

FRUIT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE

by James Smith

Smith's collection using the metaphor of fruit from the Tree of Life to present biblical truths suited to different spiritual states—sinners, seekers, confirmed believers, and backsliders—providing varied spiritual nourishment.

73 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00 Fruit from the Tree of Life
2. 00p PREFACE
3. 01 GRACE!
4. 02 FAITH
5. 03 REMEMBER
6. 04 The Loved One Absent
7. 05 The Grave of Jesus
8. 06 The Coming of Jesus
9. 07 Christians Conversing with Each Other
10. 08 Delight in the Law of God
11. 09 The Incomparable Rock!
12. 10 Be Thankful
13. 11 The Time is Short!
14. 12 The Fullness of the Gospel
15. 13 Consolation For the Weak
16. 14 COMPLETENESS
17. 15 The Heart Not Right
18. 16 The Happy Poor
19. 17 A Visit to My Birthplace
20. 18 An Insolent Demand
21. 19 The Alluring
22. 20 The Gifts
23. 21 The Relationship
24. 22 Counsel for the Young
25. 23 I Have Found Jesus!
26. 24 DISCIPLINE
27. 25 There Is Hope!
28. 26 Reproved by a Child
29. 27 My Mother's Friend
30. 28 Christ Died for Our Sins
31. 29 The Source of All Good
32. 30 Firmly United to Christ
33. 31 A Universal Prayer
34. 32 Fear and Folly!
35. 33 Saving Souls
36. 34 Limiting God
37. 35 The Bitter Cup
38. 36 The Three States
39. 37 A Cause of Danger

- 40. 38 The Right Use of the Law
- 41. 39 Rest and Give Thanks
- 42. 40 Onward to the Rescue
- 43. 41 Hiding with God
- 44. 42 Jesus Not Known
- 45. 43 Salutary Thoughts
- 46. 44 Righteous and Safe
- 47. 45 A Neglected Command
- 48. 46 The Mouth Opened
- 49. 47 Common Mercies
- 50. 48 I Want a Change!
- 51. 49 Set Your House in Order!
- 52. 50 Knowing the Time
- 53. 51 If God is for Us — Who Can be Against Us?
- 54. 52 A Satisfactory Testimony
- 55. 53 Christ's Little Ones
- 56. 54 More Severe Punishment
- 57. 55 The Holy Spirit
- 58. 56 The Love of God
- 59. 57 Peace Made
- 60. 58 Contentment
- 61. 59 The Character of Christ's Church
- 62. 60 Hindering the Gospel
- 63. 61 A Man of Sorrows
- 64. 62 Our Strength
- 65. 63 Waiting for the Hope of Righteousness
- 66. 64 A Regret and Determination
- 67. 65 A Prayer in Soul Trouble
- 68. 66 Seek God and Live!
- 69. 67 God is Love!
- 70. 68 Preaching Christ, a Cause of Joy
- 71. 69 A Wise Course
- 72. 70 A Momentous Question
- 73. 71 Excellent Counsel

00 Fruit from the Tree of Life

Fruit from the Tree of Life

Food and Medicine for the Soul! by James Smith, 1860

00p PREFACE

PREFACE

In the midst of the garden, which the Lord God planted for man's residence at first, was the tree of life. And in the midst of the holy city, intended for the residence of ransomed man at last, is to be the tree of life. What the tree of life was to Eden, and what the tree of life will be to the New Jerusalem — is the Word of God to the Church of Christ now. It is laden with pleasant fruits, and its fruit is for the food and healing of the soul. There is life . . .

in its glorious doctrines — and sublime predictions;

in its precious promises — and holy precepts;

in its instructive histories — and sacred mysteries;

in its dark figures — and in its plain facts.

Every part of God's Word is precious; and if not palatable — it is profitable. It is intended to instruct, correct, refresh, and strengthen; and to make the man of God perfect, being thoroughly furnished to every good work. Precious Bible, there is no book like the Bible!

Having sat under the shadow of this tree, and having found its fruit sweet to my taste, I have collected a small basket of it, which I now present to the reader. And if it is as sweet to you, as some portions have been to me, you will thank me for collecting it, and praise God for providing it.

Some portions are suited to man as a sinner,

some are more suited to the seeker,

some for the confirmed believer, and

some for the poor unhappy backslider.

Like others that have gone before it, this little book contains a variety; and is intended to lead the reader to the Tree from which the fruit was gathered, where a greater variety, and almost infinite plenty — may be found. Some of this fruit is sharp — and some is sweet; some is solid — and some is full of refreshing juice; the grapes from Eschol were not finer, nor the dates from Canaan sweeter.

"At our gates," said the spouse, "are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved." What the spouse laid up — I have endeavored to lay out; and may the Lord give the reader a keen appetite for them, that he may relish them, be refreshed by them, and go on in the way to the kingdom rejoicing.

I now dedicate my work to my good and gracious God; praying, that the Holy Spirit may use it . . .

to honor Jesus,

to save souls,
to confound Satan,
to cheer the sorrowful,
to rescue the ensnared,
to deliver the tempted, and
to make diligent Christians gloriously joyful.

Reader, if you derive benefit from my book, remember me at a throne of grace, and ask the Lord to make the book a blessing to many others.

01 GRACE!

GRACE!

GRACE is a sweet and precious word. Grace is the free and sovereign favor of God, exercised toward the unworthy. The gospel is full of grace, and the longer we live, the more we feel our need of it. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into our world, he was said to be full of grace and truth. He had truth for the intellect — and grace for the heart. Truth to enlighten — and grace to sanctify us. Grace and truth comprise all we really need as sinners, or as saints. The full and perfect display of grace and truth — will constitute Heaven.

There are four views of grace on which I wish for a few moments to dwell. O to write of grace, in the spirit of grace! O to write of grace, gracefully!

First, our Heavenly FATHER, is called, "The GOD of All Grace." He is the ocean — in which grace dwells! He is the fountain — from which grace flows. The Lord loves to be viewed as gracious by his people. He presents grace as the grand feature of his covenant character, as the first letter of his name. When he proclaimed his name to Moses, in answer to the request, "I beseech you, show me your glory;" he proclaimed himself, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth." And for the encouragement of those who have no claim, and but for this could have no expectation, he says, "I will be gracious, to whom I will be gracious; and will show mercy, on whom I will show mercy." The vilest sinner, the most unworthy creature — may come to the Lord, in full expectation of obtaining the costliest blessings; even the pardon of all sins, a settled peace of conscience, a perfect righteousness, and fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Believer, ever bear in mind, that God has all grace — and all grace for you. The grace that saves, is in God; the grace that saves, comes from God; and the grace that saves, leads to God. Believe in God for all the grace you need at present, or may possibly need while in this wilderness below.

Secondly, the GOSPEL is called, "The WORD of His Grace." Here God tells us . . .

that he is gracious,

how he displays his grace, and

the medium he has provided to communicate grace to us. The gospel is a gracious proclamation of . . .

pardon for the guilty,

liberty for the captive,

health for the sick,

salvation for the lost, and

everlasting rest for the weary and heavy laden. The gospel exhibits God as infinitely gracious, and as delighting to display that grace in the experience of the wretched and miserable. It shows us, that where sin abounded — grace did much more abound; so that though sin abounded, or reigned unto death; even so grace abounds, or reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel . . .

gives the most gracious invitations,

makes the most gracious promises,

publishes the most gracious doctrines,

institutes the most gracious ordinances,

and enforces the most gracious precepts. The gospel is, like its author, full of grace. O my soul, read this gracious gospel, study this gracious gospel, believe this gracious gospel — and seek to prove the truth, and enjoy all the blessings, of this gracious gospel!

Thirdly, the THRONE of God is called, "The Throne of Grace." If it were the throne of justice — we might fear; or if it were the throne of holiness — we might be dazzled with its splendors. But it is the throne of grace — where God meets sinners on the principles of grace; where God confers on seeking souls, grace to help them in time of need; and where he manifests the deepest, tenderest sympathy for miserable and wretched men. At this throne he . . .

fully pardons the guilty,

eases the bosom of the troubled,

strengthens the weak and feeble,

and bids the oppressed go free. To this throne we are invited to carry . . .

our burdens,

our cares,

our fears, and

our sins — and leave them there! At this throne we find liberty to . . .

unburden our minds,

relieve our troubled spirits, and

hold communion with our God.

Lost sinner, come to this throne — and obtain peace!

Believer, come to this throne for grace to help you in every time of need!

Fourthly, the Holy Comforter is called, "The SPIRIT of Grace." He is . . .

gracious in his nature,

gracious in his influences, and

gracious in his operations.

Therefore, he may well be called, "The Spirit of grace."

He conveys grace to the sinner dead in trespasses and sins; and quickens him together with Christ. He works gracious tempers and dispositions in the soul, and makes us like Christ. He graciously unfolds the Word, and gives us glorious and heart-affecting views of Christ. He by his gracious communications, teaching, and operations — he makes us meet for glory. All that he does for us, or works within us — is of grace.

Gracious Spirit, reveal to us more fully and clearly, the nature and character of our Heavenly Father, as the God of all grace.

Unfold and apply to us more and more the Word of grace.

Lead us continually to the throne of grace, and help our infirmities there. And as the Spirit of grace, work a deep and thorough work of grace in our hearts, to the glory and praise of God!

Beloved, let the God of grace — be the object of your faith;

let the Word of grace — be the warrant of your faith;

let the throne of grace — be your place of constant resort;

and may the Spirit of grace — seal you unto the day of redemption.

Grace in God, sent the Word from God, erected the throne for God, and sent the Spirit to lead us to God. The Spirit leads us to the Word; by the Word to the throne; and on the throne we meet with a gracious God.

View the subject therefore, in whatever way we will, our salvation is wholly of grace.

Grace purposed;

grace planned;

grace provided;

grace executed;

and grace completed —

the great scheme of salvation!

Grace laid the foundation — and grace will bring forth the topstone! And the consummation will be, with shouts of, "Grace, Grace, unto it!"

02 FAITH

FAITH

FAITH is a solemn assenting to what God says, and a cordial consenting to what Christ proposes. God says, "I have so loved the world, that I have given my only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish — but have everlasting life. My Son shall be the Savior, the only Savior, the Savior of sinners in all places, under all circumstances, for all time. He shall save sinners as sinners, not in their sins — but from them. He shall save you, if you are willing to be saved by him, and will venture your soul on him." "I agree to this. I assent to what God says, and I therefore commit my soul into the hands of Christ, to be saved by him." This is faith. Faith is consenting to Christ's proposals. Christ proposes to be a perfect Savior, to take the sinner just as he is, and save him fully, freely, and for ever. He says, "I will pay all your debts, and give full satisfaction to Divine Justice for all your sins. I will provide you a righteousness, and procure your justification at the bar of God. I will answer all the claims that may be made upon you, and all the charges that may be brought against you. I will overcome your foes, clear your way, advocate your cause, supply your needs, deliver you from death, and raise you to immortal life and glory. You shall entrust yourself and your all to me, and I will answer for your salvation. I will be your Surety — to pay all you owe; your Substitute — to do all that law and justice requires of you; your Savior, to save you with an everlasting salvation. You shall trust me with all, trust me to do all, and commit yourself entirely into my hands; so doing, I answer for your salvation." This is Christ's proposal.

"I consent to take Christ to be my Surety, Substitute, and Savior — to do all for me, and all within me, to save me by his grace, and to have all the glory of my salvation." This is faith.

If I assent to what God says in the gospel, and consent to what Christ proposes, thereby taking him as God's gift to be my Savior — I am a believer; and as a believer I am justified, I have peace with God, and I am assured of everlasting life. For me Jesus lived a life of obedience;

for me Jesus died to make an atonement for my sins,

for me Jesus intercedes that I may be with him where he is, to behold his glory. His life was given for my life, his person for my person — so that I am saved from wrath, through him. He represents me, answers for me, and will keep what I have committed unto him, against the great day. Accepting his proposal, I leave myself in his hands, I am satisfied of my salvation, and only live to honor and glorify his dear name.

Reader, have you faith? Do you heartily assent unto God's plan of salvation, revealed in the gospel? Do you consent to Christ's proposal, take him to be your Savior, and commit yourself unreservedly into his hands? If so, you are safe, and the ruling desire of your soul will be to glorify God for his mercy, and to honor Jesus for his wondrous grace. To please God, will be your daily aim; and to do good to all around you for Christ's sake, will be your constant delight. You will live, not after the flesh — but after the Spirit. You will walk, as Jesus walked, who has left us an example, that we should follow in his steps. The life you live in the flesh will be a life of faith in the

Son of God; and a life of faith, is a life of holiness, a life of usefulness, and a life of happiness. In one word, if you are a believer, you will live not unto yourself — but unto him who died for you and rose again — and living in faith, you will die in faith, and so be forever with the Lord.

03 REMEMBER

REMEMBER The power of memory is a great blessing. To be able to store up facts, and truths, and circumstances that may be of use to us in years to come. To collect from the books we read, and lay up in this storehouse for future service is really a privilege. It is therefore of great importance, that young people should well store their memories with useful facts, striking texts, and sweet verses of hymns. God frequently called upon his ancient people to make use of their memories. "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness." And again, "Remember the days of old." Deuteronomy 32:7. There are three things which we should especially remember,

First. How God tried his people. We sometimes imagine that our lot is especially hard, and our way peculiarly rough. But if we look back, if we remember what we have read — we shall leave off complaining, and perhaps be led to praise the Lord. What are our trials — compared with those endured by the Israelites in Egypt, in the wilderness, or afterwards in Babylon? Can we call our lot hard — when we compare it with those who wandered about in sheepskins, and in goatskins, in dens, and caves of the earth; being destitute, afflicted, tormented? What are our sufferings — compared with those of the martyrs and confessors, who by their prayers and courage, procured our liberty for us? What do we know of dungeons, racks, banishment from house and home, or of burning at the stake? Surely if we seriously think, and reflect upon the trials and sufferings of the Lord's people in the days of old — we shall be ready with gratitude to exclaim, "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places! Yes, we have a goodly heritage."

Secondly. How God appeared for his people. As deeply as the Lord's people have been tried — they have never been forsaken. God has been true to his Word. He has supported them under their heaviest burdens, and at length delivered them out of all their troubles. They have ever found, that as their day — so has their strength been: and when all has been ill without — all has been well within. We cannot judge of the state of a child of God, by his external circumstances. He often enjoys most, when he seems to have the least to make him happy.

God's promises to his people are all true, and must be fulfilled; they have to exercise much patience sometimes — but even then, their deliverance is more striking and glorious. Four hundred and thirty years in Egypt was long for Israel, especially as things got worse and worse — but how singular, how glorious their deliverance at length! Seventy years in Babylon was long — but the time of deliverance arrived at length.

Just so, believer, though your trial may seem to be long — yet remember how the Lord appeared for his people of old — take courage, and expect him to appear for you.

Thirdly. How the Lord wrought by his people. What greater honor can the Lord confer upon us, than to use us in his work, and for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes. How did he work by Joseph, by Moses, by Gideon, and a host of others, in the days of old? How did he work by Lazarus, by the woman of Samaria, by Paul, and others, at the first introduction of the gospel?

How has the Lord wrought by the feeblest, most obscure, and most unlikely instruments often — and so secured all the glory to himself!

Let us then remember the days of old, how the Lord wrought by his people, and ask, "Why shouldn't the Lord work by me?" If we wish to be used by God, in order to bring glory to God — let us put ourselves into his hands, and he will use us. He never refused to use one that was willing to be employed to do his work, in his own way.

"Remember the days of old!" Remember how God tried his people; and so will you be able to answer Satan, when he comes to foster your unbelief, fill you with fears, and shroud you in gloom! Then you will be able to point him to God's people in trial — supported, supplied, and at length delivered. Then you will be able to refer him to the faithfulness of God in . . .

fulfilling his promises,

performing his Word, and

glorifying his great name.

Then will you be able to point him to the Lord's using weak and unworthy instruments in his work; instruments as weak and unworthy as you. Thus you will silence his misrepresentations, answer his accusations, and quench his fiery darts!

"Remember the days of old," how God appeared for his people, and how he has appeared for you; so will you be led to expect relief in the greatest straits, and deliverance out of the greatest troubles. Then you will be prepared to say, "He who has delivered his people in all times past — does deliver his people now, and I believe that he will yet deliver me." The past history of the church, and the Lord's dealings with us in the past, will feed hope, encourage patience, and stir us up to prayer: and hope, patience, and prayer, will be sure to bring us relief!

"Remember the Lord" how he wrought by his people; and this will stimulate and direct you to act aright. You will not then be discouraged by appearances, by the lack of immediate success, or by a sense of your own unworthiness. But will be ready to say, "Neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters — but God who gives the increase." You will plow in hope, sow in hope, and expect to be a partaker of your hope. Look up — for it will draw down blessings upon you. Look forward — for it will attract and strengthen you. But whether you look backwards, or upwards, or forwards — be sure you look to Jesus:

to his life as your example,

to his cross as your hope, and

to his glorious appearing, as the consummation of your joy!

04 The Loved One Absent

The Loved One Absent "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3 The believer's happiness consists very much in the presence of God, and a sense of his love. His happiness is not place, or circumstances, or friends — but God himself as revealed in Jesus. Anywhere, at any time, in any condition, alone or in any company — we can be happy if we realize that God is present, and can enter into communion with him.

It is very commonly the case, that at conversion, believers are indulged with much of the sweet and sensible presence of God — so that they walk, in the light of his countenance, and cast every care upon him. But often, for wise reasons, though unknown to us — God hides his face from us, and requires us to follow him in the dark — walking by faith, and not by sight. This was pretty much the case with Job, when he cried so plaintively, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" In such seasons as this, there is often much darkness of soul, and the Lord Jesus is lost sight of. We feel that we are at a distance from the object of our love, trust, and confidence. Then, too, our sins are apt to stare us in the face, or lie like a burden on our consciences! From this, arises a fear of wrath, and painful anticipations of the displeasure of God. Past mercies and comforts crowd around us — only as if to aggravate our woe; and the recollection of the privileges we once enjoyed — appear to torment us so much the more. Our duties now become irksome, our prayers seem to be unheard — and we think that the Lord has become inattentive to our cries. Like the prophet, we feel as if he had hedged up our way with stone, or compassed us with thorns, so that we cannot escape from our gloom, or obtain a glimpse of our father's love! To a quickened soul, one who has been living near to God, and walking closely with God — such a state is fearful. Only a true Christian knows what it is, and he finds it very difficult to represent, or set it forth. To be without our God — is to be without . . .

the light of our eyes,

the joy of our hearts,

the life our souls. No wonder then, if a Christian in such a state cries out in bitterness of spirit, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" The desire of the soul is at once strong and fixed. I want to find, not merely my lost comfort — but the source of it; not a blessing in the general — but the presence of my beloved. "Oh, that I could find HIM!" To find him — I would go anywhere. To find him — I would suffer anything. To find him — I would do anything. Without his presence . . .

I can never be happy;

I can never be satisfied;

I shall never find my soul at peace.

Without his presence . . .

I visit the sanctuary in vain;

I read the Word without profit;

I pray and praise — but find neither relief or pleasure.

"Oh, that I could find him!"

I would frankly confess my ingratitude and guilt!

I would show him my trouble and distress!

I would reason and plead with him!

I would tell my sorrows, acknowledge my faults, and inquire the reason why he hides himself from me.

I would beseech him to turn again and have compassion upon me.

I would plead his name, his promise, and his love — that he might once more indulge me, and favor me with his presence!

Reader, are you a stranger to such experience as this? Very few, if any, who are taught by the Spirit are. They know what the presence of God is. They know what the smile of God means. They know too, what it is to be left alone — alone in the closet, alone in the sanctuary, and alone in the world. For without the Lord's presence, no one feels more lonely than a believer. Nothing satisfies him. Nothing makes him happy. He feels so far weaned from everything here, that without God — the world is a blank, and friends not much better than a desert.

Real religion always centers in God, feasts on God, and is satisfied with God alone. The teachings of the Holy Spirit brings us away from other sources of peace and satisfaction — to God alone. And in God, as made known in Jesus — we find . . .

all we want,

all we wish,

all we can enjoy!

Oh, blessed thought! Having been brought to set our hearts on God, to find our happiness in God — soon, very soon, we shall enjoy His perfect, perpetual presence; and shall never more sigh, or cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find HIM!"

O that I know the secret place

Where I might find my God!

I'd spread my wants before his face,

And pour my woes abroad!

I'd tell him how my sins arise,

What sorrows I sustain;

How grace decays and comfort dies,

And leaves my heart in pain!
He knows what arguments I'd take
To wrestle with my God;
I'd plead, for his own mercy's sake
And for my Savior's blood. My God will pity my complaints,
And heal my broken bones;
He takes the meaning of his saints,
The language of their groans.
Arise, my soul, from deep distress,
And banish every fear;
He calls you to his throne of grace
To spread your sorrows there!

05 The Grave of Jesus

The Grave of Jesus The Lamb of God had taken away the sins of the world. The day of expiation was past. The atonement was now accepted. Peace with God was made. The tumults of the people were hushed. The women hastened to the tomb. The great stone was rolled away. Instead of a dead body — they found living angels. They were terrified, and filled with alarm. But their fears were soon scattered, for a mighty angel, clothed with majesty — but inspired with love, said to them with winning voice, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay!" Matthew 28:5-6.

Jesus had lain . . .

in the bosom of his Father,

in the womb of the virgin,

in the manger at Bethlehem,

in the carpenter's cottage at Nazareth,

and at length in Joseph's tomb.

There he lay — a corpse. Life was gone. Strength and beauty were gone. He was brought into the dust of death. Let us visit his grave. Let us obey the angels, and let us bow down, and "Come and see the place where he lay!"

Mark, The SPOT. It is a garden — a rich man's garden. In the upper part of it there is a rock, and out of that rock was chiseled a tomb. It was a quiet spot, though not far from the city. No one had lain there before. The man of wealth had intended it for himself. He expected to die, for he knew that his wealth could not save him from the last enemy. But of Messiah it had been said, "His death was with the wicked, and with the rich man was his tomb." Therefore, they laid Jesus there, for the sepulcher was not far from the cross. It was near at hand. Flowers, sweet flowers grew and threw their fragrance around it, and lofty shrubs bent over it.

It was an interesting spot. Interesting before Jesus was laid there — but to us, much more so afterwards. The beauties of creation, the terrible effects of sin, and the ravages of death — were brought close together. The flowers blossomed and looked mirthful — humanity had faded and looked sad. What could form a greater contrast, than those beautiful flowers — and the sorrow-stricken, mutilated corpse of the Son of God. I feel deeply interested in every object around me, as I stand by the grave of Jesus, and look down to "see the place where he lay!" The place is as instructive as it is interesting. What lessons may be learned here! O sin, what have you introduced! O death, what have you done! The Son of God is slain, the Son of man was laid in the tomb. The Lord of Glory — was clothed with shame. The Prince of life — experienced death. The omnipotent — suffers. The immortal — dies. The innocent takes the place, and suffers the desert

of the guilty. O what condescension! O what a stoop — from the highest throne of glory, to this charnel house! What a mystery! Let me meditate, adore, and praise! But it is a solemn spot. Death is always solemn — but the death of the Son of God is most solemn. The grave is always a solemn place — but the grave of Jesus is particularly so.

He died — whom no one could kill.

He died — whom no disease could touch.

He died — who had given life to millions.

He was buried — who was to raise every corpse from the grave.

What did that tomb enclose!

What did that stone cover! The body of the incarnate God;

the hope of his scattered disciples,

the foundation of the church of God.

O my soul, I feel a deep seriousness creep over me, as I look at the place, and think that I myself was the cause of his death, and that it was through my fault that he was brought down to the gates of the grave. Let me tarry here for a while, and with deep seriousness and sympathy, look at the tomb, and "see the place where he lay!"

Observe, The ACTION. "Come and see." Use the eye, to ascertain, the grave is empty — to impress the mind; let the eye affect the heart — and to profit the soul, for the most important, the most precious lessons, are to be learned here. Come, meditate, let the eye of the mind reach where the eye of the body cannot, and for a time be a substitute for it. Looking into the empty grave, let us ask five questions, not so much for information — as impression.

First, WHO lay there? The Lord! The Lord of Heaven and earth. The creator of the universe, the sustainer of all things, the preserver of men! The ruler of all worlds, lay there! The King of kings, the Lord of lords, was wrapped in that shroud! The face of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, was covered with that burial cloth. O wondrous thought — it is the place where the Lord lay!

Second, in what CHARACTER did he lay there? As our Surety, Savior, and Friend. He had become answerable for us. He engaged to pay the debt that we had contracted, and to suffer all we had deserved. "He bore our sins, he carried our sorrows." It was his undertaking for us — which nailed him to the cross, and then laid him in the sepulcher. He died to save us. He was bruised that he might save us. He arose from the grave that he might save us. He became our Surety, that he might be our Savior; and he became our Savior, because he was our Friend.

O Jesus, as my Surety — you have paid my tremendous debt;

as my Savior — you will present me without fault to your Father;

and as my Friend — you will associate me with yourself forever.

Third, what brought him there?

It was our sins — and His own infinite love. Our sins alone could not — for He was not involved in them. His love alone could not — for as innocent, He could not die. But out of His pure, infinite, and eternal love — He became answerable for our sins. He engaged to bear them, atone for them, and remove them forever!

"He died for our sins."

He suffered — because we had sinned,

He died — because we deserved to die, and

He lay in the grave for a time — that we may not lie in Hell forever! Our sins . . .

forged the nails that fastened Him to the tree,

planted the thorns that pierced His brow, and

sharpened the spear that was thrust into His heart!

O what an evil must sin be — to bring the Son of God into such a state of suffering and humiliation!

O what love must the love of Jesus be — that induced Him to take our place, and suffer and die in our stead!

Fourth, how LONG did he lay there? For three days, or until all he had engaged to do was fulfilled. They laid him there on Friday, he lay there the whole of Saturday, and he arose on the morning of Sunday. With the Jews, part of a day was reckoned as a whole — and therefore according to their reckoning, he lay there three days. He lay there long enough to prove that he was really dead. He lay there, until laying there longer, would answer no purpose — and then he rose.

Fifth, what BROUGHT him thence? The sentence of divine justice, the command of his Father, and his own power. The debt being paid, the bond was cancelled — the Surety must be set at liberty. The expiation being complete, the Father could desire no more, and therefore commanded to set him free. Having life in himself, having power to lay down his life, and power to take it again — he exerted that power, and came forth free from all obligation, invested with universal authority, and able to save whoever he would. "He has risen! Come and see the place where he lay!"

Let us now, Accept the Invitation. Let us come to the place and become familiar with it — that we may neither fear death nor the grave. Let us come and obtain assurance that we also shall be delivered from it. Let us come and examine into its nature and contents.

What is the grave? It is a bed of rest, for the poor, weary, worn-out body. It is a house of safety, in which the members of Jesus are laid up, until he shall raise and make them like himself. It is a land of quiet, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. The rich and the poor are there, and the servant is free from his master.

What is to be seen in that tomb? A napkin to wipe our tears, a winding sheet to wrap up our bodies, and an angel to guard our dust. Here we see the last foe conquered, conquered on his own ground, and conquered though every advantage was given him. Surely then, death is disarmed, the grave is furnished, and believers have nothing to fear.

Come then, lost sinner — come, see the place where the Lord lay. He is risen. He is able to save. He is exalted to give repentance, and the remission of sins. Come and believe in a living, loving, almighty Savior. There is salvation for you nowhere else. You can obtain pardon, peace, and everlasting life in no other way. Only by believing in Jesus can you be saved, and by believing you may be saved before rising from the perusal of these lines.

Come, seeker — come, see the place where the Lord lay, and be happy. See, death is conquered, Satan is overcome, and sin is put away. Jesus is a perfect Savior, a pledged Savior — pledged to save all who come unto God by him. Indulge your fears no longer, harbor your doubts no more — but come and trust in the risen Savior, and be at peace. The angel says, "Fear not, I know that you seek Jesus." Because you seek Jesus, you ought not to fear. He will save you, and save you for evermore.

Come, believer — come, see the place where the Lord lay — and weep, love, and rejoice!

Weep — that he had to suffer so much, and to sink so low, for you!

Love — because he has so loved you, as to lay down his life for you; because he has conquered death for you; because he has perfumed the grave for you; because he has opened the gates of glory for you.

Rejoice — for he has finished his work, frustrated the designs of all your foes, and secured for you all the good things of time, and the great things of eternity. Rejoice in Jesus! Rejoice at his empty tomb! Rejoice, rejoice forever in his holy name!

06 The Coming of Jesus

The Coming of Jesus The presence of Christ with his people is their glory and joy. He is ever with them to watch over them, protect, and preserve them. But he sometimes manifests himself to them, filling them with joy and peace. Once he came in power, to ransom them from Hell — this was the theme of the Old Testament. Soon he will come again — to redeem them from death, this is the object of hope presented in the New Testament. The advent of the Son of God to our world, is the greatest event that can take place in it. He once came as a servant — to fulfill, obey, and suffer; he will come a second time, as a sovereign — to collect, reward, and govern. His humiliation, laid the foundation of his glorification;

his first coming, was introductory to his second.

How sublime, how majestic is the language of the prophet, "Behold, the Sovereign Lord comes with strong hand, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him!" Isaiah 40:10 The Sovereign Lord here intended, is the Lord Jesus, as is evident from the preceding verses. He is divine, Jehovah, the self-existent, eternal, and unchangeable God. He is the Sovereign Lord — man's Creator, Preserver, and Savior. He came in flesh, and tabernacled among men. He brought grace and truth into our world. He came as man — and yet was in the highest sense of the word, God. Thus he was the great mystery of godliness — God manifest in the flesh. He became man — that he may come under the law, and so meet and discharge all its demands — and meet and endure all its penalty. He will come again, not as a servant — but a Son; not to obey and suffer — but to be obeyed and reign

"He will come with strong hand," being clothed with power, as the Omnipotent and rightful ruler of the world. Clad with zeal as his cloak, he will . . .

fulfill the purposes of his Father,

perform the promises of his Word, and

accomplish the deliverance of his people. The prophet represents it as done, and therefore writes, "He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes." The margin of the texts reads, "He will come against the strong." He atoned for sin and conquered death when he came before; now he will come against Satan, the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air — stripping him of his authority, driving him out of his kingdom, and binding him in immortal fetters. He will swallow up death in victory. His strong hand will find out, seize, and punish every one of his enemies, and all the enemies of his beloved people.

"His arm shall rule for him." By his own strong arm he will arrest, subdue, and destroy, all that would disturb his government, or oppose his reign. He will bring salvation, or perfect and everlasting deliverance to his people, and will cast death and hades into the bottomless pit. By his own unaided power, he will accomplish his work, his strange work, and perform all the good pleasure of his will.

"Behold, his reward is with him." His reward is his people, who were given to him, and identified with him; these he will bring with him. As it is written, "The Lord my God will come, and all the saints with you." They are his seed, the travail of his soul, and his bride — which is as his own soul. They are now being collected from all lands, they will be all gathered unto him; and at his appearing, they will appear with him in glory. Their salvation and glorification with himself is his reward — the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame.

"His recompense accompanies him." He will set up his glorious kingdom, rewarding his saints, every one according to his works. He will punish his foes, binding kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron. He will glorify his Father's name, emancipate creation from the bondage of corruption, and introduce the glory promised.

Then all the grand and glowing predictions of Holy Scripture will be fulfilled, the groans of creation will be forever silenced, and the highest and best desires of his people, will be forever satisfied. All the plans and purposes of Satan will be completely and eternally frustrated, and his kingdom and works destroyed. This is the recompense of the Redeemer's pains. This is the result of his deep humiliation. This is the glory promised him by his Father. All things will be put under him. Every creature will be made subject unto him. As God's Son, and God's king — he will reign on his holy hill of Zion. He will come with strong hand, having the day of vengeance in his heart, his arm will rule for him, bringing to pass all the purposes of his will; his reward — his beloved church and people, will be with him; and his work to raise our world, to more than paradisaic beauty and glory, before him. Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Reader, do you want a mighty Savior? One that can save by his own unaided power? One that can save from all evil, and raise to the possession and enjoyment of all that is really good? Jesus is such a Savior. He can save you, if he has not. He will save you if you wish it, and apply to him to do so. His blood will cleanse any sinner, and make the foulest as pure as an angel of light. His righteousness will justify any sinner, and make the greatest criminal righteous in the sight of God. He saves to the uttermost, he saves forever — all who come unto God by him. Do you wish to be prepared to meet him at his coming, to share in the grace that he will bring, and the glory that he will impart? If so, acquaint now yourself with him and be at peace, and so shall such good come unto you. If you know Jesus — if you trust in Jesus — if you love Jesus now, when he comes, it will be to be glorified in you, and admired by you. He will appear to your joy, and all your enemies will be ashamed. If you go to Jesus for grace now — he will bring you glory then. Make sure of a saving interest in Christ now, live in communion with Christ now — and then you will not be ashamed at the proclamation, "Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him!" Nor will you be of those who in bitter anguish will exclaim, "The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand!" But you will be of those of whom it is written, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection, on such the second death has no power — but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him!"

07 Christians Conversing with Each Other

Christians Conversing with Each Other

Christian fellowship is a great privilege. But we too frequently nurse one another in our sad and gloomy feelings — instead of comforting and encouraging each other. We ought to speak one to another — and we ought to speak of subjects calculated to do each other good.

Jesus should be the great theme of our conversation. He is worthy of it, and speaking of him is likely to . . .

excite our love,

strengthen our faith, and

establish our souls in the truth. Not only so — Jesus visits us when he himself is our theme, and blesses our fellowship. We have a notable instance of this, in the case of the two disciples who were traveling to Emmaus, "As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' They stood still, their faces downcast." Luke 24:15-17

They were traveling on some business. They were conversing of what had taken place at Jerusalem. They were sad on account of what had happened. Their master had been put to death. Their little society had been broken up and dispersed. Their hopes were all blighted. The foundation on which they had been building for the future, was swept away. Unbelief had got a powerful hold on their minds. No doubt Satan was tempting them, and suggesting evil thoughts to their minds. Perhaps he was persuading them that Jesus was a deceiver — or the Jews never could have crucified him. That his doctrines were not true, and that all his claims were unfounded.

Such thoughts would produce sad feelings within them, and they were sad. Sad, for they could not forget the sweet seasons they had enjoyed, the pleasant hours they had spent, in listening to his discourses, and witnessing his miracles. Sad, for they could not but contrast the happy past — with the dreary present, and the gloomy future. Sad, for they appeared to be left in doubt and uncertainty without a guide, or a suitable and sufficient friend. In this state of mind, they walked along, until Jesus overtook them, listened to them, and said, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" Jesus loves to hear his people tell him their troubles. He knew all that was in their hearts — and yet he asked to be informed. He shows his kindness too, in meeting with his people in sadness and sorrow, and inquiring about their troubles — that he may comfort and lift them up. Out of pure love, he asks to be informed of the cause of their grief, manifesting the deepest interest in their concerns — as one who would advise, relieve, or help them. What humility our risen Lord displayed, in his conduct toward these two disciples — and such humility he will display in his dealings with his people now, although he has entered into his glory.

Beloved, Jesus takes special notice of his people's conversation! He is always present with them, listening to them, and taking an interest in all that concerns them. We should therefore realize when we are together — that Jesus is present, and so speak to each other, as not to feel confused or ashamed, if he was visibly to appear. He would not be more really present if he did so, though the sight of him would more affect us!

How necessary therefore, that our conversation should be as befits saints, remembering that he has said, "As he who has called you is holy — so be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, "Be holy; for I am holy." And again, "What manner of people ought you to be — in all holy conversation and godliness?" Did we rightly consider this, could we speak of each other, and against each other, as we do? Could we indulge so frequently in light, trifling, and foolish conversation? Should we not often think: I am speaking in the presence of Jesus, and am perhaps speaking improperly of one whom he loves and died for!

Let us expect Jesus to go with us on our journeys, and to meet us in our social circles. Let us so speak to each other, as not to be ashamed or afraid to answer the question if put to us, "What are you discussing together?"

O that Jesus would more frequently meet with us, when we meet each other; and talk with us along the way, of all that happened to him, and of all that concerns us!

"Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. 'They will be mine!' says the Lord Almighty, 'in the day when I make up my treasured possession!'" Malachi 3:16-17

08 Delight in the Law of God

Delight in the Law of God "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Romans 7:22 No one can do this, but a true Christian. For if we could perceive the spirituality and extent of the law, its claims upon us, and the doom to which it sentences us — we must surely hate it! That is, unless we saw at the same time how we could be delivered from it, or justified in accordance with it. And even then, we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds, or we could not delight in anything so spiritual, so like the nature of an infinitely holy God. By the inward man — I understand that holy nature, which is produced in regeneration, and which is just like its divine author. As the Savior said, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." It is holy, and opposed to everything vile and sinful. It bears the image of Christ, and therefore we are said to be "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created us." It is immortal and cannot perish or decay; and by virtue of it we are brought into close and inseparable union to Christ — and because he lives, we live also. This inward man is . . .

strong — to resist evil;

wise — and flies for help to the Savior;

spiritual — and ever aspires and pants after the presence and enjoyment of God;

takes part with God against all evil;

constitutes its possessor a true Christian;

and is our habitual fitness for eternal glory.

According to the influence, direction, and inclination of the inward man — we "delight in the law of God." By the law of God, we understand the moral law, let it be found where it may. Or, that law, which requires us to be . . .

as holy as God is holy,

as merciful as God is merciful, and

as perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect. But as represented by our beloved Savior, we especially love it, as it only requires what we wish to possess and exercise. "You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." This is just the nature, temper, and disposition of the new man. So like God is it — that it hates only what God hates, and loves only what God loves.

It admires and delights in this law, because it views it . . .

as divine in its origin;

as flowing naturally and immediately from God;

as holy, just, and good in its own nature;

as calculated to produce holiness, justice, and benevolence — and thus spread holiness in every direction.

There is nothing in it to alarm or terrify the inner man, because the Holy Spirit shows it to believers from the gospel perspective — that Jesus has . . .

met its demands,

paid its penalty, and

endured its curse.

It is therefore simply . . .

the rule of right,

the directory of God's redeemed people,

a reflection of God's moral attributes,

and the only rule of our conduct. As such we can, we do delight in it after "the inward man."

We see its beauty, excellency, and adaptation to God's intelligent creation. We find a sweetness in it, and long with ardent desire to be exactly conformed to it. We really love its requirements, and approve of its tendencies! It affords us secret satisfaction, when we walk by its precepts. Never are we so happy as when glowing with supreme love to God, with ardent affection for the saints, and benevolent emotions toward all the human race.

Oh, how delightful it is, to perceive that all its precepts were obeyed by Jesus — in his life; that all its penalty was paid for us — by Jesus in his death; and, that now, we are being wrought up into that state by the Holy Spirit, that soon, like it, both inwardly and outwardly — we shall be perfectly holy, righteous, and good!

We do, we must delight, to keep the precepts of God's holy law:

not that we may be justified — for we are justified already, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;

not that we may be delivered from the wrath to come — for Jesus has already delivered us from that;

nor to acquire a title to everlasting life and Heavenly glory — for we have that

— but simply, that we may . . .

honor our Redeemer,

glorify our Heavenly Father, and

gratify that holy nature which the Holy Spirit has imparted to us.

Once the law of God was the object of our dread — now it is the object of our love!

Once we hated it, and wished it blotted out of God's universe — but now we admire it, and delight in it!

Yes, we do, notwithstanding the corruptions over which we mourn, the sin that does so easily beset us, and the conflict that often rages within us — we do "delight in the law of God after the inward man." This proves that the new man, the new nature, the new creation — is holy in its nature, exercises, and acts! It is just opposite to the carnal nature with which it conflicts, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This carnality therefore must be destroyed, the man must be new-created — before he can delight in the law of God. The inward man has a keen, spiritual eye — it soon detects the evil and the unsightly — and discerns the beautiful, and the holy. Therefore it delights in the holy law of God. The requirement of the law therefore, is met by the Holy Spirit in the heart. For as the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in our nature for us — by Jesus as our Substitute; so also shall the righteousness of the law be fulfilled by us — through the new creation produced by the Blessed Spirit; now while his work is incomplete — imperfectly; but when his work is finished — perfectly. The requirement of the law without us, renders necessary a new creation within us; and the new creation within us, answers to the requirement of the law without us. The purity required by the Lawgiver, is produced by the Spirit, which is the gift of the sovereign Father. New Testament grace, produces the morality required by Old Testament precepts; and teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

Let each one then, who reads these lines, ask, "Am I in possession of this inward man? Is there grace in me? Do I daily manifest it, by delighting in the law of God? Is it my desire, prayer, and aim — to be holy, just, and good — always, and everywhere, as the law of God requires? Am I deeply grieved, and pained at heart — when I act contrary to that holy law? Am I obliged to have recourse to the fountain of a Savior's blood daily, to preserve peace of conscience and comfort of soul? If so, no doubt but the work of the Holy Spirit is in us.

O, Holy Spirit, work more powerfully and thoroughly in us, that we may hate sin, and delight in God's holy law more and more!

09 The Incomparable Rock!

The Incomparable Rock!

"There is no Rock like our God!" 1 Samuel 2:2 As creatures, we all need . . .

an object of trust,

one on whom we can lean,

one in whom we can confide,

one to whom we may look for defense and safety. As lost sinners, we need more. Every creature has some rock, some object of dependence and trust; for without this, there would be recklessness or despair.

Some make a rock of their wealth,

some of their talents,

some of their station,

some of their friends,

some of their good deeds,

some of their religious observances,

some of their name or fame. But the Christian's rock is his God, that is — God in Christ. Yes, Jesus is . . .

the foundation of his hopes,

the source of his strength,

the anchor of his safety, and

the fountain that supplies him! In Christ, his Rock — he finds honey, and this rock pours out rivers of oil for him, "He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag." Deuteronomy 32:13. This rock, Christ — is the rock of his salvation. This rock of ages — is the rock of his strength. Of this rock, he can sing, "The Lord is my Rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my Rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior!" 2 Samuel 22:2-3

Looking around upon all others he can say, "But their 'rock' is not like our Rock; even our enemies concede." Deuteronomy 32:31.

There is no rock like our rock:

none so great,

none so ancient,

none so durable,

none so suited to meet all a sinner's needs! On this rock we build for eternity! We have no doubt that our immortal interests are safe. To this rock we run for safety, and smile at the opposition of all our foes. In this rock we hide, and are safe from the sword of divine justice, as well as the rage of infernal Hell. In this rock we take shelter, and are uninjured by the windy storm and tempest. From this rock we look for all our supplies — and we are not, cannot be disappointed. Beneath its shade — we enjoy peace and comfort! In its cleft — we are safe for evermore!

How gracious, how condescending is our God, to compare himself to such a natural object, on purpose to . . .

inspire us with confidence,

arm us with courage, and

fill us with comfort!

How safe, how happy is the believer — having God for his ROCK; for . . .

he builds on a foundation that can never decay,

he trusts in a stronghold that can never be taken,

he hides in a refuge from which he can never be expelled!

How foolish is the lost sinner . . .

to build on the SAND — with a rock so near;

to trust in himself — with such a defense at hand;

to expose himself to his foes — with such a refuge within reach!

Lost sinner! Jesus, in his person, obedience, and blood — is a firm foundation for you to build on! Jesus in his offices, relations, and engagements — is a hiding-place where you may find safety, in life and death, in time and eternity. Come then to Jesus, and build your immortal hopes on him. Believe in Jesus, and be saved perfectly and eternally by him. Hide yourself in Jesus, and then, let what will happen — you can have no cause of fear, no reason to be alarmed — for the eternal God is your strength and your portion forever!

"The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior!" 2 Samuel 22:47

Great Rock for weary sinners made,

When storms of sin infest the soul;

Here let me rest my weary head,

When lightnings blaze, and thunders roll!

Within the clefts of his dear side,

There all his saints in safety dwell;
And what, from Jesus, shall divide?
Not all the rage of earth or Hell!
O sacred Covert from the beams
That on the weary traveler beat,
How welcome are your shade and streams,
How blessed, how sacred, and how sweet! And when that awful storm takes place,
That hurls destruction far and near,
My soul shall refuge in your grace,
And take her glorious shelter there! To shake this Rock your saints are in.
Tempest or storm shall ne'er prevail
'Twill stand the blast of Hell and sin,
And anchor sure within the veil!

10 Be Thankful

Be Thankful

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Hebrews 12:28 Who has greater reason to be thankful than I have! Where can I look, and not see reason to praise the Lord. But it occurs to my mind, that thirty-four years ago, these words came home to my mind, attended with sweet soul-softening power. How glorious did grace appear to me then! How precious was Jesus to my soul that morning. O that I could feel now — just as I felt then! I have even greater cause to be thankful now, than I had then. As much as I had received then — I have received more since; and as highly as the Lord had honored me then — he has honored me more since. Let me try and turn back my thoughts into the channel in which they so sweetly ran on the morning of August, 13th, 1825. Then I was led to consider the reasons I had to be thankful, in four particulars.

First, that the Lord should ever call such a vile, base, and insignificant creature as I was — to know himself and his blessed truth. And that, notwithstanding all the opposition of my carnal nature, and my proneness to backslide from him — he had by his almighty, invincible grace, carried on his work, and kept it alive in my soul. That with a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, with Satan and the world opposed to me — he nevertheless enabled me to hold out, and hold on. That he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, and made me useful to many, many souls. O how thankful I should be!

How many professed Christ about the time I did — who turned aside, and dishonored that worthy name whereby they were called; yet I have been kept on the straight and narrow way. How few that were called by grace when I was, were called to the ministry, or made useful to souls. If ever the sovereignty of divine grace shone forth conspicuously, or with peculiar splendor — it was in my conversion, and introduction to the ministry of the gospel.

Second, that God should have fixed his eternal love upon me — choosing me in Christ, and predestinating me to be one of his adopted children. That the Son of God should have so loved me, as to become Surety for me, and have engaged in the everlasting covenant to pay my debts, redeem my soul, and present me before his Father's face in spotless holiness, and perfect beauty! That the Holy Spirit, out of pure love to me, should have undertaken to call me, win my wayward heart, bring me into union with Jesus, and keep me by his almighty power through faith unto salvation.

O wondrous love, of the holy and ever blessed Trinity — to one of the vilest, weakest, and most unworthy of Adam's fallen race! Well may I be thankful, for no saint can have greater reason, no angel can have so great reason, to be thankful as I have!

Third, that God in the everlasting covenant should have made provision for all my needs, ordered all my steps, and anticipated all the circumstances of my life on earth.

Then the plan was drawn,
then the arrangements were made,
then my salvation and eternal glory were secured.

Then the Most High identified his own glory, with my best interests and well being; and so ordered and settled all things that should occur in time, as to secure my welfare, and his own eternal praise. Blessed covenant of grace — it is all my salvation, and all my desire! Blessed covenant God, to you I owe myself, my all — O that I could but praise you as I ought, and worthily magnify your holy name!

Fourth, that I am enabled to look forward to Heaven as my home, and anticipate an eternal weight of glory reserved in Heaven for me. O the prospect that opens before me! O the glory that will be revealed in me! O the happiness that will be enjoyed by me! Amidst all my ingratitude, which is enough to make even Satan blush — I feel as if I could not be satisfied to receive so much from the Lord, if there was not an eternity set before me, in which I shall be enabled to bless and praise his holy name!

Yes, I trace all my blessings, which are neither few nor small, both temporal and spiritual — to the most free, infinite, and eternal love of my covenant God! And as all flows from him; so all comes to me — through the glorious person and finished work of the dear Lord Jesus. His suretyship engagements in eternity, and his obedience and death in time, form the channel in which every good gift, and every perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights to me. Nor am I less indebted to the Holy and eternal Spirit, who from the Father, through the Son, conveys every blessing to me. Glory, glory, glory be unto Jehovah, the Father; Jehovah, the Son; and Jehovah, the Holy Spirit forever!

Lord, make me truly grateful, and to that end make me very humble; for I find that humility is the root of gratitude. May I often be led by the Holy Spirit, to look back to what I was by nature — and by grace; to the time, means, and manner of God's calling me by his grace. May I look back further, and see that in eternity all was decreed, settled, and arranged, and that time only reveals and makes known God's eternal purposes of love and mercy toward me. And may I frequently look forward to the completion of God's plan, even my perfect and eternal glorification. Then shall I see more clearly than I do now, that my salvation, my usefulness, my holiness, and my happiness — are all of grace from first to last.

What, O, what will Heaven be! What, O, what will the sight of God produce! O, how I long to see Jesus, to be with Jesus, to be like Jesus, and to praise Jesus forever!

11 The Time is Short!

The Time is Short!

"But this I say, brethren — the time is short!" 1 Corinthians 7:29 Our time on earth is short — and it is daily growing shorter! Life quickly glides away — and death and eternity quickly approaches. In a little while — we shall close our eyes on all the scenes of earth, and be done with all the concerns of time. Few things fly swifter than time, or teach us more solemn lessons. Yet we slight them, and forget them, or fail to improve them. O for grace to derive comfort, reproof, and stimulus from the brevity of time.

"The time is short!" Then our troubles must be short, for they are all limited to time. They are the offspring of sin, and will not out-live their parent! Every trouble, leaves one the less to be endured. Soon the last trouble will arrive! Let us therefore bear them with patience, endure them with fortitude, and rejoice in the prospect of bidding them an eternal farewell. Our sharpest, severest trials — will soon be ended! And then, all that will remain, will be eternal peace and joy.

"The time is short!" Then the pleasures of time will soon terminate! As sweet as they are, they are fleeting. Prize them as we may — we must soon part with them. Not one of them go with us beyond the dying bed. Let us not, then, value them too highly, or set our hearts too much upon them. Earthly comforts, worldly distinctions and honors — will soon have passed away. The rich and the poor will soon meet together in the graveyard. The peasant and the prince, the beggar and monarch — will alike slumber in the dust. Let us then, if tempted to think too much of the worldly distinctions, or value too highly the comforts of life — remember that time is short!

"The time is short!" Then our opportunities to be useful must be few and brief. A short day, at least, is all that is allotted to us, to do good below. Therefore we are admonished to work, while it is called today, for the night comes when no man can work.

If I write for God — I must do it now.

If I speak for Christ — I must speak now.

If I try to save souls from eternal death — I must do it now.

If I would comfort the sad and sorrowful — I must do it now.

Whatever your hand finds to do — do it with all your might; for there is neither work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave to which we are fast hastening!

"The time is short!" Then Jesus will soon be here. He is coming, and his people are crying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" He is coming, and his Word assures us, "He who shall come — will come, and will not tarry." How will many things appear, which now occupy our time, engross our attention, and steal away our hearts — when Jesus comes? On this astonishing event, we should fix our eye. On this glorious manifestation of Christ, we should set our hearts. For this majestic appearing of the Son of God, we should prepare and watch. A few short days, or months, or at the

most years — and Jesus will be here. He will come, and gather his saints to him, make all his people like himself, and so they shall be ever with him.

Lost sinner, "the time is short!" Are you saved? Are you ready for the coming of Jesus, or the day of death? What will the end of time bring you? Where will it land you? How will it find you? Will it find you a new creature in Christ Jesus? Will it find you pardoned, justified, and sanctified? Will it find you prepared — ready — waiting, for Heaven and glory? Or will it find you dead in sins, without Christ, unsanctified and unsaved? Look into the matter now, attend to your soul and its salvation at once, for it is of the greatest importance. O flee from the wrath to come! O seek, seek the Lord, that you may be hid in the day of his fierce anger, and stand accepted before Christ at his coming.

Backslider, "the time is short!" Repent and do your first works. Go and return to your God, from whom you have so deeply revolted. Seek afresh the application of the atoning blood, and the cleansing operations of the Holy Spirit. Beware, O beware, lest coming suddenly, your Lord finds you sleeping! Beware, lest you be found naked, and so be ashamed before him at his coming! Rather, seek to be found without spot, unrebukable, and blameless in the day of Jesus Christ. Your conduct has been base, your sin is grievous — but there is merit in the blood of Jesus, there is mercy in the heart of Jesus, and there is a full warrant in the Word of Jesus for you to return, and be fully blessed.

Discouraged Christian, "the time is short!" Go on with your work. Do not look too much at the clouds, nor pay much attention to the winds — but plow in hope, sow in hope, and watch in hope for a harvest. You are not able to command success — but you can be faithful; and your master has promised to reward your faithfulness at his coming. Yield not to fear, listen not to unbelief, give not way to Satan, for "the time is short," and your work, however feeble, however imperfect, however unproductive it may now appear — shall be fully rewarded.

Believer, "the time is short," lift up your head with joy. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for tribulation will soon cease, sorrow will soon flee away, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Time is the limit of your trials, temptations, and troubles.

Time is the limit of your conflicts, doubts, and fears.

Time is the limit of your pains, privations, and griefs.

Beyond time — all is peace and pleasure, purity and perfection, happiness and rest! Lift up then your head with joy, for your redemption, your eternal redemption draws near!

12 The Fullness of the Gospel

The Fullness of the Gospel The gospel is the greatest blessing which God ever conferred upon our world. It . . .

comprises God's loftiest thoughts,

reveals God's deepest love, and

sets forth in the simplest strains God's richest provision for his creatures. For whatever God may have provided for the glorious inhabitants of another world, it will bear no comparison with what he has provided for us. He had but one Son — and he gave that Son for us! He had but one Spirit — and he gave that Spirit to us. O the riches of his grace! Truly he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Let us for a few moments contemplate the fullness of the gospel. That fullness is for man as a SINNER, and provides for his spiritual needs. The gospel provides a glorious atonement for his guilt — which, the moment he believes in Jesus, is removed from him completely, and eternally. So that he is as guiltless before God, as if he had never sinned! The perfect work of Jesus, perfectly removes all guilt from the believer, and removes it forever. Therefore we read that "by one offering, he has perfected forever those who are sanctified."

It provides for his weakness — in the gift of the Holy and eternal Spirit; which Spirit helps our infirmities, quickens our graces, restores our comforts, and prepares us to do and suffer all the righteous will of God. The Spirit of Christ is the strength of the believer. The gospel provides for his ignorance — in the gift of his Word, which Word contains all that is necessary for him to know — in reference to God, himself, the law, grace, time, and eternity. It is sufficient to make him wise unto salvation, and to make him perfect in every good work. The gospel provides for his degradation — by introducing him into the family of God, and making him a Son of God, and an heir of God. So that he rises from the dust and the dunghill — to sit with princes! And being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God — he is made fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. The gospel provides also for his desires. Here is the bread of life, and here are the waters of salvation. Here is the robe of righteousness, and here the garments of salvation. Here is peace for the conscience, and joy for the heart. Here is in one word, all that man, as a sinful, accountable, and immortal being — can need, or wisely desire.

Here the fullness of God is brought to supply man's emptiness; and the wealth of God — to meet man's poverty. The fullness of the Gospel, displays the wondrous riches of his glorious grace. That fullness is for man as a SAINT — a believer in Jesus, a Christian. The gospel furnishes him with motives — and with motives sufficiently pure and powerful, to lead to the performance of the most painful duties, and to make the most costly sacrifices. The gospel furnishes him with rules — rules to regulate his conduct towards himself and others; toward God and man; toward good men and bad men. Perfect, holy rules, so that on this point, he has nothing to desire. The gospel furnishes him with comforts — rich and costly comforts. Comforts for dark nights and dreary days. Comforts for life and its trials; comforts for death and its pains. Comforts, which like cordials will revive,

stimulate, and strengthen, so that he shall conquer every foe, and be more than a conqueror. The gospel furnishes him with supplies. Supplies for the intellect and the heart. Supplies varied and sufficient. Supplies deeper than his miseries, and more numerous than his needs. The fullness of the gospel, contains God's provision . . .

for all of his people,

for all times, and

to meet all circumstances.

Let us then admire, adore, and make daily use of the fullness of the gospel.

Reader, the fullness of the gospel is for you. For you as a sinner, it provides . . .

for your guilt, however great;

for your degradation, however deep;

for your weakness, however extreme;

for your ignorance, however stolid;

and for your desires, however vast.

If you are a Christian, this glorious gospel furnishes you with . . .

the most powerful motives to holiness,

the wisest rules for your conduct;

the choicest comforts for your trying days; and

the richest supplies for life, and death, for time, and eternity!

Let us then make use of the fullness of the gospel, by coming to it, receiving from it, and walking by it. All we need is there. All we can wisely desire is there. More than we can at present comprehend, or make use of, is there. As it flows from God, it is filled with God, and has a direct tendency to make us like God.

It commands our reverence,

it demands our faith, and

it requires our constant study.

We shall need it:

in prosperity — to guard us;

in adversity — to cheer us;

in perplexity — to direct us;

in ease — to stimulate us;

in sickness — to generate hope;

in death — to assure us of victory!

Glorious gospel of the blessed God, you shall be my comfort, my solace and my song! More glorious Savior, in you will I rejoice!

13 Consolation For the Weak

Consolation For the Weak "Yes, he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." Romans 14:4 The apostle is administering comfort to the weak, and caution to the strong. Faith may be real — and yet feeble. The work of the Spirit, is not always powerful at first. We are apt to require others to come up to our standard, and to walk by our rule. But this is wrong. The strong should help the weak. The well instructed, should sympathize with those who are but just beginning to learn the gospel. We should receive all that God receives, and on the same grounds, and for the same purposes.

I am not justified in being stricter, or more rigid than my Lord. If Christ loves them — so should I. If Christ takes them into union with himself — I may surely unite myself to them. If Christ admits them into fellowship — I may admit them into fellowship too. If I deal leniently with them out of love, he will take it kindly at my hands; and approve rather of my being too lenient, than too rigid. We must not judge severely, or be censorious. We must not predict a fall, because we discover feebleness; for the feeble shall be held up — for God is able to make him stand. Let us notice, The OBJECT of Christ's Sympathy. A believer in Jesus — but a weak believer. One taught of the Spirit — but who has yet but little scriptural knowledge. It is not everyone that can understand doctrines, or unravel mysteries. Some of these feeble folk know but little — but they all know three things:

1. They know that they are poor lost sinners.
2. They know that Jesus is a suitable and sufficient Savior.
3. They know that he is precious to every believer.

Yet, they have but little confidence in God. They can trust him when they enjoy his presence, or feel the power of his Word; but when they cannot realize that presence, or enjoy that Word — they are harassed with doubts, fears, and misgivings. They do not withdraw their hold — but their hands are weak, and they need that the Lord should hold them fast.

They have but little sensible friendship with God. They cannot live without prayer. They must unburden their minds at the throne of grace. But of that sweet fellowship with God, of which they hear others talk — they know but little. They are very jealous and scrupulous. A little matter excites their suspicion, and they soon give way to doubt; and instead of passing the margin of Christian liberty, they are afraid of enjoying many things that are lawful, lest they should dishonor God.

They are soon stumbled, and therefore those who have much to do with them, had need use caution, and act wisely before them. They call for much pity and forbearance; and are not always the most agreeable company. But they are precious in the sight of God, and dear to the heart of Jesus: hence —

They are Assured of Support. "He will stand." This is a precious promise for the Lord's feeble ones. The Lord deals with them as children, and, as in the family the weak and sickly child has most attention, draws forth most sympathy, and excites most pity; so, as a Father pities his

children, the Lord pities those who fear him. The strong may be required to go alone — but the weak one shall have the Father's hand! The last look at night, and the first kiss in the morning — is for the sick one! And here, however rough the road, or extreme his weakness, "he will stand."

God has made many special promises to the weak. To them he whispers, "Fear not, worm Jacob, I will hold your right hand." To them he says, "I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you, with the right hand of my righteousness." For their encouragement, it is written, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." His watchful eye is ever over them, his everlasting arms are ever beneath them, and his inviolable faithfulness is ever illustrated in them.

"The Lord is able to make him stand." The apostle refers only to his ability, as if he thought, that no one would doubt his willingness. Weak believer, if your God can hold you up — he will. If he can make you stand — you shall never fall. That he can, we know, for he is omnipotent. The ability of God is a very great source of comfort to believers. "He is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory." "He is able to subdue all things unto himself." "He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think." Nothing is too hard for him, and therefore "he gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might, he increases strength." Jesus will especially display his power in the experience of the weak. He ever has done so. He ever will.

It is not the weak that stumble — so much as the careless. It is not the feeble that fall — but rather the presumptuous. The arm of power, and the bosom of love — are set apart for the little ones. Little faith, will therefore prove, that the power and grace of Jesus is sufficient for him. Such, ever go from strength to strength, until every one of them in Zion appears before God. They have an especial interest in the promise, "As your days — so shall your strength be." And with the buffeted, and deeply tried apostle, they always find, that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for them; and that his strength is made perfect in their weakness.

Beloved, are you weak in faith? If so, keep your eye fixed on Jesus! Carry all your cares to Jesus, and lay up this precious assurance in your heart, that you shall be held up, because God is able to make you stand. Are you strong in faith, giving glory to God! Then bear the infirmities of the weak. Lend them a helping hand. "Bear one another burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Receive them into your affections, let them share your sympathies, and walk with them in fellowship to your Father's house above. Jesus will not break the bruised reed — nor should you. He will not despise the day of small things — nor should you. Be therefore imitators of him, as dear children, and walk in love.

14 COMPLETENESS

COMPLETENESS

We must be complete, to be happy. But in ourselves, and by nature — we are anything but complete. Every power, every faculty, every purpose, and every action — bears the stamp of imperfection. Nor can we render ourselves complete by anything we can do or suffer. And, just in proportion as the light of divine truth shines in our hearts, or we get near to God, who is light — do we discover our incompleteness and imperfection. So that if it were possible for us to be transported to Heaven in our present state — we would be overwhelmed with a sense of our imperfection, and be inconceivably wretched, because of our lack of completeness.

It becomes, then, an interesting question, How can a sinner be made complete? How can he acquire perfection? Nor are we at a loss for an answer, for the New Testament speaks of the Lord's people as "perfect in Christ Jesus;" and tells them for their comfort in so many words, "You are complete in Him." Colossians 2:10 In order to be complete therefore — we must be in Christ. Not merely in the kingdom over which he reigns; nor in the church, which he represents; but in the body, of which he is the head. That is to say, we must be vitally united to his person; and have our persons and interests identified with his. He must be to us . . .

what the way is to the traveler — conducting us to the Father;

what the foundation is to the building — supporting and giving it strength;

what the soil is to the plant — supplying it with nourishment;

what the root is to the tree — communicating to it life and vigor;

what the head is to the body — thinking, caring, and providing for all its needs. Being in Christ — we are complete, made so . . .

by the obedience he rendered to the Law — which is our perfect righteousness;

by the sacrifice he offered to divine justice — which is an atonement for all our sins;

by the character which he sustains — as our representative before God, which is a pledge that we shall appear there exactly like him;

by the fullness he possesses for us, and the supplies he imparts to us, of wisdom, and strength, and holiness;

and by the certain accomplishment of his purpose, and the design of his death, which is thus expressed, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

Here is completeness, and as Jesus had the will, the love, to give himself for his Church, that she may be thus complete and glorious — so he has the power to carry out his design to perfection. And as he is in one mind, without variableness or shadow of turning, there can be no doubt that he will do so. Hence we praise him, and say, "Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior — be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

There is then no completeness in self, or in the church — but only in Christ. We cannot be made perfect, or obtain perfection by God's law, or our own works, or our sufferings. But in Christ there is all that is necessary to make us complete; and by virtue of union to him we become interested in, and entitled to, all that is in him. Let us beware then, lest we be led away from Christ, either by philosophy, tradition, or any carnal ordinances; but let us look to Christ for all, and rejoice that we are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Reader, in Christ is all you need as a creature, as a sinner, as a believer; all that you need now, all that you will need in life, and in death; all that you need or can enjoy, forever! Have you come to Christ for life? Are you living upon Christ as the bread of life? Are you realizing your completeness in Christ? Are you rejoicing in Christ? If not, come to Christ at once, at this very moment, and just as you are; and you will find all that you need, all your immortal soul is craving, in him.

If you are in Christ, then abide in him, walk closely with him, and live only for him. Think much, and think often, of his sweet words, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you — you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Here is completeness!

15 The Heart Not Right

The Heart Not Right "Your heart is not right in the sight of God." Acts 8:21 So spoke Peter to Simon Magus, when he thought he could obtain power to confer the Holy Spirit for money. He had professed religion. He was a member of the church. He was a gifted man, and perhaps many thought he would be a useful man — but his heart was not right, and if the heart is wrong, then all is wrong. How many are in such a state now. Their creed is right. Their general conduct right. They pass muster among professors. But the heart is not right in the sight of God. Let us glance at a few of the many characters, by whom we are surrounded in the present day — whose hearts are not right; and may the Lord bless a few simple remarks, to the convincing of some, and the correcting of others.

Undecided man, or woman — your heart is not right. You ought to be decided for God — or against him. You ought to be wholly with the church — or the world. With you religion should be everything — or nothing. While you halt between two opinions, while you linger between the world and the church — you are wrong.

Formal professor — your heart is not right. There is no life, no power, no love in your religion. You read your Bible, you repeat your prayers, you sing your hymns, and you attend religious ordinances — but all out of form, or from a sense of duty. The love of God has never been shed abroad in your heart. The blood of atonement has never been applied to your conscience. The power of the Holy Spirit has never been felt in your soul. You are wrong. I hope you may not find out your mistake too late.

Fearful one — I mean such as are more afraid of man than God — your heart is not right. You are afraid of losing man's approbation, or afraid of incurring man's frown — afraid of losing some situation, or some of your wordily business, if you were openly to profess Christ. Afraid of poverty, more than you are afraid of God's displeasure. Afraid of persecution from man, more than you are afraid of Hell! You are wrong — altogether wrong. The hypocrite, the man who wears a mask, who pretends to be what he knows he is not — his heart is not right in the sight of God. You know you were never born of God, you know you have no love to God, or living faith in Christ; and yet for some worldly advantage, or to please some superior, or from some other unworthy motive — you pretend to be religious. You are wrong! The worldly-minded, who are more taken up with temporals, than spirituals; who think more of money, than grace; who give their hearts to the world, more than to God — these are wrong. For if we profess religion, we profess to be quickened from a death in sins, to a life of righteousness — we profess to be risen with Christ, and we are therefore to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Our hopes, our desires, our affections should be in Heaven; and if they are not, our hearts are not right in the sight of God. The presumptuous, whose conduct contradicts their creed, who claim the privileges of God's people without a title to them, and the promises of God without true faith — are all wrong. They know nothing about a broken heart for sin, repentance unto life, or tenderness of conscience; but are bold, daring, and unfeeling, their hearts are not right in the sight of God. The lukewarm, who

decry zeal, fervor, and whole-heartedness in others, and are neither cold nor hot themselves, are wrong. God requires devotion, dedication, the constant presentation of our bodies, souls, and spirits to his service; if therefore we are half-hearted, self-satisfied, and indifferent to God's glory — our hearts are not right in the sight of God. The backslider, who did run well — but has been hindered, who was thorough but is so no longer — he is wrong. Yes, yes, my friend, if your prayer-closet is neglected, if your Bible is unread, if God's ordinances are no longer prized — depend upon it, your heart is not right in the sight of God. But if such characters are wrong, what shall we say to the covetous, the liar, the dishonest, the sly drunkard, the unfeeling? And yet there are many such, who wear a cloak of religion, and wish to be considered the friends of God, and the disciples of Christ; but God will never own them, Christ will never bear them in his presence — but will ask, "Why do you call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?" And he will also pronounce their doom, "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" But when is the heart right? When it has been . . .

quickened by the Holy Spirit,

cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and

is influenced by the love of God. When its dependence is on Christ, and it is in union with Christ, and is ruled by the Word of Christ. When zealous for the Lord's glory, at home in the Lord's work — it beats in union with the Lord's will. Only, as the heart is . . .

inhabited by the Holy Spirit,

consecrated to the Lord's service, and

aiming supremely at the Lord's glory — is it right. In the unregenerate, it is radically, entirely, and altogether wrong. Often, even in those who are born of God, is it partially, and for a season, wrong. Let us then bear in mind, that the Lord's eye is fixed on the heart, and that he searches the secret part of man. That though we may be deceived by our fellows, or even be for a time deceived by ourselves — yet God cannot be deceived. That the Lord will in his own time and way, show whose heart is right, and whose is not. Therefore, let us while we think of the awful and dangerous state of those, whose hearts are not right in the sight of God, be very concerned, that always, and under all circumstances, whatever else may happen, that our hearts may be right in the sight of God; for if the heart is right, everything else will be right in the end.

16 The Happy Poor

The Happy Poor

True religion is the friend of the poor. It softens the heart of the rich to sympathize with them, and it brings down the choicest blessings of God upon them. True religion never leaves a man as it finds him; it may find him in filth, rags, and idleness; but it will elevate him, and he will become clean, clothed, and industrious. The very countenances of the wicked become improved by godliness. It makes them contented and happy now — and it will make them wealthy and glorious forever. If the rich despise them, or the great oppress them, or professors deal unfairly by them — God's Word reprove them, and God will call them to account.

Some have manifested partiality, and preferred the rich in the court of justice, and the place of public concourse; and on their behalf the Apostle pleaded, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him." James 2:5.

Here is a blessing promised — and what a blessing! Not merely a residence, an estate, or like Adam's, a garden — but a kingdom! The kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory — which in reality are but one. As the holy place and the holiest of all were but parts of the same Tabernacle or Temple, parted by a veil of linen; so grace and glory form part of the same inheritance, and are only separated by a veil. They constitute the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of God. The kingdom promised to the poor is wealthy, for the wealth of the universe will be gathered into it. It is healthy, for no sickness, disease, or death will be there, neither shall there be any more pain. It will be peaceful, for tumult, contention, or war can never enter there. It will be immovable. Other kingdoms have been removed; the Babylonian gave place to the Persian; the Persian to the Grecian; and the Grecian to the Roman, the mere shadow of which only remains: but this kingdom cannot be moved. It will be an unfading kingdom. Its glories will be always fresh. Its beauties will be always new. Its splendors can never decay. It will be an eternal kingdom, therefore it is called, "The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It will comprise and comprehend all that can . . .

delight the eye,

gratify the desires,

or feast the soul.

Happy are the poor, to whom this glorious kingdom is promised!

Here are the parties interested in the blessing.

Look at their CONDITION; they are the poor of this world. God has not called or chosen many of the rich, or the great of this world; his choice fell on the poor. Therefore, if you wish to see real religion, you must go into the poor man's cottage, or the tradesman's dwelling. Here and there,

one of the wealthy is called, just to show what grace can do — but the number is always small. Not that there is any religion in poverty, nor is poverty peculiarly pleasant to God; but as it is best for his people — he has placed most of them in this condition.

Look at their QUALIFICATIONS, they are rich in faith. They believe in Christ. They have a fixed and steady confidence in God. Faith entitles them to all the promises; and the promises comprehend all that God has to communicate. As, therefore, God has promised to them as believers all he has to give; all the fullness that is in Christ — they may well be said to be rich. Rich, not in temporal things. Rich, not in mental endowments. But rich in faith, which claims the promises of a faithful God, and believes for their fulfillment. Their wealth is not from desert — but grace; not from works — but faith. But they are not only rich in faith — but they love God. Faith always begets love, and love is always regulated by faith: so that if we have strong faith in God — we shall have great love to God. Believing the love that he has to us, we cannot but love him in return.

Look at their TITLE, it comes by heirship, and heirship comes by birth, and their birth is of God. Being born of God, they are the children of God; and being the children of God, they are the heirs of God, and are consequently entitled to the kingdom which God has promised to those who love him.

Here is also the SOURCE of their privilege. God's choice or election of them. "God has chosen the poor of this world." Is there any excellency in the nature, or disposition, or character, or conduct, or condition of the poor — why God should choose them? Nothing at all. All that is good, or excellent, or lovely about them — flows from God's choosing them. He chose them to believe, and therefore gave them faith. He chose them to love, and therefore shed abroad his own love in their hearts. He chose them to inherit the kingdom, and therefore of his own will he begat them by the Word of truth, that they should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Or, as Paul states it, they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he called them by his gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

They were chosen of grace, and of grace alone. Their ELECTION was a pure act of favor, originating in the gracious sovereignty of God, unaffected by anything in them, or to be done by them. Their election was in Christ, so that they had a virtual connection, or union with Christ, long before they had a vital one. For their election in Christ was before the foundation of the world. Before the clock of time was set going, or before the sun was formed to throw a shade upon the dial — God chose Christ to be the head of the Church; and the Church to be the body of Christ. Every member was chosen individually and distinctly — but each and all in connection with Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace. He chose them to inherit the kingdom, which kingdom he prepared for them from the foundation of the world; and all through time, he is preparing them for the kingdom.

Then let not the Lord's poor complain! They may have needs, and who has not? They may be tried, and who is not? But whatever privations they may be called to endure, whatever afflictions they may be called to suffer — they are God's chosen — they are rich in faith — they are heirs of a kingdom, and will soon be put in possession of it!

Let each one of us look to our faith. Do we sincerely believe? Does our faith grasp God's promises? Does it produce love to God? Genuine faith is simple, spiritual, and powerful. It is always deeply tried, has to struggle much with unbelief, and is greatly opposed by Satan. If we have faith — faith that centers in Christ — faith that obtains and holds fast the promises — faith that wrestles and prevails with God — we are rich, and have every reason to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Therefore let every believer rejoice, for he is an heir of the kingdom, which God has promised to those who love him. We inherit in Christ, we shall inherit with Christ; for we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; now we are called to suffer with him — but soon shall we be glorified together.

Let the rich and prosperous beware how they despise the poor. The richest jewel may be hidden in a rough casket. God's poor are his jewels, his likenesses, his portion — and for them the finest and fairest portion of the creation is set apart.

17 A Visit to My Birthplace

A Visit to My Birthplace Once more I am here visiting my birthplace — may my visit suggest some profitable thoughts to my mind! This is Brentford, with its old market, church-tower, and dirty streets. More than twenty years of my life were spent here. Oh, the mercies received, the sins committed, and the grace displayed in my experience here! The greatest change that can ever be produced in a man was wrought in me here. Every spot almost brings something to my remembrance calculated to fill me with gratitude or grief. But I will visit a few old spots, which may, perhaps, bring to my mind, and present to my eye, scenes which I may turn to account. This is the Half Acre: at that old house, No. 5, I was born. I can never look at that old lath-and-plaster dwelling without deep feeling. There my honest and industrious parents lived, and there my father, while I was yet a child, died. Who would have thought that the babe born in that place, under such circumstances, would be crowned with so many mercies, and be honored with so much usefulness. In that yard was a very deep well, into which, soon after I could walk, I fell, and was only saved at the risk of another's life. There seemed to be but a hair's breadth between me and death. No ladder in the neighborhood was long enough to reach the bottom; for a time my petticoats floated me — but I had sunk twice, and was just sinking the third time, when a man descended by the chain, caught me, held me until help was obtained, and my life was saved. Surely there is a special Providence over us, and we are immortal until God's purposes respecting us are accomplished. Where that modern-built house now stands, once stood the cottage of Ma'am Banbury, where I learned the first rudiments of my mother tongue. Dear, kind old soul! Long since, her tongue, which taught so many, has been silent in the dust. Yonder is the soap manufactory, to which, soon after my tenth birthday, I was sent to work, to assist my widowed mother in procuring food for the family. There I first heard Unitarian perversions of the Word of God; there I learned to swear, and there I fell into sins which no one but a forgiving God ever knew. Oh, how wonderful the forbearance and long-suffering of God towards me!

There in New Brentford, is the Fellmongers' yard, where I was apprenticed, and spent nearly ten years of my life, where I learned to drink as well as swear, and was ripening for destruction — when God, in his sovereign grace, arrested me! Yes, it was grace, and grace alone, that changed my heart, and turned my feet into the way of peace. In the corner of the Market-place stood the little Baptist Chapel, where I sometimes attended, and was more than once convinced of sin — but those convictions were stifled, and my danger became greater than before. And now I stand before the spot, where a gardener's packing-room once stood, which was afterwards converted into a chapel, and in which God called me by his grace. Oh, the pains and the pleasures, the joys and the sorrows, the grief and the gladness I have experienced in that place! There I professed Christ, and was baptized in his name. From thence, I was sent out to preach the gospel, accompanied by a pastor's blessing, and the affectionate prayers of the Church. Oh, how I loved that place! But it is razed to the ground, and a new sanctuary erected near its site.

I am now in Boston Fields, a hallowed spot to me. Beneath that wide-spreading tree, near the bottom of the first of those fields, what seasons I have enjoyed! It was my sanctuary. When not

allowed to pray or read my Bible quietly at home, here I repaired. Early in the morning and late at night have I worshiped here. Through the deep snow at daybreak I have come here to meditate and pray. Here I brought my burdens to cast them on my God. Here I brought my sorrows, to pour them into the sympathizing bosom of my Savior. Here also I brought my cares, that I might cast them on him who cared for me. No spot on earth was like this spot to me once. Here I could pray aloud, and no one hear me. Here I could sing the praises of my God, and no one disturb here. Here I often sat, and ate my mid-day meal, with my dear old Testament spread open on my knee. Here I composed my first sermon, and here, all alone, I tried my voice in attempts to preach. To this spot I brought the first young man whose heart I won for Christ, and here I heard him call on God for mercy. Here together we talked of Jesus, confessed sin, admired free grace, and anticipated the joys of Heaven. The first field of Boston, as I then called it, I shall never forget — no, not in Heaven. Dear old tree! Dear old spot! Forget you? Never! I have enjoyed too much of my Savior's presence there for that. My communion with God has been too frequent, too familiar, too sweet for that. But I must leave it now: farewell — and farewell forever, perhaps — one of the dearest and most hallowed spots on earth to me.

I am now rambling along some of the old lanes, where I have often spent hours in meditation, prayer, and praise. Often, after a hard day's toil, have I wandered in these lanes, and have enjoyed the presence of my God, until I have felt as if I were bathing in the river of pleasure. Right heartily could I say —

"The opening Heavens around me shine,

With beams of sacred bliss;

While Jesus shows his heart is mine,

And whispers I am his!" But I have had sad seasons here, and have experienced darkness that may be felt. Oh, the horrid temptations, the dismal fears, the gloomy doubts, which have racked my soul, as I have paced these lanes in years gone by! What conflicts I have experienced here on the subject of my call to the ministry of God's Word, and how long it was before I could satisfactorily conclude that I was called to that work! Some appear to have no trouble upon this point; but I had much, and it lasted for several years too.

Here is the grand Junction Canal. I shall never forget my feelings as I paced the towing-path here one night. I had been foolishly praying for deep convictions, and as I sat in my lodgings, not far from this spot, a horror of great darkness fell upon me, violent convictions seized me, the fountains of the great deep within seemed to be broken up, and the most dreadful temptations were presented to me. I think, if ever believer felt the horrors of despair, I did that night. Oh, how I was tempted to plunge into the canal and know the worst of it! How did Satan urge, "If you are one of God's elect, you will be saved, though you end your life; and if you are not, you never will be saved, and therefore you will only know your doom a little sooner — and even Hell cannot be much worse than this. Pluck up courage, man; end the strife, and dare to know the secret." But, blessed be God, I was kept by the power of God, and at length the living water within began to spring up, a spirit of prayer returned, and my soul was delivered. Never have I dared to pray for deep convictions since — but have endeavored to warn others against such folly.

Near this spot, too, another and very different scene presents itself to my view, for here I suffered violent persecution. Here I stood many an attack, and came off victorious. But here, once, when I joined for a time with the world, I was overcome, shamefully yielded, and brought darkness and distress into my soul. Oh, how often have I prayed in those lofts, and under those sheds, and others which are now gone! Many a precious answer to prayer have I obtained there! Many a spiritual blessing has been conferred upon me there! Oh, the sweet communion with God I have enjoyed, the assaults of Satan I have experienced, and the scoffs of men I have endured on the premises that face me now. But what a change has come over the place, once so familiar! and a much greater change has come over me and my circumstances. To God, all-wise, all-gracious, and ever-faithful, be all the praise!

I am now standing before a cottage once inhabited by my old friend, Charley H. He is gone the way of all flesh, and, absent from the body, is, I believe, present with the Lord. In this cottage a few of us used to meet for prayer and Christian conference. Here I first ventured to engage in social prayer; here I first attempted to expound a portion of God's blessed Word. Here hearts united and voices blended in the worship of God; and within these cottage walls myself and some of the companions of my youth tasted the sweetest joys.

I have now before me, the dwelling of my venerable friend, Walker, for many years a class-leader among the Wesleyans; on his dying bed my father requested him to keep an eye over me. The first prayer I ever heard offered for the salvation of my soul was from his lips, and though I bitterly hated his Methodism, being then bigoted to the Established Church, I nevertheless revered the man. Dear old saint, you have long been in Heaven. Often, when I visited this, my native town, have I seen you sit and listen, with delighted countenance, to hear me speak of Jesus — but we shall meet in the worship of God no more below. Your prayers for me were answered, and, from my heart, I have often thanked you for them; and though I shall no more hear your voice below, I believe I shall join with you in singing, "Worthy is the Lamb!" above. On the other side of the street, opposite to where I now stand, is (what was) the habitation of my old friend, Lindsey. In that house I first opened my heart to my friend preparatory to joining the Church of Christ. From that house I took coach to go with my friend to Alton, in Hampshire, to preach my first sermon, and back to that house I came, with the foolish determination in my mind that I would attempt to preach no more. But my friend still lives, though not here, else I might record in my notes many an act of kindness, shown to me by him, for Jesus' sake. Dear brother in the Lord, may your last days be your best, your holiest, your happiest days, and at evening-time may it be light! and when yourself and your beloved partner shall drop into the arms of death, may you both realize that you are only dropping into the arms of Jesus!

I have gone some distance musing, and am now before what was the residence of venerable Mr. S., always kind to me, notwithstanding disparity of circumstances, and his having often been annoyed by my youthful follies. Never, while memory lasts, shall I forget your fatherly love to me, in a season of deep trouble, nor the many wise counsels I have received from you. I was to have preached your funeral sermon — at least, it was one of your last requests to me — but, from distance and other circumstances, I did not even hear of your death, until some time after the solemn event. But I trust we shall meet where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things have passed away.

I have come back nearly to where I started from, and here lived my pastor. For me he felt a pastor's love, and to me he showed a father's kindness. Dear old man, he had his faults — but who has not? I have — and plenty of them. It shall not be mine to speak of them, and for those who do, I only wish that their faults may be as few, and their virtues as many. I ever loved him. I love him still. Most ungrateful should I be if I did not. In that little parlor I received wise counsels, judicious cautions, and beneficial admonitions. Whoever may forget Andrew — I shall not. He blamed me when I saw, as I thought, farther than himself; but, having vented his honest anger, he manifested his love as warmly as ever. Dear old man, may your sun go down brightly and beautifully, and may your death-bed call forth the exclamation, "May my last end be like his!"

Oh, how many friends I had once at Brentford — and how I loved them! But I must leave off scribbling about them. Peace, peace be to the ashes of the dead, and grace, grace be given to the living!

Brentford, perhaps I may see you no more, nearly sixty years have passed over me; my brow is now wrinkled, and my locks begin to turn gray — the days are coming, and the years draw near, when, if I am spared, the trials of age will come upon me. But I know that my Redeemer lives; the covenant is ordered in all things and sure; the promises are truth; and God, my gracious God, is faithful. He will not leave me, and blessed be his holy name, he will not let me quite leave him. The Lord is my keeper, and, kept by his power, guided by his wisdom, and supplied by his providence — I shall reach my eternal home.

Sweet word, Home! What a glorious thought, Heaven is my home! What a home is mine! The home of patriarchs and prophets, the home of martyrs and confessors, the home of saints and angels, the home of Jesus and of God! Holy Spirit, prepare me for it; keep my eye fixed upon it; and, when my work is done, send a strong and loving angel to conduct me to it, for Jesus' sake! You, O Lord, shall guide me with your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.

This God is the God we adore,

Our faithful unchangeable friend,

Whose love is as large as his power,

And neither knows measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,

Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;

We'll praise him for all that is past,

And trust him for all that's to come.

18 An Insolent Demand

An Insolent Demand

Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go." Exodus 5:2

"Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" This was the question the insolent king of Egypt, put to Moses, when he delivered the Lord's message to him. And something very like it, is expressed by the conduct of many, to whom we speak in the present day. As if they did not know that it was their Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and final Judge!

Friend, the Lord who speaks to you in his law, and points out your duty; and the Lord that speaks to you in the gospel, and asks you to be reconciled to him — is the God of justice, the God of mercy. He must act justly, for his nature and his character demands it — but he is willing to show mercy, and has determined to display his grace. This just and gracious God, has often spoken unto you, and you have disregarded him, and perhaps if your conduct had been expressed in words, you have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Intimating that you neither knew him, nor cared for him. But he has not given you up, he speaks to you again; take these few lines, written in his name, as coming from him, and seriously attend to them. The Lord commands you to REPENT. His Word declares that he commands all men, everywhere, to repent, and therefore he must command you. But as each one will have to give an account of himself, and for himself to God, I want you to lose sight of everybody else, and just fix your attention on your own state and case. God commands you to repent. He does so in the exercise of his authority. He does so from a sincere regard to your welfare. He does so, because he has no wish to punish you. He would rather not execute the sentence of his law upon you, or punish you as you deserve, therefore he says, "Repent!" Change your mind — change your course. Your thoughts have been wrong, therefore change your thoughts. Your conduct has been wrong, therefore change your conduct. You must repent — or perish, for no impenitent sinner can possibly be saved. If you wish to repent and feel any difficulty about it, or experience inability to do so; come to Jesus for the grace of repentance, and he will freely give it to you, for he is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. The Lord offers you MERCY. He is ready to forgive. He is full of compassion. He is of great mercy. If you are willing to be saved — he is willing to save you. If you are prepared to confess your sin, and sue for pardon — he is ready to pardon you. He has found a ransom. He has set forth a propitiation. He has erected a throne of grace. He has sent forth his servants to proclaim that whoever believes in Jesus, and comes to him pleading his name — shall receive the remission of sins. Any sinner, at any time, applying in the name of Jesus, may receive the full, free, and everlasting pardon of all his sins. If you, therefore, are not pardoned — the fault lies only in yourself. There is no reason given in God's Word why you should not be pardoned. There is no cause to be found in God, why you are not. God was willing to forgive you before he sent the gospel to tell you so. He has been willing to forgive you, and has been waiting for you to apply to be pardoned ever since you first read his Word. It therefore lies wholly with yourself — if you are

unpardoned, unholy, or unhappy. The Lord will punish you if you refuse his mercy. He must do so, for he will not be mocked; he cannot allow himself to be so insulted; he has pledged his Word to minister judgment in uprightness. Having set before you his law, having proved you guilty of breaking it, having offered you mercy, having commanded you to repent, having even entreated you to be reconciled to him — if you remain obstinate and hardened, there is no alternative, you must be punished!

Consider the nature of that punishment, as compared to consuming fire, blackness of darkness, and the gnawing of a worm that never dies.

Consider the degree of that punishment, just in proportion to the nature, number, and aggravation of your crimes.

Consider the duration of that punishment, it is everlasting punishment in eternal fire! Will you then prefer exposing yourself to such a fate, to the accepting of a free salvation? Will you refuse to repent, and reject a pardon when it is offered you? Will you dare omnipotence, defy divine justice, and determine to brave the wrath of an infinite God? Will you? Can you?

Once more, God, by my pen, solemnly warns you. Once more the Lord calls you to repentance. Once more, your Maker asks you to be reconciled to him. Once more, the Savior invites you to come to him and live. Once more, the Holy Spirit cries, "Come and take of the water of life freely!" Once more, the Bride, the church of Jesus, lovingly calls to you, to come and share with her the blessings of grace and glory. Pause for a moment. Ponder over the subject. Make up your mind. And now — what is your decision? I have set before you the way of life and the way of death; now, O now, choose life that you may live!

19 The Alluring

The Alluring The Lord having chosen his people for himself — will bring them to know him, confide in him, and love him. So, when they have backslidden and wandered from him — he will employ means, that his banished ones be not expelled from him. Thus he brought Israel out of Egypt, and consecrated them to himself; and thus he led them out of Babylon, and again set them apart for his praise. These things were types, and show unto us, how the Lord deals with his people now, both at their first conversion, and at their restoration afterwards. How striking are the words of the Lord by his servant Hosea, on this point, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her;" or as the margin reads, "I will speak to her heart." Hosea 2:14. What will the Lord do?

"I will allure her." The eye and the heart of God, are upon his people — before they know it, and when they little think of it. He loves them with an everlasting love — therefore, he will draw, or allure them. He will draw them from their . . .

carnal pleasures,

vain pursuits, and

wordily company.

He will secretly persuade them . . .

by a divine operation upon their minds;

or by disappointments, vexations, convictions, distress of soul, and bereavements;

or by discoveries of his glorious grace, the blessedness of his people, or the felicity of Heaven

— to leave the pleasures and pursuits that are carnal — and seek for himself, and spiritual things. He will entice her, or draw her, by the revelation, and exhibition, of Jesus — in his glory, beauty, and exact adaptation to her.

"I will bring her into the wilderness." Not an uninhabited spot — but what is elsewhere called "the wilderness of the people." So, that though surrounded by society, the soul feels ALONE — it has an inward persuasion, that it is an isolated being. The allured soul feels that no one is like it — no one ever had such feelings, such fears, such corruptions, such temptations, such doubts. Therefore as Jeremiah says, "Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust — there may yet be hope." The believer, like a person in a wilderness, has a painful sense of BARRENNESS. Beneath, there is no green and pleasant verdure — but scorching sands; above, no shower bearing clouds — but a burning sky. All is barren, and tends to barrenness. So the soul finds it — the means of grace are barren; prayer, preaching, and conversation, all are barren. Even the Bible appears to be a barren book. So the man feels exposed to DANGER — danger from Satan, sin, the world, and death. Danger from the law, and danger even from Christian friends.

There is also a painful sense of DESTITUTION, and the man becomes wearied, bewildered, and exhausted. This wilderness is a place of INSTRUCTION, here the soul learns many a painful — but important lesson. Here it learns dependence on God, the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature, and the need of a divine agency to carry on the work. It learns that there is no bread but from Heaven, and what comes down appears to be small and unusual; so that with Israel, as we gather and feed on it, we are ready to cry, "Manna," what is it? what is it?

Here God works wonders, in preserving, supplying, correcting, restoring, and guiding. Here the bridegroom finds his bride, raises her to his side, allows her to lean upon him, holds secret, soul-sustaining communion with her, and conducts her to the promised land.

"I will speak to her heart."

He speaks a divorce from all creatures — that we may enjoy union to, and find happiness in himself alone.

He calls us away from centering in self — to fix our faith and affections on himself.

He speaks, so as to prevail with us to leave all others, and give ourselves up . . .

to be ruled by his will,

to feed at his table, and

to be satisfied with his goodness.

He speaks comfort, and speaks comfortably to us. By a Barnabas, or by the Comforter — he speaks, and, brings home a word of promise to the heart. This encourages faith, emboldens hope, and persuades the soul to close in with Christ. Or some sweet word flows into the mind, assuring us that he . . .

has pardoned our sins,

will take us as his own,

will guide us by his counsel, and

afterwards receive us to glory.

Reader, has the Lord ever allured you, and drawn you away into a wilderness, revealing himself to you? Has he ever spoken to your heart, words of peace and love? Jesus spoke to the heart of the poor woman, when he said, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven," and to the poor man, when he said, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Such pleasant words are as a honeycomb — sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. Such good words will make the heart glad.

We must be weaned from the world, from the creatures, and be brought into secret, heart-affecting, soul transforming communion with God. We must therefore find the world a wilderness, a desert, a land of drought. We must turn from man to God, and in God as revealed in Jesus, find a friend that loves at all times, and be able to say, with the apostle, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

20 The Gifts

The Gifts When the Lord has allured, and drawn his people away from all other to himself, when they have found it good to be alone with God, and when he has comforted their hearts — then he bestows upon them great and precious blessings. Thus the prophet represented the Lord as speaking, "There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor (trouble) — a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt." Hosea 2:15. I will,

Confer Favors. "I will give her back her vineyards." I will not only speak — but give. Vineyards were valuable property, delightful possessions; so the Lord will not only give enough for our subsistence — but abundance. Not only tastes of Canaan — but Canaan itself. That is, all the privileges and comforts of the gospel, which are like these gifts, proofs of reconciliation, and fruits of love. I will give her back her vineyards from thence. From that time, when I have brought her to be mine, only mine. From that place, the wilderness — where all was barren and unpromising. From that condition of loneliness and isolation. Vineyards from wildernesses.

"I will make the Valley of Achor (trouble) — a door of hope." This valley was naturally pleasant and secure. It took its name from Achor, who by his covetousness and theft, here troubled Israel. It means the valley of trouble, and this, says the Lord, shall be a door of hope. Trouble is often the means of good. Sanctified trouble always ends well. Achor was the first part of Canaan, which Israel possessed; trouble accompanied their entrance into the land. So often trouble attends the first joys of salvation; our first entrance into promised rest. But at the end of afflictions, stands the door of hope. This door lets out our desires to God, and lets in covenant mercies from God. It keeps out many and great evils — as gloom, despondency, and despair. And it lets out God's saints into liberty, peace, union, possessions, and honors. In Joseph's prison — was a door of hope, through which he passed to be lord over all the land of Egypt. In Daniel's den of lions — was a door of hope which admitted him to the highest place in the kingdom. In the experience of David, many and varied as his troubles and afflictions were, there was a door of hope, which introduced him to the promised throne, and made him king over all Israel. So in your experience, believer, you have always found a door of hope at the end of your conflicts, trials, and troubles, through which, when you least expected it, you passed into the enjoyment of peace and liberty. Our present mercies, are doors to admit us to new and greater mercies. The door may appear shut, all may seem dark and distressing — but Jesus carries the key, and will open the door, and introduce us to deliverance, just at the best moment. His key will open the most difficult lock with ease, and throw open the strongest door at his pleasure. The Lord will not only give us vineyards, and set before us a door of hope — but he will give us mirth; "There she will sing."

Sing, where? At the door of hope, in the vineyards he gives us.

Sing, why? On account of our obtaining our freedom, and such glorious possessions."

Sing, how? As Israel did at the Red Sea, when Miriam took a timbrel, and all the women went after her in dances, singing, "Sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously."

Sing, for what? For wonders wrought, for faithfulness proved, for obedience crowned.

She shall be humbled there, as rich displays of grace always humble us. She shall answer there, as the people of old did saying, "All that the Lord has spoken to us — will we do." Signal deliverances lead to cheerful and prompt obedience.

Observe, believer, Our songs are generally preceded by sorrow. We sigh in the valley — before we sing on the mountain. Our groans are heard in the glen, before our anthems ascend from the rock. The Lord's people shall be enriched and happy. They may be poor enough for a time, and their sorrow may be great — but vineyards and songs, will be theirs before long.

Observe, inward joys should be expressed. If the Lord renders us happy — we should gratefully show it. The Lord loves to hear us praise him. The grateful Christian, will never be long at a loss for matter for a song. New mercies should remind us of former ones. Every new deliverance, should lead our thoughts back to our first and great deliverance: and from thence we should draw the conclusion of the apostle, "He who has delivered, does deliver, and in him I trust that he will yet deliver me."

If we have received a vineyard as our marriage dowry — we shall soon enter upon the possession of the glorious inheritance. If we sing the songs of deliverance in these lowlands now — we shall soon shout from the heights of Zion. If we enter the door of hope into the enjoyment of grace — we shall assuredly pass through the door of hope again, into the enjoyment of glory.

21 The Relationship

The Relationship The Lord having allured his people, brought them away from all others, to feel alone with himself; having turned the shadow of death into morning, and given the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and put a new song into their mouths; God then takes them into the closest possible union with himself, and indulges them with the sweetest views of his love. Hence we read, "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call me Ishi, and shall call me no more Baali." Hosea 2:16.

There is a difference in the terms, though there is some similarity. Sarah called Abraham, "Baali, my Lord," though he was her husband, manifesting profound reverence as well as tender affection. "Baali," signifies, "my Lord," and conveys the idea of owner, and patron — implying inferiority, rule, subjection, and fear.

"Ishi," signifies "my man," signifying my husband, my strength, my protector — and implying, love, familiarity, and boldness. The contrast, therefore, is between lordly and loving.

"Baali," had become ambiguous, being applied to idols as well as Jehovah; and it befit the servant, better than the bride; therefore it must be dispensed with. But there are still some dry professors, some backsliders, and some who live at a distance from God, who prefer "Baali," to "Ishi;" they prefer . . .

distance to nearness,

reserve to familiarity, and

doubt to assurance. But the Lord would have us know and enjoy his love to us; and see us come boldly to his throne, and feel confidence in his presence. The relationship indicated, is the marriage relationship. It is the Lord saying, "I am married unto you!" "Your Maker is your husband, the Lord almighty is his name, and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called." It indicates, that we are God's portion — and that he is ours! That he has chosen us for his own — set his heart and his love upon us — and has brought us into nearness and union with himself — giving us a sweet assurance of his love, so that we can say, "My beloved is mine — and I am his!" Not only so — but he brings us into a state of positive dependence upon him; so that as the wife, who brings no portion with her, is dependent upon her husband for all — so we must look to the Lord for all, and trust in him alone. But we must not omit to observe, that the relation into which the Lord brings us is permanent and perpetual. He takes us as we are, and knowing all about us, to be his own, and his own forever; and we take him to be ours, and ours forever. He says, "I will be for you, and you shall be for me," and the union is formed for eternity, the relationship is entered into forever. The privileges flowing out of this relationship, are many, and very great. "You shall call me Ishi, my husband." This intends that we shall acknowledge and treat him as such. We are to look to him . . .

for counsel, in all our difficulties and perplexities;

for comfort in all seasons of sadness and sorrow;
for sympathy in all our sufferings and trials; and
for our maintenance, both as creatures and Christians.

We are to expect from him . . .

all that the wisest head can devise,
all that the kindest heart bestow,
all that the most experienced hand can perform,
all that the most eloquent tongue can express
all that the wealth of God can procure!

"You shall call me Ishi," that is —

you shall serve me from love, rather than fear;
you shall make me the object of confidence, rather than of dread;
you shall receive the spirit of adoption, rather than the spirit of bondage.

O what a privilege to be thus related to God, to be one with God! To be delivered from all terror, alarm, and dismay — and enjoy peace, confidence, and courage, in our approaches to him, and dealings with him. Blessed be God, for alluring us, and drawing us out of the world! Blessed be God, for our afflictions and trials! Blessed be God, for all the gifts of his grace. Blessed be God, for taking us into union with himself, in the person of his beloved Son!

Observe, God would have us look to him with love and delight — not with fear and dread. Think of this, lost sinner. Think of this, poor legalist. God does not want our works, or our sufferings — but our persons, and our love. He wishes us to think kindly of him, and to set our love upon him. We should view God in Christ, as . . .

our portion,

our strength,

our husband. And as our portion — we should live upon him,

as our strength — we should lean upon him, and

as our husband — we should abide in his presence, and enjoy constant fellowship and communion with him.

He will cleanse his people from all their idols, and take the name of Baali out of their mouth. Yes, every idol must fall, and Jesus must become the object of our supreme love, confidence, and adoration.

Let us, then, admire the love, tenderness, and condescension of our God — let us submit to all his discipline and dispensations, with meekness and humility — and let us seek grace, that realizing

our union with him, we may walk before him as befits the objects of his highest love and sovereign grace. Let us be willing . . .

to be weaned from all others,

to endure the afflictions appointed for our good, and

to be shut up to God in Christ, for all our comfort, peace, and joy.

Gracious God, let us often experience your alluring influence — let us often find ourselves alone with you — let us in every trouble look unto the door of hope — let us often sing of your delivering mercy and grace — and let us realize that we are one with you, and that you are one with us, so that in all our approaches to you, and dealings with you — we may exercise love, confidence, and joy!

22 Counsel for the Young

Counsel for the Young

How important is the season of youth! How necessary it is that youth should be noticed, admonished, and encouraged to seek the Lord. How many die in youth. How many form evil habits which they never conquer. The seeds of goodness and greatness are generally sown in youth. Let young people, therefore, listen to the Lord's Word, choose the better part, and secure God for their friend. Does some youthful eye rest upon this page? Allow one, who has ever been a lover of youth, to urge you to consider the language of the wisest of men, in the decline of life, as the royal preacher, and, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say: I find no pleasure in them." Ecclesiastes 12:1

Consider, the Exhortation. "Remember your Creator." To him you are indebted for your existence, your connections in life, and all the comforts you enjoy. In him you live, move, and have your being. Upon him you are dependent for life, breath, and all things. How great is your obligation to him. How absolute your dependence upon him is. Remember him, therefore, and remember to seek him, to obey him, and glorify him. Remember his goodness — and repent, for his goodness is intended to lead you to repentance. Remember his authority — and obey, for you ought to obey God rather than man. Remember his power — and submit, for every creature must bend or break. Remember his mercy — and hope, for his mercy is plenteous, free, and everlasting. Remember his love — for it is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Remember his message — and believe it, for he has sent to tell you of his grace, to offer you his Son, and to beseech you to be reconciled. Remember his determination to bring you into judgment — and prepare for it. Consider, The Period. "Now, in the days of your youth." There is no time like the present, therefore, "the Holy Spirit says, Today." "Now," there is certainty — if you seek, you shall find. "Now," you must be successful, for every one that seeks — shall find.

"In the days of your youth," when everything tempts you to forget. Remember in youth, though youthful times are giddy times, they are molding times, and the character for life is formed now. Youthful time is morning time, and the morning time is best for every important enterprise. "Josiah began to seek the Lord, while he was yet young," so do you. Remember, for your encouragement, the Lord says, "Those who seek me early — shall find me."

How many snares you will escape,
how many blessings you will secure,
how many comforts you will enjoy —

if you remember the Lord in your youth. Consider then, The Inducement. Days of trouble are coming! Yes, trouble is ahead of us. What they will bring, we know not; they may bring insanity, accidents, excruciating pains, overwhelming cares, distressing bereavements, and early death! Then you will need the supports and comforts of real religion. If we live to old age, pleasureless

years will come. The senses will be dull, the energies weakened, and evil habits confirmed. The memory will fail, the heart will be hardened, and the conscience become encrusted with guilt. Few unconverted sinners know much of pleasure in old age, their strength is but labor and sorrow. O how important it is, to lay a good foundation in youth, how necessary to have the mind well stored, the heart set right and the evidence of God's favor and love clear and satisfactory.

God's command and man's proposal are at variance.

God says, "Seek me first. Remember me in youth. Believe me now."

Man says, "Youth for pleasure, youth is for sin, youth is for the world; old age for God." But it is inexcusable if we put off the day of trouble, and make no provision for it. It must come. It is traveling toward us fast. Prepared or unprepared — we must meet it, and endure all its consequences. And then, life is very uncertain, multitudes die in youth, there are bodies of all sizes in the graveyard, and souls of all ages in the eternal world. God will not spare us because we are young, if we die in sin. "The fire of Hell feeds on twigs, as well as on logs."

It is character, which decides the state. The wicked shall be turned into Hell — whether young or old. The righteous shall enter into everlasting life — die at what age they may. There is no safety — but in Christ. There is no Heaven — without holiness. There is no happiness in this or any other world — without grace.

"Remember," therefore, "your Creator in the days of your youth." Remember, to obtain pardon at his hands; to recognize his claims, and to be reconciled unto him. Remember, O remember! to make God your friend, to obtain mercy from him, to be at peace with him, and to follow on to know him. This will render life sweeter, more useful, and more lovely. It will bring . . .

a solace for every sorrow,

a balm for every wound, and

deliverance out of every trouble. My young friends, if you would know peace — if you would rise to eminence — if you would escape the sufferings which many others have endured — if you would be prepared for life, death, and eternity — then "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth!"

23 I Have Found Jesus!

I Have Found Jesus! A Godly man had observed that his beloved daughter was becoming unusually dull and reserved. He offered up special prayer for her — but could get no satisfactory information from her. She became more gloomy, and her countenance was sad and dejected. The father prayed, the child suffered. When things had gone on so for more than a month, one day she came to her father, and as tears of joy rolled down her cheeks, she whispered, "I have found Jesus!"

She was now anew creature. Her heart was filled with joy. Her countenance was bright and sunny. Her voice sounded forth the praises of her Savior. She had passed from death unto life. The kingdom of God was set up in her heart, which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now, in union with a beloved sister, she set herself by prayer and supplication, and the use of every appropriate means, to seek the immediate salvation of a brother. She loved that brother before — but, O how she loved him now! She would do anything for that brother before — but now the love of Jesus constrained her, to make his conversion and salvation the object of her life. Thus it always is, when we have found Jesus ourselves — we cannot rest but as we bring others to him, and we generally begin first, with those we love best.

Reader, have you ever passed through the experience of this young lady? Has sin ever troubled you? Have you ever smarted under the lashings of a guilty conscience? Have you ever trembled at the thoughts of the wrath of God? Have you gone mourning and sorrowing, because you felt yourself a sinner in the sight of God? Have you searched your Bible, visited God's house, and pleaded in your closet, until you could say, "I have found Jesus!" To find Jesus, is to find the pearl of great price. To find Jesus, is to find a Savior, a friend, a brother born for adversity. To find Jesus, is to find a title to Heaven, a saving interest in all the precious promises of God, and a remedy for all the ills of life. To find Jesus, is to find all things in one, for it has pleased the Father that in him, should all fullness dwell. When we find Jesus — we find pardon, peace, holiness, happiness, and eternal life. Happy, thrice happy is the soul that can honestly say, "I have found Jesus!" Is your heart set on winning your dear relations and friends for Jesus! Do you plead with God for them? Is it your earnest prayer, that you may be made wise to win their souls? This is always the natural result of finding Jesus for ourselves; and therefore young converts are always full of zeal for the conversion of others. How can we enjoy the love of Jesus ourselves — and not wish others to do so? How can we be filled with the peace of God, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit — and not ardently desire that others should enjoy the same blessing? The love of Jesus in the heart — always fills with love to souls. The presence of Jesus with us — always prompts us to seek, and endeavor to save those who are lost. If it prompted Jesus to leave his Father's throne, to live and labor as a servant on earth, and to lay down his life for sinners; surely it will prompt us, to deny ourselves, and to do what little we can to carry out his purpose, and save souls from death.

If you have not found Jesus yet, seek him until you do, you cannot seek him in vain, if you seek him in faith, for his own Word says, "Every one that seeks, shall find." If you have found Jesus, show it, by letting your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Having found Jesus yourself, bring all you can to seek him.

24 DISCIPLINE

DISCIPLINE

There is a great difference between punishment and chastisement; the former is inflicted by the judge on the criminal, the latter is administered by the parent on the child. Our trials, troubles, and afflictions are discipline, intended to form our characters, or reform our lives. "Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools." As sore as were the trials of Israel — they were not like the judgments inflicted on their enemies: besides which the design was the very opposite, hence the prophet says, alluding to their chastisements, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sins." Isaiah 27:9. Look at, The DISCIPLINE. It was severe, for they are represented as slain. It was penetrating, and therefore represented by the east wind. It was moderated, for "he stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind." And so says the Apostle, "There has no temptation taken you — but such as is common to men; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it." It also differs from the treatment of others, as Paul testifies, "We are troubled on every side — yet not distressed; we are perplexed — but not in despair; persecuted — but not forsaken; cast down — but not destroyed." There is mercy in it, grace comes with it, and we derive benefit from it. Let us not therefore despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him. Let us not ascribe our troubles to God's wrath — but rather trace them to his paternal love. Look we now at, The CAUSE of the Discipline, Sin. Our sin grieves God's loving heart, and provokes the eyes of his holiness. The sins referred to by the prophet, were:

Forgetfulness of God. God loves us to think of him, to remember him, and when we forget him, we grieve him. And yet as it was said of Israel, so it may be said of us, "They forgot God their Savior, who had done such great things for them." We forget his presence, his requirements, his promises, and his love.

Earthly-mindedness. They were more affected by the sensual than the spiritual, by the earthly than the Heavenly. And this is very much the case with us. As risen with Christ — our affections, desires, and thoughts, should be on things above, rather than on things below — and we should aim at the things which are unseen and eternal, rather than at the things which are seen and temporal.

They made self too much their end, instead of living to the Lord, and for the Lord, they lived pretty much to themselves, just as we have too often done. As redeemed unto God, as set apart for God, everything should be done with a view to please God — even our dressing, and eating, and drinking, should be attended to with a view to God's glory.

They were guilty of idolatry, they worshiped and served the creature, instead of the Creator, who is over all, and blessed for evermore. Just so have we: the fear of man has affected us, more than the fear of God; the desire to please man, has influenced us more than the desire to please God.

We have thought more of man than God, and we have loved man more than God. Our forgetfulness, our selfishness, and our idolatry — have procured for us many strokes, and have brought on us many a trouble! This leads us to, The Design of this Discipline, "to take away his sin." God's dealings are often intended to detect sin, and bring it to remembrance. To embitter sin, and set the heart against it. To take away sin, that is to take away the love of it, our appetite for it and our indulgence in it. Alas! the love of sin is not entirely destroyed in our souls! We are at times very zealous in a wrong course. We do too often indulge in filthiness of the flesh and spirit. No discipline endured by us, no pains suffered by us, can ever purge away sin, in the sense of expiating it, or making an atonement for it. No suffering — but the suffering of Jesus, no blood — but the blood of God incarnate can ever atone for, or take away sin from the sight of God. But sanctified afflictions, will bring us back from the ways of sin, and into the ways of God. The blood of Jesus, put away our sins forever as to the guilt of them; but the work of the Holy Spirit, and his grace attending our trials, deepens our sanctification, and makes sin to us an evil and bitter thing!

Sin grieves our Heavenly Father's heart, and requires that he use the rod, and put us under discipline! Therefore we have to experience severe afflictions, heavy trials, and sore troubles. The reason we are not overwhelmed and carried away with them — but bear up under them, and come out into a wealthy place, is because the Lord moderates them, and sends grace with them. And when they are sanctified, they always . . .

set the heart against sin,

turn away the eyes from admiring vanity,

and the feet from the ways of death. Our God, therefore, is gracious, when most severe. He does not afflict willingly, nor unnecessarily — neither does he chastise immoderately — but unerring wisdom and mercy guide the rod. In this the saints of God are distinguished from others; God deals with them as with sons; he corrects in measure, and will not leave them wholly unpunished. He gives them grace sufficient for them, and makes his strength perfect in their weakness.

O what a mercy to have God for a father, to know that he never disowns or disinherits his children, and to be assured that every affliction and trial is sent in love! Yes, not for his pleasure — but for our profit, are we put to pain, and sometimes treated severely! The time is coming, when for every affliction, we shall bless and praise his holy and adorable name. Gracious Lord, help us to believe your love to us, especially in days of dullness and seasons of trouble — help us to hold fast our confidence in you, under all our conflicts and trials — and may we hopefully look forward to the period when we shall joyfully allude to all our sorrows and distresses, saying, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me!"

How gracious and how wise

Is our chastising God!

And O! how rich the blessings are,

Which blossom from the rod!

He lifts it up on high,

With pity in his heart;
That every stroke his children feel,
May grace and peace impart.
Sweet fruits afflictions bring,
Like those on Aaron's rod,
They bud, and bloom divinely fair,
Which proves them sent of God.
Dear Father! we consent
To discipline divine;
And bless the pain that makes our souls
Still more completely Thine.

25 There Is Hope!

There Is Hope! A North American Indian, having heard the gospel, was brought under conviction of sin, his sleep departed from him, and he became restless and wretched. He saw himself on the brink of eternal misery, he sought for mercy — but there appeared an impassable mountain before him, and his way was hedged up with thorns, he felt that he could not move an inch. Despair began to seize upon him, and he was settling down into gloom, and giving up all for lost. Just then, as if a voice spoke to him, the words sounded in his soul, "There is hope! There is hope!" He was led to the Lord Jesus, obtained pardon, found peace, became a new creature, and at once manifested a glowing desire for the salvation of all around him. He lived a happy and a useful life, and died a peaceful and an enviable death.

Years have rolled away since this event occurred — but human nature is the same, true religion is the same, and the grace of God that brings salvation is the same. Has my reader been convinced of sin, and led to see himself on the brink of everlasting misery? Has he been cut off from all hope in the law, and all dependence on his own doings? Has he any doubt of his salvation, or fear of his acceptance with God. If so, the gospel still cries, "There is hope! There is hope!" Yes, there is hope for the vilest. There is pardon for the basest. There is salvation for the worst. There is a Savior, O glorious news! He is both able and willing to save, O blessed intelligence! He saves all who come to him, and are willing to be saved by him, O delightful fact! There is hope, for his blood cleanses from all sin. There is hope, for by his obedience many shall be made righteous. There is hope, for his Spirit will . . .

melt the hardest heart,

cleanse the foulest soul, and

relieve the most troubled conscience.

There is hope, for Jesus loves to save, wishes to save, and rejoices over every sinner that comes to be saved by him.

Reader, whoever you are, or whatever you are — there is hope for you. The door of mercy is not yet closed. The blood of Jesus has not lost its efficacy. The heart of Jesus is not hardened, or turned against any seeking soul. Satan may suggest that there is no hope — but there is. Your own heart may misgive, and doubts may spring up within you — but unto you is the Word of God's salvation sent. At this moment, God waits to be gracious unto you. At this moment, Jesus waits to show mercy unto you. At this moment, the Spirit is addressing you, and wishes you to accept of a free pardon.

Nothing can make your case hopeless — but unbelief. If you will not believe God when he tells you that he is ready to pardon — when he beseeches you to be reconciled unto him — when he takes oath that he has no pleasure in your death, and therefore pathetically asks, "Why will you die?" — if you will not believe you must perish! And this will be your condemnation, that God called to you

— and you would not hear — that Jesus died to make a free and easy way to Heaven, and you would not walk in it — that the Holy Spirit warned, invited, and strove with you — but like the deaf adder, you stopped your ear. Still, at present "There is hope! There is hope!" Reader there is hope for you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ — and you shall be saved!"

26 Reproved by a Child

Reproved by a Child A short time ago, as I was sitting in a friend's house conversing with him, suddenly the door opened, and my friend's little boy came in from school with his mind evidently full of something; without staying to see if anyone was present, he went up directly to his father, and taking him by the hand, said, "Father, you said, etc.," pleading a promise which the father had made, which promise was immediately honored, with only a slight reproof for not noticing that someone was in the room. Well, thought I, I have often been instructed and reproved by children before, and here I am reproved again. Let me look at the reproof, learn the lesson, and seek grace to benefit by it. This child . . .

believed his father's word,

remembered his fathers promise, and

expected to receive what he asked for. Do I treat my Heavenly Father so? How often I doubt his promise. How often I forget his promise. How often when I plead his promise, I do not confidently expect that God will make it good. But I ought. If this child had any reason to believe his father — then how much more have I? If this child had ground to believe that his father would do as he had said — then how much more have I? The children of this world, are wiser than the children of light. The child's mind was full of the subject, so that everything else was lost sight of, when he came to plead his father's promise. Is this my case? Almost every trifle attracts my mind, and distracts my attention when I come to a throne of grace. The child clearly anticipated before he asked, and while he was asking; and if there had been any hesitation in giving, was no doubt prepared to argue the point. Do I do so? Do I come expecting God to give, and do I ask believing that I shall receive? This is just what the Savior requires, and to this the assurance is given, "You shall receive." Do I come prepared to plead with God, to argue the point if necessary, and to take no denial? So did Moses, and many of God's ancient worthies, and so have I at times — but do I generally do so? Alas, no! The child was full of confidence, and his confidence seemed to extend to his father's love, and word, and truthfulness. This gave him courage, and made him bold. There were no indications of doubt, or fear, or misgiving — he believed, he expected, he was confident.

O what a reproof to me! Where is my confidence in God often, when I am upon my knees before him? If I steadily believed the love he has to me — if I felt confident that he was truthful and must fulfill his word — what courage, what boldness, I would have. The child was intent on his business, and his application was at once crowned with success. He obtained an answer, his wish was gratified. So would mine be much oftener, if not always, if I was only more intent on my business, and prayed and pleaded with God, as if I must have, or be miserable. My soul, I charge you, stand reproved. Realize your sin. Mark the dishonor alone to your God, and seek grace, that in future God may be glorified by your hearty faith, fervent prayers, and devout expectations. God should be believed. He has done and said, everything he well could, to command our faith, encourage our confidence, and raise our expectations. His promises are plain, they are confirmed by the death of his Son, and he can summon thousands of witnesses to attest their truth. He will never deceive us.

He cannot deny himself, or break his word. He has no disposition to do so, he can have no temptation to it. O to come to God for all I want or wish, promise in hand, and confidently appeal to him as the child to its parent, with, "Father, you said, that . . .

you would give me grace,

help me in trouble,

guide me with your eye,

supply all my wants, and

make me victorious over all my foes

— now do as you have said!"

Reader, how do you treat the Lord? He has sent you invitations, he has made you promises, he desires your friendship. Have you accepted his invitations, and come to him? Do you believe his promises, remind him of them, and expect him to make them good? Are you a friend of God — being reconciled to him, and walking in love with him? Does not the conduct of my friend's child reprove you? He came direct to his father, he appealed at once to his father, he evidently expected from his father, and he was rewarded by his father. If you have not, go at once and do likewise, like the prodigal, arise and go to your father, and tell him, that as he invited you — you have come; as he promised to pardon — you come to ask him to forgive you; as he has plenty and you are in poverty — you come to beseech him to bless you with a portion. Come, O come, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from you, if you walk uprightly. When a sense of sin and thrall

Forced me to the sinner's Friend,

He engaged to manage all,

By the way, and to the end.

"Cast," he said, "on me your care,

'Tis enough that I am nigh,

I will all your burdens bear,

I will all your wants supply."

Lord, I would, I do submit,

Gladly yield my all to you,

What your wisdom sees most fit,

Must be, surely, best for me!

27 My Mother's Friend

My Mother's Friend Whose heart is not affected, when a reference is made to his mother? There is something sacred about a mother, especially a Christian mother — and a Christian mother in Heaven. Memory having recorded, recalls the past: The mother's features. The mother's voice. The mother's tears. The mother's counsels. The mother's prayers.

These, though like buried seed, they may be forgotten for a time, will spring up, be remembered, and influence us again.

It was so with a young friend. She had been giddy, thoughtless, mirthful. She enjoyed worldly pleasures — and while health lasted, all seemed to go on well. But there was a change. Health failed. Her prospects were blighted. Her heart was sad. She was much alone, and felt very lonely. Her thoughts went back to the past. Her mother seemed to live again. She thought of that mother's sorrows and joys, of her trials and triumphs — and could not but contrast her mother's state of mind with her own. She dwelt long and seriously on the subject, inquired into the cause, and at length, as if she had just found it out, she said with a sigh, "My Mother's friend was Jesus!"

Happy mother, to have Jesus for a friend, for he is a friend who loves at all times, a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Yes, Jesus was my sainted mother's friend, he supported her under her trials. She could trust in his word. She could lean on his arm. She could make sure of his aid. She knew that he would never fail her nor forsake her. She had tried him for many a long year, and she could trust him now. Nor did he disappoint her hope. She found him faithful. Many and severe were her trials — but her supports were answerable. His strength was made perfect in her weakness.

Jesus was my mother's friend — and he comforted her in all her tribulations. His sweet smile, his loving voice, his faithful word, gave her the sweetest comfort. While the tear hung on her eye-lid, joy flowed through her heart, for she knew, she felt, that Jesus was hers, and would not let her be tried above her strength. She exercised faith in him, and was filled with joy and peace in believing. Few had sweeter comforts, or stronger consolation, than my poor tried mother had, and all flowed from Jesus.

Jesus was my mother's friend, and he answered her in the day of her trouble. O how many prayers she poured into his ear, how many petitions she presented at his throne! How many answers to prayer she received, and how she loved to tell of . . .

his delivering mercy,

his comforting presence, and

his supporting grace. And there are prayers to be answered yet. Prayers for her poor, thoughtless, and foolish child. Can the prayers of such a mother remain unanswered? Surely not! Perhaps my present sadness, my bitter disappointments, and my wounded heart — may be an answer to my mother's prayers.

"Jesus was my mother's friend, and at length, he took her to be with him. He loved her, he visited her, he blessed her below — and at length he called her up to dwell with him in Heaven. Can I ever forget her dying hour? Can I ever forget the faith she exercised, the joy she felt, the testimony she bore! Never! And yet I have forgotten them. Yes, too long have I forgotten a mother's tears, a mother's prayers, and a mother's exhortations. How sweetly she spoke of Jesus. How tenderly she entreated me to come to Jesus. How touchingly she described the blessedness of being one with Jesus. O my mother's friend, my mother's Savior — be the friend, the Savior, of her ungrateful, sinful child!"

Thus the daughter felt, thus the daughter soliloquized, and thus the daughter prayed. Nor did she pray in vain, for the time came, when she could not only say, "My mother's friend was Jesus," but could add, "Jesus is my friend too!"

Reader, had you a praying mother? Was Jesus your mother's friend? If so, let me ask you: Is he your friend? Have you attended to your mother's counsels? Have you experienced an answer to a mother's prayers? O the privilege of having such a mother! But how much greater is the privilege to have Jesus for our own! And this privilege we may enjoy. Jesus is ready to receive us. He waits and calls us to him. He seems to say, "I was your mother's friend, and I am willing to be your friend, too. I supported her under all her afflictions, I comforted her in all her trials, I answered her prayers in the day of trouble, and then I took her to myself. I am prepared to do just the same for you. The arms that supported your mother — shall support you. The love that comforted your mother — shall comfort you. The ear that listened to your mother — shall listen to you. In the Heaven, where your mother enjoys perfect happiness, there is room for you. Only believe my Word. Only trust in my perfect sacrifice. Only be reconciled to my Father. Only obey my voice. Only take me to be your Savior — and all shall be well, and well forever!"

Reader, what do you say? You are the person addressed, let your name, or character, or situation be what it may. To you is the message of this salvation sent. To you is this gracious offer made. By your mother's love, by your mother's tears, by your mother's joys — I beseech you close in with Christ. For your mother's sake, for your own sake, for God's sake — accept of Christ and be happy!

28 Christ Died for Our Sins

Christ Died for Our Sins "Christ died for our sins!" 1 Corinthians 15:3

What a glorious testimony is this! It is a main feature of Paul's gospel. He preached it everywhere. He preached it to all. It was much for Christ to live for us, pray for us, and work for us; but it was much more for Christ to die for us — to die for our sins! But for our sins, the Son of God would never have . . .

become man,

lived in poverty with worms below,

suffered and died. In the cross, we see . . .

the worst thing in the universe,

the means of the greatest display of God's love,

and the Savior's wonderful condescension. But for sin, the Word would never have been made flesh — and the universe would never have seen God's perfect and complete character exhibited! The cross is a mirror, in which is seen all His divine attributes, and glorious perfections. We see God's character fully manifested — in the salvation of His people. The death of Christ is a subject which fills the holiest intellect with wonder and astonishment. Only in the sufferings and death of Christ, is the true nature of sin seen, and the full glory of God displayed.

"Christ died for our sins," to get rid of our sins. To remove them from God's sight, that they may not provoke the eyes of his holiness. To erase them from his book — that justice may not bring them forward at the grand assize. To give full satisfaction for them, that Satan may not justly accuse us with them.

Jesus, the Son of God took our nature — that he might be capable of dying for our sins. He took our place — that he might be allowed to die for us. Having our nature, and voluntarily coming into our place — he became our Substitute. He stood for us. He was accepted for us. He engaged to do, and suffer, all that could be required for our salvation. His obedience to the law, therefore, was for us. His sufferings were for us. His death was for us. His obeying the law — was as if we obeyed it. His suffering the desert of sin — was as if we suffered it. His dying for our sins — was as if we had died for them. This being the case, as believers in him, as united to him, as represented by him — we are free . . .

from all charges,

from all condemnation,

from all just occasion to fear wrath.

"Christ died for our sins," to obtain our eternal redemption. That redemption, includes . . .

present pardon,

freedom from the law of sin and death,

admission into the presence and favor of God,

complete and eternal deliverance from sin, and all its penal consequences. In consequence, the grave must give back our bodies, and they, strong, spiritual, glorious, and immortal — become the abodes of our sinless souls forever. Then in the enjoyment of perfect freedom, we shall live and reign with our glorious Redeemer and Savior, enjoying the smile of God, and the perfection of holiness and happiness forever!

"Christ died for our sins," and so became our Savior; and becoming our Savior, He became . . .

our Lord,

our Lawgiver,

our Advocate,

our Judge,

our all in all.

Christ therefore, as having died for our sins, and as having risen again for our justification — is the glorious object of our faith, hope, and affection. In him we confide;

from him, and through him, we expect every blessing;

and on him our warmest love is fixed.

Blessed Savior, your death prevents our damnation, and your resurrection secures our everlasting salvation!

We shall never die for our sins — because you have died for them!

We shall never be held in the grave — for your resurrection secures our deliverance! Our present pardon, peace, and every blessing — come to us through Christ dying for us! And our perfect sanctification, resurrection, and glorification, are now certain — because "Christ died for our sins!"

O my soul, whenever tempted by Satan to despond and give way to slavish fears, call to mind this glorious truth, "Christ died for our sins!"

O my soul, whenever you have guilt upon your conscience, and corruption rages like a stormy sea within you — then remember that "Christ died for our sins!" When your sins stare you in your face, or rise up like mountains before you — do not forget that "Christ died for our sins!"

Yes, Jesus died for those very sins which now alarm and terrify you, which rise up in such horrid forms before you! And such is the efficacy of His blood — that it cleanses from all sin! No sin is too great, no stain is too deep — for it to remove! The vilest sinner, through Christ's precious blood — shall be as faultless and pure as a holy angel.

Reader, did Jesus die for your sins? If you sincerely believe on him — he did. Those for whom Jesus died, are by the Holy Spirit convinced of sin, and are led to exercise sincere faith in him. He who believes, is born of God; for true faith in Christ, is the effect and proof of the new birth; and the new birth is produced by the Spirit, to honor Jesus, and that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

If therefore I am born of God, I shall believe in Christ to the salvation of my soul; and if I believe in Jesus thus — there can be no question that he died for my sins.

If Christ did not die for them, then we must eternally die. How infinitely important then is faith in him, for to him give all prophets witness, that through His name, whoever believes on him, shall receive remission of sins. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him!"

Now from the garden to the cross,
Let us attend the Lamb of God;
Be all things else accounted dross,
Compared with sin-atoning blood! With thorns his temples gored and gashed,
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back with knotted scourges lashed,
But sharper scourges tear his heart!
Nailed naked to the accursed wood,
Exposed to earth and Heaven above,
A spectacle of wounds and blood,
A prodigy of injured love!
You who assume his sacred name,
Now tell me, what could all this mean?
What was it, bruised the harmless Lamb?
What was it, pierced his soul — but sin?
Blush, Christian, blush; let shame abound;
If sin affects you not with woe,
Whatever spirit be in you found,
The Spirit of Christ, you do not know.

29 The Source of All Good

The Source of All Good The Lord often refers us to nature, to illustrate his conduct in dealing with his people. He does so by the prophet, when he had been denouncing the sin, and threatening to punish his professing people. He refers to the gardener preparing his soil, selecting his seed, and collecting the produce of his land. Then he represents himself as the author of the talent and skill displayed, intimating that he will deal more skillfully with them. "This also comes forth from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Isaiah 28:29. The Lord Almighty is the source of all good. Of every good thing we may say, "This comes from the Lord Almighty." All natural good, as wisdom, skill, and talent — is from the Lord; he gives, and divides to every man individually as he will. All spiritual good is from God, as divine life, and all its accompanying blessings. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. All flows from God, who is naturally, essentially, and eternally good. The sun is not so full of light, or the sea of water — as God is of goodness.

Yet he dispenses his good things sovereignly, both as to kind and degree. To some he gives one kind of talent, and to others another. To some he gives one talent, and to others five. "He does according to his will."

He always acts wisely as well, in the distribution of his gifts, as in everything else.

Yet he invariably deals justly, nor ever injures one, by conferring favors on another. To every one he gives according to his place and station, that each may be fitted for his position and duties. But he deals with his own people graciously, and while in them he glorifies all his perfections, his grace is most conspicuous. Every good desire, every holy emotion, and every righteous action they experience or perform, "comes forth from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." The giver of all good, is wonderfully wise in his plans. His object in them is to bring out and display all the perfections of his nature, to reveal his whole character. He has determined to glorify himself in our present good, and also in our eternal salvation. He has counseled to do this, and his counsel is wonderfully wise. Hence the prophet cried, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. O great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve." Jeremiah 32:17-19

He exactly adapts all the parts of his plan to the whole, so that the vast machine works with ease and certainty; and displays the wisdom of his counsels, by producing all he wills with the greatest certainty, in a world of contingencies. His plans never fail. His purposes are never frustrated. His decrees are all accomplished. As he speaks, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Men may cavil, dispute, and oppose — but "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." In accomplishing his purposes — his excellent wisdom is displayed. This is

especially the case in our salvation. He wonderfully secures his own glory, by the sacrifice of his Son, so that none of his perfections are compromised. He hides pride from man, by the instruments he employs to accomplish his ends — the feeble, the foolish, the unlikely. He silences his foes, by the justice he displays, so that to every creature he can say, "I do you no wrong," and every one's conscience will be obliged to reply, "He has done me no wrong." He displays his wisdom equally, in correcting our faults — by afflictions, crosses, and sore trials. The resources of God are boundless, and cannot be exhausted. His counsels are too deep and wonderful for us to understand. "He does great and unsearchable things; marvelous things without number." "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." This made the apostle to cry out, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" His work is too excellent to be improved; let us therefore . . .

study it with care,

believe the testimony of his Word in reference to it,

admire it whenever and wherever we discover it,

commend it to the study and admiration of others, and

seek grace that we may daily enjoy meditation upon it ourselves.

Lord, teach us by your patient and Holy Spirit, to watch your hand, admire your wisdom, and in reference to every good thing given to us, or done by us, may we with meek humility say, "This also comes forth from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

30 Firmly United to Christ

Firmly United to Christ A young man was awakened to a knowledge of his lost state as a sinner, he sought a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, he obtained peace through the blood of his cross. Filled with peace and joy, he consecrated himself and all he had unto the Lord. He began to prepare for public service in the Lord's cause, and prosecuted his studies with great success. His purpose was accepted — but his services on earth were not required. He walked with God on earth, and a message came, calling upon him to rest with God in Heaven. His friends thought the dispensation mysterious — but he acquiesced fully in the decision of his God. He sickened, and testified of Jesus to all who visited his sick chamber. Death was at hand, and now came his dying testimony. He was calm, peaceful, and filled with holy joy. A friend was leaving him, and he felt that he should see that friend no more. The moment was come to witness for his Savior in death, as he had done in life, and he said, "I know that I am dying — but, remember, I am firmly united to Christ." O what a blessed state to be in! How sweet the confidence experienced, the joy expressed!

United to Christ! What a privilege! One with Jesus, who is one with God. One with Christ, in whom all fullness dwells. Once without Christ. Once a stranger to Christ. But now united to Christ. As the graft grows into the tree, receives its sap and nourishment from the tree, and becomes one with the tree, a part of the tree; so we, engrafted into Christ by faith, do receive the Spirit from Christ, so that we become one with Christ, and bear foliage and fruit like Christ.

United to Christ, we constantly receive from Christ, are supported and preserved by Christ, and are looked upon and treated by God as part of Christ. Thus,

the blood of Christ avails for our pardon,

his righteousness for our justification,

his grace for our sanctification,

his power for our preservation, and

his pleading for our perfect salvation.

If we can say, "I am united to Christ," we can have no ground for fear, no cause for complaining, no reason to be dissatisfied with our lot, for if we are one with Christ, our fortune is made, our salvation is certain, our Heaven is secure!

"Remember, I am firmly united to Christ." Happy Christian! Yes, the bond that unites us to Christ is firm. It will never break. Once in Christ, we are in Christ forever.

If we are united to Christ in health — we shall be in sickness;

if we are one with Christ in life — we shall be in death;

if we are one with Christ in time — we shall be to all eternity. The grace that made us one with Christ — will keep us one with Christ.

"Firmly united to Christ."

Corruptions have been powerful,

temptations have been strong,

fears have been many,

doubts have been painful —

but notwithstanding all,

"I am firmly united to Christ!"

Satan has done his worst.

The world has tried its utmost.

My weakness has been great.

My sins have been many.

My pains have been distressing.

But, "I am firmly united to Christ!" With the blessed apostle, such a soul may ask, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And with holy confidence may say, "I am persuaded that not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, height or depth, or any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

Reader, are you united to Christ? If so, it is by faith in Jesus, and love to Jesus. Baptism does not unite us to Christ — but it should be a profession that we are already in union with Christ, and wish the fact to be known. No ordinance can unite us to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the grand agent;

faith and love are the bonds of union;

and peace, joy, confidence, and a holy life, are the effects and proofs that we are one with Christ. For the branch that is engrafted into the tree, and has become one with the tree — brings forth fruit in virtue of its being supplied with sap; so those who are united to Christ bring forth fruit in Christ, by virtue of the Spirit received from Christ. If there is no faith, there is no spiritual life; and if there is no spiritual life, there is no union with Christ. Lord Jesus, grant that I may realize my union with you, and daily receive supplies of grace from you. And may it be my privilege when I come to die, to enjoy this union, and to be able to say to dear friends and relatives, "I know that I am dying — but, remember, I am firmly united to Christ!"

31 A Universal Prayer

A Universal Prayer

We have heard of a universal prayer. But if a prayer is to be universal, it must be expressed in the most simple language, that all may understand; and it must be for some blessing, that all really need. There are such prayers in the Bible — but they are brief; indeed all inspired prayers are. I am thinking of one, which if all men knew their real state, had a revelation of God in Christ, or were taught by the Holy Spirit, would bid fair to be universal. I have often presented it, and shall no doubt, if I live, often present it again. It is this, "Save me for your mercies' sake!" Psalms 31:16. The Blessing Sought, is a blessing that is universally needed. All are lost as sinners, and all must perish — except they are saved by grace.

We must be saved from our sins — and this requires an atonement. Nor will an atonement alone do; it must be applied; and we must experience the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The power of God, as well as the grace of God, is necessary to our salvation.

We deserve punishment, endless punishment; for what cannot be inflicted in degree, must be inflicted in duration: nor will punishment change the nature, or fit us to be what God requires, and the necessity of the case demands. Our deserts must be endured by another, and the guilt, dominion, power, and love of sin — be destroyed by a divine agency.

We must be saved from our foes — internal and external, human and infernal.

We must be saved from our fears, our follies, and our corrupt wills. We need a salvation, which will expiate guilt, renovate the nature, subdue every foe, overcome every internal and external obstacle; deliver us from evil, and put us into the possession of every good. Such a salvation, God alone can produce, consequently we need a divine Savior, and may therefore well cry out to Omnipotence, "Save me for your mercies sake!" The Plea, is one that may be universally employed. We do not pray to be saved, on account of anything within us, or anything done by us, or any desert on our parts. Not because we feel, or promise to do anything — but for your mercies' sake.

Save me, and so exalt your mercy, above all your perfections.

Save me, and so get glory to your mercy, both in Heaven and earth, in time and eternity.

Save me through your mercy . . .

which is strong enough, being linked with Omnipotence;

which is free, and requires no recommendation of the creature;

which is varied, and therefore suits every case;

which is constant, and cannot be diverted from its object;

which is tender, and can sympathize with the most desperate case; and which is at liberty to exert all its power, and display all its glory, in saving the vilest of the vile, since Jesus died.

Blessed be God, every obstacle and impediment is now removed out of the way! Therefore, God is just — while he shows mercy to the greatest criminals! God is holy — while he saves the foulest transgressors. Mercy harmonizes with truth, and justice unites with peace, in our salvation. O glorious work of Jesus, through which a foundation is laid for the hope of any poor sinner, who cries from the depths of his soul, "Save me for your mercies' sake!" The Source Applied To, is one that is open to all. It is not to any creature who is changeable, and may be unfeeling, or lofty, or revengeful, or distant, or disdainful. Not to a proud priest, nor even to a holy virgin. It is to Jehovah, the first letter of whose name is gracious, and the second is merciful. It is to the Lord, who is rich in mercy, plenteous in mercy, and abundant in goodness, and in truth. Nor only so — but he delights in mercy. Delights to exert it, and show it, and glorify it, in the poor, miserable, and wretched sons of men. His throne is a mercy-seat,

his heart is mercy's home, and

his promise is mercy's pledge.

He has shown mercy to thousands — to millions!

He has shown mercy to multitudes who never thought of it, or desired it, or sought it — but he never denied mercy to one who applied for it in the name of Jesus.

He saves, and saves as an act of mercy. He saves the greatest sinners, and saves them in the exercise of sovereign mercy. Let us, then, in all times of danger, in all seasons of trouble, when guilt burdens the conscience, or darkness broods over the mind — let us cry aloud to him, "Save us for your mercies' sake!"

Reader, do you ever pray thus? Have you ever cried from the depths of a burdened heart, for salvation? Have you ever appealed to the mercy that is in God, to save you from the sin and misery that is in yourself? If so, you often cry out, you frequently pray, "Save me for your mercies' sake!" Are you saved now? All who applied to Jesus in the days of his flesh, continued their application, until they obtained the blessing — not one was sent empty away.

If the blind came for sight — they went away seeing.

If the sick came for healing — they went away healthy.

If the guilty came for pardon — they went away justified.

Just so, all who are taught by the Spirit of God, cry for mercy — until they obtain it; and seek salvation — until they enjoy it. Therefore we ask you, Are you saved now? Can you rest without salvation? What, enjoy life — while you know that you are in the gall of bitterness? What, be merry, be cheerful, be comfortable — when life is so uncertain, and there is but a step between you and Hell? Can you rest without salvation? Rest not! Rest not another day, another hour, another moment — but cry, cry to God; and be this the burden of your cry, "O save me for your mercies' sake!" With melting heart and weeping eyes,

My guilty soul for mercy cries;

What shall I do, or where flee,
To escape that vengeance due to me?
Until now, I saw no danger nigh;
I lived at ease, nor feared to die;
Enrapt up in self-deceit and pride,
I shall have peace at last, I cried. But when, great God! your light divine
Had shone on this dark soul of mine,
Then I beheld with trembling awe,
The terrors of your holy law!
How dreadful now my guilt appears,
In childhood, youth, and growing years!
Before your pure discerning eye,
Lord! what a filthy wretch am I! Should vengeance still my soul pursue,
Death and destruction are my due;
Yet mercy can my guilt forgive,
And bid a dying sinner live. Does not your sacred Word proclaim
Salvation free in Jesus' name?
To him I look and humbly cry
O save a wretch condemned to die!

by John Fawcett

32 Fear and Folly!

Fear and Folly!

"And Adam said: I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself!" Genesis 3:10

Sin is the source of both fear and folly. Sin produces guilt, guilt fills with fear, and fear betrays into folly. Every sinner therefore is called a fool in God's Word. All this we see in our first father, Adam. He had loved God as his father, conversed familiarly with him as his friend, and found his presence to be exquisitely delightful. He had no idea of being alarmed at the presence of God, or of being terrified by hearing his voice. He had rather listened to it with the deepest interest, had felt profound reverence, had glowed with holy love, and had been wrought up into a divine rapture while his Maker condescended to hold converse with him. Every thought of God had been pleasant, every view of his Creator had been delightful. But now, he had new conceptions of God, and new and painful feelings sprang up towards him. He thought of his God as a Judge — a Judge who would pronounce sentence upon him, and deliver him over to the tormentors. Oh, fearful change! Oh, bitter fruit of sin!

He felt guilty, he had violated his Creator's law. He had merited his just wrath. He could only expect the fulfillment of the sentence, "You shall surely die!"

What was meant by death? He knew not. He had never seen death. He could not guess what was intended by it exactly. No doubt it was something terrible — very terrible.

He felt embarrassed. He knew not what to do, or which way to take. His minutes were hours. His life became irksome. Heavy sighs escaped him. Deep groans were heard in his soul.

He was alarmed. What was about to happen? What would be his doom? He felt that he was exposed to all that was contained in the divine threatening. But what was that?

He felt also that he was inexcusable. He had no cloak for his sin. He was blame-worthy. He deserved to suffer, and he saw no way of escape. This is just how every sinner will feel, sooner or later:

guilty,

embarrassed,

alarmed,

exposed to the wrath of God,

without excuse!

All this springing from his own fault — his own sin!

He was AFRAID. What made him so?

He was naked. Not merely his body — but his soul was naked. His righteousness was gone. That righteousness had been to him as a robe, and as a diadem. It made him bold, fearless, confident. It was, like suitable clothing — his defense, his comfort, and his ornament. But it was gone! He had willfully cast it away — and he was naked. He felt defenseless, miserable, and degraded. In this state, with such feelings — he must meet, face, and account for his conduct to his Maker. Oh, sorry plight to be in! Well may he feel afraid. But so will every lost sinner. It is a fearful thing to appear naked before God. A naked soul, meeting the piercing glance of God's eye, which is as a flame of fire — must be most terrible! To feel exposed to the eye of God, ashamed to be seen — how painful!

Reader, you may have to appear naked before God! What if you should? If you die in your sins — you must!

Think of standing naked before the Heavenly multitudes!

Think of standing naked before an assembled world! This is bad enough. But to stand naked before God's eye — what, oh, what will that be!

He heard his Maker in the garden, he dreaded his presence; and, therefore, instead of going forth to meet him and converse with him as before — he was filled with fear, and hid himself among the trees of the garden!

What FOLLY, to think of hiding himself from the omniscient eye of God, behind the foliage of the shrubs, or the trunk of a tree.

"I hid myself." What pride! What an endeavor to seem to be what he was not. He did not meditate a defense — but, like a guilty coward, he fled! He did not sue for, or expect a pardon—for he had never heard of mercy, sweet mercy! He did not think of employing a plea — what could he plead? He felt . . .

that his sin was great;

that his state was dangerous;

that his prospects were gloomy;

and that his destiny was a secret.

What would become of him? His was the sin of a world. It was . . .

the turning of a world against God,

the alienating a world from God,

The exposing a world to the wrath of God!

O Adam, what, what have you done?

Well, well might he be afraid! The crown of glory had fallen from his head;

the robe of beauty was torn from his body;

confidence and courage had fled from his heart; and
guilt and fear had taken possession of his breast.

What a fearful change!

What a terrible wreck! And this is the state, the condition of every unconverted man!

He is naked before God!

Naked by his own fault!

Naked to his eternal shame! But is there no hope? Blessed be God — there is! Is there no possibility of being hidden from the eye of justice, and of being once more clothed before God? Yes, yes, there is! "Behold, I bring you good news, glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." There is no ground for despondency, nor cause to fear; no occasion to try to hide yourself, either behind trees, or under rocks and mountains.

God will hide those who do not attempt to hide from him. He has provided a hiding-place for sinners, and that hiding-place is his own beloved Son. All other hiding-places shall be destroyed, as it is written, "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding-place!" Isaiah 28:17

Only one shelter remains, "A man shall be a hiding-place!" (Isaiah 32:2.) That man is Jesus — the spotless Lamb of God. This is the Stronghold — to which the prisoners of hope are directed. This is the Strong Tower — into which we may run and be safe. In Jesus there is no condemnation. In Jesus the sinner finds all that he needs! His filthy nature will be cleansed, in purifying blood. His naked soul will be clothed with righteousness divine. A title to eternal life will be given him. A fitness for life will be wrought in him.

All guilt will be removed from the conscience.

All slavish fear will be chased from the heart.

He will neither be afraid nor ashamed to appear before God.

Paradise was lost by sin; but Heaven is gained, by faith in Jesus. O blessed, thrice blessed hiding-place for a sinner! Are you, reader, in this hiding-place? In Christ — every blessing is yours.

Out of Christ — the wrath of God abides on you.

Many, it is to be feared, will yet be as foolish as Adam was. They will try to hide themselves from God, or at least to cover and conceal their nakedness by some fig-leaves of their own. But "There is no darkness, no deep darkness, where evildoers can hide themselves!" Job 34:22.

It will be all in vain to cry "to the mountains and the rocks — Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Revelation 6:16.

If you are not hiding yourself in Christ, God puts to you this solemn question, "Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord." Jeremiah 23:24. And all who attempt to hide from God, instead of taking refuge in the hiding-place provided by God, are thus solemnly threatened, "Even if they dig down into Hell — I will reach

down and pull them up. Even if they climb up into the heavens — I will bring them down. Even if they hide at the very top of Mount Carmel — I will search them out and capture them. Even if they hide at the bottom of the ocean, I will send the sea serpent after them to bite them!" Amos 9:2-3

It will indeed be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Before his face, so solemn is his glory, that Heaven and earth will be ready to flee away. And then his coming will be so dreadful — not like when he came to Adam — in the cool of the day, calm, pitiful, and full of love. No! "The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power!"

Lost sinner! The storm is gathering, the distant thunder is rolling, the lightnings begin to flash! To the refuge — to the refuge — to the hiding-place without delay! Soon Almighty God will rain down snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. Soon you will see the great white throne fixed, and will be summoned to appear before it, for the day of vengeance is in his heart! Think, O think of one passage, which will soon be a fearful reality to you, "The great day of His wrath has come! And who is able to stand?"

33 Saving Souls

Saving Souls

It is the bounden duty of every believer to seek to save souls from eternal death. For this we should live. At this we should habitually aim. Our hearts should be set upon it, and all our talents should be employed with a view to it. But, alas! we are cold and careless — selfish and indifferent — and sinners all around us perish without any regarding it. It is not enough that we subscribe to Societies, that we help to support ministers; we should labor ourselves. We pay to support the fire brigade in the town — but whenever there is a fire, we run to render all the assistance we can personally. It is not enough that the engine, the fire-hose, and the fire-men are present; we help, and in every way endeavor to save property and life. Just so, though we have our Societies, our ministers, and other agencies, as sinners are perishing all around us, every Christian should lend his help. May the Lord help me to pen a few lines on this subject, which may stir some up to engage in this important work. Consider then,

1. **WHAT** sinners are. They are immortal beings, and must live forever. They are capable of enjoying the highest happiness — or of suffering the deepest misery. They are unfit for Heaven, and are traveling in the road to Hell. If saved at all, they must be saved now. It will soon be too late. They must glorify God's mercy in the highest Heavens — or endure his wrath in the lowest Hell.
2. **WHO** sinners are. They are our kindred, our family. Every sinner around me is my brother or sister, for we are all one man's sons. God made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth. If, therefore, I am accessory to the ruin of a soul, I am accessory to the ruin of the soul of a brother or a sister; and if I can do this, where is my humanity, let alone my Christianity?
3. The **DANGER** sinners are in. And this danger cannot be exaggerated — it is so dreadful, so fearful, so imminent. They are in danger of falling into Hell, into that lake of fire, that place of wrath — where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched. They are in danger of this every moment of their lives, and may plunge into it suddenly, without any notice. Yes, the lost sinner you have just spoken to, may be in Hell in two minutes — and if he should, and you never warned him of his danger, never tried to lead him to Jesus, how will you feel?
4. The **MEANS** by which sinners are saved. God works by means, and most generally by the living voice. Souls are saved by a word spoken in love; it may be a warning word, or a word of invitation, or a word about Jesus, or about Heaven, or about Hell.

Souls are saved by prayer. O how many have been led to seek salvation through hearing others pray for them!

Souls are saved by a simple address, delivered in dependence on the Lord, with a view to do them good.

Souls are saved by reading tracts, good books, or God's Word, presented to them. Let us therefore speak to sinners, to every sinner we can. Let us pray and pray much for sinners. Let us give tracts and good books to sinners, and urge them to read God's Word.

5. The HONOR of saving sinners. To save a fellow-creature from the flames of a burning house, or to rescue a fellow-creature from drowning — is considered an honor, and it is an honor. But to save a soul from Hell — what an honor is this. Jesus considers it his highest honor to save souls, and what then should we consider it? To save souls on earth, with whom we shall dwell eternally in Heaven, and who will forever look upon us, and feel towards us, as the instruments of their salvation — what can compare with this? Even to be in Heaven, and not see one, and never to meet with one, that we have been the means of bringing there — would seem to leave a blank in a loving heart. But to be in Heaven, and to be constantly seeing souls there whom we have been the means of saving, O what thrilling pleasure, what ecstatic joy it must impart! Besides which, it is testified in God's Word, that such shall be distinguished, and "shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

6. The WAY to save sinners. Not by suffering for them, as Jesus did; nor by working in them, as the Holy Spirit does; they save meritoriously and efficiently, we only instrumentally. If we would save souls, we must set the heart upon it, and keep the heart set upon it. We must plead with God for it, that he would give us wisdom to win them, power that will impress them, and love that will conquer them. We must beseech him to put this honor upon us, and teach us to glorify him by doing it. We must look out for opportunities, and embrace them whenever they offer. We must speak to all we can about their souls, about Jesus, about sin, about salvation, about Heaven, and about Hell. And we must speak to them with a view to impress them, and if possible, to save them. We must expect results, as the gardener when he sows his seed expects it will spring up, and looks forward to a harvest; just so should we expect that under God's blessing, glorious results will follow.

7. OBJECTIONS will be raised to your saving souls. Your carnal heart will object. Even some believers may discourage you. Satan will endeavor to his utmost to divert your attention from the work. Some of the doctrines of the gospel may be perverted, or some passages of scripture may be misapplied to dishearten you. For a time you may meet with no success to stimulate you. But it is for you to persevere, looking to the Lord for strength, and wisdom, and courage. Say not, "I am not the person" — you are. Say not, "I have not the power" — God can give it you. Say not, "I cannot succeed, for I am not qualified" — you can succeed, and God can give you all the needful qualifications. There is no lion in the way, unless you place one there. There is no reason why you may not save some; yes, save many, if your heart is right with God, and your eye single to his glory. Excuses you may make, and plenty of them — but scriptural reasons to exempt you from this work, or to justify you in the neglect of it, you can find none.

How shall it be then? Will you make it the grand business of your life to save souls from death? Will you with Paul, become all things to all men, if by any means you may save some? Will you adapt yourself to persons and circumstances, that you may save the more? Nothing is of so much importance, after your own salvation, as seeking to save others. Nothing is so noble, so honorable, so Christ-like — as saving souls!

O that we had always and everywhere kept this in view! But we have not: let us repent and be sorry for this our sin, and now let us remember:

that we are surrounded with perishing sinners,

that those sinners are our brothers and sisters,

that they are in danger of Hell-fire,

that the means by which they may be saved are in our hands,

that to save souls is to win the highest honors, and

that we shall save souls . . .

if our hearts are set upon it,

if we plead with God for it,

if we speak with all we can with a view to it,

and if in faith we expect results.

O Lord, fill us with the Spirit of love, power, and sympathy for souls, and let us live, labor, plead, and pray to save souls from death!

34 Limiting God

Limiting God

Right views of God's nature and character are of the utmost importance; for if we have not correct views, we shall not have correct feelings; and if our views and feelings are wrong — so will our conduct be. Let us therefore frequently compare our views with his Word, that we may correct what is wrong, and confirm what is right. Israel often mistook God's character, and therefore sinned grievously against him. These sins are brought forward against them, and charged upon them; and psalms, containing those charges, were prepared and set to music, to be employed in their religious services, that so their sin may be ever before them. Among the charges brought against them is one that may with as much truth be brought against us, "They limited the Holy One of Israel." Psalms 78:41.

Now there are no limits to the power of God — for he is omnipotent;
nor are there any limits to the grace of God — for he is infinitely gracious;
nor are there any limits to the wisdom of God — for he is all-wise;
nor are there any limits to his goodness — for he is good to all, and his mercy is over all his works.
Neither is there any limit to the Savior's mercy, or merit, or love:
his mercy reaches unto the Heavens,
his merit is infinite as his Divine nature, and
his love makes him willing to save all who are willing to be saved by him.

Yet we find lost sinners will limit the mercy of Jesus — and doubt if it will reach to them; and they will doubt his merit — and question if it is sufficient for them; and they limit his love — and fear whether he is willing to save them.

Believers also will sometimes limit the Lord, especially when providence . . .

crosses their wills,
frustrates their plans,
and blights their hopes.

Then they give way to unbelief, indulge distressing fears, and are frequently filled with gloom. So also sometimes in grace they limit the Lord, and then their faith is feeble, they are often discouraged, and consequently they do little for God, and get but little from God.

We are all very apt to limit God in reference to his own special work in the church, and in the world.

Sometimes we limit him as to time — and if he does not work just when we wish — we conclude that he will not work at all.

Sometimes as to means — and if he does not work by the means we employ, we set it down that he will not work at all.

Sometimes as to numbers — and if great numbers not are wrought upon, we doubt whether it is God's work or not.

Sometimes as to places — and rashly conclude that God will not work in such or such places.

Now all this is utterly wrong! It is no less than presumption. God will work . . .

in his own time,

by the means he selects,

to the extent he chooses,

and just where he pleases.

It is not for us to attempt to set a limit to the Lord; and if we do, he will resent it, for he is a jealous God. He is free to work . . .

as he will,

when he will,

where he will, and

how he will.

"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him! The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths! All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, and He does as He pleases with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can hold back His hand or say to Him: What have You done?" But God will be true to his Word, and will do as he has said. He will be faithful to his people, and will honor those who honor him. He will never do less than he warrants us to expect — but he will often exceed our hopes, and do far more and abundantly above all that we ask or think. He is able to subdue all things unto himself, and therefore more than once he proposes the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

Brethren, let us beware how we limit the Lord; he can do all things; he will do all that is necessary for his own glory, or our good. Let us therefore,

exercise faith in his Word,

rely on his power,

trust in his grace, and

rejoice in his goodness.

Lost sinner, beware how you limit the Lord, as if your sins were too great to be pardoned, or your case too bad for the Lord to take up. He loves to take up desperate cases, and wondrously displays the freeness and power of his grace. The merit of Jesus is infinitely above the demerit of your sin. The ocean is not so full of water, nor the sun so full of light — as the blood of Christ is full of merit; so that if there is water enough in the ocean to wash your person, or light enough in the sun to enlighten your little room—then there is merit enough in the blood of Jesus to save your soul. And as, after near six thousand years, the ocean is still full of water, and the sun is still full of light — so there is still a fullness of merit in the sacrifice of Jesus. Do not limit his ability, or his love. No soul was ever more welcome to him than you are; and as sure as he ever saved any soul, so sure will he save you, if you apply to him, and trust in him.

35 The Bitter Cup

The Bitter Cup

Yesterday I received from my kind neighbor, a circular, which read as follows: "The bitter cup and goblet — a Tonic of great efficacy," etc. My neighbor perhaps did not know that I already had a "bitter cup" in my house, and had had one for years. But it is nevertheless true. Indeed I do not know a Christian who has not this Tonic. It is not always on the table, nor always in the hand — but it is somewhere in the house, or the family. It may be in the old-fashioned corner cupboard, or in the new-fashioned cheffoniere — but it is easily found, for it is often in use.

There is my friend, Sarah Toms, she has a "butter cup" — for her husband has a harsh, irritable, and uneven temper, and does not seem to realize that it is his duty to curb it, control it, and bring it into subjection. He is often angry — when he ought to be pleased; and sullen — when he ought to be sociable. He is a sore trial to his wife, who wishes to live in peace, walk with God, and grow in grace. But, Sarah often finds it to be a Tonic, and it sharpens her appetite for the bread of life, and renders the throne of grace very precious. It is a great question if Sarah's spiritual health would be nearly so good — if it was not for this "bitter cup;" or if she would, prize and enjoy the ordinances of God's house as she does, if all was pleasant at home.

Then there is Alfred Haines, he has a "bitter cup" — for his wife does not understand him, and therefore often taunts, threatens, and torments him. Often when Alfred has his whole heart set upon pleasing God, and is trying in every way he can to help forward God's cause, and make all about him happy — his wife mistakes him, charges him with neglecting her, and with being cruel to her. Often does she annoy, irritate, and hinder him — until he is bewildered and confused. He is sure that she takes the place of the judge on the bench, when she ought to take the place of the criminal at the bar. Poor Alfred has a "bitter cup," but no doubt it is of use to him, for it often drives him to the Lord, and makes him long for home. It is a Tonic, and strengthens his digestive organs, and enables him to feed on doctrines as well as promises, on meat as well as milk.

I sometimes visit a dear family, where both husband and wife are believers, and appear to be very well matched. Their house is their own, and their business is good. When you enter, all is neat, clean, and orderly, and you feel as if you could enjoy yourself there. You look around you and think there can be little to cause grief here. But my friends have a "bitter cup," for they have a son that causes them shame and grief. How they trained him in infancy, I know not — but he is unmanageable now. His mother cannot influence him, nor can his father control him. Sometimes he comes home intoxicated, and sometimes is out the whole night. Many a sleepless hour has that father spent, full of anxious thoughts about that prodigal son; and many an hour has that mother wept and prayed that her Absalom may be brought to God. But painful as it is, even that "bitter cup" may be the means of spiritual health, and prevent the soul from sinking into ease and worldliness. My friends, the Smiths, appeared to have their lot cast in a pleasant place, and to possess a goodly heritage. Happy in each other, happy in the church — but happier still in God, all seemed to go well with them. I could see no "bitter cup" in their dwelling. But they had a lovely,

intelligent child, of which perhaps they thought too much, and perhaps loved too ardently. They watched over it with the greatest care, and sought by all means to train it up for God and glory. It was a sunbeam in the house, a sunbeam in the eye, and a sunbeam in the heart. But it took a slight cold, it gradually grew thin and pale, it became weak and feeble. Fear was excited, every means was tried to restore health — but it drooped and died! This was a "bitter cup." What tears were shed. What prayers were offered. What distress was felt. But all was in vain. The darling's doom was sealed — an early grave received the body. Yet this proved a blessing too, for Jesus occupied the dear one's place, and became the object of their undivided affections.

Joseph Andrews is a holy man, and one who wishes to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. He has a godly wife, and a comfortable home. He stands well in the church, and enjoys the means of grace. He has good health, and earns good wages. His motto is, "If it is possible as much as lies in you — live peaceably with all men." But he is one of a number of men employed in the same business, and some of his fellow-workmen are infidels, some profane swearers, some mockers and persecutors of the godly, so that, like Lot, his righteous soul is daily vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. This is his "bitter cup." If you saw him at home, you would say, "What a happy man he must be!" If you saw him only in the house of prayer, you would say "Who can have greater cause to be grateful?" And this he feels. But his Sunday is often disturbed with thoughts of the coming week, and his devotions are spoiled by what he has heard at shop, harassing him in the sanctuary. But home is endeared, and the sweet peace of the Sanctuary is rendered doubly precious by what he suffers when at his employment; and so his "bitter cup" proves a Tonic for his soul.

Mary Arthur is a good spiritually-minded Christian. The Bible is her daily delight, and the company of the saints is greatly prized by her. Her hope of Heaven is firm and steady, and her fellowship with Christ is sweet and pleasant. Her heart is set upon honoring Jesus, and serving her generation by the will of God. Her daily wish and prayer is, that she may be made useful to souls, and take some with her to her Father's house. But she is an invalid, confined to the house, and very often to her room. Her sufferings are great, and her bodily pains severe. She is the Lord's prisoner — this is her "bitter cup." Like a caged bird, she seems to have wings — but cannot use them. Others are strong — but she is weak. Others have health — she is always sick. Others enjoy ease — she has almost constant pain. Poor Mary, the bitter in your cup is very pungent — but if your body suffers, your soul enjoys ease; and if you cannot do the will of God, you are suffering it. If you had not the "bitter cup" in this form, you would have it in some other, and no doubt but this is the best form in which you could have it, or your Heavenly Father, who loves you so well, would not have appointed it!

George Grimes has good health, a good business, a comfortable home, and fills an honorable place in the church. His gifts are considerable, his usefulness is great, and he is generally respected. Some are inclined to envy him, and there is a spice of jealousy in some minds respecting him. No one can see that he has a "bitter cup." But he is fearfully harassed with temptations, tormented with doubts and fears, and the lusts and corruptions of his nature work so horribly, that he is at times almost beside himself! No one knows what he suffers, nor can he open his mind to any. In prayer especially, he is often assailed with the most dreadful suggestions; and when hearing God's Word, he seems to himself as if he was set as a mark for Satan's arrows. Oh, the fiery darts which are cast into his soul! Oh, the horrid corruptions that work in, and seem to roll

over his spirit! Oh, the vile thoughts that agitate his breast! His is a "bitter cup" indeed, and so much the more bitter — because only known to God and himself. Friend George, it is a mercy for you that you have a sympathetic high priest — one who was tempted in all points like as you are. As he suffered, being tempted, he is able also to support those who are tempted. But I must stop my pen, for "bitter cups" are very common things, and fresh cases keep rising up before my mind.

One man's "bitter cup" is the alienation of friends;

another's "bitter cup" is failure in business;

another's "bitter cup" is heavy losses;

another's "bitter cup" is church troubles;

another's "bitter cup" is unkindness of professors;

another's "bitter cup" is the lack of success in the Lord's work. Where should I end? The trees, from the wood of which these bitter cups are made — grow very fast and very plentifully. There are forests of them, against which the woodman's axe has never come yet. The root of these trees is sin, and the roots of sin spread over the entire surface of the world. The bitter is exceedingly bitter — for it reaches unto the soul. The bitter cups are said to retain their bitterness for years, and some of the cups I have mentioned retain their bitterness all through life, and would, if a man was to live to the age of Methusaleh! It is necessary to some, to take the bitters from these cups twice a day — but some of us take our bitters a dozen times a day. Indeed the taste is seldom out of the mouth, or the heart.

Kind neighbor, I shall not want one of your "bitter cups." I need not spend two shillings to procure one — for I have one already, yes, more than one, and have had for years. I thank you for your circular — but just now I shall not be a customer. But there is a bitterer cup than any I have alluded to, and that is the cup of wrath. Jesus drank it up for us, and, oh, the agony and bloody sweat, the pain and fear, the torture and distress, it produced! Blessed be God, that cup will never be put into a believer's hand. But the lost sinner — the unbeliever — he must drink of that cup, and drink of it forever! He must drain it to the very dregs, and therefore it will be kept to his lips eternally. Satan trembles at the very thought of it, and prayed to the Son of God, "I beseech you not to torment me!" O lost sinner, what, what will you do? If you perish under the sound of the gospel — your cup will be the most bitter of all. For it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Nineveh and Babylon, for Sodom and Gomorrah — than for you. Yours will be the Hell of Hells! Yours will be the epitome of torment and agony!

O how bitter the cup, which has been put to the lips of some awakened souls, to drive them from sin, self, and the world, to seek salvation in Jesus! O how bitter the cup that has been tasted by some infidels on a dying bed, when they have seen Hell opening before them, and the door of mercy forever closed upon them! O how bitter the cup that has been drank by some lost ones, before the lamp of life went out! How they have writhed, and groaned, and sweat, and screamed! But the worst, the worst, the worst is to come!

Reader, are you a Christian? Are you sure of it? If not, I beseech you to fly to Jesus at once, immediately fly to Jesus, before the "bitter cup" of eternal wrath is put into your hand!

36 The Three States

The Three States

There are three states through which we must pass, if we ever are to answer the highest end of our existence:

in the first we find ourselves as men,

into the second we must pass to be Christians, and

on the third we must enter to be perfectly happy.

I have been in the first,

I am now in the second, and

I live in hope of soon being in the third. In the first, I was miserable enough;

in the second my experience varies;

in the third I shall have all my heart can wish.

I trace up my first state to sin,

the second to sovereign mercy, and

the third to free, and distinguishing grace.

These states are called . . .

nature,

grace, and

glory.

1. In nature, we are without Christ. We have no correct knowledge of his person, no faith in his Word, nor any interest in his glorious work. We are afar from him, strangers to him, and have no desire to possess him. Oh, it is a miserable state to be without Christ! In Christ, all the fullness of the godhead dwells. In Christ, all the riches of grace are stored. In Christ, all the promises of mercy are found. In Christ, all the springs of true happiness are opened.

Out of Christ — all is darkness, doubt, condemnation, death and damnation! To be without Christ, is to be under guilt — and bound to answer for every sin we have committed in thought, word, or deed. To be without Christ, is to be . . .

an enemy to God,

a stranger to hope, and

a criminal waiting for execution.

Without Christ, is to be in a worse condition than the antediluvians were without the ark. To be without Christ, is to be in a worse condition than the Israelites who perished in the wilderness. In a word, to be without Christ, is to be in the most fearful state imaginable! And yet, every unconverted sinner is without Christ.

I myself was without Christ once. Reader, how is it with you? Are you without Christ now? you were once. If you have never been convinced of your danger; if you have never fled for safety to the cross; if you have never received Christ as God's unspeakable gift — then you are without Christ now! You are in a state of nature, and know nothing of the second state, which is a state of grace.

2. In a state of grace, we are, in Christ. That is, united to his person, savingly interested in all he has done, and entitled to all he has promised. We were chosen in Christ, by the Father in eternity; and were blessed with all spiritual blessings in him. Oh, what a favor, God gave us grace in Christ, before he laid the foundations of the earth! We were convinced of our need of Christ by the Spirit, and were led to seek a saving interest in him, and union to him. We came to him . . .

for pardon — and obtained it;

for peace — and enjoyed it;

for righteousness — and received it;

for grace — and he conferred it. And being struck with his beauty, and affected with his generosity — our hearts went forth in fervent love to him; and then we could be satisfied with nothing less than union to him. He received us graciously, and pledged himself to be ours — and we pledged ourselves to be his. We became one. The uniting bond was the Holy Spirit; and while the Holy Spirit lives, and dwells in us — Christ and our souls will be one.

One with Christ! How glorious! In Christ! How safe — how secure — how well provided for — how happy we are!

United to Christ — we are one with his people!

United to Christ — we are one with the eternal Father!

United to Christ — Heaven is our home! Being in Christ, let us . . .

receive all we need from Christ,

walk as Christ walked,

work as Christ worked,

and live as Christ lived. To be in Christ, is to be in a state of grace; but there is a third state, even a state of glory. In a state of glory, we shall be, with Christ. With Christ — in the same place. With Christ — in the same state. With Christ — in the same society.

"Father," said Jesus, "I will, that those also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me." O how blessed to be with Christ! To have

Christ with us here, is unspeakably sweet — but what! O what will it be, to be with Christ, to see him as he is, and to enjoy his presence, his glory, and his love forever! Yet, this honor is awarded to all the saints. This happiness is sure to all who are in Christ!

Nothing can break the bond that unites us to him; nothing will ever be able to separate us from him. In union with his person,

savingly interested in his love,

entitled to all his promises, and

daily receiving out of his fullness,

nothing shall ever sever us from him!

No, we shall be with him — with him in his Father's house — and be with him forever! Nor will it be merely being with Christ, for we shall be like him, and shall share . . .

in all his joys,

in all his honors, and

in his perfect happiness to all eternity! In nature — O how wretched and miserable was our state! In grace — O how favored, how privileged we are! In glory — O how happy, now honored, how triumphant shall we be!

Reader, you were in nature — but are you in grace?

You were without Christ — but are you now in Christ?

Grace leads directly to glory.

Union to Christ, ensures our being with Christ. Make sure then of a saving interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy you — but a solid, scriptural, unquestionable proof, of union to Christ. You must know that you are without Christ — before you will seek a saving interest in Christ. You must seek an interest in Christ — before you can be united to Christ. And you must be united to Christ on earth — or you will never be with Christ in Heaven, to behold and share in his glory!

37 A Cause of Danger

A Cause of Danger

I have been reading the fifty-second psalm, Psalms 52:1-9, and have been struck with the representation of a character presented in the seventh verse, "The man who would not make God his refuge." I have looked around me to see if I could recollect any such, and, alas! there are many. Yes, I have known many, and some who professed religion, who did not make God their refuge, and the consequences have been sad. Before I notice them, I cannot but pause to admire God's goodness to me, that while I have seen so many fall — I have been kept. I must ascribe it all to free grace, for if left to myself, I would have trusted my own strength, or rather weakness, and before this have perished through temptation, or in affliction.

Benjamin Jenkins was a man who did not make God his refuge. He professed religion. He had a sound creed, he prayed in public and in his family, and for a time all went on well. But the hour of temptation came, he yielded, he fell. He got into worldly society. He neglected the means of grace. He slighted the warnings given him. He was obliged to be excluded from the church. He is now in the world. His character is a wreck, his profession given up, and he answers the description given by Jude, "Twice dead, plucked up by the roots." Alas! poor Benjamin, I cannot but grieve over you, and fear that your end will be according to your course, for after years of backsliding, there appears no hope of your restoration. I fear that you are "the man who would not make God his refuge."

William Johns, too, was a very zealous professor — but restless, energetic, and impulsive. He taught in the Sabbath School, and then he must preach in the villages. He might have been seen with a train of young people after him, whose conversion he professed to be seeking. And some professed to be converted by his efforts. But he was proud. He had an overweening opinion of himself. He would not be under control. He believed, or professed to believe, that he was called of God to play with the fire of temptation. He would not listen to advice. His course was always more or less eccentric. He fell into gross sin, and instead of humbling himself for it — he avoided the saints, neglected ordinances, and there he lays, a wreck. He not only ruined himself — but another, and pierced more than one or two through with many sorrows. Providence seems to point to him, and say, "the man who would not make God his refuge."

Evan Thomas was thought to be a good man, and for a time ran well. He excited hope in the saints by his mild spirit, amiable manners, and love to the house of God. We thought he had the root of the matter in him. But when he was tried — he fell. In the day of trouble he prevaricated, pilfered, and practiced deception. He revealed a lack of principle. He dreaded poverty more than sin. He forfeited his character. He gave up religion. He mixed with the crowd. He was generally despised. Alas! he too proved to be one "who would not make God his refuge."

Simon Rogers was a total abstainer, a rigid moralist, an active agent of the Temperance Society, and a useful member of the church. No one suspected him. But how many fall away either in

adversity or prosperity. He was tried. The trial placed him in the balance, and he was found lacking. He broke his pledge. He left the society. He fled to the bottle. He was expelled the church. He took to the ale-house. He ruined his family. He brought a reproach on religion. He hardened sinners in their sin. He opened the mouths of infidels. He turned out to be another of the men who "would not make God his refuge."

Patrick Parsons was a very hopeful character. His convictions of sin were deep. His reformation appeared thorough. He received the Word with joy. He was most industrious in distributing tracts, in visiting the sick, and in looking up children for the Sunday School. He bid fair to be a most useful Christian. But he prospered in business, enlarged his premises, became more expensive in his mode of living, indulged his appetite, and speculated largely. By degrees he neglected ordinances, then family prayer, and at length there was little difference between him and the world. Providence frowned on him, one loss followed another, utter ruin in a temporal point of view appeared just before him. He fainted in the day of adversity. His pride could not bear the degradation. He died a suicide — by his own hands. To him also the finger of God seemed to point, saying, "the man who would not make God his refuge."

Samuel Stowe differed from all the former, for he never gave up religion, he never took to drinking, nor did he ever lose his character among his fellow-men. But he was always murmuring and complaining. He seemed to envy everyone that rose higher than himself, and thought himself hardly dealt with. No one ever heard him say, "I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies." Or ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" Times were always bad with him, for pride ruled his heart. No one ever treated him as they should; for he was never stripped of self. If he was an illustration of religion, no one would wish to be religious. Groaning and grumbling, complaining and finding fault, were the articles in which he mainly dealt, and every keen observer who had a spiritual eye could see as plainly as if it was painted on his sign-board — that he was a "man who would not make God his refuge." But I need not enumerate more instances of such folly, or bring forward other illustrations of the text, for the reader no doubt could call to mind many which he has known. Such there always have been, such there are, and such I suppose there will be. It is for us to be wise enough to learn a useful lesson from them.

Real religion consists principally in receiving from God what he has promised to bestow; and in using for God, what we receive from his hands. We are not saved by our own efforts — but by his grace. We do not stand, or walk, or work, in our own strength — but in his. If we trust in ourselves, either in whole or in part, we shall be sure to fall. Our trust must be in the Lord who made Heaven and earth. God must be our refuge and strength in every time of trouble. Unless the Lord Jesus is our strength — then temptation will be too strong for us, and our crafty foes will be sure to overcome us. O how many have fallen into error, into sin, into apostasy — because "they would not make God his refuge." But no simple-minded believer, who, conscious of his own weakness, foolishness, and proneness to go astray, trusted in God, cried to God, and sought strength from God — was ever overcome. Our weakness is our strength,

our ignorance is our wisdom,

our fear is our preservative;

for feeling our weakness — we are obliged to look to God for strength;

realizing our ignorance — we of necessity cry to God for wisdom;

and fearing lest we should fall — our daily, hourly prayer is, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto your statutes continually." Our weakness, appeals to his strength,

our ignorance, appeals to his wisdom; and

our fear, appeals to his preserving grace. The appeal is heard, is felt, is acknowledged — and as the result, he puts his fear into our hearts, that we should not depart from him — and we are kept by his power, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Lord, have you made me know your ways?

Conduct me in your fear,

And grant me such supplies of grace,

That I may persevere!

Let but your own Almighty arm

Sustain a feeble worm,

I shall escape secure from harm

Amid the dreadful storm.

O be my all-sufficient friend

Until all my toils shall cease;

Guard me through life, and let my end

Be everlasting peace!

38 The Right Use of the Law

The Right Use of the Law Our principal subject is the gospel of the grace of God. Not that the gospel was ever intended to set aside, or make void the law; for while the law prepares us for the reception of the gospel — the gospel always leads us to observe and keep the law. But the law was intended to instruct the innocent, and to condemn the transgressor; whereas the gospel is intended to bring pardon to the guilty, and comfort to the distressed. Disputes about the law are often unprofitable and vain — but "we know that the law is good — IF a man uses it lawfully." 1 Timothy 1:8 To use the law lawfully, is to set forth its spirituality, and show that it not only regards the outward conduct — but extends to the thoughts, purposes, and motives of the heart. This will cut off all dependence on the law — and drive the sinner to seek salvation by free grace. To use the law lawfully, is to show its goodness — as coming from a good God, requiring a good state of heart, and demanding that everyone do good to his neighbor. To use the law lawfully, is to point out its holiness — it being a faint reflection of the divine nature, and therefore holy in its nature and requirements. To use the law lawfully, is to exhibit its justice — showing that it requires nothing more than what God created us capable of producing with perfect ease, and was just in requiring at our hands. And therefore as our conduct cannot affect God's rights, he is perfectly justified in requiring us to be, and to do, all that the law requires. To use the law lawfully, is to testify to its immutability and eternity, for as what God required in his law was right, and right under all circumstances; it must remain eternally and immutably the same. Nor can God justify — but in accordance with it; therefore sinful man can never be saved by it. This renders a substitute necessary, makes way for the work of Jesus, and so brings in the everlasting gospel. The law must be obeyed, and all its requirements met on behalf of all who are saved; for as the law is holy, just, and good — it cannot be set aside in favor of transgressors. The law rightly used, brings man in guilty, condemns him, and cuts him off from all hope of salvation by any of his own doings and sufferings; and shuts him up to salvation by grace, through the substitution of the Son of God. He must be saved by grace — or perish.

It is also right to use the law — to show the believer what God requires him to be, and do, as the moral governor; and that everything short of, or contrary to, the requirements of the law, is sin. So that the law is still . . .

a rule of moral conduct,

a standard of right and wrong,

a balance by which actions are weighed. The law is good — for it always calls for what every true believer admires, loves, and delights in — as Paul said, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." The Christian knows that he is delivered from its curse, and freed from its condemnation, Jesus having borne them for him; and therefore as possessing eternal life, he desires to obey the law, out of love to God, and for his honor. The law is good — for it shows me my deficiencies, and the imperfections of all that I do, so that I dare not boast, nor withdraw my reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ for a single moment. It will not allow me to rest in my works, or

depend on them in the least — for it shows me that there is sin in them all. The law therefore drives me from all my duties, and from myself in every sense, to build on Christ alone, and expect to be saved exclusively by him. The law keeps me daily sensible of my need of pardon, because I daily sin. The law makes me admire and prize free grace, which has honored it, and saves in strict accordance with all its claims. The law shows me that I must have a better righteousness than my own, or I am undone forever; and that I must be made holy — or be eternally wretched. The law drives me to Christ as my refuge and strength, and preserves alive in my soul a deep sense of my need of him to hide me, support me, and save me; so that I must daily live on Christ, walk in Christ, and make use of Christ — or come under condemnation. As it is the means of producing such effects, and of keeping me awake, lest I should indulge the flesh, tamper with temptation, or live in sin — the law must be useful. Rightly used, such benefits result from it, and therefore, let men say as they will, we with the Apostle say, "The law is good — IF a man uses it lawfully." But it is a fearful thing to be found under the law, for all who are under the law are under the curse! We must therefore be delivered from the law by faith in, and union to Christ; and then sin will not have dominion over us, as we are not under the law — but under grace.

If we are under the law, we seek salvation by it, and with this view we try to keep it; but if we are not under the law we expect to be saved by Christ, and so place our entire dependence on him, and his finished work. As saved by Christ, we love holiness, and as the law is the rule of holiness — we love it, and walk by it! But while we do so, we place no dependence on it, or on anything we do in accordance with it — but on Christ, and Christ alone.

Reader, beware of resting in the law, or depending in the least on anything you can do or suffer; but renounce all and trust in Christ alone. But as trusting in Christ — beware of thinking lightly of the law, or speaking disrespectfully of it, or neglecting to observe any of its requirements in your daily life — seeing the law is holy, just, and good, and reflects the moral excellencies of the glorious law-giver.

39 Rest and Give Thanks

Rest and Give Thanks This motto was inscribed on a fountain, intended for the accommodation of travelers. Weary, the traveler needs rest. Thirsty, he needs drink. Both are provided and presented to him freely, he may well therefore be directed to give thanks. The fact is, we are not half thankful enough. Perhaps if we were kept in more need — we would be more grateful for what we have. But the Lord daily loads us with his benefits. Most of us have cause to say, "My cup runs over!" The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, yes, we have a goodly heritage. What spot is so favored as Old England! What people are so indulged as we are! But I fear we are very ungrateful, and are apt to dwell more on a few trials — than on a thousand mercies. May the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, open a fountain of gratitude in all our hearts. But the motto of the fountain, is very much like the gospel. That calls us to REST: To rest from labor and useless toil. To rest from cares and fears. To rest from doubts and misgivings. To rest in the midst of a restless world. To rest at the feet of Jesus. To rest on the Word of Jesus. To rest on the finished work of Jesus. To rest and be safe. To rest and be happy.

Faith, is resting on Jesus — staying ourselves on his Word, on his perfect work. Trusting him to save us. Confiding in him to answer for our sins, provides for us a title to Heaven, and prepares us for going there.

Jesus gives . . .

rest to the troubled conscience,

rest to the weary heart,

rest to the anxious spirit,

the moment we believe on him.

Lost sinner, here is rest for you. Carry your burden no further. Labor for life no longer. You are heavy laden, "Rest and Give Thanks!" But here is a FOUNTAIN too. A flowing fountain. A fountain that will . . .

cleanse you from all sin,

cure you of all diseases, and

prepare you to prosecute your journey with pleasure.

It is the heart's blood of Jesus.

It was shed for you.

It is preserved for you.

It is free for you.

Wash and be clean.

Wash and be healthy.

Wash and be invigorated. Not only so, it is a drinking fountain too.

It will quench your thirst of sin.

It will satisfy the craving desires of your soul.

It will revive your drooping spirits.

It will be in you a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. This is spoken of the Spirit, which Spirit Jesus gives. It flows freely from him. Yes, both blood and water flowed from the opened heart of Jesus. The one expiates your sin, the other cleanses your soul. Drink then and give thanks. The water of the fountain will not cleanse the traveler — unless it is applied. Neither will the blood of Jesus benefit you — unless it be applied to you. The water of the fountain will not satisfy the thirst of the traveler — unless he drinks of it; nor will the Spirit satisfy or sanctify our souls — unless we receive it. Drink and give thanks!

Reader, cast your soul on Jesus, and enjoy rest. Receive the Spirit from Jesus, and enjoy satisfaction. Make use of Christ, as the traveler of the fountain, and give thanks. Thank God for such a precious Savior. Thank God for such a seasonable rest. Thank God for a fountain of living water. Thank God for a free salvation — a full salvation; so that it is represented by an ever full, an ever flowing fountain. Thank God that you live in such a day — in such a place. Rest and enjoy yourself, and then praise God. Drink and satisfy your soul, and for such a favor give God thanks. May I, as I pass along the journey of life, and amidst all its weariness, keep my eye on Jesus, and "rest and give thanks."

40 Onward to the Rescue

Onward to the Rescue A house in the neighborhood was on fire, and the alarm soon spread. Life was in danger, and all felt concerned. Young and old, rich and poor, male and female, ran off in the direction of the burning house. Everyone was ready to lend a hand. All were alive, awake, and on the alert. The firemen were in their place, the engines were soon in full play, the inhabitants were all rescued, and some of the property was saved. Human nature had a fine opportunity of manifesting its sympathy, and display its benevolence. Everyone was talking of the fire, of the amount of property destroyed, of the danger in which the inhabitants were placed, and all seemed to rejoice in their safety. All this was as it should be. A few spent their time in speculating upon how the fire began, instead of helping to put it out; and some thought more of what might have been the consequences if there were no engines, or if there had not been plenty of water, or if the firemen had not been on the spot, or if the neighbors had not been willing to help; neither of these parties were of much use. But in general the motto was, "Onward to the rescue!"

There was a cry heard, "A boat is upset, and a number of people are in the river!" Everyone that heard felt, and everyone that felt ran towards the river. Some labored at the boats to get them into the water, others manned them, and struck off toward that part of the river where the poor creatures were struggling for their lives. Some who could swim plunged into the water, and at the risk of their own lives, were determined to try and save others. All was excitement, until it was announced that all were saved.

Soon it was discovered that one was missing; again all were on the alert, some dived to the bottom of the river, others got out the drags, others made all necessary preparations to restore suspended animation, if the poor creature should be found in time. Hour after hour the river was dragged to find the corpse of the missing one; and though twelve were saved and only one lost — the loss of that one cast a gloom over all. No one thought of reward, or loss of time, or injury to clothes — but all worked freely and as for life.

True, there were some here who would talk of those who upset the boat, their folly and blame, etc, instead of trying to rescue them; and some would speculate upon the consequences if it had happened in the night, or when the tide was in, or if the wind had been rough; but these speculators did no good, gained no credit, nor did they stand high among their philanthropic fellow-men. Generally the idea felt was, "onward to the rescue!" In a back street of the town, a multitude of immortal souls were perishing in their sins, perishing for lack of knowledge. An eternal Hell was before them — but they had no thought of it. A way of escape was near them — but they did not seem to be aware of it. They lived, they died, and no one seemed to regard them. Yet there was a Christian Church in that town, and they met for worship not far from this very street. They were entrusted with the means of salvation for these very people. They were commanded by Christ to go out among them, and compel them to come in to the Gospel feast. They were told of the duty that devolved upon them, and of the honor of saving souls from death. Yet week after week, month after month passed away — but no stir was made, no means were used; there was

no excitement, no effort, no move — though souls were sinking into the flames, and perishing in the pit of Hell. Some spoke of the degraded state of the street, some tried to trace out the origin of its degradation, some thought it a nuisance to the town — but no one went to the rescue! Was this Christianity? Was this humanity? Will not those who ran to rescue their fellow-creatures from the fire, rise up in judgment, and condemn such professors as these? Ought not their motto to have been, "onward to the rescue!" In a certain village lived a number of poor creatures steeped in ignorance, and very wicked. They knew not their real state in the sight of God, or the danger to which they were exposed as breakers of his law. They sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. To them no messenger of mercy carried the glad tidings of salvation. To them no one told the tale of redeeming love. They were . . .

born in sin,

lived in ignorance,

and died without hope!

Yet within a few miles Christians lived and worshiped, and those Christians were commanded by their Lord and Savior to go and teach all the nations, and they did subscribe to send the Gospel to the heathen afar off — and yet allowed these souls to perish at their very doors. They were commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature — but, as if these were not fellow-creatures, they never carried the Gospel to them, nor sought to win them for Christ.

Surely those who ran, toiled, and risked their lives, to rescue the poor creatures in the river from a watery grave, will rise up in the judgment and condemn these; for they all ventured to save their fellows from a temporal death, whereas these made no effort to save their neighbors from eternal death. Their motto was not, "onward to the rescue!" A young man regularly attended the preaching of God's Word, and was often impressed by it, and was brought under concern of mind. Often did he wish that someone in the congregation would speak to him about his soul; yet no one ever did. He often sat side by side with a professed Christian; but no loving word was ever spoken to him, no kind encouragement was ever given him. The Church professed to seek the salvation of sinners, and to feel a special interest in the young; but where was the proof of it? The minister preached and prayed as if he really desired to save all present, and exhorted his people to co-operate with him in saving souls from death; but in vain he exhorted them. They were cold and formal, indifferent and unconcerned. The young man was stumbled, discouraged, and disheartened, and at length gave up attending there altogether. Can we wonder at it? Yet such people are cautioned to beware, lest they hinder the Gospel of Christ, and are exhorted to become all things to all men, that they may by any means save some. Surely their motto was not, "onward to the rescue!" An old man lived many years in one house at the corner of a street — and he lived without hope, and without God in the world. In that street there lived those who professed to be the disciples of the Son of God, and by that old man's door, many professors regularly passed to the house of prayer. Yet at no time did anyone ever take the old man by the hand, saying, "Come with us, and we will do you good." Never did anyone pay that old man a special visit to talk with him about his soul and the Savior. Never was he directly spoken to as if he had any interest in the Gospel, or as if the Lord Jesus had at any time, by any of his people, sent a message to him. He therefore looked upon religion as a mere form, and thought it was all very well for religious people — but he need not concern himself about it. Poor old sinner! his hair grew grey, his forehead

became wrinkled, and his heart became as hard as a millstone, and his case seems to have become hopeless.

Now someone is to blame here. Who is it? Did no one's conscience ever speak when passing that old man's door? Did the Spirit never whisper, "Go tell that old man of Jesus?" If he had fallen down in a fit — many would have run to his help; or if he had been attacked by a bull — many would have run to his rescue. But he may live in sin, die in sin, and be damned for his sin, and no one trouble about it. O that every Christian's motto was, "Onward to the rescue!"

Brethren, such cases are fearfully common, and are deeply to be deplored. We are acting wrongly, or no street in the town would be left unvisited by the children of God — no village in the country would be without a Sunday-school, the preaching of the pure Gospel, and a regular course of visitation — no person would be allowed to attend our sanctuaries twice or thrice, without being spoken to, and encouraged to flee from the wrath to come; nor would anyone live within the reach of a believer, without being warned of his danger, invited to hear the Gospel, and directed to the Lamb of God for life and peace.

We are truly guilty concerning our brethren; there is utterly a fault among us, and the sooner it is mended, the better. We are not half awake to our duties, our responsibilities, and our dangers! We are not like the woman of Samaria, or Philip of Bethsaida, or Saul of Tarsus, or our great model — the Lord Jesus! O for grace from God to see our fault, to deplore our folly, to seek pardon for our sin, and to determine that in future we will speak to all we can of Jesus, do all we can for Jesus, and make it the grand end of life to save souls from eternal death. Sinners are perishing! Let our motto be, "Onward to the rescue!" Souls are dying in sin! Let us "Onward to the rescue!" And let us cry in the ears of the Lord's people all around us, as we point them to immortal beings perishing in their sins, "Onward to the rescue! Onward to the rescue!"

41 Hiding with God

Hiding with God

What a mercy it is to have a God to go to in trouble! A God whom we know, in whom we can confide, and to whom we can appeal with success. A God who loves us, and rejoices to do us good. We need him . . .

in sorrow — to comfort us;

in trouble — to sustain us; and

in danger — to defend or hide us.

David found him to be his "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" and therefore in danger he cried out, "Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies, I flee unto you to hide me!" Or as the margin reads, "I flee to hide me with you." Psalms 113:9. Where should a child flee — but to its father;

where should a wife flee — but to her husband,

and where should a Christian flee but to his God! The Lord hides his people at times,

in the secret of his tabernacle,

under the shadow of his wings,

and in the hollow of his hand.

Then, the enemy cannot find them, or cannot reach them, or cannot injure them. He hides us from . . .

the rage of man,

the sword of divine justice,

and the designs of Satan.

He hides us in every evil day, until the calamity be overpast. "I flee unto you to hide me." My hope is in you. My trust is in you. My safety is in you. Yes, it is not what we are, or where we are, that makes us safe; it is the Lord's hiding us. Let us not therefore fear, whatever convulsions may take place, whatever troubles may arise, or whatever changes we may experience: for the Lord is the same — he is at hand, and can and will deliver us!

"I flee to hide me with you." You have invited me to come. You have promised me safety. You have befriended me before. I shall not only be safe with you — but I shall feel at home, I shall be happy, as well as safe. As the wearied dove fled to the window of the ark — so will I flee to you. As the manslayer fled to the city of refuge — so will I flee to you. I will look to you, and to you alone for

support and support. I will expect from you, and from you alone, consolation and supplies. With you, my faith will be strong! With you, my heart will enjoy rest! With you, I shall fear no evil!

Yes, I will flee to hide me with you, for you are plenteous in mercy, and you are the orphan's God. You have been the dwelling-place of your people, in all generations; be my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; and in every time of danger, let me hear you calling me, to come and hide myself with you. With you! O how blessed! With you! What more can I long for!

Reader, do you know the Lord? Have you ever fled to him for refuge? Have you found him to be a present help in trouble? If not, "Acquaint now yourself with him, and be at peace." Look at him — as he is revealed in Jesus. Go to him — as dwelling in Jesus. Plead with him the name of Jesus. Seek from him, whatever you need for the sake of Jesus. Ask him, in you, and by you — to glorify Jesus.

Believer, be much with God. Realize his presence everywhere. Walk with him day by day. Trust him with all your concerns. Act always as under his eye. Ever live, as if the great end of your life was his glory. Hide with God, from . . .

the fascinations of the world,

the designs of Satan,

and the dread of death.

Hide with God daily, hourly — and let him alone be your fear, and let him alone be your dread. Make it your one business to please him, and in pleasing him, never trouble about who takes offence, for he will make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath, he will restrain. Hidden with God, you will be safe in life, and happy in death! Hidden with God, when Christ who is your life shall appear — you also will appear with him in glory!

42 Jesus Not Known

Jesus Not Known The believer's mind should be constantly directed to Jesus, and the more he is taken up with Christ, the better. He is the same to his people now that he is in glory, as he was when upon earth; as he proved himself to be the same after his resurrection — as he was before his death. What a deep interest he took in his disciples, and in all their concerns; such an interest as they never thought of, or expected. When they were fishing — he stood on the shore watching; and when discouraged because they had toiled all night and taken nothing — he directed them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they should find fish. But they never thought of their Master being there, and as it was early, and perhaps it was hazy, "The disciples did not know that it was Jesus." John 21:4. This Is a Common Fault. We do not expect Jesus to take that interest in our common, every day affairs — which he does.

We are brought into some deep trial and are sorely afflicted; we look at the trial, at the instruments employed in it, and talk about it as a worldling would — but we do not realize that it is Jesus. And yet every trial is sent by him, and he accompanies every trial, that we may make use of him in it, or seek its sanctification from him. A precious promise is applied, it comes home just at the nick of time when it is most needed. We feel its power, taste its sweetness, and enjoy its supporting influence — and yet we do not know that it is Jesus. But it was him, who by his Spirit sent that sweet word to cheer and strengthen you.

We meet with some bitter disappointment, occasioned perhaps by the fickleness or forgetfulness of a friend. We are filled with grief. We are dejected and cast down. We do not see that it is Jesus, who is weaning us from earthly friendships and creature props, that we may rest on him alone. Providence interposes for us, deliverance is wrought, or supplies are sent; they come unexpectedly, or from a quarter we never anticipated. We take them, enjoy them, feel thankful for them, and talk of the mercy — but we do not perceive that it is Jesus! But it is, for he works by his providence for us, as well as by his Spirit in us.

Some idol is taken away, or some gourd is smitten, we are grieved to lose our idol, and have pity for the gourd; but do we recognize the hand and the presence of Jesus! He is speaking, and saying, "From all your idols, I will cleanse you." He is working, to bring you to trust in him, and in him alone.

We are in some trouble, a sweet peace flows into the soul, and a holy calm reigns in the breast; we are delighted with the sweet sensations, and rejoice in the pleasant emotions — but do we know that it is Jesus? Are we aware that he gives the grace and imparts tranquility — or do we try to trace it to some other source? Strength is secretly imparted, so that we overcome our difficulties, prosecute our journey, and with patience carry our cross; we are almost surprised at ourselves, and wonder how it is. Ah, we need not wonder, for if we were at all quick-sighted, we would see that it is Jesus.

Beloved, in every trouble and in every deliverance, in every sorrow and in every comfort, in every trial and in every conquest — we should realize that it is Jesus. Jesus working for us, and Jesus working in us, to will and to do of his own good pleasure. It is a sad mistake, when we see creatures only — but not Christ; instruments — but not the great agent. The Cause of this Mistake is, that we forget, or lose sight of the following facts. That Jesus rules all events. Nothing can take place without him. He appoints or permits all that come to pass, and he superintends all, to secure our good and his glory. He is ever present with us. Always and everywhere, Jesus is with us — he never leaves our side, or withdraws his eye from us. He is always working for us. Whether we perceive it or not, whether we believe it or not, Jesus is always acting for his people, and for every one of them; the poorest, the feeblest, the most despised.

He is constantly watching over us. And watching over us to do us good. He observes every foe. He sees every purpose we form, every plan we draw, and every effort we make. His word to Israel is made good to us, "I will rejoice over them to do them good, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul."

He is daily fulfilling his word. Providence performs the promise. Providence fulfils the prediction. Providence proves Jesus faithful.

He is trying our confidence and love. He often says, "Can you trust me?" "Do you love me?" And he is more jealous of our confidence and love, than of all besides.

Now if we realized . . .

that Jesus rules all events;

that he is ever present with us;

that he is always working for us;

that he is constantly watching over us;

that he is intent upon doing us good;

that he is daily fulfilling his word;

and is trying our confidence and love — instead of reflecting upon creatures, or being crushed by circumstances — we should know that it was Jesus. But we do not, therefore let us notice, The Painful Consequences. We unjustly complain and complain — when in reality, we have nothing to complain of. A complaining Christian ought to be a wonder in God's universe.

We needlessly doubt and fear. We can never be justified in doing so, and if we knew and felt that it was Jesus who was dealing with us — we would not.

We often inordinately grieve. We should grieve for nothing but sin, and after none but the Savior; but losing sight of him, we often grieve over the smallest trifles, and make ourselves unhappy, when we ought to rejoice.

We do not relish our mercies as we should. If we received them as from the hands of Jesus, as procured for us by the sufferings and death of Jesus, as proofs of the love and favor of Jesus — they would have a peculiar flavor then.

We do not look to him through our trials. Yet every trial is but a thin veil behind which he stands, through which he speaks, and on account of which he expects to hear from us.

We do not expect his blessing upon our troubles, or that our troubles should be made blessings to us. We do not prize him as we ought, nor give him the thanks that he deserves.

Oh, if we knew that it was Jesus who afflicted, comforted, sent us mercies, or withheld supplies:

we would cease to complain;

we would no more give way to doubts and fears;

we would not inordinately grieve over our losses;

we would enjoy our mercies with a peculiar relish;

we would . . .

look to him through every trial,

expect his blessing on every trouble,

and praise him night and day.

Beloved, Jesus is the gardener — who with knife in hand walks among his plants, and prunes them that they may bring forth more fruit.

Jesus is our friend — who meets us in the path of duty, in the rough road of tribulation, in the way to the kingdom — that he may correct, reprove, bless, and do us good.

Jesus is our Comforter — who comforts us in our tribulations — but who will only comfort when he can secure our welfare, and his own glory by doing so.

Jesus is our Provider — whose Word is pledged to supply us, and who rejoices in an opportunity to send us a blessing.

Jesus is more — he is our Husband, who claims our heart; and claiming, will have it. If it is withheld from him, he will correct us for it, and visit us with stroke upon stroke, until we return to him.

Jesus is our all, and is more than all to us. We should therefore always have him in our thoughts, and before our eyes; and when any blessing comes, we should be ready to say, "Jesus sent it!" Or if any trouble comes, we should be ready to say, "Jesus has sent it!" Then our comforts would be sweetened and sanctified; and then our troubles would be real and lasting blessings.

Holy Spirit, glorifier of Jesus, never, never allow us to be so blind as not to know Jesus. Never allow us to be so absorbed with the things of time, or so taken up with ourselves — as not to recognize the presence of Jesus. But let us . . .

see him in every event,

hear his voice in every dispensation, and

aim to glorify him in all that happens to us!

O for grace to be wholly, and always, taken up with Christ!

43 Salutory Thoughts

Salutory Thoughts

I am a sinner, a sinner against a holy God — a sinner, who cannot offer the least excuse for my sins. A sinner condemned by a righteous judge, in accordance with a law, which is holy, just, and good. I am a sinner, and I deserve to suffer — to suffer the full penalty due to my sins; though that penalty, is being punished with the devil and his demons forever. I am doomed to suffer, that is to say, the law has passed sentence upon me, and there is no hope for me — but in the clemency of my justly-offended sovereign.

I need not suffer, nor need any sinner, to whom the gospel of Christ comes; for the gospel offers a free pardon to the guilty, and a full salvation to the lost. Therefore, I will not suffer — for there is a Savior, a Savior for me, a Savior who is able, willing, and waiting to save me. I will go to him. I will go to him at once. I will go to him just as I am. I will go to him to be saved by him. I will go and cast myself at his feet, throw myself on his mercy. I will plead with him, telling him I am lost, that I have no hope but in his mercy, nor expectation but from his grace. I will plead my need of his help, the invitation he has sent me, and the promise he has made, that he will cast out none that come to him. I will not be put off — but, lying at his feet, I will look up, cry earnestly, and wait until he shall say unto me, "Go in peace." Salvation is all important to me, and as I may be saved, I will be saved; and as I may know myself saved, I will not rest until I hear him sweetly whisper to my soul, "I am your salvation."

I am a believer, a believer in Jesus; I have renounced my own righteousness, and now place my whole dependence on Jesus, and his finished work. I look at nothing within me, at nothing done by me — but to Jesus, and Jesus alone, to be saved by his obedience, blood-shedding, and intercession.

I am a believer, and as such, my sins are pardoned — all my sins, and they are pardoned forever. The whole debt is cancelled. The full receipt is given. I am guiltless before God, for my transgressions are forgiven, my sins are covered; and God will not impute iniquity unto me. My person is justified, for I am invested with the obedience of Jesus, I am clothed in his righteousness. As my substitute,

all that he did — he did for me;

all that he suffered — he suffered for me;

all that he procured — he procured for me. As therefore he procured a perfect acquittal from all charges, and provided an everlasting righteousness — my person is completely justified. My services are purchased. Jesus has a right to me — to all I have, and to all I can do. I am not my own, but his. My talents, my time, my life — are not my own, but his.

Dearly he bought me,

honorably he paid for me, and

therefore justly he may claim me. My faults are aggravated. If I sin now, I do not merely sin against law — but against grace. I sin not against my Creator merely — but against my Redeemer! Every fault is committed in the light, and is aggravated by the infinite love of my compassionate Savior. My love for him should burn. Yes, if Jesus has so loved me, I ought to love him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. My love to others, should be hatred — in comparison with my love to him. What wondrous love he has displayed to me — and what hearty, earnest, burning love I should manifest to him. My zeal for him should glow. His zeal for my salvation consumed him — and my zeal for him, for his cause and for his glory, should be a glowing zeal. A zeal that will consume selfishness, and prepare me to do, or suffer anything for his honor. My property should be consecrated. Yes, all should be considered as the Lord's, be used as the Lord's, and be employed for his glory and praise. As I am not my own, so nothing that I have is my own; both my person and property belong to Jesus, and should be devoted to him. My influence should be exerted. Exerted for Christ, and for the good of his beloved ones. For them, I should speak and write; for them, I should act and suffer; to them, I should give of my substance. His hungry ones — I should feed;

his sick ones — I should visit;

his illiterate ones — I should teach;

and his despised ones — I should honor. My pity should be shown. Pity for those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death. For them, who have not his law, to convince them; nor his gospel, to convert them. Pity for them who wander on in darkness, and need someone to guide them. Pity that will warn the sinner, invite the wanderer, exhort the careless, entreat the indifferent, and beseech those who are at enmity with God, to be reconciled unto him.

Reader, you are a sinner — do you know it? Do you feel it? Do you deplore it? You deserve to suffer, for you are a criminal — you are doomed to suffer, by the law — you need not suffer, for there is a Savior. If you have not, let me beseech you to go to him — to plead with him — to cast yourself on his mercy — nor leave off crying to him, until assured, that you are saved by him.

Then, as a believer, you will enjoy the pardon of all your sins — the full justification of your person — and will perceive that by his infinite grace:

your services are purchased;

your faults are aggravated;

your love is required to burn;

your zeal should glow with fervent heat;

your property should be consecrated to your Lord's service;

your influence should be exerted for your Lord's honor;

and your pity should be shown to your fellow-sinners in every direction. As a sinner, your state is sad;

as a believer, your state is glorious. As a sinner, your danger is imminent;

as a believer, your safety is perfect. As a sinner, you can look forward to shame, pain, and everlasting contempt; but as a believer, you may anticipate glory, happiness, and eternal honor. As a sinner, you must look upon God as your foe;

but as a believer, you may look upon him as your Father. As a sinner, you may look upon God as your judge;

but as a believer, you may rejoice in him as your Savior.

There is but one step between all the terrible consequences of being a sinner, and all the glorious results of being a believer — and that is, stepping into Christ, the ark, the refuge, the hiding-place, set before you in the gospel.

There is but one exercise of the mind, one act of the heart, between condemnation, and all its dreadful consequences, and justification and all its eternal benefits — and that is believing, or faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Believe, O believe in Jesus, only believe, and you pass . . .

from death — unto life;

from condemnation — to justification;

yes, from Hell — to Heaven!

44 Righteous and Safe

Righteous and Safe "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalms 37:39

"There is none righteous, no not one." That is, none are righteous naturally, or while under the law, and according to the law. The law requires us to be righteous — but it cannot make us so. Nor while there is the least defect in us, or the least fault chargeable upon us; can it pronounce us so. The gospel provides a righteousness for us, and presents a righteousness to us, and the moment we accept it, it pronounces us justified from all things. Our righteousness, as believers — is the perfect work of Christ as our Substitute; including all that he did, and all that he suffered; which being wrought for us, is imputed to us, and we are justified thereby. So that while no man is righteous by nature — many become so by grace; while no man is justified by the law — many are pronounced just by the gospel. The righteous are said to need salvation. But a man legally righteous cannot need salvation, for he has done all the law required, and is in no danger. He has . . .

no debt which needs paying;

no disease which needs healing;

no sentence against him which needs reversing. But those who are evangelically righteous, do need salvation . . .

from sin within them,

from Satan without them, and

from dangers around them. And the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. He who wrought their righteousness . . .

changes their natures,

carries on his work, and

will perfect it in the day of Christ. Their salvation being of the Lord, it is certain, for he is in one mind, and always completes what he commences.

He saves them by himself.

He saves them for himself.

He saves them in himself. The righteous may be in trouble. Not only may be — but shall be. The furnace is not more necessary for the ore, to purify it — than troubles are to the Christian, to exercise his graces, prove his principles, and form his character. "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows!" John 16:33. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Psalms 34:19

Yes, we must have our times of trouble — and we sink very deep sometimes. Our burdens at times appear to be too much for our strength. The road is so difficult — that we think we shall never reach the goal. Trouble follows trouble, as wave follows wave on the troubled seas; and as when the sea is troubled to its depths, its waters cast up mire and dirt, so it is with us. O the evil thoughts, the base suspicions, the vile feelings — we are sometimes the subjects of, in the time of trouble. God alone knows what we feel, what we suspect, and what we fear. "I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me!" Psalms 69:2. Ours are not imaginary troubles — but real ones, deep ones, and often long continued ones. But the Lord is our strength in time of trouble. This we have proved, and this we shall prove unto the end. If the Lord had not been on our side — we would have been overcome. If the Lord had not been our strength — we would have fainted in the day of adversity. We are poor creatures to bear trouble, and if left to bear it alone, we would murmur, repine, rebel, and sink under the load. But the Lord being our strength — we submit, acquiesce, and persevere in the path.

Though the Lord is our strength, yet . . .

the weight of trouble will be felt;

our own weakness will be painfully experienced; and

strong cryings and earnest prayers must ascend to the throne.

Saved by the Lord — we daily feel our need of the Lord.

Righteous before God — we daily require to be strengthened by God.

Blessed, forever blessed be the Lord, that though the transgressors shall be destroyed together, and the end of the wicked shall be cut off, the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, he is their strength in the time of trouble. My soul, are you one of God's righteous ones? Have you renounced forever all dependence on self, and your own righteousness; and have you cordially, and thankfully, embraced the righteousness presented to you in the everlasting gospel? Are you looking to the Lord to be your Savior, your daily Savior, your Savior for evermore? Do you realize your lack of divine strength to enable you to bear trouble, and are you expecting the Lord to be your strength in every time of trouble? Happy is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord. Such may appropriate to themselves with confidence, the precious promise, "Do not fear — for I am with you; do not be afraid — for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10 And looking forward to the darkest path, the roughest road, the sorest trials, or the most difficult duties — they may say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of your righteousness, even of yours alone."

45 A Neglected Command

A Neglected Command

"A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests: Come, the banquet is ready!" Luke 14:16-17 Our Lord, by this parable, compares the gospel to a great feast, to which the guests would not come; it became necessary therefore to invite others; and the Lord of the feast gave this command to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city — and bring in the poor, and the maimed, the halt, and the blind." Luke 14:21. Let us notice, The Provision Made. It is called a great feast, made toward the end of time, to meet all the wants and woes of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. A great feast. Jesus called it so — who well knew what greatness was; and we shall call it so — if we consider several things:

1. It was provided by the great GOD. By God who does everything like himself. Yet, he has never has done anything upon so grand a scale as this. Greatness is stamped upon the thought which conceived it, upon the end fixed by it, and upon all the features of the divine character displayed in it. The great, the mighty, the infinite God — made a great feast, to display . . .

the greatness of his grace,

the vastness of his resources,

and the infinite nature of his love.

2. It was purchased at a great PRICE.

It cost the Father the life of his only begotten Son.

It cost the Son . . .

deep humiliation,

years of suffering,

days of the most intense agony,

the most shameful painful death! No created intellect could sum up the cost of this great feast, provided for the vilest of mankind, and treated with contempt by many of them!

3. It contains great PLENTY and VARIETY. Here is enough, and to spare. The provision can never be exhausted. The whole world might feed, and there would be enough left for other worlds. And the variety is as great as the quantity. Here is what will . . .

suit every appetite,

meet every want, and

delight every one that partakes of it.

It is a great, a glorious feast!

4. It is intended for a great COMPANY. Millions upon millions shall come — and all may come. The invitation, which was at first particular, and addressed only to the Jews, is now made general, and addressed to all, Jew and Gentile alike. Those are as much invited who refuse, as those who come; and the invitation is as sincere in the one case as in the other.

5. It is a great feast in a NOBLE MANSION, or rather in the Sovereign's palace! And in this palace, a physician is provided to examine and heal every guest. A cleansing bath is prepared to wash away every stain, and make every guest perfectly clean. A change of clothing is ready, to clothe every one in a wedding garment. A group of servants is employed to wait upon, and minister to the comfort of every one who accepts the invitation.

Or, without a figure:

here is Jesus, who saves to the uttermost, the great physician of souls;

here is His precious blood, which cleanses from all sin;

here is His magnificent robe of righteousness, which justifies and clothes the sinner;

and here are the angels of God, to minister to the heirs of salvation.

How complete, how glorious the provision made!

All that can be needed,

all that can be desired,

all that can be enjoyed!

Bless the Lord, O my soul! Mark now, The Guests. Who are to be invited to partake of such privileges, to enjoy such blessings?

"Bring in the poor." The poor are generally the last cared for by man — but they are the first thought of by God. To the poor, the gospel was preached by Jesus, and the common people heard him gladly. God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and constituted them heirs of the kingdom. The poor who have nothing excellent in them, or valuable about them; but who are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked — are to be especially invited to the great feast of the great God.

"Bring in the maimed," the debilitated, the enfeebled, who having lost their limbs cannot labor to procure; and having lost them through sin, can lay no claim. Lost sinners are not invited to work — but to receive: not to labor — but to feast.

"Bring in the halt," the undecided, the wavering. Those who have no fixed principle, no settled habits, upon whom no one can count, of whom no one can make sure. Bring them in, though lame; carry them, if they cannot walk.

"Bring in the blind," those who are without knowledge or discernment. Ask them to come, commend to them the provisions, and lend them your hand. Lead them in, and assure them of a welcome.

Pick up the common beggars — the vile, the unworthy. None can be too bad. None can have sunk too low. Grace can make them what the founder of the feast wishes them to be. All are to be invited — but as if any are neglected, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind — are sure to be, therefore we are especially commanded to bring them in. Observe, The Command. "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town — and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind." This command is for all the servants, for though one is spoken to, that one being the steward of the household — all are intended. He was to GO; but he was to send the others too. One could not do the work — but many may.

Go out quickly. Lose no time. Don't stand thinking about it. Don't wait for a convenient season. Don't consult flesh and blood. Go, and go at once. The king's business requires haste. Go out quickly. Go from street to street, from lane to lane, from alley to alley.

"Bring in." Don't merely ask, or invite; but urge, entreat, beseech, argue, be importunate. Persevere until you attain their consent, compel them to come in. Take no denial. Accept of no excuse.

Bring them in. Bring them to the house. Bring them to the feast. Bring them to the throne. Make no exceptions — but as many as you find, all classes, all characters, all ages, of all countries, all colors, of all languages; as many as you find — invite to the marriage feast. Go, and go quickly. Go on purpose, and make it your one business to bring in guests.

Brethren, is the feast now ready? Is the great feast prepared? Is the house filled with guests? The feast is ready. The preparation is complete. The lamb has been slain. The blood has been shed. The atonement has been made. The perfect righteousness is finished. The table is furnished. God is ready to receive and pardon. Jesus is ready to receive and save. The Spirit is ready to sanctify and comfort. All is ready — but yet there is room! Has the command been obeyed? Have the Lord's people, his servants, been in the habit of going out, to bring sinners to the Savior? To invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind — to the gospel feast? Has no street in the town been missed? Has no lane in the locality been passed by? Has no person been omitted? Has there been a direct effort made by some of the Lord's people, to bring each soul to Christ?

There has not! The command has been overlooked! Places of worship have been erected. Ministers have been appointed. In many places all who venture to come to the church, have been welcomed. But the going after the lost sheep — the going out on purpose to bring in, has been omitted! Are we then guiltless, if they perish? If the feast is made for lost sinners, ought we not to inform them of it? If we were commanded to go out, and bring them in — ought we not to have done it? Have they been warned to flee from the coming wrath, and have been pressed to come to the Savior — that they might have life? Are we prepared to obey now?

Once they die, they are lost forever. If they were lost directly or indirectly by our fault — we cannot now remedy it. But the living, the living! There are thousands in the streets, and lanes of the city, to whom no Savior is presented, to whom no invitation is given, for whose salvation, no direct effort is made. Should it be so?

What, have we no pity for souls, immortal souls, immortal souls perishing for lack of knowledge! Have we no reverence for our Master's authority, or regard for our Master's commands? Has he not bidden US to go? Is he not even now saying, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind."

Brethren, sisters, shall we go? If we do not, what reason can we give — what excuse can we make? With the feast prepared, with the command in our hands — shall sinners perish with hunger? Shall they? Shall they?

You wretched, hungry, starving poor,

Behold a royal feast!

Where Mercy spreads her bounteous store,

For every humble guest.

See Jesus stands with open arms;

He calls, he bids you come:

Guilt holds you back, and fear alarms;

But see, there yet is room!

Room in the Savior's bleeding heart,

There love and pity meet;

Nor will he bid the soul depart

Who trembles at his feet!

46 The Mouth Opened

The Mouth Opened A Christian man who sometimes attended my ministry died the other day, and from the pen of his wife I have received his dying testimony. I love to collect the dying testimonies of godly men. When alive, he had been very reserved in reference to his own personal experience, but his life was a speaking life. So timid was he, that he never ventured to engage in prayer in public, nor even in his own family. This was his infirmity. But when the end came, his reserve left him. His confidence was strong. His testimony was decided. The day before he died, musing on God's Word, and thinking of Jesus, he broke out in the presence of his wife, and exclaimed, "Oh, if I could see him with these mortal eyes! If we could see him come now, to take us up to be with him forever." On the day of his death, he was much in prayer, and to a friend who called to see him, he said, "You don't know what I see and feel of the transcendent loveliness of my adorable Redeemer! Oh, to think of his stooping from his throne of glory, to save a sinner — An ATOM!! AN ATOM LIKE ME!!! Oh, sir, I know him!" And laying his hand on his heart, he said, "The love of Jesus! The love of Jesus! It has been here these many years; but, oh, sir, you cannot comprehend it!" Afterward he cried out, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Do not delay another night, if it is your will!" And again placing his hand on his heart, he added, "Here he is fixed." And so saying, he fell asleep in Jesus. The body slept — but the soul awoke to see Jesus, and enjoy his glory and beauty in a brighter and better state.

Reader, are you reserved? Oh, speak for Jesus — speak of Jesus — he desires it, and he deserves it at your hands. Yes, he is worthy, for whom you should do this. Do not indulge in a nervous timidity. It will hinder your usefulness. It will deprive the Lord's people of comfort and edification. Speak of what Jesus is to you, of what Jesus has done for you, and of what Jesus has wrought in you. It will be for your own benefit, as well as for the benefit of others; for in bearing our testimony, God blesses us, and makes us a blessing.

Never shall we regret that we have spoken of Jesus — but we may regret that we have not. Is not his love, a wonderful love? Is he not transcendently lovely in himself? And then to think of his leaving his throne, toiling, suffering, and dying on his cross — to save a sinner, an atom, like you, like me! Oh, it is wonderful! Well may the apostle say, "It passes knowledge!" We cannot comprehend it. Its heights, depths, lengths, and breadths — are beyond our powers of conception. What a privilege to know him! To possess him! To enjoy him! To have him in the heart, the hope of glory! And then, to depart, and be with him!

O Jesus, manifest yourself to me more clearly, more frequently; and let me joy in you, derive invaluable blessings from you, and often experience a desire to depart and be forever with you. I do desire to . . .

love you supremely,
serve you incessantly,
glorify you greatly, and

then ascend to see you, and be with you eternally.

47 Common Mercies

Common Mercies

Waking up from a good night's rest, I feel exceedingly grateful for so great a mercy. What a refreshing thing is sleep. How many nights of good sleep I have enjoyed, for which I never prayed, and for which I never praised God. But now I cannot sleep as I once did. Hour after hour I lay sometimes, and get no rest. I feel with job, that "wearisome nights are appointed to me." Sleep is valued now as a great blessing, though it was once looked upon as a common thing. Now I pray for sleep, and when I get it, I praise God.

How little praise God gets from us for his common mercies — unless he deprives us of them. Then we prize them, pray for them, really enjoy them, and give God thanks. What we win by prayer — we should wear with praise. Nor do we sympathize as we should with the poor, who have not the blessings we enjoy. During a sleepless night, our thoughts will wander to the hospital, the sick room, and the dying chamber, and so sympathy is excited for others, and thanksgivings ascend to God. Not only so, we think of that glory land where sleep is no longer needed, where pain is no longer felt, where darkness never reigns; for there is no night there. Lord, teach me to enjoy the mercy of sleep, when I have it, with gratitude; and to improve a sleepless night when I have it not! Sleep is your gift, and an invaluable gift it is. May I enjoy it as your child, and improve the testimony of your Word, where I read that you "give your beloved sleep." Not long ago, I was affected with a degree of deafness, so that much that was said I did not hear; never did I value the sense of hearing as then. It must be painful to be in a silent world. To hear no sweet sounds. To be unable to hold social fellowship. To know that others are communicating thoughts, and we cannot hear them. To see others intensely interested by them, and greatly enjoying them — and ourselves shut out from that interest and enjoyment.

How many years I have been able to hear well, and how few praises has a gracious God ever received from me, for so great a favor. But I do feel grateful now; it is therefore well to lose our mercies in part for a time, if the restoration of them will fill us with devout thanksgivings to God. How painful to a child, to be unable to drink in the sweet sounds of a mother's voice; or to a wife to be unable to converse with the husband she loves. But how very painful it must be to the Christian, to attend the house of prayer, and be unable to hear the sound of the preacher's voice. Yet there are many who are suffering these privations, while millions who enjoy the gift of hearing — never think of rendering thanks to the Lord, according to the value of the favor conferred. Blessed be God, that I could ever hear, that I have heard his holy Word, and have, I trust, heard it to good purpose. Blessed be God that I can hear now, and may he preserve me that blessing while life shall last. The other day I mislaid my eye-glasses. I wanted to read a note which had been sent to me — but I could not decipher a word. A reply was required — but a written reply, I could not send. Never did I feel the value of eye-glasses as I did then. Never did I feel my ingratitude for not praising God for the good sight which I had enjoyed for so many years — as I did then. O what a privation the loss of sight must be! To be in a beautiful world like this — and be unable to see any

of its beauties. Unable to look up and see the clear blue sky, or the sky studded with stars. Unable to see the sun in his glory, or the moon walking in brightness. Unable to look at the green fields, or admire the productions of the lovely garden. To be shut out from all that is beautiful in the world of nature, and to be deprived of feeding the mind by reading.

What would I do without my books, or power to read them! What should I do without my pen, or power to use it! How sweet I have found it, to feed on the thoughts of others; and how grateful I have felt, when I have ascertained that I have awakened good thoughts in the minds of my fellow Christians, and my fellow creatures! How sweet, how inexpressibly sweet, is the blessing of being useful; especially of being useful to the souls of men. Blessed be God that he ever gave me sight! Blessed be God, that he has continued my sight so long! Blessed be God, for the gift of eye-glasses to aid my sight, now that it has become weak and imperfect!

I used to walk well, and a good distance too; but now if the atmosphere is heavy, or the weather foggy; if the distance is long, or the road hilly — I find my breathing affected, and get weary soon. This indicates that old age is creeping on me apace. But what a mercy it is that I am not confined to my house, to my room, to my bed. What a blessing I feel it, that in looking back, I see that I have not lived in vain; and in looking forward to believe that I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Where I am going — the inhabitants are never sick, and all the people there are forgiven of all their iniquities. There are no asthmas there, no failing of sight there, no weary limbs there. Perfect health, perpetual day, and unsullied holiness characterize the place. Thanks be to God that ever I could walk, and thanks be to God that I can walk now, though not so well as I could once. Thanks be to God that I am not always suffering — but have many profitable hours, pleasant days, and refreshing nights.

Yes, yes, the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage. May I never complain, when there are so many thousands suffering more, and after having enjoyed so many mercies for so many years. Rather let me say with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits." Gratitude befits me — but complaining or repining would be altogether out of place. I have had my trials, and I have them still, but . . .

what are my trials — compared to my mercies;

what my privations — compared to my privileges;

what my present pains — compared to my future prospects? A short time ago, I was called to suffer severe pain of body — and who ever forgets pain? We may forget months and years of ease — but one week's severe pain is not soon forgotten. There can be no doubt but pain is beneficial. I am persuaded that it has done me good. But nature does not like medicine, especially when it is bitter, and given in large doses. How suffering seems to lengthen time; one hour's pain, appears longer than two hours pleasure. How it changes the appearance of temporal things, and seems to lessen their value. How it prompts us to look forward to the time, and upward to the place — where there shall be no more pain or suffering.

Having had so many months and years of ease — I ought not to shrink from a few weeks of pain. I ought at least to bear it with patience. But philosophy is of little use in suffering. I find that prayer is more soothing. If I am to suffer as a Christian, if I am to glorify God in the fires — I must ask the Lord who sends the pain, to send special grace with it.

What a wonderful thing is grace! It makes . . .

the impatient, patient;

the ungrateful, grateful;

the complaining, contented;

and the polluted, holy.

Lord, give me more grace — give me much grace, that so I may bear pain, improve pleasure, and serve my generation according to your will.

Blessed be God, for freedom from excruciating pain! Blessed be God, for freedom from constant pain! Blessed be God, for freedom from unsanctified pain! Blessed be God, above all, for the assurance, that I shall never taste the bitter pains of eternal damnation! O Savior, how much it cost you of pain, anguish, and sorrow of heart — to procure my exemption from eternal torment; and the sanctification of all I suffer here below!

Reader, how are you affected upon these points? Do you ever pass sleepless nights? I seldom did once, though trouble and sorrow, as well as irritation and pain — have at times chased away sleep from my eyes. If you can sleep soundly and sweetly — thank God. Thousands cannot. If sleep could be purchased, how much would some give for one night's sound sleep. Is your hearing quick and correct? Thank God, and pity the poor deaf who are around you. Your ears may yet become dull of hearing. Is your sight good? Prize it, and make good use of it while you have it. Is your general health strong and robust? You have one of the greatest earthly blessings. Better be strong enough to walk, than be feeble, and have a carriage to ride in. Are you in general free from pain? Remember it is more than you deserve, and many, perhaps more exemplary people than you are — seldom know what it is to have an hour's freedom from suffering. Be grateful, be grateful for all you enjoy, and for the freedom from the ten thousand evils to which you are exposed.

Above all, make sure of a saving interest in Christ, of a title to a place in that happy land, where sorrow and sighing are perfect strangers. Store your mind with the promises of God's most holy book, seek the enjoyment of much of the communion of the Holy Spirit, and you will have something to . . .

soothe your pains,

solace you in sorrow, and

to turn the shadow of death into the morning.

Gracious God, help us to dwell on our mercies, to prize our privileges, and to improve our sufferings. And may we so pass through the sufferings, sorrows, and pleasures of time — as to secure a hearty welcome into your presence, when time with us shall be no more!

"Let us praise God for common mercies, for they prove to be uncommonly precious — when they are once taken away!" Charles Spurgeon

48 I Want a Change!

I Want a Change!

Speaking to a friend the other day about her health, which is not the most perfect, she concluded her account, by saying, "I want a change!" She meant she wanted a change of air, and scenery; a change of place for a time. And a visit to the sea side, or the quiet country village, for a few weeks in the year — is very pleasant, and very useful, either to establish one's health, or to recruit it. But I could not help musing on the expression, "I want a change." How many want a change, and how many desire a change — who would be better without one.

It is a mercy to be satisfied with one's lot, and to desire simply to glorify God wherever we are, or in whatever condition we are. But there is a great craving in many minds for a change, any condition, any situation almost, seems to be preferable to the present. This shows that our minds are in an unhealthy state, though people in general do not think so. Reader, you may think you want a change — but are you sure of it? It may not be a change of place — but a change of mind, a change of heart, that you need.

Mary Edwards has been in her situation now for two or three years, and on the whole, a very comfortable situation it is. She has an opportunity of going to the house of God on a Sunday. She is well fed, well clothed, has very comfortable fellow servants, and her wages are not bad — but she has got it into her head that she wants a change. Take care, Mary, take care. There may be better places than yours — but there are many worse! You profess to love God, and have your name enrolled among his people, and therefore it is to you that he speaks, when he says, "Be content with such things as you have."

It would be a great venture for you to change, you may get higher wages — but you may have unpleasant fellow servants; you may have less work — but you may not have so good a mistress; you may have more liberty — but you may not have the same religious privileges; and what is life to a Christian, if he has not the enjoyment of the means of grace? Take care, take care, ask counsel of God, consult judicious friends, don't move in a hurry, watch the hand of God, be sure that the cloudy pillar of God's providence goes before you — or you may have to regret the change!

Thomas Joplin lives in a country village, he has plenty of work, is respected by his neighbors, and is acquiring an influence, that he may use for God's glory, and the good of his fellow men. But he has taken a fancy to a large town, and thinks he shall do better there. He feels that he wants a change. Let us advise you, Thomas, to beware how you allow yourself to be led by your feelings. They are always a very unsafe guide. You know what life in a village is — but you do not know what it is to live in a large crowded town. You would miss your fresh air, your pleasant walks, and your quiet evenings. The simplicity of your neighbors, and the frankness of your friends, will perhaps be exchanged for the deceit and craft of those who lie in wait to deceive. The temptations of a large town are great, and very different to those of a country village. It may not be wrong for

you to make a change — but move cautiously, take as your guiding star that text, "In all your ways acknowledge him — and he shall direct your paths."

Watch God's hand. Wait God's time. Follow God's leadings. This is the way to avoid going wrong. Endeavor to be useful where you are, for it is in being useful, that God makes us happy. Happiness, you know, depends on the state of the mind — and not on the situation in life. The poor peasant is often happier than the wealthy noble. Happiness may fly in at the window of the palace — but she builds her nest under the cottage roof. Godliness with contentment is a good fortune.

Sarah Treffery is a single woman, and occupies a very useful situation in life — but she imagines that she should like a change. A worldly young man smiles at her, seeks her company, and offers to be her husband. Now Sarah is a Christian, and her New Testament tells her, that she is at liberty to be married — but only in the Lord. She may marry a Christian — but no one else. But she wants a change, and persuades herself she may be very comfortable with him, and would most likely be the means of his conversion. She thinks it would be wrong to refuse him, forgetting that in accepting him — she rejects God, and breaks one of his positive precepts.

O how many have made this change, who have deeply regretted it, and have gone down to the grave, sorrowing for their folly! Sarah, Sarah, be wise, and take God's Word for your guide, or you may have a change you will greatly regret! You may exchange . . .

plenty — for poverty;

peace — for contention;

the smile of God — for the frown of man;

a quiet mind — for an accusing conscience;

and may regret the change as long as you live!

Marriage is honorable — if it is not contrary to God's Word; but when the godly marry the graceless — it is inconsistent and improper, and must involve the parties in trouble and sorrow. Never be married, unless you feel that you are justified in inviting Jesus to your wedding, and are warranted to expect God's blessing on your union.

Sometimes, a minister of Christ, gets it into his head, that he wants a change. He is useful where he is — but he imagines that he may be more useful somewhere else. His people love him, and wish him to live and die with them — but he tries to persuade himself that a change may be better for them, as well as for himself. He imagines that he is not influenced by a love for popularity, or led away by the idea of respectability; he hopes that his motives are pure, and that his Master will approve.

Well, it is quite right for ministers to move sometimes, and perhaps it would be better, if some had a change a little oftener. But the question is: Did your Master place you where you now are? Did the Holy Spirit make you an overseer of that flock? If so, take care that you do not move without the Master's orders, be sure that you have the sanction of the Holy Spirit in what you do. Many ministers have made a mistake about moving, and have been miserable all their days after; and

others have been obliged to return to the place, which they had no warrant to leave. It is a miserable move — to go any where, and leave the presence of the Lord behind us. Well may we cry with Moses, whenever we contemplate a change, "If your Presence does not go with us — do not send us up from here!"

Sometimes a church imagines they want a change of ministry, and they manage to make the Lord's servant uncomfortable, until he is glad to leave them. They would like a younger man, or a more learned man, or a man of more popular talents, somewhat more respectable. They are allowed to have their way. God gives them their request — but sends leanness into their souls. It is a sad change for them! Conversions are few and far between. Prayer-meetings are neglected. They have philosophy instead of Christ, and eloquence instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. Or they may not get even these! Now they look back and sigh, as they think of by-gone days. Deeply do they regret the change — but they cannot retrace their steps. Often do they exclaim, "Oh that we were as in times past!" But they must reap the fruit of their doings.

Brethren, beware how you treat God's servants, for our Master is jealous. He may take away a pastor — and send you a plague. He may remove a loving minister — and send you an unfeeling taskmaster. If you do not profit as you wish, look into your own heart, and see if there is no reason there; look into your life, and see if you can detect no cause there. Ask: Do I pray for my pastor as I ought? Do I contribute to the support of my pastor as I ought? Do I love my pastor as I ought? Do I go to hear, not what my pastor may say out of his own head — but to receive a message sent by him from the Lord. When the minister rises to preach, the people should say, with David, "I will hear what God the Lord shall speak."

If you imagine that your minister is dull — cry to the Lord to give him more life. If you think him dry — beseech the Lord to anoint him with fresh oil. If you see no proofs of success — entreat the Lord to put power into the Word. God's ministers are all prepared to say, "It is not in us." We have not the power, or the ability — or we would exert it. We are but earthen vessels, and we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are just what God made us, and are only successful — as God works with us. It is very probable that you may not need a change in the ministry — but the minister may need to be baptized afresh in the Holy Spirit, and that blessing may be obtained by your prayers.

"I want a change!" This is a common cry — but you may not want a change of place, or a change of relation, or a change of society, or a change of employment — but you may want a change of heart, a change of disposition, a change of nature. If so, until you are born again, until you are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, until you are created anew in Christ Jesus — you will never be happy, you will never enjoy satisfaction.

You may change your country, change your climate, change your situation in society — but unless God changes your heart, and his grace changes your character — you will be still crying out, "I want a change."

Lost sinner, seek to experience the greatest of all changes, a change from death to life, from enmity to love, from sin to holiness. No change short of this will meet your case, or give you rest. God has promised it, ask it of him, and you shall receive it.

Believer, your changes have been many, they may be many more, and you may be saying, "I want a change." Remember, your great change will soon come, and then you will want no other change. But until then, every change will leave you in need of something, and you will find, amidst all the changes you get, the truth of the Poet's words —

Man has a soul of vast desires,
He burns within with restless fires,
Tossed to and fro, his passions fly
From vanity to vanity! In vain on earth we hope to find
Some solid good to fill the mind,
We try new pleasures — but we feel
The inward thirst and torment still.
Great God, subdue this wicked thirst,
This love to vanity and dust;
Cure the vile fever of the mind,
And feed our souls with joys refined!

49 Set Your House in Order!

Set Your House in Order!

It is not of every event, that we can say that all are interested in it; and there may be events in which all are interested — but all are not equally interested. But there is one event in which all are interested, and all are equally interested in it, and that event is DEATH. All must die, and each one must die for himself; no substitution is admitted here. Each one must die alone — no friend is allowed to accompany him through that dark valley. A few words on this subject may be profitable.

Let us then, very briefly, consider the message sent to king Hezekiah, for a similar message will soon be sent to every one of us. "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order — because you are going to die; you will not recover." Isaiah 38:2.

Death is a very solemn event. The most solemn event in a man's history. Death is certain, for it is appointed unto man once to die, and there is a time fixed when each of us must die. Vain is the surgeon's experience, vain the physician's skill, and vain the kindness of friends — we must die! But to us, the hour of death is very uncertain; there may be but a step between us and it. At any moment, for anything we can tell — we may die. But the consequences of death are either dreadful — or delightful. To the unconverted sinner, how dreadful! He comes at once into contact with the wrath of God — and of all dreadful things, the wrath of God is the most dreadful. It has been pent up all the days of his sojourn on earth — but it now bursts forth like a long smouldering fire, to feed upon and torment him forever!

After death is the judgment, the righteous judgment of God; then the sinner is to be tried, publicly condemned, and the degree and kind of his punishment fixed for eternity!

Then comes the infliction of that punishment — the casting him into the lake of fire, the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. O how terrible, how inconceivably terrible are the consequences of death to the soul that dies in sin! But to the Christian, they are equally delightful. He dies, and ascends to Heaven, enjoying the approbation of his God. He goes to the judgment, not as a criminal to be punished — but as a just person to be publicly acquitted, and eternally rewarded. To him, after death, nothing remains but perfect holiness, and perfect happiness. He goes to see Jesus — that Jesus whom he has loved and served here below. He goes to be with Jesus — that Jesus who loved him, and laid down his life for him. He goes to inherit the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world. He enters into peace, rests from his labors, and is forever with the Lord! O how delightful, how inconceivably delightful are the consequences of death to the believer in Jesus!

Yet when the message comes suddenly, it is sometimes startling. "Set your house in order — because you are going to die; you will not recover!" Prepare for the most solemn event in life's history. Settle your affairs for time and eternity.

If your will is not made, make it. For no Christian should live a day without a will, if he has property to leave. Making the will will not hasten death — but it may prevent much sin, and preserve peace among relatives. If therefore the disposal of your property is not settled, settle it.

Prepare to stand before God. Be ready to render your account, whenever called upon to do so. Get your sins pardoned, if they are not, while the fountain is open, and the promise stands good. Get your person justified; not only get acquitted from all charges — but get the righteousness of Jesus into your possession, that you may plead it, and wear it before God. Get your nature sanctified, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Get into union with Christ, that so you may be entitled to the merit of all he did for sinners, and to all he has for those who believe on his name. Get clear evidences for Heaven, that so you may have no doubts or fears — but arise, and with confidence, accompany the messenger when he comes. In one word, get a well-grounded assurance of salvation, arising from a sense of freedom from condemnation, and a persuasion that you can never be separated from the love of God in Christ.

Settle your affairs at once, you will die safer, and happier.

Let us then think of the importance of death, consider how uncertain it is, whether we shall have time to prepare for it in future, and therefore get ready at once. God sends the message to us in mercy, he sends it beforehand, so giving us time, and thus takes away all excuse, if we are not found prepared. Death often comes suddenly. It comes to many when least expected. It finds multitudes unprepared; all their affairs, both temporal and spiritual, in confusion — and without pity, with a stroke cuts them down!

Lost sinner, you shall die. I do not know when — but it may be very soon. I do not know where — but it may be where no friend will be found to pray by you, or point you to the way of life. I do not know how — but it may be by an accident, a stroke, a spasm at the heart, or by some fever that renders you insensible, and forbids the possibility of preparation then. But though I know not when, where, or how you will die — I know that you must die, and therefore I present the solemn message to you, "Set your house in order — prepare to meet your God!"

Believer, you shall die. But the time when, the place where, and the means by which — are wisely, and in mercy concealed from you. Get ready, therefore. Live as for eternity. Become familiar with death, by dying daily. "Set your house in order," let everything be arranged and settled there. Set your heart in order, and see to it that all is right there. Keep your faith steadily fixed on Jesus, who conquered death for you, and is the resurrection and the life. Keep your hope fixed on the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, which is reserved in Heaven for you. Keep your love centered in God, as your Father and Friend in Jesus. Keep your affections set on things above, not on things on the earth. Let the eye, the heart, and the aim, be directed, not to the things which are seen, and which are temporal; but to the things which are not seen, which are eternal. So shall your life be spent in honorable service, so shall your days peaceably pass away, and so shall your death be happy, and the end shall crown the whole. You shall only sleep in Jesus.

Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep!

From which none ever wakes to weep;

A calm and undisturbed repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes!
Asleep in Jesus! oh, how sweet
To be for such a slumber meet:
With holy confidence to sing
That death has lost its venom'd sting!

50 Knowing the Time

Knowing the Time

Knowledge is valuable, just in proportion as it bears on our own circumstances and cases, and is likely to influence and regulate our conduct aright. We can do very well without the knowledge of many things; and the knowledge that would be highly useful to some, would be of little importance to others. But there are some things we must know as sinners — or perish; and there are some things we must know as believers — or be comparatively useless. It is highly important that we know the time — for every time brings with it its duties and responsibilities. The present time, the time in which we live, is a peculiar time, and it befits us to know it. To know it, so as to improve it. To know it, so as to perform the duties belonging to it. To us therefore, as well as to the Romans, Paul would say, "Knowing the time." Romans 13:11. The peculiarities of the present time are solemn and affecting.

It is the time of Satan's power. He seems to have come down with great power, knowing that he has but a short time. What life and energy has he infused into the old popish superstition, and what a stepping-stone to popery has he provided in Puseyism! What power has he imparted to various forms of infidelity, leading captive multitudes at his will. With what craft and subtlety he introduced the licentious and beastly system of Mormonism, ensnaring thousands of our peasantry, and others. Satan is active — never more so. He is energetic — never more so. He is determined to destroy man, dishonor God, and show his enmity against the Lord Jesus — never more so. It befits us therefore, to know the time.

It is the time of the world's danger. Never were sinners in greater danger than now. Every species of error is afloat. Every means to destroy men's souls is plied. Millions are asleep in superstition, and millions are indifferent as to their souls and eternity. The spirit of a deep sleep has fallen upon the masses, and they are like a man sleeping on the edge of the crater of a volcano; or like a man sleeping on the top of a mast, when a terrific storm is rising. Myriads are deluded, by various errors and evil influences; and the rest are at enmity against God, or enraged against his truth.

It is the time of God's forbearance. God's Justice now rests on its glittering sword. Grace is authorized to confer salvation. Mercy is active, warning and inviting souls to escape from danger.

It is the day of salvation. Salvation may be had. It is pressed upon our attention, it is urged on our acceptance. Whoever will, may now come, and receive and enjoy all the blessings of grace and glory.

It is the time of the Church's duty. It is working time, and we should work while it is day. It is evening time, for the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. It is therefore precious time. Time that we should value, employ for the most important purposes, and redeem for God's service and praise. It is singular time, never were there so many calls to duty, so many facilities to aid us in the work, so many encouragements to throw the whole heart into the cause of God, consequently never was there a time that laid the Lord's people under such deep and solemn responsibility.

Lord, teach us to know the time, that we may seize it, improve it, and win laurels while it lasts!

"Knowing the time!" We do so partly from God's Word, which tells us what will occur, and what will mark the last days. We do so from observation, wars and rumors of wars, the abounding of errors and heresies, evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived — prove that perilous times have come. And then, the wonderful outpouring of the Spirit of God, by which such thousands are converted and brought to Christ, shows plainly that we are living in the last days. Our knowledge should be improved. We should embrace every opportunity of displaying our courage for God, our activity in the cause of Christ, and our love to immortal souls. We should stir up others, provoking to love and to good works, and stimulating them to engage in the glorious enterprise. We should employ every talent, use every means, put forth every effort — to save souls from eternal death, because we know the time.

Brethren, remember the time must be short. Jesus will soon come, or if not — he will send death to arrest our course, and call us home. We cannot be where we are, and as we are, for long. The end will be solemn. Most solemn will the end be. The dispensation will end in judgment, and our day will end with standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, that we may receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.

Oh, the thought of the great white throne, the judge whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and the reward according to works — should make us serious, energetic, and entirely devoted to God! We should therefore be wakeful — let us not sleep as do others. We should be watchful — for we know not when the time of the Savior's appearing is. We should be laborious — for labor for God and souls is confined to earth, and is limited by time. At death, we rest from our labors, and our works will follow us. We should be liberal — giving to God's cause and the poor, in proportion as he has given to us.

Knowing the time, let us be thorough Christians — let us be diligent and devoted laborers — let us buy up every opportunity for usefulness, because the days are evil.

Lost sinner, do you know the time? It is the time given you to secure a saving interest in Christ, to flee from the wrath to come, and to obtain salvation from free grace. It is your time, and the only time you will ever have. Neglect this, trifle with this, squander this — and you are undone forever! You are lost, and lost by your own fault. You die a suicide, and perish by your own hands!

51 If God is for Us — Who Can be Against Us?

If God is for Us — Who Can be Against Us?

Every Christian is exposed to foes. Every believer must expect opposition. In the world, we must have tribulation. But the consolations held out to us by the gospel, afford a stimulus and an encouragement to press forward, notwithstanding all. Our resources are greater than our needs — and our strength is equal to our day. God is with us. God is for us. Therefore we may ask with the Apostle, "If God is for us — who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. Here is, A Point to Be Ascertained. "If God is for us." Are we for God? Are we for his cause — doing all we can to support it? Are we for his truth — doing all we can to spread it? Are we for his people — showing kindness and love to them? Are we for his glory — seeking by all means to advance it?

If so — God is for us.

He is for all whom he has called by grace, and introduced into the fellowship of his Son. He is for all who have the Spirit of adoption, who cry unto him, "My father, my father, the guide of my youth." He is for the poor in Spirit, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He is for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for whom he has prepared the kingdom of Heaven. Are we then made partakers of the Heavenly calling? Have we received the Holy Spirit? Are we poor and needy? Are we hated, opposed, and persecuted for Christ's sake? If so — then God is for us. Look we then at, The Question. "If God is for us — who can be against us?" That is, who can justly be against us, or be justified in vilifying and ill-treating us? Who can successfully be against us — so as to prevail, and finally injure and harm us? Who can reasonably be against us — if God takes our part, and sanctions us? Who can be against us, so as to bring us under condemnation? Who can be against us, so as to separate us from Christ — or, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus? Who can be against us — so as really to hurt us? Who can bring us into condemnation? What, when we are in Christ Jesus! Who can separate us from Christ? What, when we are members of his body! Who can separate us from the love of God? What, when that love is eternal, and like his nature immutable! If God is our Ally, if God is our Shield, if God is our Strong Tower — who can succeed against us? Can Satan? He is conquered, spoiled, and reduced to be the vassal and slave of Him who loves us, and who gave himself for us. Can man? Man, who is less than nothing, and vanity in the sight of God! No, blessed be God, let there be what there may, there shall be no condemnation, to those who are in Christ Jesus! There shall be no separation from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is engaged for his people. By covenant, by promise, and by oath, he is engaged to be with them, to be for them, and to defend them. He is their light and their salvation, he is their refuge and strength, he is their Father and Friend — therefore they need not fear. He sacredly keeps his engagement. The strength of Israel is not a man, that he should change his mind. He is in one mind, and who can turn him? What he was when he made the engagement — he is now. What he thought, when he pledged himself by promise to us — he thinks now. The love he had, when he swore that he would not be wroth to us — he has now. He is without variableness, or the shadow

of a turning.

He allows their foes to try them. In this way he proves and improves them. Their faith is tried — and being tried is strengthened. Their courage is tried — and being tried is increased. Their fortitude is tried — and being tried they become steadfast, immovable, and they abound more and more in the work of the Lord. Thus they are benefitted by their trials, and the Lord being with them, and for them, they come off conquerors, and more than conquerors through him who loved them.

He appears in them, to them, and for them — in answer to prayer. Yes, the Lord is in his people, as well as with them — and he appears in them, strengthening them with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. He appears to them, and comforts, encourages, and assures them of their final victory. And appears for them, scattering their foes, sanctifying their troubles, and giving them the victory over all that opposed their progress. God IS for us! And this privilege, no unbeliever can claim, no one who indulges in any sin, has any right to. If God is not for us — then he is against us! There is a sense, in which he is against every impenitent sinner, and is bound to oppose and punish every willful transgressor. He cannot be against the poor broken-hearted sinner, or against the poor tried and timid believer; but against the man who loves sin, and lives in sin, he is against — he must be.

If God is for us — who can be against us? But, if God is against us — who can be for us? Who can be for us, to any good purpose? Not one! Not any! Let us therefore, by faith in Jesus, by prayer to God, and by decision for Christ — make sure that God is for us, and so all will be well.

52 A Satisfactory Testimony

A Satisfactory Testimony An aged believer was near to death, from the nature of his disease, speaking was painful. All could see, that he was in peace. No fears agitated his bosom. No doubts disturbed his rest. He was resting on the strong arm, and reclining on the loving bosom of his Savior, waiting to be beckoned away, and admitted into the presence of his Lord. The testimony of his life was amply sufficient to satisfy all his friends, that to him Heaven was sure. But a few last words were desired by some. A friend called to inquire, a very dear old friend, the opportunity was seized, and the question was put, "What shall I say as to the state of your mind?" Mark the reply. "Say, I am resting on the promises of God, and the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ." What could be more blessed? What could he have said more satisfactory, more encouraging, or more instructive?

He was resting. Yes, there was no agitation. No perplexity. No dark foreboding. The heart was at rest. The soul was in calm repose. He was resting on the promises of God. Those precious promises, which are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus. Those promises which have been fulfilled so many times, and which are all confirmed by the precious blood of Christ. No rock was ever so firm — as those promises. No pillow was ever so soft, so downy — as those promises. They are the pledges of a father's love, and the proofs of a father's care. O may my soul rest on those promises all through life, and especially may I be privileged to do so in my dying hour! But our friend had another stay, another support — he was resting on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had known and loved the Savior for many a long year. He had proved the love, care, and constancy of the Savior in many a trying hour. He knew that Jesus was faithful, not only from the testimony of his Word, and the testimony of his fellow believers — but from his past experience. He had trusted him through a long life of trial and trouble, and had always found him true; and now he felt he could trust him, in the valley of the shadow of death. Oh, how blessed to have a Savior in the hour of death, a faithful Savior, a tried Savior, one in whom we can trust without the least doubt or fear!

According to the testimony of his Pastor, who had known him well, and had known him long — our friend was distinguished by three things: "Spirituality of mind. A spirit of prayer. And confidence in God."

What a mercy it is to be spiritually-minded! All spirituality flows from the presence, power, and teachings of the Holy Spirit; and to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

What a privilege is a spirit of prayer, by which we carry all things to God, leave all things with God, and get everything sanctified by God.

And, confidence in God, what an honor, and what a source of happiness is this! To confide in God — amidst all the storms of life. To entrust all with God — amidst all the changes of time. To depend on God — come what will. This keeps the soul steady, the heart at rest, and the conscience peaceful.

O for strong and steady confidence in God!

O for a spirit of earnest fervent prayer!

O for deep and abiding spirituality of mind!

Reader, what is the state of your heart! Sudden deaths are very common now — suppose you were suddenly summoned away, if any one was to ask the state of your mind, could you with truth say, "I am resting on the promises of God, and on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ." If any minister of Christ was to endeavor to testify to your death, would he be justified in saying of you, that you were remarkable "for spirituality of mind, a spirit of prayer, and confidence in God?" If not — you ought to seek these blessings. They are to be obtained. You cannot produce them yourself — but you can ask God to work and produce them in you.

What our friend was — he was by the grace of God; and that grace that made him what he was — may be obtained by you; and that grace will do for you, what it did for him. God presents his promises to you in his Word, he requires you to believe them, he wishes you to appropriate them — and so doing, he will fulfill them in your experience. Jesus, the faithful Savior, invites you to him, that you may be saved by him; and wishes you to prove the efficacy of his blood, the power of his grace, and the truth of his Word. Will you not come to Jesus, if you have not? Will you not seek daily to prove more and more — the love, grace, and faithfulness of Jesus, if you have come?

Beloved, we should seek so to live every day — that we may be ready to die any day; and to die "in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life." O how blessed to be in Jesus! To live in Jesus, to die in Jesus! For then we shall sleep in Jesus, be awakened in union with Jesus, and be caught up to meet Jesus in the clouds, and so be forever with him!

Holy Spirit, give us a strong and steady confidence in Jesus now, that when we come to die, we may be able to say, "I am resting on the promises of God, and the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

53 Christ's Little Ones

Christ's Little Ones

There can be few families in which the children all of one age, one stature, and one disposition. In our families we see great diversity — and so there is in the family of God. There are babes, young men, and fathers. Now in most families, the little ones call forth most affection, and have most attention — and so it should be in the family of God. And lest we should overlook, or despise the lesser branches, Jesus has said, "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Matthew 18:10. Observe, The Beloved Objects. "These little ones." They have small gifts, little grace, and fill obscure situations. In appearance, they are lowly;

in disposition, they are trying; and

in conversation, they are not very pleasing.

Yet they have some grace. They sigh and cry because of sin. They pray and strive for holiness. They mourn over their deficiencies, and inconsistencies. They are stripped of self-righteousness, and trust alone in Jesus. They believe that he is a living, divine, and glorious person — that he is the Savior, and the only Savior. They commit themselves to him, and endeavor to leave all their concerns with him. They love him, and their chief complaint is that they do not love him more.

They are in the Vine — but they are not prominent branches.

They are in the building — but they are not large polished stones.

Yet they are dear to the heart of Jesus, and are kept constantly under his eye. Mark therefore, The Serious Caution. "Take heed." Be careful, be cautious, lest you despise one of these little ones. To prevent this — be humble. Encourage low thoughts of yourself, and honorable thoughts of others. Be kind — especially to all who bear the name of Jesus. Be courteous to all. This is a duty, and if carried out, will prevent your despising one of the little ones. Do not despise their persons — though poor, diseased, or deformed. Do not despise their gifts — though small, and apparently of little use.

Jesus does not despise them — or he never would have laid down his life for them. The Father of mercies does not despise them — or he would not have chosen them to life, or have put them among his children. The Holy Spirit does not despise them — or he would not make them his temples, or take up his residence in their hearts. The holy angels do not despise them — or they would not so cheerfully and constantly minister unto them. Take heed that you do not despise . . .

one whom Jesus loves,

one whom the Father has chosen,

one whom the Holy Spirit has sanctified, and is training up for glory! See, The Instructive Reason. "For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Angels are the servants of the saints, and they minister to the comfort, and the needs, of the lowest of God's children. They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation.

They care for the least,

they watch over the feeblest,

they wait on the lowest,

they benefit all. The servants of Christ's little ones; they are the courtiers of the great king; they behold his face, are accepted in his presence, and perhaps report what they witness below. Ezekiel 6:9. Zechariah 1:7, Zechariah 1:17. If therefore Jesus so prizes them, if the high and holy angels watch over, and minister to them — then we should take heed lest we despise them. It is to be feared, that the Lord's little ones, are not always regarded on earth, as they are in Heaven; or treated by professed Christians, as Jesus would have them treated.

See then, the dignity of the lowest Christians. The highest created intelligences wait on them, are kind to them, and are careful over them — and Jesus gives a special charge concerning them.

See then, the duty of Christians to each other. They should love and highly esteem each other, looking upon one another as belonging to Jesus, and loving each other for the sake of Jesus.

See then, the sin and pride of prejudice. We ought not to look down upon the poorest, or be prejudiced against the least of God's little ones.

See then, the notice Jesus takes of his little ones. They are dear to his heart. They are always under his eye. He gives charge concerning them. He will reprove kings for their sakes. He cannot love them more — or be more careful over them.

See then, the privilege of ministering angels. They always behold the face of God. They feast on his glories, feel at home in his presence, and do homage at his throne.

See then, the reproof administered to many of us. We have not been tender enough over, or kind enough to — the Lord's little ones. We might often have ministered to their comfort, have cheered their hearts, and have smoothed their way if we would — but we did not. In future let us beware, lest at any time, by word or deed — we despise one of Christ's little ones!

54 More Severe Punishment

More Severe Punishment The gospel places us in a very solemn position. Coming as it does, as a direct message from God, we are bound to receive it, believe it, respect it, and act upon it. Its invitations should be received,

its promises should be embraced,

its doctrines should be believed,

its precepts should be obeyed.

It should be acted upon immediately it is heard; and if it were . . .

pardon and reconciliation to God would be sought,

peace and comfort would be enjoyed,

the Savior would be prized,

the atonement would be trusted,

the Holy Spirit would be honored.

But, how often is the gospel trifled with — where it is not positively rejected; and by how many is it despised and disregarded. To such the solemn language of the Apostle, is directed: "Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Hebrews 10:28-29.

Here is a comparison between sinners — and their punishment.

Sinners under the law — and sinners under the gospel.

Under the law, certain crimes were punishable with death, and he who slighted, neglected, and willfully broke the law was doomed to die. In despising the law — he despised the Sovereign, who enacted it; and he despised the rule of righteousness — which he had enacted. The punishment was death, death without pity, which was the highest punishment which man could inflict. If there were two or three witnesses of his crime, on their joint testimony he was condemned, and handed over to punishment.

Under the gospel, there is a sin unto death — and sinners may come into such a state, that for them there can be no pardon, to them can be shown no mercy. If they willfully reject the atonement of Jesus — there is no other sacrifice for sin; and without shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sin. The apostle is speaking of some, who were in a dangerous position; a position, in which it is to be feared, that many are at this day.

Look at their CRIME: They trampled the Son of God under foot. That is, they treat him with neglect and contempt. They never accept his invitations, or come to his feet, or trust in his blood, or rely on his promises, or observe his precepts. They have the gospel — but they act as though they had it not. They pretend to admit his claims, respect his authority, and rely on his glorious work — but their conduct shows that it is all pretense. They count the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified — an unholy, or common thing. Aaron was sanctified, set apart and consecrated to the priest's office, with the blood of a young bullock — but Jesus was consecrated by his own blood. Aaron was sanctified by Moses — but Jesus sanctified himself. This is called the blood of the covenant, because in the covenant, Jesus agreed to shed it; and the covenant was ratified, and confirmed by it. On the ground of this blood being shed — God engaged to forgive our sins, to be reconciled to our persons, to give us all needful grace, and in the end confer on us eternal life.

They insult the Spirit of grace, that is the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of grace, he graciously enlightens and strives with sinners; and these characters wrong him, for instead of yielding to him, they resist him, they grieve him; and as represented by a light — they are said to quench him. They treat him as a foe instead of a friend.

Thus they sin against the Father — for instead of reverencing his Son — they trample him under foot. They sin against the Son — for instead of prizing his blood, pleading it with God, and building their hope upon it — they treat it as if it were the blood of some inferior animal. They sin against the Holy Spirit — for instead of welcoming his approach, listening to his Word, and yielding to his influence — they resist and grieve him.

Look we then at their PUNISHMENT: The sinners under the law died without mercy, suffering the highest degree of punishment man could inflict. But these Christ despisers will have more severe punishment, as eternal punishment must be sorer than temporal.

Heavier vengeance lies on them.

Fiery indignation awaits them.

Fierce wrath is their portion.

Inconceivable torment is reserved for them!

They are said to be worthy of it, that is:

they deserve it,

they have merited it,

they have worked for it,

it is their just due,

it is their equitable wages.

It is a righteous thing for God to inflict it. But our own consciences, our sense of right is appealed to — and we are asked to decide as to the degree of punishment a man deserves, who tramples God's Son under foot, despises the blood shed for sinners, and despitefully treats the Holy and ever gracious Spirit. If it was just to put a man to death for willfully breaking the law of Moses once

— what will be the just desert of those who daily for months and years, treat the Son of God, and the Spirit of God with such contempt? If the breaker of the law is chastised with whips — then surely these should be chastised with scorpions!

Lost sinner, beware — do not trifle with the gospel — it is the only remedy for your disease, the only balm to heal your wounds. It is . . .

the most wondrous display of God's mercy,

the greatest exhibition of the love of Christ,

the most marvelous display of the grace of the Holy Spirit. By it, an everlasting salvation is presented you — reject the gospel, and you are undone forever! Well then may the apostle ask, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Do not despise the gospel — or you despise the most glorious person, the most precious thing, the most gracious and most powerful agent. Do not neglect, or you treat with neglect — the person of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. If you despise or neglect the gospel — then calculate if you can, the degree of punishment which you deserve! Think of the fierce wrath of God, the fiery indignation, and the fearful judgment which you deserve!

Remember . . .

you sin against the greatest mercy,

you trample on the costliest pearl,

you commit the greatest crime!

If the lot of Tyre and Sidon was to be preferred to the lot of Chorazin; and if the lot of Sodom and Gomorrah was to be preferred to the lot of Capernaum — then surely the lot of Chorazin and Capernaum, will be preferable to yours! Matthew 11:20-24. In flaming fire Jesus will come to take vengeance on such as you — if you dare to persevere in conduct so base, so terribly sinful. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

Let me then beseech you to be wise, and not despise your soul. There is mercy — mercy for you if you seek it. There is pardon — pardon for you, if you confess sin, and pray for it. O then, for your soul's sake — seek mercy, confess sin, plead for pardon! Do not rest until you receive and enjoy these invaluable blessings!

55 The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit

How much we are indebted to the Holy Spirit, and how apt we are to forget, or lose sight of our obligations to him! Jesus, who knew all about our nature, and who knew all that would happen to his people in this world — in order to allay their fears, comfort their hearts, and fortify their souls — promised them the Holy Spirit. What he promised, he performed — and the Holy Spirit is in the Church, and in every true believer, as the gift of Jesus. The Holy Spirit . . .

teaches us,

helps our infirmities,

testifies of Jesus,

sympathizes with us,

and will never leave us.

I wish to dwell for a few minutes, and to write a few lines on this subject, for the benefit of my own soul, and for the profit of others. Lord, help me! Let no unworthy thought enter into my mind. Let no improper word drop from my pen. I would honor the Blessed Comforter, and glorify his most holy name. The Holy Spirit is with us for the most important purposes, and to perform a most glorious work. The Holy Spirit is with us to animate us in conflict. We have to do battle with most determined foes. With indwelling sin, the god of this world, and the evil world itself — all being in league against us — we would faint and give up the contest often, were it not that the Holy Spirit points us to our great Captain, fixes the eye on the crown, and brings home the precious promises, which animate and stimulate us afresh. The Holy Spirit is with us to strengthen us in duty. Many of our duties are very arduous, and exceedingly trying to flesh and blood. We would shrink from them, or fail in them — but that the Holy Spirit, by fresh communications of grace, and supplies from the fullness of Christ — strengthens us with strength in our souls. The Holy Spirit is with us to console in sorrow. He is entitled, "the Comforter." And as such, he administers the choicest consolation to us. Our sorrows are at times very deep. They appear to be overwhelming. We fear we shall sink under them, or dishonor God from our impatience in them — but the Holy Spirit leads us to Gethsemane, or to Calvary — to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. Or he directs our thoughts forward to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, and so administers consolation to us. The Holy Spirit is with us to sanctify in joy. As our sorrows may fill us with gloom, and overwhelm us with distress — so our joys may unduly elate, or make us light and vain. To prevent this, the Holy Spirit reminds us of what we were, or what we would have been — but for the grace of God. He refers us to many who have fallen, or have become carnal and vain — and so preserves us serious, watchful, and prayerful. The Holy Spirit is with us to enlighten in perplexity. This he does . . .

by throwing light upon our path,

by unfolding the Word of God,
or by shining into our minds.

Then we stand in the ways to see. We wait for the Lord. We look out to see our Father's hand clearing our road. We listen to hear the voice behind us, which says, "This is the way — walk in it." The Holy Spirit is with us to help in prayer. For, with the Apostle, we can say, "We know not what to pray for as we ought," therefore "the Spirit helps our infirmities." We have neither light to see what we need, nor faith to believe the promises made to us, nor power to plead with God and prevail — but as the Holy Spirit renders us assistance. He teaches us for what to pray for, and how to pray. He prompts, suggests, and renders us successful at the throne of grace. The Holy Spirit is with us to inspire in praise. Our praises are often very dull. Gratitude is a scarce thing with us. But our praises would be dullness itself, and gratitude to God would be a stranger to our bosom — but for the Holy Spirit. Blessed Comforter . . .

animate me in all my conflicts,

strengthen me in every duty,

console me under all my sorrows,

sanctify me in all my joys,

enlighten me in all my perplexities,

help me in all my prayers,

and inspire all my praises to my covenant God and Father! The Holy Spirit imparts penitence for sin, working in us repentance unto life.

He produces aspirations after holiness, so that we pant to be made pure in body, soul, and spirit.

He gives love to duty, so that we choose the things that please God, esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way.

He leads into correct views of truth, so that we escape the errors that float around us, and are preserved from damnable heresies.

He generates humbling thoughts of self, so that we are not inflated with pride — but lie low before God in self abasement, admiring his free and sovereign grace, which has made us to differ from others.

He unfolds gladdening views, so that we at times see the King in his beauty, and get a glimpse of our future glorious inheritance.

He takes the eye off the saddening and depressing, and fixes it on the cheering and animating.

He gives us liberty in prayer, so that we plead with God, as a man pleads with his friend; and at times, we feel no where so much at home, as at the mercy-seat, when alone with God. The Holy Spirit produces delight in God's law, he shows us its beauty and excellency, assures us that we are delivered from its curse, and shall ultimately be so sanctified, that every vibration of the soul will be in exact conformity with it. Then we say, "O how I love your law — it is my meditation all the

day!"

He fills us with confidence and joy in Christ — then every tear is dissipated, peace and profound happiness are enjoyed, foretastes of Heaven are realized, and we often long to depart and be with Christ — which is far better.

Spirit of Jesus . . .

give me penitence,

produce in me strong aspirations after holiness,

impart to me a love to every duty,

lead me to correct views of divine truth,

give me humbling thoughts of self,

and gladdening views of Jesus,

grant me liberty in prayer,

delight in God's law, and

confidence and joy in Christ!

Reader, have you received the Holy Spirit? Do you know anything of receiving supplies of the Spirit of Christ? Does the Holy Spirit dwell in you, work in you, and endear Jesus to you? The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life — and without him we are dead in sin, alienated from the life of God, and are totally unfit for Heaven! As there is no pardon — but through the blood of Christ; so there is no holiness — but through the Spirit of Christ. And as the blood of Christ will not avail for us, unless it is applied to us; so the Spirit of Christ will not sanctify us, unless he dwells in us.

We cannot get to Heaven without a pardon;

nor obtain a pardon but through the blood of Jesus;

no more can we see God without holiness;

nor be made holy — but by the Spirit of Jesus.

We do not more need a dying Savior on the cross — than we need the living, and life-giving Spirit in our hearts!

See to it then, that you have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, and if you have not, make sure of the blessing as you may, for Jesus has said, "If you being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children — then how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto those who ask him." Ask then, and receive — and so you will be safe!

56 The Love of God

The Love of God What subject can be compared to the love of God? What subject is so sweet, so profitable, so full of wonders!

God, loving his people. The infinite, loving the finite. The Creator, loving his creature. The Most High God, loving a worm. The Holy One, loving the unholy. The Sovereign, loving his rebellious subject. The Eternal God, loving poor sinners in his Son. For God puts us into Christ, and there he blesses us, saves us, and loves us with an infinite love.

I want to think over, to meditate for a little while, on the love of God this morning. Holy Spirit, it is yours to enlighten the mind, and to direct the heart into the love of God. O direct my heart into this glorious subject, and shed abroad the love of God in my heart, that tasting its sweetness, and feeling its power — I may write from experience on this delightful theme!

God loved his people first. No one ever loved God, or wished to love him — but as the effect of his own love. We love him — because he first loved us. He loved all of his people before time began, as he says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

God's love was fixed upon, and flowed out to his people freely. That God loves his people is clearly revealed, and powerfully proved; but WHY did he love them? How did he come to fix his love upon them? How did he come to reveal and communicate that love to them? This he has not told us. He has assured us that it was not for anything in them, or done by them. He loves freely. He loves — just because he will love, or because it pleases him to love. His love is great beyond expression or conception. No one can possibly conceive the greatness of God's love, and if it cannot be conceived, then it cannot be expressed. It is as vast as eternity, and as infinite as his own divine nature. How wonderful, that God should love one like me — and love me with such a love! His love is fraught with every blessing, and is the fountain from which flows every good. Yes, in the love of God is comprised and comprehended, every blessing that can be conferred on sinners in time, or be enjoyed by believers in eternity. The love of God is as unchangeable as his nature. He is without variableness — and so is his love. His works may change, do change, must change; but he is the same, and as he is, so is his love. It ever was, what it is; it is, what it ever was; and what it is, it ever will be. His love is eternal in its duration. Once fixed, it is fixed forever. Having loved his own — he loves them unto the end. No object of his love is ever lost. No one cared for by him, will ever perish. He is able to keep us from falling, and we are kept by his power, through faith unto salvation.

God's love is sweet and powerful, and it wins over all its objects to itself. God is loved — because he loves. The sweet power of his love, as displayed in the gift of his Son, and as shed abroad in the heart by his Spirit — wins us over to himself, and we love him — but never feel as if we loved him enough.

Oh, that I could enter into the love of God more fully! Oh, that I felt the love of God more powerfully! Oh, that I could love God more heartily and constantly, in return for his love to me! Oh,

to illustrate and commend the love of God in my temper, conduct, and conversation with my fellow-men!

Nothing will make me happy — but this love.

Nothing will make me holy — but this love.

Nothing will give me strength and energy for duty — but this love.

If I realize that God loves me, loves me infinitely, loves me eternally — then I can do anything for God, I can suffer anything from the hand of God.

God's love to me, is like . . .

light in darkness,

manna in the wilderness, and

a sweet song in the night.

God's love to me, is . . .

my joy in sorrow,

my solace in suffering, and

my life in the midst of death.

God's love to me, will make me happy anywhere, satisfied with anything, and raise me above the most trying circumstances of time. O may this love comfort me in my lonely hours, in seasons of sickness and sorrow; and may it inspire me with courage, in every conflict with the foe.

Father of mercies, God of love, may I know and believe the love you have to me! Precious Lord Jesus, you are the proof and exposition of the Father's love! May I study you more, know you better, that so I may rejoice in your Father's love! Heavenly Comforter, it is yours to reveal, unfold, and impart the love of God to poor sinners; do more clearly reveal, more fully unfold, and more plentifully impart — the love of God to me, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God!

57 Peace Made

Peace Made

Paul never seems to be so much in his element, as when he is exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. He seems, as if he felt, that he could never speak highly enough of him, or ascribe too much to him. He does indeed set him on high, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world — but also in that which is to come. He speaks of him as God, and as the image of God; as the author and end of creation; but he delights to dwell on his character as the Savior — the Redeemer, the great Peacemaker. He never tells man to make peace with God — but speaks of it as made by the Lord Jesus Christ. I want for a few moments, to refresh my soul, by thinking over those precious words, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." Colossians 1:20.

What a Glorious Work. He has made peace. This supposes disagreement. Man has fallen out with God. He has turned his back on God. He is become the enemy of God. He will not agree with his law — but refuses to yield to its requirements. He will not agree with his gospel — but rejects its provisions. He has a thorough dislike to God, and everything Godlike. He carries his enmity to God, into everything, and shows it in every possible way. And yet, wonderful to tell, God in his own infinite mind, of his own mere grace — formed the purpose, of reconciling his enemies to himself. All the engagements were made in the covenant of grace — and in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, in order to make peace. The Son of God came, and became the Son of man; he entered upon his work of deep humiliation, nor did he rest until it was accomplished. He laid a firm, and honorable foundation, for an everlasting friendship between God and man. He did all that God as the Creator, Lawgiver, and Governor, of the world — could require. He did all that could be demanded of man, in order that God may receive him in mercy, and reconcile him to himself. He procured all that was necessary for the accomplishing of the glorious purpose — the righteousness necessary to justify our souls, and the Spirit needed to sanctify our persons. He confers all that he procured, in order that we may have peace with God, and walk with him in love. Not only so, he maintains the friendship when it is once begun, so that the Apostle argues, "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."

What Wondrous Means He Employs to Make Our Peace. The blood of his cross. The blood of his person; blood that was human — but the blood of one, who while he was human, was also divine. Blood, the virtue of which passes knowledge, so that we cannot fully represent it, we cannot adequately conceive of it! Blood, the value of which is infinite! For while one soul exceeds the value of a world, this blood was sufficient to purchase souls, more numerous than the stars of Heaven, the sands on the sea shore, or the drops of the morning dew! Blood, the glory of which dazzles angelic minds, lights up all Heaven, and throws a bright and beautiful halo around the eternal throne! Precious blood of Jesus, which first stained the soil of Gethsemane — but which flowed out in a full stream on gloomy Calvary! How should we think of this blood, daily, hourly!

How should we rest on this blood, without doubt or fear! How should we plead this blood, with confidence and courage! How should we point Satan to it, when he comes with his temptations; and with it answer all his objections — to our present comfort, or final salvation! How should we bathe the conscience with it, when wounded with guilt, or pierced with the arrows, shot from the bow of a broken law! How should we fix the eye, and rest the heart upon it, when we come into the last conflict! O may I fix my eye on the blood of the cross, when death fixes its eye on me! O to trust the blood, and the blood alone in life, in death, and forever more!

Sinners may enjoy peace with God. Jesus died in order that they may. Any sinner may be reconciled to God, and come into a state of friendship with God. God asks us to do so, yes begs us to do so — and promises that he will not impute our trespasses unto us. All that is necessary to our reconciliation — Jesus has done, Jesus has suffered; and looking to him, and resting on what he has done — we may be on terms of peace with a righteous and holy God, at any moment. But peace can only be obtained at the cross. There the ransom price was paid. There the demands of Justice were fully met. There mercy and peace met together, righteousness and truth embraced each other. There God can be just — and yet justify the sinner. There God can maintain his authority — and yet receive as his bosom friend, his bitterest foe. Cross of Jesus! You are . . .

the foundation of my hope,

the ground of my confidence,

the source of my comfort,

and my daily boast.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ; and in that, may I glory more and more; in that, may I glory, both in life and in death! To maintain peace, we must keep our eye fixed on the blood of the cross.

Nothing will calm a troubled conscience,

nothing will silence an accusing devil,

nothing will allay the fears of the heart,

nothing will smooth the dying pillow

— but the blood of the cross. May I therefore . . .

daily apply to the blood,

daily recommend the blood,

daily plead the blood,

daily rejoice in the blood.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus, which . . .

cleanses us from all sin,

fills us with holy peace, and

maintains our friendship with a righteous God!

58 Contentment

Contentment

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Php 4:11-13

Man is a poor discontented creature. He is never satisfied for long. Whatever he has — he wants something that he has not. And if he had all that he could desire — he would rack his mind to find out something to wish for, and be dissatisfied about. Sin is the source of all dissatisfaction — the parent of all discontent. But if lost sinners are discontented — believers ought not to be. They are commanded to be content with such things as they have. They are exhorted, having food and clothing, therewith to be content. But, alas! many Christians know but little of real contentment. Now, if I can pen a few lines, which with God's blessing, would produce or increase contentment in my own heart, and the hearts of a few of my fellow believers — I shall do good. Let me then look up to the Lord, and beseech him to give me grace, to enable me to do so, to the praise and glory of his holy name.

Fellow traveler to Zion, are you contented with the lot your God has cast for you? Or, are you complaining, sighing, and uselessly wishing for a change? If the latter — then stop complaining, and listen for a few moments to me.

Consider what God is to you. Is he not your God in Jesus? Is he not your Heavenly Father? Does he not love you with an everlasting love? Has he not ordained and arranged all your affairs for you in his infinite wisdom? Has he not also assured you, that all things work together for your good? And under such circumstances — must it not be wicked to complain, repine, or be discontented.

Then, consider what Christ has done for you. Has he not put away your sins, by the sacrifice of himself? Has he not provided you with a glorious, an everlasting righteousness? Has he not promised to be with you always, even unto the end? Is he not now pleading for you in Heaven, and preparing a place for you in his Father's house? Has he not also given you his Word, that he will come again, and receive you unto himself, that where he is, there you may be also? Is this the case — and you discontented? O for shame!

Consider what eternity will be to you. Eternity, a state of endless existence, what will it be to the believer? It will be . . .

light — without darkness;

joy — without sorrow;

health — without sickness;

pleasure — without pain;

triumphs — without trials;
and life — without death. In eternity, you will . . .
receive all that you desire,
enjoy all that you can wish,
be where you will be perfectly happy, and
possess all that your God can give.

Set then eternity — against time, the future — against the present, and blush if you feel the least dissatisfaction with your lot.

Consider the providence that watches over you. Providence is . . .

God's eye fixed upon you,
God's mind devising for you,
God's heart sympathizing with you,
God's hand supplying you,
God's arm placed beneath you.

You are the especial care, of a special and particular providence, which . . .
numbers the very hairs of your head,
watches every step you take, and
will overrule everything for your eternal welfare.

Child of providence, child of the God of providence — be content!

Consider the design which God has, in trying you. It is to prevent your falling into the evils produced by fullness of bread, or uninterrupted prosperity. It is to produce humility, or faith, or some other grace — which will adorn your character, count on your future history, and bring honor to his dear name. God's design in every pain or privation, in every trial and trouble, in every loss and cross — is worthy of himself.

All flows from divine love.

All is directed by infinite wisdom.

All is designed for your good.

Ought you not then to be thankful!

Consider the consequences of prosperity to many. How it . . .
feeds their pride,
inflates them with vanity, and

binds them to the present world. In the closet, they are lifeless;
in the sanctuary uninterested;
in Christian society, uncomfortable;
and when thinking of death, unhappy.

They have . . .

little spirituality,
little gratitude to God, and
but little comfort in their own souls.

They do little good, have little fellowship with God, and are very unlike the Lord Jesus Christ.
Would you wish to be like them?

Consider why the Spirit is given to you. It is to . . .

fortify you against fear,
strengthen you in every trouble, and
conform you to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit is given to you . . .
to lead you to Christ,
to teach you to make use of Christ, and
to instruct you how to bring honor and glory to Christ. The Spirit is given to you to . . .
unfold and apply the promises,
help your infirmities in prayer, and

cry, Abba Father, in your heart. The Spirit is to do all within you — as the Lord Jesus has done all without you. Then, sow to the Spirit, live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit — and discontent will flee away; joy, peace, and gratitude, will fill your soul; and your life will be as happy, as it is often uncomfortable now.

Or, consider God's decree, which fixed your lot, and did so for the wisest and best of reasons. His decree is so fixed, that all your struggling, fretting, and complaining, will not alter it.

Consider Christ's example, who chose the poor man's place; and who was poorer than you are, more tried than you are, and who suffered far more than you can. Yet he never complained. No one ever heard a word tinged with discontent proceed from his lips; and he is the copy you are to imitate, the example you are to follow.

Consider the gracious promises. Promises . . .

of God's presence,
of God's care, and

of God's assistance.

Promises made to . . .

banish fears,

excite your gratitude, and

inspire you with holy confidence.

Promises which secure to you, all that is necessary for the present life — and of that which is to come.

Consider the condition of the primitive saints. Where you have one trial — they had fifty. Where they had one outward comfort — you have a hundred. They were many of them homeless, friendless, and oppressed. To them, earth was a wilderness, life only a series of trials; and death, or the coming of Jesus, alone afforded them hope of deliverance. Look at them hidden in dens and caves of the earth, clothed in a goat skins, or a sheep skins, wandering about from place to place, being destitute, afflicted, tormented!

Consider of your deserts. What have you merited? What have you deserved? Can you claim one comfort, one privilege, one exemption from suffering on the ground of desert? Or, if you had only your desert — would you have . . .

a rag to cover you,

a morsel to feed you,

a drop to refresh you,

a shed to shelter you,

a law to protect you,

a friend to speak to you, or

one ray of hope to cheer you? Would you have anything but Hell? The frown of God, the wrath of God, the curse of God, and these forever! Oh, what a dreadful state you would be in, if you had only your deserts!

Consider your future prospects:

DELIVERANCE, perfect deliverance . . .

from every foe and every fear,

from every pain and every privation,

from every trouble and every trial.

POSSESSION, eternal possession . . .

of health and wealth,

of life and liberty,

of God and Heaven,

of Christ and inconceivable glory!

Oh, how bright, how beautiful, how blessed, the prospects of a believer in Jesus are!

Consider, finally, of God's glorious designs in all that he does or permits. It is his own glory in connection with your present and everlasting welfare. His designs are always worthy of himself, and he never does anything, or allows anything to be done, which will in any way affect his people — but with a wise, a holy, a gracious design.

How then, can you be discontented . . .

if you believe that God fixed your lot by his immutable decree;

if you keep your eye fixed on Jesus as your example;

if you receive and rest on the great and gracious promises;

if you consider the condition in which primitive saints were placed;

if you think of your own deserts;

if you consider the prospects opening before you;

if you meditate on God's glorious designs in all that happens to you?

I ask, how can you be discontented? But if discontent should be felt working within you, then as an antidote to this accursed evil, think . . .

of what God is to you;

of what Christ has done for you;

of what eternity will be to you;

of the providence that watches over you;

of the design of God in trying you;

of the painful consequences of prosperity to many;

and of the purposes for which the Holy Spirit is given you.

And, if such considerations fail to make you humble, grateful, and contented — then, go the mercy-seat and confess your sins, mourn over your evil heart, and beseech God to give you more grace — that so your whole soul may be brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

Gracious God, you have commanded us to be content with such things as we have, because you will never leave us, nor forsake us. We beseech you to give us the grace of contentment, that we may obey your wise and holy command! O grant, that we may not only be content — but grateful. And from a deep sense of your undeserved goodness, and unmerited love — may we praise and bless your glorious name forever!

Holy Spirit, give us such a view of the Hell we have escaped, such a view of the Heaven promised us, and such a view of the price Jesus paid for our ransom — that we may sink into the profound depths of humility, and rise to the highest heights of grateful love!

O Savior, we bless you, we praise you, and we magnify your glorious name, for all you have procured for us, wrought in us, and set before us! And we rejoice that throughout eternity, we shall be still praising you!

59 The Character of Christ's Church

The Character of Christ's Church

There is a good — a glorious time coming. The Lord shall be King over all the earth. Jesus will be personally present with his people. The curse will be completely rolled away from the world, and the effects of that curse will cease. Creation will be in harmony and be happy. The Church will be like Christ, as well as with Christ. Then shall be fulfilled the Lord's precious promise, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9. This promise must be made good, and a glorious time it will be when it is. But the former part of the verse represents what a Church of Christ should be now, and how a Church of Christ should appear at present. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

God's Church is represented by a MOUNTAIN. A mountain is composed of common earth — for there is no difference between the Lord's people and others by nature. All are alike corrupt, depraved, and sinful. A mountain is created by divine power. The hand that scooped out the ocean, leveled the plains, and spread out the valleys — piled up the mountains. It is the power of God, working with the Word, that makes the Christian. And a company of such Christians, bound and banded together constitute a Church. A mountain is clothed with verdure and rendered visible. So the Church is clothed with holiness, and appears as Christ made visible. All the graces of the Holy Spirit deck and adorn the Lord's people, and they are manifestly declared to be the sons of God, the people of the Lord. A mountain invites the traveler to ascend, inhale the breeze, and enjoy the prospect. So the true Church invites us to come, and with her receive the sweet and delightful influences of the Spirit, to see the king in his beauty, and catch a glimpse of the heavenly glory.

It is a holy mountain. Separated from the world, set apart for God, and consecrated to his praise and glory. Its author is holy, for it is the Church of God.

Chosen by the Father,

redeemed by the Son, and

sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Its source is holy, for it flows from the free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace of God. The purpose, the plan, and the production of the Church was entirely of grace. The instrument by which it is produced, is holy. For the Word of God is the instrument which the Holy Spirit employs in the regeneration, sanctification, and edification of the Church of God. The design of it is holy.

It is God's residence.

It is the Savior's spouse.

It is the Spirit's temple.

It is intended to exhibit the excellency of the divine character, purposes, and plans. In every view of it, the Church of God is holy, not perfectly at present — but is preparing to be so ultimately. The prediction is, "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." The opposite is implied — that LOVE shall reign. The Lord's people are principally remarkable for their love. They are taught of God to love one another; and let a man have what he may, if he has not love — he is not a genuine Christian.

LIBERTY shall triumph. The Church of Christ is the home of liberty. There should be liberty to think, to act, and in some things to differ. The Church was to be characterized by unity — but not by uniformity. It is a mountain, not a dead level.

TENDERNESS shall be displayed. They shall not hurt with tongue, pen, or sword; in mind, body, or estate. They shall not destroy — life shall be held sacred, and therefore be safe. The Church of Christ should be a loving family — a circle of friends — a company of equals. Distinctions there must be, as in every family; but a degree of equality there should be, as in every well-regulated family. No Church is perfectly what it ought to be, or perfectly what God requires it to be — except it can be said of it and its members, that they neither hurt nor destroy in all that holy mountain.

Compare this with POPERY. Who can say that they never hurt nor destroy in that Church. Compare this with many religious establishments, which fine, imprison, and put its members to death. As soon as ever a Church becomes a persecuting body — it loses its right to be called a Church of Christ.

See the dignity, the duty, and the destiny of the Church of God, like some lofty mountain it is to stand out in bold relief from the world! Like a mountain whose sides are clothed with green and pleasant verdure, it is to be lovely and attractive to the traveler's eye. And like a mountain inhabited by some loving family — all the members of the Church are to be full of love, sympathy, and kindness.

Let every professed Christian seek to be like his Lord, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Church discipline should be attended to — but only in order to the purity, peace, and prosperity of the body. We are not to allow sin in a brother — nor to walk in fellowship, or join in company with wicked people. As we are not of the world — we are to be distinct from the world. As redeemed from among men — we are to be unlike men, that is, superior to men.

Let not the sinner then be prejudiced against religion by anything he sees in professors, or in Churches; the only standard of true religion is the Bible; the only model is the Lord Jesus; and only as we answer to the descriptions of God's Word, and walk as Jesus walked — are we entitled to be considered his disciples, or looked upon as his Church.

Lord, in your mercy, so pour out your holy, loving, gentle Spirit upon us, that it may be literally true, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

60 Hindering the Gospel

Hindering the Gospel The gospel is a glorious revelation of grace. It is a message from a gracious God to a world of sinners, by which God informs them of a Savior, invites them to be saved by him, and promises salvation to every one who trusts in him. By the gospel, God informs us that he is merciful, that his nature is love, that he does not wish to punish us — but wishes to be friends with us, and therefore beseeches us to be reconciled unto him. By the gospel, God works in the conversion of sinners, in the comfort of sufferers, and in the sanctification of believers. We have the gospel for the world. We are to preserve it spread it, illustrate it, and adorn it. In every way we are to make it known, and every one of us should be inspired with the beneficial fear that influenced the Apostles mind, when he surrendered his unquestionable right, and assigned as his reason, "Lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." 1 Corinthians 9:12.

Here is a Solemn Fact, the gospel may be hindered. We may hinder the spread of it, by withholding the means, by discouraging the preachers, or by grieving the Spirit. The gospel is the Savior's triumphal car, in which he rides forth conquering and to conquer; and it is our duty to prepare the way for it, and by all means to help it forward. Hence Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." It is for us to prepare a good, smooth, straight, firm road for the gospel chariot to roll along; if we do not, we hinder it.

We may hinder the effect of it, prejudicing people against it, and preventing people from coming to hear it. Many professors, who should be a proof of the truth of the gospel, and a powerful argument why others should embrace it — hinder by their spirit, temper, and conduct — certain parties from calmly examining it, cordially embracing it, publicly professing it, and assisting to circulate it. Like the Lawyers of old, only in another way, they take away the key of knowledge, not entering in themselves, and those who would enter in they hinder. Luke 12:51. This is often done by professors — they are so cold and indifferent, so careless, unsociable, covetous, proud and haughty, light and frivolous, sour and crabbed! They are anything, and everything — but what they should be. For everyone that professes Christ, should be zealous in his cause, hearty in his service, friendly and kind, humble and courteous, pleasant and obliging. In a word, they should resemble him who was meek and lowly of heart, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and who went about doing good: and if this is not in some good measure the case — we hinder the gospel of Christ! For we all exert an influence for good or evil; it may be secret, silent, or unconscious — but it is powerful, either to help or hinder the gospel.

Mark the Apostle's Concern. "Lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." He feared doing it, he loved the Savior so much, he prized the gospel so highly, and he was so intently set upon saving souls from death — that he dreaded few things more than hindering the gospel. He therefore endeavored to avoid hindering the gospel, in order to which he adapted himself to his circumstances, consulted the prejudices of his hearers, accommodated himself to their peculiarities — if by any means he might save some. Yes, he sought to please all men, in all things not sinful — that he might gain the more. Consequently, he denied himself, brought his body into

subjection, gave up his right to financial support, wrought with his own hands for his own support, and for the support of his friends too, lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ. He strove by all means to commend the gospel, to proclaim the gospel, and to induce men to embrace the gospel. His conduct was noble, and is worthy of our admiration and closest imitation.

Brethren, let us also fear to walk on the margin of our liberty, to punctiliously contend for all our rights, or to yield to a self-indulgent spirit, lest we should hinder the gospel. We have perhaps hindered it; if so, let us be sorry for it, grieve over it, and seek grace that we may in future recommend it, and induce others to admire and accept it. The gospel is entrusted to us. It was originally delivered to the saints, and by them it has been handed down to us, that we may believe it, enjoy it, publish it, and in every possible way recommend it. We are identified with its success or failure; if it succeeds through us — we share in the honor; if it fails through us — we are involved in the consequences. Succeed or fail it must, and perhaps it depends very much more on us, than we have been given to think — we may have hindered it. The reason why many ministers of the gospel cannot prosper, why many of the Churches do not flourish, is that the members hinder. Instead of every one putting his shoulder to the wheel to help the chariot along — they put stumbling blocks in the way, and by a censorious spirit, or a cold heart, or a haughty manner — they hinder the gospel. This is also the reason why there are so many prejudiced against the gospel: they judge of religion by us — and not by the Bible; they look at us as its standard — not at the Lord Jesus. Thus the inconsistent tradesman prejudices his customers; and the customer by his slack and slow payments prejudices the tradesman; the servant by perverseness, lack of cleanliness, or purloining, prejudices the mistress; and the mistress, by her fretfulness, lack of sympathy, and severity, prejudices the servant; the master by the hard bargains that he drives, and the low wages that he gives, prejudices those he employs; and the employed by idleness, lack of interest in his master's business, and general dissatisfaction, prejudices the master.

Some by their gloom — others by their giddiness;

some by their love of luxury — and others by indulgence in dress;

some by being found at carnal amusements — others by profaning the Lord's day for pleasure, or self-indulgence;

some by one means — and some by another,

produce a prejudice against religion, and cause worldlings to say, "If that is religion — I am better without it!" The kitchen often hinders religion in the parlor — and the parlor hinders religion in the kitchen. The warehouse, the mill, or the workshop — hinders religion in the counting-house; and the counting-house hinders religion in the mill, or the warehouse, or the workshop. The pulpit sometimes hinders religion in the pew — and the pew hinders the success of the pulpit. Beloved, a great amount of responsibility rests upon us; let us beware, lest the blood of souls be charged on us; lest by anything in our temper, conversation, or conduct — we should hinder the gospel of Christ, for every one of us must give account of himself to God.

We are every day of our life, in every place, by every publication — either helping or hindering the gospel. We cannot be neutral, especially if we are professors of religion. When therefore the cause of God does not prosper, when souls are not converted, when the gospel does not spread or succeed in our neighborhood — let us solemnly ask ourselves the question, "Have I hindered the

gospel of Christ? If there is a Jonah in that vessel — am I that Jonah?"

Sunday School teacher, has the gospel free course in your school? Is it glorified in the conversion of your children? If not, put the question to your conscience, "Have I by any means, or in any way, hindered the gospel of Christ?"

Church member, is the Church to which you belong prosperous, does the Lord add the saved unto it daily? Does it grow in grace, and do its members abound in good works? If not, ask, seriously ask, "What hinders? Who hinders? Do I hinder the gospel of Christ?"

Minister of Christ, is your ministry successful? Are souls saved? Do inquirers fly as a cloud, or as doves unto their windows? Is the Church at peace, and do the people walk in the comforts of the Holy Spirit? Is the hand of the Lord with you, and do many believe and turn to the Lord? If not, ask, and ask with deep seriousness, "What hinders? Who hinders? Lord, Is it I?"

God of grace, pardon, pardon us — for we have often, and in many, many ways hindered your gospel! Henceforth plant in our hearts the beneficial fear that shall prompt us to suffer wrong, make sacrifices, accommodate ourselves to all circumstances; yes, to do anything, or suffer anything, "lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ."

61 A Man of Sorrows

A Man of Sorrows

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Isaiah 53:3 Or whom does the prophet speak? Of himself, or of some other man? Not of himself — but of his Master. The inspiring Spirit led his mind forward, and represented by him the sufferings of the Messiah. He speaks of Jesus. Of Jesus the Son of Mary. Of Jesus the Son of God. Of Jesus the great sufferer, who bore our sins and carried our sorrows. O to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and to be led into a knowledge of his heart-breaking sorrows! With more force and propriety than Jeremiah, he could say, "Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." O Savior, your sufferings were astonishing, your sorrows were indescribable — may my soul be deeply and properly affected with a sense of them! The cause of his sorrows, was his having assumed, or undertaken, the office of Mediator. He had agreed in the everlasting covenant, to come between a righteous God, and unrighteous sinners — and effect a reconciliation. He therefore was to do what they left undone, and to suffer what they deserved. On the principle of grace, in accordance with law and justice — he was to reconcile man to God, and to lay a foundation for an honorable and everlasting friendship. He became Surety for his people, undertaking to discharge their obligations, and bring them back to holiness and God. In order to this, he became their Substitute, and undertook to answer for them, and honorably secure their discharge from all the demands of law and justice. He had therefore to suffer, in order to put away their sin, to endure the curse of God, to satisfy the claims of justice. In doing this, he had to endure sorrows — dreadful beyond description or conception. His Father hid his face, and left him alone in his dying agonies on the cross. His disciples abandoned him. His foes insulted and reproached him. Satan and his hosts harassed, tempted, and distressed him. And the state of sinners excited his deepest sympathy, and filled his bosom with the keenest anguish. Sorrow flowed into his heart from every quarter — and he became a reservoir of woe. Floods of bitter anguish descended on his holy soul. If all the sorrows, endured by all sinners, had been squeezed into one cup — it would not have equaled the sorrows of the Son of God. His was a baptism of woe. Nor were his sorrows confined to one period of his life, though they became more terrible toward the last. As soon as he could, he began to suffer, and his sorrow accumulated as he went on, until all its waves and its billows went over him; and he was laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, and in the deeps. His was a life of suffering. Pain, grief, and sorrow, were his companions by day and by night; they accompanied him, increasing in strength and intensity, until they expired with him on the cross. O to be properly affected with a sense of my Savior's sufferings and sorrows, seeing he endured the whole for me! His sufferings were intensely great, being inflicted on both body and soul. They were varied — coming from all quarters. They were lasting — enduring through life, and only ending with his death. They were meritorious — being endured by one who was independent, being under no obligation to suffer them — but who voluntarily engaged to do so, to honor the moral

government of God; that so God might be just, in justifying the ungodly. They were sufficient — more could not be exacted, or be justly inflicted. They were therefore satisfactory — so, that as believers in Jesus, as represented by him, and as saved through him, penal sufferings can never be inflicted upon us.

Jesus was the great sufferer — he is now the great sympathizer. He knows by experience, all that his people endure, he can therefore support them, console them, and deliver them — and he will do so.

Blessed Jesus, may I, whenever in pain of body, or enduring sorrow of mind, think of you, turn to you, and have fellowship with you. At most, I do but sip of the cup of woe — but you have drained it, and drank its very dregs! May I be willing to suffer for you, to suffer with you, and having done so, expect, O blessed expectation! expect to sit down with you in your kingdom, and enjoy your love, and share in your joy forever!

62 Our Strength

Our Strength "As is the man — so is his strength." Judges 8:21

These were the words of the kings of Midian, when requesting Gideon to put them to death himself, that so they might be quickly dispatched. But the words contain a general truth. Physically, the man's strength is according to his age, health, and discipline. And so in reference to religious matters. The natural man has only natural strength; but the spiritual man has spiritual strength. Yet the strength of spiritual men differ, there are degrees; and so the strength of the same man varies at different times, and under different circumstances. As our age is — so is our strength; the new-born babe has but little strength; the young child has more; but the young man is expected to be strong. As our health is — so is our strength; some are weak and sickly, and some are healthy and strong. As our temperament is — so is our strength; some are timid and nervous, and others are courageous and hopeful. As our discipline is — so is our strength; the soldier must be drilled and exercised, the wrestler and the racer must be taught and trained. As the state of the heart is — so is our strength; if carnal, we are like Ephraim, who was called a silly dove, without heart; if backsliding, we are like Samson, when he lost his hair; if deeply spiritual, we shall be like Paul, whom nothing could daunt — but who could do all things through Christ strengthening him.

Spirituality, therefore, is of the greatest importance, for as our spirituality is — so is our strength . . .

to resist Satan;

to overcome the world;

to crucify the flesh;

to put off the old man with his deeds;

to bear afflictions; and

to work for God and souls. Is a man strong? He will undertake to do much, to do many things, to do difficult things. He will attempt great achievements. He will persevere in what he begins. He will overcome his foes. He will master his difficulties. He will triumph and be crowned.

It is folly for us to complain of weakness — unless we seek grace, and use means, that we may grow, regain our health, be recovered from our backsliding, and so become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. In vain do we look for strength — but from the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and the deepening of our sanctification. It is the indwelling of the Spirit, and his gracious operations, which makes us strong. If we had more holiness, and more of the Spirit of God — we would be stronger. May the Lord strengthen us with all might, by his Spirit, in the inner man, that we may be no longer children — but become strong men, and by our strength, glorify the Lord.

Carry the idea to Jesus — as he is, so is his strength. As he is one with God, really and truly God, his strength is omnipotent, unchangeable, and eternal. To him all things are possible. The God

man, has the strength of God and man, united in his glorious person, and that strength he employs for us. But he will employ it wisely — for our good and his own glory.

He will employ it lovingly — as our circumstances require.

He will employ it holily — so as to secure our sanctification.

He will employ it according to his Word — making it perfect in our weakness.

It is a mercy to feel our weakness, otherwise we would not value the strength of Jesus; and it is well that we are required to make use of strength, or we should not apply to Jesus, to strengthen us with strength in our souls. But for the strength of Jesus — we must fail. But by his strength — we can do and suffer all things. His own arm wrought our salvation, effects our deliverances, and will sustain us under all our troubles. On that arm we may lean, and by that arm we shall be led and defended, until we arrive at our Father's house.

Precious Savior! to your strength I look, on your promises I rely, and on your faithfulness I depend! You shall lead me by your right hand, guide me with your eye, and at last, place me before your face forever.

Holy Spirit, daily renew my mind, revive my graces, increase my spiritual strength — that I may work for Jesus, win souls for God, defeat Satan in every engagement, and meet the last enemy without fear or trepidation! My Heavenly Father, you have commanded my strength, strengthen I beseech you, that which you have wrought in me, and make me strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, for your mercies' sake!

63 Waiting for the Hope of Righteousness

Waiting for the Hope of Righteousness The gospel, like some swift-winged messenger of mercy from the upper skies, flies through the world, having in its hand an act of grace, for the emancipation of the slaves of sin and Satan; and proclaiming a full, a present, an everlasting pardon, to all who will accept of it. It prescribes no conditions — but only asks us to believe, receive, and be happy! It takes the willing soul by the hand, and leads it from the Lawgiver — to the Savior; and delivering it from the law — places it under grace. Now there is no condemnation. Now there is no ground for doubting or fearing. Now the slave — becomes a child, the servant — becomes a son.

Into this state, the Galatians were brought, by the preaching of Paul; from this state, they were being led by the Judaizing teachers; therefore the Apostle reproves them, reasons with them, and exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty, with which Christ has made them free, and be no more entangled with the yoke of bondage. He insists upon it, that it must be all law — or all grace. Moses alone — or Christ alone. That justification must be gratuitous — or altogether by our own works; and if any one sought justification, in whole, or in part, by the works of the law — he was fallen from grace. "For we," said he, "through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Galatians 5:5. We, through the teaching, and power of the Spirit, wait for the blessed object of our hope — even eternal life, by faith.

Here is an ATTRACTIVE Object. "The hope," not a grace — but a prospect — not a work within us — but an object before us. The hope that is laid up for us in Heaven, of which we have been informed by the gospel.

It is something good, exceeding good.

It is something future, which we are led to expect.

It is something attainable, though its attainment may be difficult.

It is an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, which is reserved in Heaven for us.

It is a house not made with hands.

It is a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

It is a state, in which we shall enjoy a freedom from all evil, and be put in possession of all real good, both physical and moral. The poor body will no more suffer from pain — but will be healthy, spiritual, powerful, and immortal. The soul will be no more tormented by sin, nor harassed with doubts, and fears — but will be holy, confident, and happy forever.

O glorious hope, prepared for us, by our Heavenly Father's love; procured for us, by our beloved Savior's sufferings and death, and revealed to us, by the blessed Spirit, in God's holy book! The GROUND of Our Hope is Righteousness. The righteousness of Jesus. A righteousness, which is

the gift of grace. A righteousness, which becomes ours through faith. A righteousness, which Jesus wrought out for us. A righteousness, which the Holy Spirit revealed to us. A righteousness, which became ours by believing in Jesus. A righteousness, which was provided by the Son of God, which is imparted to us by the Father of mercies, and which we were enabled to apprehend and appropriate through the aid of the eternal Spirit. This is the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all, those who believe, without any difference. No righteousness — no Heaven. No faith — no righteousness. How important then is faith in Christ! The MEDIUM of Possession, is Faith. Not works, however splendid. Not experience, however deep. No — but by simple faith alone, the righteousness of Christ becomes ours; and through that righteousness, the hope of eternal life. In this faith, there is first the persuasion of the existence of this righteousness. Feeling our need of a righteousness, we are led to the Divine Word; there we are informed, that God through the life, labors, and death of his beloved Son — has provided a righteousness for sinners. Hence springs up in the mind, the persuasion that there is already prepared, the very righteousness we need. Then we embrace the righteousness provided for us, and presented to us. And perceiving that God has laid up in Heaven a glorious hope for all who believe in his Son, a confident expectation of enjoying it, springs up in the mind.

We expect it as a free gift. We feel confident, because God who cannot lie, has promised. Being a free gift — no worthiness is expected in the recipient. Being provided by a faithful God — we can look forward to it with confidence and joy. It is promised to faith — not to works; to believing — not to doing. "It is," as the Apostle says, "of faith, that it might be by grace." Our Present Position is Waiting.

We wait for the glorious object of our hope.

We have to wait God's time — when we shall be put into possession.

We wait in God's way — which leads us directly to the inheritance.

We wait in God's work — who employs us for our good, and his own glory.

We wait — and should do so patiently, though briars and thorns be with us.

We wait — and should do so with perseverance; though the Lord may delay, and we may be deeply tried, sorely troubled, and often filled with painful solicitude.

Waiting supposes, that we believe the object of hope to be real, certain, valuable, and worth waiting for; and this is preeminently the case with the hope of the gospel. We shall have a real Heaven, the same that Jesus has. Its value is incalculable, for it comprises all that is good, great, and glorious. It is certain, as certain as the promise and oath of God, the obedience and blood-shedding of the Son of God, and the witness and the earnest of the Holy Spirit can make it. O glorious object of our hope! Hoping for what we see not; that which is real, invaluable, and certain — well may we with patience wait for it. The SOURCE From Whence We Derive Grace To Wait, is the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Christ, works faith in our hearts, produces patience and fortitude — and fixing the eye on the glorious hope, enables us to wait for it. We are not more indebted to the work of Christ without us, for a title to this hope — than we are to the Holy Spirit within us, for a perception of it, a desire to possess it, and patience to wait for it. By his gracious influences and divine teaching — he encourages us under all our difficulties,

supports us in all our conflicts, witnesses to our interest in it, and points us forward, persuading us that we shall possess it. Blessed Spirit, you begat in me a desire for glory, you revealed Jesus to me as the way to obtain it, you worked faith in my heart to believe and expect it, and hitherto you have enabled me to wait for it.

Brethren, see, first, on what your eye should be fixed — the hope laid up for you in Heaven.

See, second, on what your heart should rest — the righteousness of God our Savior.

See, third, the principle you should cherish, faith. Not doubts, or fears, or languishing hopes — but faith. Faith in Jesus and his finished work! Faith in God, and his covenant love, and most holy Word.

See, fourth, the posture in which you should be found, waiting. Not sleeping — but watching. Not loitering — but working.

Waiting, or looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God, our Savior Jesus Christ.

See, finally, the agent to whom you are indebted, the Holy Spirit. Yes, to the Holy Spirit, you are laid under the deepest obligation, and to the Holy Spirit you should render constant praise. Seek . . . to realize more of his presence,

to feel more of his power,

to experience more of his love, and

to exhibit in your daily life and conversation more of his fruits.

O my soul, see to it that this is your daily experience, and seek grace to say, "I, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

64 A Regret and Determination

A Regret and Determination

Some time ago, I wrote a letter to one who was under deep conviction of sin, and under much discouragement was seeking a saving interest in the Savior. My letter was made a comfort to him, and the advice I was enabled to give, proved a blessing. I have just received a letter of thanks, telling me he believes he has now obtained the pardon of sin — but was suffering under sore temptations, and was passing through a severe conflict. But one portion of the letter struck me as likely to be useful to others, especially to the young, therefore I copy it, in order to make a few remarks upon it. It is this:

"Oh, that I had given my heart to the Savior when I was a boy — I would not now have to suffer this remorse of conscience! I have truly proved Satan to be a hard task-master — but I will serve him no more! God give me grace to resist him!"

How often we have heard people regret that they served Satan so long — and sought the Lord so late. But we never heard anyone regret that he sought the Lord so soon, or broke off from Satan's service so early. How many we have known who have been made to possess the iniquities of their youth, and have found all their latter days clouded, by the effects of their early transgressions. When God has forgiven us — we cannot forgive ourselves. Satan will accuse us with the past, and trouble us with temptations which derive their power from our former course; and through the memory, bring back former scenes to harass and distress us. Oh, the pangs felt by one who has lived long in sin, even after being savingly converted to God!

Mark my friend's view of religion — it is giving the heart to the Savior. Jesus asks for our hearts. He created them for himself. He desires them for his residence. He wishes to make them holy and happy. He might seize them by his power, or command them by his authority — but he stoops to ask for them, as if we were doing him a favor. "My son — give me your heart." But he is refused. His request is slighted. He is treated with contempt, and the heart is given to the world, to sin, to Satan, to anyone, or anything in preference to him! Is it not astonishing, that he will accept it at all after this? Yet, he never refuses the heart that is sincerely offered to him. However polluted, however depraved, however hardened by sin — he receives it and washes it in his blood, softens it by his love, and adorns it with the graces of his Holy Spirit. He takes the heart that was only fit fuel for everlasting burnings — and makes it fit for the presence and enjoyment of God! How astonishing!

How many have testified that Satan was a hard task-master — but no one ever found Jesus so. The very pleasures of sin — are a vile and degrading bondage! But the service, the religion of Jesus — is perfect freedom. Every servant of Jesus will speak well of his service, and better of the Master. No one ever regretted entering into his service, or wished they had delayed to do so longer. Oh no! His service is sweet. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. To serve Jesus on earth is pleasant — but what will it be to serve him in Heaven? The service of Satan is hard on earth —

but what will it be in Hell? The work of sin is bad enough — but what will the wages of sin be! No slavery is like the slavery of sin! No task-master is half so iron-handed as Satan! No end is so dreadful as the end of a sinner's course! His light will go out in blackness of darkness. His day will end in a night of eternal agony and woe.

Reader, have you given your heart to Jesus? Is he enthroned in your affections? Have you felt your need of him? Have you felt an all-conquering desire after him? Have you gone as a poor sinner to him? Have you cried to him for mercy? Have you laid your heart at his feet? Are your affections set on things above, or on things below?

You may judge yourself, and ascertain your true state by this, for where the treasure is — there will the heart be also.

If you have not given your heart to Jesus — do so at once. If there is a doubt about it, surrender it afresh, and make the matter sure. Are you young? A young man or a young woman? Then let me beseech you to give your heart to the Savior, while you are yet young. Ah how many have said, "I wish I had given my heart to the Savior when I was a boy! I wish I had given my heart to the Savior when I was a girl!" You may escape the remorse suffered by such, and while you are yet young, you may enjoy the sweetness, the power, the pleasures of real religion.

"I will serve Satan no more! God give me grace to resist!" said my friend. May you say so too.

You have served Satan long enough — too long! Break off from him then at once. Flee to Jesus at once. Seek grace to resist him at once. There is a throne of grace — fall on your knees before it. God gives grace to the graceless — ask him to give grace to you. He gives more grace to those who have a little — seek more grace. In a word, seek to be a very decided, devoted, and useful Christian. You may be. God will make you so, if you desire to be so, and if you put yourselves into his hands to be made so.

Jesus Christ is just suited to you.

He alone can make you happy.

He alone can make you holy.

He alone can give you a title to Heaven.

He alone can make you a blessing on earth.

He alone can blot out all your past sins — and give you wisdom, strength, and grace to enable you to honor him in future. My friend obtained pardon — and so may you. He obtained mercy — and so may you. He has become a new creature — and so may you! Oh, that you were wise — that you may understand these things, and would consider your latter end! Oh, that before you rise up from reading these lines — you may give your heart to Jesus, to be his wholly, his entirely, and his forever!

Why should this earth delight us so?

Why should we fix our eyes

On those low grounds where sorrows grow,

And every pleasure dies?
While time his sharpest teeth prepares
Our comforts to devour,
There is a land above the stars,
And joys above his power!

65 A Prayer in Soul Trouble

A Prayer in Soul Trouble

Quicken me, O Lord, for your name's sake! For your righteousness sake, bring my soul out of trouble!"Psalms 143:11 The soul that has been once quickened, often feels its need of being quickened again. David did, and therefore he often prayed for this blessing. He knew what it was to be overwhelmed, and have his heart desolate within him. Then he looked back to his past experience, which is sometimes profitable; but he soon looked up and sought help from Heaven, which is much better. He cried with fervor, he pleaded with earnestness, he entreated as for his life. He sought . . .

deliverance from foes,

instruction in God's ways, and

a renewed sense of God's loving-kindness. At length, he cried out, as with his whole soul, "Quicken me, O Lord, for your name's sake! For your righteousness sake, bring my soul out of trouble!"

He Was in Trouble. So is the believer at times, and some believers are often. Their faith is feeble, and unbelief is strong. They cannot grip the promise, nor appropriate it to themselves. It appears to meet their case — but they cannot claim it — they cannot rest on it. If they touch it — they cannot grasp it. They look on it with longing eyes, they sigh over it with troubled hearts — but they cannot draw from it the comfort which they need.

Then Satan comes with his temptations — and endeavors to draw them from the Lord, and lead them to doubt and fear, if not into open sin! Sometimes he tries to fascinate — and sometimes to fill with terror and alarm. If he can but keep them from Jesus, or divert their minds from the glorious gospel — he can soon bring them into bondage, if not into open sin. Then darkness spreads over the soul, the prospects are beclouded, the evidences are concealed — and a chill and gloom seizes upon the spirit. Then we feel a deadness and dullness in reference to all that is holy. The Word of God makes no sweet impression. The ordinances of the gospel yield no refreshment. The throne of grace has lost all its attractions. We try to pray — but the most we can do is to sigh and groan; and if we feel at all, it is only grief because we cannot feel as we would, as we should. This deadness of soul is terrible! To be surrounded with spiritual food — but have no appetite to enjoy it. To be loaded with privileges — and yet feel neither life nor comfort in them. To be dead and dull over the Bible — but never feel so dead as when on our knees. Then, often, the hidden evils of the heart, the concealed corruptions that lie embedded deep in the soul — begin to rise, rage, and roar! Such foul, filthy, and unmentionable corruptions are discovered — as we had no conception of. These terrify and alarm us, while Satan suggests that it is impossible for God ever to dwell in such a vile heart; or for Christ to love and nourish one so corrupt.

Then, very frequently, a load of guilt is felt upon the conscience. Perhaps the guilt of sins long since pardoned comes back again, and press us down lower than before. We cannot keep the eye fixed on Christ's atoning sacrifice, or the heart resting upon the precious promises. Then the soul is troubled; like the troubled sea, there is no rest — but rolling, tossing, trembling, doubting, fearing, sinking, rising, sighing, and groaning — characterize the experience.

Reader, do you know anything of this? Many of the Lord's people do. Some, who appear to others to have a very smooth path, because all without appears to be prosperous — suffer a martyrdom within. Do not faint if you have them. It is a difficult road along which many of the flock travel, and their foot-prints may be traced out. But all do not sink so deep in the mire, or pass through such miry roads, as David did.

He Prayed to the Lord. "Quicken me!" Only the Holy Spirit can quicken us. He gave us life at first, and he must renew us again. He may, he generally does, make use of means; and sometimes by the Word read or suggested to the mind — he . . .

strengthens faith,

enlightens the soul,

revives the spirit,

subdues corruption, and

delivers us from guilt and fear. At other times he brings us into affliction — and affliction drives us to our God! We cast ourselves down before him, groan and cry unto him — until he lifts up the light of his loving countenance upon us, and this gives us peace.

Sometimes while we are trying to pray, he . . .

breathes on the soul,

helps our infirmities,

directs the eye upwards,

expands the heart, and

sweet liberty is felt —

then we weep and plead, and praise our God, and feel ourselves to be new creatures. At other times he shines on our evidences, makes some sweet communication to us — and we rise from our sadness, and are filled with peace and love. The quickenings of the Spirit are most blessed. Just as God in nature renews the face of the earth in spring — so does the Holy Spirit renew the souls of the Lord's tried and troubled people.

"Bring my soul out of trouble." We can get into trouble ourselves, and often do — but the Lord alone can bring us out, and blessed be his holy name, he does, he will. By a pleasant smile, by a sweet word, by drawing us up into holy fellowship with himself — he brings us out of trouble often. In his own way, in his own time — he will do it; and thus we rest . . .

on the promise,

on the finished work of Jesus, and

on the unchangeable love of God.

Then we rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel. O what blessed seasons we often have when the Spirit quickens us, and brings us out of soul trouble, and fills us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we abound in hope by his power! Such seasons had David.

He Used Two Pleas.

"For Your name's sake." That is, because You are gracious, merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; and because it is your desire to be known as such.

"Quicken me — bring my soul out of trouble." For the honor of your name, to get honor, or that it may be honored by others, who see that of your own grace and mercy — you are pleased to quicken and deliver me. We are to plead the name of Jesus now, and pray that for his sake, on account of what he has done and suffered for us, and in our stead — we may be heard and answered.

"For your righteousness' sake." By which, we may understand his faithfulness to his Word, in which he has promised to do these things for us — or his just dealing with us, as one in covenant with him, for God has covenanted to withhold no good thing from us. Blessed be God, we can plead his own name, when we can plead nothing of our own! And we can plead his righteousness — notwithstanding our own unrighteousness.

Soul trouble is the heaviest trouble. As Solomon said, "A man may sustain his infirmity," that is, his bodily infirmity, "but a wounded spirit — who can bear?" Yet, when soul trouble weans us from SELF, and drives us to the Lord — it does us good. Whatever makes us pray, is a blessing. In soul trouble, it is in vain to apply to anyone but the Lord. He alone quickens us, and brings our souls out of trouble. The Lord's name and his faithfulness may always be pleaded by us. We cannot plead our own names, nor our own doings, nor very seldom our own experience — but we may always plead the name of Jesus, and the Divine faithfulness; and in pleading these, we shall succeed.

Let us then, however dark or dead we may feel — however Satan may tempt, or corruptions work within us — however feeble our faith, or strong our unbelief — let us still cry unto God, still plead his name and grace, that he may . . .

quicken us again,

bring our souls out of trouble,

set our feet upon a rock,

and establish our goings. Nor can we often do better than cry unto God, in David's own words, written for our instruction and encouragement, "Quicken me, O Lord, for your name's sake! For your righteousness sake, bring my soul out of trouble!"

66 Seek God and Live!

Seek God and Live!

Life is generally prized, though existence is not always a blessing — for there are some for whom it had been good, if they had never been born; and others end their mortal life by their own hands. But life as it comes from God, and as it is spent in the enjoyment of God, is always a blessing; because it is life with solid happiness. That such a life is attainable, is a great mercy — but it sometimes appears astonishing, that if it is to be had for seeking — that all do not seek it. But herein we discover the effect of sin — that it . . .

blinds man to his own best interests,

hardens his heart against God, and

impels him to seek death in the error of his way. And herein we discover the work of the Holy Spirit — in opening man's eyes to his true interest, and stirring him up to seek this great blessing. But if I wish to obtain eternal life, life in the presence, favor, and enjoyment of God — can I? Yes, for here is the Lord's Word, "You who seek God — your hearts shall live!" Psalms 69:32. Notice, The NATURE of the life promised. "Your hearts shall live."

It is the life of the soul, and it embraces justification by God. To be justified is to be cleared of all charges, to be pronounced righteous, and to be treated as such. Now God justifies every soul that seeks him, by imputing to him the obedience of his beloved Son, and placing to his account all the merit of his life and death. This promised life, includes reconciliation to God. God and man become friends. The enmity of the human heart is subdued. The love of God is revealed. The affections of man are won. The lawgiver and the lawbreaker meet and agree to terms of peace. God loves the sinner, and the sinner loves God. They join hands, and take the same course. This promised life, includes communion with God. God meets man in a way of grace — and man meets God in a way of duty. Prayer becomes social converse. God pours his thoughts into our minds — and we pour out our desires, needs, and thanksgivings to God. Everything is carried to God, by man; and everything is made to work for man's good, by God. This promised life, embraces communications from God. God gives . . .

grace to help in every time of need;

strength, to fit us for conflict and duty;

light, to direct us in all seasons of perplexity;

comfort, under all our sorrows and discouragements;

and glory, to crown us at the end of our course. This promised life, includes conformity to God.

We are changed into the same image.

We become godlike.

We think as God does.

We desire as God does.

We love as God does.

We hate as God does.

We aim at the same end that God does. Our wills are ultimately lost in the will of God. This promised life, includes also the exercise of all the Christian graces. Especially . . .

faith in the Word of God,

hope in the mercy of God,

and love to the Church of God. To live, is to answer the great end of our creation, and to be happy in doing whatever God requires, and receiving whatever God imparts. This, this is life!

Reader, are you justified by God? Are you reconciled to God? Do you live in communion with God? Do you receive gracious communications from God? Are you growing into conformity to God? Do you exercise . . .

faith in God's word;

hope in God's mercy;

and love to God's character?

If so, you have the life of God within you, and the prospect of eternal life before you! To WHOM is this Life Promised? To those who seek God. To those who seek to know him, as revealed in his Word. To those who receive from him, as the fountain of living waters, the source and giver of all spiritual good. To those who enjoy him, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. To those who seek to honor him, as the author and end of their existence; the object of love, confidence, and adoration. To those who seek him . . .

in his Word, where he is revealed;

in the house, where he meets his people;

on his throne, where he dispenses his favors;

and in his Son, who declares him.

All who seek him sincerely, earnestly, and with perseverance — find him, and obtain eternal life from him. Their hearts live, for they receive his life-giving Spirit;

they become united to his Son, who is the life;

they receive his visits, which quicken and delight;

and they enjoy his love, which is even better than life. Our life is in God's favor. God's favor is to be sought by us, before, and beyond anything else. All who seek it in God's way — will surely find

it. All who find it . . .

will enjoy peace with God,

will become devoted to God, and

will live a life of preparation for dwelling forever with God.

Separation from God, is death.

Union with God, is life. The presence of God, is Heaven. The absence of God, is Hell.

Reader, have you sought God? Have you found him? Have you the life of God in your soul? Are you seeking him now? David's words are still true, "If you seek him — he will be found by you." Seek him in his Word. Seek him in Jesus. So you will be sure to find him, and finding him, eternal life is yours. Rest not until you have received Christ, "for he who has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life."

"You who seek God — your hearts shall live!"

67 God is Love!

God is Love!

Right views of God are of the greatest importance. Fallen man cannot learn what God is from nature — let him study it ever so closely; nor from providence — let him observe it ever so accurately. Clear, correct, and full views of God's character, can only be learned from the Bible. In the plan of salvation, God has given a full revelation of himself. Here he has displayed his justice equally with his grace — and his holiness equally with his mercy. In Jesus — the mirror that reveals God to believers — he is love — pure, perfect, perpetual love. Therefore twice in one chapter, the Apostle John declares, "God is Love." 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16.

God is essentially and eternally love — but to sinners he has manifested his love in a righteous and sovereign manner; not more sovereignly, than righteously — nor more righteously, than sovereignly. And each of the Divine persons in Jehovah — Father, Son, and Spirit — is alike, love, and has manifested their love to us. The Father is love to us, and has wondrously revealed and displayed his love. In his love, he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love. Of his love, he gave his only begotten Son for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins; and he gave him to us, to be the perfect Savior of our souls. In his love — he gave us the many, exceeding great, and very precious promises. And, of his love he prepared for us a kingdom, before the foundation of the world.

All the arrangements of the eternal council,
all the provisions of the everlasting covenant,
all the gifts of grace, and all the preparations of glory —
are but fruits and effects, of the Father's infinite and eternal love.

If, therefore, the Father has thus thought of us, provided for us, and prepared to have us in his presence and glory forever — he must be love, and love to us! The Son of God is love to us, and has manifested his love, by becoming incarnate for us; taking our nature, that he might personally know all our infirmities, temptations, and trials. In our nature he wrought for us, and produced a righteousness to justify us! He suffered for us, and died in our stead — to make an atonement for our sins. He ascended to Heaven to carry on our cause, and ever lives to answer every accuser, and by his intercession to secure for us every blessing. Could he do more, to prove his love? Or could he more clearly manifest, that he is love? The Holy Spirit is love to us, and therefore he quickened us when dead in trespasses and sins. Having convinced us of sin, and of our need of a Savior — he led us to Jesus. He gave us the Holy Scriptures, and daily teaches us by his providence and grace. He helps our infirmities in prayer, and instructs us how, and what to pray for. He dwells in us, works in us, and exerts his power in us. He makes us his temple, and consecrates us to the glory of God. Could he more strikingly or impressively, prove that he is love — or could he possibly show greater love to us?

Jehovah God — Father, Son, and Spirit — is love to the believer. Each of the Divine persons distinctly, and the whole God-head, unitedly — is love to the Christian. God is always, everywhere, and under all circumstances — love to his people. His nature being love — and his love being his nature — it cannot change — but is without variableness, or shadow of turning. Everything God does for us — he does out of love. And everything God permits to happen to us — he permits in love. Let us then endeavor always to keep in mind, that God is love. But more especially let us do so, in times of trouble and trial — for every trouble however heavy, and every trial, however severe — flows from his love. So also when we approach to God in prayer, let us bear in mind, that we are not coming to a severe Judge, or an offended Governor — but to a loving Father — to a God who is love, and who loves to hear, answer, and confer blessings upon his children. And when we lie on the bed of sickness, when death stands by our pillow, when the scenes of time are closing upon us, and the solemnities of eternity, are opening before us, when heart and flesh are failing, and Satan makes his last attack upon us — then, then let us remember, that God is love, and that his love is about to be perfected in us!

Lost sinner, a God of love, warns you to flee from eternal wrath, invites you to come to Jesus, and offers you everlasting life!

68 Preaching Christ, a Cause of Joy

Preaching Christ, a Cause of Joy The best things are sometimes done from a bad motive. Yet, in the sight of God, everything is — as the motive is. To preach the gospel is a good thing — but no one should preach the gospel except from love to the Lord Jesus, and a desire to do good to immortal souls. Yet, from the worst of motives, some have preached Christ. It was so in Paul's day, out of sheer opposition to him, and in order to add affliction to his bonds, some preached Christ. Hence his language is, "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice!" Php 1:15-18

Observe, the CAUSE of His Joy. "Christ is preached!" To preach Christ was his favorite employment, and to know that Christ was preached by others, gave him joy. To preach Christ is to publish the glory of his person, as the Son of God; and to make known his finished work, as the Savior of sinners. This is what man needs — to be told of a Savior; a present, powerful, and willing Savior. This is what God requires — that the good news of his grace, should be made known to every creature that is under Heaven. This is what the Spirit works by — for Christ crucified is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The good news of Christ, is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes. By this, sinners are converted, and translated out of the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. By this, the Savior is exalted, and acquires a name that is above every name. By this, believers are edified, and are built up on their most holy faith. If therefore Christ was preached, Paul rejoiced. Mark, The NATURE of His Joy. It was benevolent joy — and flowed from his love to man. He loved mankind, and desired the salvation of all the race. It was loyal joy — and flowed from his love to Christ as king, whom he desired to see crowned by every creature, and honored as Lord of all. It was self-denying joy. Others preaching Christ, may eclipse him, and perhaps on purpose to annoy and distress him; but . . . if Christ was preached,

if souls were saved,

if Satan was confounded,

if sin was destroyed,

if Christ was made known and honored,

and if free grace was glorified — he rejoiced. And it was his settled determination to do so; "yes," says he, "and I will rejoice." Let whoever will preach Christ, let them preach Christ from whatever motive they may, though some error may be mixed with what they preached — yet, if they preached Christ, he would rejoice. What magnanimity was here! How SELF was abased here! What love to Christ was here! How free from jealousy was the apostle's mind! The more Christ

was preached, and the more purely Christ was preached — the more he rejoiced. Only let Christ be exalted, no matter by whom — and it added to the apostle's joy. There may be much imperfection mixed up with the performance — but if the substance was good, he was happy. What an example for us! What a reproof for many!

Beloved, let us endeavor to imbibe his spirit. It is a holy, a Christ-like spirit. If good is done, no matter who does it; if Christ is made known, no matter who publishes him — let us rejoice. Let us imitate his example. Christ was his copy, let us copy him. The Spirit of God influenced and directed him, let us seek to be influenced by the same almighty agent. Let us so act and so speak, that all may see that the same mind is in us, which was also in Christ Jesus. He would not forbid the casting out of devils in his name, though James and John wished him, because the parties followed not with them; but said, "he who is not against me, is for me."

We must not expect every one to see with our eyes, or walk by our rule. "There are diversities of gifts — but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of administrations — but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations — but it is the same God who works all in all." Let us therefore pray for all who preach Christ; and as far as we can conscientiously, let us co-operate with all, who proclaim the gospel, and endeavor to extend the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Variety of opinion there will be — but union of heart there may be. Different men will act in different ways — but let us wish well to all, who wish well to the cause of Christ, and say, from the bottom of our hearts, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ!" And if men preach Christ, and salvation by him alone — let us not be too fastidious, or make too much of minor matters — but rising above all that is little or mean, exclaim, "Christ is preached, and I do rejoice! Yes, and will rejoice!"

69 A Wise Course

A Wise Course The gracious presence of the Lord is a privilege enjoyed only by the Lord's people. They know what it is, and therefore prize it — but they alone prize it. To represent it, or make a carnal person understand what it is — is impossible; for the natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. A present God makes a happy Christian; but an absent God makes a believer wretched. In all ages, the Lord has visited his people, manifested himself to them, and conferred special privileges upon them; and in all ages the saints have had to mourn on account of the hiding of his face. Therefore said the prophet, "I will wait upon the Lord, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Isaiah 8:17.

Here is a Cause of Grief. The Lord hiding his face. From whom does he hide? From the house of Jacob. What, from that favored race? Yes. They had the promises, made to Abraham and his seed — they had the covenants, made with their forefathers — and they had the ordinances, which brought them near to God, and brought God near to them — yet from them the Lord hid his face.

Just so, the most honored, the most favored of the Lord's people have at times to suffer from this privation. But what a mercy it is, that it does not affect our relation to God, or deprive us of our saving interest in the promises, covenants, and ordinances of God. We are still the Lord's. The glorious promises still belong to us. The covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, still secures our salvation. The ordinances of the gospel, are still means of grace to our souls.

What then was the cause of grief? The Lord hiding his face.

He does so at times in providence, in reference to temporal things, and then nothing appears to succeed with us. This is apt to awaken doubts in the mind, and we question our interest in his love. Temptations are presented or suggested by Satan, to induce us to take rash steps, or to turn aside from the right ways of the Lord. Suspicions, as to our past experience, or our standing before God, are produced, and gloom and distress troubles the soul. The Lord hides his face in grace too. Then we cannot find him in his Word, in his house, or in our closets. We go forward — but he is not there; backward — but we cannot perceive him. And then we utter the impassioned cry, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Fears are awakened. Darkness broods over us. Dissatisfaction is felt by us. We are unhappy; for the sun that makes our day, is eclipsed; the prospects that cheered our hearts, are beclouded; and life has lost its value and its joy. With the presence of the Lord — we could be happy anywhere; but without his presence — no place, no circumstances, no privileges can give us joy.

Here is a Course of Conduct Marked Out. "I will wait upon the Lord." Not complain of him. Not murmur against him. Not doubt his love. Not question his veracity. Not listen to his foes. Not yield to unbelief. But, "I will wait upon him."

"I will wait upon him" . . .

In his house, where he meets his people;
at his throne, where he has before manifested himself to me;
in the company of his people, where he loves to be;
in the ordinances of his own appointment, where he has promised to meet his people.

"I will wait upon him" . . .

in hope, expecting his presence;
in faith, believing his word;
in prayer, imploring him to appear;
with perseverance, determined never to give up until I find him.

"I will look for him." I will . . .

not sit alone in sullen gloom;
not write bitter things against myself;
not charge God foolishly;
not bring up a bad report of the good land.

"I will look for him," where I have found him before — in his Word, in the closet, in the dispensations of his providence. I will expect him to make the clouds his chariots, and to come flying on the wings of the wind.

"I will look for him," for . . .

he alone can satisfy my heart,
he alone can meet my case, and he cannot be unkind,
he alone can make me happy, and he will do so in his own time. Yes, he will turn again, he will have compassion upon me, for he will cast all my sins into the depths of the sea!

It is nothing new for the Lord to hide himself from his people, nor does he do so without a cause, or without a gracious design. It becomes, therefore, our duty, not to fret, complain, doubt, or give way to suspicions of his love — but to wait upon him, hopefully; and to look for him in faith, resting upon his promises, and believing his love. The lost sinner knows nothing of the Lord's presence, and therefore he never mourns his absence — only the Lord's children are thus indulged, therefore they alone are thus tried.

70 A Momentous Question

A Momentous Question As all real religion begins and is carried on by the Holy Spirit, who renews, sanctifies, and makes us fit for glory — it is a question of the greatest importance, "Have we received the Holy Spirit?" All primitive Christians had, and they knew it, otherwise they could not have been filled with joy and peace — as they were expressly told, that if any man had not the Spirit of Christ, he was none of his. The Spirit comes to claim us for Christ, takes possession of us in the name of Christ, fits us for the service of Christ, and trains us up for the everlasting enjoyment of the presence of Christ. The Spirit is not only in the Church as a body — but he is in every member of that body. Let us therefore press home the solemn question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" Acts 19:2.

Consider the **CHARACTERS** in which the Holy Spirit is to be expected.

He is the **QUICKENER**. The life-giving Spirit. All spiritual life flows from him. He quickens the dead in sin — quickens us together with Christ. Every divine emotion flows from him. Every holy desire is from him. Every acceptable prayer is from him. He is to the soul, what the soul is to the body; as therefore the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Holy Spirit is dead also. Nor is the body more dead to temporal things — than the soul is to spiritual things.

He is the **ENLIGHTENER**. He enlightens the understanding, and illuminates the heart. Without the Holy Spirit, all is darkness; therefore . . .

we do not see the dreadful depravity of the heart,

we do not feel our dangerous state,

we do not perceive the glory of the Savior,

we do not flee from the wrath to come.

It is only in his light, that we can . . .

read the Word of God to profit,

find our way into the presence of the Father, or

see the goings of our God, our King in his sanctuary. The natural eye, is not more dependent on the sun for light, to see the beauties of creation — than the soul is dependent on the Holy Spirit to see the glories of grace.

He is the **COMFORTER**. As the Quickener, he speaks, and we live;

as the Enlightener, he commands, and we see;

but as the Comforter, he comes down nearer to our level. He sympathizes with us in all our losses and crosses, in all our trials and troubles, in all our conflicts and tribulations; and by . . .

revealing the Father,
leading us to Jesus,
unfolding the truth of the Word,
and applying the promises —

he comforts us and often fills us with joy. The babe is not more dependent on its tender mother for comfort, than we are upon the Holy and ever blessed Spirit.

He is the SANCTIFIER. He sets us apart for God, and stamps upon us the image of God. He brings us out from the world, separates us from the ungodly, and by his inward operations conforms us to the will of God. His power alone is sufficient . . .

to detach us from the world,
to lift us up out of self, and
consecrate us to the service of God.

All holiness flows from the Holy Spirit.

All fitness for glory is the work of the Holy Spirit. The stone is not more dependent on the mason, to polish and reduce it to the intended form; than we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for the purification of our natures and conformity to Christ.

He is the SEALER. He is the Father's seal, so that when received into the heart as the testifier of Christ, we are sealed unto the day of redemption. His gracious work within us . . .

proves that we are Christ's,
confirms our title to the inheritance of the saints in light,
and preserves us unto eternal glory.

He is the pledge of our eternal inheritance. The pledge is a part of the whole. He who has the pledge, is sure of the rest. If therefore we have received the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption — we have that within us, which assures us, that Heaven with all its glory and joy is ours.

Blessed Comforter,
let me experience more of your quickening power;
let me enjoy more of your enlightening influence;
let me receive more of your divine consolations;
let me be more thoroughly, more deeply, sanctified by your grace;
let me be by you, more evidently sealed as the Holy Spirit of promise;
and be in my heart, the pledge of the future inheritance!

What are the evidences of having received the Holy Spirit?

1. If we have the Spirit now — we know that we had not once. We may not be able to tell when we received the Spirit, or how he commenced his work within us; for "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." But though we cannot tell exactly when we received the Spirit, or describe his work and operations on the soul — yet we know that a change has passed upon us, for we are not what we were once; and it is such a change as man could not effect, such a change as we could not produce ourselves. If, therefore, it is beyond man's power, and opposed to the nature and designs of Satan — it must be of God, and is an evidence that we have received the Holy Spirit.

2. If we have received the Holy Spirit — the Lord Jesus stands high in our estimation — and our views of ourselves are very humbling. And, just in proportion to the power and depth of the Spirit's work — will be our conceptions of the glory, grandeur, and excellency of the Savior; and our discoveries of the depravity, pollution, weakness, and misery of our own hearts. If, therefore, we have heart affecting views of the glory of Christ and his finished work, and if we lie low in the dust under a sense of our weakness and worthlessness, so that we are brought to depend wholly on Christ, and on Christ alone — we have received the Holy Spirit.

3. If we have received the Holy Spirit — we admire the holiness, approve of the demands, and reverence the authority of God's law. We see that it is holy, just, and good. We perceive that it is a reflection of God's moral attributes. We once dreaded its sentence, objected to its strictness, and wished its annihilation. But having heard and received the gospel, which gospel provides for the honor of the law, and presents the sinner with all that is necessary to meet the law's demands — we highly prize the gospel, and deeply reverence the law. Now with Paul we can say, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man."

If we habitually admire and reverence the law of God, and prize and appreciate the everlasting gospel — we have received the Holy Spirit.

4. If we have received the Holy Spirit, we dread deception; and lest we should deceive ourselves, or be deceived by others, we often examine ourselves, and beseech God to examine us. The cry often ascends from the heart, "Examine me, O God. Search me, O Lord. Never, never let me be deceived, or foster a false hope, or build on an unsafe foundation!"

Connected with this, the soul is in earnest to secure a saving interest in Christ and his finished work. It feels at times as if it could scarcely ever be sure enough, the matter is of such infinite importance. It digs deep, and lays its foundation upon a rock.

Now if we dread being deceived ourselves, and feel determined that we will not deceive others, in reference to our soul's salvation; and if we are determined by all means to secure a saving interest in Christ, cost what it may — we have received the Holy Spirit.

5. If we have received the Holy Spirit — there is in us a deep-rooted, abiding hatred to sin — all sin, especially sin in ourselves. What was once our darling sin has become the object of our hatred — and against that we set a double guard. For nothing do we sigh so often, nothing do we desire so ardently — as holiness. The Holy Spirit always sets the whole soul against sin, and longing for perfect holiness.

True, our old feelings toward sin will sometimes revive — but then we loath ourselves on account of it, mourn over it, and confess it before God. The cry of the soul is, "Holiness, Lord, more holiness! Deep, penetrating, all-pervading holiness!"

Now, if we hate sin everywhere, all sin, and especially the sin that dwells in us; and if we love holiness, admire holiness, pray for holiness, pant for holiness, and strive for holiness — then there is no doubt but we have received the Holy Spirit.

6. If we have received the Holy Spirit — we wish to be useful in the cause of Christ. We want to do something for him — who has done so much for us! We behold transgressors, and are grieved. We long to save souls from death. If the Spirit's work is deep within us, we are willing to do anything, to suffer anything, to go anywhere, or become anything — if we may but honor the dear name, spread the glorious truth, and increase the number of the followers of Christ. To be useless is to be miserable. To be inactive in the cause of Jesus, while so much is to be done, is execrable. The soul is ready to cry out, "O for a thousand tongues to speak for Jesus!" If the ruling desire of our souls is to be useful in the cause of Christ, on purpose that the Lord Jesus may be glorified — then doubtless we have received the Holy Spirit.

7. Once more, if we have received the Holy Spirit — then we are ruled by God's Word; we do not follow custom, or allow our passions or prejudices to dictate our course. In all times of difficulty, when in any perplexity, something seems to say, "To the law and to the testimony," and to the precepts of the New Testament, we turn. The Word of Christ is the law of the true believer. Everything short of it, or beyond it, or beside it, or contrary to it — is sin! "Only what Jesus commands, all that Jesus commands, and because Jesus commands," is the language of the soul. And while we thus make the Word of Jesus our rule — we deny ourselves. We deny our own wills, our own passions, our own desires, our likes and dislikes. We are before Him, as He was before His Father, when He cried out, "Not My will — but may Your be done." If, then, we make the Word of God our guide, and habitually deny ourselves for Christ's sake — we may rest assured, that we have received the Holy Spirit.

Observe, there is no one who has received Christ — who has not received the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit claims the heart for Christ, enters it in the name of Christ, and prepares it for the reception of Christ. The beauty of Christ is never seen, the need of Christ is never felt, the desire for Christ is never realized, the opening of the heart to admit Christ never takes place — but where the Spirit of the Lord is.

8. No one has received the Spirit, who is satisfied with present attainments; for where the Spirit dwells and works — nothing short of perfection will satisfy. Even Paul said, "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Php 3:13-14.

9. He who has the Spirit within him always depends upon Christ without him. He never makes the Spirit's work, his foundation or the ground of his dependence — but he builds on Christ alone. Thus the Spirit glorifies Jesus by leading the soul away from himself, and even from his own operations — to rest alone on Christ's precious blood and perfect righteousness.

Let us, then, devoutly seek more of the Spirit's power, grace, and operations; yes, let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, then we shall be . . .

deeply sanctified to God,

fully assured of our acceptance with God,

walk so as to please God, and

at death we shall be called up to dwell forever with God, and eternally enjoy God!

Reader, "have you received the Holy Spirit?" Remember, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ — he does not belong to Him!" Romans 8:9

71 Excellent Counsel

Excellent Counsel Friendship sweetens life. Who does not desire to have a friend? One in whom he can confide. One whom he can communicate, with whom he can advise. Who may not need a friend? One to consult. One to help. One to counsel. Who can live happy without a true friend? Happy without a friend! How can that be? How many are disappointed who think they have one? Acquaintances are plentiful — friends are few. One true friend in a life time — is perhaps all we may expect. In some things, the new are the best, not so in friendship; an old friend is to be most valued. This led Solomon to say, "Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father." Proverbs 27:10. This advice is sound and good, in reference to human friendship — but more so in reference to Divine. Let us look at it in this light. The Lord Jesus Has Been a Friend to Us. He gave us our being, and our well-being. He molded our bodies, and he created our souls. We are his workmanship. He made us rational, intelligent, and accountable creatures. He gave us our senses, and he ennobled us with reason. He placed us almost at the top of creation, for we were made only a little lower than the angels. But for him, we would never have blessing, or might have been among the very lowest order of his creatures. He having given us a being — has also preserved us in existence. We were — because he willed. We are — because he has sustained.

He is an old friend, for he has befriended us from our infancy until now. He was our father's friend. Many Christians, and the children of Christian parents, can look at Jesus, and say, "He was my father's friend." The dear old man trusted in him and found him faithful. He valued him above all beside, and ever spoke well of his name. He recommended him to me often, and even with his dying breath, he said, "Make Jesus your friend." He is now happy with Jesus. Yes, I doubt not, I cannot doubt — but must believe, that my sainted father is now with Jesus — enjoying a Heaven in his love.

Jesus has all the qualifications necessary to form a true and faithful friend; the very friend you want. His wisdom is infinite, for in him dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He can advise, counsel, and instruct us. His kindness is exquisite. His heart is unspeakably tender, and his love is strong as death; and such love, flowing through such a heart, must be inconceivably kind. His wealth surpasses knowledge. The Heavens, even the Heavens are the Lord's. All creation is his, with power to create whatever he pleases. He is a constant friend — he never changes. Once our friend, he is our friend forever.

Oh, how blessed to know Jesus as our friend. Happy is the man whose heart firmly trusts in him, and makes, under all circumstances, a friend of him! Is Jesus your friend, reader? Do you know him as such? Do you confide in him as such? Do you love him as such? Do you cleave to him as such?

"Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father." This is Admirable Counsel. Jesus asks our confidence. He offers his friendship. He deserves our supreme regard. He may be, he is, misrepresented by many. You may mistake his character, neglect his offered kindness, be tempted to refuse his love, or become shy and distant with him. But, forsake him not. Rather, daily

invite him to your bosom — trust him with all your secrets — consult him in all your difficulties — visit him often in his house, and on his throne — value him, and his friendship, as he deserves — vindicate him, and his cause, whenever necessary — make him your friend in youth — cleave to him all through life if you have — and anticipate the enjoyment of his friendship forever.

Let my young friends hear and attend to the admonition of wisdom, secure the friendship of Jesus. Live upon terms of closest intimacy with Jesus. Cleave to him, for he is your life. Pay deference to your godly parents, and make your father's friend, your own. Be not like Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who was led away by the advice of the young men, to his destruction; but as Solomon cultivated the friendship of Hiram, his father David's friend — so do you cultivate the friendship of Jesus, your father's friend. Be wise in your choice of a friend, many have made a mistake, have suffered for it, and have repented too late; but no one ever repented of choosing Jesus for a friend, though thousands have repented that they neglected to do so. Let no one draw or drive you from his house. Here you were brought early, by those who loved you best. Here your father found a home, and here your mother felt truly happy. Follow their excellent example. Tread in their steps — and you are safe.

Let your father's friend, your mother's friend, be your friend — and you will be prepared for whatever may happen. Jesus, is a friend that loves at all times. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. The religion of Christ, is friendship spiritualized. Being reconciled to God, enjoying peace with God, and walking with God; we participate with Jesus in his highest, sweetest love, and share in all the blessings of grace and glory. We are called into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have fellowship with the Father, and with his beloved Son, enjoying also the communion of the Holy Spirit. And in this fellowship, in this communion, is the proof of the Divine friendship. Oh the honor that is bestowed on us, that we should be called, The Friends of God.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net