

CHOICE SERMONS BY JAMES SMITH - VOLUME 1

by James Smith

The first volume of sermons by James Smith, Spurgeon's predecessor at New Park Street Chapel, focused on humbling sinners, exalting the Savior, and emphasizing God's free grace over human achievement.

23 Chapters

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Chapter 1

00.1-Choice Sermons By James Smith - Volume 1

Choice Sermons By James Smith - Volume 1

(1802 - 1862)

00.2-Author Note

Author Note

James Smith (1802-1862) was a predecessor of Charles Spurgeon at New Park Street Chapel in London from 1841 until 1850. Early on, Smith's readings were even more popular than Spurgeon's! My object is to lead the mind . . . from SELF - to Jesus; from sin - to salvation; from the troubles of life - to the comforts of the gospel. My aim is . . . to humble the sinner - and exalt the Savior; to strip the creature - and place the crown on the head of God's free grace!

I cannot ascribe too much to Jesus - or too little to man!

00.3-Source Note and Special Thanks

Source Note and Special Thanks

God's servants at <http://www.gracegems.org/> updated, revised, and adapted this beautiful material to modern English. They adopted a 'flowing poetic form' for most of the quotes as an aid to reflection and comprehension. <http://www.gracegems.org/19/literature.htm> Grace Gems Copyright Policy: We frequently get requests asking for permission to use literature from Grace Gems. Since everything on our website is public domain, there is no need to ask permission. We encourage others to use our literature in any way they desire. Forward it to others - add it to your website - put it in your church bulletins - make it into books or booklets for distribution. Also, feel free to add a "link" to <http://www.gracegems.org/> on your website - there is no need to ask for permission. (Formatted for e-Sword by Tom Rightmer using e-Sword ToolTip v3.44)

01-The Wealthy Family!

The Wealthy Family!

James Smith "There is no lack to those who fear Him!" Psalms 34:9 They are not truly wealthy - who appear to be so - or who boast of being so. The lost sinner must be poor. He has . . . no God to comfort him; no Savior to deliver him; no Guide to conduct him; no Advocate to plead for him; no inward peace to support him; no title to Heaven to encourage him.

He is poor. He is in need. He will need . . . confidence and comfort in death; a wedding garment, in which to appear before God; and a comfortable home throughout eternity!

Every lost sinner is indeed poor. His resources will soon be exhausted, and he will find himself "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!" He may have the appearance of prosperity - but not the reality. True riches belong to another family. The Lord's people all fear Him; that is, they fear to offend Him, and desire above all things to please Him. And though they may appear poor - they are really rich! God has provided all good things for them - and He gives all good things to them.

They have a solid peace, flowing from a knowledge of acceptance with God, through the blood of Jesus.

They have a joyful hope, which blooms with immortality.

They are assured of strength equal to their day; and of sanctifying grace to make all their troubles work for their good.

They are content with God's wise and holy appointments; and godliness with contentment is a good fortune.

They acquiesce in the will of God; and are often filled with joy which flows from His presence.

They obtain victory over the temptations which would ensnare them.

They live above the world, which would allure and beguile them.

They are sure of support in death.

They look forward to a joyful resurrection.

They rightly anticipate Heaven as their portion forever!

There is no lack to them, for all that they can truly need, is promised - and every promise is confirmed by the blood of Jesus!

Jehovah is theirs - along with all that He is, and has! His power is their support! His wisdom is their guide! His fullness is their fortune! His mercy is their friend! His love is their Heaven.

"Happy are the people who are in such a case!" All the Lord's people are really in this case - and therefore they are all happy!

Just think of having Almighty God for your present, constant, eternal Friend!

Think of having the wealth of Deity to supply and satisfy you! And if you sincerely fear God - then this is the reality of your case! No truth is more clearly revealed in Scripture. No subject is more rich with consolation!

Strength may be exhausted, health may decline, courage may fail, riches may flee, friends may forsake, enemies may increase, all circumstances may change for the worse - but "those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing!"

Sweet promise of a faithful God!

Here, pilgrim, is your staff - take it and travel home!

Here, saint, is your cordial - drink and forget your misery!

Here, believer, is your fortune - take it and live upon it, while a resident here below.

Here, fearful soul, is your antidote - use it to dispel your fears and cheer your fainting heart!

"The young lions may lack food and go hungry - but there is no lack to those who fear Him!"

Here is wealth! Here is comfort!

Here is all that we can need for life or death, time or eternity!

02-Paul's Seven Wishes!

Paul's Seven Wishes!

James Smith, 1856

Wishing is generally fruitless, and sometimes sinful. Resignation is generally better than wishing, and acquiescence in God's will, more so still. But it is natural to desire what we esteem to be good - and grace only regulates and sanctifies this exercise of nature. Desire is often the effect of knowledge - and it is the very soul of prayer. Whatever we have, there is much that we need, and, consequently, much that we must desire.

Paul desired seven things especially, and they all referred to Christ, and they are all named in his epistle to the Philippians, and I propose to glance at them. Let us compare our desires with his as we go on, and may the Holy Spirit bless our brief meditation on the subject.

First, he says, "that I may KNOW Him!" (Php 3:10.) Christ had appeared to Paul, he was revealed in him, and was constantly preached by him. Christ was . . . the object of his trust, the subject of his ministry, and the joy of his heart. But he knew that there was much in Christ with which he was unacquainted. He knew but in part. He desired, therefore, to know more of . . . the glory of his person, the riches of his grace, the magnificence of his work, the excellency of his natures, the majesty of his kingdom!

Everything in Christ interested Paul. Creation was good - but to him, grace was better; but Christ was best of all. He was never wearied of thinking of Christ, speaking of Christ, or learning of Christ. He went on with his work, he went on his way, with the desire constantly rising in his heart, "That I may know Him!"

Beloved, how is it with you? Do you sympathize with Paul in this desire of his heart? Is it your daily wish, ardent desire, and constant aim - to know more of Jesus?

Throughout eternity we shall be learning Christ!

He is the lesson placed before us in the church on earth; and he is the lesson placed before the church in Heaven.

Time is given us to learn Christ - and, blessed be God, eternity will be given to us to learn Christ also.

Nothing endears eternity to me like this - it will be spent in learning, enjoying, and honoring Christ!

Secondly, he says, "That I may WIN Christ!" (Php 3:8.) He was not merely satisfied to know Christ, as the property of someone else; he wanted Christ as his own! He was not only willing to receive Christ as a free gift - but he would win Christ as a prize. Was Christ to be run for - then he would run. Was Christ to be wrestled for - then he would wrestle. Were there any means by which Christ could be obtained, however painful, however costly, however difficult - then Paul would use them!

Did he believe? It was that he might win Christ. Did he pray? It was that he might win Christ. Did he preach? It was that he might win Christ. Did he crucify the old man, mortify the flesh, beat his body and make it his slave? It was that he might win Christ. Did he suffer the loss of all things, and count them but dung and dross? It was that he might win Christ. Did he subject himself to stripes, imprisonment, hunger, cold, nakedness, and a martyr's death? It was that he might win Christ. To possess Christ was his one object, his ruling desire!

Reader, is it your main object and desire? Are you prepared to part with all for Christ? Would you take Christ - in exchange for ease, reputation, wealth, labors, sufferings, yes, even death itself? Paul was; and if you are not, his estimates of Christ and yours cannot be the same. My soul, I charge you - let this be your object, let this be your aim, always and everywhere: to "win Christ!"

Thirdly, "To MAGNIFY Christ!" Hence he says, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!" (Php 1:20-21) Paul desired to exhibit and exalt Christ!

If he wrote - he wrote of Christ.

If he spoke - he spoke of Christ.

If he suffered - he suffered for Christ.

If he sorrowed - it was because professors dishonored Christ.

Christ was to him dearer than the apple of his eye - and more precious than all things in earth or Heaven! He would live - if he could honor Jesus; or he would die for him - if that would honor him more. He felt his obligation. He was inflamed with his love. He was a sacrifice on his altar. He was a vessel for his honor. He would go anywhere, he would do anything - if he might but honor Christ. Heartily he would say, "Let the name of Paul perish, if the name of Christ can be magnified thereby!" To him Christ was, in fact, all and all. He died for Christ; the honor of Christ was the end for which he laid down his life. My brother, how is it with you? Does your heart cry, "Oh, that I could honor Christ!" Does your life make this impression on others, "That man aims to honor Christ!" Is it your daily cry and prayer, "Let Christ be magnified in me, by me, and through me - in life, in death, in time, and forever!"

Oh my soul, let it be my constant desire and prayer - that Jesus, my Jesus, may be magnified by me!

Fourthly, "To be FOUND IN Christ." (Php 3:9). Paul wished to be IN Christ. . . as Noah was in the ark, as the man-slayer was in his refuge, as the jewel is in the cabinet, and as Christ is in God. The closest possible union, the nearest and dearest communion - was desired by him.

If he is accepted by God - then he desires to be accepted in the name of Jesus.

If he is justified - then he wishes it to be in the righteousness of Jesus.

If he is sanctified - then he would be so by the Spirit of Jesus.

He would have Paul to be 'nothing' - and Jesus to be 'all'. In Christ, he knew he would be safe. In Christ, he felt he would be happy. In Christ, he was persuaded he would be satisfied.

Christ in Paul was his life.

Paul in Christ was his honor.

Friend, are you IN Christ? Is it your ambition to be found in Christ?

If death finds you - will it find you in Christ?

If justice finds you - will it find you in Christ?

If judgment finds you - will it find you in Christ? In Christ - you will find God as a Father. In Christ - you will meet all the saints as your brethren. In Christ - you will find the angels ministering unto you. In Christ - death has no sting. In Christ - the grave has no terrors. In Christ - the law has no claims upon you. In Christ - there are no threatenings in God's Word against you. In Christ - all the promises are confirmed to you.

How glorious to be in Christ! My soul, let this be your daily prayer, "That I may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law - but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Fifthly, "To be CONFORMED to Christ." (Php 3:10). It was not enough to know Christ, to win Christ, to magnify Christ, or to be in Christ; Paul wishes to be LIKE Christ! He would . . . breathe his spirit, exhibit his temper, copy his example, and be just like Christ!

He desired to be . . . like Christ in poverty, like Christ in suffering, like Christ in death itself.

Paul desired to be exactly like Jesus!

Meek - as Jesus was meek.

Patient - as Jesus was patient.

Loving - as Jesus was loving.

Useful - as Jesus was useful. In every point resembling him!

What admiration of Christ is here!

What love to Christ!

What self-renunciation!

What power of grace!

What a wonderful transformation! How unlike Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee of the Pharisees, the persecutor of the church, the blasphemer of the Nazarene! What could be more unlike?

Once he saw no beauty in Christ - now he sees nothing but beauty.

Once he could not bear the mention of his name - now he never seems happy, but when pronouncing it.

Once he was exceeding mad against him and his people - now his heartfelt abiding cry is, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings - becoming like him in his death!"

Dear reader, have you ever experienced any such change? Are you panting, praying, striving to be like Jesus? Are you willing to be anything that Jesus was - that you may be like him? Are you willing to suffer even death - that you may be conformed to him? My soul, this is a very high attainment - aspire to it! Seek grace day by day at the throne of grace - that you may so love, so admire, so adore the Savior - as to desire to be conformed to him in life, in death, and forever!

Sixthly, "To be WITH Christ." (Php 1:23).

Paul dearly loved his work.

He was greatly attached to the church - which needed his presence, gifts, and labors.

He deeply sympathized with poor perishing sinners - who needed the gospel. But such was his love to Jesus, that he felt himself in a great strait, "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" He says nothing about place, or employment, the absence of sorrow, or the possession of joy; his heart was fixed on the person of Christ. To be with Christ - this was his desire. To be with Christ anywhere - was enough. To be with Christ forever - was a sufficient Heaven.

Paul had no idea of the soul sleeping, or of an intermediate state where Christ was not. His idea was, "Absent from the body - present with the Lord!" Therefore he was willing to lay down his body, to put off the tabernacle - if by doing so, he may be with Christ. To be with Christ, to him was far better than life with all its comforts. To be with Christ, to him was far better than the world with all its privileges and pleasures. To be with Christ! This is . . . the flower of bliss, the crown of glory, the perfection of happiness. To be with Christ! Paul could desire nothing beyond this! My brother, can you sympathize with Paul here? Does not Jesus sometimes come to you? Are not his visits peculiarly sweet? Do you not, at such times - desire to be forever with him? Do you not? What! a Christian and a stranger to the visits of Jesus - or, enjoy the visits of Jesus, and not desire to be with him forever and altogether? How can one understand this? If one tastes of the grapes of Canaan - one wants to go and see the vineyards. If one obtains a pledge of the inheritance - one wants to go and take full and eternal possession of it. My soul, you do at times long to depart and be with Jesus! Oh, that this were more frequently my sweet experience! All saints feel this, and, blessed be God, that promise extends to it, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted!" Paul's desire is now realized; and if we desire as he did - ours, too will be realized by and bye!

Seventhly, "To REJOICE in the Day of Christ." (Php 2:16) Paul was constantly looking forward to Christ's second coming, and pointing believers to it. He expected great things then, therefore he longed for it, rejoiced in anticipation of it, and prepared to enter into all its glories and joys. The Day of Christ is that day specially set apart for his glory, when he will openly wed his church, crush under his feet Satan and all his foes, and appear in his own glory, and in his Father's glory too. Such a day has never yet been seen. Such another period, there never will be.

Paul's desire was to meet all his converts then, and present them to his glorious Master. "For what," said he, "is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord

Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?" "That you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life - in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing."

Jesus is coming to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe; and Paul desired to see all his children there, as mirrors to reflect the glory of Jesus, as monuments on which will be inscribed his triumphs. This would add to his joy. This would open sources of unutterable pleasure. This would produce exquisite delight. Happy Paul, the day of Christ will be a triumphant day for you! The coming of Jesus will be a glorious event to you!

Reader, what will it be to you? Do you expect the fulfillment of that sweet passage then - "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear - then you shall also appear with him in glory!" My soul, I charge you so to live, so to labor, so to suffer, so to believe, and so to die - that you may rejoice in the day of Christ. Look forward to it, as to the day of jubilee, the year of release - and expect grace to be brought unto you at that appearing of Jesus Christ.

We have thus looked at Paul's seven wishes. He had others, no doubt; but these were his principal, his abiding ones. All of Paul's desires are gratified - but one.

Now he knows Christ, not in part - but even as also he is known.

He has won Christ, and possesses him as the prize of his high calling. There is no running, wrestling, or striving now. No, no, Christ is his - in the highest, in the fullest, in the most glorious sense of the term.

He has magnified Christ in his body, both in life and in death; and he now magnifies Christ in glory before thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers!

He is found in Christ. Death found him in Christ, and he said, "I am ready!" The ministering angel found him in Christ and conducted him up to the eternal throne, and there he is in Christ forever!

He is conformed to Christ in holiness, happiness, and glory - as concerning his soul, and will be in reference to his body "at the resurrection of the just."

He is with Christ. With Christ, in the presence of his Father. With Christ, in the mansion prepared for him in his Father's house. With Christ, and with Christ forever! But the last wish waits to be realized - and it will be soon. For "he who shall come, will come - and will not tarry!" "The Lord my God will come, and all the saints with him!" The redemption of the body will soon take place - the redemption of the purchased possession will soon be realized; then . . . the groans of creation will be silenced, the prayers of the church will be ended, the promises that refer to that glorious period will be fulfilled, and the whole earth will be filled with his glory! Then the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. All flesh will see the salvation of God. The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together - for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!

We must close our remarks. A man's state before God, may be known by the nature and character of the abiding desires of his soul. For if as Solomon said, "As he thinks in his heart - so is he;" so we may say, "as he desires in his heart - so is he."

If our desires meet and center in Christ - we must be true Christians. If to know Christ, to win Christ, to magnify Christ, to be found in Christ, to be conformed to Christ, to be with Christ, and rejoice in the day of Christ's second coming - are the desires of our souls - then we are as really Christians as Paul was!

Paul, you see, begins with Christ, goes on with Christ, and ends with Christ. Christ was his Alpha - and Christ was his Omega. Christ was the circle within which he moved, the center to which he constantly tended. The grace of Christ converted him, the preaching of Christ employed him, the power of Christ sustained him, and the glory promised by Christ attracted him.

Faith in Christ gave him peace, love to Christ set him working, zeal for Christ stimulated him to persevere, and the hope of glory promised by Christ, prompted him to press forward with incessant ardor. Is our religion, then, like Paul's? Is Christ . . . our Alpha and Omega, our first and last, our center and circumference, our all in all? Would taking away Christ extinguish our light, destroy our life, and pass sentence of death on all our hopes and joys? If so - then all is well. All is right. As we have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord - so let us walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Holy Spirit, glorify Jesus in us, by us, and through us, more and more every day!

"For to me, to live is Christ - and to die is gain!"

Christ is my all, my sure defense, Nor shall my soul depart from thence:

He is my rock, my refuge too, In spite of all my foes can do!

Christ is my all, and he will lead My soul in pastures green to feed;

'Tis he supplies my every want, And will all needful blessings grant.

Christ is my all - where should I go?

Without him I can nothing do;

Helpless and weak, a sinner great, Yet in his righteousness complete!

03-A Curious Meditation

A Curious Meditation by James Smith, 1855 As I was walking out for exercise in the fields one morning, having been pleading with God to give me some profitable subject for meditation--I suddenly fell into this train of thought, which I afterwards wrote down; and, as it may interest and profit some, it is here inserted.

There are three things which I especially desire: more communion with God, more likeness to the Lord Jesus, and more usefulness to his Church.

There are three things which I deprecate: the withering of my gifts, the decay of my graces, and to become useless in the Lord's vineyard.

There are three things which I dread: that I should become a proud professor, that I should become a lukewarm Christian, and that I should fall into the hands of man.

There are three things which I sometimes wish for (but which God will never grant me on earth): to be totally free from sin, to be delivered from a daily cross, and to be always happy.

There are three things which I feel sure of: hatred by the world, opposition by hypocrites, and love by spiritual believers.

There are three foes which always oppose me: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

There are three friends which will always stand by me: a peaceful conscience, the bride of Jesus, and the Lamb of God.

There are three deaths which have been experienced by me: a death in sin, a death to sin, a death to the law of God.

There are three lives which shall be lived by me: a temporal life, a spiritual life, and an eternal life.

There are three things which burden me: a body of sin and death, the opposition I meet with, and my own ingratitude.

There are three things which support me: the Father's love, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's work.

There are three things which are a sore trial to me: an irritable temper, a flippant tongue, and self-love.

There are three things which bring strong consolation to me: the open fountain of Christ blood, the promises of God, and the Savior's free invitation.

There are three things which are especially dear to me: the Word of God, the throne of grace, and the ordinances of the Lord's house.

There are three things lacking in me: perfect penitence, entire resignation, and fervent love.

There are three books which are very useful to me: the book of nature, the book of Holy Scriptures, and the book of my own experience.

There are three teachers which are employed to instruct me: the Holy Spirit, a special providence, and the rod of God.

There are three things which are manifested in me: the nature of sin, the power of grace, and the faithfulness of God.

There are three things which would be greatly useful to me: more humility, spiritual wisdom, and enlightened zeal.

There are three things which characterize me: weakness, poverty, and sinfulness.

Yet, there are three things which may be seen in me:

Christ's strength, God's grace, and the Spirit's holiness.

There are three things which are feared by me: a stiff neck, a hard heart, and a presumptuous spirit.

There are three things which are matter of joy to me: the conversion of sinners, that my name is written in heaven, and the glory to be given me at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

There are three things which must be renounced by me: preconceived opinions, worldly wisdom, and natural religion.

There are three things which must be held fast by me: the Word of truth, my confidence in God, and my profession of the gospel.

There are three things which are especially required of me: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God.

There are three things which are promised to me: tribulation in the world, sufficient strength in Jesus, and eternal life at the end of my course.

There are three things which the Lord observes and approves in me: the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a threefold deliverance which is effected for me: from the dominion of sin, from the present evil world, and from my deserved doom.

There are three things which I would trample under foot: unfounded prejudice, vain distinctions, and self-righteousness.

There are three things which I would aim at daily: to exalt Christ, to glorify God, and to bring sinners to repentance.

There are three things which are still sure to me: a rough road, changing experiences, and safety at last.

There are three things which are behind me: a wicked life, a broken law, and the pit of destruction.

There are three things which are before me: death, perfect conformity to Jesus, and eternal glory.

There are three things which are on my right hand:

Satan to resist me, the Lord Jesus to save me, and my own heart set on things above.

There are three things which are on my left hand: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

There are three things which I greatly admire: the Savior's person, the promises of God, and the instruments he employs in carrying on his work.

There are three things which much please me: the doctrines of the gospel, the witness of the Spirit, and the light of God's countenance.

There are three things which I delight in: that Jehovah is my God, the comfort he imparts to me, and the riches of glory which are set before me.

There are three things which I hate: the cant of hypocrites, the flattery of friends, and the pride of professors.

There are three things which are good for me: to draw near to God, to be afflicted, and to sing praises unto the Lord.

There are three things which often disgust me:

Satan's temptations, the powerful working of unbelief, and the conduct of religious professors.

There are three things which are prescribed to me: to believe in God, to love the saints, and to observe the Lord's ordinances.

There are three things which are too often neglected by me: self-examination, diligent reading of the Bible, and secret prayer.

There are three things which are too deep for me to fully know: the depravity of my heart, the devices of Satan, and the manner of the Spirit's working.

There are three things which I wish to leave with the Lord: to choose my lot in life, to fight my battles, and to supply all my needs.

There are three things which I do not consider worth having: a form of godliness, without the power, a name to live, while dead, and the commendation of the enemies of Christ.

There are three things in which I glory: the cross of Christ, my saving knowledge of God, and the everlasting gospel.

There are three things which have been taken from me: proud free will, vain boasting, and enmity to God.

There are three things which abide with me: faith, hope, and charity.

I am made up of three men: corruption--the old man, grace--the new man, and the body--the outward man.

I fill a threefold office: a prophet in the Church of Christ, a priest before the altar, and a king anointed to reign with Christ.

I wear a threefold garment: the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, the graces of the Holy Spirit, and the garment of humility.

I have been condemned in three courts--and yet justified in them all: the court of conscience, the Church of God, and the court of God's justice.

I have been justified three times: at the resurrection of Christ my substitute, when faith received his righteousness, and when good works justified my faith before the world.

I am the subject of a threefold sanctification: by the purpose of the Father, by the blood of the Son, and by the cleansing operations of the Holy Spirit.

I am a free man of three cities: the present world, the church below, and the Jerusalem which is above.

I have been an eye-sore to three parties: the devil, the world, and envious professors.

I shall have occupied three peculiar seats: a dunghill by nature, among the princes in the Church by grace, and the throne of glory by special privilege.

I shall have three grand holidays: one when the Holy Spirit sets my soul at liberty, another when death sets me free from this mortal clay, and another when Jesus comes to be glorified in his saints.

I shall then have appeared in three different characters: a vile rebel against God, a supplicating sinner at mercy's footstool, and a justified son of God before his throne.

I shall have had three fathers: a human father, the devil, and Jehovah himself.

I shall have received three laws: the law of nature, the moral law of God, and the law of the Spirit of life.

I shall have passed through three gates: the gate of hope, the gate into Christ's sheepfold, and the gate of death.

I shall have walked in three ways: the broad road of destruction, the highway of holiness, and Jesus Christ the only way to the Father.

I shall have conversed with three distinct classes of beings: carnal men, spiritual Christians, and the Lord himself.

I shall have made three appearances: once all black--like the devil, then speckled--with nature and grace, and then all pure--whiter than the driven snow!

I shall have undergone three momentous changes: one at regeneration--when I passed from death unto life, one at death--when my soul shall be admitted into Heaven, and one at the resurrection--when my body shall be raised powerful, glorious, and immortal.

I view three things as pre-eminently excellent: the fear of the Lord, a sound judgment, and Christ formed in the heart, as the hope of glory.

There are three things which I may covet: the best gifts, a contrite and humble spirit, and to be filled with all the fullness of God.

There are three things which are removed from me: the burden of sin, the wrath of God, and all condemnation.

There are three things which I do not know: what is before me, how God will provide for me, and what I shall be.

There are three things which I do know: that in my flesh dwells no good, that though I was once blind, now I see, and that I must needs die.

There are three things which are prepared for me: a fountain to cleanse me, a robe to adorn me, and a mansion to receive me.

There are three things which await me: a crown of righteousness, a palm of victory, and a throne of glory.

There are three things which shall be done for me:

God shall wipe away all tears from my eyes, God shall remove all cause of pain and sorrow from my nature, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall eternally satisfy me.

There are three things which shall never be known by me: the frown of divine justice, the curse of holy Jehovah, and the power of God's anger.

There are three things which are hurtful to me: carnal ease, the flattery of professors, and fullness of bread.

There are three things which benefit me: temptation, affliction, and opposition.

There are three things which are pursued by me: to know more of the Lord, to live in peace with all men, and thorough sanctification.

Satan tries to thwart me in three things: by spoiling my comforts, hindering my usefulness, and seeking to devour my soul.

Satan has three things to expect: to be disappointed of his prey, to be judged by the saints, and to be eternally punished for his wickedness.

There are three things which I would never trust: my own heart, an arm of flesh, and my treacherous memory.

There are three subjects which I should never meddle with: the fall of the angels, the origin of moral evil, and how God will justify himself.

There are three things which I cannot understand: the nature of God, the cause of my election, and how divinity and humanity constitute one person.

There are three things which I should often think of: what I have been, what I now am, and what I shall be. A threefold freedom is granted me: from the law of God, from the reign of sin, and to make use of, and enjoy the Lord Jesus.

I am an heir of three worlds: the natural, the spiritual, and the eternal.

There are three things which will never grieve me: that I have been poor in this world, that I have preached the gospel fully, and that I am related to Jesus Christ.

There are three things which comprise all I wish: to know God, and glorify him, to see Jesus, and be like him; and to be united to the saints, and be eternally happy.

There are three things which shall never be heard by me:

Christ reproaching me, God disowning me, and the devils triumphing in my everlasting destruction.

There are three things which shall be eternally enjoyed by me: the love of God, the presence of Jesus, and the company of the saints.

There are three things which will eternally delight me: to be filled with holiness, to be employed in praising Jehovah, and to have gained a complete victory over all my foes.

There are three things which must come down: the pride of men, the devil's kingdom, and the cause of error.

There are three things which will stand: the house built on the Rock, the purpose of God, and the Messiah's kingdom.

There are three things which cannot be removed: the church of God, the covenant of grace, and the kingdom we receive.

There are three things which will stand the fiery trial: genuine faith, the Word of God, and a real Christian.

Lost sinners are like Satan in three things: their nature, their employment, and their end.

Three things make Hell: the wrath of God, the stings of a guilty conscience, and black despair.

Three things prove a man a Christian: worshiping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh.

Three things are never satisfied: a doubting Christian, a worldly miser, and the man of pleasure.

Christ fills three offices: a prophet--for the ignorant, a priest--for the guilty, and a king--for the depraved.

Christ has been in three states: ancient glory, deep humiliation, and merited dignity.

What more shall I say!

If you, reader, are a sincere Christian--do three things daily: search God's Word, be much at God's throne, and be diligent in God's work.

If you are an unconverted sinner--do three things immediately: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of every sin you have committed, seek the witness and pledge of the Holy Spirit in your heart, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

04-Abide with Me

Abide with Me James Smith, 1859

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine - neither can you, unless you abide in Me." John 15:4

Union with Christ is one of the greatest privileges of the believer; and to be one with Christ is the privilege of every believer. Nor ought anyone who professes religion to be satisfied without knowing, and daily realizing - that he is one with Christ. Our comfort, our stability, and our usefulness, very much depend on this. The union between Christ and His people is represented by Himself by the figure of a vine and its branches; teaching us that our union with Him is as real, as close, and as necessary - as the union of the branch with its parent stem. O what a glorious privilege to be one with Christ! Thus . . . receiving all our supplies from Christ, partaking of the nature of Christ, bearing fruit like Christ, being absolutely dependent on Christ for all our spiritual life, vigor, and strength. Being one with Christ, our Beloved Lord gives us this gracious and necessary direction, "Abide in Me."

Let us make this the great object of our lives, and keep it constantly before our minds. And in order that we may be enabled and encouraged to abide in Jesus - let us consider . . . what it supposes, what it requires, and what it secures.

Holy Spirit, as the glorifier of Jesus - be our teacher: unfold the truth to our understandings, apply it to our hearts, and write it in large characters upon our memories.

What does abiding in Christ suppose? Of course, that we are engrafted into Him by a true and living faith, and that we rest alone on Him for our acceptance with God; for unless we are in union with Christ - we cannot abide in Him. But being in Christ, in order to our actual and experimental abiding in Him - we must daily feel our need of Him. One great part of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is to . . . empty us, strip us of self, lead us to feel our own weakness, and bring us as poor sinners to look to Jesus alone, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. And just in proportion as we feel our need of Christ, and realize our absolute nothingness without Christ - shall we prize Him, enjoy Him, and exercise dependence upon Him. As we must daily feel our need of Christ - so also we must have a scriptural knowledge of Christ. Just in proportion as we know Christ - shall we make use of Him, cleave to Him, and rejoice in Him. Well did the Apostle know how necessary the knowledge of Christ was, and therefore he prayed for the Ephesians, who knew so much of Christ already, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." And giving expression to the desire of his own soul, he exclaimed, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

O how little do many of us know of Christ, and therefore it is that we make so little use of Christ, receive so little from Christ, and do so little for Christ! Our sense of our need of Christ, if it is deep and increasing - will lead us to seek to know more of Christ; and knowing more of Christ, we shall

daily come to Christ for all our supplies. This is the next prerequisite to our abiding in Christ, we must come to Him. We come to Him at first - as poor, lost, helpless sinners, that we may be saved by his merit and mercy. And as believers, we must continually come to Him . . . with all our burdens - that He may bear them; with all our cares - that He may manage them; with all our sorrows - that He may sanctify them; with all our foes - that He may conquer them; with all our sins - that He may cleanse them; and with all our needs - that He may supply them.

All that we need is in Christ - and it is in Christ, for us. Our deep necessity fits us for Christ - and His infinite fullness fits Him for us! Our trials, troubles, temptations, disappointments, and vexations - are to teach us our need of Christ; and what we receive from Christ is to make all these things blessings to us.

Fellowship with Christ is necessary to our abiding in Christ. Peter describes the Christian life thus: "Coming to Him as to a living stone . . . you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4-5

If therefore we would abide in Jesus, we must more and more feel our need of Him; we must increase in our knowledge of Him; we must seek all our supplies from Him; and realize that we are in union with Him!

What does abiding in Christ require? Many things - and we will notice a few of them. We must think of Him, or exercise the intellect upon Him. As we are capable of thinking, and have the power of fixing our thoughts upon an object - we must make Christ the great object of our thoughts, and think of Him. That we think of Christ so little, so seldom - is one great reason why we enjoy Christ so little.

Beloved, we should think . . . of His glorious person; of His free and abounding grace; of His infinite and everlasting merit; of His deep and tender sympathy; of His authority and unlimited dominion; and of His eternal and changeless love!

We should think. . . of what He was in glory; of what He became on earth; of what He did while here below; of what He suffered on our behalf; and of what He is now doing at the right hand of God.

We should think of . . . His nature, His offices, His relations, and His glorious second advent!

Oh, how much there is in Jesus to occupy our thoughts, and feast our souls! Is it not astonishing that we do not think of Him more? Never, never, shall we enjoy deep spirituality; or rise above our doubts and fears; or rejoice in God; or be very useful among our fellow-men - unless we think of Christ more! As we must think of Christ - so we must hear and read of Christ. The senses should be employed on Christ, as well as the intellect. If we can hear at all - we should go where we can hear of Christ, not only on the Lord's day - but on other days too. If we can read at all, we should read of Christ; and as Christ is the most important subject, and as we are more deeply interested in Him than in anything else - we should read of Him most. It is one thing to read religious books - and quite another thing to read of Christ; for many religious books have very little of Christ in them. Nor should we so much read what man says of Christ - as what God says. God's own book should be our book, and we should read it, that we may know more of Christ, and become more like

Christ.

We shall never abide in Christ as we ought, unless we hear more of Christ, read more of Christ, and think more of Christ. But we must not stop at thinking, hearing, or reading of Christ - we must actually commune with Christ. There is often much prayer - and yet little communion with Christ. We should realize that Christ is present with us. That we are alone with Him. That he is giving us His whole attention. That he expects us to tell Him . . . all that troubles us, all that grieves us, all that pleases us, all that we need, and all that we desire.

We should keep back nothing from Him - but speak to Him freely on every subject, and every circumstance. And realizing that Christ is with us, listening to us, and by sympathy entering into all our circumstances - we should expect to receive . . . intimations of His will, proofs of His approbation, communications of His grace, and the consoling influences of His love. Our thoughts should ascend to Jesus, and His thoughts should descend and take possession of our minds. Without more direct, sensible, and secret communion with Christ - we shall not much enjoy our union with Christ, or attend to the admonition to abide in Him.

Having communion with Christ - we must trust Him. He requires us . . . to treat Him with confidence; to believe what He says; to expect what He promises; to do what He bids us.

We must trust him with the salvation of our souls, and having put them into His hands, having committed them to His keeping - we should rest satisfied that He will save them. We must trust Him with the body as well as the soul, believing that He feels an interest in the one as well the other. Yes, we must ask Him to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure; to fulfill in us all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power. And we must trust for temporal concerns also, looking to Him for food and clothing, as well as for grace and glory.

We do not half trust the Savior as we ought. Our confidence in Him is not worthy of Him. Our doubts, fears, and misgivings dishonor Him. Let us therefore seek grace that we may trust in Him at all times; trust Him for all, and trust Him notwithstanding all. As we must trust Jesus, so we must identify our cause with His. Christ and His people are one. As the branch and the vine are one, as the members and the head are one, as the building and the foundation are one - so Christ and his people are one. He has identified Himself with them - and they should identify Him with themselves. He has identified His cause with theirs - and they should identify theirs with His. Jesus takes an interest in all that concerns them and theirs - and they should take an interest in all that concerns Him and His. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are His."

Christ says, "My person, My obedience, My grace, My Spirit, My word, My wealth, My glory - is yours! You shall taste My sorrows now - and share in My throne, kingdom, and glory by and by." We therefore should say, "My person, my property, my time, my talents, my influence, my all - is yours. You, O my Savior, shall be honored by . . . my poverty or wealth, my adversity or prosperity, my sickness or health, my life or my death.

I will be for You, and for You alone now - as I hope to be with You and like You forever.

Beloved, let us think of Christ more, let us read of Christ more, let us commune with Christ more, and let us identify ourselves with the cause of Christ - so shall we abide in Him.

What will abiding in Christ secure?

1. It will secure our safety. Noah was not so safe in his ark; Lot was not so safe in Zoar; the man-slayer was not so safe in the city of refuge - as the true believer is in Christ. Abiding in Christ, to him there is no condemnation; every sin is pardoned; the whole, the perfect, the glorious righteousness of Christ is his! All the glorious perfections of His nature are thrown around the man who abides in Him. He is . . . safe from Satan, who cannot destroy him; safe from sin, which shall not have dominion over him; safe from men, for no weapon formed against him shall prosper; and safe from death, for Jesus has said, "He who keeps My sayings shall never taste of death." In Christ! his person is secure.

2. Abiding in Christ - all things work together for his good. Happy believer, no one shall ever pluck you out of your Redeemer's hands, or sever you from your Savior's love! Abiding in Christ will not only secure our safety - but our happiness! Happy, thrice happy is the man who is in Christ.

He is not only pardoned - but justified; not only justified - but accepted and pleasant in the sight of God; not only accepted - but adopted, and is God's beloved child; not only a beloved child - but an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ! Is it not enough to make a man happy, to know that God . . . has blotted out all his sins; has given him a glorious, eternal inheritance; and never looks upon him, but as in Christ, nor treats him otherwise than as a beloved child?

3. Abiding in Christ not only fixes us in a happy state - but secures our supplies. All that we need for the body and for the soul, for life and in death - is provided for us, secured to us, and will be conferred upon us - as we need it. O how precious the Apostle's words to the Philippians: "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus!" Well may our beloved Lord say, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." (Matthew 6:34.)

Beloved, the God who has numbered the very hairs of our heads; the God who has redeemed our souls from everlasting death; the God who has made us so one with His Son, that we are forever united with Him - this God has provided for all our needs, has promised to supply all our needs, and will be as good as His Word.

4. Abiding in Christ will also secure our usefulness. We long to be useful, and by our usefulness to glorify our God, and honor our beloved Savior. Usefulness does not depend on great gifts, on exalted station, or on bodily vigor; but it does depend very much on our union to Christ, communion with Christ, and abiding in Christ. "He who abides in Me," says Jesus, "and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." Not only fruit, you see - but much fruit. O if we were living in close and intimate fellowship with Jesus, if we were abiding in Him as the branch in the vine - then how useful we should be!

Let us then be deeply impressed with the consideration that our safety, happiness, supplies, and usefulness - depend on our abiding in Jesus! And just in proportion as we wish to . . . realize our safety, enjoy solid happiness, live without care and anxiety, and to be useful in our day and generation - shall we endeavor to abide in Jesus. My dear friends, we live in stirring times, everything is full of life and vigor - except the Church of Christ, which ought to be more so than anything else. We hear of the outpouring of the Spirit, and of a great revival of religion in another land, and we need the same blessing in our own. Many seem to be impressed with this fact, and

means are being used to obtain such a blessing. But is it not to be feared that many are looking to meetings, to excitement, and to the use of means - rather than to God. And is there not reason to fear that the feelings produced by exciting circumstances and startling news from abroad, will end with them? It is not mere excitement that we need - but something purer, deeper, and more spiritual. We may have physical excitement, mental excitement, and even spiritual excitement - and it may end in nothing. We need deep spirituality. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need abiding in Christ, that we may . . . breathe the spirit of Christ, copy the example of Christ, and so be extensively useful in the cause of Christ. Shall we have a revival of pure and undefiled religion? Shall we be instrumental in obtaining and bringing about such a blessed state of things? If so, we must attend to the following things:

First, we must be in Christ. Apart from Christ, without union to Him - we can do nothing in this matter. As poor sinners, we must feel our need of Christ, come to Christ, obtain salvation from Christ, and by faith and love be united to the person of Christ. No union to Christ - no grace, no spiritual life, no acceptance with God, or access with confidence to God. Without union to Christ, we have no power with God; and unless we have power with God, we shall have no power with man for spiritual and saving purposes.

Second, we must be intimate with Christ. We must live by faith in Him. We must walk with Him. We must carry everything to Him. We must seek all we need from Him. We must be constantly . . . going to Christ, conversing with Christ, and obtaining from Christ. The branch receives from the vine night and day, summer and winter; there is a constant communication from the root, through the trunk to the branches, and hence the buds, the blossoms, and the fruit.

Just so, there must be constant fellowship between Christ and our souls. The more we receive from Christ, the more we can do for Christ. This leads me to observe,

Thirdly, that we must act for Christ. There are many things done by religious people, and in the cause of God - but they are not done for Christ. Jesus could not say, "You did it unto Me." We may act from pity - or from pride, for applause - or to satisfy conscience; but we should act for Christ. The glory of Christ should ever be our aim and end in all our religious actions. As all that Christ did, as the Savior - he did for us; so all that we do as Christians - should be done for him.

Now, unless we are in union with Christ, we cannot be intimate with Christ; so unless we are intimate with Christ, we shall not, in our efforts and endeavors to do good acts for Christ.

Fourth, we must be like Christ. We may possess His nature, for "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ - he is none of His." We must become His disciples, and learn of Him. We must . . . copy His example, breathe His spirit, and imbibe His temper.

Every Christian should represent Christ in the world, in the family, and in the Church of God; and if we do not give a fair representation of Christ - we do not answer the end of our new creation.

Until we are more like Christ, it cannot be said of us, "You are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ, written not with ink - but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone - but in the fleshy tables of the heart." O for grace to make us more like Christ.

Finally, we must receive the Holy Spirit from Christ. The Father promised to give His Holy Spirit to the Church. When the Son had finished His work on earth, He went up to Heaven, and received of

the Father the promised Spirit. On the day of Pentecost He sent down that Spirit into His Church; and by the wisdom, power, and operations of that Spirit - sinners were converted, the Church increased, and believers were edified.

Now, the great thing we need for ourselves, is the Spirit in His fullness and in power. That fullness and power of the Spirit that we need must be obtained from Christ - but it can only be obtained by close walking with Christ. The great thing needed by the Church, in order to its union, harmony, and increase - is the Spirit in His fullness and in power. That blessing would . . . remove our prejudices against each other, break down all the walls and hedges that keep us asunder, lead us more fully into the truth, and fill us with love to one another.

Then we would love one another as Christ has loved us, and this being the case, the Church of Jesus would soon "appear like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession!"

Then the poor, selfish worldlings around us, would be compelled to exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another!" And then the conviction would be forced on every conscience, that the religion of Christ is a divine reality, a holy power, and a supernatural nature. Nothing will impact the world - like the holiness of the Church! This, then, is what we need for the Church - not worldly titles, places, or honors; not worldly wealth, respectability, or distinctions; not so much great gifts, splendid talents, or powerful minds - but the Spirit in His fullness and in power! This is the great thing needed by the world. It has the Gospel, the Christian ministry, the Church, and all various religious societies - and yet it still lies in the power of the wicked one. There are comparatively few conversions, while multitudes are hardening in sin. Nothing but the Spirit in His fullness and in power - will awaken sinners to a sense of their danger, convince them of sin before God, or lead them to the Cross for life and salvation. The world is God's enemy. The world is governed by Satan. The world hates the light. And in this state it will continue "until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high" - and then there will be deep convictions, numerous conversions, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

Reader, are you in Christ? This is a very solemn and important question. Press it home on your heart, nor rest until you can say, "Yes, blessed be God, through free and sovereign grace - Christ and my soul are one!"

If you are in Christ - are you intimate with Christ? Is there a constant fellowship carried on between Christ and your soul, in reference to all things, both temporal and spiritual? Remember, if you are a Christian, the Lord Jesus feels interested in everything that affects you, however insignificant it may appear. Do you act for Christ? Is the honor and glory of Jesus the great end at which you aim, the chief object which you have habitually in view?

Think for Jesus.

Speak for Jesus.

Act for Jesus.

Let your whole life be consecrated to Jesus. May you sincerely say, "For to me, to live is Christ!" - and then for you "to die will be gain". Whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him. Are you like Christ! I think I hear you exclaim, "Oh, how

faint the resemblance! If at all like Him - O how little!" Well, friend, if you would be like Christ, you must be much with Christ; and if you are much with Christ, you will in Christ see the glory of God, and be gradually changed "into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Will you receive the fullness of the Spirit from Christ? He has it. He has promised it. He is prepared to bestow it. But He will have us feel our need of it, ardently long for it, earnestly seek it, and persevere in our applications - until we obtain it. In this way the Spirit in His fullness and power may be obtained - but in no other way. We have not - because we ask not - or because we ask amiss. Let us come to Jesus as poor, empty, needy creatures, and seek until we obtain this invaluable blessing at His hands. And now to conclude, let us pity the Church - torn and divided, comparatively powerless and feeble as it is. And for the honor of Christ, and out of pure love to the brethren - let us set our hearts upon obtaining the empowering of the Holy Spirit for it, in greater fullness than it has been enjoyed by it in our day.

Let us also look with joy on this poor unhappy world, which lies under sentence of death, only waiting for the day of execution; and let us endeavor to bring down the Holy Spirit upon it, by earnest, united, importunate, persevering prayer! Morning, noon, and night - let us pray for it. In public, in private, and in our families, let us pray for it. And while we pray that the Holy Spirit may descend upon it, let us speak to all about us of Jesus, and try, as if all depended on our efforts - to save souls from death. The secret of success lies here, in our being united to Christ, abiding in Christ, and acting for Christ; acting for Christ - as if everything depended on what we do - and yet depending upon the Holy Spirit - as if everything depended on His presence, power, and operation alone.

Gracious Lord, make us thorough Christians, and use, oh, use us, to bring about a revival of pure and undefiled religion, for Christ's sake! Amen.

05-The Bitterness of Sin!

The Bitterness of Sin! by James Smith, 1860

"Your ways and your deeds have procured these things unto you! This is your wickedness - it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart!" Jeremiah 4:18

Sin is the most dark subject that can engage our attention - but we have become so familiar with it, that it scarcely affects us at all. Not so the Lord - he calls it 'that abominable thing which he hates.' Yes, God hates nothing but sin - and no one, but for sin. God never hated a sinless being - and he never can. If we could get rid of sin, we would have nothing to fear; therefore we bless God that deliverance from sin is promised. But sin is not only dangerous - it is bitter, and is the prodigious source of all bitterness! Hence the language of the prophet, "It is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart!" Jeremiah 4:18. It is called the root of bitterness. It may appear pleasant at present, and may taste sweet to the depraved palate of the sinner; but as Joab said of war, "It will be bitterness in the end!" Let us therefore think of: The Bitterness of Sin: Sin is bitter in its NATURE, as it is . . . a departure from God, the source of all real happiness; opposition to God, the giver of all true pleasure; rebellion against God, the righteous ruler, who is pledged to punish it; the degradation of man, who was made in the image of the holy and happy God.

Sin is bitter in its EFFECTS:

Look over the world - all its divisions, confusions, wars, diseases, bloodshed, and cruelties - are but the effects of sin.

Look into families - all the anger, envy, jealousy, enmity, and lack of love - are but the effects of sin.

Look at individuals - all the sufferings of the body, and all the tortures of the soul; all the sorrows of time, and all the agonies of eternity - are but the fruits of sin.

Look at the seeking soul - all his cutting convictions, bitter reflections, stinging remorse, gloomy despondency, and slavish fears - are but the effects of sin.

Look at the believer - all his terrible conflicts, deep depression, gloomy foreboding, and soul-distressing fears - are all the effects of sin.

Indeed whatever is . . . dark and dreary, distressing and painful, alarming and terrible - is to be traced up to sin!

Every sigh that ever heaved the bosom, every groan that ever indicated a breaking heart, every exclamation produced by violent pain - all, all are the fruits of sin!

Think of . . . the millions who have suffered, and are suffering; the fearful nature and extent of their sufferings; the agonies experienced on earth; the horrors endured in Hell - and say, must not sin, from which all these proceeded, be a bitter thing! But here is: A Season Assigned: "It reaches unto

your heart!"

Sin is not a wound in the flesh - but a disease in the heart!

There it was conceived, there it is nourished, and from thence it flows.

Sin reaches to the heart - and defiles and pollutes it!

Indeed, man's heart is one of the most loathsome and polluted things in God's universe!

There is pollution enough in one human heart, to corrupt and defile the universe!

There is nothing so foul, base, or abominable, in earth or in Hell - but its counterpart is to be found in man's heart!

Sin reaches to the heart - and alienates it from God. It has now . . . no sympathy with God, no desire to please him, no fear of offending him!

Man fears punishment - but he does not fear sin!

Sin reaches to the heart - and distracts it. It has . . . no settled peace, no holy calm, no quiet satisfaction. The passions are turbulent. The conscience is defiled. The will is depraved. The understanding is darkened. The memory is a store-house of evil!

Indeed every power and faculty of the soul is injured, perverted, and wrongly influenced - by sin!

Sin reaches to the heart - and damns it! It is condemned already, and if grace does not prevent it - the sentence of condemnation will be executed, and the heart will become the seat of . . . the most terrible agony, the most torturing pain, and the most dreadful despair - and that forever! No lake of fire and brimstone, no bottomless pit, no horrible tempest - can convey to the mind any adequate idea of the horrors of damnation - which are the just desert of sin.

Truly, "it is bitter, and it reaches unto the heart!"

Reader, see how God speaks of sin, your darling sin, that sin which you now value so highly, and enjoy so much: "It is bitter!" Your sin is so bitter, that no tongue or pen can describe it. And what makes it so bitter is that "it reaches to the heart," the seat of life, the source of action, and therefore . . . defiles the whole person, misdirects the whole life; and exposes the whole man to the wrath and curse of God - and to that wrath and curse, forever! From this bitter root, proceeds . . . all the bitter words, all the bitter tempers, and all the bitter actions - which make men miserable on earth, and will make the lost eternally miserable in Hell! Our one great business therefore, should be to get rid of sin - this root of bitterness! And by faith in the Lord Jesus, which purifies the heart; and by the work of the Holy Spirit, which cleanses and sanctifies the nature - we may get rid of it. Let us therefore seek first, and before anything else - first, and more than everything else - that we may be washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Holy Spirit, convince us of the bitterness of sin! May it . . . be bitter to our taste, lead us to forsake it in practice, and seek to be delivered from its love and power in our experience!

06-An Offensive Question

An Offensive Question

James Smith

"Look! the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?"

Then they cursed him and said, "You are His disciple - but we are disciples of Moses!" John 9:27-28 This question was asked to the Jews - by the man whom Jesus had healed of blindness - and it stung them exceedingly! They despised the thought of being the disciples of Jesus. But this question may, perhaps, be asked to the reader, without giving so much offence. Will you, reader, be the disciple of Jesus? His wisdom is infinite! His power is omnipotent! His authority is universal! His beneficence is unbounded! His disposition is most gentle and meek!

He performs the most surprising miracles!

He teaches the most important and valuable truths!

He now sits at the right-hand of God, and he saves all His disciples with an everlasting salvation!

What do you say? Will you be His disciple? If so . . . you must surrender yourself, and your all, unto Him; you must be ready to suffer with, and die for Him!

You must be willing to . . . embrace His doctrines, submit to be ruled by His precepts, imitate his example, and observe all His institutions! A true disciple is teachable, and loves His Master above all. He . . . studies to know His will, watches His eye, waits upon Him, fears to offend Him, delights to please Him, confidently trusts Him, zealously imitates Him, cheerfully obeys Him, is most happy when favored with His presence, and will by no means leave Him - but cleaves to Him with full purpose of heart. Will you be His disciple? If so, you must obey Him - you must do what He commands . . . out of respect to His authority, from love to His will, from deference to His wisdom, from zeal for His honor, with faith in His promise, fearing His frown. His commands must rule your heart and life . . . though your carnal nature may dislike them, though friends may persuade you to neglect them, though enemies may oppose and persecute you for regarding them, and though for a time you may suffer loss for attending to them. Will you be His disciple? If so, you must unite with those who already sit at His feet, and they are, generally speaking, poor - not many wealthy are called. They are despised - for they walk contrary to the maxims of the world. They are often deeply afflicted, "For whom the Lord loves - He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

If you will be His disciple, you must forsake . . . all your present follies, all your vain companions, and all your carnal pleasures.

You must publicly profess your faith in, and obedience to Him; and you must engage to attend His worship and support His cause.

Young friend, will you be His disciple? Notwithstanding all that has been said - His disciples are happy; yes, they are the only people who are truly happy. They may be placed in the most painful circumstances, and seem to be most miserable of all men - but there is a secret something within which supports, animates, and cheers them at the worst! The Christian's worst - is better than the worldling's best! His disciples are all honorable; they are the sons of God, they are kings in their minority, they are the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - to whom He has willed all His vast and eternal possessions! It will take a whole eternity, to enjoy all that God has given them - all that the blood of Jesus has secured to them! His disciples are safe, for . . .

He throws around them the shield of His favor;

He places beneath them His everlasting arms;

He keeps fixed upon them His piercing, sleepless eye!

Thousands have entered His school, and been taught by His Spirit! Will you also be His disciples? Abraham was! David was! Paul was! Will you? "This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow!"

He never turned away one who sincerely sought to enter His school. Nor was one ever rejected because He could not teach them His lessons. He receives every applicant - and He makes scholars of all who enter. He teaches them to . . . avoid sin, love holiness, walk with God, overcome their foes, and leads them all at length, to sit down in the glorious kingdom of God!

07-The True Remedy!

The True Remedy!

James Smith, 1856

Nothing is so important when the body is badly diseased - as to procure and apply the right remedy in good time. For lack of this, many have suffered long, and at length died. It was not because there was no remedy - but because they did not know it; or knowing, did not apply it. Just so is it, in reference to spiritual things. We are surrounded by the spiritually diseased, the suffering, and the dying - but there is a remedy! Some imagine that there is none; others are led away by lying advertisements, a few know and employ the true remedy. Let us look at some DISORDERS - and then point out the TRUE REMEDY for them.

1. There is SIN. This is the root and cause of all other diseases and sufferings. No sin - no disease, no suffering, either in this world or in eternity. But even sin, the root of all diseases - is not incurable. Sinners have been cured. Sinners may be cured. It would be infidelity to say of any sinner, where the gospel comes - that his case was desperate. We know of no desperate cases - if the true remedy is employed. That remedy is the blood of Jesus. Jesus died that we may live. He shed His blood to heal our souls. This is the true balm of Gilead. This is the sovereign catholicon (universal remedy). It is placed within our reach in the everlasting gospel. All we have to do is to fix the eye upon it, place confidence in it, and pray the Holy Spirit to apply it.

We must look away from everything else.

We must fix the eye intently upon it.

We must exercise a steady confidence in it.

We must entreat the Holy Spirit to sprinkle it on our hearts.

And, as soon as ever this is the case . . . the guilt of sin is removed, the power of sin is undermined, the love of sin is destroyed, and we are perfectly and eternally delivered from all the penal consequences of sin!

There is no remedy for sin - but the blood of Jesus! And that is an infallible remedy! It was never applied in vain - it never can be. It cleanses us from all sin. It justifies us perfectly before God. But to prove its efficacy - we must give up all other medicines! Religious services, sacraments, prayers, praises, priests, and presbyters - all must be renounced, and the blood of Jesus alone must become . . . the sole object of our trust, the sole ground of our hope, and our sole plea for pardon and peace at the throne of grace. This is the true remedy for both sin and sinners. It is exactly suited to them, for its healing properties are infinite and eternal! It is to be obtained gratuitously, without money and without price - and its efficacy may be proved a thousand times over!

Reader, if you would obtain a full pardon of all sin, perfect peace in the presence of God, and an unquestionable title to everlasting glory - then exercise simple faith in the blood of Jesus, and these invaluable blessings are yours, and yours forever. This is the only true remedy!

2. Another soul-disorder is FEAR, slavish fear! This springs either from . . . guilt on the conscience, ignorance of the gospel, or the lack of simple faith in God, as a covenant God. The true remedy for fear, is faith in God - in God . . . as revealed in Jesus; as pledged to us by his precious promises; as at peace with us, through the perfect work of His beloved Son.

"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me," said Jesus. If I believe . . . that God is love; that he has received full satisfaction at the hands of His Son for all my sins; that He will rejoice over me to do me good; that He will never leave me, nor forsake me; that He will cause all things to work together for my welfare

- then how can I fear? What shall I fear? And, as a disciple of Jesus, how can I believe the gospel, the glorious good news - if I do not believe these things? They are spoken to all believers. They are the common property of every member of the living Church of God. Every slavish fear, then - must arise . . . from taking the eye off the great atonement, or from not understanding the everlasting gospel, or from unbelief! And the true remedy for slavish fear is to . . . trust simply and entirely to what Christ has done for acceptance with God, to keep the promises of grace continually before the mind, and simply believe what God has said, because God has said it. He said it . . . because He meant it, because He wished us to believe it, and because He was willing to give us strong and everlasting consolation. In every time of trial, in every season of darkness, in every severe conflict - turn then to the Lord's Word, and with David say, "The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, therefore will we not fear!" Or, "The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?" This is the only true remedy!

Another soul-disorder is anxious care. Worry or anxiety is prohibited by the gospel, because it is injurious to us, and reflects badly upon the care and kindness of God. Yet we, like Martha - are anxious and troubled about many things. We lose sight of the fact that God is our Father, and as such is engaged to provide for us. We forget that we . . . are in our Father's world, are living under our Father's eye, are fed by our Father's hand, and that our interests lie near our Father's heart! The true remedy for anxious care is to realize daily, and every hour of every day . . . that the Lord cares for us, that he knows where we are, and what we are, that he has fixed the bounds of our habitation, that his feeding the sparrows is a proof that he will never neglect His children.

Anxiety! As a believer in Jesus, as a child of God - about what should I be anxious?

God is my Father, and he loves me - loves me just as he loves Jesus.

He cares for me - cares for me as much as he cared for the apostle Paul.

He watches over me, as a tender mother watches over her precious infant.

He keeps me - keeps me as the apple of his eye; and lest anything should hurt me, he will keep me night and day. He bids me cast every care upon him. He exhorts me not to worry about anything - but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let my requests be made known unto him. This is the true remedy for care: to live in close and intimate fellowship with God, and cast all my cares upon him as they come in; to live realizing the fact, that I am the object

of the constant, tender, loving care of God - that my God cares for me, for my best interests, for my everlasting welfare. Yes, this is the only true remedy!

3. Another soul-disorder is spiritual weakness. This we deeply and daily feel. The longer we live - the weaker we appear to be; that is - we feel and realize our weakness more. When we look at our duties, on our foes, on our difficulties - we feel at times almost overwhelmed under a sense of our weakness! We are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think a holy thought; and yet . . . the old man is to be crucified, Satan is to be conquered, the world is to be overcome, the journey through a waste howling wilderness is to be completed, and the crown is to be won before we wear it. But there is a remedy for our weakness; it is union to Jesus. When united to Jesus . . . his wisdom becomes ours, his righteousness becomes ours, his strength becomes ours; his fullness is placed against our emptiness; his wealth is placed against our poverty; and his strength is placed against our weakness. His grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in our weakness. Our needs are to drive us to his fullness; our weakness is to cause us to lean upon his arm; and our sense of nothingness to make him all in all.

If I am one with Christ - all that he has is mine!

Let us, then, seek daily to realize our union to Christ - that we are members of his body; and let us obtain mercy and grace from him to help us in time of need. Then our weakness will . . . endear his strength, increase our dependence, stimulate us to earnest fervent prayer, and glorify the riches of his free grace. This is the only true remedy!

08-The Physician!

The Physician!

James Smith, 1855 "Those who are whole do not need a physician - but those who are sick." Matthew 9:12 When the Lord Jesus was upon earth, he spent much of his time among the common people. He was often found visiting and teaching those who were considered great sinners. The self-righteous pharisees were offended at this, and they complained of it. "They said unto his disciples: Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" In reply to their question, and in vindication of himself, Jesus said, "Those who are whole do not need a physician - but those who are sick." No sinner can be really whole - but the pharisees imagined that they were, and so do many now. Such feel no need of the Savior, nor do they really desire a saving interest in him. He is not suited to them. They may speak well of him, as many healthy people do of a physician; but they will not apply to him, nor can they prize him.

Jesus is the friend of sinners. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He is exactly suited to sinners, and he loves to be found among them. The world is one vast hospital. Jesus is the only physician in it; he has healed thousands, he will heal thousands more; but multitudes reject him, they imagine they can do without him; they think that they are whole, and therefore do not need a physician.

Sin is the disease of the soul. The sinner's state is a diseased state. He is sick - mortally sick. His sickness is hereditary. He inherited it from his parents. He brought it into the world with him. That is true of all, which was spoken by David of himself, "Behold I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me!"

Sin is increased by wicked habits. We go astray from the womb, speaking lies. We contract the habit of sinning, so that to sin becomes as natural to us as to breathe. The disease of sin is contagious. We contaminate others, and others increase our sickness. "Bad company corrupts good character." The progress of this disease is constant - it spreads daily - almost insensibly, and especially from neglect. It produces great weakness, so that the sinner cannot of himself, do anything really good. He must be united to Jesus, and receive the Holy Spirit, before he can do anything truly good. "Without me," said the Savior, "you can do nothing."

It not only makes us weak, but stupid - so that we become careless and foolish. We are dying of disease - but are unconcerned about it; there is a skillful Physician at hand - but we refuse to apply to Him!

Sin has destroyed all our moral beauty, and left us loathsome, unsightly, and wretched. It produces innumerable and horrendous pains, and surrounds us with sorrows, cares, and woes.

Sin brings us to death - not only separating the body from the soul - but separating the soul from God!

Sin is the forerunner of eternal and unmitigated weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

There is no sickness is like sin - yet this disease is universal. All are sick! "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good - not even one!" Romans 3:9-12. This disease affects every part of man, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it - only wounds and bruises and putrefying sores!" Isaiah 1:5-6. Man is one mass of moral disease! Every power and faculty is disordered. All the elements of destruction are within himself. He deeply needs a physician, for he is dreadfully sick; so sick, that there is but a step between him and damnation! My dear reader, this is your state! The Holy Spirit has given your portrait in the passages you have just read! Can you recognize the likeness? If not - your eye is diseased! Do you feel alarmed at the representation? If not - your conscience is diseased! Are you determined at once to apply to the physician? If not - your heart is diseased! The plague spot is upon you! You are very far advanced in a moral and spiritual cancer - which is secretly hurrying you to eternal death and damnation! O may the Lord . . . open your eyes - that you may see your dreadful state; enlighten your conscience - that you may be alarmed at your condition; and quicken your soul - that you may repair to Jesus and receive health, healing, and everlasting soundness from His hands!

Jesus is a physician. His work is to heal souls. He is every way qualified for His work.

He is a wise and skillful physician. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him - and He employs them for the good of souls. He has been employed in healing sinners for six thousand years - His skill has never been baffled, nor has one patient died under His hand yet!

He is a kind and tender physician. Not one harsh word is ever spoken by Him, to a poor broken-hearted sinner; nor does He ever refuse to attend to any case. His kindness is such - that He weeps with those who weep! And His tenderness is so great - that it is said in reference to all His patients, "In all their afflictions - He is afflicted."

He is a friendly and faithful physician. There is nothing forbidding or austere in His manner, nor does He ever deceive. Friendship has erected her throne in His heart, and built her mansion in His bosom; and He is ever faithful to His word, and to the poor sick sinner who applies to Him.

He is a willing and accessible physician. Willing to heal anyone who is willing to be healed by Him - and to go anywhere to perform His miracles of mercy. As when applied to of old, He said "I will come and heal him!" Just so now! He stoops to the beggar in the dust, and visits the needy on the dunghill. He is always ready at hand. You need no messenger to send and fetch Him - He is within hearing! He is nearer than anyone else - He can hear the softest whisper of the heart!

He is the great physician, no one can be compared to Him for qualifications or success.

He is the good physician, no one beside Him can be found - who so kindly, so freely, and so effectually heals every applicant! His blood is the true balm of Gilead, and He is the skillful physician there.

It is not only His work - but His delight to heal sin-sick souls! And He heals them all freely, certainly, and perfectly! Those whom He restores to health - will enjoy health forever. He makes every one of His patients immortal - and surrounds them with all that can make them holy and

happy forever!

Blessed physician, heal my soul! Heal me perfectly! Heal me at once! Heal me in your mercy this moment, and preserve me in health forever! But many fall into the mistake of the pharisees. They imagine that they are in health; or at least, if not quite healthy, that they are not very sick. This is the very worst symptom of the disease. It proves that they are completely under sin's power; and while they remain in that state, they will never apply to the great physician. They feel secure, while the plague is in the heart. They despise the Savior, or at least, do not think that they need his aid; and therefore they do not call him in. They trust to their own remedies, and thus perish, in their own deceivings.

How lamentable - to die of disease, with the physician in the house, and to die simply because they refuse to apply to him, and prove his skill!

Dear friends, we are all either mortally sick - or under Christ's healing process. Which is it? If you are under the physician's care, then . . . you have felt your sickness, you have personally applied to him, your heart is set against sin, and upon the possession of true holiness, which is health, you are in some degree weaned from this present evil world, and you come to the light of God's word, that your deeds may be reproved. Do you imagine that you are whole? I beseech you to seriously consider this portion of the word of God, "There those who are pure in their own eyes - and yet are not cleansed of their filthiness!" Proverbs 30:12. Are you not in the same condition as the church at Laodicea, the members of which said, "We are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" While in reality, they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked? Revelation 3:17. Do you deeply feel your diseased and disordered state? If so, allow me to recommend to you most earnestly this great physician. Jesus is both able and willing to heal you. He has healed such cases as yours - and He has some in hand now. He will heal you. His terms are, "No Money! No Price!" Are you healed? Then admire your physician's skill, and recommend him to every poor sick sinner you may meet with. Are you under His healing process? Then visit him often; carefully attend to his prescriptions; and look for the signs of returning health. Never rest satisfied, until you feel the love of God shed abroad in your heart, and the peace of God keeping your soul as in a garrison!

Physician of my sin-sick soul, To you I bring my case; My raging malady control, And heal me by your grace!

Pity the anguish I endure, See how I mourn and pine; For never can I hope a cure, From any hand but thine.

I would disclose my whole complaint, But where shall I begin? No words of mine can fully paint That worst distemper, sin!

It lies not in a single part, But through my frame is spread; A burning fever in my heart, A palsy in my head!

It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind, And impotent and lame, It overclouds and fills my mind With folly, fear, and shame! A thousand evil thoughts intrude, Tumultuous in my breast, Which indispose me for my food, And rob me of my rest!

Lord, I am sick, regard my cry, And set my spirit free, Say, will you let a sinner die, Who longs to live to thee?

09-Christ Precious!

Christ Precious! by James Smith, 1861 "Unto you therefore who believe - He is precious!" 1 Peter 2:7

FAITH in Christ is all important. It is both the gift of God's grace - and yet the exercise of man's heart. It is going to Christ, trusting in Christ, committing the soul to Christ, and relying alone on Christ. Wherever there is faith, there is also unbelief, and these two opposite principles will so contend in the believer's bosom, that he is at times unable to conclude whether he believes or not. At such times, we should repair to God's word, and seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit, search out the proofs of faith therein contained. Many such proofs are scattered through the word, and they are simple and satisfactory; but I want to confine your attention to one, and a very sweet one, "Unto you therefore who believe - He is precious!"

Consider the FACT: Jesus is precious to all believers. He is prized by them, they set a very high value upon him. He is enjoyed by them, yes, there is nothing they enjoy so much. He is an honor to them, and believing on him is an honor to them.

Every believer VALUES Christ. Let others think of him as they may, all who are taught of God, think highly of him. They can never honor him as they wish, or enjoy him to their full satisfaction.

Every believer feels their NEED of him. No weary traveler ever felt his need of rest, no hungry laborer ever felt his need of food, no drowning mariner ever felt his need of a life-boat - as the believer has felt his need of Christ.

They need to be saved - and only Christ can save them.

They need to be happy - and only Jesus can make them happy.

They need his blood to cleanse them from sin, and procure their pardon.

They need his righteousness to clothe their souls, and justify them before God.

They need his Spirit to sanctify their nature, and make them fit for Heaven.

They need his intercession to secure them from evil, and procure for them good things.

They need his fullness of grace to supply all their needs from earth to Heaven.

Every believer discovers the exact SUITABILITY of Christ to them. He is just what they need - He has all that they need.

They are foolish - He has wisdom.

They are unrighteous - and He has righteousness.

They are unholy - and He has holiness.

They are weak - and He has strength.

They are in bondage - and He has redemption.

They are lost - and He has salvation. In a word, they are led to see that God has stored up everything in Jesus, and that possessing Him - they have all things!

Every Christian believes on Him to the saving of the soul. They trust Him to procure their pardon, peace with God, and everlasting life. Their heart goes out to Him, they repose confidence in Him, they commit their souls to Him, they build on Him - as God's foundation; they hide in Him - as the sinner's refuge; and they trust themselves with Him - as the almighty Savior. This is faith, and to all who have this faith - Jesus is precious. But He is only precious to believers. Others do not feel their need of him, do not see his adaptation to them, and do not depend on him for pardon, peace with God, and everlasting life. The apostle gives certain reasons WHY Christ is precious to believers; let us look at: The REASONS why Christ is precious. God has laid him for a FOUNDATION. He is the one foundation of the church, on which the whole building rests, and from which it derives safety. He is the only foundation of a sinner's hope. On him we must build for eternity - and on him alone. He is the foundation of every believer's hope. Only by building on Jesus - will hope spring up in the soul, cheering and comforting the heart.

He is the CHOSEN of God. Chosen to be the Savior. Chosen to be the center of attraction, the source of supply, and the author of eternal salvation - unto all those who obey him. He was chosen to be the storehouse of blessings, out of which all who believe in his name shall be supplied. "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell."

He is the CORNERSTONE. That which unites all believers together as one living temple, and keeps them together to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. The union, the strength, and the beauty of God's church, arises from Christ being the cornerstone. He unites all the parts together, and the whole church to God. He preserves all who believe on him from apostasy, shame, and danger. "He who believes on him shall not be confounded." Every believer shall be bold in the judgment, confident in God, and safe - let whatever will come on the earth. Now, as God's foundation of our hope; as God's elect, or chosen one; as the glorious uniting cornerstone of the whole church; and as the Savior from confusion, shame, and danger - He is precious to every believer.

These are some SEASONS in which Christ is especially precious:

Christ is especially precious when the soul is first converted. When it emerges from darkness to light. When it sees Jesus as the only and all-sufficient Savior. When venturing on him - it enjoys peace, liberty, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It sees that all flows from Jesus, and deeply feels its obligation to Jesus. But for Jesus, all it could look for would be condemnation, death, and Hell! Through Jesus it enjoys justification, eternal life, and a good hope of Heaven. O how precious does this render the Savior!

Christ is especially precious to believers - when the emptiness of the world is discovered. The soul having tried the world, has found it . . . false and fickle, an empty cistern, a dry well, a cloud without water, only vanity and vexation of spirit! The Christian has experienced that . . . the world's pleasures - end in pain, its honors - end in disgrace, and its wealth - ends in absolute poverty.

Now turning from the world, to Jesus - it finds . . . solid happiness, substantial pleasure, full supplies.

It obtains . . . a deep and lasting peace which passes all understanding, unsearchable riches in Christ, and honors which will never pass away.

O how precious is Jesus, when this world appears to be a valley of tears! Almost everything earthly is at times calculated to . . . cause sorrow, fill us with sadness, and draw forth tears.

Losses, crosses, disappointments, and bereavements - all conspire to make us sad. Earth is to us a Valley of Achor - the place of trouble and sorrow.

Now turning to Jesus, we find a friend who loves at all times, and a brother born for adversity.

He makes up for every loss, He sanctifies every disappointment, and He fills for us every relation. His presence is . . . like a flowing spring - in a dreary desert, like a cheering fire - on a piercing winter's night, and like a happy home - to the exhausted traveler.

O how precious is Jesus now!

Christ is especially precious at the throne of grace. What could we do without Jesus there? What could we plead? Realizing this, and perceiving the infinite worth and worthiness of Jesus, and his glorious sacrifice, and believing that he stands between us and his Father's justice, how precious Jesus is! We dare not go to the throne without him, nor expect the least blessing but through him, and for his sake; but with him, and through him, we may expect the greatest, the richest, the best blessings, which God can bestow!

Christ is especially precious in seasons of sickness. When shut out from the world, and obliged to be much alone. When exercised with strong pain, or extreme weakness. Then, to lie on the sick pillow and meditate on . . . what he is, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he has promised to do - is indeed sweet.

One promise dropped by him into the heart, will raise us above pain and fear, and fill us with patience, fortitude, and courage.

Christ is especially precious when Satan comes to harass us, and reflections on the sins and infirmities of our past lives, are calculated to deject and cast us down.

Christ is especially precious in the hour of death. However much we may need Christ in life - we shall need him more in death. He is the only antidote of death. He alone can give us victory over it. He alone can make us triumph in it.

How precious have multitudes found Jesus to be in the dying hour! They have been able to defy its power, smile at its pains, and court its final stroke! Through him they have cried, and cried in tones of triumph, "O death, where is your sting! O grave, where is your victory!" Yes, when earth appears to be receding, and eternity drawing very near to us. When every earthly prop gives way. When clear light shows us that our very best works are but splendid sins. O how precious is Jesus then! His blood and obedience, his word and his grace, his faithfulness and sympathy, are unutterably precious!

Beloved, do you have this faith, which, renders Christ so precious? If so, admire the sovereign and distinguishing grace of God, which has conferred so great a blessing upon you - for not all are given saving faith.

Honor the Holy Spirit, by whose operation this faith was produced in you.

Realize the importance of this faith, which renders Christ so precious.

It is the eye - which sees the beauty of Christ.

It is the foot - which travels to Christ.

It is the hand - which lays hold of Christ.

It is the mouth - which tastes the sweetness of Christ.

It is the inward principle - which clings and cleaves to Christ.

Avoid therefore whatever weakens faith, or interrupts its exercise; and prize whatever strengthens it, and makes it vigorous!

If you do not have this faith, or if you doubt whether you have or not - cry mightily to God, to send the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of faith to produce, or increase it, in you.

If you do not have high and honorable thoughts of Christ, if you do not prize him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, if you do not depend entirely on his precious blood and finished work, for your salvation

- whatever 'faith' you may have - is not that faith which distinguishes God's elect, which is of the operation of God, and to which the promise of salvation is made. Look well to it, therefore, that you have this faith, that you believe on the Son of God, that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, and trust in him, and love him accordingly, for, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

Jesus is precious, says the Word, What comfort does this truth afford! And those who in his name believe, With joy this precious truth receive. To them he is more precious far, Than life and all its comforts are;

More precious than their daily food, More precious than their vital blood. Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame, Nor earth's deceitful empty name, With all its pomp, and all its glare, Can with a precious Christ compare!

He's precious, in his precious blood. That pardoning and soul-cleansing flood!

He's precious, in his righteousness, That everlasting heavenly dress! In every office he sustains, In every victory he gains, In every council of his will, He's precious to his people still. As they draw near their journey's end, How precious is their heavenly friend!

And, when in death they bow their head, He's precious on a dying bed.

10-Christ All in All!

Christ All in All!

James Smith, 1855 When the Holy Spirit works in our hearts as the glorifier of Jesus - he always lays us in the dust and endears the Savior to our souls. We are then sure to get some fresh views of him, and he is in our estimation divinely sweet and glorious. Then we desire, above all things, to exalt and glorify him, and to be useful to his cause and people. We long for others to see him just as we do, feeling persuaded that if they did - they must love, delight in, and adore him. He appears so suitable, and is in every view we take of him so precious.

If we look at his PERSON, we see our nature exalted and united to the Divine; and as the God-man, he is altogether lovely and glorious. We behold in Him, all the solemn and amiable attributes of Godhead, united with all the sinless passions and affections of humanity! And, while we view the Divine perfections and human passions united in his blessed person - we feel glowing love, and realize inseparable union - and the joy is sweeter than human tongue can express. His very nature is love, he possesses a fullness of grace, and his heart overflows with mercy. Hence, his every action, dispensation, and word . . . is mixed with love, exhibits grace, and displays mercy.

He is most compassionate, full of pity, and tenderly sympathetic; and he has displayed and proved it in the most remarkable manner! This was compassion like a God, That when the Savior knew The price of pardon was his blood, His pity ne'er withdrew!

If we look at his precious NAMES, every one of which is calculated to endear him to our hearts - he appears altogether suitable and glorious.

He is called JESUS, because he came into our world on purpose to save sinners, and raise them to glory and immortal life.

He is called CHRIST, because he was anointed, appointed, and commissioned to save. He engaged in the everlasting covenant, he was promised to the Old Testament saints, and he appeared in the fullness of time. He was anointed . . . to teach the ignorant, to atone for the guilty, and to rule over all who are saved by his grace.

He is called IMMANUEL, God with us - to show that he is able to save all who come unto God by him, and to manifest the depth of his condescension and the strength of his love. His names are numerous, everyone of them is full of meaning, and the whole united, prove him to be superlatively excellent, and glorious beyond our powers of description! Not softest strains can charm my ears, Like his beloved name; Nor anything beneath the skies inspire My heart with equal flame!

If we look at his OFFICES - it endears him to our hearts.

He appears as a PROPHET, to . . . instruct the ignorant, lead the blind, and make the foolish wise.

He . . . unfolds the Father's mind, opens the everlasting covenant, and teaches all his people to profit.

He is a PRIEST, to . . . atone for the guilty, reconcile those who are enemies, and intercede on behalf of transgressors.

He . . . satisfies justice, magnifies mercy, and brings a holy God and polluted sinners into an honorable union.

He is a KING, and as such he . . . receives the discontented, rules over innumerable penitent criminals, and defends all his subjects from danger. His power is omnipotent, his resources are boundless, his government is peaceful, and all the statutes of his kingdom are wise, merciful, and just. Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame, Nor earth's deceitful empty name, With all its pomp and all its glare, Can with a precious Christ compare!

If we look at the RELATIONSHIPS of Christ to his people - he rises in our estimation.

He is our FATHER - to pity the poor returning prodigal, to care for all who depend on his Word.

He is our HUSBAND - to love, cherish, and honor his beloved blood-bought bride. He loves her as he loves himself, treats her with unutterable kindness, and will allow nothing to separate her from his love.

He is our elder BROTHER, who possesses our nature - and feels deeply interested in the welfare of every brother and sister. For all he has made provision, to everyone has given promises, and the whole shall ultimately enjoy the best part of God's universe through his grace. He identifies his interests with ours, pleads the cause of his brethren in disgrace, and will raise the low-fallen family - to honor and renown. This causes us to sing - Jesus my shepherd, husband, friend, My prophet, priest, and king, My Lord, my life, my way, my end, Accept the praise I bring!

If we look at the COMPARISONS which are made use of by the Holy Spirit to set Christ forth - we behold something more of His loveliness.

He is compared to a MOTHER, and is said to have more than a mother's tenderness, kindness, and care. His concern for His people is constant, He never loses sight of them for a moment, and He pledges His Word that He will never forget them!

He is the CITY of REFUGE, with . . . the broad and clear road, the gates wide open, and the hearty welcome awaiting every sinner who approaches to escape the threatened vengeance!

He is the STRONGHOLD, which emboldens, supplies, and secures all the prisoners of hope.

He is the ROCK, which shades, shelters, and refreshes the weary traveler.

He is the DAY-STAR, which betokens brighter scenes, and guides the vessel of mercy across the boisterous deep - to the haven of perfect redemption and safety.

He is the SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS, whose rising . . . cheers the benighted pilgrim, makes glad the weary citizen of Heaven, and produces moral beauty and fruitfulness in our world.

He is the APPLE-TREE among the trees of the forest . . . whose blossoms are beautiful, whose shade is refreshing, and whose fruit is sweet to the taste.

He is the BREAD of LIFE, which came down from Heaven . . . satisfying the hungry, strengthening the weak, and giving life unto the world.

He is the WATER of SALVATION, which . . . cleanses the filthy, refreshes the weary, and makes glad the city of God.

He is the WAY, which alone leads from sin, condemnation, and wrath - to life, holiness, and Heaven!

He is the HEAD, which thinks, plans, and contrives for the welfare of the whole of His mystical body.

He is the DOOR, which admits to . . . the pastures of Divine truth, the privileges of His Church below, and His Father's glorious presence!

He is the FOUNDATION on which all must build for eternity, and which alone is able to support our hopes and sustain our souls - amidst the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds!

He is the CORNER-STONE, which unites, beautifies, and strengthens the whole building of divine mercy.

He is the TEMPLE, where God . . . meets with us, accepts us, and imparts His blessing to us.

He is the ALTAR, which sanctifies both the gift and the giver.

He is the VINE, which communicates life, nourishment, and fruitfulness to all its branches.

He is the ROSE of SHARON and the LILY of the VALLEY - fragrant, lovely, attractive, perfuming, and unequalled in beauty and grace!

He is the BRAZEN SERPENT, which heals easily, instantly, and perfectly - all who look to Him by faith.

He is the FORERUNNER, who is gone before His flock . . . removing the obstacles, marking out the road, and ready to receive them as they finish their course.

He is the FRIEND . . . who loves at all times, whose mind never changes, whose love never cools, and who never neglects a friend in distress.

He is the greatest, best, and most glorious GIFT of GOD - including, securing, and conferring every good thing upon those who sincerely receive Him.

He is the KINSMAN . . . who redeems the forfeited inheritance, who ransoms all His poor relatives from slavery, and whose name is held in renown.

He is the LAMB of GOD, who took up, expiated, and forever put away - the sins of all who trust in His blood.

He is the MESSENGER of the COVENANT, who . . . brings good news from God, carries all our requests to God, and ever stands as a Mediator between us and God.

He is the PEARL of GREAT PRICE, or the priceless pearl, which . . . all who sincerely seek, find, all who find, may claim, and all who possess, are enriched forever!

He is the PHYSICIAN, who . . . heals all disorders, restores every patient to perfect health, and bestows medicine and care, gratis.

He is the RANSOM, which . . . procured our release, ensures our liberty, and preserves us from going down into the pit!

He is the RIGHTEOUSNESS, which . . . justifies us from all charges, entitles us to eternal life, and enables us to lift up our heads with boldness in God's presence.

He is the TRUTH, which . . . enlightens the mind, purifies the heart, and regulates the life.

He is the FIRE, which . . . purges our dross, brightens our graces, and cleanses our consciences from works which deserve death.

He is the SHEPHERD, who . . . knows every sheep, watches over the whole flock, and never loses a lamb, by disease, accident, or beast of prey.

He is the BISHOP, who . . . dwells among His people, consults their welfare, and imparts His benediction freely.

He is the CAPTAIN of SALVATION, who . . . collects His soldiers, disciplines His troops, and leads them forth to certain victory over sin, the world, and the devil.

He is the LADDER, by which we . . . rise from this earth, lose sight of carnal things, and ascend to the presence of God!

He is the SURETY . . . who engaged for us in the everlasting covenant, who is held responsible for our salvation, who has pledged to set us before His father's throne forever.

He is the WALL of FIRE, which surrounds, enlightens and infallibly protects - all His redeemed people!

He is the chief among ten thousand, and the ALTOGETHER LOVELY ONE!

Precious Lord Jesus, allow me . . . to know You more fully, to trust You more heartily, to serve You more diligently, to enjoy You more frequently, to imitate You more closely, to exalt You more highly, and to show forth Your salvation from day to day! Your love - is my Heaven, Your presence - is my delight, and Your service - is the joy of my heart!

Let me daily . . . walk with You, work for You, and bring glory to You!

Oh, send Your Spirit to my poor heart . . . to exalt You, to honor You, to endear You to my soul!

Use me to bring . . . lost sinners to Your cross, believers to Your throne of grace, backsliders to the path of obedience. Be my . . . strength in life, solace in death, and eternal portion beyond the grave!

11-The Complaint!

The Complaint!

James Smith, 1864 "I am cast down!" And why are you cast down?

"My heart is burdened with a sense of my short-comings!

Every duty I perform is so imperfect.

Every purpose I form is so soon frustrated.

Every hope of seeing better days is so soon beclouded. My heart is so fearfully depraved. My life is so unlike the life of Jesus. My temper is so unholy. My prayers are so brief and heartless. My praises are so feeble and fitful.

I do so little good.

I live to so little purpose. My evidences are so dim. My prospects are so overcast.

I am harassed sometimes with the fear of death.

I cannot realize the glories of Heaven.

I am dissatisfied with the world - and yet glued to it!

I hate sin - and yet fall into it!

I am a riddle, a mystery, a mass of inconsistency! Is it, then, any wonder that I am cast down?"

No, if you look at yourself, and pore over the things you have named - then it is no wonder that you are cast down! They are enough to cast anyone down! But if you carry them to the throne of grace, if you there confess them before God, if you look to Jesus to save you from them--then, in spite of them - you will not long be cast down.

I know it is difficult to do this. There is a natural proneness to pore over such things. One feels at times a secret liking to indulge in gloomy thoughts. But we must look away from self - for if we do not, we shall become anxious, doubting and gloomy! We must run the race, not looking at our imperfections, short-comings, and failures - but looking unto Jesus. He knows what we are. He knew what we would be - before He called us by His grace; yes, before He shed His blood for us!

He loved us, as sinners.

He died for us, as sinners.

He called us, as sinners.

He saves us, as sinners. He will have all the glory of saving us, and He will get great glory by doing so, because we are such great sinners; and do not, cannot, do anything to repay Him for His

wondrous love. Salvation is by free grace - from first to last! Believe this, and it will raise up your drooping mind! The life-boat of free grace has put you on board the vessel of salvation, and that will convey you safely to the port of glory! Do not look at your spiritual destitution, or feebleness, or incapacity, or imperfections - but trust in your Pilot, rely on your Captain, and expect His mercy and merit to land you safe in Heaven at last! As imperfect you now are, and as imperfect you will be - your dying prayer will still be, "God be merciful unto me - a sinner!"

Hope in God! His mercy is great unto the Heavens, His grace is as free as the air, His love is as changeless as His nature, His promise is as immutable as His love.

Hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him. He will save you for His own sake, and present you before assembled worlds as a monument of His mercy, and a trophy of His grace!

12-God's Special Treasure!

God's Special Treasure! by James Smith, 1860

"For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure!" Deuteronomy 7:6 By nature all people are alike. Descended from one parent, partaking of one and the same nature, and involved in the same guilt and condemnation: "there is no difference - for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Nature in Abraham was no better than in Pharaoh; nor were the Israelites to be preferred to the Egyptians. But when man has no right - God sees fit to exercise grace. And for the glory of his great name, to manifest his divine nature, and to accomplish his deep and holy purposes - he did put a difference between Israel and the Egyptians. Hence Moses told them, "The Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure!" Deuteronomy 7:6.

Therefore the people were to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations. But Israel after the flesh is but a type of the true or spiritual Israel; the people whom God has chosen in his Son, to enjoy salvation, and partake of everlasting glory. The words are, if possible, more applicable to them - than to those of whom they were originally spoken!

Observe, the design. God intended them to be his own, particularly - a special people unto himself. As he said by the prophet, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." He highly prizes them. Yes, it is impossible to say how highly he prizes them. Those are wondrous words, "For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his own special treasure." Did the shepherd prize his flock? God calls his people, "his flock, his beautiful flock." Does the miser prize his wealth? God says of his people, "You shall be a special treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine." Does the prince prize his jewels? God says of his people, "They shall be mine, in that day when I make up my jewels!" Does the bridegroom prize his beloved and dearly purchased bride? It is written, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you!" Does the reigning monarch prize his crown? God has said, "You shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God."

What wondrous love, such expressions as these represent! How precious must the Lord's people be to him! Truly they are his special treasure!

God **CHOSE** them to be special unto himself. He chose out from among others. He chose in preference to others. He chose them to bring them near to himself, that they may know him! And by the most wondrous ways - he brings them to the knowledge of himself, as he is revealed in Jesus.

He chose them, that they might need him; and so need him as not to be able to do without him. Therefore they are brought to feel their need of his grace, wisdom, strength, and presence. Nor can they be supplied from any other source, or be happy - but only as they realize his presence and his love. This shows that he chose them that they might enjoy his presence, and be forever with him. His tabernacle was pitched in the midst of the typical people, and the symbol of his

presence was always with him. His spiritual presence is ever with his spiritual people - and he will soon collect them all into his glorious presence - and have them near to himself forever!

He chose them out from others on purpose that they may be a special people unto himself - and in so doing, he acted FREELY. It was not on account of anything he saw in them, or on account of anything he expected from them; but in the exercise of his most free and holy sovereignty - he chose them to participate in the glory of his Son. In choosing them, he acted also DELIBERATELY. It was no hasty choice. His thoughts had been eternally filled with them. His heart had been eternally set upon them. Therefore he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world; before his works of old. In choosing them he acted WISELY - as he really desired to have them. For each one of them is ready to confess that if God had not chosen them, they would never have chosen him! The nature regulates the choice; and as our nature is carnal and impure - we would never have chosen God, who is spiritual and holy. His choice was just an early expression of His LOVE. The love that chose them - would do anything for them, and give anything to them! Therefore God spared not His own Son - but delivered Him up for them all; and in so doing gave them the assurance that also He will freely give them all things in Christ.

O the wonders couched in electing love! This act of choosing such creatures as we are to be a special people unto himself - displays such grace, such condescension, such infinite wisdom and love! It seems to say, "The Lord has need of you." And, indeed, if he is to display all the glorious perfections of his nature, if he is to communicate of his infinite fullness to creatures, if he is to appear as God, in the most wondrous and astonishing manner - he does need us! As the mother needs the child to empty the full breast; as the Father needs the Son to share and enjoy his possessions with him; as the bridegroom needs the bride to satisfy the deep love that is hid in his heart towards her; so God, our covenant God, may be said to need us.

God's election says, "The Lord loves you!" Loves us! Yes, and with a love that is eternal, immutable, sovereign, infinite, and free! All the love of God is lavished upon us as His special people in Christ. Oh, those wondrous words of Jesus, "You have loved them - AS You have loved Me!"

Beloved, if God has chosen us to be a special people unto himself - then let it be the ruling object of our lives, to be specially for God! And as God desires to have us near to himself - let it be a daily effort to get near, and keep near to him. But few among the worldly wise, But few of nobler race, Obtain the favor of your eyes, Almighty King of grace!

He takes the men of lowest name - For sons and heirs of God! And thus he pours abundant shame, On honorable blood.

He calls the fool, and makes him know The mysteries of his grace, To bring aspiring wisdom low, And all its pride abase!

Nature has all its glories lost, When brought before his throne; No flesh shall in his presence boast, But in the Lord alone!

13-Redeeming Love!

Redeeming Love!

James Smith, 1861

"He gave Himself for us - that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:14 The first and second advent of Christ are frequently presented to our notice together in the New Testament. The former sometimes introduces the latter, and sometimes the reverse. In writing to Titus, the apostle's mind was wafted away by the inspiring Spirit, to the second coming of the Lord, and he speaks of it as the "blessed hope" of the church of God, for which believers were looking and longing. Then he brings forth the end and design of the first advent, and says, "Who gave Himself for us - that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." The Glorious FACT. "HE gave Himself!" Yes, Jesus gave Himself for us. Note the contrast between the Giver - and those for whom He gave Himself. The Giver is He who was the only begotten Son of God, the author of creation, the sustainer of the universe, the brightness of divine glory, the source and end of all things! He who was proclaimed by the prophet as "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the prince of peace." He who is declared by the apostle to be "God over all - blessed for evermore!" He who is "God manifest in the flesh."

"He gave Himself for US." For us - who at the best are mere creatures, between whom and our Creator there can be no comparison. But it was not for us as mere creatures - but for us as base, vile, insignificant, and totally depraved creatures! We had debased ourselves, even unto Hell. Worse, our nature could not be, for "the human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked!" The most exalted, glorious, and holy being in the universe - gave Himself for the most vile, polluted, and degraded of His creatures! O how astonishing! But He volunteered on our behalf, without any solicitation, offering to become . . . our Substitute and fulfill the law in our stead; our Sacrifice, and make a full atonement for our sins; and our Ransomer, paying the satisfactory price for our redemption.

He engaged to bear the desert of all our sins in His own body - to suffer all that the inflexible justice of God could inflict on our Surety - and so put away our sins forever, by the sacrifice of Himself. He gave . . . His person - for our persons; His blood - as our ransom price; and His life - for our lives.

He gave His entire self, doing and suffering all that was necessary to secure our release from sin's curse, and our everlasting salvation. O amazing grace of a gracious Savior! The OBJECT in View. He gave Himself that He might justly redeem, ransom, or deliver us - from the guilt, power, and penal consequences of sin. He gave Himself to expiate the guilt, to destroy the power, and secure us against the eternal desert of our transgressions. He gave Himself to purify unto Himself, by fully expiating their sins, a peculiar people: a people purchased - to be peculiarly His own; a people sanctified, separated from all others - to be set apart for Himself; a people to be His own subjects -

as the King of Zion; a people to be His own soldiers - as the Captain of our salvation; a people to be His own servants - as the Lord of the house; a people to be His own children - as the everlasting Father!

He redeemed us from all who claimed us, and from every claim that could be made upon us - in order that we might be honorably, exclusively, and eternally "His own". His own, in the highest, fullest, and most glorious sense. His own peculiar people, "zealous for good works." That being influenced by His love, affected by His example, enabled by His Spirit, and guided by His word - they may answer the gracious design of God, zealously performing "good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Thus, grace is gloriously displayed, man's salvation is secured, and God's glory by the good works of His people, is rendered certain!

"He gave Himself!" The love of Jesus is unparalleled. Out of pure love to us who had no love to Him, nor ever would have had - but for His first loving us! He gave, not only His time, His labor, His wealth - but Himself! He gave His entire person as the God-man, the incarnate Jehovah!

"He gave Himself!" This was more than as if He had given a thousand worlds - for these He could create with a word!

"He gave Himself," and not merely to live for us, or labor for us - but even to die for us!

"He gave Himself," and not even to die some easy and honorable death - but the most painful, shameful death, that man ever invented, or creature ever suffered!

O wondrous love!

O Jesus, never, never was there love like yours!

Note, the special object that Jesus had in view. "That He might redeem us" - by a price, which no one but Himself could pay - that He might . . . satisfy all the demands of law and justice, acquire a peculiar right to us, and so honorably . . . deliver us from every foe, rescue us from all that is degrading, and exalt us to the highest honor.

Jesus would have us to be peculiarly His own, "His own peculiar people," which indicates peculiar love, and displays peculiar grace.

Observe, the parties redeemed: Those who were the vilest of His creatures - but who being claimed for Him, by His Holy Spirit - became a peculiar people, zealously endeavoring to do just what pleases Him, and all that pleases Him.

They are brought to have a peculiar knowledge of Him - which leads them to be peculiarly zealous in endeavoring to please Him.

See, the claim He has to, and upon His people. A more just claim to them - He could not have, seeing He has given His life, His all - to possess them! A greater claim He could not have upon them, seeing He has redeemed them from death, ransomed them from Hell, and purchased them in order to make them holy, honorable, and happy forever.

Notice then, what He expects from them. He expects zealous obedience. He expects . . . that His word be studied, that His will be consulted, and that His honor be sought in all they think, speak, or

do.

He expects that they will abstain from all sin. Sin brought them into danger. Sin rendered it necessary that He should suffer, bleed, and die for them. Sin grieves His love, wounds His heart, and dishonors His name; therefore He requires them to avoid sin, abstain from sin, and hate sin!

Reader, what do you think of Jesus?

How do you feel toward Him?

What do you think of His love, His wondrous love?

What effect has it upon you?

What are your views of sin - all sin?

How do you feel toward sin?

What think you of good works? Are you zealously endeavoring to perform them? And WHY, dear Savior - tell me why, You thus would suffer, bleed and die?

What mighty motive could you move, The motive's plain - 'twas all for love! For love of whom? Of sinners base; A hardened herd, a rebel race! That mocked and trampled on your blood, And trifled with the wounds of God!

They nailed Him to the accursed tree;

They did my brethren - and so did we! The soldier pierced His side 'tis true; But we have pierced Him through and through!

14-Almost Gone!

Almost Gone!

James Smith, 1865 "But as for me - my feet were almost gone! My steps had well near slipped!"
Psalms 73:2

Asaph appears, in his own mind, to have been going over the history of the Lord's people in general, and of some of them in particular; tracing out the Lord's dealings with them, and marking his peculiar interventions for them. Full of this subject, he commences his Psalm rather abruptly, exclaiming, "Truly God is good to Israel - even to such as are pure of heart." Good, incomparably good, had He been to Israel literally, and to all the pure, or true hearted, among them. But His goodness shines even brighter still, in His dealings with His spiritual Israel. How good, how infinitely good . . . to choose them to eternal life in His beloved Son, to predestine them to the adoption of children, to redeem them from death by His precious blood, to preserve them in the days of their unregeneracy, to quicken and call them by His Holy Spirit, to speak to them in His Word, and to work for them by His providence.

Yes, God has been good, and is good to Israel; even to such as have had their hearts cleansed from guilt - by the blood of Jesus, and from filth - by His Spirit and Word. Being pure-hearted, the hands are washed in innocence, pure paths are chosen, pure companions are selected, and pure conversation is enjoyed.

Asaph's attention had also been directed to himself, and while he marked their course, he compared it with his own, and as he reviewed his narrow escapes, and sinful propensities, he exclaimed, "But as for me - my feet were almost gone! My steps had well near slipped!"

He had been in GREAT DANGER. Judging by the eye, misled him. He saw the wicked - healthy, wealthy, and prosperous; while some of the Lord's people - were sick, poor, and in adversity. Envy arose in his heart, and began powerfully to work. He began to think that it was folly to obey God, and observe His precepts. A spirit of complaining was produced, and he reflected upon the conduct of his God. At length he went to the Sanctuary - there his mistakes were corrected, his mind was enlightened, and his actual fall prevented. He was almost gone! His steps had nearly slipped! He had only narrowly escaped! In looking back, how often has this been the case with us. But there are special periods, and some particular spots, which remind us, how near we were to a shameful fall. O this, ALMOST! This, well near! How vividly they bring before us past scenes, and past seasons.

We can remember what danger we were in, from peculiar temptations. Satan studied our constitution, and prepared his temptation accordingly. It perfectly matched the lusts of our flesh, and natural bent of our sinful desires. It so exactly suited, was so calculated to make us fall - that we were almost gone.

Then, it was so adapted to our circumstances. Satan always observes the circumstances of the Lord's people, when he prepares his traps for them. He has temptations for sickness - and health, for poverty - and wealth, for cheerfulness - and gloom. As every constitution has its suitable temptation - just so has every circumstance in the believers life. Besides which, Satan plies his temptations with such power and perseverance. How he does this - we cannot understand; but that he does so - we cannot doubt. An infernal spirit often acts upon the human spirit. It suggests, it excites, it tempts, and, alas! how often it prevails! When the temptation to sin, and the opportunity to commit the sin meet - the conflict is fearful, and the result sometimes shameful! When the wine sparkled before the eye of Noah - he was tempted and fell. When Bathsheba's beauty met the eye of David - he was tempted and fell. When the damsel charged Peter - he was tempted and fell. And there have been times in our history when solicitation to sin, an inclination for sin, and the opportunity to commit sin - have met together - and we were almost gone! If special grace had not been given to us - we would have surely fallen.

We can remember too our danger when our corruptions have been powerfully stirred up. Satan is allowed to do this sometimes - and then every evil that lies hidden in the heart begins to show itself! Corruptions we would be ashamed to mention, and afraid to name - are found working furiously within us! O what awful thoughts of God then! O what fearful cogitations then! Flood seems to follow flood, billow follows billow; until it is almost impossible to believe that there can be any true grace in our hearts! The cable strains, the anchor drags, the masts crack, and the sails flap fearfully - we are tossed with tempests and not comforted. We seem just ready to make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience. Our feet are almost gone! Our steps are well near slipped! Our resistance is nearly overcome. Like one walking on ice - every moment we expect to fall prostrate. Like one going down a steep plane, it appears almost impossible to stop. At times, all seems to be over, and disgrace now, with destruction by-and-by, seem certain.

O the scenes of danger we have passed through! O the hair-breadth escapes we have had! There seemed to be but a step, and scarcely that, between us and the awful precipice, the shameful fall! Many, many times, we have been almost gone - and yet have never fallen yet. What mercy, what rich, free, and undeserved mercy this! But Asaph had not only been in great danger, he had also experienced, A Merciful Deliverance. A father's eye was over him! The Lord was observing him. Just so with us. Our God has ever had His eye on us - and His arm around us! "The eyes of the Lord, run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on the behalf of all those whose hearts are perfect towards Him." O the mercy, to have God's eye watching us; and His ear open to listen to us! With David, we can say, "When I cried: 'My foot slips!' Your mercy, O God, held me up." The Lord bounds the temptations of His people. So far - but no farther, may Satan go. He may tempt us - but he shall not triumph over us; or if he does for a time, the triumphing of this wicked one shall be short. Our heavenly Father bounds the time, the force, and the number of our temptations. We may think them peculiarly strong, and seem to be encircled by them, and conclude that they must crush us. But no, thus says the Word, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it!" This has hitherto been the case with us, we were almost gone - but not quite. Our steps had well near slipped - but we were preserved from falling. Every saint is in God's own keeping. "I will keep it night and day." These are the Lord's own words, and they are true and

faithful. "I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Indeed, the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep. The Lord protects you; the Lord is a shelter right by your side. The sun will not strike you by day or the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all harm; He will protect your life. The Lord will protect your coming and going both now and forever!" Psalms 121 The Lord our God will continue to work for us - as He has in the past. He works IN us - by His Holy Spirit; and He works FOR us - by His special providence. And the inward work of the Spirit, and the outward work of divine providence - conspire to preserve us from falling. Blessed be God, He watches over us, bounds our temptations, keeps us as the apple of the eye, and works for us. Here is our safety. This is the reason, that though our feet were almost gone, and our steps had well near slipped - we can say of our enemies, "They are cast down and fallen - but we are risen and stand upright."

Brethren, thus so dangerously circumstanced - we had need to take heed; with such corruptions within us, such an enemy without us, and such a slippery path beneath us - great caution is necessary. Therefore the Apostle exhorts, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed - lest he fall." "Watch and pray - lest you enter into temptation," is the caution of our Divine Master also.

We should also feel our dependence. We need a wiser head, and a stronger arm than our own - to keep us! If the Lord had not been on our side - long before now, Satan would have surely prevailed against us. The ivy does not more need the oak, the vine does not more need the wall, the infant does not more need the parent's arm - than we need the powerful support of our gracious God. Our daily prayer should be "Hold me up - and I shall be safe!"

We should be found in the posture of the spouse, of whom it was inquired, "Who is this, that comes up out of the wilderness, leaning on her beloved." We should walk humbly. Leaning on another's arm, guided by another's eye, and kept by another's power - surely humility befits us. The humbler - the safer. The humble cleave to Jesus, and fear to leave His side.

Leave Him, and like Dinah - you will find some Shechem too strong for you, and will have to return to your home dishonored and disgraced!

We should give God the glory of our preservation. Our feet were almost gone, and but for His timely intervention - they would have been quite gone! Where, O where might we have been this day - but for the Lord's faithful care? He was mindful of us, and He will bless us. We have been kept, we are preserved - but "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name goes all the glory for Your unfailing love and faithfulness!"

15-The Zealous Christian!

The Zealous Christian!

James Smith, 1864 "Be zealous!" Revelation 3:19

Coldness or lukewarmness in the ways of God, is peculiarly offensive to our Lord and Savior; for if anyone deserves our whole hearts, if anyone ought to have the whole of our energies - it is Jesus. He was very zealous for us. Zeal covered him as a garment. His zeal was very early displayed, when he stood up for us in the everlasting covenant; engaging to be a Substitute, Sacrifice, and Shepherd. And from the moment of his engagement, his zeal never abated. Zeal for us characterized his whole life, and sustained him in the bitter pangs of his ignominious death.

Most zealously did he labor to work out a righteousness which would justify us before his Father, and with equal zeal he presented himself before divine justice to suffer the due desert of our crimes. He died for our offences, and so made an atonement for them; he arose for our justification, and now, the moment we believe in him, we are justified from all things and forever. He went into Heaven full of holy zeal, and there he zealously pleads our cause before his Father, and enables us to say, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son - much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Being thus zealous for us - for our safety, honor, and true happiness - he wishes to see us zealous for him. Our indifference grieves his loving heart. Our selfishness wounds him in a tender part. He expects us to be devoted to him, consecrated to his service, and glowing with zeal to carry on his cause. Beloved Christian friends, Jesus speaks to you, to me, to each, to all of us - and he says, "Be zealous!"

We should be zealous for the truth of the gospel.

It is God's mind.

It is the revelation of the Savior's love.

It is the remedy for the sinner's woes.

It is the charter of the Church's privileges.

It is dear to God's heart.

It is watched over with a jealous eye.

It should be prized as inestimably valuable.

We should zealously defend the truth, for it is sure to be assailed by erroneous and ungodly men. Not in a bitter spirit, not with anger; but in the Spirit of Jesus, with firmness and holy love, we ought to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Never let us give up one particle of truth - but endeavor to maintain it whole and entire. The truth is . . . the mirror, in which God is seen; the map, on which our road is marked out; the law, by which

our duty is made plain; let us therefore zealously defend it, nor ever tamely surrender any part of it.

We should zealously adorn it. "That they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything!" Titus 2:10. Not by the tinsel of human eloquence, or by trappings borrowed from heathen schools - but by a consistent and holy walk. We ought to be living expositions of the truth. In our conduct - the nature and tendency of the Gospel ought to be seen. By our meekness and gentleness, by our fidelity and prudence, by our self-denial and benevolence, by our temperance and brotherly kindness, by our patience and fervent love - we ought to adorn the most holy truth of God!

God calls for it. The Gospel is calculated to produce it.

We should be zealous to spread it. It is too good to be kept to ourselves. It was never intended to be confined to the Church. The world is the field in which this seed is to be sown. The whole race of mankind is to be made acquainted with this divine revelation. Every creature, without one solitary exception - is to be told of this good news. Every one who knows it - ought to publish it. The whole Church, should be zealous to spread it over the face of the whole earth. Every believer should be anxious to communicate it to all whom he possibly can.

It is the word of life - let us hold it fast.

It is the light of the world - let us place it on the candlestick.

It is the balm of life - let us send it wherever pain is felt, or sorrows are experienced.

If we are not zealous to defend the truth - can we know its value?

If we are not zealous to adorn the truth - can we understand its design?

If we are not zealous to spread the truth - can we sympathize with human misery, or desire to spread God's glory.

We should be zealous for the Lord's people. They are precious in his sight. They are his jewels, his special treasure. He loves them more than all the other productions of his power. His heart has been set upon them from eternity.

Chosen for his own glory, purchased by the precious blood of his only begotten Son, sanctified and made the temples of his Holy Spirit - he cares for them with the tenderest care.

He wishes us . . . to view them, just as he does, to love them, just as he does, to care for them, just as he does, to act toward them, just as we would act toward him.

If therefore we are cold, distant, and haughty in our bearing toward them - it grieves him. If we do not feel interested in their welfare, concerned for their comfort, and desirous of promoting their holiness - he is, he must be, displeased with us.

We should be zealous to encourage them. They need it. They have enough to discourage them. Satan, sin, and the world - unite to distress, beguile, or discourage them! They need our tenderest sympathy, our brotherly affection, our kind attentions! Viewing them as the children of God, as the members of the mystical body of Jesus, as the pupils of the Holy Spirit - we should be zealous to encourage them in their way to the kingdom.

We should zealously assist them. Many of them are poor. Many of them are ignorant. Many of them are afflicted. In these circumstances we ought not to require frequent applications, urgent entreaties, or touching appeals; but our zeal should prompt us to search them out, to minister to their necessities, to instruct their minds, and to endeavor to comfort them under their sufferings and sorrows.

What is done to a believer - Jesus takes as done to himself. As we imagine therefore that if he were on earth - we would zealously search him out, minister to his need, and if possible increase his comforts - so ought we to do to his poor people. They are placed near us for this purpose. They are thus so circumstanced, to test the reality and the power of our love.

We should zealously endeavor to cement them together. They are in reality - one body, one flock, one family. Satan has divided them, and he endeavors by all means to keep them in a state of division. Love is the cement of the Church. Not the love of opinions - but the love of people - of all people who love Jesus. We must allow liberty of thought, opinion, and action - and we should love ardently while we do so.

Here is one who thinks differently to me in the matter of Church government; he differs with me in his opinion of certain points of minor doctrines; he acts differently to me in some practical matters - but he is a sincere Christian. He believes in Christ, he walks in fellowship with God, his life and conversation are holy. Then I must love him, and I ought zealously to endeavor to cement and unite all such together, in the bonds of holy brotherhood.

Let us be zealously attached to the persons of the Lord's people, notwithstanding their differences. We must be viewing them in Christ, loving them for the sake of Christ, and endeavoring to bring them closer and closer to each other. Happy is he who unites differing Christians together. But we cannot think well of him who separates, alienates, and divides them.

We should be zealous for the Lord's cause. He has a cause upon the earth. It is the cause of holiness and truth. It is distinct from the world - but is intended to be a blessing to the world. It is called his Church. The Church in which he dwells, by which he works, through which he communicates his blessings. It is . . . founded on Christ, taught by the Holy Spirit, ruled only by his word, and intended to carry out his deep and divine purposes.

Every Christian is really identified with it, and should never look upon himself as isolated from it. The cause of God is our cause - and our cause ought to be the cause of God.

We should be zealous therefore, to increase it. To bring sinners under the sound of the Gospel, under the influence of the truth. To lead souls to Jesus, and then into the Church of God. Never should we be satisfied until the largest promises of his word are fulfilled, until the most glowing predictions are made good. Not one of the Lord's family, male or female, should be happy - but as employed, and employed to the full extent of their ability, in endeavoring to increase the empire of the Messiah.

We should be zealous to support it. By our presence, by our prayers, by our influence, and by our property. Silver and gold are given to us as God's stewards, and we are to use them for His glory. He often gives them, and then seems to leave us to ourselves, saying, "I will just see what you will do with them." And what do many do? Look . . . at their opulent homes, at their lavish furniture, at

their plush clothes, at their vain amusements, at their expensive foods, at their But I forbear!

Only just look on the other hand, at what they give to support the ministry, to assist missions, to circulate the Bible, to distribute tracts, to relieve the poor, to supply the needs of the sick, etc. etc. Can we say of such people, as Paul did of others, "None of us lives to himself?" If these are God's stewards - are they faithful? If ministers are their servants for Christ's sake, are they good masters? If the poor believers are their brethren, are they at all like their elder Brother in their conduct toward them? If there is no hope for sinners but through the Gospel, are they very anxious that souls should be saved? The cause of God requires all our sympathy, influence, and untiring support - but does it have it? Shall it in future have it? We should zealously identify ourselves with it. To be one with Christ, how glorious! To be one with the cause of Christ, is only a little less glorious! The one is the glory of the sun, the other is the glory of the moon.

God has identified his cause with himself, and he has identified his people with his cause. They are to sustain it, to increase it, to perfect it. But this requires zeal. It will not be done without zeal. It deserves our warmest zeal, our utmost endeavors. Cause of Jesus! may I be identified with you, may I zealously support you, may I be instrumental in increasing you! To this may every believer add, Amen and Amen!

Brethren, let us be zealous - for Satan is! He never tires, he never rests. Most zealously does he . . . contrive his plans, lay his snares, and watch his victims!

He goes about seeking whom he may devour.

Let us be zealous, for lost sinners are. See the money they spend, the labor they give, the means they employ in the cause of sin and Satan! Their conduct ought to put us to shame.

Let us be zealous, for false teachers are. How active, how diligent, how persevering they appear in propagating their error. They employ the tongue, the pen, the press, and the purse - in the most lavish and unsparing manner. Let . . . their conduct be our model, their success our stimulus, and their zeal our reproof.

Let us be zealous! The zealous Christian is sure of . . .

God's blessing, the approbation of his own conscience, the opposition of Satan, the frown of every lukewarm professor, and the commendation of all godly people.

If therefore the truth is valuable, if the saints are the excellent of the earth, if the cause of God is worthy of our regard, if Satan, if sinners, if erroneous men are zealous - then let us be zealous too!

Let us warm our hearts at the fire of God's love!

Let us quicken our motives by a visit to the cross!

Let us sharpen our weapons by communion with the Spirit!

Let us seek the grace, the courage, the strength necessary at the mercy seat - and then let us zealously fall to work. Let . . . the work of God be our delight, the welfare of our fellow-men be our aim, and the glory of the Lord be our highest object!

Let us live in earnest. Let us live to purpose. By the shortness of time, by the solemnities of death, by the realities of eternity, by the danger of lost sinners, by the vigilance of Satan, by the poor state of the Church, by the character of the present times, by the command of God, by the example of primitive believers, and by the counsel of the Lord Jesus - let us stir up our hearts, and stir up one another to "be zealous."

"It is good," said Paul, "to be zealous, provided the purpose is good." Galatians 4:18.

If ever it was good - it is good now.

If ever it was called for - it is called for now.

If ever it was an honor to be zealous for God - it is an honor to be so now.

Brethren, the time is short, and "it is high time to awake out of sleep!" By the spread of Popery, by the activity of infidelity, by the condition of our cities, by the needs of the Church, by the woes of the world, by the authority of God, by the blood of the cross, by the promise of the Spirit, by the prospect of success, by the rest of the grave, by the glories of Heaven, by the terrors of Hell, by the rewards of activity, and by the condemnation of the lukewarm and the slothful - allow me to beseech you, to "Be zealous!" Be zealous today - tomorrow you may die! Be zealous in time - and in eternity you will rejoice that you have been so!

16-The Proper Aim of a Christian's Life

The Proper Aim of a Christian's Life James Smith, 1856

"Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more!" 1 Thessalonians 4:1
"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do - do it all for the glory of God!" 1 Corinthians 10:31

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:10 Every servant should habitually aim to please his master.

Every wife should habitually aim to please her husband.

Every child should habitually aim to please his father. But every Christian is the Lord's servant, the Lamb's bride, the child of God; therefore his daily, hourly aim, should be to please God. He should never lose sight of this for one hour - but in every place, in every circumstance, in every undertaking, ask, "Will this be pleasing to God?"

God is pleased or displeased . . . with every thought we think, with every word we speak, with every action we perform, with every emotion we feel.

Perhaps we do not sufficiently realize this. We think, speak, feel, and act - without ever considering whether we are pleasing God, or not. But this ought not to be, for He . . . gave us our being, redeemed us from sin and damnation, called us by His grace, and has blessed us with innumerable and interminable blessings

- and all that we may glorify Him! And how can we glorify Him but by habitually aiming to please Him? If I forget or lose sight of this, I forget and lose sight of the principal end of my being, and well-being.

What makes Heaven so happy? Just this - all there keep the eye and heart intently fixed upon this one thing - pleasing God. What would make us permanently and solidly happy on earth? Only this - to aim always and in everything to please God. Ah! if we did this, we would have . . . few cares, few fears, and no falls! The bosom would be a stranger to anxiety, and the heart to foreboding. The Savior's prayer which He taught his disciples would be in a great measure answered, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

Well, shall we go on as we have done - or shall we seek a change? We have not, perhaps, in everything, and at all times, sought principally to please God. But Paul says, "You ought to please God!"

Both reason and revelation unite in saying that we, as believers in Jesus, as partakers of the grace of God, as those who are absolutely dependent on God, who are so richly supplied by God, who are so infinitely indebted to God, and who are expecting to receive a crown and kingdom from God

- ought in everything to endeavor to please God! The precepts of His word direct us how we may do this, and the Holy Spirit is ready to help our infirmities - if we heartily desire and fervently ask Him.

Let each of us, then, in future, propose that the end of my life, is to please God. And let us often, very often, ask in reference to particular points, "Is this pleasing to God?" For instance, the manner in which I employ my spare time - the amount of time I give to sleep, to recreation, to entertainment. Many Christians seem never to think whether the way in which they spend their time is pleasing to God or not. If they did, would they ever go to some entertainments, or indulge in certain pleasures? Would the world have so much of their time, and the prayer-closet so little? How much time is wasted in frivolous ways, which are neither conducive to the health of the body, nor calculated to promote the spirituality of the mind.

How many squander their money on dress, ornaments, or delicacies for the body - who never relieve the poor, or supply the needs of the sick, or contribute to establish God's cause in the world; or if they do so at all, it is not in due proportion to their means. The pence are given to the Lord - the pounds are spent in the gratification of SELF!

If, when I am going to lay out money in ornaments or dress, or indulgences for the table, I was to ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" - would it not check my lavish expenditure? Would it not often change the course in which my money flows?

Just so with those who hoard up much, adding house to house, field to field, pound to pound - while the needs of the widow and the fatherless, and the funds of God's church are not supplied by them, if they were to ask, when making their purchases, or paying their money into the bank, "Is this pleasing to God?" - would they not often give more - and hoard less? We think so. And would not the reflection be more pleasing on a sick-bed or dying pillow? We think it would.

We all have influence, and in the case of a contested election, or in order to carry some party question - we prove that we have. We can influence some, it may be many. We can influence them for good or for evil.

Now, in making use of our influence for worldly objects, and in withholding it from spiritual objects - do we not sin? Are we not displeasing God? Ought we not to ascertain what influence we have, and how we may best exert it, so as to please God? Are we not accountable for the use or abuse of our influence? Is it not a talent, an important talent? Was it not given us to employ for God and the good of our fellow-men? Is it not important, then, in reference to using our influence, to ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" So also as to the connections I form, and the relationships into which I enter, the first question should be, "Will this please God?" A Christian is about to enter into partnership, to commence or carry on a business - -what should be his first object? Assuredly to please God, for if he loses sight of God's glory, and seeks only his own worldly advantage - God may blow upon it, and if it does not end in ruin, it may introduce him to trouble, care, anxiety, and perplexity, which will spoil his peace, rob him of his spiritual enjoyments, and make his life anything but desirable! Men of business should often ask in reference to their transactions, "Is this pleasing to God?" A godly man is about to choose a wife, or a godly woman has an offer of marriage - what should they do? What should be the principal aim? What should decide the point? Just an answer to this question, "Will it please God?" If they can, after much thought, prayer,

regard to God's Word, and close examination, conclude, "Yes, it will please God" - then they have reason to expect the smile of Heaven upon their union, the blessing of God upon their household, and real happiness in their connection with each other - but not else. Do not forget that you ought not only to please yourselves - but to please God! And not only so - but you should aim to please God first and principally - before you please yourselves. For example, say that I am a laborer, and am about to engage in an employment - "pleasing God" should be my guide. The place may be respectable, the employment may be easy, the remuneration may be good; but can I have time for closet prayer? Can I have liberty to attend the means of grace? Can I adorn the doctrine of God my Savior here? Or, looking at the subject on all sides, and comparing it with other situations that may offer, I should ask, "Will it glorify God for me to enter into this employment?" Or, "Is it pleasing to God that I should enter into such an engagement, or undertake such a service?" This is the point, and we should stick to it. This is the rule, and we should walk by it.

Again, as to the way in which I perform duty. Many things are done - which are not well done. The way of doing them does not reflect honor on God, or do credit to ourselves. If I do anything out of fear, slavish fear - it is wrong. If I do anything merely to silence conscience - it is wrong. If I do anything merely to please men, or to raise myself in their estimation - it is wrong. My object in everything I do - should be to please God. The one grand end of my life, the grand thing I am to aim at - is to please my Heavenly Father. I have . . . nothing to dread but His frown, nothing to fear but His displeasure, nothing to seek but His approbation.

If my Heavenly Father is pleased with me - it is enough. In prayer, in praise, in exercising benevolence, in every public duty, in every arduous enterprise, in every self-denying undertaking - I should just ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" If so, all is well. But His word must decide the question - and will always do so. In general, if we do all to the glory of God, if we do all lovingly or in a spirit of love, if we do all to edify believers, and to win lost sinners - then it is no question that God is pleased with us. In a word, in reference to . . . the spirit we manifest, the temper we indulge, the object we aim at, the design we have in view, and the motive that influences us in every enterprise - we should seriously ask, "Is this pleasing to God?"

Beloved, if we do not please God - then it matters little whom we please! And if we do please God - then it is of small importance whom we displease. What a comfort it is when . . . the world frowns on us, Christians misunderstand us, and professors misrepresent our conduct

- to have the inward conviction, "my aim was to please God!" - and to go to the throne of grace to render an account, and feel the light of our Father's countenance lifted up upon us, assuring us that he is pleased with us. On the other hand, suppose that . . . the world smiles on us, Christians think well of us, and professors applaud us

- but we have an inward conviction that in what we have done - we have sought ourselves before Jesus, and have been influenced by some carnal motive, instead of a simple desire to please God - and we go to the throne of grace to lay our work at our Father's feet - and He refuses to acknowledge it - there is no sweet smile, no access to His loving heart, no light from his countenance beaming upon us! What is the world's smile, what the opinion of our fellow-Christians, what the plaudits of professors - without the approbation of God? Ah, what? My brother, my sister - our Heavenly Father is pleased with our poorest performances, with our most imperfect services, with only a cup of cold water given to one of His children - if our object is to

please Him! In all that we do - He looks into our hearts, to see what we are aiming at. He is displeased or pleased - with all we do. It is one thing for Him to accept our persons in Jesus, to pardon our sins for the sake of Jesus, and another thing to be pleased with our works, as the works of His beloved child. Of the former we should be assured, and the latter we should constantly aim at.

O what a mercy to be permitted to do anything for God, to visit His sick, to relieve His poor, to circulate His truth, and to speak well of His name! And what a comfort it is to know that our God is easily pleased - that it is not the amount of what we do - but the motive from which we do it, that He looks at! "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that a man has not."

Whatever we do, let us "do it heartily, as to the Lord - and not to man." Whatever we do, let us "do all in the name of the Jesus Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father, by Him." Whatever we do, "whether we eat or drink - let us do all to the glory of God." Whatever we do - let it be our object, aim, and end - "to please God." And - in the future, when any work presents itself, when any untrodden path opens before us, and any influence urges us forward, or any object attracts us onward - let us ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" And before we proceed, let the question be decided; nor let us dare engage in any enterprise, enter into any relationship, or undertake any work - but from the conviction, "This will please God!"

17-The One Mediator!

The One Mediator!

James Smith "There is one Mediator between God and men - the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5 The mediation of Christ is the glory of the gospel! No one has seen the glory of the method of grace - who has not distinctly, clearly, and spiritually seen the nature of the mediation of Jesus. God and man are by nature separated; nor can they be reconciled or united - but by a Mediator. The cause of this separation is sin. The sin of man is rebellion against the just authority of God. The sin of man is deep-rooted, cruel, and wicked enmity against God. The sin of man is moral filth, in consequence of which he cannot be admitted into the presence of God.

Sinful man aims at nothing less than the destruction of the very being of the absolutely holy God; for if the sinner had the power - he would chase God Almighty out of all the worlds He has created, and deprive Him of His existence and very being! The character of man, is that of the enemy of God - he is the avowed, determined, and implacable enemy of God! And his enmity is so deep and dreadful - that nothing short of the divine power and influence of the Holy Spirit can subdue it, nothing but a new creation can change his character!

How then can such a vile being, in such a dreadful state - be admitted into the presence of the thrice holy God? Into the presence of that God:

1. Whose justice demands that the rights of the divine nature be maintained, and the sins of the sinner be punished!
2. Whose holiness is like a burning, glowing fire, and will not, cannot - allow anything impure to approach Him!
3. Whose truth is as immutable as His throne, and will not rescind or falsify His threatenings!
4. Whose power makes earth to tremble, and the perpetual mountains to bow!

How can such a holy God, and such vile creatures - meet and embrace, and love each other?

Only through a Mediator, one who can lay his hand upon both! The Mediator required must be one who can approach to and deal with God for man; whose dignity, glory, and majesty, are such, that it shall be no dishonor to Jehovah to admit Him to His council, and enter into terms with Him for man's redemption. The Mediator must be one who has ability to prevail with and reconcile men. He must have power . . . to subdue the stubborn will, to cleanse the filthy nature, and to bring the rebel at a humble suppliant to the divine throne!

He must be willing to undertake this great and arduous work, and to go through with it, let it cost what it may of toil, suffering, and power.

He must also be acceptable to both parties: God must approve of Him and be satisfied with Him; and man must acquiesce in his appointment, office, and work.

He must be able to meet and fulfill all the conditions of the covenant . . . obeying the precepts of the law, suffering its dreadful penalty, and new-creating the rebel man.

He must therefore be GOD - or how could He . . . deal with God, undertake for millions of sinners, and deliberately engage in such an dreadful work?

If He is not God - then He is infinitely beneath God; for there is an infinite distance between God and the most exalted creature.

He must also be man, and PERFECT MAN, without spot, or stain of sin - or how could He obey the law in His life, and suffer its penalty in His death?

Jesus is BOTH God and man. God by nature, and man by choice - the God-man, therefore the Mediator. His WORK was first to lay a foundation for bringing God and man together upon just and honorable principles - this He did by His obedience and death. Then He must actually bring the parties together into friendship and agreement - this He does by His gospel and Holy Spirit. Then He must keep the parties together, in peace and love - and this He does by His intercession, constantly pleading His blood for sinners in the holiest, and sending down the Holy Spirit to sanctify, teach and guide them! As Mediator, He made peace. He proclaims peace, He imparts peace. He maintains peace. He will introduce His people into perfect and eternal peace! He stands between God and man as Intercessor with God - and as Advocate for them! He is the only medium of access to God; no sinner can approach God with acceptance - but through Him! As the medium of communion with God - God can not have fellowship with us - but through Him. As the medium of sympathy, He unites God and man so closely, so tenderly - that every groan touches Him, every sigh touches Him, every pain touches Him! And in all our afflictions - He is afflicted!

Wonderful union of God and man! Amazing mystery! That God and man should become one, through Jesus. The rebel and the Sovereign - one! The vile sinner and the Holiest - one! But so it is, and Jesus will be our one Mediator to us in ultimate glory forever. There is one Mediator, and but ONE! We need no more!

18-The Restless Bed

The Restless Bed

James Smith What is sown now - will be reaped in eternity.

Eternal life is the free gift of a gracious God.

Eternal punishment is the just wages of eternal sin.

We deserve Hell now - but we may escape it by fleeing to Jesus. If we refuse to do so - then we can only expect to reap the fruit of our folly.

Heaven is the gift of God's grace - but Hell is the wages of sin.

Every sinner makes his own Hell. In this light, let us look at the words of the Psalmist, "If I make my bed in Hell." Psalms 139:8 THE RESIDENCE. "In Hell."

WHAT is Hell?

Hell is the prison - in which the prisoners of God's justice are confined.

Hell is where punishment is inflicted on all who die at enmity with God.

Hell is the place where Satan acts the part of the chief tormentor.

Hell is the place where conscience, armed with terrible power, torments the guilty soul.

Hell is the place where reflection, aided by a strong and tenacious memory, afflicts without mercy or cessation.

Hell is the place where God frowns justly and eternally on the naked soul.

Hell is the place where everything calculated to . . . satiate with terror, fill with agony, and torture with pain, exist.

While everything calculated to inspire hope, give pleasure, or impart relief - is excluded forever. WHO is in Hell?

Satan and his demons - all those foul, wicked, and degraded spirits - who are filled with envy, malice, and enmity against God and man.

All unrepentant sinners - of all classes, creeds, places, and periods.

All who have . . . stained the world with their crimes, afflicted others with their cruelties, and degraded themselves by their vices.

All the lowest, vilest, and basest of the human race!

God is there too, in his glorious majesty, almighty power, impartial justice, and awesome holiness! O how it will aggravate the sufferings of the lost - to have God's eye always fixed upon them, and the justice, holiness, and majesty of God ever shining before them!

WHAT is in Hell?

Justice with its flaming sword - is there.

Memory stored with the whole history of ones life - is there. The worm that gnaws the vitals of the soul, but never dies - is there. The fire that cannot be quenched, which tortures but never destroys our nature - is there. But there is no Bible there.

There is no gospel with its joyful sound.

There is no gentle, loving Savior.

There is no loving friend or dear relation.

There is nothing to lessen or alleviate suffering!

Hell concentrates in itself, all the elements of misery, degradation, wretchedness and woe! THE REST. "My bed." "If I make my bed in Hell." Rest in Hell? A bed in Hell? What kind of a bed could that be? A bed composed of the thorns of bitter reflection. A bed made up of the terrible inflictions of incensed justice. A bed embracing . . . the horrors of a guilty conscience, the blackness and darkness of despair, the ceaseless outpouring of the vials of the wrath of God! This bed is . . . ever heaving - like the restless ocean; ever sinking - like a millstone, in the bottomless depths; ever burning - like a lake of liquid brimstone; and ever inflicting torments - beyond description or conception.

"MY bed" - the bed I procured by a life of sin.

"MY bed" - the bed I deserve for rejecting the Savior, and neglecting the great salvation.

"MY bed" - the bed awarded me by a just and holy God. My OWN bed - the only bed I can claim; the only bed I can expect; that bed for which I labored; and which is the righteous wages of my sin. My OWN bed - the only bed I shall have forever! My OWN bed - on which there can be no rest day nor night. Ever wakeful, ever weary, ever cursing and condemning myself - here on my infernal bed - I am doomed, and justly doomed to lie forever! THE EMPLOYMENT. "If I make my bed in Hell." Every man makes his own bed, and on the bed he makes for himself - he must forever lie.

What are sinners on earth doing? Making their bed in Hell!

Drunkard - you are making your bed in Hell, and a terrible bed it will be!

Dishonest man, by your tricks in trade, and various dishonest practices - you are making your bed in Hell, and an awful bed it will be!

Liar, by your falsehoods and deception - you are making your bed in Hell - and a liar's bed will burn with brimstone and with fire!

Profane swearer - you also are preparing for yourself, a dreadful couch!

Promiscuous man - the lusts you indulge now, will entwine about your soul like serpents, and sting and poison you, on your bed in Hell forever!

Hypocrite, pretending to be religious, when you know that you are not - I suppose few will have a more racking or torturing bed to lie on forever - than you will!

Careless sinner - you are making your bed in Hell, and you will perhaps repent of it when it is too late.

Trifling professor, worldly-minded church member - you too are making your bed in Hell, and it is to be feared that many will go from the church of God on earth - to be tormented forever on a bed in Hell!

There is a Hell - an eternal Hell. Justice provided it originally for the devil and his demons - but there is room in it for rebellious men, and if they die impenitent - they will be forever doomed to it! No one will have a place in Hell, who does not richly merit and deserve it. Hell is just wages - for present sinful work. "The wages of sin is death" - eternal death. O terrible thought, to be working so hard on earth - only to receive the wages of eternal punishment in Hell!

"If I make my bed in Hell."

Young man - what if you should make your bed in Hell? It will be your own act and deed.

Young woman - what if you should make your bed in Hell? And you may - for the dance, the ball-room, pride of dress, and neglect of God, without any grosser vices - will be sufficient to prepare for you a bed in Hell!

Aged man - what if you should make your bed in Hell? What a dreadful close - to a long and trying life on earth.

Aged woman - is it possible that you should make your bed in Hell? It is - and more than possible!

Religious man - what if you should make your bed in Hell? What if after all your prayers, sacraments, and contributions to religious societies - your bed should be in Hell! And it will - if you are not found in Christ!

It does not matter - whether young or old, whether professor or profane - unless you are washed in the blood of Jesus; unless you are sanctified by the Spirit of God; unless you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son - you will certainly make your bed in Hell.

Look well to it, then, I beseech you - that you have saving faith in Christ, and that you are regenerated by the Holy Spirit - for without true holiness, no one can see the Lord. Without holiness - you will certainly make your bed in Hell!

19-Israel's Need - and God's Mercy

Israel's Need - and God's Mercy James Smith, 1856 Life is but a journey - a journey from the present fleeting world, to the eternal world.

"By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." Exodus 13:21-22

If the books of Moses were now for the first time put into our hands, with what deep interest would we read them, and what a powerful impression would their contents make upon our minds. To sit down and read, how God fitted up the world for our reception, how he created our first parents, how they fell by sin, and how graciously God opened a door of hope before them. To go through the history of the long-lived ante-diluvians, the history of the patriarchs, and, above all, God's wonderful dealings with his people. Surely we would be absorbed in the subject, and filled with admiration at the book. But we have been familiar with these things from our childhood, and therefore they have lost the charm of novelty. Still we cannot read these books carefully and with prayer, especially when we bear in mind that the past was typical of the present - without interest, instruction, and profit.

Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand; they were about to cross the sea, enter the wilderness, and travel to the promised land. Moses was their leader - but they needed one wiser, more patient, and more powerful than Moses.

Just so with ourselves; the Lord has brought us out of the Egypt of our natural state; we have crossed the sea, which forever forbids our return to it; we are strangers and pilgrims on earth; and are traveling to a country which the Lord has promised to give us for an inheritance. There is, therefore, a similarity between Israel's circumstances - and our own; and we will keep this in view while we meditate on this portion of the Lord's Word. Here we see - First - Israel's Need. They needed a GUIDE.

They had a long journey before them, which would take them forty years.

They had to travel by a strange path, on which they had never trodden before.

Numerous foes would endeavor to obstruct their progress.

Many dangers lined the way. And they had mistrustful and deceiving hearts.

Fellow-Christians - is it not even so with us? We are going on a journey to a country of which the Lord our God has told us. The journey is long and trying. It takes some twenty, some forty, and some sixty years to travel from earth to Heaven.

It is a strange path. A path which no one knows - a path we have never trodden before. A path which by nature we could never find, and from which we are prone to turn aside.

We are surrounded by numerous foes, visible and invisible: The WORLD frowning as a determined persecutor, or fawning as a base deceiver - is our foe. Now by its sneers, sarcasms, or sword; and then by its gilded vanities, flesh-pleasing baits, and blandishments - it endeavors to turn us aside from the right ways of the Lord.

SATAN and his hosts - crafty, cunning, cruel, united, persevering and determined - set themselves to terrify and drive us back, or to allure us from the way. And worst of all, in our own natures, we have a determined foe who is . . . ever present, ever vigilant, ever powerful.

Yes, the FLESH lusts against the Spirit. We find a law in our members warring against the law of our minds. The world, the flesh, and the devil all combine to . . . oppose our progress, hinder us in our march, and, if possible, to destroy us in the wilderness!

Then there are so many dangers: the towering rocks of presumption, the quagmires of doubt and fear, the pitfalls of error, the ravines of willful sin, the fiery-flying serpent of temptation, the scorpion of indulged lust, the sunshine - and the shade; the barren sands - and the verdant valleys; the granite rocks - and the flowing streams

- all of them have dangers concealed in them! Nor can we be trusted alone for one moment - if we are to be safe. Worst of all, there are our distrustful and deceitful hearts!

Overcoming faith is impossible without the constant renewings of the Holy Spirit. We doubt the promise - and distrust the promiser. Sometimes we question whether we have ever left Egypt - and at other times we are ready to conclude, that for our sin, he has brought us out to slay us in the wilderness. This distrusting God is the sin that does so easily beset us. With so long a journey, so strange a path, such numerous foes, so many dangers, and such unbelieving hearts - can we ever reach the promised land? Can we? Not if left to ourselves. Not if led only by Moses. Not if we have merely an angel for our guide. We must have a guide . . . who well knows the road; who can conquer our many foes; who can lead us safely through all our dangers; who can bear with our stubborn hearts and lives!

We need a guide . . . whose wisdom is perfect, whose power is almighty, whose care is constant, whose patience is immutable, and whose mercy endures forever! And we have such a guide, for the Most High God, who rules over the kingdoms of men has said to us, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go! I will guide you with My eye!" (Psalms 32:8) And so sweetly has he assured us of his love, won our confidence, and revealed his character and qualifications, that we have right heartily said, "You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory!" Israel's God was Israel's guide; and this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death, through death, and beyond it. "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night." This leads us to notice -

Secondly - The Lord's Mercy. God provided just what the Israelites in needed in the wilderness - a guide to lead them by day and night. He went just before them: thus pointing out the road, clearing it of insurmountable difficulties, and conducting them in it. This is just what our good and gracious God does for us! He is really present with us - though unseen by us. He is never far from any one of us. He marks out our road, He removes every real impediment out of our way, and conducts us step by step in the path to the promised land!

Naturally we do not know the path; and when we do, our nature always dislikes it. Left to ourselves, we would choose the short-cut, the smooth path, and well-frequented road. But He leads us in a zig-zag way, by a rough and uneven road - where there are but few fellow-travelers. His choice is best. The way He points out is the only right one. It is to humble us, and test us, and show what is in our hearts. It is that we may walk by faith - and not by sight. It is to teach us our need of Himself - and to lead us to cleave to Him.

He came behind them. When the Egyptians drew near, the pillar of fire moved, and fell down as a fiery partition, as an impassable barrier between the two companies. The Lord went before them, and the God of Israel was their reward.

Just so, our wise and watchful guide becomes our SHIELD - he interposes between us and danger. Often, very often, would the Egyptians have come upon us from behind, and injured, if not destroyed us - but our God was there, he protected and preserved us. We shall never know until we get to glory - how often and in how many ways, the Lord has interposed for us and preserved us!

He adapted himself to all their circumstances. By day, when the sun was pouring down its streams of glaring light and scorching heat - it was a cooling and refreshing cloud, spreading like a large umbrella over the entire company. By night, when the cold dews were falling, and the chilling winds were blowing - it was a warming cheerful fire. It was shade or light; shadow or warmth - just as they needed. And, oh, beloved, how has our God adapted himself to all our circumstances these many years in the wilderness!

He has warmed us with his love - and cooled us with his mercy.

He has sheltered us with his broad hand - and cheered us with his loving Word. In looking back, we can see that we have had the cloud by day - and the fire by night. He has fully provided for them that they might journey by day and night. If they had to strike their tents and pack up for a march at noon-day - the cloud shadowed them; and if they had to prepare for a removal at midnight - the fire gave them light to work by. If they traveled on scorching sands, and under a burning sky - they were sheltered; and if they journeyed under the gloom of midnight - they were illumined and cheered.

Blessed be God for the provision he has made for us, for we have found his grace sufficient for us, and his strength perfected in our weakness. Our shoes have been iron and brass; and as our day - so has our strength been. We have gone by day and night. Ah, some of us have traveled much by night! But we have ever found the truth of the testimony, "Unto the upright - there arises light in darkness."

He continued his kindness to them unto the end. "Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." The symbol of the divine presence continued with them until Moses died. When Joshua became leader, the ark opened the way through the Jordan, and conducted them into the promised land.

Just so, God's providence will care for us, comfort us, lead us, and supply us - until we come to the Jordan. And then Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, Jesus, the ark of the everlasting covenant - will lead us across the river, make the way plain and easy, and introduce us to the promised land.

He who began with us, will go on with us - nor will he leave us nor forsake us until he has done all that he has spoken to us of. Every jot and tittle of his Word must be fulfilled, for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it has pleased the Lord to make them his people. We are confident of this very thing - that he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ!

Beloved, are you traveling from Egypt to Canaan - from earth to Heaven? If so, you need a guide. No creature will be found sufficient. It must be the Lord himself.

He guides all his people by his providence, for his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of all those whose hearts are perfect towards him.

He guides them by his grace. His Word is our directory - the map of our journey. On that he shines by his Holy Spirit, and in us he works by the same divine agent. He convinces, he inclines, he leads, he sustains, and at length introduces us to the eternal rest prepared for the people of God.

If God is your guide - he will adapt his manifestation to your circumstances. There will be no visible cloud or fire - but he will make your way plain before your face. He will not guide you as a horse or mule - with bit and bridle; but as a rational being - as a beloved child. He will take you by the hand, gradually and graciously clear your way, and comfort and encourage you as you go on.

Under his guidance you will make progress both by day and night. In prosperity and adversity, in joy and sorrow, in light and darkness, in summer and winter, you will still make way to the promised land. The true Christian can travel by day or night. He is not dependent on circumstances. He often rises beyond the region of second causes. He makes progress - because the Lord is with him.

If God begins to lead you, he will go through the whole journey with you. He will not leave you in the middle. He will not forsake you toward the end.

Aged pilgrim, cheer up! The Lord who led you when young, who guided you in life's meridian - will not leave you now.

"Even down to old age all his people shall prove, His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love! And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn, Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne!"

Young Christian, take courage. You have a long journey, it may be, before you. You have to cross a waste-howling wilderness. You will have to contend with Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites. The Amalekites may come out against you. Moab may hire soothsayers against you. But fear not - press on. Keep your eye on the cloud by day, and expect the fire at night. He who has mercy on you, will lead you, even by the springs of water will he guide you. You may at times be brought to a stand-still, and wonder which is the right path, when you come where two ways meet; but even then, you shall hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way - walk in it!"

Doubts may beset you, fears may assault you, Satan and the world may conspire against you - but your God will guide you!

He will support, supply, and defend you; and make all his goodness pass before you!

"By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." Exodus 13:21-22 When Israel was from Egypt freed, The Lord who brought them out, Helped them in every time of need, But led them round about.

They often murmured by the way, Because they judged by sight; But were at length constrained to say, The Lord had led them right! By fire and cloud their way was shown, Across the pathless sands; And Amelek was overthrown, By Moses' lifted hands. The way was right, their hearts to prove, To make God's glory known, And show his wisdom, power, and love, Engaged to save his own!

Just so the true believer's path Through many dangers lies;

Though dark to sense, 'tis right to faith, And leads us to the skies!

20-Nevertheless!

Nevertheless!

James Smith, 1859

How much is sometimes conveyed to the mind by one word, especially by one inspired word. This word, NEVERTHELESS, has often been profitable to me; for it has conveyed sweet comfort, strong encouragement, and a powerful stimulus to me. I propose therefore to spend a few minutes, in looking at it, as it stands in a few different portions of God most holy Word.

1. In considering my many defects and shortcomings, I have at times been greatly depressed and discouraged, and have been tempted to give way to doubts and fears; but in looking into the divine Word, I find that all the saints have had their spots and their defects. I have been encouraged when I have read this, "But the high places were not taken away out of Israel; nevertheless the heart of Asa was faithful all his days." 2 Chronicles 15:17. Asa was not all that he ought to be, neither did he do all he ought or could have done; nevertheless he was sincere - and God thinks much of sincerity. He was heart-whole in his religion, though he had many imperfections. And I trust, as deficient as I am, as imperfect as I am - I trust that I am sincere; my heart is in God's cause, and is set on God's glory. I have not taken away all the high places - I have still too many high thoughts, and high ways; nevertheless, I trust it will be found, that my heart is faithful with the Lord, and that I shall be found a sincere believer, though an imperfect Christian, all my days.

2. I have often been cast down in consequence of the dispensations of divine providence, and the mysterious dealings of the Lord with my soul. But in reading the Psalms, I have often found comfort, because I saw that the Lord's people had been exercised just in the same way in the days of old. Poor Asaph - how he was tried, dispirited, and distressed - but even in his case there was a nevertheless, as he says, "Nevertheless I am continually with you - you have held me by your right hand." Psalms 73:23. So is there in my case too, for however the Lord has tried me, he has never forsaken me, nor let go his hold of me. I have slid back often - but he has held me fast, and he holds me fast still. Of many things I may be deprived - but the Lord has pledged his Word, that he will never leave me nor forsake me. And, not only so - but he will not let me leave him for long, nor wander from him far. "I am continually with you" - in the darkest night, in the most trying season. "You have held me with your right hand" - and this is the reason, why I have not fainted, been overcome, or utterly turned back!

3. I have at times thought, that in consequence of the power of sin, the deceitfulness of my own heart, and the wiles of the devil - I would certainly turn apostate, and forsake the right ways of the Lord. But there is one blessed, "Nevertheless," which has preserved and kept me until now; and I believe it will keep me even to the end. For thus it is written, in reference to our beloved Lord, "I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, and their iniquity with flogging! Nevertheless, I will not take my love from him,

nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered!" Psalms 89:29-34. What a blessed "Nevertheless," is here!

He will correct - but not reject.

He will punish - but not disinherit.

He will turn his hand against them - but not his heart.

Lovingly he will rebuke and chasten - but will never turn against them, or allow them to apostatize from him.

Gracious God and Father, I bless you, I adore you, for your changeless love! I rejoice in the assurance, that whom you love, you love unto the end! Long ago, I would have left you - if permitted. Long ago, you would have hated me - if anything could have provoked you to do so. But, oh, I bless you, for those sweet words, "Nevertheless, I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness." And if not from Christ, the head - then not from the members, seeing we were chosen in him, blessed in him, are preserved in him, and are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

4. I have passed through many sad and sore afflictions, and in those afflictions I have been left at times, without any cheering light, comforting hope, or soul elevating consolation. I have cried - but could obtain no answer. I have sought the Lord - but could not find him. I have given way to doubt and despondency - until I have sunk deep in sadness and in gloom. I have been tempted to think that my case was hopeless, and my experience contrary to that of the Lord's family. I have fretted, complained, and repined; and have been ready to give up all for lost! But there was one blessed "Nevertheless," that like a star in the midst of midnight darkness, gave me a little light, and cheered me with a little hope. In Psalm 106 I read of the conduct, or rather misconduct of Israel of old, how they provoked the Lord, and brought down his sore judgments upon them. But in verses 44, 45, it is written "Nevertheless he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented!" What a blessed "Nevertheless," is this! After so much sin, so many provocations, and such severe chastisement, "Nevertheless!" After all, notwithstanding all, in spite of all, "Nevertheless he took note of their distress when he heard their cry!" As if it touched his paternal heart, stirred up the depths of his compassion, and aroused his tenderest pity! O infinitely gracious God! Again I bless your adorable name, for your long-suffering and tender mercy - toward such poor, weak, wicked, wayward worms of the earth!

5. I have been discouraged in my work very often, because I have seemed to labor in vain - to spend my strength for nothing, and in vain. But I have been cheered in reading of the fruitless toil of the disciples in the lake of Gennesaret, when they labored all night and caught nothing; and in the morning, when the Master bid them to launch out into the deep, and let down the net for a draught; Simon Peter said, "Master we have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing; Nevertheless, at your word I will let down the net." Luke 5:5. Yes, yes, if Jesus bids - then we must obey. We must be faithful - even when we are not successful. We cannot command success - but we can obey our Master's word. The commendation is not, "Well done, good and successful servant," but, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

If we have toiled in vain for a long time, perhaps the very next attempt may be crowned with extraordinary success. Yes, my soul, if you have toiled and caught nothing, remember you toiled for Jesus, whose ministry was not the most successful. You toiled for Jesus - who toiled much more for you. O it ought to be enough, if we are only permitted to do something for him - who has done so much for us! If we are only permitted to suffer a little for him - who suffered so deeply for us! If in any way we are permitted to show our love, and acknowledge our obligation to him! Yes, blessed, blessed Savior, though we catch nothing, though we seem to toil in vain - yet at your word we will let down the net! As ministers of Christ, let us be encouraged by this! As Sunday school teachers, let us be stimulated by this! It is at the command of Jesus, it is out of love to Jesus, it is to honor Jesus - that we preach and teach; and therefore however discouraging the circumstances in which we are placed, let us say, "Nevertheless at your word, I will let down the net!"

6. I have at various times been much disheartened, and sometimes perplexed by the changeability of professors of religion. How many have I seen fall into sin, or run into error. Many have disgraced their profession, and many have cast it off altogether. But there is a "Nevertheless" in God's Word that has comforted me, and set me right.

Paul, writing to his beloved son Timothy, speaks of some who had erred from the truth, and had overthrown the faith of others - but he adds, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: the Lord "knows those who are his. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Yes, the Lord knows his own - and can distinguish them from mere pretenders. He is not surprised, or disappointed, at anything that takes place - though I am. He knows whom he has chosen. He knows every one upon whom he has set his mark. He requires that all who profess Christ - should imitate Christ, and walk as Christ walked - departing from all iniquity.

Amidst all the changes then that may take place in the Church, if professors fall away, if they forsake the truth, and embrace error - God's foundation remains firm! None are removed from that foundation, who are once built on it, and cemented to it. The sheep never perish, nor can any one pluck them out of our Father's hand!

7. Once more, I have seen great changes take place in the world, and greater changes must have taken place since the beginning; and greater changes will take place yet. But whatever changes may take place, however many, or however great - they ought not to disturb us; for the sure Word of God predicts them, and therefore we ought to expect them. Nor only so - but we should look beyond them, to what is to be introduced by them, for so did the apostles and primitive believers.

Hence Peter having spoken of the day of the Lord, when "the Heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare;" adds, "nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness!" 2 Peter 3:13.

What a glorious prospect this opens before us! What a blessed nevertheless is here! New Heavens! A new earth wherein dwells righteousness! Prepared specially for the saints, and intended for the glorification of our blessed Lord and Savior. I do not wonder that they sing above, "Unto him who 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." Nor am I surprised to read again, "And they sung a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth!" How glorious to reign on such a new earth! How delightful to reign with Jesus, to the honor of Jesus - as the purchase of his blood, and the beloved ones of his heart.

If therefore I witness changes, if I suffer losses, if I hear of earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, or the most terrible convulsions, or devastations - I will not be much disturbed - but will say with Peter, "Nevertheless, according to his promise, I am looking for new Heavens, and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells!" But I must not enlarge, though there are yet many more instances of the value and blessedness of this sweet word, "Nevertheless." When Nehemiah and the Jews were in trouble, he says "Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God," Nehemiah 4:9, and this prayer was successful and brought relief. When the Psalmist confesses the sins, provocations, and wickedness of his forefathers, he adds to the honor of God's free and unmerited grace, "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known" Psalms 106:8. How full of comfort is this, to souls deeply sensible of their utter unworthiness! When Solomon speaks of the many devices that are in a man's heart, he adds for our encouragement, "Nevertheless the counsel of the Lord - that shall stand." Proverbs 19:21. When Paul speaks of his persecutions, afflictions, and imprisonment, for the gospel, in his letter to Timothy - he adds, in order to fortify him, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed; for 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." 2 Timothy 1:12. And when alluding to the grievous and painful chastisement endured by the Hebrew Christians, for their comfort he adds, "Nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:11. But if ever the word was uttered with inimitable grace, representing the most beautiful and lovely state of mind; it was when Jesus, lying on the cold ground in Gethsemane, said, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me - Nevertheless, not as I will - but as you will." Matthew 27:39. And if ever it displayed unequalled courage, and conveyed the full persuasion of divinity, it was when it was uttered by the Lamb of God, as he stood before the High Priest, who said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God! Jesus replied unto him: Yes, it is as you say. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven!" Matthew 26:64. Yes, blessed Jesus, the proud, haughty, scornful priest of Israel, shall have more than your word, to attest your claims, for he shall see you in your glory, and in your Father's glory, and all the holy angels with you!

O Lord Jesus, to submit to my Heavenly Father's will as you did, and to look forward amidst all my sufferings, poverty, and pains, to the fulfillment of the apostolic testimony: "When Christ who is our life shall appear - then you shall also appear with him in glory!"

Now let the feeble all be strong, And make Jehovah's arm their song, His shield is spread o'er every saint;

And, thus supported - who shall faint?

What though the hosts of Hell engage With mingled cruelty and rage! A faithful God restrains their hands, And chains them down in iron bands!

Bound by his Word, he will display A strength proportioned to our day; And when united trials meet, Will show a path of safe retreat.

Thus far we prove that promise good, Which Jesus ratified with blood;

Still he is gracious, wise, and just; And still, in him, may we all trust.

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