daily mourns over those remainders of corruption in his heart, which are continually lusting against the Spirit; and rejoices in Christ Jesus, as his Atonement, Righteousness, and Hope of glory.

Hence, while this view of himself keeps him humble, the view of the Savior animates him to the conflict, and makes him finally more than conqueror over all his spiritual enemies. Feeling his own helplessness, he leans on the strength of Jesus; and knowing his own blindness, he prays without ceasing, for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. He believes, and is not confounded. The Spirit of Christ dwells in his heart, witnessing with his Spirit that he is a child of God, and filling him with heavenly affections, holy desires, and spiritual joy. He thus bears the image of Christ, and evidences his election of God. His salvation being all of grace, he, with his whole soul, gives God the glory.

Such is the true believer, who is born from above; born of the Spirit. In this world he is often esteemed last; is branded by the formalist, as an enthusiast; and by the worldly, as a madman. But he shall be first in that day, when Christ shall make up his jewels, when he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who believe.

True religion will always influence the whole inner man. All the powers and faculties of the soul are brought under its sway. Forms and ceremonies are unavailing without this principle of grace, for "circumcision avails nothing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love." "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

In the present day much is being done, and still more devised, for the spiritual good of mankind. Christians are invited, on Gospel principles, to aid in these labors of love. But while the principles may be warmly enforced, yet the Gospel motive in the heart can only be imparted from above. The love of Christ to us should indeed constrain us to every act of self-denying obedience; yet, how few comparatively feel that love to the Savior which urges onward in the career of usefulness.

It is painful to think how much exertion may be made, and how much money expended, without one single motive which can render the service and sacrifice well-pleasing unto God. If called to labor in the field of benevolence, how needful it is to watch over the heart, to examine the principles, to scrutinize the motives of our actions. There is so much selfishness in our fallen nature, such a desire of pre-eminence, such a secret delight in human applause, such a high opinion of one's own powers, talents, however weak and inefficient, that there is daily need for that blessed grace which alone can make us humble, and keep us so.

Lord, root out of my heart that deadly weed of pride, which is so hateful to you, and so destructive to my soul. Give me, blessed Savior, that humble, lowly mind which dwelt in you. O let me tread in your steps. Clothe me with humility.

It is a serious truth, that a person may spend his whole life in feeding others, while he starves himself. The soul cannot thrive without spiritual meditation, retirement, secret prayer, and a devout study of the Holy Scriptures. The neglect of these things is the cause why so many cry out; "My

leanness, my leanness, woe unto me." "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

God has closely connected the means with the end, as he has also the precept with the promise; but still a certain state of heart is needed, to attain the blessing. The understanding may be well furnished with Gospel truth, and yet the heart remain destitute of Gospel grace. We ought, and it is our privilege, and should be our desire, to lay out our time and talents, however small, for Christ and the good of souls; but in doing this, we must look well to the spring, the motive, the principle of action. This cannot be too deeply or too frequently impressed upon the mind. All must flow from faith in the Savior. All must be the genuine expression of ardent love to him. All must be directed simply to his glory. Self must be annihilated. Pride must be crucified. The praise of men must be disregarded; and Christ, and Christ alone must be seated on the throne of the affections. Then will a cup of cold water, given in his name be accepted. Then will the widow's mite be esteemed precious. Then will the smallest effort done in faith to glorify Christ among men, be well-pleasing unto God.

Lord! give me simplicity and sincerity, humility and love. Let all my doings be the fruit of faith. O let me think, and speak, and act, and live for you. Two things I would wish to attain— to say little, and do much. Lord, set a watch before the door of my mouth. Give me wisdom to know when to speak, and when to be silent. Let my speech be always with grace. Let me ever be willing to help forward the cause of truth in the earth, yet always desirous to take the lowest place among the laborers in your vineyard.

However blind the world may be to its own faults, it is quick sighted enough in discovering the failings of religious professors. The men of the world readily perceive their inconsistencies, and charge them upon the religion which they profess. Thus a vainglorious professor of godliness often spoils much good, and produces much evil. Christian prudence is therefore necessary, and, when springing from a knowledge of the human heart, from self-distrust, from genuine humility, from a real desire to advance the cause of God in simple dependence on divine aid, it is the means of effecting great things. In such a world as this, how greatly do we need the wisdom of the serpent combined with the harmlessness of the dove. When the blessed Gospel renews and governs the heart, through the Almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, then every excellence appears in its proper place and due proportion. The symmetry and beauty of the structure manifest a divine architect, whose prerogative alone it is to "make all things new."

The religion of the heart is simply Faith Working by Love. Jesus is the object of faith. Faith looks to him as the all-atoning sacrifice for sin. It comes to him as the helper and hope of the soul. It receives him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church, the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Faith feeds upon him, as the bread of life; walks in his light, who is the light of the world; and, uniting the soul to him, as the branch is to the vine, it draws from him that grace and strength which causes the fruits righteousness to appear and abound.

Oh! what a precious gift is faith, wrought in the heart through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he who comes unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." By faith, we stand in the liberty with which Christ has made us free. By faith, we walk steadily and perseveringly in the narrow way of holy obedience. By faith, we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. By faith, we substantiate

things hoped for, and realize things not seen.

Is faith thus precious? Then surely it must be the solicitude of all to obtain it. Alas! no. Thousands of Christians who profess to believe, have it not. Where true faith dwells, its effects become visible. "Faith without works is dead." Does faith work by love to Christ to his people, his word, his ministers, his cause, his Sabbaths? Then, where true faith is, there love will be in active operation. Do we perceive this energy of love in all who call themselves Christians? Ah! no! Few, comparatively few, show their faith by an ardent, self-denying, and constant love. Faith purifies the heart. Is sin hated by all Christian professors? Is holiness the element in which they live? Alas! the reverse is too often the case.

Faith overcomes the world. Do all who profess to follow the meek and lowly Savior, renounce those pomps and vanities from which he came to deliver them? How many thousands practically deny the doctrine of their baptismal regeneration, by living in direct opposition to the vows and promises made in their names at their baptism! Are all baptized people bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit? Facts prove that they do not. The world maintains an awful power in the visible Church. It forms the crying sin of the age. That love of money, that thirst for power, that fondness for vain show, that quest of pleasure which pervades all grades of society, evidences our fallen state as a professing Christian people. We forget the solemn warning; "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, unless you repent."

Lord, give me that deep conviction of sin which David felt, when he said unto Nathan; "I have sinned;" that heartfelt repentance which Job experienced, when he declared; "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" that brokenness of heart which Peter manifested, when "he went out and wept bitterly," that faith which upheld the blessed Paul, when he said; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

O! Almighty Savior! fill me with faith, hope, and love; until faith is lost in vision, hope in enjoyment, and love is forever perfected in the region of peace and joy, through your own everlasting grace.

Father of Mercies, You alone I bless,

Oh Source divine of comfort and of peace;

When sorrow o'er my heart its mantle throws,

And all my days are marked by tears and woes;

Your gracious hand extends the kind relief,

Your smile paternal calms the poignant grief.

Yes! dearest Lord, I know your powerful word

In wildest storms can tranquil peace afford;

When death expands its cold and darksome shade,

And dire forebodings make the soul dismayed,

Your voice, blessed Savior, can dispel the gloom,
And light with joy my passage to the tomb.
How vain, how fleeting is the life of man!
How soon we traverse over its narrow span!
Without You, Lord, ah! what has life to boast,
A sinking vessel near a dangerous coast.
Death follows soon. Yet, through its darkened veil,
The dying saint can beams of glory hail!
As weary pilgrims wait their last remove,
My longing soul desires the joys above;
Eternal day will soon appear in view,
Then heaven possessed will prove the promise true.
A stranger here, I would abide a while,
Then hasten homeward to my Savior's smile.

53. REALIZING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

53. REALIZING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

And he said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14

Happy is the man who daily lives under the guardian care of the Almighty, who can say; "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." "You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

O! what a mercy it is, to have such a gracious God to look to. Lord, be pleased to draw my heart wholly to yourself, and enable me to place my trust under the shadow of your wings; to realize your presence at all times. Cause the light of your countenance to shine upon me, then will sorrow flee away at your presence, and joy spring up in my heart.

We live in a world which abounds with sin and grief; the latter ever growing out of the former, as its natural fruit. But, the blood of Christ can remove the one, and the Spirit of Christ can alleviate the other, so that all things shall work together for good. Oh! for a living faith, which can appropriate to itself the Savior's merits, and extract sweetness from the bitterness of affliction.

Soon, very soon, must this frail tenement be laid in the silent tomb; shut out from the eye of man, and all the changes of this passing scene. Oh! that my soul may then be shut in with Christ, where sin and sorrow can never enter. My happiness will then commence; my bliss will be completed, when my raised body, spiritualized and refined, shall be reunited to my redeemed spirit on the morning of the resurrection of the just. Oh! blissful and glorious period! How every earthly thing fades before it, as shadows before the rising sun.

"How vain are all things here below,

How false, and yet how fair;

Each pleasure has its poison too,

And every sweet a snare."

Our most endeared enjoyments are transitory, and mixed up with many cares. If we cultivate the rose and admire its blushing leaves, and sweet perfume, the prickly thorn protects it; if we would possess the honeyed hive, it is guarded by a thousand stings. Truly our comforts are entwined with crosses. This world is not our rest.

The child of God can see wisdom and love in all this dispensation. Before Adam fell, there was no annoyance. In Paradise all was delight. But now the earth is covered with thorns and thistles, emblems of the Fall. We are daily taught, that it is through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom. This world is a school of discipline to the children of God, and afflictions are sent as medicine to heal the diseases of the mind, through the power and skill of the heavenly Physician.

This world is a place of trial; but thanks be to redeeming love, "There remains a rest to the people of God;" a purchased inheritance, a kingdom reserved, for them.

In Scripture, we find that promises are in general made to characters. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." If we ask, who shall see God? the promise replies; "the pure in heart." There are some broad and indefinite invitations which include within them the greatest blessings, as "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." "Him who comes to me I will never cast out." And yet, even here, faith is included; for who will look to Christ, or come to Christ, but those who are led to feel their need of him through the secret grace of the Holy Spirit on their hearts; and who, like the bitten Israelites in the wilderness, cast their dying eyes upon the remedy provided for them?

It would be presumptuous to expect the glory of beholding Christ, and the felicity of dwelling forever with him, if we continue in a state of unbelief and impurity. Antinomianism is one of the depths of Satan; a most deadly poison to the soul. Salvation by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ, includes three great blessings—

I. A deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and punishment of sin, through the death and righteousness of the Son of God.

II. A deliverance from the love, power, and pollution of sin, through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

III. A restoration to the divine image, which was lost through the Fall; and a realization of the divine presence in the soul, as the foretaste and pledge of future glory.

This is the nature of Christ's salvation, which, while it cuts up the roots of self-righteousness, makes the believer righteous before God; and while it humbles him in the dust, makes him an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Oh! what a glorious salvation is that which destroys the image of Satan, and renews us after the image of Christ.

There is much information in the nominally Christian world; many go to and fro, and knowledge is increased; but does genuine piety, heart religion, true humility, keep pace with the growing expansion of our intellectual powers? Knowledge is power. It is a weapon which cuts two ways. If sanctified, it becomes a blessing; but if it is knowledge without piety; if it be knowledge drawn only from human science, to the neglect of the Book of God, it only sharpens the mind, and fits the agent for deeper works of darkness. Unsanctified knowledge is closely allied to Infidelity, as mental blindness is to Popery.

Nothing but the light of God's word, through the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit on the understanding and heart, can preserve us from being carried away by the sophistries of the infidel, the superstitions of the Papist, or the solicitations of the worldly and profane. Our hearts are naturally prone to evil. Our minds are naturally dark. Hence arises the necessity of reading diligently the Scriptures of truth with humble prayer for divine teaching, that we may know God, and his dear Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal; that we may know ourselves, and the world around us; that we may know the way of life, and realize the presence of God while journeying to his courts above.

Oh! that I could daily realize the presence and providence of God. This would make me watchful and submissive. Did I continually feel the truth of Hagar's declaration; "You God see me," what a

holy fear would fill my heart. To realize the divine presence, to live as seeing him who is invisible through the medium of his word and works is to walk as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walked. It is to walk by faith. It is to walk so as to please God.

How sublime are the words of Jehovah; "Am I a God who is only in one place?" asks the Lord. "Do they think I cannot see what they are doing? Can anyone hide from me? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" David lived under the sanctifying influence of this truth; "I can never escape from your spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day."

"If I take," says David, "the wings of the morning;" If I could even fly upon the wings or rays of the morning light, which diffuses itself with such velocity over the globe from east to west, instead of being beyond Your reach, or by this sudden transition be able to escape Your notice, Your arm could still at pleasure prevent or arrest my progress, and I should still be encircled with the immensity of Your essence.

Oh! my soul, seek for grace thus to walk day by day as in the presence of your God and Savior. Are you washed from your sins through the blood of Christ? Then do not fear. He, who fills all space with his presence is your Friend. His arm encircles you. His power protects you. His eye is ever upon you. His ear is ever open to your cry. Nothing can harm you without his permission; nothing shall harm you by his command; for, if, you are united to Christ by a living faith, He will make all things work together for your good; he will supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Do you love God? Then rejoice in the sweet assurance, that nothing shall be able to separate you from his love. He is engaged in Covenant to keep you in all your ways; to keep you unto life eternal.

As the Head of the Church militant is now in glory, so shall all the members of Christ's mystical body be united with their Head, as the Church triumphant, in the kingdom of heaven. Nothing is so sure as the glorification of the persevering believer. "He that endures to the end shall be saved." "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life!" The Word of Truth has said it, and it cannot be changed; "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Oh! how safe, how happy is the true believer in Jesus. He may have trials, temptations, afflictions, griefs, and sorrows. This is the lot of God's saints in every age, whom he calls his jewels, his peculiar treasure. They are chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love." They are "from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." They are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit;" therefore they continue faithful even unto the end, being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

According to the word of Christ, "My sheep shall never perish." They are called in time by the Gospel. They obey the calling, and suffer willingly the hatred of men, and the malice of devils.

They confess Christ boldly, and have to endure the contradiction of sinners, the rage of persecution, and sometimes a painful death. But still they are safe in the Ark of the Covenant; they are happy in the love of God. Christ and heaven are theirs. A glorious immortality awaits them. Soon they will be in the presence of the Savior whom they love; translated into that world of bliss, where the Lamb is the light thereof, and God its glory.

O! my soul, cease not to pray for an increase of faith, and love, and holy obedience; an increase of patience, resignation, and hope; an increase of peace, and joy, and gratitude; an increase of every grace, by which God may be glorified, the Savior honored, and yourself fitted for the participation of those blessings which abound in the Paradise above.

The excellent Henry observed; "He who eyes providences, shall never lack providences to eye." This was David's experience. He was an accurate observer both of Providence and Grace; therefore he never lacked motives either for humiliation, confidence, gratitude, or praise. The fifty-first Psalm is expressive of the deepest self-abasement, and of humble hope in the divine mercy, after the message of God to him by Nathan the Prophet. The sixty-second Psalm declares his trust in God at all times, as the God of his salvation, the rock of his strength, and his refuge. The one hundred and third Psalm is a song of thanksgivings for mercies, countless as the sands. The one hundred and seventh Psalm is a beautiful survey of the Providence of God, with a call on all men to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Indeed all the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, have cheered and comforted the Church of God in every age. Like David, in our humble measure, may we glorify God, and solace the Christian pilgrim on his way to Zion.

Are we the children of God? Then we may rest calmly under all providences, whether of a comforting or bereaving nature. How precious are the words of Christ; "What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows." As if our Lord had said; If your heavenly Father remembers the little birds of the air, to protect and feed them, will he forget you, for whom he gave his only begotten Son?

Paul answers this question by the Holy Spirit; "What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?"

Blessed Lord, "you will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." Oh! may I ever feel a confidential reliance on your power and grace, through faith in your promises in Christ Jesus. You will never forsake those who make your word their trust. Give me a strong faith to glorify you under all circumstances, whether of trouble or of joy. Let not the things of time obscure the views of eternity. Wean my heart from earth. Fix my affections on Yourself. Be my Center and my Crown. May all my fresh springs of happiness be in You; all my hopes of glory flow from You. Prepare me for Your kingdom, and oh! make me there an everlasting monument of Your love.

Happy the man, who, in this world of woe,

Where troubles spring, and bitter waters flow,

Enjoys the presence of his pardoning God,

And lies submissive 'neath his chastening rod.
While journeying homeward through a desert land,
He trusts the guidance of a Father's hand
Though darkness often overspread his earthly scene,
His soul is ever peaceful and serene.
Midst swelling waves, and on a boisterous sea,
From fearful doubts and sad forebodings free
With joy, at length, he lands upon the shore,
Where sin and sorrow shall be known no more.
Oh! blessed Lord! your people's Guide and Guard,
Their present Portion, and their great Reward,
O be my Hope, my Help, my Joy, my Crown,
O keep me- save me- seal me for Your own.

54. EARNEST DESIRES FOR PARDONING

54. EARNEST DESIRES FOR PARDONING AND SANCTIFYING GRACE

"For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." Psalms 25:11

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalms 51:10

David's plea must be mine; "O Lord pardon my iniquity for it is great." Also the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And Peter's cry, "Lord, save me! or I perish."

With shame and confusion of face I look up unto you, Oh! bleeding Lamb, for having slighted your goodness, and loving-kindness towards me. Take away this earthliness from my mind; this coldness from my heart; this insensibility to the things of God. Preserve me from a secret alienation of heart; from a growing lukewarmness. Do not allow the enemy to triumph over me. Allow me not to fall from you. Adorable Jesus! I acknowledge my vileness, my worthlessness, my ingratitude. But, oh! let me still hope in your mercy; still plead the merit of your blood; still expect your renewing strength; still long, and look, for the visits of your grace. I am a sinner, and you died to save sinners.

You are the Rock of Ages, the everlasting Strength. Endue me with power from on high to overcome all my indwelling corruptions, which, like a thick cloud, intervene between my soul and you, the Sun of Righteousness, and thus prevent the rays of your consolation from gladdening my heart, and making me to abound in the fruits of righteousness. To whom can I look- to whom can I go, but unto You, O Friend of sinners. Lord, I come invited by your word. I come at your sweet call, for pardon, peace, and holiness. You delight to save. O make me willing to be saved in your way, and on your terms. May I have grace to receive salvation as the gift of grace, and to plead for mercy as a lost sinner, through your all-prevailing name and merits.

You, O Jesus, are exalted "to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins;" and shall I not praise you for such infinite love, such abounding grace to the chief of sinners? O give me a heart to praise you. Stir up my languid desires. Inflame my cold affections. Set my whole soul on fire with holy love. Lord! I am sorely grieved, that I love you so little; that my affections move so slowly towards you. But, you give more grace. O bestow it upon me in richer abundance, that so I may live more to your glory, and to the comfort of my own soul, until joy shall be complete, and love perfected, in your presence and glory.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." What reason I have continually to complain of a barren heart. Did I say barren? Is it not full of evil? And, yet, it is a barren heart still, destitute of that love and humility, and those heavenly affections, which dwell in every child of God. Oh! how I long to be a real, sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. It is easy to make a profession of religion; that may be done by fallen nature; but to possess the Spirit of Christ, can only be enjoyed by those whom Sovereign Grace endues with so great a benefit.

Oh! that I knew how to estimate the blessings of salvation. Lord, enlighten my mind to see more clearly the riches of your grace, the wonders of your love, and the greatness of your mercy, as manifested to perishing sinners, in Christ Jesus. O allow me to taste your goodness, and relish those sublime truths, which are revealed in your holy word. How painful, that I should be so little affected by the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, of my suffering Redeemer. Why is not my soul all on fire, when I think of your love? Why is it not melted into tears, when I think of my dying Savior? Am I harder than the rock in Horeb? Colder than the northern ice? Lord! smite my rocky heart with the rod of your loving-kindness; dissolve my frozen affections, by the melting beams of your grace.

Ah! "When shall I be made clean? when shall it once be." Lord grant that it may be Now. This night I may be in eternity. O! blessed Jesus, hasten your glorious work of sanctification in my soul. Alas! what cause have I to complain of that dead sea which lies within. Oh! that the living waters from the sanctuary may flow into my corrupted heart; that pure streams may constantly issue from it into my life and conversation.

How distressing are evil thoughts. How dreadful is the perception of such subtle wickedness, insinuating itself into the mind, and fixing its abode for days, in opposition to strivings, prayers, and tears! Lord lift up your arm. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered." Bid the powers of darkness to depart from me; or, if these thoughts arise from the corruption of my fallen nature, O! remove this dreadful cause, by plunging me into the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; by sitting as a refiner's fire; and by consuming, through your grace, the dross of sin. Then shall I be holy and happy, peaceful and full of joy.

Your name, blessed Jesus, is SAVIOR, and your work SALVATION. Your office is to save sinners, and your delight is with the sons of men. O then, encouraged by your grace, by your precious promises, and everlasting love; yes, emboldened by the sweetest calls and invitations of your word, I come, blessed Friend of sinners, beseeching you to pardon all my sins; to give me a new heart; to fill me with your heavenly Spirit; and when I shall have served you here on earth, to translate me to your kingdom of glory.

Time is hastening on the wing. Every moment cuts off a portion of my life, and leaves me less time to work out my salvation. I cannot tell how soon I may be called into eternity- an Unchangeable Eternity. My day of grace may speedily draw to its close. Oh! then, be diligent, my soul, be diligent. Work while it is day. Delay not to seek the Savior of sinners. Defer not that work, in comparison of which, all the boasted works of mortals are like painted bubbles, floating on the air. Soon they will burst and vanish away, but the great work of salvation will be commensurate with eternity. If thus to seek for pardoning grace, with ever-longing desire, be esteemed "vile," oh! that with David I may say; "I will yet be more vile."

Blessed Jesus, behold me in mercy, in pity, and in love. Oh! let my wretchedness move your compassion. Was there ever a more miserable object than I?

I am BLIND. Lord open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of your law. Open my understanding to understand the Scriptures. Give me eye-salve that I may see your beauty, and my deformity; your perfection, and my pollution; your preciousness, fitness, fullness, love, and glory, and my own helplessness and nothingness.

I am MUTE. Lord unloose the string which guilt has tied. Enable me to speak your praise; to tell of all your wondrous works; to tell of your everlasting love; your groans, and tears, and blood, shed for the vilest of the vile, even, amazing grace, for me!

I am A HELPLESS CRIPPLE. Oh! heal those bruises which sin has made; heal the bones which sin has broken. Restore me to the joys of your salvation; then shall I walk in the path of your commandments, and not be weary; then shall I run the heavenly race, and not faint; then shall I mount up in heart and affection to you, my adorable Jesus, as on eagle's wings.

I am FULL OF DEADLY DISEASES. Sin has poisoned all the springs of life; polluted all the powers of my soul; and filled me with a dire disease. Oh! great Physician, apply the healing balm of your precious blood; cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit; and make me a new man, through the healthful Spirit of your grace.

I have LOST THE SENSE OF FEELING. Sin has paralyzed my soul; blunted the edge of my conscience; and hardened my heart. Oh! give me a quick perception of evil, a dread of its approach. May the very breath of sin be nauseous to my soul. May I never rest until the foul corruption be removed; until the inner man be wholly renewed by You.

I am SPIRITUALLY DEAD. This is my state by nature. Though alive and active to evil, I am dead to God and goodness. Though my mind can devise mischief, I am not sufficient of myself, to think a good thought. Oh! You, who are the Resurrection and the Life, bid me come forth from the grave of nature's corruption; bid me live, live to you now, by faith and love; and with you when time shall be no more, in your kingdom of glory.

I am EVERYTHING THAT IS VILE AND WORTHLESS. This I must be, if, by nature I am spiritually blind, and dumb, and helpless, and diseased, and paralyzed, and dead! Oh! divine Emmanuel! You who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, unite me to Yourself. Then, as viewed in You, I shall be beautiful and lovely in the eyes of my heavenly Father. In you, and clothed with your righteousness, I shall be complete, without spot and blameless. In you I shall be adorned with celestial graces, through the indwelling Spirit of Holiness. Oh! blessed Savior, wash me through your precious blood, that every guilty stain may disappear; then, when presented before the Eternal Father as your ransomed one, and beheld by Him who cannot look upon iniquity, I shall be accepted in You, as my Righteousness, Atonement, and Intercessor, with complacency and favor, and be admitted through You to endless joy and glory.

While a sojourner and pilgrim upon earth, I want to be steadfast in faith, fervent in love, joyful in hope, low in my own eyes, meek in spirit, and pure in heart. These are the graces which constitute and adorn the Christian character. These are the old, the silver, and the precious stones which I would build upon the true and only foundation— Jesus Christ the Righteous. To Him I would look, as the Author and Finisher of every good and perfect gift, bestowed upon perishing sinners by the Spirit of his grace.

Without your WISDOM I would wander into the mazes of error and heresies; be carried about by every wind of doctrine, and at last make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

Without your STRENGTH I would never hold on my way, or hold out to the end, amid the oppositions of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I would shrink from the cross. I would betray my

Savior. I would ruin my soul.

Without your RIGHTEOUSNESS, I would forever remain under the curse. I may toil and labor by legal obedience, by ceremonial observances, by fastings and prayers, by mortifications and austerities, but I would still remain unsaved and unblessed. If I seek for justification through these works of the law, I would never find the favor of God. Jesus is the Lord our Righteousness. He alone can present me perfect and complete, clothed in his merits alone. United to Him, all is changed. My works are works of love, not grounds of merit. They are accepted of the Father, through the Son, as fruits of faith and evidences of my adoption into his family.

O! then, None but Christ, none but Christ! He alone, by his Spirit, can enable me to vanquish the powers of darkness, to overcome the corruptions of my heart, to crucify the lustings of the flesh. The worst enemy I have is MYSELF, strange to tell; yet, no less strange than true! I may escape from other enemies, but from this I cannot flee. Wherever I go, SELF still is there. The inbred evil travels with me. I may cross mighty oceans, traverse extensive deserts, plunge into the deepest recesses of the tangled forest, or the caverned earth, yet, in the profoundest solitude, SELF is there. The records of the ancient ascetics fully prove that Satan and inbred sin, are as powerful in the mountain cell as in the crowded city.

None but the harassed, tempest-tossed believer knows the dreadful conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, between the law in his members and the law of his mind. His cry is; "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away and be at rest!" But soon he feels the vanity of this wish; for even if could he fly on eagle's wings to the earth's remotest bounds, he would carry with him all the evil he deplores. He therefore prays for present grace and strength, for present power to conquer sin, and glorify his Savior in the place and station divine wisdom has appointed for him.

It would not be expedient or fit, that the internal conflict should be minutely described. Those thoughts which, like lightning, dart into the mind, and set the passions on fire, are known only to the tempted believer and the heart-searching God. When hated and resisted, they are temptations, and not sins.

The shield of faith alone can quench these fiery darts of Satan. Happy is the tried believer who can say from the heart, at these distressing seasons; Lord, these vile imaginations are my grief, my burden, yes, the very anguish of my soul. My will rejects them, my heart detests them. You know that I long for deliverance from them. Oh! come blessed Spirit of Holiness, drive these fiends away! Wash me afresh in the Redeemer's blood. Breathe on my dying graces. Make me more vigorous, more alive to You, more actively employed in all good things; then shall Satan find no room for his hellish injections, but heavenly peace and holy joy will reign triumphant in my soul.

O! that this may be the prayer of my heart, in seasons of conflict with indwelling sin. What continual need do I find for the grace of God. Alas when I would do good, evil is present with me. I find it most difficult to keep my thoughts in subjection to the law of Christ, and to prevent my imagination from roving to the ends of the earth, and building ten thousand visionary schemes. How painful to feel the divine principle so weak, and the corrupt principle so strong.

"Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." We are saved, not by presumption, but by a holy fear. Thus says the Lord, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Lord implant your fear in my heart,

entwined with hope in your love, that, through a living faith in Jesus, I may stand in the evil day,
obtain the victory, and receive the crown of life, to the praise of the glory of your grace.

My soul, blessed Savior, pants after thee,

To find You, forms the summit of desire

Your smile can set my mourning spirit free,

Your peace my heart with holy joy inspire.

A wretched wanderer on forbidden ground,

Your Name and Will was long to me unknown;

But mercy sought me in this night profound,

And kindly drew me to Yourself alone.

Your voice of love, in accents sweet and mild,

Revealed Salvation in that favored hour;

Your Spirit formed me to a little child,

The seal and witness of your grace and power.

But ah! your patience since that joyful day,

Has borne my languors with a Father's love;

You have I left- ungrateful have I strayed,

Though still my mercies ever faithful prove.

Why do I feel such weakness in my heart?

Such cold affections to my heavenly Friend?

It is not You, blessed Savior- I depart

From You, whose love nor measure knows nor end.

Take pity Lord- Dispel my guilty fear;

Subdue my heart- its hardness now remove.

My soul on Golgotha to You was dear,

I rest, O God, on your Eternal Love.

57. EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION

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57. EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION

"I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return." 2 Timothy 1:12

To talk about Christian Experience is, by some people considered little short of enthusiasm. To try to enlist the affections on the side of Christianity is by others deemed extravagance. In their view, the sober-minded Christian is one who attends to the duties of his station, is a strict observer of religious ordinances, and distributes of his substance to the poor and needy. To speak to them about the corruption of the heart, the inward conflict, the power of faith, the energy of love, the work of the Spirit, the grace of the Savior, is like talking about an unknown region.

It was not so with the blessed Paul. He could say, "I know the one in whom I trust." He was taught of God to know, by sweet experience, the efficacy of Christ's atonement, the sufficiency of his grace, and the prevalency of his intercession. His ardent desire was "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

John also, being taught of God, was well acquainted with spiritual knowledge and religious experience. His first epistle abounds with the most delightful proofs of this. He seems to rise, as he writes, on the wings of an assured faith and hope; "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "You know that he was manifested to take away our sins." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "We know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us." "Every one that loves, is born of God, and know God." "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." "We have known and believed the love that God has to us." "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." "If we know that he hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." "We know that whoever is born of God sins not." "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

O! what a blessed knowledge is this. How deeply it enters into the experience and feelings of true believers. Here is nothing cold and calculating, nothing frozen or formal, all is warmth and energy. Happy are they who can say with Peter; "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." With John; "We love him, because he first loved us." And with Paul; "The love of Christ constrains us."

With such declarations of the Apostles, recorded in the Sacred Scriptures for our encouragement and pursuit after holiness, we need not be ashamed of Experimental Religion. The world's shame

is the Christian's glory. Such was Paul's triumph. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

They know little of the religion of Jesus Christ, who cannot follow him through evil report as well as good report; who cannot deny themselves or take up their cross, bearing his reproach. "If we deny him, he also will deny us." The fear of man, and the love of the world, are the bane of our profession, and the ruin of thousands. The words of our Lord should be impressed on the hearts of all his followers; "This is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." So deeply did the Apostles enter into the intercessory prayer of their divine Master, that their hearts' desire was, that the knowledge of Christ crucified should become universal.

Paul prays for the Ephesian converts, that the blessings of spiritual illumination, spiritual strength, and faith and love, might be imparted in rich abundance. "I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people. I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him." If this do not be experimental godliness, where is it to be found?

But the tender-hearted Apostle does not rest here. He still prays, on his bended knees, for an increased outpouring of the Spirit upon his beloved children in the faith; "When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

For the Philippians, he prays in the sweetest spirit of ministerial affection; "God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God."

For the Colossians, he has the same overflowing tenderness of desire; "So we have continued praying for you ever since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you a complete understanding of what he wants to do in your lives, and we ask him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually do good, kind things for others. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better. We also

pray that you will be strengthened with his glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all our sins."

For the Thessalonians, he also pours out his heart before God; "And may the Lord make your love grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love overflows toward you. As a result, Christ will make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy when you stand before God our Father on that day when our Lord Jesus comes with all those who belong to him."

Let a minister of the gospel pray and preach in this fervent, exalted, spiritual, heavenly strain, and he would be branded by many, yes, it is to be feared even by some who call themselves "the successors of the Apostles," as an enthusiast. Would holy Paul have escaped such a censure, had he lived in these days? Is there no danger, lest spiritual religion is not to be once more buried beneath the superincumbent weight of those errors and idle ceremonies, from which we were happily delivered by our martyred Reformers?

There is in all men, naturally, a thirst for power. Every age has its "Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence, prating against us," says John, "with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and forbids those who would, and casts them out of the church." What is the advice of the Apostle to such holy, yet excommunicated believers? "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that does good is of God; but he that does evil has not seen God."

The Christian's path then is plainly marked out. He is to take up his cross daily. He is to count the cost. If he is faithful to his Savior, he must be a partaker of his Savior's sufferings; so said our Lord; "If the have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." It is a painful truth, but one which cannot be concealed, because it is emblazoned in colors of blood on the page of Scripture, and on the page of the Church's history, that the greatest persecutors of Christ, and of his true believing members, have been those who have sat in the seat of Moses (Jews), and in the chair of Peter (Catholics)! Who were so clamorous for the crucifixion of our Lord, as the chief priests, the scribes, and elders of the Jewish Church? Who, in after ages, were so bitter against the sheep of Christ, as those very ministers of the Christian Church who styled themselves Shepherds, but who were ravening wolves. Jesus cautioned his people against such people, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; you shall know them by their fruits."

Paul foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy, the approaching apostasy; "Take heed," said he, addressing the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch."

Yes! we have need to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation;" lest we forsake the standard of the cross, through the influence or the fear of man. The times are indeed fearful, when those, who once stood foremost in the cause of Christ, who were valiant for the truth on the earth, now desert his standard; when those, who once preached, in all its simplicity and purity, the gospel of the grace of God, are now drawn into the vortex of a system, which will disfigure our Reformed Churches by Papal ceremonies, and darken them by Papal doctrines. Is it not a presage of evil days, when sacraments are virtually put in the place of Christ? When the doctrine of the atonement is to be sparingly exhibited to the perishing sinner? When the rights of conscience are made to succumb at the feet of an assumed infallibility? When the foundations are thus destroyed, what must the righteous do?

Truly this was not the preaching of the Apostles. Paul "determined not to know anything except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Peter gloried in the Lamb, who redeemed us by his blood. John gives us the song of the church triumphant in heaven; "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Neither was this the conduct of the Apostles. Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith you stand." Peter exhorts the elders to diligence and humility; "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." John asserts the right of private judgment "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

And by what touchstone must they be tried? Isaiah informs us, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." While we have the light, may we have grace to walk in the light, and with the noble Bereans, to search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so.

An awful delusion, a spiritual darkness, is rapidly over-spreading the Reformed Churches. Is there not a cause, when apostate Rome is viewed as an "erring sister, as "the Savior's holy home," instead of the mystical Babylon doomed to destruction.

The judgments of God are evidently lowering over our land. The dark clouds are gathering around us. We have long been blessed with the light of the Gospel, but if we do not repent, the candlestick will be removed from us, and carried to other lands. Our God is the same unchangeable Jehovah. In his word, he has taught us to dread declension from his ways. How awakening are his warnings. "If you will not be reformed by me but will walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you." "I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." "I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts; and I will give unto everyone of you according to your works." "Remember how you have received and heard; and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you."

The signs of the times indicate the coming storm. Have we not reason to say with Peter, "For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin first among God's own children. And if even we Christians must be judged, what terrible fate awaits those who have never believed God's Good

News? And 'If the righteous are barely saved, what chance will the godless and sinners have?' So if you are suffering according to God's will, keep on doing what is right, and trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you." The storm, which overwhelms the wicked, will purify the saints of God.

Oh! solemn warnings of most just judgment! Lord awaken our slumbering souls; enlighten our darkened understandings; preserve your Church from heresy and error; do not allow the champions for your truth to become, "as when a standard-bearer faints."

The deliverance and journeyings of the children of Israel, form a striking counterpart to the Christian's redemption and pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan. They were held in bondage by the Egyptian tyrant, and though they groaned under their oppression, yet were loath to leave the iron furnace. Likewise, sinners are kept in awful slavery to Satan and their lusts; and though often wretched to the last degree, still they hug their chains.

The Almighty, by an act of grace, undertook to rescue his people from the power of Pharaoh, by signs, and wonders, and with a stretched-out arm. Likewise, sinners are redeemed from the tyranny of Satan, from the evil of sin, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell, by the omnipotent Jehovah Jesus, God manifest in the flesh.

As the Israelites sang the praises of God, when, having passed through the Red Sea in safety, they saw their enemies dead on the shore; so believers rejoice with joy unspeakable, when they experience a mighty deliverance from all their enemies, whom the Lord subdues before them. In heaven they will sing the conqueror's song; the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

The Israelites, before they could enter into the promised rest, had to traverse a long howling wilderness, that their faith and patience might be exercised, and the power, love, and faithfulness of God, exhibited in their preservation and protection. So, believers in Jesus, after their conversion to God, and regeneration through the Spirit, have to journey through the valley of life, amid numberless trials and difficulties, snares and temptations, before they enter the heavenly rest, to prove the reality of their faith, and to manifest the grace of their crucified Lord.

The history of the Israelites in the wilderness, is the history of the human heart. We see in them a faithful picture of ourselves. When all is shining and pleasant, our hearts can feel elated and joyous. When the purse is heavy, the heart is light; but when the purse is light, the heart is heavy. Thus it was with the children of Israel. So long as their outward comforts continued, they were thankful; but when their bread and water began to fail, they murmured against Moses, and rebelled against God.

Is it not thus with us? When our sun is overcast, when storms arise, when comforts fail, when earthly sources of delight are dried up; then sadness seizes upon our spirits; doubts and fears prevail; murmurs escape our lips. In these trying seasons, the faith, even of believers, falters; while the faith of the stony ground hearers, having no root, withers! How destructive is unbelief! How deceiving is the confidence of nominal Christians. "Every branch in me," said our Lord, "that bears not fruit he takes away." It is a fearful truth, one which should make us tremble, that out of the many thousands of Israelites who came out of Egypt, only two were found faithful, and permitted to enter the promised land; all the rest were excluded through unbelief."

Paul applies this fact most forcibly to the Christian Church; "Be careful then, dear friends. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ." Then, referring to the rebellious Israelites, he adds, "And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn't it the people who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom was God speaking when he vowed that they would never enter his place of rest? He was speaking to those who disobeyed him. So we see that they were not allowed to enter his rest because of their unbelief."

The practical conclusion is then drawn from these solemn premises, "God's promise of entering his place of rest still stands, so we ought to tremble with fear that some of you might fail to get there. For this Good News—that God has prepared a place of rest—has been announced to us just as it was to them. But it did them no good because they didn't believe what God told them."

The visible Church of Christ, like the Church in the wilderness, is composed of a mixed multitude. All men have not faith. Many have the form of godliness, who deny the power. Many say, "The temple of the Lord are we", in whose hearts the Savior never dwelt; and who shall never enter into the temple above. Self-deception is no less common, than it is fatal.

The Jewish priests prided themselves on being the children of Abraham; when our Lord plainly told those who they were the seed of the old serpent! Is not the same delusion still practiced? Do not the priests of the Romish Church boast themselves on being the successors of Peter, though they would persecute, even unto deaths, those who faithfully adhere to the doctrines, and live in the spirit, of the holy Apostles? The history of their Church is written in letters of blood. Romanism lacks the power, and not the will, to root out the heretical tares, to gather them in bundles, as in the days of the Marian persecution, and to burn them!

O! that this leaven of self-deception may never work fatally in our Reformed Churches. The subtle enemy of mankind is ever seeking to darken, if he cannot destroy, the TRUTH. He can transform himself into an angel of light, as well as assume the character of a roaring lion. No, he often combines both, in his warfare against the Church of Christ. Popery is the masterpiece of Satan, which can adapt itself to every state of society. It is the religion of the natural heart. Lord! save me from unbelief; self-deceptions; Satan's delusions; and the fear of man.

I am now a pilgrim journeying through the wilderness. The manna is daily descending; and the water of life continually flowing to sustain and refresh me. Jesus, the true bread from heaven, is freely given; the Holy Spirit, as a living stream, is graciously supplied from the fountain of eternal love. Oh! how great is the goodness, truth, and mercy, of my covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, to an unworthy worm of the earth. Lord, make me grateful. Give me a believing and a loving heart. Preserve me from self-will and self-seeking; from self-sufficiency and self-pleasing. Mold my will into yours; and enable me in all things to seek your glory.

Guide me, O great Jehovah, in safety through this desert-land. Shield me by your power. Cheer me with your presence. Uphold my goings in your way. Let me not turn aside into crooked paths; nor dread any danger, while in the path of duty. Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me under the shadow of your wings. Impart that spiritual illumination which will direct me aright; that spiritual

strength, which will enable me to endure unto the end; that assurance of faith, which will animate me to the conflict; and that experience of your love, which will support me under every trial, and cause me to die, rather than deny you before men. O grant these inestimable blessings, for your own mercy and truth's sake; for you, O Lord, alone are the God of my salvation.

Holy Father! hear my prayer,
As, through Jesus, it ascends;
On You I cast my every care,
Now the day of labor ends.
Soon will sleep my eyelids close,
In Your love may I repose.
All my days are known to thee,
All my times are in Your hand;
Life is like the rolling sea;
Ebbs and flows at Your command
As a plant does bloom and die,
Man is only vanity.
Thus today is swiftly gone,
Solemn witness to appear
At Jehovah's holy throne,
How shall I the judgment bear?
Lord! I shrink with shame and awe,
'Midst the thunders of Your law.
Jesus! clothe my naked soul,
With Your Righteousness divine,
You can make the wounded whole,
Let Your Spirit seal me thine.
Pour Your comfort in my heart,
Never from my soul depart.
Hide me, O Almighty Friend,
Under Your paternal wing,

From the ills which life attend,
Then will I Your goodness sing.
Lord! renew my wasted powers,
Consecrate my waking hours.

58. THE UNPROFITABLE NATURE OF

58. THE UNPROFITABLE NATURE OF EXTERNAL RELIGION, WHEN MADE A SUBSTITUTE FOR GODLINESS

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power." 2 Timothy 3:5

Gracious God! impress this truth upon every heart, that all who call themselves Christians may live under its saving influence— that externals of religion profit little. We may regularly attend the house of God; be stated communicants at the Lord's Table; observe with rigor the appointed fasts of the Church; use various austerities to mortify the flesh; be conscientiously strict in private devotion, and in family worship; be zealous for the Church in all its rites and ceremonies; be actively engaged in the management of religious and benevolent institutions; and yet, with all this External Religion, remain mere Formalists. Nothing is pleasing to God, nothing is vital in religion, but what springs from faith in Christ. Without love, all our doings are nothing worth.

O! then, what need we have to watch and pray, lest we should be deceiving ourselves, having only the form of godliness while denying its power. We may deceive ourselves and others, but the all-seeing God cannot be deceived. He looks at the heart. He weighs the spirits. Blessed Lord! show me my true state and character. Deliver me from a deceived heart, from formality and hypocrisy. Give me a single eye, make me upright and sincere before you.

Man is naturally legal and self-righteous. He is ever ready to substitute External Religion for godliness. The ancient Jews were continually reprov'd by their prophets on this very account. "I am sick of your sacrifices," says the Lord. "Don't bring me any more burnt offerings! I don't want the fat from your rams or other animals. I don't want to see the blood from your offerings of bulls and rams and goats. Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices? The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them. I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them!"

True devotion cannot live in a sinful atmosphere, but formality can. This truth is verified in every age of the Church. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is. What a sweet assurance to the people of God. They shall have everything that can render this life truly happy; for, being the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, he will withhold nothing from those who are really for their good. Their sins are all forgiven through the blood of Christ. They are justified freely by his grace, and have peace with God. They are adopted into his family, and become heirs of his kingdom. They are made the temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them, to enlighten, guide, sanctify, and comfort them on their way to Zion.

They may be hated and persecuted by the world; they may be often in heaviness through manifold temptations; they may often groan, being burdened; they may be frequently harassed by the enemy of souls, and by the rebellious lustings of indwelling sin; but they still have the promise of

the life that now is. They shall have sweet seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; they shall enjoy a pleasure to which the world is a stranger, a pleasure flowing from a close and abiding union to Christ their living Head, in whom dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily, and out of whose fullness they shall receive continual supplies of grace and strength. They may be poor in temporal things, but Jesus will sweeten their little portion, while the rich have often gall and wormwood poured into their golden cup

O! my soul, are you looking unto Jesus? Are you longing to obtain an interest in his blood? Ah! what avail the gilded pomp and grandeur of the world? Do I want to be rich? Let me look at the end of the rich worldling who fared sumptuously every day, but when called into eternity, was cast into the lake of fire! Do I seek the praise of men and the honors of the world, Let me remember, that "whoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;" that all who love the world, shall perish with the world when Christ shall come in flaming fire to take vengeance on all who will not have him to reign over them.

Do I pant after the pleasures of the world? Let me not forget, that all who now place their happiness in sinful gratifications shall feel the gnawing of the worm that never dies, and the torment of the fire which never shall be quenched. "Seek," then, O my soul, "those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Labor to possess that godliness which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Blessed truth; the promise of the life to come, is included in godliness. Oh! what a treasure, surpassing all the riches of ten thousand worlds. Could I call the stars my own, this vast possession would dwindle to a pinpoint, when compared with the inconceivably glorious portion of the humblest believer. He is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Death alone can reveal the fullness of this blessedness. Here we must live by faith. So did John— "Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who believe this will keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure."

O! eternal Spirit of all grace, renew my soul in righteousness, and fill me with light and love. Preserve me from formality. Guard me against self-deception. Deliver me from false views of religion, and false marks of grace. Enable me to walk in the narrow way, and strengthen me to withstand the world, the flesh, and the devil; to confess you before men, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. O give me a new heart, that in simplicity and godly sincerity I may live a life of faith on earth, abound in the fruits of righteousness, and live a life of glory with you in heaven.

Though external religion, apart from godliness, profits little; yet, when connected with, and resulting from true piety, it profits much. Thus Paul declared to the Corinthians; "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." His life, from the period of his conversion, was dedicated to the service of his Savior. He deemed no labor too great, no toil too severe, no privation too painful, if only he could extend the Redeemer's kingdom, and be made instrumental in bringing sinners to Christ. He exhorted the Roman Christians to active service "As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness."

The Corinthians he also admonished; "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

His epistles abound with exhortations to activity in the cause of Christ, which may be summed up in the one addressed to the Hebrews; "For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. Our great desire is that you will keep right on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and patience."

True believers are consecrated to the Lord. "Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

Surely this is one of the unsearchable riches of Christ. What an inconceivable honor for a poor worthless sinner to be made an habitation of God through the Spirit. For, "thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Every true believer is therefore humble and contrite, because with such the high and lofty One condescends to dwell. "To this man," says the Lord, "will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." Oh! how gracious is our God. He "is near unto those who are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise," was the prayer of David, when he supplicated for mercy.

The true believer is clothed with humility. Being filled with self-abasing views, he cries out with Job; "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And with Jacob; "I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies." Yes, with Paul he esteems himself to be "less than the least of all saints," the chief of sinners.

Oh! my soul, are these your feelings and views? Are you panting after Christ? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Is sin your burden? Is purity your delight?

The true believer in Jesus experiences more pleasure in crucifying a lust, than the sensualist does in gratifying it; which proves that the gospel, even in its most painful exercises, far exceeds the fleeting pleasures of sin. The pleasures of the wicked, if such they can be called, are like the transient meteor; while the enjoyments of the righteous resemble the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. The gratifications of the wicked, in the end, bite like a serpent and sting like an adder; but the felicities of the godly, flowing from faith in Christ, and communion with the Father through him, yield their sweetness in a dying hour. Truly, then, may we say with David; "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." And with Solomon, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Happy, indeed, is the man who can say, in humility and sincerity, I desire above all things to love Jesus, and to repose my soul fully and entirely upon him. Where can I expect comfort, but from Him who is the fountain of felicity? Where can I find wisdom, but in Him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Where can I obtain pardon and justification, but in and

through Him who paid the price for my redemption, even his own most precious blood; and who obeyed that holy law, which demands a sinless obedience to all its requirements?

How beautiful, how glorious, is the plan of human redemption, which amply provides for the honor of God and the happiness of man. Well may angels desire to look into this mystery of grace. Surely nothing can more clearly prove the blinding, hardening, and rebellious nature of sin, than the manner in which this dispensation of mercy is received by a world of sinners. Jesus, the compassionate Jesus, daily knocks at the door of our hearts, and sweetly says, "If any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." A promise this, of delightful communion and enjoyment of his love. But what reception does he meet with? Do we hail his approach with gladness? Do we throw wide open the doors of a willing mind? Do we say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Alas! no. We ungratefully bar the doors against him, by unbelief, and pride, and the love of sin, as if he were coming to destroy our comfort, and to rob us of our peace. Oh! blind infatuation. Awful delusion! Jesus comes indeed to destroy our false comforts, and to remove our false peace. He comes to dislodge the strong man armed, and to save us from indwelling sin. He comes to dispel the darkness from our minds, to show us our true state and character, and to deliver us from that fatal security, by which we are bound. He comes to take away that self-love which conceals us from ourselves; which makes us fancy that all is safe and well, though there be but a step, and that a very short one too, between this destructive repose and everlasting torment.

Oh! how we should love this kind and heavenly Visitor, who comes to us on such an errand of love. Blessed Jesus! put forth your hand and touch my sin-sick soul. Speak the word only, and your servant shall be healed. Oh! all-gracious Redeemer, now that you are in heaven, your love and pity are the same; and my needs and weaknesses, my guilt and corruption, my helplessness and wretchedness, are so many pleaders with You to have mercy upon me! You have said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Lord, I am sick, heal me. You have said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Lord, I am a sinner; the chief of sinners. O save me! Grant unto me repentance unto life, that I may turn from every evil way to You, the only true and living God. Lord, the work is all your own, and the whole glory shall be yours. I will lay the crown at your feet, and ascribe salvation unto You, who redeemed me through your blood, when made a vessel of mercy; a pillar in your temple, to go out no more.

61. ON THE APPROACH OF DEATH

61. ON THE APPROACH OF DEATH

"Behold, your days approach that you must die." Deuteronomy 31:14

The longest life, and the most useful one too, must draw to its close, for "death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Though Moses was forbidden to enter into the earthly, he was not excluded from the heavenly rest. The time drew near when he must die. This event did not take him by surprise. The Lord said unto Moses, "Behold, the days approach that you must die." We cannot expect such a divine intimation. Yet still, enough is revealed in the word of God, and sufficient evidence is afforded to teach us, that "there is but a step between us and death." "For what is our life? It is even a vapor, which appears for a little time, and then vanishes away?"

Nothing discovers our fallen state more than insensibility to eternal things, a neglect of the gospel, an unwearied search for happiness among the creatures, instead of from God, the Fountain of Living Water. While thousands of professing Christians are busying themselves for futurity, Death levels his dart, and lays the worldling in the dust. How solemn was the message to Hezekiah "Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live." How happy was its effect upon his mind. "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord." His prayer was heard, and fifteen years were added to his life. "This year you shall die," said Jeremiah to the false Prophet Hananiah, "because you have taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month."

The Scriptures abound with warnings and encouragements. "This year you shall die." Then let me feel and act as if I knew it were so ordered by him, in whose hands my breath is, and who has appointed my time upon earth after the good pleasure of his will. My stay upon earth cannot be long. My sand is running quickly down. My shadow is lengthening apace, which proves that the sun is fast declining. Soon will the evening shades overspread me, and the night of death hide me from the eye of man.

How important, oh! how all-important is the question- Am I prepared to die? Have I fled for refuge to Jesus, the sinner's friend? Do I believe with the heart unto righteousness? Have I the witness in myself that I am born of God? Is my heart renewed after the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness? Have I received the Spirit of adoption- a loving, filial, obedient, thankful, humble spirit, enabling me to cry, Abba, Father, through a lively faith in Christ my Savior? For thus says Paul; "you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." If I truly believe in Christ, I have the Spirit of Christ, and I am a child of God. Then all the promises of God in Christ Jesus, to me are yes, and amen, sure and certain, and shall all have their blessed fulfillment in my salvation, and the display of the divine glory. Then I may exercise the assurance of faith, and hope; yes, the full assurance of these graces of the Spirit, if I have only a true and lively faith in the Son of God, a faith, working by love, purifying the heart, overcoming the world, and bringing the invisible glories of heaven, as realities before the mind; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence

of things not seen."

O! what a glorious and glorifying grace is faith in a crucified Redeemer. With these gospel views and with the inward experience of the grace of God, who would not welcome the words; "Behold, the days approach that you must die." It is as if our heavenly Father should say, "my beloved child, you have wandered long enough in this desert land. I have fed you with the true Bread from heaven, and refreshed you with water from the smitten Rock, Christ Jesus. I have given you my ordinances and statutes. I have proved you by manifold trials, that you might know what was in your heart. In the midst of all your wanderings and rebellions, your haltings and complainings, I did not forsake you. I chastised you with the rod of affliction. I brought you low by deep repentance. I led you into the valley of humiliation. I hid my face from you for a little moment. I caused you to loathe yourself, to cry for mercy, to seek my face. And then, when your heart was broken and contrite, looking unto Jesus, and pleading, by earnest faith, the merit of his blood; I caused the beams of my grace to shine into your soul. I gave you a token of reconciliation, a Spirit of adoption. I enabled you to sing for joy, and to go on with increasing vigor in the ways of truth and righteousness. Now, your journey is nearly ended; my messenger is sent to convey you home, to bring you to your Father's house, where are many mansions, where your Savior has prepared a place for you, and where you shall be eternally blessed in his presence. Come, for all things are ready. Prepare to meet your God. Enter into the joy of your Lord. Doubt not my love. Fear not the enemy, for Christ and heaven are yours!

Oh! blessed Lord! grant that this sweet call may be impressed on my heart. May I live under the daily influence of your love, and when I hear you say, "Surely I come quickly; Amen;" may my joyful heart respond, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

How solemn, how awakening should be the voice which speaks to me through the Scriptures of truth;

"PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD."

Oh! that I may not only listen to, but obey, through grace, this voice of the Spirit, speaking to my heart and conscience; for thus says the Lord, "Hear the rod, and who has appointed it." The dispensations of God have a voice; they speak either in mercy or in judgment. Lord make me conversant with death. Let me not shrink from looking into the grave, sanctified as it is, through the body of Jesus. If my body rests in the hope of rising to a joyful resurrection, the grave will indeed be a place of repose from sins and sorrows, and the storms of life. But this cannot be, unless I am a believer of Jesus; for it is only those who sleep in Jesus that God will bring with him.

This glorious rising cannot take place except my body be now the temple of the Holy Spirit; for God will quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwells in us. Oh, that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith; that the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, may take up his abode within me. Then I shall have light, and love, and peace, and joy, and all the other blessings flowing from the Covenant of Grace.

"The sting of death is sin." It is sin which arms death with terrors. How dreadful is death to a soul, awakened to its consequences, at the period of dissolution. Agonies, inconceivably great, rend the soul, while writhing under the serpent's sting— unpardoned sin!

How sweetly serene is the penitent believer in Jesus, while standing on the brink of Jordan, in the hope of a joyful admission into the celestial Canaan. He dreads not the cold stream which rolls between him and the abodes of bliss. The hope of glory sustains him. Death comes as a messenger of mercy, divested of every evil, to conduct him out of time into eternity, to bring him into the presence of God his Savior.

Oh! the blessedness of faith in the Atonement of Christ. It affords a firm foundation on which the soul can repose, amid the swellings of Jordan. Lord enable me truly to believe. Faith is your gift. To You do I look, and on You would I wait, for this precious gift of grace.

"PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD."

Almighty Savior, do in mercy prepare my soul for a joyful meeting. Wash me from all my sins through your cleansing blood. Clothe me with your righteousness. Make me pure within. Give me the victory over sin, Satan, and the world. Enable me daily to come to You; to draw fresh supplies out of your fullness, until I reach the Fountain-head of blessedness, even your own self in your everlasting kingdom.

"PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD."

Oh! may the solemn sound ever vibrate in my ears, and reach my inmost soul. The call is from above. It is God himself who speaks. O may I listen to his voice; bow in deep humiliation before the Cross, and, looking by faith to Him who hung upon it, receive a free and full forgiveness. "God is a consuming fire." The wicked, like stubble, shall be consumed, as in a moment, by the wrath of incensed justice.

"God is a consuming fire." The redeemed sinner is as gold. He loses nothing in the flame but the dross. Lord convert my soul. Make me as the precious gold, which becomes the purer by being in the furnace. Oh! may every affliction, every tribulation, endured in the body, tend, through your love, to the purification of my soul; that when I hasten to meet you at your call in the eternal world, I may be found a new creature, a vessel of mercy, fitted, by the Spirit, for the Master's use.

"PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD."

Lord! may I joyfully accept your gracious invitation. May I come in the fullness of faith and hope, looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God. Why should I linger here? Why should I wish to remain a pilgrim in a world of woe? O my soul! stretch out your wings. Prepare for your flight. Fix your eyes upon the Sun of Righteousness; and, like the eagle, soar aloft beyond the shadows of this lower world. Angels beckon you away. Dear departed friends invite you to join their blessed company before the throne. A world of glory opens to your view. Fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, are at God's right hand.

Eternity is impressed upon the bliss of heaven. It is the royal signature, which cannot be effaced. Oh! then, why so backward to enter into the joy of your Lord? Why so unwilling to drop your chains, and enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God? Does it not arise from the workings of unbelief? a latent love for earthly things? Lord remove this evil leaven from my heart. Complete your work of mercy on my soul. Seal me by your Spirit. Unite me to Yourself; and then, with the joy of faith, and with a heart of love, I shall hear Your blessed call; "PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD."

Gently, my Savior, let me down,
To slumber in the arms of death;
I rest my soul on You alone,
E'en until my last expiring breath.
Death's dreadful sting has lost its power;
A ransomed sinner, saved by grace,
Lives but to die, and die no more,
Unveiled to see Your blissful face.
O Soon will the storm of life be o'er,
And I shall enter endless rest;
There, shall I live, to sin no more,
And bless Your name, forever blessed.
Dear Savior! let Your will be done;
Like yielding clay, I humbly lie;
May every murmuring thought be gone,
Most peacefully resigned to die.
Bid me possess sweet peace within,
Let child-like patience keep my heart;
Then shall I feel my heaven begin,
Before my spirit hence depart.
Yes! and a brighter heaven still,
Awaits my soul, through His rich grace,
Who shall His word of Truth reveal,
Until called to sing His endless praise.
Hasten your chariot, God of Love,
And fetch me from this world of woe;
I long to reach those joys above,
And bid farewell to all below.
There shall my raptured spirit raise,

Still louder notes than angels sing;
High glories to Immanuel's grace,
My God, my Savior, and my King.

62. PROPHETIC VIEWS OF THE GLORY

62. PROPHETIC VIEWS OF THE GLORY OF THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Isaiah 9:7

As the astronomer, through his powerful telescope, discovers worlds unseen by the unassisted eye, so the believer in Jesus, through faith in the prophecies and promises of God's word, beholds these glories to be revealed, which the eye of reason has not seen, and which the natural understanding cannot comprehend.

How delightful is the study of the Holy Scriptures. Faith is the key which unlocks the treasury. Jesus is the sum and substance of the Sacred Volume. Jesus is the Sun, placed in the center of this system of grace and mercy; around whom, all his ransomed ones, move in willing obedience; from whom, they all derive their light and warmth; to whom, they are all attracted, by the powerful influence of his Spirit. But as in the natural, so in the spiritual system, there is a counter-tendency. If left for one moment to themselves, these ransomed ones would fly far off from the center. Nothing keeps them in the path of holiness, but the attractive influence of the Sun of Righteousness. How experimentally true are the words of the poet—

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;

Prone to leave the God I love

Here 's my heart--O take and seal it,

Seal it from your courts above."

How glorious, how happy, will that period be, when the "law in the members shall no longer war against the law of the mind;" when only one influence will be exerted, the influence of holy love, ever drawing the heart nearer and nearer to Jesus, the source and center of felicity. This blessedness is now, in part, experienced by the true believer. It shall be more delightfully enjoyed in the reign of the millennium. But the fullness of this bliss is reserved for the heavenly state.

Is it not strange, that creatures, born for immortality, should be so indifferent to joys like these? Why is it so? The Bible tells us— because of unbelief. We are blinded by the god of this world. We are sunk in earth-born cares and pleasures. Like worms of the earth, we creep out of our holes, and crawl in the dust; when, like the eagle, we should be soaring upwards, until the earth disappears from our view. Alas! how fallen are we! Sin has marred the image of our God, in which man was originally created, and now we bear the image of the evil one. We are a compound of brute and devil.

This is a most unwelcome truth to the pride of the natural man. We would sincerely exalt ourselves to the highest pitch of excellence; at the very time, when the truth of God proclaims our guilt and misery, "He that commits sin, is of the devil." "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild donkey's colt." Let us, then, rejoice, that "salvation is of the Lord," that he does not desire the

death of a sinner; that he has "so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Yes! let us rejoice, that the reign of darkness shall not always continue; for as sin has reigned unto death, so grace shall reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. This reign of grace is now progressing; for Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth. But his kingdom is opposed by wicked men and evil spirits. His people are now in an enemy's country. They have to buckle on their armor, to take their weapons, and to fight under the banners of the Captain of their salvation. Outside the pale of his Church, are millions of Heathens and Mohammedans, who set themselves against the faithful soldiers of the Redeemer. Within his Church, are formalists, and hypocrites, who darken the truth, who despise the saints of the Most High; who belie their baptismal engagements, and who virtually unite with, and strengthen the hands of the infidel and the profane.

How precious is the book of God, which unfolds to us a brighter scene than this. Jesus, indeed, even now reigns in the hearts of his people. But, as yet they are only a little flock. Oh! how painful is the view of the present state of the world. Take, for example, one single large town, composed of one hundred thousand souls. As we walk in the streets, crowds of immortal beings press us on every side. Can we, in charity, hope that one in every twenty, is truly a child of God, a member of Christ? not a nominal, but a real Christian? Happy, indeed, were it so.

We cannot read the hearts of men, but we can read their lives. Does the great mass of our population live as Christians should live? as those should live, who have been admitted by baptism into the Church of Christ? Alas! no, the world reigns in the hearts of thousands. The chains of worldly pleasure, profit, and power are thrown around their affections, and make them willing slaves to the God of this world. Oh! how much should the true believer be engaged in prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit; and in multiplied exertions, to stem the torrent of iniquity, and to promote the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Three things are perceivable in Prophecy—

- I. The prosperity of the Church, in its enlargement, holiness, and glory.
- II. The outpouring of the Spirit, as the great means for promoting this state of earthly blessedness.
- III. The spirit of prayer, which is promised, and shall be imparted, as the dawn of this predicted felicity.

The prophet Ezekiel, in his description of the temple, which may refer to the millennial reign, beautifully describes the living water, issuing from the altar, emblematical of the Holy Spirit flowing to us, through the atonement of the Son of God. On either side of this river, which deepened as it flowed, so rich and full is the grace of God our Savior, "were very many trees," full of fruit, "whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed;" showing, how every spiritual blessing grows on the banks of this celestial stream, which makes glad the city of God.

The streamlet, which at first was ankle deep, increased as it flowed, until it became a mighty river, in which a man might swim. How descriptive this of the Messiah's kingdom, which he himself compared, in its beginning, to the mustard-seed; which, though the smallest of all seeds, grows to be the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds lodge in the branches of it. "Of

the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." The stone, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision, cut out without hands, and which became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth, is the kingdom of the Messiah; the reign of Jesus shall be co-equal with eternity. Every one who is taught of God, will feel the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence; will rejoice in the promise that it shall be imparted; will acknowledge the duty of seeking for it; and will use the means for its attainment. Oh! that the dew of divine grace may descend upon the souls of all who labor to promote this happy reign of righteousness, until they arrive at that blessed abode.

This truth is clear from divine revelation, that nothing but misery and desolation will overspread the earth, "until the Spirit be poured out from on high." Then "the wilderness shall be a fruitful field," showing the happy change in the Gentile world, and among all who know not God, whether Jews or Christians; and "the fruitful field," those cultivated parts of the earth where the gospel is planted, "shall be counted for a forest," at once, permanent and useful, for "judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

Who would not pray in the words which Jesus has taught us; "Your kingdom come." Oh! that our hearts may unite with the inspired Apostle "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." "The only wise God and our Savior," has connected the means with the end. As of this, so of every other spiritual gift and grace, the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. To obtain this blessing, how fervent was Isaiah "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burns. And the Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God."

How blessed would be the result, did ministers and people thus unite in prayer, and endeavor to advance the glory of the Church, and the salvation of the world. To animate us to this delightful exercise, this concert of prayer; how gracious is the promise of Jehovah; "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more. I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking to me about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! The wolf and lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. Poisonous snakes will strike no more. In those days, no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

This blessedness will, then, be preceded by the united, believing, fervent, unceasing prayers of the Church. But how abundant is the grace of God! "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear," is the voice of Him who never said unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek you me in vain." "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters." Gospel blessings may well be called waters, from their rich abundance, from their purifying, fructifying, and refreshing quality. There is a sea of love and mercy, an ocean, into which the sins of believers are cast to appear no more forever. "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of

Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

If such blessings were vouchsafed to the ancient Church, when brought out of her captivity, what mercies are now in store for the Church of Christ militant, upon earth, when the Spirit shall be poured out in rich effusions upon all her members, when "judgment shall run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Then "wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of our times." "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "Hostile nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;" "they shall learn war no more; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Then Jesus will "speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

And will this glory rise upon our earth, shrouded as it is with darkness? It will, for thus says the Lord; "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering for my name shall be great among the heathen, says the Lord of hosts."

The Jews shall then adore their long-neglected Messiah. Now, they are suffering under the fulfillment of this righteous judgment; "The children of Israel shall abide many days (already amounting to nearly eighteen hundred years) without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." But then, at this glorious period, when Jesus shall take unto him his great power, and reign as King supreme, it is graciously promised, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David Their King; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

How inexpressibly precious are these prophecies respecting our fallen race. They are like the rainbow on the cloud. They assure us of mercy; that we shall not be destroyed by a deluge of wrath. But while they breathe loving kindness, they call upon us to pray, to praise, to work with all our might, that we may become the honored instruments in the hand of our God, for helping forwards, and hastening this reign of grace. God is pleased, in general, to work by means. He could preserve us without food, but this is not his appointment. He could bring about the world's regeneration by a single word, but this is not his plan. The Church of Christ is the medium through which he is pleased to communicate his blessings. For this end, he has appointed his ministers, as his ambassadors, as his stewards, as his laborers, as his watchmen. He commands all his people to work while it is day; to put forth all their powers, before the night of death comes.

"There are two little words in our language," remarks that lamented Missionary, John Williams, "which I always admired, try and trust. You know not what you can or cannot effect, until you try; and if you make your trials in the exercise of trust in God, mountains of imaginary difficulties will vanish as you approach them, and facilities will be afforded which you never anticipated."

What an encouragement is this for the Christian laborer. When Christ said, "Stretch forth your hand;" through faith, the man stretched out his withered hand, "and it was restored whole, like as the other." Let us implicitly obey the injunctions of our Lord. With the command he graciously imparts the power to labor, and the will to serve. He, who gives the command, makes his people willing in the day of his power. He imparts his consolations. He places underneath the everlasting arms. He enables them to endure unto the end; and then gives them a crown of life, which fades

not away.

If this be the end of the righteous, believers should not be afraid to die. Jesus has declared, "I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Blessed revelation! Jesus, the Savior, the Friend of sinners, has the keys of the invisible world. If we wanted to enter into some place of security, or happiness, we would feel easy if we knew that the keys were in the possession of a Friend, who dearly loved us, and sought our highest felicity. We would not fear a repulse, when we came to knock for admittance. But how different would be our feelings, if these keys were in the hands of an implacable enemy, who sought our destruction; or in the hands of a sovereign, against whom we were living in open rebellion, and from whom we could expect nothing but death. That a period of grace and glory, such as the Church has never yet experienced, will bless our world, is clearly revealed in the Scriptures of truth; but to determine the manner and circumstances of the reign of Christ is not required. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children." In the midst of tribulation, we have prophecies of glory, and promises of rest, to cheer us. We may never live to see those days of the Son of Man; but we may now, by faith, enjoy his presence in our souls; the indwelling of his Spirit in our hearts. We may now rest in the love of God; repose on the faithfulness of Christ; and be refreshed with joy and peace through the Holy Spirit.

If this is our happy experience, we need not perplex our minds, whether the reign of the Messiah will be personal or spiritual. We know that Christ shall "appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." We know that he will come "with clouds, and every eye shall see him." But the mode of his coming must be determined by the glorious event, when, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God."

O! Almighty Savior, enlighten the eyes of my understanding by the beams of your Spirit. Enable me rightly to discern the truths of your word. Do not allow me to reject your revelations of glory, because I cannot comprehend them; nor to cavil at the mysteries of your grace, because I cannot explore them. Make my soul as a little child, humble, teachable, and obedient to your will. Give me a heart to mourn over sin, both in myself and others; a heart to rejoice over your mercies; a heart to love you supremely, for all that you are to me, as my present and everlasting Portion.

O in mercy keep me from the evil that is in the world; from the errors which, like hemlock, grow in the gospel field- your visible Church. Preserve me from being led away by the opinions of men, however great in name, renowned for learning, or extolled for piety, if such opinions be repugnant to the plain declarations of your word. Give me courage to reject, whatever opposes your Truth, though it be silvered over with age, or be sanctioned by ancient Councils. May I never forget that I must be judged at your tribunal; that the words which you have spoken shall judge me at the last day. Teach me, then, O Lord, to cease from man; to place my whole reliance upon You; to follow, through the teaching of your Spirit, the light of your holy word.

Oh! You, who are the Light of the world, be my guide. Wherever I see your footsteps, there may I plant my own. Shield me from the subtle attacks of Satan. Guard me against the flatteries and frowns of the world; and, when brought by your grace to the brink of Jordan, conduct me in mercy through the rolling stream, until I reach your blissful presence in the celestial Canaan. All praise to Sovereign Grace!

63. THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

63. THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

"Let no man deceive himself." 1 Corinthians 3:18

What a compound of contraries is this heart of mine! Heavenly Father! how wonderful is your forbearance; how amazing your patience! I pray unto you for humility. You graciously hear my request; and put me into a situation where my pride is mortified and wounded. Do I then rejoice at perceiving such an answer to my prayer? Alas! no. How are my feelings hurt; how do fretful complainings fill my breast. Lord have mercy on so weak, so wretched a creature, and make me more sensible of the mercies I pray for, and more resigned to your will.

I pray for the grace of self-denial. In answer to my supplication you give me an opportunity of exercising this grace. Do I bless you for this token of your love? Do I cheerfully embrace this opportunity for self-denial? Ah! no. My heart makes a thousand excuses for a little longer self-indulgence, saying, as Lot did with respect to Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" Oh! how numberless are the arts of self-deception. How slowly do we attain to the knowledge of ourselves! Lord increase my faith. Subdue my corruptions. Conquer my stubborn will. Cast me into the mold of the gospel, and make me wholly yours.

The danger of self-deception increases in proportion to the magnitude of the thing about which we are deceived. The salvation of the soul is the chief concern of man; to be deceived on this point, is eternally fatal. The Scriptures divide all mankind into two great classes, the spiritually and the carnally minded. The one walk by faith, the other by sight; the one, are the children of God; the other, the children of the devil. The former have their affections set on things above; the latter delight in everything earthly and sensual; their views are bounded by time; their interests are founded on the 'shadow of a moment'. Strange as it may appear, yet, upon this airy nothing, the men of the world build their hopes, which vanish like the midnight dream.

Our Savior has described by parable, the character and end of the rich worldling. When the man was promising to himself years of ease and pleasure, the sentence went forth to cut the cumberer down. "You fool! this night your soul shall be required of you."

A reflecting mind, impressed with the value of eternal things, mourns over this infatuation. What man would dare to sleep on the brink of a loose and crumbling precipice; or to stand on the summit of a mast, during the heaving of the vessel in a storm? And yet, thus rash is the man who trusts in his riches, and prides himself on worldly greatness. He leans on a vapor; he grasps a shadow; he sinks into destruction!

No character is more common than the carnally-minded. It is the character of all the unregenerated part of mankind, whether among Jews, and Heathens, or the baptized members of the visible Church. Actions speak more forcibly than words. They are the test of character. Like fruit upon the tree, they show the nature of the man, while motives, like the sap, are hidden from

our view.

Faith, producing love and obedience, characterizes the trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting; but are these graces of the Spirit to be found in the hearts of the worldly? Do we not there behold, as evidenced by the life; sensuality and enmity to God? Such people, if rich, are honored; if generous, are applauded; if possessed of power, are courted and flattered. But what said our Lord; "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."

The world is full of such people, and the visible Church has been contaminated in every age, by men who love filthy lucre, the lust of power, or the lust of the flesh. Paul mourned over a Demas, who loved this present world. John over a Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence. And the early Fathers of the Christian Church, over those who stained by impurity the so-called angelic state of celibacy. The Church of Rome is proverbial for these evils. Oh! that our Reformed Churches may ever shine in the beauty of holiness, and by a weanedness from the world. But alas! the world has crept into the Church. Hence arises the drooping state of our once flourishing vine. Lord look down from heaven, behold and visit this Vine. Water it with the dew of grace. "Revive your work in the midst of the years."

The history of the gospel is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over the spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians, is only the number of those who, following the Spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to the spirit of the world. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." This is the language of the whole New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity, "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

O! my soul, as standing on the borders of eternity, weigh well these things. Seek after heavenly wisdom, to know yourself. Dread self-deception. Prepare to meet your God.

There are a thousand ways whereby we may deceive ourselves. Vices, through the artifice of Satan, are decked with rose-buds, and concealed under specious titles. He puts a fascinating mask upon the face of sin, and thus, like the angler, hides the hook. The wretched sinner, like the silly fish, sees not the snare. Like the maniac, he imagines himself a king, while held in fetters, though his scepter is but a straw! Are not such people objects of pity? Should they not be subjects for prayer?

Oh! my soul, feel the pulse of your affections. Do they beat for Christ? Is he your Portion, your Eternal All? If so, then the Spirit of Christ and of glory rests upon you. God numbers you among his beloved people, his chosen ones, his jewels. But if you are a stranger to the covenant of grace; if you are unacquainted with Christ as the hope of glory; if you have never felt the plague of inward corruption; if you have never come to Christ as a poor heavy laden sinner, nor taken his yoke upon you; if, in short, you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind, striving against sin, crucifying the flesh, renouncing the world, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God; then are you, however honored, applauded, or courted by the world, an enemy of God, a child of wrath, an heir of hell!

Oh! eternal Spirit of all grace and truth, display your saving power in my salvation. Convince me of sin. Reveal me to the mighty Savior. Lead me to the garden of Gethsemane, to the hill of Calvary, that there I may behold the bloody sweat, and hear the dying groans, of my crucified Redeemer. There, in the sacred mount, melt my heart to penitence and love, and make me wholly, and

entirely yours.

A self-righteous spirit is a spirit of self-delusion, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." This is a standing truth of the gospel, which age; cannot alter, though ages past and present have wrought hard to pluck it from the word of life.

Who, then, can be saved? The gospel tells us "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Faith in Christ opens the storehouse of heaven. Faith lays hold on Him who is the Possessor of all things. This is the mighty instrument which baffles all the arts of Satan, and the malice of the world. It shows the sinner to himself, and leads him to his Savior.

When Paul, by faith, beheld the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and himself, as the chief of sinners; when he beheld by faith, the preciousness of Christ, and the fullness, the fitness, and the freeness of his great salvation; he was overwhelmed with the view. Then he renounced his boasted virtues, his legal righteousness, and desired only, that he might win Christ, and be found in him. Then he gloried in nothing save in Christ crucified. Then his wish was, to die, and to be with Christ. He hastened to the cross, and there, through faith, he washed away his sins. He seized, by faith, the robe of righteousness which his Savior wrought, and wrapped it round his naked soul. He sought for grace to sanctify him, body, soul, and spirit; to prepare him for sufferings in his Master's service, to preserve him unto eternal glory. He sought and found the blessing. Or, rather, Jesus, in Sovereign Love, sought him out, when hastening on his bloody errand to Damascus, and made him a vessel of mercy, a monument of grace, "a pattern to those who would hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Was Saul, the persecuting murderer, converted into a patient lamb? Then, O sinner, fear not, Jesus ever lives. His grace can also save you. How wonderful is the operation of grace. The churches of Judea, heard the wonderful story; "He who persecuted us in times past, now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And," adds the Apostle, "they glorified God in me." God ever gives his witness to the faithful preaching of the gospel, by making it the instrument of turning many to righteousness; and Satan gives his witness to it, by opposing it with all his might. This arch-enemy well knows the force and efficacy of preaching the doctrine of the atonement; of a free justification by faith, without the deeds of the law; of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart; and against such preaching, he plants his artillery. He enlists, not only the worldly and profane, the infidel and the skeptic into his service, but also the formalist and the moral; yes, even some in the ministerial office, who, blinded by prejudice, think that they ought, like Saul of Tarsus, to do many things contrary to such preaching as this.

Do not facts attest this painful statement? We never find a 'moral preacher' derided by the world; neither do we see a moral preacher bringing souls to Christ. He may, by dint of eloquence, arrest the profligate in his course, and lead him to a momentary reflection; but all his powers of rhetoric cannot change his heart. This conquest is reserved for the faithful preaching of the Cross. Christ crucified is the blessed magnet, which draws perishing souls to happiness and heaven. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes," though esteemed foolishness by the worldly-wise. Blessed are they, who hold forth, by their doctrine, and in their lives, the gospel of the grace of God. They may be called to endure the wrath of Satan, and the hatred of the world; the reproach of the formalist, and the anathemas of ecclesiastical rulers; but they shall have the smiles of Christ here, and their portion in his kingdom, though burned at the

stake, as heretics unfit to live.

Blessed be God! against this true Church, the gates of hell shall not prevail. The waves of trouble may dash against it, but it cannot be overthrown, because it is founded upon the Rock, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. The work of redemption is the work of omnipotence. The word of God is mighty in operation. It is as a fire to consume the chaff of error in doctrine, and the dross of sin in practice. It is as a hammer to break in pieces the adamant heart of the rebellious sinner. It is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

O! my soul, have you experienced this transforming grace, through a believing reception of Christ crucified? "Examine yourself whether you be in the faith; prove your own self." Rest not in forms and ceremonies, however excellent. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Let all your hope and confidence be in God.

True religion, such as God will approve, is not confined to particular times and places, but, if truly received into the heart, will show its influence in every place, in every part of the conduct. It is like the sap of a living tree, which extends to the most distant boughs, and circulates through the smallest fibers. Not only actions, but words; not only words, but thoughts; yes, motives, affections, and desires, are guided by the law of truth, and influenced by the law of love.

True religion consists in the right dispositions of a heart, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ; a heart, where self is humbled, where Jesus reigns, where holiness is promoted. When the renewed soul is enabled, through the power of the Spirit, not only to discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but also to forsake it; when it is strengthened by faith to overcome the world, and to trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation; not pleading its own good works, (those never failing fruits of faith), but the riches of redeeming love; when the renewed soul is brought, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, in his temper, mind, and spirit, being clothed with humility, beautified by meekness, and adorned with charity; when thus renewed and born again, living upon Christ by faith, and being spiritually united to him, as the member to the head, the soul can cast itself in deep contrition at the foot of the cross, bewailing the imperfections of its holiest services, and imploring pardon and acceptance through the atoning sacrifice and all-perfect righteousness of the Redeemer; then is that soul truly a member of Christ, a child of God, and shall soon be made the happy inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Is this the prevailing character of baptized Christians? Does the visible Church thus shine in the beauty of holiness? Are all her members temples of the Holy Spirit? Would it not be so, if all were spiritually born again in baptism, since Paul has declared that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance?" Oh! it is well to have the mind scripturally enlightened, at a time when many would substitute the doctrines of men for the truth of God.

Some people are apt to confound the sign with the thing signified, and thus to make the ordinance of baptism and spiritual regeneration to be one and the same operation; that is, that every child sprinkled with water is invariably born again of the Spirit.

"The agency of the Holy Spirit, when he testifies of Christ and glorifies him, is quite distinct from the means which conveys the testimony. This important distinction is carefully noted in Scripture. In confirmation of this truth, it is written, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend unto the things which were spoken by Paul. In this instance we plainly see the man of God preaching

Christ, and all that is needful for the conversion of the soul on one hand; on the other, the God of all grace exercising his powerful influence, by which the Apostle's preaching obtained success." (Venn)

Preaching the Gospel is a divinely-appointed means of grace; so also are the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Super; but, as in the former, the agency of the Holy Spirit is quite distinct from the means; so it is with respect to the two latter. Many heard Paul preach with as much power as Lydia did; but they remained unconverted, and why? because of the hardness of their hearts! Many receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper without benefit, being destitute of true faith. And multitudes are baptized in the name of Christ, who never manifest their love to him, being still in the bonds of iniquity; for the agency of the Holy Spirit can alone render the means effectual, and not any power or virtue vested in the priest, or in the sacramental rite, apart from, the Sovereign grace of God.

The Holy Spirit's influence must, then, ever be earnestly implored, through faith in the name of Christ, whenever we hear the gospel preached, and whenever the sacraments are administered. We must cease from man. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

How different is the language and the doctrine of the Apostles, from their boasted successors in the Church of Rome. Oh! that our Reformed Churches may ever be preserved from Papal errors; and, like the primitive Church of Jerusalem, "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Then will a divine blessing rest upon the labors of faithful ministers, "and many people will be added unto the Lord." Ordinances will then become as wells of salvation, out of which we shall draw, by faith, the living water, through the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit.

"Simon Magus was baptized, and yet remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, as much after his baptism as he was before. And so it may be with us. And this is an infallible proof, that the change which the Scriptures call the new birth, does not always and of necessity accompany this sacred ordinance. As the circumcision of the heart did not always accompany the circumcision of the flesh, so neither does the renovation of the soul always accompany the outward rite of baptism, which shadows it forth; and if only our opponents will distinguish the sign from the thing signified, and assign to each its proper place and office, there will be an immediate end of this controversy." (Simeon)

Oh! my soul, pray earnestly to be guided into all truth. Guard against the influence of those, who would draw you from the simplicity of the gospel. It is most important, not only to know, but to be established, in the truth as it is in Jesus.

In the transactions of life, one false step is often attended with temporal losses; but in religion, false doctrine, producing wrong conduct as its natural fruit, endangers the salvation of the soul. Errors in doctrine are always dangerous, and never more so, than when they are disguised and clothed with the name of truth. Let me, then, never trifle with a subject which involves my present comfort and future felicity.

Am I born again? What question can be more important. Am I a child of God, or am I not? There are some who will say, "You are." If I ask, When was I made one of God's children? They will reply, "When you were baptized." Must I, then, rest satisfied with this answer? Must I conclude that I am adopted into the family of God, through the baptism of water, without any internal evidence of the baptism of the Spirit? Must I take to myself the precious promises of the new covenant, if destitute of a new heart? Must I call heaven my home, if my affections are glued to this world? Surely I ought to look further into this weighty subject, lest, like the foolish virgins, when the cry is made, "Behold, the bridegroom comes; go out to meet him," I should only have the lamp of an outward profession, while destitute of the oil of an inward and spiritual grace.

John the Baptist, when showing the superior nature of the Baptism of Christ, said "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire;" adds, "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." How strikingly is the mixed character of the visible Church described by this simile. He who runs may read, except his eyes be blinded through unbelief, and prejudice, and error.

What can be more awakening, than the declaration which Jesus made to circumcised Jews, and therefore equally applicable to baptized Christians, when he was commending the faith of the Roman Centurion; "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom, (awful thought,) shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Surely this should make every Christian to tremble, yes, all who rest their hopes of heaven upon their Church membership, and their baptismal regeneration, if they are unrenewed in the spirit of their mind. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." Searching words indeed!

The Church, it is true, received me when an infant, into her maternal bosom, by the outward rite of baptism. I was then signed with the sign of the cross, as a badge of my profession, that I might become, through grace, a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit was supplicated for me, and, in the language of hope and charity, I was admitted to the privileges of the gospel covenant, as a regenerated member of the universal Church. But, though thus received, much remained to be done. When come to years of discretion, I was taught by the Church, that all who truly receive the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; must repent and believe the gospel; that I am bound to perform, in my own person, the promises and vows then made for me by my sureties, and that if such performance be left undone, I am, by a natural inference, unregenerated, and have no saving interest in the blessings of the baptismal covenant.

That my mind might be deeply impressed with this truth, the Church puts this question to my conscience; "Do you not think, that you are BOUND to believe, and to do, as they have promised for you?"

In the same spirit of hope and charity, the Church teaches me to say, "Yes, verily, and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he has called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Savior. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

Truly this is the language of a regenerate heart; language which only such a heart can sincerely utter in the presence of a heart-searching God. All who can say from the heart, in sincerity and truth, not trusting to their own strength, but to the grace of God, that they will renounce the devil and all his works; the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; that they will believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life; and whose lives are agreeable to their profession, are truly the members of Christ, the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

But, I would ask, is this the heartfelt language, is this the sincere determination, of every baptized child? Experience, alas! says no, for a tree is known by its fruits. If, while repeating these solemn vows and promises made for them at their baptism, and ratified by themselves at confirmation, the works of the devil are practiced; the pomps and vanity of the world idolized; the sinful lusts of the flesh indulged; the truths of the gospel, practically disbelieved; and the will and commandments of God, habitually transgressed; can such people be considered as regenerated, in the saving sense of the term? Though sprinkled with water, and baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and thus admitted as members of the visible Church, can they, while thus enslaved by sin, be the very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and be also heirs, through hope, of his everlasting kingdom?

Surely a broad distinction must be made between real and nominal Christians, if we would avoid a strong delusion. If the blind lead the blind, it is no marvel, if both fall into the ditch. Oh! let us understand what regeneration really is, and the self-righteous will shrink from claiming it in baptism; and the spiritually-minded will regard baptism as a real help to holiness, humility, and love. From all this, it is evident, that throughout her beautiful liturgical services, from the baptismal font, to the burial of the dead, the Church of England provides for the strengthening and refreshing of real believers, not for the formal services of her worldly members. She could not furnish two liturgies- one for the sincere, and the other for the hypocrite. If any of her members draw near to God with their mouths, while their hearts are far from him, they, and not the Church, will be answerable for such hypocrisy.

Though baptized when infants, and thus brought into a covenant relation with God, we are bound, when arrived at riper years, to repent and believe the gospel. If we live and die impenitent and unbelieving, we shall never be admitted into the temple above. Great, indeed, is the delusion of those who place their hopes of heaven on the performance of outward forms, while destitute of the Spirit of Christ. And great is the responsibility of those ministers who, to such people cry, "peace, peace, when there is no peace."

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life; and few there be that find it;" are the words of Him to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hidden. Surely this declaration should awaken all our solicitude, when it is added, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in there."

Am I now walking with the many, or the few? How important is self-knowledge. How dangerous is self-deception! Oh! that I may have grace to detect the deceits of Satan, the corruptions of my heart, the temptations of the world. The door of mercy is still open. The God of all grace is waiting

to be gracious. Jesus is pointing to his hands, his feet, his side. The Spirit bids me fly from the wrath to come; to hasten to the Ark of the everlasting Covenant. Oh! my soul, why linger, like Lot in Sodom? "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The Savior says, "Come, for all things are now ready;" the feast is provided; "and yet there is room." God the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Eternal Jehovah, invites you to happiness and glory; he calls you to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where saints and angels are the guests; yes, where He Himself will be your everlasting Portion.

64. THE DESIRE FOR MORE

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"He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance with increase. This is also vanity." Ecclesiastes 5:10

Covetousness, in the language of inspiration, is the desire of having more. If we are habitually desirous of riches, for their own sake, we are, in the estimation of heaven, covetous people, idolaters, the servants of mammon. Our station may be exalted; our profession of religion may be outwardly strict, but still our destruction is sure; for Jesus has pronounced the sentence, "How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Man is a restless thing; still vain and wild,
Lives beyond sixty, nor outgrows the child;
His hurrying lusts still break the sacred bound,
To seek new pleasures on forbidden ground,
And buy them all too dear. Unthinking fool,
For a short dying joy to sell a deathless soul!
'Tis but a grain of sweetness they can sow,
And reap the long sad harvest of immortal woe.
Another tribe toil in a different strife,
And banish all the lawful sweets of life,
To sweat and dig for gold, to hoard the ore,
Hide the dear dust yet darker than before,
And never dare to use a grain of all the store.
Happy the man that knows the value just
Of earthly things, nor is enslaved to dust.
'Tis a rich gift the skies but rarely send
To favorite souls.

Riches and destruction are not necessarily connected together, for we read that "Abram was very rich, in cattle, in silver, and in gold." But riches have a tendency to draw away the heart from God,

by opening the door to all earthly gratifications, as in the case of Solomon; by leading the possessor to the summit of power; by throwing around the rich, the splendid appendages of grandeur. Riches and humility, much wealth and great self-denial, are seldom found together. As "money answers all things," in the estimation of the worldly, so it is sought after, above all things spiritual and eternal. Nothing can be more opposed to each other than covetousness and contentment. Thousands labor to be rich, hoping thereby to enjoy the sweets of quietude, but when they have reached the object of their wishes, the desire of more, like "the horse-leach," which cries, "Give, give," urges them onwards, until, not infrequently, like the ponderous avalanche, they roll down the precipice, and are shivered to pieces in the valley below.

In this commercial country, where Satan has set up his golden image, instances are not lacking to exemplify this truth. "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." How many families have to mourn over the desire for more- that insatiable thirst for wealth, which brings its own curse along with it; for "those who will be rich," at all hazards, and by all means, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

The remedy for this evil is given us by Paul, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, let us be therewith content." How precious is "godliness with contentment;" an efficacious antidote to the evil of covetousness.

The advice of the Apostle is equally valuable, "Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" The example of Paul was in unison with his precept; "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." And then, he lets us into the secret of all this elevation above the changing varieties of time- "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." This is the great secret, which is hidden from the rich formalist, as well as from the rich worldling.

The grace of Christ in the hearts of his people, is the strengthening remedy against the covetous desire of more. He can give the blessing of peace in the absence of plenty. He can impart contentment, yes, even rejoicing, in a time of famine. "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains."

Can the world, with all its promises, confer such blessedness on its votaries? In the season of privation, do we find the worldly, calm, patient, and thankful? Is no repining word allowed to escape their lips? No hard thoughts of God permitted to invade their hearts? This fruit of contentment is not found on nature's ground. It is the product of godliness; the work of Christ in the soul.

To those who are observant of the signs of the times, and of the sins of the nation, it must be apparent that the love of money, like a fatal worm, is gnawing at the root of our prosperity. The men of the world behold the withering process, and ascribe it to natural causes, though evidently baffled to discover the true one. The believer in Jesus, with the Bible in his hand, sees with unclouded clearness the source of all the evil. Covetousness, or the desire of more, eating, like a canker, upon the vitals of our religion, is the crying evil of the Church and of the world. The love of money insinuates itself into every heart, under every form.

Economy, prudence, foresight, and forethought, claim a place in the judgment and conduct. They approach us as friends, as auxiliaries to our comforts, while they are, too often, enemies in disguise. Thus Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, more effectually to deceive. Had he come to Eve in his proper character, as a fallen spirit, she would have dreaded his approach; but he came under a guise which caused her no alarm, and thus the poison stole into her heart. She was deceived- and fell! She believed the lying spirit in the serpent, instead of the God of Truth and Love. Her sin was a compound of unbelief and rebellion.

Oh! my soul, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Beware of the golden bait which covers the fatal hook. To his own people, the Almighty said; "Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver." The heart is seldom refined by the accumulation of wealth. "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." To apostate Judah, Jehovah uttered, by his prophet, words of judgment; "You have forsaken your people, the house of Jacob, because their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses; neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, when he arises to shake terribly the earth."

How true are the words of Solomon; "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Covetousness and idolatry are so closely allied, that Paul declares, "You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or covetous person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a covetous person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world."

The proud city of Tyre, for her covetousness and idolatry, was doomed to destruction; "Tyre has built a strong fortress and has piled up so much silver and gold that it is as common as dust in the streets! But now the Lord will strip away Tyre's possessions and hurl its fortifications into the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre will be set on fire and burned to the ground." "Who has brought this disaster on Tyre, empire builder and chief trader of the world? The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness." Well might the prophet say; "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

A day is fast approaching, when it will be clearly seen, whether Christ or Mammon has swayed our affections. There are, perhaps, few sins which assume so plausible an appearance; and for which so many excuses are made as for that of covetousness. And hence it is that we have need to guard so much the citadel of the heart. Our blessed Lord, who knew what was in man, and who well knew the subtlety of this evil, has given us a double caution; "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." "For what is a man profited, if he gains the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" What advantage did Achan, Gehazi, Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, gain by their desire for more?

They reaped shame and death; and now stand as beacons in the word of God to warn us against their soul-destroying sin.

The simple possession of wealth is in itself no evil, because we read that this was promised to Israel as a blessing; "You shall remember the Lord your God; for it is he that gives you power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he swore unto your fathers." It is the desire for riches and the passion for them, which is defiling and sinful. It is making an idol of money, by placing that confidence in it, which is due to God alone. "How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" "The difference," observes the excellent Henry Venn, "between possessing wealth put into our hands by the providence of God, and desiring to grow rich, is as great as that between a worthless ambitious intruder into a place of honor, seeking nothing but his own base interest; and a man sought out for his worth, and invested with the same office for the public good. And those, who can see no material, no necessary distinction, in the two cases, are already blinded by the love of money."

There is, however, a holy spirit of desire for more, which we should cultivate continually. Lord give me an increasing desire for more faith and love, more obedience and activity in your service; for more joy and peace, more humility and meekness; for more patience, and resignation to your will. I would covet earnestly the best gifts, and above all, the graces of your Holy Spirit. I cannot ask for these blessings too largely, nor expect them too confidently, if I only ask in reliance on the truth of your promises. You have said; "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." "All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

When praying for temporal blessings, may I ever do it with a cheerful acquiescence in Your will, knowing my ignorance in asking. The very denial of my request may be the greatest mercy to my soul. But, Oh! Giver of all good, when I supplicate for spiritual graces, I may ask for showers of blessings; for the outpouring of your Spirit in its richest measure, if I ask in faith, without wavering, pleading the merits of my Savior.

How happy is the true believer, whose heart and hope are in heaven. His treasure is there; and when he leaves this earth, it is only to take possession of it, for God is his portion. For his guidance and support, while journeying heavenward, many sweet precepts and promises are given; "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." "Seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind." "Seek first the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." "In everything you do, I want you to be free from the concerns of this life." "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

While living in this Christian spirit, we shall experience the truth of Solomon's declaration; that God "has made every thing beautiful in his time." We shall avoid the folly of burdening today, with the cares of tomorrow; or of loading tomorrow, with the work of today. While we work for the food which perishes, according to the will of God; "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return unto the ground;" we shall, above all, "labor for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give us." In this work and labor of love we cannot be too abundant. The most covetous heart may here find ample scope for all its desires.

Oh! that I may ever feel this panting, this longing, this thirsting after God. Lord increase every holy, heavenly desire. While my hands are employed in the duties of my calling, may my heart be ever fixed upon you. Take from me all covetous hankerings after earthly wealth. Give me a contented mind with the allotments of your Providence. Be my present and everlasting portion, and I shall be rich indeed!

As life advances to its close

The silent tomb appears in view;

Soon, where my aged sires repose,

Must I descend, and slumber too.

To dazzling wealth, or splendid name,

Each sparkling joy, the worldling joins,

Though in the midst of mirth and fame,

The soul, in secret languor pines.

That constant thirsting after more,

That torment of the carnal mind,

Creates of grief a plenteous store;

'Tis all the covetous can find.

What solid bliss can I obtain

From earth's most anxious toil and care?

I only forge a heavy chain,

To bind me fast in Satan's snare.

Yes! I have seen the poignant grief,

The torment cleaving close to sin,

Its fatal charms give no relief,

When gall o'erflows the heart within.

The thread of life is almost spun,

I hasten toward the eternal day;

Blessed Savior! before my race is run,

Wash all my sins and guilt away.

O cleanse my soul from VANITY.

65. ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

65. ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!" Luke 2:10-11

What angelic mind can descend into the depth, or soar to the height of redeeming love! "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "Jesus Christ was of the seed of David;" and yet, "is over all, God blessed forever."

The two-fold nature of Christ was declared by himself on many occasions. To Nicodemus he said, "No man has ascended up to heaven, but he who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." As Man, he was on earth; as God, he filled the heavens with his presence. Proud reason staggers at this truth, but faith rejoices and triumphs. Salvation is of the Lord.

O for this love, let rocks and hills,

Their lasting silence break;

And all harmonious human tongues,

The Savior's praises speak.

As Jesus was born in the flesh, so must I be born in the Spirit. He became the Son of man, that I might become a child of God. He died, that I might live. He ever lives to make intercession for me, that where he is, there I may be also.

And did He indeed shed his precious blood for me? Was it for one so vile and wretched, that he became incarnate, endured a life of suffering, and a death of pain? And shall I not love him with all my powers? Why is my heart like adamant for hardness, and ice for coldness? Oh! what ingratitude, worse than satanic baseness! Come, O Sun of Righteousness, dispel the clouds of unbelief which obscure your brightness; drive away the mists of error; melt my frozen heart; subdue my stubborn will. Come with all your vivifying rays of mercy, grace, and love; and make me humble, loving, teachable, and mild, an image of Yourself.

When the Savior of the world was born, angels filled the canopy of heaven with joyful hallelujahs. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Did angels rejoice at man's salvation, and shall man, for whom this salvation was wrought, be silent and unmoved? Alas! the loving Savior came unto his own, and his own received him not." Do I condemn the Jews? "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," said Jesus to the accusing Pharisees. I should sit in judgment on myself.

Blessed Redeemer! your word proclaims pardon and peace to a ruined world; your ministers preach salvation, through your atoning blood, to all who repent and believe; your Spirit strives with

sinners by powerful convictions; and still they withstand these workings of your love. And had not your grace been as omnipotent, as it is sovereign, I would even now have been in arms against you. But Oh! the mighty, the almighty power of Love; you did graciously draw me to Yourself, and shed abroad in my heart the kindly influences of your Spirit. Jesus, O Friend of sinners, O Physician of souls, how can I sufficiently adore and praise you. As you had compassion on the leper, the paralytic, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, and the blind, so have you had pity on me. Yes, as you did raise Lazarus from the dead, so have you bid me live. Oh! that I may live to your glory while on earth; and live with you in glory, when time shall be no more.

The anniversary of the birth of Christ, should be a season of rejoicing, not of carnal feasting; a season for spiritual delight, not to pamper the appetites, like heathens in their idol-temples; a season to exalt the soul by divine meditations, and to console it by the assurance of pardoning grace. Oh! that I may thus rejoice with holy joy, and feel every emotion alive to gratitude and praise. I want to feel my heart full of holy rapture, while I meditate upon the wonders of this day. But I must examine myself whether I be in the faith- whether I have received Christ as offered to me in the gospel. Have I any saving interest in this redemption? Jesus is the Savior of the world. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. I am lost; therefore he came to seek me. But will all be saved? Alas? no! And why? because "not all men have faith."

Here, then, is the all-important question: Do I believe in the Son of God with the heart unto righteousness? If I do believe, through grace, though by nature a child of wrath, I am among the saved in Christ Jesus; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh! what a declaration of grace is this! Truly this is the gospel of my salvation. "Whoever believes." Here is my warrant to hope. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Give me a stronger and a stronger faith, that it may grow into the assurance of hope.

"Whoever believes." Oh! what a word of consolation. The word "whoever," in its full meaning, as expressed by our divine Redeemer, extends to the utmost bounds of the human family, whether in time or space. All, from Adam to the last man born into the world, would be saved, if believers in Jesus; for the word is, "Whoever." No nation, nor age, is exempted from this blessing, so long as "Whoever believes" is recorded in the word of Truth. No sins, however aggravated, shall prevent the participation of this salvation, if there only is true faith in the heart of the sinner, accompanied, as it ever will be, with sincere repentance, love, and obedience; for Jesus has said, that "Whoever," (let him be what he may; or where he may; or have lived when he may;) "Whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The same blessed truth was declared by our Lord in his last commission to his Apostles; "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to Every Creature. He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." O what mercy and grace is this! Surely none need now despair, who feel an earnest desire after salvation. Everything connected with the redemption of mankind, bears the impress of the divine goodness. The Son of the Virgin was to be called, "Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." A mere man could not do this; therefore he is, "Emmanuel; which being interpreted, is, God with us."

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David. How mysterious his character. He was the root and offspring of David. David's Son, and David's Lord. These names are full of meaning. David

signifies, 'beloved'. Jesus, when baptized by John in the river Jordan, was declared by a voice from heaven, to be the beloved of the Father; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Paul exhorts the Colossians to give thanks unto the Father, who "has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Bethlehem, the birth-place of Christ, is a name of rich import. Bethlehem signifies the 'house of bread'. How suitable is this for him who declared. "I am the bread of life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." O! that my soul may be nourished and sustained by this "true bread from heaven." Lord, evermore give me this bread. O dwell in me, and I in you. May I daily feed upon you, by faith, in my heart with thanksgiving.

Bethlehem signifies also the 'house of war'. How remarkable this. Jesus, when lying in the manger, was announced to the shepherds, as "Christ the Lord," the Anointed One, Messiah, the Prince. To Mary, before her conception, the angel said; "You shall bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and, shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

To Adam, in Paradise, the promise was given, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This implies conflict and conquest. Christ was foretold by Isaiah as a mighty conqueror; "Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in the greatness of his strength?" "It is I, the Lord, announcing your salvation! It is I, the Lord, who is mighty to save!"

David, in the spirit of prophecy, beautifully describes the glory and majesty of Christ. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust."

Jesus, by his Spirit in David, thus speaks of himself; "The Lord has said unto me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews declares, that through death, Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus fulfilling the first prediction: Satan bruised the heel of the promised seed, when Jesus suffered on the cross; And Christ, by his death, bruised the head, the kingdom of the power of darkness. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Believers, then, must endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, knowing that the Captain of their salvation was made perfect through suffering. Spiritual armor is provided for the Christian warrior, the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The command is given, "Be on guard. Stand true to what you believe. Be courageous. Be strong."

The view of the conquering Savior is given, to animate his soldiers to the fight. John, in prophetic vision, saw Jesus going forth "conquering, and to conquer." "He was clothed with a robe dipped in

blood, and his title was the Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword, and with it he struck down the nations. He ruled them with an iron rod, and he trod the winepress of the fierce wrath of almighty God. On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords." "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Well might Moses sing; "The Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is his name."

Let me not be ashamed of Christ; let me fight manfully under his banners; let me continue his faithful soldier and servant; and what will be the consequence? By multitudes of baptized Christians, I shall be derided as an enthusiast; I shall be shunned as a fanatic! And yet, these scoffers and deriders are to be considered as regenerated people! Paul, with fearless heart, through the power and grace of Christ, led his converts on, to conflict and to victory. To the Corinthians he declared "We are human, but we don't wage war with human plans and methods. We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds. With these weapons we break down every proud argument that keeps people from knowing God. With these weapons we conquer their rebellious ideas, and we teach them to obey Christ. "

To Timothy, Paul writes; "Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army." And when he came to lay down his life for Christ, and to receive the crown of martyrdom; he could triumphantly say; "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." If, like the blessed Apostle, I am drawing all my supplies out of the fullness which is in Christ Jesus; and if, like him, I keep the faith, enduring unto the end, with him also I shall receive the crown of life which fades not away.

When I think of Bethlehem, I will think of the House of bread, and of the House of war; out of which He came, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting; even Jesus, who is the Ruler in Israel, the Light of the Gentiles, and for salvation to the ends of the earth.

Behold! through the regions of death,

What light and what gladness arise;

Jehovah, in manhood arrayed,

Descends from his throne in the skies.

Rejoice, O you sinners, rejoice!

Exult at the life-giving view;

Adore the rich grace of the Cross,

Where the Savior expired for you.

Now peace is proclaimed on high,

Oh! touch the blessed scepter and live,
Ask freely whatever you want,
For God now delights to give.
The blood of your Savior and Lord,
Has purchased each blessing above;
The mansions of glory and rest;
The Father's approval and love.
The Spirit of grace shall descend,
And kindle the rapturous fire,
Whose flame will increase and expand,
When life's feeble lamp shall expire.
In yonder bright region of bliss,
Your praise will incessantly flow;
Then sing to his glory and grace,
While strangers and pilgrims below.

66. A SABBATH MEDITATION

66. A SABBATH MEDITATION

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Revelation 1:10

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty." Psalms 84:1

I bless you, Oh! Lord, for the return of this holy day. When retired from the world and all its vanities, I can contemplate the glorious truths of your gospel, and listen to that still small voice, which is seldom heard amid the pleasures, companies, and cares of a world which lies in wickedness.

Often have I thought upon the evil of sin, both in its nature and effects; but give me, in mercy, a deeper view, and a greater abhorrence of it. Destroy its reigning power in my heart. Enable me to resist its rebellions, to subdue its lustings, until death shall end the warfare, and conduct me to the realms of peace.

I learn the malignity of sin at the cross of Christ. Was Jesus the beloved of the Father? Was he "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him?" Was he the eternal Son of God, "one with the Father?" He was; and yet, if he will undertake for sinners, he must stand in their place; if he will become their surety, he must smart for it. All their sins must meet upon him. He must bear the punishment due unto them. Though the delight and joy of the Father, yet, if he will become their bondsman, divine justice cannot release him, until he has paid the uttermost farthing.

How terrible to the sinner is the righteousness of Jehovah. Oh! my soul, what must become of you, if you are not in Christ; if all this wrath must fall on you? The forgiveness of the least sin, (esteemed least by men,) can only be procured by the blood of God incarnate! "Without shedding of blood is no remission." "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

From this day forth, may I have grace never to trifle with sin; never to cherish any sin under the false notion that it is a little one. To have the smallest transgression forgiven, Christ must die! The blood of Jesus Christ and nothing else, cleanses from all sin. How then can I escape, if I neglect so great salvation? If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," though I make many formal prayers, practice many austerities, and go through a round of ceremonies. I may do many things, and apply to many physicians, but all will prove unavailing, if I neglect to go in faith to the Cross of Christ.

Give me grace, O God, to guard against positive evil; yes, to abstain, even from the appearance of it; to watch against and suppress the first motions of sin in the heart; and to avoid everything that might prove an inlet to it, or have a tendency towards it. Give me grace never to do that, of which the lawfulness is dubious; for "whatever is not of faith is sin." May I not only ascertain the lawfulness of an action but also its expediency, lest, by not attending to this Apostolic rule, I should become an occasion of sin to others, by emboldening them to do that which, though lawful to me, is contrary to the conscience of a weaker brother. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are

not expedient," was the judgment of Paul. Give me grace to be circumspect in all my ways; to walk in wisdom towards those who are without; to redeem the time, because the days are evil.

This day I have been in the house of God; the place where his honor dwells. I have joined with the congregation in praising God, and in hearing the glad tidings of salvation. But, Oh! my soul, how have these services been performed? What sincerity has there been in your prayers; what fervency in your praises; what faith in listening to the words of eternal life? Lord! I am ashamed when I reflect on the wretched offering I have this day presented unto you; an offering so lowly, so full of blemishes, so unworthy the acceptance of the Majesty of heaven. "When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is! says the Lord Almighty." Alas! how often do I fall under this condemnation. Yet, Oh! all-gracious Father, accept my sacrifice of prayer and praise, defective as it is, through the all-perfect sacrifice of your beloved Son, who died upon the cross for me. I offer myself and all that I am, upon the altar of his cross, that I may henceforth be a living sacrifice, devoted unto you, body, soul, and spirit, which is my reasonable service. May all My hopes of pardon rest on the atonement of your dear Son; all my peace be drawn from his obedience unto death, all my joy spring from the assurance that he ever lives to make intercession for me.

The more I know of myself, the more I find cause for deeper humiliation. The more I know of my duty to you, the more I am convinced that I am an unprofitable servant. The more I know of your Majesty, Glory, Greatness, Holiness, and Justice, the more I am persuaded that no man can be justified in your presence. The more I reflect upon my holiest services, the more I discover of their imperfection and sinfulness.

Blessed Jesus! how lovely, how endearing do you appear, as the Lord my Righteousness. Oh! clothe me in this garment of salvation; that, being accepted in you, I may experience your Father's love; the Holy Spirit's consolation, and stand with "boldness in the day of judgment." Seal this blessing to my heart, through your sanctifying grace; then shall I have the witness in myself, that I am born from above.

While I remain in this earthly tabernacle, Oh! Almighty Savior, spiritualize my affections. Give me a heart to love you, to delight itself in you. Take away all relish for earthly, sinful pleasures. Sanctify all my enjoyments of creature comforts, by never forgetting you in them, nor losing the sight of your glory in the use of them. Let all my faculties and powers be consecrated unto you who made them. And let me praise you, blessed Lord, while life and being last.

It is comparatively easy to live in the form of godliness. To attend the service of the sanctuary, to pray in private and in the family, to read the Scriptures, to associate with religious people, to talk about religion, and to give alms to the poor, are duties which may be performed, though the heart may not be right with God. These things must be done to maintain the Christian character, as is evident from the word of God. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." "When you pray, enter into your closet." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Search the Scriptures." "I am a companion of all those who do not fear." "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man." "You shall open your hand wide unto your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in the land."

But experience affords abundant proof, that all this may be done from a principle of self-righteousness; from a principle of vainglory; from a desire to be seen of men, and to obtain a name.

To ascertain my real character, I must look into the heart. Do I labor to perform these outward duties with a single eye to the favor and glory of God? Am I more anxious about unseen duties, remembering the words of Hagar; "You God see me." The flame of vainglory, which is kindled by the pride of fallen nature, is fanned and increased by the suggestions of Satan, and kept alive by the praises of men. O! how difficult it is, to keep down this unhallowed fire. Even when we think it is quenched, it is still smoldering beneath the embers, ready to burst forth at the least blast of Satan's temptations.

Let me, then, look within. Do I strive to keep my heart with all diligence, from every impure thought; from every idle imagination; from all irregular passions and desires; from all evil affections and lusts? Do I study to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God, as well as man? Am I continually watching over the motions of the mind, the rapid flights of fancy, that the enemy may not rush into my heart by some unguarded avenue; or find me sleeping at my post?

Conscious of my utter inability to help myself, am I daily, yes, constantly, looking unto Jesus for grace and strength, to mortify the flesh, and to cherish the influences of the Spirit?

If, while diligently performing the outward duties of the gospel, I am unwearied in cultivating inward sanctity, then, I possess an evidence of being renewed in the spirit of my mind, and may draw near to God, through Christ, with filial confidence. But, if my religion be confined to forms and ceremonies, coldly performed, from education or custom, I am a self-deceiver; and should I knock at the closed door, saying, Lord, open unto me; the answer would be, as to the foolish virgins, "I know you not."

O! Shepherd of your chosen flock, grant that the outward call of your word may be accompanied by the inward call of your Spirit. Then shall I be stirred up to call earnestly upon you, to seek you in all the means of grace, to pant after you, as the deer pants for the water brooks. Then will my interest in you be unclouded; my peace, through faith in your righteousness, be secured; for all your redeemed ones are the purchase of your blood, given to you by the Father; chosen in you before the foundation of the world; called in time, and preserved unto eternal glory. None of the tribulations of this evil world can separate their love from you, and no created power can separate your love from them.

O! blessed bond of union, cemented by your blood; their salvation is sure; their names are written in heaven; they are engraved on your heart; they are yours, and none shall pluck them out of your hands. Such is the blessedness, the security of the sheep of your pasture. You have said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me. My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me."

Are you Wisdom? They are taught of you, and made wise unto salvation. They are guided into all truth.

Are you Power? They are strengthened with might by your Spirit in the inner man; and made more than conquerors over sin and Satan.

Are you Goodness? They daily partake of its blessings; inviting others to taste and see how gracious the Lord is.

Are you Faithfulness and Truth? This is the Rock on which they build; and, being grounded and settled in your Truth, can triumph over all their foes. "Those who know your name will put their trust in you; for you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you."

Are you Righteousness? This is their glorious dress, in which arrayed, they can appear before the throne, with holy boldness, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Are you Holiness? By this, they are made like unto You, being sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. They bear your image in righteousness and true holiness. They are beautified with your salvation; and made "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Are you Mercy? This is their rejoicing and song of praise. Your grace is the theme of their thanksgiving. "Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy" "Let them now that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endures forever."

Are you Love? Oh! how great is your people's joy. They love you, because you have first loved them. They love you, because with loving-kindness you have drawn them. They love you, because you have shed abroad your love in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto them. Their language is, "By grace are we saved. By grace we are what we are. To grace be all the praise."

Are you a Prophet, Priest, and King; a Redeemer, Advocate, and Intercessor? In all these offices and characters they admire and love you. You are the Lord their God; their Portion; their All in All.

Do you feel, O my soul, this love to the Savior; this faith and hope? Is he precious to you, the chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely One? Is he your beloved and your friend? Then rejoice; this comes from the Lord; this flows from the fountain of his Sovereign love. Rejoice, and look across this narrow span of time, to the boundless regions of eternity. There, in the world of glory, shall all the chosen flock, redeemed by his blood, surround the throne of Jesus, and swell with countless myriads, the chorus of his praise.

Oh! while life shall last, admire this free, this rich, this undeserved mercy. Lie low before him in humility. Rise high in gratitude. Never cease to love, until the pure flame shall reach the source from where it came. There it will burn with inextinguishable blaze, to the glory of the Triune Jehovah!

Sweet is the day of holy rest,

To souls renewed by love divine;

They lean as on the Savior's breast;

Like Moses, on the Mount, they shine.

The Savior's mild reflected grace,

Gives witness to their peace within;
While they, with arms of faith, embrace,
The Great Atonement made for sin.
With joy, they hear the Gospel sound,
With pure devotion, join in prayer;
They praise the Savior they have found,
And all his mercies richly share.
The sacred Sabbath of their Lord,
They love the best of all the seven;
With saints unite in one accord,
And antedate the bliss of heaven.
O that with them, I thus may love
The consecrated House of Prayer
Then fly to purer realms above,
And praise my Savior ever there.

67. CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER

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"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever." John 14:16

The last discourses which our Savior held with his disciples, closing them with his intercessory prayer, have been, and ever will be, a source of the richest consolation to his Church. While we read them in a spirit of love towards him who uttered them, our language will be that of the two disciples walking to Emmaus; "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way."

Those are, indeed, to be pitied, who can peruse, unmoved, those gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. Truly he spoke, as never man spoke. His words are spirit, and they are life.

How many Christians, baptized in the name of Christ, and professing themselves to be members of his visible Church, would rather read an exciting novel, or some highly-wrought work of fiction, than these words of eternal life. How true are the parables of our Lord, which describe those mixed characters, which abound in the so-called religious world. Surely it must be the duty of faithful ministers to point out the distinction, and to guard their hearers against self-delusion. But is it always so?

The beautiful Intercessory Prayer of our Redeemer, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel, is full of the riches of the Covenant of Grace, and sets forth, in the most lively manner, the character and privileges of his people. We learn from the supplications of our Lord to the Eternal Father, that all true believers are the gift of the Father to the Son. "You have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him." "I have manifested your name unto the men which you gave me out of the world; yours they were, and you gave them to me." "I pray not for the world, but for those who you have given me; for they are yours." "Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are." "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

These gracious petitions, which embrace all true believers, evidently declare that in the Covenant of Grace, entered into between the three Divine Persons in the Godhead, Jesus Christ had a people given to him, before the foundation of the world, which he should redeem unto himself in time, and glorify to all eternity. For this reason, the angel said, "His name shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." And to complete this act of mercy, Christ declared, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

In unison with these supplicatory addresses of our Lord, he declared in the synagogue at Capernaum, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will never

cast out." "This is the Father's will who has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose none, but should raise them up again at the last day." "No man can come to me, unless the Father, who has sent me, draws him." "No man can come unto me, unless it were given unto him of my Father." "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me."

The natural heart is now, as it was when these blessed words were spoken. We read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." They could not receive the doctrine of Christ; they were offended at him; they knew not the spiritual nature of true faith which can feed upon Christ as the nourishment of the soul. And in this our day, the more spiritual, the more experimental, any statement of Gospel Truth is, and the more it will be opposed by some who call themselves, "Masters in Israel;" and be derided by others, who pride themselves as being members of the Church. The heart, if unrenewed, is the same under every outward guise. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, all opposed the Holy Savior.

Jesus, by his word, speaks to us as he did to the Apostles; "Will you also go away?" Oh! that the constant language of our hearts may be, "Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." How anxiously should we guard against declension, remembering the words of our Lord to the presiding minister of the Ephesian Church; "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love."

The humble believer sees a fund of blessedness in these petitions of his Lord; and, while standing, by faith, on this immoveable Rock, he can say with joyful heart; "He has set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

In this Intercessory Prayer, we learn much of the character of Christ, as the Great Head of his Church. "Father, glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you." "I have finished the work which you gave me to do." "I have given unto them the words which you gave me." "They have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you sent me." "As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you." "The glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." "That they may behold my glory, which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world." "Glorify me with your own self, with the glory which I had with you before the world was."

Jesus declared himself to be the Son of the Eternal Father. One with the Father. Glorious in himself before the foundation of the world. The Prophet of his Church. The Savior of sinners. Oh! that I may ever receive the adorable Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh. With such plain declarations from the lips of Christ himself, how fearful it is that any should dare to deny his divinity. The fallen spirits did not commit this sin, for they confessed his Godhead; "What have we to do with you, Jesus, Son of God?" The Savior wanted not the testimony of Satan, therefore he "allowed not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

But to the deniers of his divinity, among men, mercy is offered, if they will turn unto him by faith and repentance. Oh! how gracious are the words of our compassionate Redeemer. "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him." Saul, of Tarsus, drew his own

character, and the Savior's grace. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." The sin of Saul was, therefore, not the sin against the Holy Spirit, or he would never have been forgiven. "He did it ignorantly in unbelief."

In his Intercessory Prayer, Jesus points out the character of his redeemed people. "They have known that all things whatever you have given me, are of you." "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." "That they all may be one; that the world may believe that you have sent me." "That they may be made perfect in one."

Thus wrote John to the believing members of the Christian Church; "You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things." "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin." "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

How different is all this from nominal Christianity; from that religion of the world, which consists in the form of godliness without the power. Such religion, if, indeed, such it can be called, will never cheer the soul in a day of distress, nor support it in the hour of death. In this land of Bibles and Churches, people are almost constrained to show some deference to religion. The man of the world goes to church once on the Sabbath; and, to keep up appearances, will, perhaps, attend at the Lord's table, once in the year. But his heart is not there. From the church he will stroll into the news-room, as if he could not too speedily obliterate the faint impression which the preacher may have made. The afternoon is passed away at his table, or on his horse; and his tedious evening is shortened by retiring earlier than usual to rest. His language is that of the Jews of old; "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?"

To such ungrateful members of the visible Church, how affecting is the language of the Almighty; "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" "O my people, what have I done unto you? and wherein have I wearied you?" "You have wearied the Lord."

In this Intercessory Prayer, the privileges of the true believer are interwoven with the petitions. "All mine are yours, and your are mine; and I am glorified in them." "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name; those that you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost." "I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." "You have loved them as you have loved me." "I have declared unto them your name, and will declare it; that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

No language can convey to the spiritual mind greater blessings than these. Oh! for faith to receive, with child-like simplicity, these gracious truths, which dropped from the lips of incarnate Love.

As the blind are unaffected by the most sublime prospects, and the deaf by the sweetest sounds, so do these displays of sovereign grace, these accents of redeeming mercy, produce no saving benefit on the carnal mind. Unbelief and pride, sensuality and the love of the world, hypocrisy and formality, like so many bars, close the citadel of the heart. Nothing can dislodge the strong man armed, but the mighty power of God. No human efforts will avail. Who can stop the whirlwind with a feather? or the rolling tide with a straw? So helpless is man, when he attempts in his own

strength, to stem the torrent of his corruptions. He, who said, "Let there be light and there was light;" He, who said to the wind and waves, "Peace, be still;" He, who said to Lazarus, "Come forth!" and the dead arose; can alone subdue the heart, and make the sinner willing in the day of his power.

It is delightful to dwell upon this comprehensive prayer of our blessed Savior. Here I am taught, that all who are the subjects of grace, are the gift of the Father to the Son; that to such, the Son gives eternal life; that the beginning of this eternal life is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; that this knowledge is imparted by Jesus Christ through the teaching of the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter; that this knowledge is of a sanctifying nature; that it leads to a separation from the world, and to a union to each other; that these happy souls are loved by the Father and the Son are kept from the evil that is in the world; and preserved unto eternal glory.

Oh! blessed Lord, You who have cast your bright beams of light upon your Church, how does my heart pant after this blessedness. I cannot claim it; for through sin, I have forfeited every favor; but, let me never cease to crave it, since you have interceded, not only for your Apostles, but for all those who shall believe on you through their word. As a poor suppliant at the door of mercy, I wait in humble expectation of the promised grace. Lord, enable me to believe in you, through the words of your Apostles; then I shall experience all the riches of your love, contained in this precious prayer, which, as the Intercessor of your people, you did present to the Eternal Father.

68. REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMENCEMENT

68. REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW YEAR

Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer—"the stone of help"—for he said, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!" 1 Samuel 7:12

Another year has fled! But how has it fled? Bearing the sins of unnumbered multitudes, which shall all be exposed at the judgment day! When first it opened upon me, it was greeted with thankfulness. A monument of gratitude was erected, on which was inscribed, "Up to this point the Lord has helped me." But, it has been an eventful year to many. Numbers, who beheld the opening year, full of hope, and prospects of happiness, are now in the silent grave.

"He builds too low,

Who builds beneath the skies."

I am preserved in life, while death has cut down many a lovely flower; and why is this? Why am I now on mercy's ground, within the precincts of salvation, while many are imprisoned, where hope can never come? It is because my gracious Lord has interceded for me. "Do not cut it down. Leave it alone one more year." His thoughts towards me, are thoughts of peace and not of evil. In richest grace, he bears with my rebellious heart; he deigns to wash me in his blood; to cover me with his merits; to purify my heart; to make me a trophy of his love. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," is the language of a Sovereign. "I will," is the voice of the Omnipotent Jehovah.

How sweet is the sound, when coming through the Covenant of Grace, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." "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." Precious indeed are those words of power, uttered by Sovereign Love. Truly it is by grace that we are saved. God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He inclines our hearts to himself, so that when the call is given, "Come you to the waters;" "whoever will, let him take the water of life freely;" the power goes forth with the command, and the sinner, by grace, is saved.

While I meditate on the days that are past, two principles operate in my heart—

1. Hatred of myself, for having so long and so grievously offended the best of Beings; for having so much delighted in sin, and so little in things divine.
2. Love to God, for such unbounded mercy, such amazing forbearance, such striving and inviting, such compassion and pity, shown to the chief of sinners- an heir of hell!

Oh! my soul, humble yourself in the dust before the Majesty of heaven. Think how many precious moments, hours, days, and years, have borne on their wings ten thousand times ten thousand sins, which you have committed, and which are obliterated from the tablet of your memory. But,

oh! remember, God has not forgotten them. He will bring into judgment every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Can you think of this, O my soul, and not tremble? Can you think of this, and not fly with eager steps to the Cross of Christ, that, through faith in his atoning blood, all your guilty stains may be blotted out, and your sins and iniquities be remembered no more?

Lord! behold me prostrate at your feet. I come to your mercy-seat; to the Lamb which was slain, who alone can redeem me by his blood. Look upon the bleeding sacrifice, and then your look on me will be a look of pardoning love. Yes! blessed Lord, you never have, nor ever will reject the vilest sinner, who clings to the Cross of Christ, and there, besprinkled with the falling drops of his atoning blood, cries out for mercy. Look on me, O God of my salvation. Behold a sinner vile and wretched, pleading before your throne the merits of your Son. For his only sake, O Lord, pardon all that is past; for his only sake accept me graciously; for his sake love me freely; and mercifully vouchsafe a rich effusion of your Holy Spirit, that this opening year may be spent in your service, and to the promotion of your glory. May all my powers be devoted to you, every affection and desire be fixed upon you. Make me sincere in all I pray for. Give me a single eye in all I do. May every word spoken for you, be the sincere expression of my heart. You know what I am. Lord, teach me to know myself. Give me daily the victory over all my inward corruptions and spiritual enemies. Grant unto your servant every internal and eternal blessing; and not to me only, but to all who are united to me by the bonds of friendship, or the ties of blood.

Another year has elapsed. New mercies call for fresh praise. I long to be a Christian indeed. Mere profession will profit nothing. It yields no comfort. It brings no glory to God. It differs as much from vital godliness as the portrait does from the living subject. It is the appearance, not the reality of religion.

Nothing can make me happy, but a real, vital union to Christ by faith. Nothing can procure my acceptance with God, but his righteousness. The great Apostle Paul desired nothing so much as to win Christ, and be found in him; not having his own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. This is what I need, and for which I pray. Let differing Christians understand the blessed truth in whatever light they may, yet, of this I am persuaded, that no sinner has, by nature, any righteousness of his own. To assert this would be a contradiction in terms. How strange to talk of a sinner's righteousness! of a sinner's holiness! We might as well speak about the loyalty of a traitor, or of the sobriety of a confirmed drunkard. The most devoted children of God have cause to exclaim, "Behold, I am vile;" how much more those, who have never experienced regenerating grace.

An unconverted sinner is always proud. He is ever ready to place his honorable dealing, benevolence, and refinement, against his glaring violations of God's commandments, and then to flatter himself, that the balance will be in his favor; or, at least, that God will be too merciful to execute his threatenings upon him. He charges with uncharitableness, the faithful dealings of the righteous, who boldly tell him, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." He will not believe that the God of Truth will be true to his word. He dares the result, and dies to learn in hell, what he willingly remained ignorant of while on earth.

But how different are the views and feelings of the awakened sinner. He sees the precipice on which he is standing, and trembles to behold the yawning gulf below. He stands amazed at his former blindness; sees his utter inability to escape from the ground which he feels to be sinking

beneath him; cries aloud for help, saying, "Lord, save me," embraces with anxious solicitude the gracious hand which is stretched out to preserve him; and acknowledges the infinite goodness of that God, whose free love thus snatches him from destruction.

Am I this ransomed sinner? Have I been saved through the beloved of the Father, from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell? Have I experienced the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit? Do I feel the grateful emotions of a new heart? a sincere devotedness to the Author of all my mercies? Happy, thrice happy shall I be, if I possess this inward witness that I am a child of God. Then will the opening year, be a year of blessedness. Trials may come, but they will all be sanctified. Death may come, but it will only bear me into the presence of my Savior.

What abundant cause I have to bless and praise my heavenly Father for all the grace, mercy, and peace which he has bestowed on me through Jesus Christ my Lord. It is like a flowing stream, whose pure waters refresh and gladden the soul. God is love. Oh! that my heart could enlarge itself in some humble proportion to the blessings which it receives. May every affection, desire, and purpose have gratitude written upon them; and every action of my life be the fruit of holy love, of unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus.

In the midst of the divine mercies, I have to mourn over an evil heart, ever ready to turn aside like a broken bow, and too prone to cleave unto the dust. Oh! how hateful is sin. It is the disease of the soul. It is the poison which kills my joys and comforts. When it works within, O what languor it produces, what deadness of feeling! Sometimes it racks the conscience, and then nothing but war reigns in the soul— a wild confusion, a stormy night!

How precious, at such a season, is a believing view of the Cross of Christ. How gracious the voice, "Look unto me, and be saved." The stormy wind is then hushed; the swelling waves subside; a sweet calm ensues, and peace once more resumes its empire in the soul. Every tempest-tossed, afflicted believer, can bear witness to the all-subduing, the all-consoling voice of the Son of God, when he says to the inward storm; "Peace, be still."

How great is the goodness of the Lord. His tender mercies are over all his works. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which he has done unto me? I can render nothing unto the Lord, but what I first receive from him. And what can I render, but praise and thanksgiving? How can I better show my thankfulness, than by receiving the cup of salvation, the glorious and gracious offers of redemption through the blood of his beloved Son. But this also comes from God. It is the fruit of his everlasting love. It is the work of his almighty power. All good comes from Him. I can render nothing unto God that is pleasing in his sight, but what he first bestows, according to the riches of his grace.

Oh! that I could feel my heart deeply and abidingly impressed with a sense of his goodness. I deserve nothing but wrath; yet God speaks in mercy. "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

When I look upon the year which is past, I have cause to lament my unfaithfulness, and unfruitfulness. The review should indeed fill me with humiliation. In myself, I find so much of earth, and so little of heaven; so much of the old man, and so little of the new; that I may well doubt whether any saving work has been begun in my soul. My feelings and sentiments about religion

may be the effect of the society with which I am connected, and of the ministry under which I am placed rather than the work of grace, before whose potent rays the darkness of error flies as the evening mist before the rising sun. I may be evangelically right in my views, and yet practically wrong in my heart and life. Knowledge and holiness are not always connected. There is a knowledge which puffs up, but charity edifies. The wisdom that is from above is pure.

In prosecuting my enquiry, I find much comfort from the Apostle's own experience in the seventh chapter to the Romans; and from his declaration to the Galatians; that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;" that "these are contrary the one to the other; so that we cannot do the things that we would." Hence, there is a conflict in the heart of the believer, which is peculiar to himself, and which is unknown, because unfelt by the unregenerate. There is, indeed, in unconverted people, a struggle at times, between natural conscience, and their wicked desires and practices. But, as their conscience is darkened and defiled, through original corruption, so it is always insufficient to break through those sins which are constantly weakening its force by repetition, until it become, not only without feeling, but a justifier of those actions which once it condemned. Hence arises those excuses for sin, and those self-justifications, after a course of transgression, which would not have been made at the first outset into the paths of wickedness. David has strikingly described the progress of the wicked, by walking, standing, sitting. He who walks after evil counsel, will soon stand in the way of evil men, and finally sit down in the seat of the scornful.

This inward fighting, between natural conscience and wicked desires, is vastly different from the struggle between nature and grace. In this struggle, the flesh indeed rebels, but grace reigns. They both struggle, as the Apostle expresses it, but grace obtains the ascendancy. The will of the believer is decidedly for God, although the animal passions may struggle for indulgence. The affections are too often, alas! allured from better to baser objects, but the new principle checks the aberration, and preserves the heart from a total departure from God. Thus believers "are kept by the power of God through faith," that new implanted principle, "unto salvation." For the same gracious purpose, the Almighty says; "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" which fear is another holy principle tending to keep the believer in the way of life and salvation. This faith and fear, combined with holy love shed abroad in the heart, through the power of the Holy Spirit, forms that spiritual life, which is imparted and maintained by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

The natural conscience may sometimes check, but it can seldom restrain, except through the fear of temporal punishment, or worldly disgrace; and these are often found to be feeble barriers against the violent assaults of natural corruption. So depraved is the heart. The new principle of grace in the believer, not only restrains from evil, but restores the soul to the image of God. Thus a person may know whether he be a child of God or not, by examining the habitual state of his mind and affections; by observing the inward workings of his heart; and watching over the continual motions of his spirit. Hence the Apostle draws this important conclusion; "Those who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." So that, "to be carnally minded is death; but to the spiritually minded is life and peace."

O blessed Savior! be pleased to redeem my soul from the bondage of corruption, and bring me into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Implant in my heart the seed of holy desires. Ripen

those seeds of grace. Cause them to shoot forth and bud, to blossom, and to bear fruit. Make me more humble, more holy, more weaned from the world, more devoted to you, until you shall transplant me to the Paradise above.

Another year is now opening upon me. Where shall I be before it closes? in time, or in eternity? To many thousands this year will be the last; yes, to many, on whose cheek now plays the hue of health, and in whose limbs vigor is transfused. What reason have I then to suppose, that the arrow of death may not be commissioned to lay me in the dust? Surely none. Oh! that my heart may be duly and deeply affected by the following truths—

I AM A FALLEN CREATURE.

Blessed Lord! give me the deepest insight into myself. Make me to know, in some measure, the extent of my misery and corruption as a child of fallen Adam. Fully to know the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of the heart, is your prerogative. But oh! let me not be ignorant of my vileness. Let not pride and self-love blind the eyes of my mind; or cause me to fancy myself to be something when I am nothing; less than nothing, and vanity. Show me to myself, through the light of your Holy Spirit shining upon your own word of Truth. In that faithful mirror may I behold my natural state of guilt and misery, and while beholding, loathe myself with perfect loathing. Oh! cause me to sink down before you in deepest self-abasement. Lord break my proud heart. Melt the stone that lies within me. Purge away the dross of sin, and make all new within; that my heart may become a temple, in which you will condescend to dwell.

I AM A HELPLESS CREATURE.

As a person, who has fallen down a steep precipice, and broken his bones, cannot stand upright; so, through the fall of my first parents, I am totally unable to recover myself from the dreadful consequences of transgression.

Lord teach me to renounce all self-dependence. In myself, I have no strength; therefore, of myself I can do nothing to satisfy your justice, or restore your lost image in my soul. Oh! may I never, for one moment, make the vain attempt of appeasing your wrath; or of appearing before you, in the filthy rags of my own righteousness. Your justice demands an infinite satisfaction; and your holiness delights only in unspotted purity. But I cannot pay the least mite, nor present before you a clean heart, being ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved. Where, then, must I flee? To whom must I look for help, and support? How shall I obtain present and everlasting salvation?

GOD IS LOVE.

Oh! delightful truth! Oh! heart-cheering consolation! Let it be carried round the globe. Let it be echoed from hill to hill, from shore to shore, until all nations catch the joyful sound, that "God is love," that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here, in this one truth, this precious gospel message, proclaimed by the Savior of sinners himself, is contained all peace, and strength, hope, joy, purity, yes, heavenly glory. Only believe this sweet declaration, with a loving obedience; only receive Christ, through whom this salvation is procured; and all the promises which cluster on the living Vine are your portion, O my soul, freely and fully given by the Father of mercies, through the Son of his love.

O eternal Spirit of light and truth, proceeding from the Father and the Son, work this saving faith even now in my heart. O make me this day, which commences another year of my earthly existence, a true member of the mystical body of Christ, a regenerated member of his Church, a sheep of his fold. Take away the darkness of my mind, and shed a flood of light into my soul. Pluck my feet out of the net of Satan's temptations; and enable me to walk in the path of your commandments. Give me to see the beauty of holiness, and to hunger and thirst after it; to discover the heinousness of sin, to flee from it, and abhor it.

If called into the furnace of affliction, be with me to support and comfort me. If led into the enjoyment of worldly blessings, preserve me from the snares of prosperity. Oh! grant that I may begin this year with earnest desires after Christ and his salvation, that, being kept by your power from day to day, I may be continually waiting for the Savior's coming, and rejoice, when his voice of mercy shall whisper to my soul; "Come up here;" "Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Jesus! I will praise your name,
While my life and being last;
Your rich mercies are the same,
Which saints enjoyed in ages past;
A dying pilgrim here below,
'Tis my bliss, Your love to know.
With the lightning's rapid flight
All my moments hasten by;
Day is soon o'erspread with night;
Flowers of Spring do quickly die.
Jesus, in this land of woe,
Let me Your salvation know.
Fleeting vapors are my days,
Life is but an airy dream;
As the sun's declining rays,
Or the constant ebbing stream.
Fix my heart on You alone,
You, the Church's Corner-Stone.
You, my kind redeeming Lord,
Wean my heart from earthly joy
Change me by your powerful word,

Every sin in me destroy.
Let my treasure ever be,
Safely hid, O Christ, in Thee.
Holy Spirit, Heavenly Fire,
Burn the hated dross within,
Kindle every pure desire,
Save me from indwelling sin.
Let my soul on You depend,
Faithful and Almighty Friend.

69. THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS CHRISTIAN STATE

69. THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS CHRISTIAN STATE

"Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands." Deuteronomy 8:2

Thousands live with no appreciation of the hand that supports them. They revel amid the bounties of Providence; and rebel against his chastening rod. They "regard not the work of the Lord," nor consider "the operation of his hands." "God is not in all their thoughts." Not so, the true believer in Jesus. In prosperity, he can say with David; "You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings." And with him, he can also say in adversity; "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me."

In the Psalms of David, we find all the varied experience of a child of God. The mere religionist knows nothing of the internal workings of the renewed mind. The difference is indeed great, between the outward form, and the inward power of godliness. The former, while destitute of the latter, is like the body without the soul; it is a lifeless carcass. Hence we find David always breathing after the quickening influence of the Spirit. The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of these divine breathings. As David was a man after God's own heart, so he was made well acquainted with his own heart. He abhorred the idols of the heathen. He never fell into the sin of idolatry; yet he could exclaim with grief; "My soul cleaves unto the dust; quicken me according to your word;" and with brokenness of heart confess, "I have sinned against the Lord."

This is the common complaint of all true Christians. They want an entire conformity to the mind of God. They pant after universal holiness. They labor to get their affections supremely fixed upon Christ and heaven. They long for the complete victory over indwelling sin, and the perishing vanities of the world. Yet, they find, to their inexpressible grief, that when they would do good, evil is present with them; not indeed as a thing indulged, but as mixing itself with all their aims and desires, so that they are constrained to cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They feel a force drawing them down to earth, when they would soar above.

This experience greatly humbles the Christian pilgrim, while traveling through the wilderness. He sees that he has no righteousness of his own; that of himself he can do nothing; and that it is of the Lord alone, that he has either righteousness or strength. This conviction of inward pollution, unseen by the eye of man, drives him to the blood of sprinkling. It makes Christ unspeakably precious. He is fervent in supplication for the supply of the Spirit, through the intercession of his great High Priest; and feeling his inability to think one good thought, or exercise one holy affection, without the grace and power of Jesus, he sits daily at his feet, to hear his word, to receive out of his fullness, to imbibe his spirit, and to copy his example.

Such is the experience and practice, not of one, but of all the faithful servants of Jehovah. They have many trials; for, "many are the afflictions of the righteous," but they have also many consolations. Thus writes Paul, "All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."

Oh! that I may be found among these chosen vessels of the Lord. I have to mourn over deadness, lukewarmness, and earthly-mindedness; though, through grace, I abhor these evils! I am grieved that my heart is so cold, when God is so kind! Yes, I am grieved, that I grieve so little. What a paradox is my experience! In the midst of conflict, this is my comfort; when I am sensible of my weakness, and lean upon Christ, then I am strong- when I am tried, and trust wholly in the Lord, then I am supported- when I am sorrowful, through manifold temptations, and look unto Jesus, then I am exceeding joyful. O! what a blessed religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, when it has its empire in the heart; when the Redeemer is enthroned in the affections; when the will is brought into a willing subjection to the Prince of Peace.

It is profitable to take a retrospective view of the path of life; to retrace the various movements of Providence; the many vicissitudes of this chequered scene. This will help to strengthen faith, as well as to deepen humility. Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, records the Lord's mercies, and Israel's transgressions, to awaken the gratitude, and to promote the humiliation of the Church in the wilderness. David, in his songs of Zion, recapitulates the dealings of the Lord with his people, "so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born—that they in turn might teach their children. So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors—stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God." How good it is, when the dealings of the Lord are handed down from generation to generation; when his praises are sung by children's children.

The review of our Christian state is both humbling and elevating. When we look at the rock where we were hewn; and at the Rock on which we are placed, we may well exclaim, "What has God wrought!" From the heart every true believer can say- Blessed Lord, with deepest abasement of soul, I desire to approach your divine Majesty. In myself, I have nothing but sin. In how many ways have I offended you. My conscience testifies against me. My own heart condemns me. When I contemplate your Holiness, Justice, and Truth, must I not fear before You? But, in the midst of the throne, I behold "a Lamb slain;" I hear a voice of mercy proceeding from it; "God is just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. " "Salvation is of the Lord." I behold, by this revelation of grace, a way of access opened to poor perishing sinners, through faith in the blood of the Lamb. Lord, give me faith in your dear Son. Enable me to cast myself, without reserve, upon your covenanted mercies in Christ Jesus. In him, alone, is eternal life. In him, is treasured up grace, mercy, and peace. Oh! for a heart to believe unto righteousness. This heart is your gift, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. You know my wickedness, and wretchedness, my frailties and follies, my helplessness, and total alienation from you, through original and actual transgression. You know from what height of happiness I am fallen; into what depth of misery I am plunged.

Oh! sovereign love! Oh! matchless grace, which pitied me in my lost estate. To redeem my soul from hell, the Eternal Word becomes incarnate, bears my griefs, carries my sorrows, is wounded for my transgressions, is bruised for mine iniquities, and dies upon the cross, being made a curse for me. This is a mystery which heavenly minds cannot fathom; but which can be received into the heart by faith.

How precious is saving faith. It is the hand which receives the gift of grace; the hand which places the crown on the head of Jesus, ascribing glory and honor to the Lamb who was slain. Through faith, I am complete in Christ. Through faith in his blood, all my sins are forgiven. Through faith in his righteousness, I have peace with God. But when I review my Christian privileges, I must put to my heart, an all-important question: Have I true faith, "the faith of God's elect?" Jesus has said, "By their fruits you shall know them." "The tree is known by his fruit " Here, then, is an unerring criterion, whereby to form a judgment of my real state in the sight of God. I must, then, examine myself whether I am in the faith.

What are the fruits which I habitually bring forth? What is the general tenor of my thoughts? When sinful thoughts arise, do I cherish them? Am I fond of retaining them? Or, can I say, in sincerity, I hate every sinful thought, affection, and desire. Have I obtained the mastery over my imaginations, so as to be able to suppress them when contrary to purity and holiness? Alas! they struggle to gain the mastery. Like a bold enemy, they rally again and again, until I am sometimes ready to cry out with David; "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul." But, at these seasons, I find prayer a never-failing weapon, which puts to flight the armies of the aliens; and thus proves the truth of that gracious promise; "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Have I delight in communion with God, in secret retirement, meditation, reading the Scriptures, and prayer? Can I say with humility, I do delight in these seasons of retirement, when, apart from the noisy world, I can hold sweet communion with the Father of spirits? But alas! I do not always enjoy that sweet and soul-enlivening communion with God, which I long and pray for. I have to lament over much unbelief, coldness of affection, and wandering thoughts. Still, though often discouraged, through the workings of indwelling sin, I would not give up these secret retirements. I am convinced, that no true happiness can be found, but in God. No salvation, but in Christ. No strength to resist sin, and grow in heavenly-mindedness, but through the Spirit. For this reason, Satan tries hard to drive me from a throne of grace, well knowing the power of prayer—

"For Satan trembles when he sees,

The weakest saint upon his knees."

I will therefore wait upon God, trusting to his promise, that he will never leave me, nor forsake me; but cause the light of his countenance to shine upon me, that I may be filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and be able to say, like Peter, at another manifestation, "It is good for me to be here."

AM I CAREFUL OF MY WORDS?

Through divine grace, I have been preserved from corrupt conversation, from lightly using the sacred name of God, or venting unkind and uncharitable expressions, in spleen or anger. But, oh! what a load of guilt lies upon me for "idle words," those multiplied sins of the tongue. Though

cheerful conversation is innocent, when it does not degenerate into levity, yet the Christian has need to guard the door of his lips, when he remembers the words of his Lord; "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment for by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

From this declaration of Christ, it is evident that words are declarative of our true spiritual state. "By your words you shall be justified." James expresses the same of works; "By works a man is justified." It is the same as if they had said, "The tree is known by his fruit." The meritorious cause of justification is the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, which is the instrument; while good, works are the fruit which evidence and declare our being justified in the sight of God; for, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Surely, I have cause to cry out with the publican; "God be merciful to me a sinner." If I were to be judged, only for the words which I have spoken from childhood to old age, oh! how could I appear before the all-seeing, heart-searching God? David felt the force of this truth, "You God see me," when he penned his beautiful Psalm; "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."

Do I love, when suitable opportunities occur, to talk upon religious subjects, not controversially, but experimentally and practically? Am I desirous, at all times, to render conversation profitable and instructive, good to the use of edifying? Is Jesus, that endearing name, often on my tongue, not from mere profession, or vain display, but from a heart-felt love to Him, whom angels worship, and whom saints adore? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Can we imagine Paul to have been in the circle of Christian believers for weeks and months, and never to have dwelt upon the theme nearest his heart— the dying love of Christ, except when engaged in the act of public preaching? And yet, alas! how seldom do some ministers of the gospel make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of their discourses, either publicly, or, like the Apostle, from "house to house." May not Jesus say to such, "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love?" Or, rather, "because you are destitute of the first love, which was manifested by the warm-hearted members of my primitive Church?" Both ministers and people have cause for deep humiliation on this account. "Those who honor me," says the Almighty, "I will honor." "If we deny him, he also will deny us."

Lord, make me faithful. Preserve me from false-heartedness and faint-heartedness. Keep me from the extremes of vainglory, and the fear of man. Clothe me with humility.

Do I seize opportunities for speaking a word in season; either of reproof, exhortation, or encouragement? A consciousness of my own depravity, mixed with an undue feeling of shame, often keeps me from being faithful in the performance of this duty. To speak about Christ to worldly people is difficult; but not impracticable, when the truth is spoken in love. Nothing wins its way to the heart so much as genuine Christian love, which is ever clothed with humility. It often disarms the violence of opposition; and disposes the worldling to listen to the voice of reproof; yes, even to confess the error of his way. O! that I may have grace to perform this, and every other self-denying duty; leaving consequences with God.

HOW ARE MY ACTIONS IN GENERAL?

If there are none that are openly vicious and immoral; or, such as bring a scandal on religion; or, make the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; to God be all the praise. I may be punctually observant of all outward duties, which respect the sanctuary and the family; be chiefly associated with religious people; be actively engaged in promoting religious institutions; and yet be destitute of love to Christ, without which, all my doings are worth nothing. It is the principle, which gives the quality to the action. This our Lord has clearly declared in the sermon on the Mount.

Let me examine into this matter. When I perform the various commanded duties, is it from a desire to be seen of men? Or, does it spring from the force of education, habit, and custom? Or, from a change of sentiment, through the influence of the circle in which I move? If so, I am a tree without fruit.

True faith works by love; love to Christ and love to holiness. It is most important, that this be well established in the mind; that this point be settled on Scripture grounds. If I perform my duties from a principle of love to God, and delight in Him, then I have a clear scriptural evidence that I am his; for if I love God, it is because he has first loved me. Then I have a clear proof, that I have a saving interest in the work of Christ's redemption; for love is the fruit of faith, and the solid evidence of my acceptance with God; for whom he justifies, them he also glorifies; and what is our glory, but to be like him here in holiness, and to dwell with him in glory everlasting. Surely these will be the meditations and aspirations of every true believer in Jesus.

Blessed Lord! create in me these holy, heavenly desires, and endeavors to please you. Kindle the flame of love, and cause it to burn continually on the altar of my heart. Let it be like the fire of the sanctuary, which was never to go out. Increase my faith and love, my hope and desire, my ardent longings after you. O make me sincere, on every review of my Christian state and character. Make my heart pure; freed from unhallowed affections, and sinful imaginations. Let my conversation be pious and profitable; my actions be agreeable to your will, in every relation and department of life. Implant right principles in my soul, and keep me, through the merits of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, to your everlasting kingdom.

70. A GRATEFUL RETROSPECT OF UNDESERVED MERCIES

70. A GRATEFUL RETROSPECT OF UNDESERVED MERCIES

"How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God! They are innumerable! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up in the morning, you are still with me!"
Psalms 139:17-18

It is delightful to contemplate what the blessed Jesus is to his believing people. He manifests himself to them in the most condescending manner, by using those similitudes which are comprehended to the humblest understanding. Truly, his words are spirit, and they are life. He spoke as never man spoke.

1. "I am the Vine, you are the branches; he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."

Here I learn, that as the branch receives all its sap from the parent stem, by which union, its fruitfulness is produced; so my soul can only bring forth the fruits of righteousness, by being grafted into Christ by faith. A branch cut off, lies withered on the ground; and, severed from Christ, I shall be barren also.

2. "I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to me shall never hunger; and he who believes on me shall never thirst."

David blesses God for the gift of "bread which strengthens man's heart." If bread be called the staff of life, for its nourishing quality, how precious is the bread from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ! He is indeed the bread of life. He alone, can give life to the world, to all who come unto him by faith; for whoever believes shall be saved.

3. "I am the Door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

As the sheepfolds in Judea were enclosed, to keep out beasts of prey, it was important that they should be well guarded. Within such a protected sheepfold, the flock could repose in safety. Jesus is the only door of admittance into the gospel-fold. By faith in him, I am admitted into his Church, and form one of the sheep of his pasture, to whom he kindly says; "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The roaring lion of the wilderness, who is ever going about seeking whom he may devour, cannot invade this sacred enclosure, for He, who is the door, is the Omnipotent Savior.

4. "I am the Good Shepherd; the good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep."

Jesus is not only the door into the sheep-fold, but also the good shepherd of the sheep. He is the "All, and in all" to his people. While the hireling flees, and leaves his flock to the danger of the wolf, Jesus gives his life for the sheep, that they may be saved from every evil, spiritual and eternal. Happy are the sheep of his pasture, who hear his voice and follow him. To such he will give eternal

life, for none can pluck them out of his hands.

Oh! how great is the love and care of the good Shepherd. He died, that we might live; and ever lives to make intercession for us. He wills the salvation of his believing people. He seeks them, he saves them, he sanctifies them, he glorifies them. Oh! that we may rise to the full assurance of faith and hope.

5. "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man comes unto the Father but by me."

As a pilgrim, traveling through a dreary desert, I need a guide to direct me. I perceive various roads branching out on the right hand and on the left, but into which shall I turn? Which of them will lead me to the city of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem? I see a guidepost, on which is written; "This is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left." While reading, I hear a voice; "Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls." I ask for direction, I entreat the Lord himself to guide me into the way wherein I should go; he hears my prayer; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." Oh! what a blessing! Jesus is both the way, and the guide to heaven.

6. "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

What a glorious revelation is this! Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness. His bright beams illuminate his Church. As it was of old, so it is now. In the land of Goshen, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings, while the Egyptians were wrapped in darkness. The members of Christ's true Church are now enlightened by the Spirit, while the unbelieving members of the visible Church are walking in darkness; for he, and only he that follows Christ, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

7. "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die."

O! how rich are the promises of Christ! While a sojourner upon earth, if a true believer in the Son of God, I am a fruitful branch in the Vine; I am nourished by the Bread of Life; I am admitted by the door into the sheepfold, the true Church; I am protected and saved by the good Shepherd; I am led into the true and living Way to the Father; I am enlightened by Jesus, the Light of the world, to see and avoid the dangers which surround me. All this is vouchsafed to me while traveling Zionward.

But, I must die! My body must return to the dust, and my spirit to him who gave it. Is all then ended? No. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life; he will re-animate my sleeping dust; he will re-unite my soul to my body made spiritual and incorruptible; and, he will give me eternal life. There is the climax of blessedness, the fullness of glory.

How precious are these beautiful sayings of Jesus. The more I meditate upon them, the more of richness and beauty I discover in them. When I take a retrospective view of my mercies, I see, that from a child, baptized in his name, these blessings were freely offered to me in the gospel; and, that from the moment I truly believed with the heart unto righteousness, they became my portion, my treasure, my consolation. I cannot sufficiently praise the Giver of all good, the God of my life

and of my salvation, for such unspeakable mercy, for such unsearchable riches of his grace. Oh! that my life may be one continued course of loving obedience, and believing reliance on the faithfulness and truth of God. May I, from henceforth, show my faith by my works; and my election in Christ, by being "holy, and without blame before him in love."

O! my soul, praise the Lord with a song, and magnify him with thanksgiving. Tell of his salvation from day to day; for He is good, and his mercy endures forever. Oh! how great is his goodness towards those who fear him; how transcendent his mercy towards the children of men. There is no end of his loving-kindness. It is inexhaustible; it is everlasting! Sing, then, the praises of your God, O my soul, for it well becomes a redeemed sinner to be thankful. Meditate continually on his excellent greatness, for such meditation is sweet. Rejoice in his salvation, for he has commanded his gospel to be preached to every creature, and has declared, that whoever believes in him shall be saved.

When I take a retrospective view of my undeserved mercies, I must bless my God, that I was born in a Christian land, where the light of the glorious gospel shines around me with meridian splendor. I might have been the offspring of some poor Hottentot, or wild Tahitian savage, ignorant of God, of Christ, and of heaven; sunk in all the sensualities of a debased idolatry. How, then, can I sufficiently admire the mercy of God in casting my lot in this favored island. Truly "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." I hear the sound of the Sabbath bells calling me to hear the sweet sounds of the gospel of Christ. I am blessed with the faithful preaching of Christ crucified, with the precious Bible, released from its fetters, by our martyred Reformers. Millions of my perishing fellow sinners have none of these things. Even in Christian lands, professedly so called, the bells may sound, but they call to the rites of superstition, or to the preaching of a dead morality.

But, Oh! my soul, remember, yes, remember, that as your privileges are great, so is your responsibility. Never forget the doom of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Peter felt all the force of his Lord's words when he wrote, respecting backsliders and apostates; "And when people escape from the wicked ways of the world by learning about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up with sin and become its slave again, they are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the right way to live than to know it and then reject the holy commandments that were given to them."

The hearts of such people were never renewed, their natures were never changed. This they proved by their return to the propensities of their natural hearts; for thus added Peter; "They make these proverbs come true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and "A pig that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud." The pig, though washed, was a pig still. The outward washing could not change the inward propensity of the animal. Is it not so with multitudes of baptized people? Outward reformation must never be confounded with inward regeneration.

Paul alludes to the same awful people in his Epistle to the Hebrews; "Anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Think how much more terrible the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God and have treated the blood of the covenant as if it were common and unholy. Such people have insulted and enraged the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to his people." "For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good

things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people to repentance again because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him, holding him up to public shame."

Oh! how we should dread every approach to final apostasy. "If we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. There will be nothing to look forward to but the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies."

When Paul says of the despiser of the blood of the covenant, "with which he was sanctified;" may he not allude to the ordinance of baptism, whereby the individual was sanctified or set apart to sacred uses, like the vessels of the temple? Had such an one been truly renewed by the Spirit of God, he would have been kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

"Dear friends, even though we are talking like this, we really don't believe that it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do. Our great desire is that you will keep right on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and patience." Here the Apostle assures his beloved converts, that he was persuaded better things of them, and things that accompanied salvation, though he thus spoke.

I would then ask— Are all those true Christians; who are born in a Christian country? Are all those born again of the Spirit, who have been admitted by baptism unto the visible Church? Are all those the real disciples of Jesus, who attend his preached word? Alas! alas! many a heathen heart dwells in the bosom of a baptized Christian! What then is my state and character? Before men, I may be esteemed religious; but what will this avail, since He that judges me is the Lord. "For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Surely I have cause to bless God if he has brought me to the saving knowledge of Christ as my Savior, my Intercessor, my Righteousness, My Hope, my Refuge, and my Trust. The Rock on which I can securely build. The Friend in whom I can safely confide. The Fountain of supply for all my needs. I never can sufficiently admire this boundless grace, granted to one so worthless, when justice might have consigned me to the burning wrath of an offended God.

Lord, why is this? I search, but cannot find the cause in myself. I contemplate your own Eternal Love, and there I reach the Fountain of all my mercies. "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself." Surely mercy and truth have followed me all the days of my pilgrimage, like the waters in the wilderness, which cheered and refreshed the Israelites of old. As they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, (and that rock was Christ,) so have I been blessed with the living water from my crucified Lord, smitten for me.

As mountains rise above mountains, so do my mercies. On every side, I see blessings rise. To have Agur's wish fulfilled, is a favor of no ordinary kind. He well knew the danger of extremes, when he asked a gracious Providence to lead him in the middle path. "O God, I beg two favors from you before I die. First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name."

If a believer in Jesus, my happiness will be increased by living near to him, by living to his glory. May humility and love ever dwell in my heart; then I shall be happy in all the changing scenes of life. If called to ascend the hill of prosperity, or to traverse the valley of adversity; if blessed with health, or depressed with sickness; if carried to old age, or cut off by early death; all will be well, if Jesus is my Savior, and my Friend.

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 should at this moment be under the rack of excruciating pain; or, under the pressure of most abject poverty; or, under the destitution of every friend to comfort me; or, under the sting of an awakened, guilty conscience; 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, O my soul, in such a heavenly Father, who thus spares and blesses his rebellious child. Rejoice in such a Savior, whose intercession for you is incessant and prevailing. Rejoice in such a Comforter, whose gracious work it is to snatch you as a brand out of the burning.

Oh! that I could be more and more grateful for those mercies which I enjoy. Let every murmuring thought be gone. Lord make me all praise, all gratitude, all love. May sin increase in hatefulness, as I increase in the knowledge of your goodness. Enlighten my mind to know both myself and yourself. Increase this salutary knowledge, that, from a deep abiding sense of my own depravity of nature, I may be led with greater earnestness to flee into the ark of safety— Jesus Christ, the righteous.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give you praise." "I will extol you, my God, O King; and I will bless your name forever and ever." "You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, I will exalt you." "The Lord is my strength and song, and has become my salvation." "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable." Thus sang the sweet Psalmist of Israel. O that I could seize his harp and strike a chord in unison with his!

Glory be to you, O Father, Son, and Spirit. To You be ascribed, by angels and men, all blessing, and honor, and glory, and power. Your name alone is excellent, and your glory above the earth and heaven. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah."

Soon shall I bid this world adieu!
And enter soon the world above;
The eternal day bursts on my view,
The radiance of eternal love.
Weep not, O friends, nor mourn my loss,
My purest joys are all to come;
When far removed from every cross,
I reach my sweet, my heavenly home.
The shadows fly, the glorious light
Bespeaks the Holy City nigh;
Behold the day excludes the night,
My soul, is this Eternity?
The first-born form a sacred train
Around the Lamb, whom they adore;
While, safe beneath his gentle reign,
They chant his praises evermore.
I fly to join the victor's cry;
To taste their transports, all divine!
I fly to share the bliss on high,
And in my Savior's glory shine.
Release me now, you heavy chains;
Burden of flesh, drop down, and die
You piercing griefs, you earthly pains,
From you forever do I fly.
Come, then, quickly, Jesus! Come!

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