

GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS

by James Smith

Smith's work presenting the Gospel as glad tidings, addressing God's wondrous love, the Savior's grace, and the Spirit's power, offering pardon, peace, wealth, rest, and salvation to all who come.

72 Chapters

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00 Glad Tidings of Good Things

Glad Tidings of Good Things James Smith, 1861

00p PREFACE

PREFACE

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God!" 1 Timothy 1:11. In a world like this, something is needed to animate and cheer us; in a state like ours, as sinners against God, there is but one thing that meets the case, and that is the gospel. This gospel is most appropriately called "Glad Tidings," for it brings tidings calculated to gladden the heart of the most depressed and sorrowful of men. It reveals God's wondrous love, it tells us of the Savior's grace, and makes known the promise and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed "Glad Tidings of Good Things" — for it informs us of pardon for the guilty, peace for the troubled, wealth for the poor, rest for the weary, and salvation for the lost. Precious gospel! It commends itself to the head and the heart of all who have a correct knowledge of themselves, and their standing as guilty sinners before God. It just meets their case! And when it is unfolded and applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, it makes the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. "Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Timothy 1:10

Now as my little book is full of the gospel, and is intended for just the same people as the gospel is, I thought I could not be doing wrong if I gave it the same title. I am persuaded that many a poor sinner, and many a tried and troubled believer, will find in it, "Glad Tidings of Good Things." But ever keeping in mind, that everything is just what God makes it, I would caution my reader from expecting a blessing from my book alone. The blessing must come from God, who may very graciously send it through such a weak and feeble instrument. If you would get a blessing from my book — you must read it with prayer, often lift up the eye and heart to God while reading it for his blessing upon it, and you will not read in vain — but if you read without this, you may. And now, O good and gracious God, who is pleased to use weak and feeble instruments, that the power may be evidently from you — I beseech you to use this little volume, for the glorifying of your holy name, the magnifying of your own free and sovereign grace, the exalting of your beloved Son, the comforting of your own people, and the conversion of many, many sinners. Almighty God, work with this book for the good of souls, and all the glory shall be your forever. Amen.

01 Glad Tidings of Good Things

Glad Tidings of Good Things This is God's representation of the gospel. It brings tidings from Heaven, tidings for sinners, tidings of good things for them; yes, tidings of the very best things — for the very worst of men! Not for them exclusively, but for men as sinners, including the very worst of them. It is the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God, giving correct views of his nature, revealing his loving heart, publishing his gracious thoughts, and making known his mercy to sinful men. These tidings calculated to gladden the saddest heart, cheer the desponding mind, and fill the despairing soul with joy and peace. Never were there such Glad Tidings! No one but an infinite God could have devised them. No one, but the All-merciful God would have sent them to rebellious sinners! O that Heaven and earth would unite to praise, bless, magnify, and adore his holy name for them! The best thing in these glad tidings, is the SAVIOR — one who is able save such sinners as we are; one who not only can — but willing to do so. Here we are informed, that God has sent his Son, to be the Savior of the world. That the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, possessing the nature of the Father, and equal to the Father, in majesty, power, and glory — that this only begotten Son, came into our world, took our nature, made an atonement for sin, and opened a way in which any sinner, and every sinner who will, may be saved — saved certainly, honorably, and eternally. Yes, any sinner can be saved now. Every sinner who will, shall be saved now.

There is no impediment in the path. There is no legal difficulty in the way. Jesus has all the qualifications required in one who is to save the vilest, to save freely, and to save all who apply to be saved by him. The glad tidings forbid despair, they prohibit despondency, they are intended to dispel every doubt and fear. There is in reality no room for a single doubt, no room for a solitary fear, if the gospel is truly understood and believed. Any sinner, be he who he may — every sinner, be he what he will — may be saved — and be saved the moment he hears the gospel, let it find him where it will, or in whatever state it will.

Jesus is an almighty Savior. Jesus is an ever willing Savior. Jesus is a loving Savior. There is no reluctance on his part. It is no difficulty to him. Therefore he calls sinners to him — sinners of every name, sinners under all circumstances. His invitations embrace all. The glad tidings exclude none. The man or woman who reads these lines, is as really, as sincerely invited by Jesus, to come and be saved by him, as if a letter had been hand-written by Jesus and addressed to that person by name. All who hear or read are invited, all who are invited are desired to come, all who come are welcomed, and all who are welcomed are saved. Can you conceive of anything better than this? A Savior for vile sinners;

a Savior to deliver sinners from the lowest Hell;

a Savior to raise sinners to the highest Heaven;

a Savior from sin — the cause of suffering;

a Savior from guilt — the source of fear;

a Savior from the world, which is doomed to destruction!

Precious Redeemer, may your name be soon universally known; and may the glorious glad tidings of your saving love, power, and mercy, be published in every land, in every tongue, to every soul!

Next to the Savior, comes the free and full forgiveness of all sin, and the gospel is the glad tidings of this.

Without pardon — we perish.

Without pardon — we cannot know peace with God.

Without pardon — we cannot be holy.

Without pardon — we cannot have fellowship with God.

Without pardon — there can be no Heaven.

Now, the gospel is the glad tidings of pardon — the pardon of all sin, the instantaneous pardon of all sin, the eternal forgiveness of all sin — for every one who believes in Jesus. All the prophets bear witness, that through Jesus, and by faith in his name — pardon may be obtained. All the apostles preached a full, free, and everlasting pardon of all sin — for every one who believes in Jesus. And by the gospel, a complete pardon of every sin, and the perfect and everlasting justification of every person, is guaranteed to every one one that believes on the Son of God. A pardon without penance — a pardon without confession to a priest. A pardon without delay. For the moment a sinner renounces all dependence on himself and his own works, places his confidence in the finished work of Christ, and confesses his sins at a throne of grace — he is forgiven all trespasses.

And, as often as he is overcome by temptation, falls into sin, and brings guilt upon his conscience; confessing his fault, pleading the name of Jesus, and trusting in God's mercy — he is pardoned afresh. Daily sins are forgiven by a gracious Father — and by constantly applying to the all-cleansing blood of Jesus, the conscience is kept clean, peaceful and happy. O what a mercy to have an open fountain! O what a privilege to have the promise of a free and perfect pardon on confession of sin and exercising faith in Jesus! This the gospel presents to us, not once in our lives — but every day, every time we hear or read it — well therefore may it be called "glad tidings of good things." The gospel is also the good news of a better country, even a Heavenly one. HEAVEN is . . .

a rest for the weary,

a home for the homeless, and

the best company for the lonely and desolate.

Heaven comprises . . .

all that can feast the intellect,

all that can satisfy the heart,

all that can fill the soul.

It is enriched with all the wealth of God,
it is filled with the glory of God, and
it is the house and home of God. In Heaven there is . . .
no pain or privation,
no grief or sorrow,
no losses or crosses,
no temptations or trials,
no wants or woes.

Heaven contains the highest manifestations of the greatness, grandeur, and magnificence of God. Heaven is the home of the brightest, holiest, and most dignified of God's intelligent creation. Heaven! what is it? Heaven! What does it comprise and comprehend? "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love Him!" No one can give the faintest guess at what Heaven is — but whatever it is, whatever it contains, the gospel tells us that it is for saved sinners. Nor is Heaven a place difficult of access, or hard to obtain. There is a new and living way to it, and Jesus is the way. By coming to him, and trusting in him, we enter on the way; and by confiding in him, and walking with him, we make progress in the way. The path to Heaven, is not by works of righteousness which we have done or can do — it is not by any sufferings we have endured or can endure — but it is by simple faith in Jesus. He who believes has everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. Whoever believes in him shall not perish — but have eternal life. Nor can we have life, escape condemnation, or arrive at Heaven in any other way — for God's word is plain and decisive, "He who believes on the Son of God — has everlasting life; and he who believes not the Son — shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."

Reader, the kingdom of God has come near unto you — will you enter it? The good news of a Savior is made known to you — will you embrace it and act upon it? The pardon of all sin is presented to you — will you accept it? Heaven, God's Heaven, and the way to it, is set before you — will you believe and make use of it? The gospel is God's best message to man. It contains the promise of all that man can need, and all that God can give, to every one who sincerely believes the message, is willing to receive the grace, and applies for it. No sinner that reads or hears the gospel, perishes because he cannot be saved — but because he will not. Take heed therefore how you treat the gospel, for we can conceive of no greater sin, than disbelieving God's message; or of any greater insult offered to God, than to treat his message with contempt.

Believe the gospel, and it will make you glad. Believe Christ, as presented in the gospel, and it will satisfy your soul. Enter on God's consecrated way to glory, and Heaven with all its joys, pleasures, and glories are yours. But, if you refuse the gospel — you will surely perish! If you neglect the gospel — you will surely die! If you put off — it may be too late. Now, the glorious glad tidings are presented to you — presented to you as from God.

You are told that there is a Savior, and a great One — a Savior for sinners, for sinners such as you are — a Savior for you if you will receive him, employ him, and give yourself up to be saved by him. A pardon is now offered you, the pardon of all your sins whether secret or open, past or present, of heart and life — a pardon that will bring peace to your conscience, holiness to your heart, and a foretaste of Heaven into your soul. A pardon that will fit you for fellowship with God now, and communion with God forever.

Heaven is now set before you, you may obtain it — and eternally possess it. Is it possible, that such sinners as we are — so vile, so poor, so feeble, so utterly worthless — may obtain God's Heaven, and dwell in it with the Savior forever? It is, and more than possible, it is comparatively easy — only believe and all is yours — nor is faith left to be done by your own power, for the Holy Spirit, who works faith in the sinner's heart, is plainly, positively, and solemnly promised to every one that asks for him. With that sweet and precious assurance, as it dropped from the Savior's lips, we close our remarks on the glad tidings; "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

"Oh what amazing words of grace

Are in the gospel found!

Suited to every sinner's case,

Who knows the joyful sound.

Poor, sinful, thirsty, fainting souls

Are freely welcome here:

Salvation like a river rolls,

Abundant, free and clear.

Come, then, with all your wants and wounds,

Your every burden bring!

Here love, unchanging love abounds;

A deep, celestial spring!

"Whoever will," (Oh gracious word!)

Shall of this stream partake:

Come thirsty souls, and bless the Lord,

And drink for Jesus' sake! This spring with living water flows,

And living joy imparts;

Come, thirsty souls, your needs disclose,

And drink with thankful hearts.

Millions of sinners — as vile as you,
Have here found life and peace;
Come, thirsty souls, and prove it true,
And drink, adore, and praise!"

02 The Privilege

The Privilege

"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, sons of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe!" Php 2:14-15

Privileges should always be employed to enforce duties. This is the apostolic method, and it is like oiling the nail before we attempt to drive it. Paul wanted the Philippians to be of one mind, therefore he enforced humility, and set before them the example of the Lord Jesus, who had done so much for them. He wished them to be contented and thankful, blameless and harmless, or sincere — transparent — and he reminds them that it befit them, because they were "the sons of God." What an honor to be conferred on man, fallen man, and yet this honor have all the saints. The Privilege. We were by nature the creatures of his power, the subjects of his government — and yet traitors to his throne. By grace we become his sons.

First, by adoption, as Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses, and brought him up for her son; and as Mordecai adopted Esther, and brought her up as his own daughter; so the Lord in the exercise of his rightful sovereignty, adopted us.

Second, by a new birth, we are born again, born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit; in consequence of this we have a new nature, a spiritual nature, in a sense, a divine nature.

Out of the new birth, as its effect and fruit, grows faith; and faith leads us to Christ, connects us with Christ, and it is testified that we are the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Adoption, changed our state;

regeneration, changed our nature;

and faith, proved our relationship.

Adoption, was an act of God without us;

regeneration, was the work of God within us;

and faith was an act put forth by us.

Adoption was of pure grace;

regeneration, was by divine power; and

faith was by the exercise of the newly imparted principle of spiritual life.

Adoption, was by the Father before time;

regeneration, was by the Spirit in time; and

faith in Christ, was after we had passed from death unto life.

Adoption gave us a name in the book of life,

regeneration made us one of God's family, and

by faith we were manifested to, and recognized by our brethren.

Blessed be God for putting us among his children, for giving us the nature of his children, and for working in us the faith of his children. The People. Children honor their Father; and the Lord's people honor and reverence him. Therefore he asks of some, "If I am a father — where is my honor?" Children obey their father, and God's children obey him, and obey him from the heart. Children love their parents, and the children of God love him, and prize his presence above their best joys.

They are led by the Spirit to know themselves, to trust in Jesus, and to enjoy fellowship with him; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. They love all their brothers and sisters — all who are of the same family, who have the same nature, and resemble the Lord Jesus. Therefore John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," — and does he refer to some deep experience of law terrors, dreadful temptations, frightful manifestations, or glorious joys? No, valuable as these things may be, he alludes to none of them — but says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Love to saints, as saints, is a sure proof of saintship. The marvelous grace displayed — for it is marvelous grace — that God should adopt us for his children, especially when he had a Son, and such a son! A Son who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. A Son whom he calls "his dear Son," or "the Son of his love." In whom his love centered, and all the rays of his glory met. He had one only begotten Son — but in addition to this, he had myriads of bright, beautiful, and obedient beings, who had witnessed his creating power, and rejoiced in the displays of his wisdom. For at the creation of this earth, we read, that "the morning stars sang together — and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Now that God with such a Son as his only begotten, and with such sons, as those blessed and holy angels — should choose and adopt such vile, degraded, and deformed beings as we are — is wondrous grace indeed! Besides which, some whom he has adopted for his children, appear to be the very basest! Where all were bad — God seems to have taken the very worst! And then the price it cost him to redeem us, that he might honorably put us among his children; us, who were his open, shameless enemies. Not only so — but that he should take such numbers of us, myriads — and take us to raise us to such great, such amazing honor. O wondrous grace, of an infinitely glorious God!

Beloved, in our adoption, Jehovah acts like a God. Everything connected with this display of his grace, is glorious, godlike, and divine. It was the thought of a God — profoundly deep, wondrously wise. It was the purpose of a God — grand and surpassing human conception. It was the act of a God — displaying such condescension, such love, such glorious grace, as only an infinite God could. Our adoption secures us from all evil. From all penal evil at present, and from all physical evil in eternity. Naturally we could only expect evil, unmixed evil, and evil from every quarter; but God's grace displayed in our adoption, will remove us to an infinite distance from all evil, and put us in possession of all that is really good. Our adoption lays us under infinite obligation to God. To

spare our lives was mercy. To deliver us from going down into the infernal pit was grace. But to raise us above angels, to place us before his face forever, to constitute us his children, to love us as he loves Jesus, to make us his heirs, and to cause us to inherit the throne of glory — is grace beyond degree, almost beyond belief! Our adoption and its blessed results, will fill all worlds with wonder and surprise. Even now the angels seek to pry into the subject, and come to learn the manifold wisdom of God — in the redemption of the church. But to all God's intelligent creation, he will show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us by Jesus Christ.

Beloved reader, are you one of "the sons of God?" Have you proved your adoption — by a new birth? Have you proved your regeneration — by your faith in Christ? Do you daily prove your faith in Christ — by your good works? Do you honor, fear, and obey God as a Father? Do you love him, and prefer his presence to all things besides? Are you led by the Spirit — into the truth of God, into fellowship with God, and in the ways of God? Do you love the brethren; all the brethren? Do you love them for Christ's sake, because they belong to him and resemble him?

If so — rejoice that your name is written in Heaven.

If so — trust in the Lord, and expect to receive from him all that you need.

If so — honor the Lord more and more, by your confidence, humility, and grateful spirit.

If so — publish the wondrous grace, tell to all around you, what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he had compassion on you.

If so — in all your troubles, trials, temptations, and distresses, look forward to the time, when absent from the body you will be present with the Lord, and dwell in pleasure and plenty in your Father's house forever!

Behold what wondrous grace

The Father has bestowed

On sinners of a mortal race,

To call them sons of God!

03 The Affection Set

The Affection Set "I have set my affection to the house of my God" 1 Chronicles 29:3

David's attachment to the house and ordinances of God was strong and ardent. He often gives expression to it in the Psalms, and when he had collected the princes and people of Israel around him, just before his death, to direct and stimulate them in reference to the building of the temple — he tells them of the great provision he had made for it, and accounts for his care and liberality by saying, "I have set my affection to the house of my God." Every true, well instructed Christian, feels the same, and can adopt the language as his own — in this light let us look at it, and apply the words to, A PLACE. In a changeable climate like ours, places for the worship of God must be raised, and as where the Lord's people meet, he always meets with them — we call every such place, a house of God. Here he is worshiped, honored, and glorified. Here his ordinances are administered, his people meet, his presence is enjoyed, and his promises are fulfilled. Of such a place, the believer may well say, "I have set my affection to the house of my God," and therefore I will support it, I will visit it, yes, I will make it my spiritual home.

Beloved, can you speak thus? Do you love the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honor dwells? If so, look at the house in debt — will you not make some sacrifice to remove it? Or, it is thinly attended — will you not endeavor to fill it? Or, it is perhaps unfinished — will you not make some effort to have it completed? You love God's house, then ask — What do you spend on God's house, and what on your own? Is there a fair proportion? You love it, that is right — but how much will your love lead you to subscribe weekly towards its support? What is your love worth? One penny per week? Well, if poor, it may be all you can afford, and God, who accepts according to that a man has, and not according to that a man has not — will approve and be pleased with it. But if you subscribe a penny, when you could afford a shilling; or if you subscribe a shilling when you can afford a pound — God cannot be pleased with it, or accept of it. Let your conduct and contributions prove, that you have set your affection to the house of your God. Apply the words to, A PEOPLE. God's house is his redeemed people. Every church is a house for God, hence Paul in writing to the Hebrews says, "Whose house are you." Then we say, "I have set my affection on God's people" — as God's people are banded together for his glory, and engaged in his service. If this is the case, you will cover their faults, and not expose them, for love covers a multitude of sins. You will prefer their company, for love always associates with its objects. You will sympathize with them in sickness and sorrow, under losses and crosses. You will assist them in poverty, and rejoice with them in plenty. You will esteem and think more highly of a poor saint — than a rich sinner. You will identify yourself with them, and travel to glory in their company.

If you have set your affection on God's people, you will speak for them, to vindicate them; you will speak of them, to commend them; and you will speak to them, to encourage them. You will feel towards them pity — if poor, or suffering. You will feel towards pleasure — if well supplied, and happy. You will feel towards love — let their cases and conditions be as they may. You will act for them, to benefit and advantage them, and you will act for them on principle, and according to the

means with which God has favored you. You will meet with them to encourage, and assist them, and to enjoy their society, and devotions.

Affection always leads us to sympathize with each other, both in spirituals and in temporals. If a man were to say, I love my child — and yet starve it; or I love my wife — and yet neglect her; or I love my garden — and yet let it lie waste and uncultivated — could we believe him? To this purpose, John speaks, "down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

If we set our affection upon a place — we shall wish to be there, to see it, to possess it, and to enjoy it. Just so of the house of God on earth, and of our Father's house in Heaven. If we set our affection on a people — we shall desire to be with them, to be of them. Just so, if we love the church as the household of God, we shall wish to be of the family, and to be with them wherever they are, whether on earth, or in Heaven.

04 Walk Worthy of God

Walk Worthy of God "Walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory." 1 Thessalonians 2:12

Distinguishing mercies, require us to be distinguished people. Great favors conferred, lay us under great obligations. If the Lord has done more for us, than he has for others — he expects us to do more for him. We are required to act becomingly, or answerably to what God has done for us. This the apostles always inculcate. Hence Paul writing to the Thessalonians says, "Walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory."

He had conferred a special FAVOR on them. He had called them from heathenism, and idolatry — by his gospel, and by his Holy Spirit. He had called them into his kingdom, the kingdom of his dear Son. This kingdom was set up in the world, and was endowed with special privileges and immunities. In this kingdom — grace reigns, mercy triumphs, and God resides. They were called . . .

to perceive its nature, which is spiritual;

to enter its gates, by a profession of faith;

to unite with its citizens, in all holy duties;

to enjoy all its privileges, which are numerous and great;

to identify themselves with its trials, which were painful and severe;

and to share in its honors, which are great and lasting.

They were called into the kingdom of grace — as introductory to the kingdom of glory. They were to be identified with Christ in his humiliation — that they may be exalted with him in his exaltation. He called them unto his glory — to receive information respecting it, to experience a desire to possess it, to be prepared to enter upon it, and eternally possess and enjoy it. What wondrous grace, to call such people, from such a state — to such privileges and prospects.

He required suitable conduct from them. They were exhorted to walk worthy, or befitting their dignity and profession. Believers who are in Christ's kingdom now, and expect to be in Christ's glory soon — should walk in separation from the world — as those who are delivered from it. They should walk in union with the saints — as those who are one with Christ. They should walk in obedience to the Savior's precepts — as those who love his authority. They should walk copying his example — as those who wish to be like him, in order to be with him, and enjoy his society forever. They should walk advancing his cause — as identified with it, and to whom it is in a measure entrusted.

We should walk worthy of God — or answerable to the grace shown to us, the dignity conferred upon us, the distinction made between us and others, and the glorious destiny appointed for us!

Where much is given — much will be required. If there is any gratitude in our hearts, any love to God in our souls, or any sense of consistency in our minds — let us walk worthy of God, who has called us to his kingdom and glory.

God's kingdom is spiritual — therefore we are called to be spiritual people. Influenced by spiritual principles, acting from spiritual motives, guided by spiritual truth — we should make it manifest that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and are being trained up for glory. Let us seek a deeper spiritual experience of divine things, a deeper insight into spiritual subjects, more spiritual enjoyment in God's ways, and ability to speak to edification on spiritual matters.

God's glory is pure — therefore we are called to be holy in all our behavior. Called to glory — we must be trained in purity. If Heaven is to be our home — holiness must be our element. Our walk now, must be answerable to our expectations at the end. He who lives in sin — is very likely to die in sin; and he who dies in sin — will be surely damned for sin. Only the pure in heart will see God.

Let us then walk wisely, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. God is peculiarly related to us, therefore we should walk befitting so great a privilege. If God is our Father, let us walk as his children — so walk that he may not be ashamed to own us. Let us so walk, that he may be pleased with us, and commend us. Let us walk humbly with him, cautiously before him, in all things seeking to commend ourselves unto him.

We ought so to walk as to please God. Let us therefore walk with his people, as his people, so that all who see us may acknowledge us, as the seed which the Lord has blessed. Often let us ask: Is this befitting? Ought I to be here? Ought I to act thus? Should I go into the world so far? Should I be on such good terms with those who are on such bad terms with God? Shall I take my Father's enemies — to be my friends? Is it fit to requite the Lord's kindness thus? Ask this, when the Bible is neglected, when the closet is not regularly frequented, when the means of grace are not prized, when you do not make God's glory, your great end in all you do.

How humbling the thought, that God should do so much for us — and that we should do so little for him; that God should manifest such great kindness to us — and that we should manifest such unkindness to him. Holy Spirit, convince us of sin, correct us for our folly, and give, O give us grace, that we may "walk worthy of God, who has called us unto his kingdom and glory!"

05 The Ground of Pardon

The Ground of Pardon The Lord's people should be kind to each other, tender-hearted, and ever ready to forgive injuries and insults. They should put far away from them — all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, and all malice; taking the Lord Jesus for their example. In forgiving, their Heavenly Father has set them the pattern, and they are exhorted to forgive one another, "even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them." Ephesians 4:32. Here is, An INVALUABLE Blessing. God has forgiven his people's sins, all their sins. What were they? Sinners. Ephesian sinners! Idolaters, worshipers of the goddess Diana, profane, unclean, depraved, polluted, some of the vilest of the vile! There was nothing in them to induce him to show them mercy, or to pardon their aggravated transgressions. Yet he sent his gospel to them, publishing a free pardon to all who believed it, and received his Son to be their Savior. What did he do for them? He forgave all their sins, faults, follies, and crimes. When God pardons, he does it freely, as he says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."

He pardons willingly, or from his heart, for he is a God ready to pardon. Therefore the Psalmist exclaimed, "You, Lord, are good, ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon you."

He pardons freely, forgiving all trespasses, as it is written, "You have forgiven the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sins." "All manner of sin and blasphemy is forgiven unto men." "Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them," and forgave them all.

He pardons justly, because his law and justice have received satisfaction at the hands of his Son. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

He pardons irreversibly, so that he forgets when he forgives. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more." Forgiveness is a blessing that may be enjoyed by the youngest of the Lord's people, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." It is a blessing often repeated, therefore our Lord taught us to pray to our Father, for a daily pardon: and David sung, "Who forgives all your iniquities," and "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." Jesus is now "exalted a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins." How sweet are the Lord's words by Jeremiah, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them." The GROUND on Which this Blessing is Bestowed. "For Christ's sake." Not on the ground of any merit or desert in us. Not on account of any duties performed, or anything experienced by us. Yes, though it comes to us through faith and repentance — yet it is not for faith and repentance — but for Christ's sake alone. It is for the sake of what Christ has done, in honor of his perfect and infinitely meritorious work. It is to do honor to his name, on account of his suffering for sin, and pleading for sinners with his Father. It comes to us by Christ, who is related to us as our brother,

Savior, and friend — who stood for us in the everlasting covenant, engaging to do and suffer all the law required on our behalf — and by his rendering a perfect, an everlasting, an infinite atonement for us. Jesus procured our pardon. He commanded his apostles to proclaim a pardon. He promises to confer a pardon on all that believe.

Every believer therefore is pardoned — pardoned fully — pardoned freely — pardoned cheerfully — pardoned justly — pardoned frequently — and pardoned irreversibly — for such can never come into condemnation.

Reader, are you pardoned? Pardoned or condemned, you must be. Every sin of thought, word, or deed, that you have ever committed lies against you, and is placed to your account, to be answered for by you. To you may be applied the language of the Psalmist, "O the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessedness of the man, unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." Or to you may be applied the language of our Lord to the Pharisees, "Therefore your sin remains." If you have not the sense of pardon, do you look for pardon through Christ, and through Christ alone? God for Christ's sake will forgive you, if you plead his name, rest upon his blood, and rely on his faithful word. There is no difficulty in your obtaining forgiveness, if you only apply for it in God's way, and are willing to accept it on God's terms. God for Christ's sake is willing to forgive you. Can you live unpardoned? What, live under sentence of condemnation, when a pardon is offered you? What, live under condemnation, when God is prepared to justify you freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus? If you live so — you will die so; and dying so — you will rue your folly to all eternity. Will you rest upon duties, or frames and feelings — instead of resting upon Christ? If you do, you are not safe — you cannot have peace. Christ is the Rock — on which we must rest. Christ is the Refuge — to which we must repair. Christ is the Stronghold — to which we must betake ourselves. In Christ — we are safe, we are pardoned, we have peace with God, we are entitled to everlasting life. Out of Christ — we are in danger, we are unpardoned, to us there is no peace, and we can have no title to eternal life. My dear friend, make sure of a pardon while you may, receive it from God's hand in Christ's name, and pray the Holy Spirit to bear his witness with your spirit, that you are God's child, one of Christ's disciples, an heir of glory, and that "God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

06 Pride Humbled — and Grace Exalted

Pride Humbled — and Grace Exalted

"You have not chosen me — but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." John 15:16

One design of the gospel is to humble the pride of man, and exalt God's grace. Its doctrines are very humbling to the proud heart — for they require us to become as little children, receiving truth as from God's mouth, and to believe it simply on his authority. It calls for faith — not reasoning; for meekness — not argument. It always places God first, and traces up all good to him — and so lays the creature in the dust. But that which humbles us — also exalts; that which lays us low — fills us with comfort. It was humbling to the disciples, to be told by Jesus, "You have not chosen me — but I have chosen you." But while it humbled, it was full of comfort. O how blessed, to be told by the Lord's own mouth, "I have chosen you!" Here we have, A Denial. "You have not chosen me." Not one of the apostles came to Christ — until he went after them and called them. Not one of them chose Christ first, or naturally. Nor does anyone choose Christ naturally. No sinner will ever come to Christ — unless the Father draws him — and then he chooses Christ. In order to choose Christ — one must feel one's need of him — but this no natural man ever does. He knows he needs something, he wishes to escape wrath, he may desire deliverance from his uncomfortable state — but he does not perceive, nor feel, that he needs just such a Savior as Jesus is. No one will acknowledge his need of a physician, until he feels that he is sick; no one will sigh for a deliverer, until he feels that he is in prison, or in difficulties. Just so, no one will choose Jesus — until he feels that he is utterly lost without him. In order to choose Christ — we must conceive of him as lovely; but the natural man sees no beauty in Christ. To him he is like a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor loveliness. He can see beauty in his fellow sinners — but he sees no beauty in Christ. He can see beauty in the world — but not in the Son of God. He is blind to all the excellencies, beauties, and glories of Immanuel; and therefore he will not choose him. He tries every way he can to do without Christ. He will do any work, suffer any privation, or endure any pain, rather than come to Christ — until the Holy Spirit sways his will. He will trust in sacraments, services, priests, the virgin Mary, anything, or anyone — rather than trust in Christ alone; and in such a state of mind, it is impossible that he should choose Christ. The sinner's heart is enmity against Christ, and enmity cannot love; as to choose, therefore, is expressive of love; man, while carnal, cannot choose Christ. No words can be plainer than those of the apostle, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Against Christ, as the revealer and representative of God — the enmity of man is displayed; and while this is the case, he cannot choose Christ. The fact is, no one ever did choose Jesus in his natural state, and no one ever will. Hence, The Assertion. "I have chosen you." Jesus chooses all his disciples. He made his own selection. So in every instance, the choice is Christ's. He chooses each, and he chooses all his people. He chose them before they believed on him, knew him, or had any real care about him. Just so in our case: we had no faith — until he gave it; we had no knowledge of him — 'until he imparted it; nor did we care anything about him — until he led us to feel our deep

and utter need of him. He chose his people from the beginning, even before the foundation of the world — and therefore they could not choose him first. His choice of them was out of pure love. Not because of anything they would be, or do; but out of pure, unselfish love, the Lord chose them for his own. His choice was an act of sovereignty — a manifestation of his right to do as he will with his own — a proof that he delighted in mercy. In our election to eternal life, Jesus shows himself to be God. He had a right to choose. He exercised that right. He had wisdom to direct him in the exercise of that right, and therefore he chose wisely. Believer, Jesus says to you, and to me, "You have not chosen me," nor did we choose him — but as the effect of his choosing us. He says, "I have chosen you," and he did so, or else we should never have chosen him. Let this humble us, and let it also fill us with love to, and zeal for Jesus. Which leads us to, The Design. "That you should go and bring forth fruit." Jesus ordained his disciples to be his witnesses, his ambassadors, and representatives, and he said, "Go and bring forth fruit." Just so, he has ordained us, and bids us go into the world and represent him, and bear witness for him, and beseech men in his name to be reconciled to God.

He chose us to be his servants, and it is our imperative duty to serve him. To serve him out of love. To serve him from gratitude, for the favor he has shown us.

He chose us to go and bring forth fruit. Fruit as his ministers — converts to the truth. Fruit as his members — even the fruits of the Spirit, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith.

He chose us to bear permanent fruit. Fruit that will count before God, and be valued by him. Fruit that will benefit man, and bring a verdict of approval from him. Fruit that will adorn the gospel, and win converts to his cause. Fruit that will honor himself, as the teacher and example of all that is good.

See — who are elected. The fruitful, those who continue in the word and ways of Jesus. We cannot read the book of life — but we can read the conduct of men; and by their fruits we are to know them.

See — who must have the glory of our fruit, of our salvation, of all. He who chose us, chose us to bear fruit, chose us to be saved in himself with an everlasting salvation, chose us to both grace and glory.

See — that the love of Christ is pure and unselfish. He could see nothing in us, why he should choose us — but of his own pure love, he chose us, and ordained us, that we may bring forth fruit.

See — the folly of cavers. Someone must choose, either God or man, for religion, on our part, is choosing God, yielding to his will, and obeying his commands — and on God's part, it is God choosing us, setting us apart for his glory, and conferring grace upon us. Who then shall choose — the Sovereign or the subject? The infinitely wise God — or poor foolish man? The infinitely good and gracious One — or the evil, depraved, and degraded one? But the dispute is settled, caviling is vain, objecting is folly, for Jesus says, "You have not chosen me — but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

07 The Voice of Christ

The Voice of Christ With what conscious dignity our Lord often spoke, claiming the highest homage we can render, and asserting his equality with the Father. He rejoiced in his Father's love, displayed omnipotent power, and proclaimed his supremacy and majesty. With what dignity he asserts his sovereignty, when he says, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and those who hear shall live!" John 5:25

The Sinner's State. He is dead. Not merely bruised, or maimed, or mangled — but dead. In a state of separation from God, the source and giver of life. Having all the natural powers — yet as they are all under an evil influence, he is powerless to do good. Being powerless, he is inactive in reference to spiritual things, though active enough in all that is carnal and worldly. Such are in general unconcerned, or if they are concerned for a season, the concern is neither deep, nor lasting. They are unfit for holy society, a corpse in a ball room would not be more out of place, than an unconverted sinner in Heaven. All would be annoyed and disturbed, and the sinner could enjoy none of the employments of the place.

They are exposed to degradation and destruction. Hell is a place of degradation, as well as of punishment. There are collected all the detestable and vulgar, all the profane and proud, all the vile and villainous, the refuse of creation, the very dregs of the earth. With such, must eternity be spent. To the level of such, the lost soul will be brought. Lower and lower, into deeper and deeper degradation, the lost soul will sink. Everything included in the term destruction, except annihilation, must be endured. O miserable state! O terrible doom! By dead souls we are surrounded, with the lost we have constantly to do — and yet how little we feel. Lord, give us deep and undying sympathy with perishing sinners! The Savior's Promise. This includes, a time. "The hour is coming, and now is." Jesus has special times when he exerts his authority, and displays his power. The day of Pentecost, was the day of his power. And in the experience of every renewed soul, there was an hour, in which the voice of Jesus was heard, and in which the power of Jesus was felt. A fiat he will speak, and his voice is full of majesty. He may not speak in the loud and startling tones of the law. There may be no thunder, no lightning — but only a still small voice. As in the chamber, he quietly said, "Maid, arise" — or in the street he said, "Young man, I say unto you, arise," and in each instance, without noise, or bustle, or excitement — the dead sat up, and were delivered to their friends.

Just as quietly, as calmly, with as little excitement often, Jesus raises the dead in sin, and gives them everlasting life. An effect: those to whom he speaks shall hear — hear spiritually, and live eternally. It requires no effort for him to raise the dead, it is but for him to speak, and it is done. Life accompanies his word, and floats on the tones of his voice. A result: all who hear his voice live. They are quickened, though dead in trespasses and sins. They are raised up together with Christ, though buried in the grave of nature. A solemn asseveration: "Truly, truly, I say unto you." The Amen, the God of truth speaks, and what he says — shall surely come to pass. How solemn, how majestic his words, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live." The Believer's Privilege.

Hearing the voice of Jesus — he lives. He is brought into union with Christ, who is the life; and through him into union with the Father, who is the living, and life-giving God. He becomes deeply, intensely concerned about the things of God — to know them, to possess them, and to enjoy them. He is active in the ways of God, aware of his holy will, awake to his requirements, and desirous of pleasing him. He becomes fit for the presence of God. He enjoys the presence of God in grace, preparatory to the enjoyment of it in glory. To please Jesus — is the believer's delight. To be like Jesus — is the believer's highest desire. To be with Jesus — is the believer's Heaven.

He is safe from the wrath of God. To him, there is no condemnation, no second death, no curse, no punishment; but as Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He is prepared to hold fellowship with God, and enjoy it; and that fellowship is the solace and delight of his soul.

He shall live. Live a life of holiness and usefulness on earth. Live notwithstanding death, which shall have no power over him. Live with God, in the full enjoyment of God in Heaven forever. Yes, all that hear Jesus speak in a way of grace, shall live in the possession of his glory.

See then, what the Church of Christ needs: that Jesus should speak — speak to sinners, and convert them — speak to drowsy professors, and arouse them. Ministers may speak — but they will not heed them. Teachers may teach — but they will not be aroused by them. It is the voice of Jesus which is needed, for where the word of the king is, there is power. His sheep hear his voice, and follow him; but a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.

O Jesus, speak, speak we beg you. Speak to thousands, to millions, and grant us a great and glorious revival.

See, why some are quickened — it is because Jesus speaks. He speaks with the preacher, or without him. He speaks in public, or in private. He speaks just as he sees fit. Every conversion, proves that Jesus is present, for as the Shunamite's son, could not be raised by the prophet's servant, though he had the prophet's staff — no more can ministers raise dead souls, although they have the everlasting gospel — Elijah must come in the one case, and Jesus must come in the other.

See, the dignity and power of the Redeemer, he has the power of life and death. It is but for him to speak — and the end designed by him, must follow. He quickens whomever he will. He gives eternal life, to as many as the Father has given him. He casts out Satan with a word. He dethrones sin with a word. He imparts eternal life with a word. O the millions to whom He has effectually spoken — and every one of those millions heard and responded! They lived a life of faith on earth, and they are now living a life of unspeakable joy in Heaven!

See, to whom we should look. Do we want our children converted, our churches revived, our neighbors brought to God, the heathen turned from darkness to light, or our own souls quickened — we must look to Jesus! Means without Jesus, are powerless; and as the poor man lay for years at the pool of Bethesda, without a cure until Jesus came — so may we. It is Jesus, and Jesus alone — who can infuse life into the means we use, and render them effectual.

See, who should have the praise. Do any souls live? Have we been quickened? Are we living by the faith in the Son of God? Then Jesus has spoken to us, he has done the work, and to him belongs the glory. Let us praise his holy name. Let us give him all the glory. Be this our song, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us — but unto your name give glory, for your mercy, and for your truth's sake."

O Jesus, speak to my soul and revive it — speak to poor sinners, and save them! Speak with your word, speak by your servants, put life and power into the ordinances, and give us a glorious illustration of your own words. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God — and those who hear shall live!"

08 Good and Evil Alike from God

Good and Evil Alike from God

God teaches by trials, and every trial should be looked upon as sent to teach us some lesson of importance. But for the trials of the saints, what a different book the Bible would have been. How many records of the trials and troubles of believers we have there. Who can be in trouble now, and not find a companion in God's book? What a blessing has the book of Job been to thousands. But it never would have been such a blessing if Job had not been tried as he was. The tree was stripped — yet it survived, and was more fruitful afterwards than before. All was taken away but his wife — and she appears to have been spared to be a tempter and a trouble unto him. She would have him curse God and die. But he nobly repelled her suggestion, and said, "What? shall we receive good at the hands of God — and shall we not receive evil?" Job 2:10

Jehovah's Prerogative: He sends GOOD — all good. He sends all temporal good, therefore Agur prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

He sends all spiritual good, not only food for the body — but for the soul. He forms the light and creates darkness. His presence produces the one, and his absence the other.

He sends EVIL — not moral evil, for God cannot be the author of sin, nor in any way give his sanction to it. Unless he could sanction the grossest insult that can be offered to himself, and an attempt to rob him of his glory, and deprive him of his very existence, he never could sanction sin. But afflictions, bereavements, losses, crosses, pains and sorrows — he does send. At times, likewise, he gives liberty to our enemies, and allows them to trouble us, and for a time to prevail against us. He sends good and evil sometimes in quick succession. He sent the fish to preserve the life of Jonah, and the gourd to screen him from the sun — but he sent also the worm to destroy the gourd, and teach Jonah a beneficial lesson. Who can read the life of Jacob or Joseph, of David or Daniel, and not see that the Lord sends good and evil upon his people. Hence of the latter, the prophet asks, "Shall there be evil in a city — and the Lord has not done it?" The Believer's Duty. We should receive all as from God's hand. The reference is not so much to the receiving, for we must receive it; but the manner of receiving as from God. We often receive good as from God — but we do not so receive evil; yet both alike should be so received.

GOOD should be received with gratitude and praise, with humility and love — with a deep sense of our unworthiness, and God's unmerited goodness. Nor should we forget, that we are held responsible for the use of all the good things we receive from God.

EVIL should be received with patience and submission, saying with Eli, "It is the Lord — let him do what seems good unto him." There should be a recognition of his justice, as Aaron, when his two sons were slain, held his peace. He was dumb, he opened not his mouth, because the Lord did it. There should also be confidence in his love, because the dispensations of his hand, never prove a

change in his heart. He loves us as much when he sends evil, as when he sends good; for his love is not only everlasting — but unchangeable. The head should bow in reverence before the Lord, while we ask, "Show me why you contend with me." Or say, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord." We should receive good and evil alike — as from a wise, gracious, and holy God; who in all that he does, while he exercises his sovereignty and maintains his high prerogative — always keeps his eye on his promises, and secures our welfare. The Expostulation. "What? shall we receive good at the hands of God — and shall we not receive evil?" Are we to receive good, and only good; or are we to view good alone as coming from God? Are we not to look at evil, at our trials, troubles, and tribulations — as coming from him? Or, are we to forget his favors, lose sight of his paternal relationship, quarrel with his wisdom and love — and thus act the rebel and the ingrate? Alas! this is too often the case. One trouble swallows up the remembrance of many mercies. We think more of one loss — than we do of the gains of years; and we are more affected with one hour's pain and sickness — than we are with months of ease and health. But it should not be so, nor would it be so — if we were properly affected with a due sense of our sinfulness, ingratitude, and unworthiness. Then in the midst of our good things, we would say with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies!" And in the midst of our evil things we would say with Job, "The Lord gave — and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"

It is folly to lose sight of God's hand in our troubles. We should rather say, "This also comes forth from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Nor is it wise to complain of his dealings with us, for a sinner out of Hell — can never have any reason to complain. Everything short of Hell is mercy. Yes, "it is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not," To rebel against his dispensations is to awaken his displeasure. He assures us that all he does is in love. His word to us, when things are at the worst is, "As many as I love — I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." Silence befits us, though to justify God would befit us more.

We should not make too much of the instruments by which we suffer. Joseph said unto his brethren, "It was not you — but God." David said of Shimei, "Let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him." The best of men have always looked more at God who uses the rod — than at the rod he used. If he appoints — it is wise. If he permits — it is for our good. He does nothing, he permits nothing to be done, that affects his children — but they would do themselves, if they were as wise, as judicious, and as far-seeing as he is. Nor is there a doubt — but in eternity we shall bless and praise his holy name — for the very things that grieve and distress us now. Believer, receive everything, whether painful or pleasant — as from God's hand! And bless a taking — as well as a giving God.

Lord, pardon our folly and forgive our sins, for we have been guilty of both in our conduct toward you; and help us in future if tempted to repine, or if rebellious feelings arise in our hearts to say, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God — and shall we not receive evil also?"

09 Remember the Former Days

Remember the Former Days

Upon whatever object the mind is fixed — it is sure to affect the heart. We therefore always direct sinners to the cross, and exhort them to keep the mind fixed on Jesus as suffering — the just for the unjust; as dying — that the sinner may live. Dying believers, we often point forward, to the rest which remains for the people of God. But sometimes we find it expedient to direct suffering Christians backward to the first stages of their pilgrimage, when they were called to suffer much for the name and cause of Christ. Thus Paul directs the Hebrews, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions." Hebrews 10:32.

What Had Been Done for Them? "They had been illuminated." Man, by nature, is in the dark — yes, he is darkness. The gospel is sent as a great light, to enlighten those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and wherever it comes — it enlightens. But illumination may be only COMMON, which is simply by the Word; as Paul speaks of some who were once enlightened — but who falling away, it was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Many get light in the head — who do not get grace in the heart. They get light into doctrines, ordinances, or duties — but they are not led to Christ.

SPECIAL illumination is by the Spirit. The Word is generally the instrument — but through the Word, the Spirit enlightens the heart. This was Paul's own experience, as he says, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Here you see God, who is light, shines — he shines in the heart, and so shines as to reveal Christ, and to make him known as the anointed Savior. This shining into the heart, always appears marvelous, as we read, "Who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." This spiritual illumination deeply humbles the soul and lays it low in the dust, as it did Job, who said, "I have heard of you with the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This spiritual illumination determines the heart, and brings the soul to Christ, as he said, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Everyone therefore who has heard and learned of the Father, comes unto me." This spiritual illumination removes prejudices, proud reasonings, and carnal misconceptions, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This spiritual illumination leads to practical godliness, and devotes the life to Jesus; prompting us to follow on to know the Lord. "The entrance of your word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for your commandments."

Spiritual illumination, affects our views of every subject: it shows . . .

sin to be hateful,

the law to be holy,
Christ to be lovely,
the world to be empty, and
Heaven to be all desirable.

Reaching the heart — it affects the head, and changes and transforms the life. To be thus enlightened, is to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

What Was Suffered by Them. "They endured a great fight of affliction." Their afflictions were like a conflict with some foe, a great conflict with some terrible foe. They were heavy — pressing them down. They were many — coming from different quarters. They were various — the more calculated to try and dispirit them. But they endured them. They stood patient under them, as under a burden; they endured, realizing that God was present, would support, and make them more than conquerors.

They met them with fortitude — as good soldiers; they persevered — as those whose hearts were set on the prize. Like the Thessalonians, they received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit — yet they had not resisted unto blood striving against sin, and therefore they were very likely to be tried more severely yet. Until we have passed through our last trial, we cannot tell whether we have had our worst trial. But though we do not know that, we do know that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for us, that his strength will be made perfect in our weakness, and that, let what will come — as our day, so shall our strength be. Let us not therefore be alarmed at the prospect of trouble, or be terrified by the thoughts of trial; but let us remember the past — and with confidence face the future.

What Was Urged upon Them. "Call to remembrance the former days." They were days of severe trial. Then your strength was small, and your knowledge deficient. You had but little experience of the sustaining power of grace, or the faithfulness of God to his people in trouble. You were young disciples, raw recruits, untried pilgrims — and yet you stood, fought, and overcame!

Compare the past with the present. You now know much more of your own weakness, and where your great strength lies. You have now much more experience of the power and sweetness of experimental religion.

Improve the comparison against fear. You may be assaulted by fears, and be filled with needless alarms. But if you stood your ground at first, surely you can now. If you triumphed then, why should you despair now? Fear not, for the Lord who is with you, is more than all that can be against you. Never yield — but grasp your sword, hold up your battered shield, call upon the great captain of your salvation, and so meet whatever may come upon you. Beware of the first backsliding step. Hold on. Press forward. But never slide back, much less turn the back to the foe or to the trial. Face whatever comes. Meet all that approaches. For you will find that what appeared most formidable in the distance — will lose more than half its terrible character when near at hand.

Remember the former days, hold fast that you have, and let no man take your crown. "Whereunto you have already attained, walk by the same rule, mind the same things, and press on toward the mark for the prize of your high calling which is of God in Christ Jesus.

Tribulation you must have. Troubles will come upon you. Dark days and long nights may be before you. Make up your mind to the worst. Force your way through every obstacle. Everything will give way before faith, prayer, and perseverance. You can overcome — for grace is provided for you, promised to you, and may be obtained by you. You must overcome — if you are to be crowned, enter the holy city, and sit down with Jesus on his throne. Cowards and apostates will be disowned by him. The fearful and unbelieving will be placed in the front rank of those whom he will banish to the lake of fire.

Take heed then, that you lose not the benefit of the past — but remember the former days, the trying scenes you have passed through, and take heart, be determined not to quit the field, until you are a conqueror, and more than a conqueror through him who has loved you, and given himself for you. The Hebrews attended to the admonition, and took joyfully the confiscation of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in Heaven a better and enduring substance.

Gracious God, give us grace, so to remember the past as to take courage for the future; and grant that we may go on from strength to strength, from stage to stage — until we arrive in that better country, where there shall be no troubles to burden us, no afflictions to affect us, no enemies to oppose us — but where all will be happiness and peace forever!

10 PURIFYING

PURIFYING

"I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your tin." Isaiah 1:25 In the dealings of the Lord with Israel, we have a pretty clear representation of his dealings with his people in general. All was based on mercy, and was intended to display the holiness, justice, and grace of the Divine nature. If they sinned — he corrected them; if they repented and returned to him — he pardoned them. While they continued obstinate — he continued to strike them; until at length, he is determined to overcome, and special mercy steps in. Thus it was in Isaiah's time, and the Lord said, "I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your tin." Thus the Lord, at times, speaks to us. The WORK to Be Effected. PURIFICATION.

"I will thoroughly purge away your dross," which may represent our worldliness, formality, and unbelief; which like dross, mixes with the pure metal and debases it.

"I will remove all your tin," or self-righteousness, which like tin is light, glittering, and base — not to be compared with pure silver. When the ore is put into the fire — the dross rises, spreads over the metal, obscures it, and causes disturbance. Just so, when the Lord puts his people into the furnace:

the hidden corruptions of the heart rise,

they spread over the whole soul,

they obscure all our evidences,

they burden and deject the spirit,

they disturb and distress the mind,

they afford matter for Satan to work upon,

and awaken fears and inquiries. The purifying process is at times very severe, and we require to be kept long in the furnace. While passing through it, we often draw wrong conclusions, we write bitter things against ourselves, and are tempted to give all up for lost. There is so much dross, that we conclude there is nothing else, and corruption rises so thick and fast, that we doubt whether we have the grace of God at all. But as painful as is the experience — it is necessary, it is beneficial, and will glorify the great Purifier at length. The AGENCY Employed. "I will turn MY HAND upon you." The Lord purifies us with his own hand. By his hand, we understand his wisdom and power combined — or his special and particular providence. His hand sustains, carries, supplies, and blesses his people. It produces, directs, and uses afflictions, trials, and sufferings for our good. As his grace is set upon sanctifying us — his providence kindles the fire, and then comes trouble, trial, and affliction; these act on the soul as fire on the ore — and separate the precious from the vile!

Mark how he represents it, "I will turn my hand upon you." With a turn of the hand — he changes our circumstances, and brings us into the severest trials. He does it easily — and he does it effectually too. He purges thoroughly. He purges away all the dross — and takes away all the tin. He makes thorough work of it — and will get great glory by it. The Object in View. He intends to make us PURE, like pure gold or choice silver — free from all dross.

Bright and shining — that we may catch and reflect the rays of his glory.

Beautiful and ornamental — that we may be fit to adorn the house not made with hands.

Valuable and useful — answering his wise and holy purposes, being highly esteemed by him.

Righteous and faithful — answering to the requirement of his law, and honorably maintaining our profession. In a word, he intends to make us pure and holy, like his own beloved Son — thus answering our prayers, accomplishing his own gracious purpose, and fulfilling his great and glorious promises.

Beloved, let us expect trials and afflictions. They are appointed for us. The hand of God will bring them upon us. Let us therefore be prepared for them, that they may not come upon us unawares.

See the cause of many of our trials: there is dross and tin which needs removing — and nothing but such trials and troubles will remove them. God does not afflict willingly — but only when circumstances call for it. Nor are afflictions sent in wrath — but in love, showing the value that he sets upon us, and his determination to remove our dross from us.

Observe the design he has in view — to purify and thereby render us more valuable, bright, and beautiful. It is his will that we should be sanctified — therefore it is his will that we should be afflicted and tried. Let us look upon our afflictions — as coming from God. It is his turning his hand upon us. His wisdom plans, and his power executes — all his designs. Troubles do not spring out of the dust — but are sent by God for a purpose worthy of himself. Let us then seek to hasten the end intended. As soon as the metal is refined — the fire will be drawn. As soon as we are purified and made white — our afflictions will terminate. Let us not then despise the Lord's chastening — as though it was not necessary; nor let us faint — as if it was unnecessarily severe. For whom the Lord loves — he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. Hear God's purpose, and mark his end, "I will bring the third part through the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'" Zechariah 13:9

11 God's Presence in His House

God's Presence in His House "Surely, the Lord is in this place — and I knew it not!" Genesis 28:16 Our sufferings very frequently spring from our sins. Jacob sinned against his blind father and his elder brother, therefore he must suffer. He must be sent from home to a distant country, sent alone without guide or protector. Wearied with his journey he halted for the night. He took a cold stone for his pillow, stretched himself on the greensward, and beneath the heavy dews of the east — he fell asleep. Grace takes advantage of his circumstances, and God comes to reveal himself in a dream. He sees a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven, and he hears the voice of God speaking from the top of it. He perceives that heaven and earth are connected, and that communication between the two worlds is constantly carried on. He wakes from his sleep, full of solemn impressions produced by his dream; and being awake exclaims, "Surely, the Lord is in this place — and I knew it not!" These words are applicable to the sanctuary, and may well be used by many. Let us look at them in this light, and notice, The FACT. The Lord is present where his people meet for prayer, and preaching his word. He is there from necessity of nature, for as the omnipresent God — he is present everywhere, in all parts of his vast universe. God is present in Heaven, earth, and Hell. But he is especially present where his people meet in his name, because he has promised to be so. Of old he said, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you." He will be present, and present to bless. So our Lord said to his disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The triune God therefore is especially present in our worshiping assemblies, for he has solemnly pledged his word to be so. No place however magnificent, no company however large, no service however devout, no sermon however earnest, eloquent, or scriptural it may be — will satisfy them. It is the presence of the Lord that they want, and the presence of the Lord they must enjoy, or they cannot be satisfied. The Lord loves to be invited by his people to meet them, and he is sure to accept of their invitation. Nor should we ever meet together in any religious service, without first earnestly and devoutly inviting the Lord to meet with us. However, God will keep his word, and will be found in the assemblies of his saints. The DESIGN. The Lord is present to observe. He observes every thought which we conceive or indulge, every word we speak or whisper, and every action of the mind and body.

He is present to record. A book of remembrance is written before him, which contains a record of our desires, prayers, and pretenses. For many pretend to be devout, who are not.

He is present to bless. He blesses some with penitence, some with power, and some with pardon. Indeed so numerous and so various are the blessings which he brings and communicates, that it would be impossible to enumerate or describe them.

He is present to receive. To receive the homage of his people, the confessions of the sinner, and the petitions of all who approach him.

He is present also to divide and distinguish — and by the ministry of his word, and the work of his Spirit, he distinguishes between the precious and the vile, and divides between the saint and the

sinner. How solemn then, to meet with God's people — for then we must meet with God. How valuable divine ordinances, in which such blessings may be obtained. How serious we should be in the sanctuary, if such an Observer is present, and if such a record is made. The CONFESSION. "Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not!" To many we may say that this must be true, or you would not trifle as you do. How many trifle during prayer, while the Scriptures are read, while God's praises are sung, and while the gospel is preached. Others pray — but these only pretend, or scarcely that, and so mock God. Others praise God, these mock him with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue. Others hear the word, as if God was speaking to them — but these are no more affected by it, than as if it was an old song. If they realized that God was in the place, they would never trifle as they do. They would be serious, if not spiritual; attentive, if not devout; expecting a blessing, if not enjoying the Divine favor.

"The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." To some we must say, you did know it — but you failed to realize it; for if you had, you would have sought his face, implored his blessing, expected the fulfillment of his word, and have deeply felt the solemn circumstances in which you were placed.

Sinner, when you meet with God's people, remember that God is there — and act accordingly. Perhaps you seldom, if ever, come nearer into contact with God, than when you meet with his people in his house.

Seeker, remember that God is there — there to receive sinners, there to forgive sins, there to be reconciled to offenders, there to answer prayers.

Believer, never, never forget that when you go to meet with your brethren — you go to meet with God. In public worship, God comes to us in mercy. He meets us in order to bless us. He waits to be gracious in our midst. His hands are full of blessings — and his heart is full of love. He proves the truth of his promise. He never fails to meet his people. He is always there in time, and he never leaves until the service is closed. Late comers, and early goers, do not always think of this. If we forget that we meet with God in his house, or fail to realize that he is in the place, it will not be always so. He will call the sinner to face him at the bar of his justice, and will pour upon him the fierceness of his wrath — and fiery indignation. He will call the believer to meet him before the throne of his glory — and to enjoy his presence forever. To be in Heaven, and feel, "God is here, my Father and my friend!" How blessed! But to be in Hell, and feel, "God is here, my grieved and offended God, here to deal with me according to my sins!" How dreadful!

12 The Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd This title Jesus claims for himself. Other shepherds may be good comparatively — but he is good absolutely. A good shepherd is one thing, the good shepherd is another. All that a shepherd should be — Jesus is. All that a shepherd should do, Jesus does. He is the Father's shepherd, and looks after his Father's sheep. He is our shepherd, and has taken charge of us. We may sing right joyfully, "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack!" because Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." John 10:11 The OFFICE. A shepherd. This implies trust — for he undertakes the charge of the flock, he is entrusted with the sheep.

It includes care — for he is required to watch over, take care of, and provide for all the needs of the sheep.

It requires attention — for the sheep have many needs, are liable to many diseases, and in the east were exposed to many foes.

It is a situation of great responsibility — for the flock is the wealth of the owner. The shepherd becomes answerable for the safety, condition, and prosperity of the flock, up to the amount of his ability.

Just so is Jesus — he is entrusted with the flock of God, all the care of the flock devolves on him, his whole attention is given to it, and he has become responsible for it. Hence speaking of the Jewish part of the flock, he said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." The CHARACTER. I am the good shepherd." He knew this, and without either vanity, or pride, or boasting, he could say, "I am the good shepherd."

He was the true shepherd, not a mere hireling. He knew His work. He loved His flock. He cared more for His sheep — than for himself.

He was a kind shepherd. He gathered the lambs with His arm, carried them in His bosom, and gently led those who were burdened. His kindness extended to the whole flock, and to every sheep and lamb in it.

He was the watchful shepherd, who dwells in the midst of His flock, and lest any should hurt it — keeps it night and day. His eye rests on the whole, and follows every one.

He was as wise as He was watchful. He knew the nature, diseases, habits, needs, and dangers of His flock. His wisdom could never be baffled, nor His knowledge be at fault.

He was as self-denying as He was wise. His flock was ever first — Himself last. For His flock — He suffered,

for His flock — He labored,

for His flock — He died; in consequence of which he could say, "Not one of them is lost!"

Blessed Jesus, help me in all seasons of weakness, want, and woe — to remember that I have a good shepherd — one true of heart, infinitely kind, ever watchful, inconceivably wise, and full of self-denying love! The PROOF. "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." His object was to preserve his sheep; rather than part with them — He would die for them.

It was to ransom them — for they had strayed, they had trespassed — and an infinite ransom was demanded, and that ransom He laid down his life to pay.

It was to rescue them. To rescue them . . .

from the grasp of divine justice,

from the jaws of the great destroyer,

from the present evil world, and

from all the penal consequences of their transgressions.

It was in order to present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; and to surrender them to his Father worthy of his admiration, delight, and highest love. For this he gave his time, his talents, his labors, and his life! O good shepherd — You have you given your life to preserve me from death, to ransom me from Hell, to rescue me from Satan, and present me all glorious to your Father! I will bless you while I live, and will glorify your name forever and ever. Did not the conduct of Jesus as a shepherd, show special love? Did he not do for his flock — what he did not do for others? Must he not have died for them in a sense in which he did not die for others? Will Jesus obtain his object? Will his flock, his whole flock, be saved? Will he ever lose a lamb? Never! Never! This is his Father's will, and he will carry it out: "I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."

What induced Jesus to act as he did? The sheep were his Father's property and choice, and such was his love to his Father, that he was willing to lay down his life for them, rather than his Father should lose them. He therefore accepted the sheep at his Father's hand, and undertook the entire charge of them. They were entrusted to him that he might see to their salvation and everlasting glorification. Thus his own character became involved in their destiny. If they are saved — he is honored, exalted, has a name above every name — for doing what no one else could do, and bringing a glory to God, which no one else could bring. But if any of the sheep are lost — the shepherd must bear the blame forever; for he either undertook what he could not do, or he was not faithful to the trust which was committed to him. If he could save, and did not — where is his love? If he would have saved — but could not, where is his power? But the good shepherd can and will save every member of his flock with an everlasting salvation!

13 Waiting for Salvation

Waiting for Salvation

Troubles have a tendency to wean us from the world, to weary us of life, and make us long for the better land. In the buoyancy of youth, amidst the pleasures of manhood, when all things go well with us, we have few aspirations after that city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But amidst the pains of sickness, the vexations of business, and the weakness of old age — we long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Then, like Jacob, wearied with life's trials, satisfied with all God's dealings, and worn out in God's service, we can say, "I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!" Genesis 49:18. The OBJECT of Desire. SALVATION, or deliverance — full and perfect deliverance.

Deliverance from Satan, his temptations, suggestions, and annoyances.

Deliverance from all sorrow, trouble, grief, and care. The Lord's salvation — which he purposed in himself, promised in his word, procured by the labors of his life, and the agonies of his death, which he proclaims by the everlasting gospel, and perfects by the work of his Spirit in the heart. A salvation, worthy of God who devised it, the expense it took to procure it, the aspirations of the soul for it, and all the pains taken to obtain it. A salvation, which is deliverance from all evil, both physical and moral; and the possession all good, both natural and spiritual. A salvation which brings the greatest glory to God, the greatest confusion to Satan, and the greatest good to man. A salvation which will exalt, satisfy, and dignify us. The Patriarch's POSTURE. "I have WAITED for your salvation, O Lord." This is our only proper posture as believers in Jesus. We wait not for death — but for God's salvation. We have the plan of it in the Scriptures — to study, and we have the pledge of it in our hearts — to encourage us. It is for us therefore to wait for its full perfection, and to wait in God's way, God's time, until it arrives.

Let us wait praying, which is a preparation for it.

Let us wait pressing on, determined to reach it.

Let us wait particularly doing and enduring all that God requires or permits it.

Let us wait persuaded that it will come, and come soon. To some of us, it is just in sight. Soon, very soon, we shall be called from scenes of suffering and labor, and shall enter into the enjoyment of perfect, perpetual, and everlasting freedom!

Every saint waits and pants for perfect purity. This is the direct and invariable tendency of the new nature. Sin is an annoyance, a burden, a grief, a very hateful thing. Holiness is lovely, desirable, and precious. To be holy, perfectly holy — is the natural and constant desire of the regenerated soul.

FAITH lays hold on God's promise. Which is the promise of salvation, for as John says, "This is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life." This promise, as presented in the gospel,

is apprehended, appreciated, and appropriated by faith. Faith believes it, is assured of it, and rests upon it.

PATIENCE waits God's time. Human nature is often in a hurry, trials and troubles spur it on, and at times it becomes restive; but grace is willing to wait, yes, would rather wait, if God may thereby be glorified. "I have waited," said Jacob: and "if we hope for that we see not," says Paul, "then do we with patience wait for it."

LOVE works in God's vineyard. None wait so patiently, so comfortably, so consistently, as those who are diligently employed in God's service. O how many evils are prevented, and how much good is obtained by diligent working for God!

HOPE expects full enjoyment. As God has promised it — faith believes it;

and as faith believes it — hope expects it;

hope expecting it — we patiently wait for it;

and while patiently waiting for it —

we often enjoy the foretastes of it.

Reader, is your heart set upon salvation? Upon being saved from sin now — that you may be saved from all sorrow, sighing, and sadness forever?

Salvation may be had — but it must be sought. If you are willing to be damned, you need take no special effort — just go on and let things take their course, and you are lost. But, if you wish to be saved —

you must strive to enter in at the strait gate,

you must set your heart upon obtaining the salvation which is in Christ Jesus,

you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus.

Faith, the faith which saves us, comes from Christ, receives from Christ, trusts in Christ, has fellowship with Christ, nor will it allow the soul to rest until it realizes that we are one with Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ — and you shall be saved!" But if you believe not — you must be damned, for "He who believes not the Son of God shall not see life — but the wrath of God abides on him." We are saved by grace — but it is through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

14 ELIJAH'S PRAYER

ELIJAH'S PRAYER To the throne of grace, every trouble should be carried, there every promise should be pleaded, and every request made. With God as our Father — we should be free; and for all the good things we need — we should earnestly plead. Both temporal and spiritual blessings should be sought, for our God rules in providence as well as in grace. In everything, by prayer, we should let our requests be made known unto God. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, carried everything to the Lord. "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years." James 5:17. Notice, The PROPHET. His name was Elijah, signifying, "The strong Lord," or "The Lord is my strength." His experience answered to his name, for his strength was in God, the Lord was his strength, and in the strength of the Lord, he wrought wonders. His office was that of a prophet — employed to deliver God's messages, and at times to predict future events.

He was also a reformer — whose work it was to bring back the Lord's professing people from the idolatry into which they had fallen.

He was God's servant — to do his work, assert his claims, and vindicate his honor. His character was that of a godly man. He was on good terms with God, being reconciled to him, and walking in close and intimate communion with him. He was engaged in a good work for God, which called for much courage, faith, and prayer. He was jealous for the honor of God, and felt his soul filled with indignation at the insults offered to God by the idol-worship of Baal and Ashtaroath. He was one who . . .

had power with God,
could touch the heart of God,
arrest the arm of God, and
open the hand of God!

Like Jacob, who had power with God and prevailed, and like Moses, to whom God said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them."

Yet he was but a man — infirm and troubled as we are. "Elijah was a man just like us." He possessed the same fallen nature we have. He was troubled in his body with pain, hunger, and weariness. He was troubled in his soul with fear, unbelief, hope, and sympathy. He was imperfect though sincere and gracious. He was not heard on the ground of his greatness, or personal goodness — but because he prayed in faith. The PRAYER. "He prayed earnestly" — he really prayed in prayer, or with intense feeling. O how many prayerless prayers we offer! How little feeling there is in many of our devotions! The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous man is but seldom offered by us. But Elijah had faith in God, as the prayer-hearing, and prayer-answering God. He had faith in prayer too, as an ordinance of God, ordained to bring down blessings from God.

He prayed, aiming at God's glory — which should be the great end always kept in view.

He prayed aiming at man's good, which next to God's glory, should ever be sought.

Elijah prayed for a judgment, for "he prayed earnestly that it would not rain." His object was to convince the people of the sin of idolatry, giving them a striking opportunity of crying to Baal — and of seeing what Baal could do for them.

It was also to correct them, teaching them that it was an evil and bitter thing — that they had forsaken the Lord their God.

It was intended to reform them, and bring them back to the worship of the true God.

He obtained an answer to his prayer. Rain there was very rare — about every six months; but for three years and six months it rained not. Seven of the wet seasons passed by, and not a drop of rain. Nor only so, the dews were constant and heavy — but there was neither rain nor dew for these three and a half years. What a dreadful visitation! The brooks were dried up, the fountains and springs became exhausted, and the beds of the rivers were laid bare. Famine and death rode through the land in fearful triumph, and the prophet himself had to be supported by a miracle.

O the solemn power of the prophet's prayer! God will answer prayer, if it is earnest, if it is the prayer of faith, if our motive in presenting it is good, and if it is in accordance with his will. It must have these qualifications. Prayer, without earnestness, or intense feeling, in such a case would be but mockery, or a complaint at best. To ask of God without believing his power, or general willingness to answer, is but to insult him. Unless our motive is good — our prayer cannot be acceptable. And not to ask in submission to his will, is to dictate to his wisdom, and display our proud conceit.

Objections from the laws of nature, or human philosophy, are not to be allowed to affect us in prayer. Every miracle interfered with the laws of nature more or less, and many answers to prayer, have been given in opposition to those laws. When Joshua was in deadly conflict with Israel's foes, and the going down of the sun was likely to prevent the completion of the victory; he cried, "Sun, stand still upon Gibson; and moon in the valley of Ajalon. So the sun stood still and the moon stayed in place until the nation of Israel had defeated its enemies." Did the laws of nature hinder here? No! So in the case of Elijah, the prayers of the prophet dried up the clouds of Heaven, and again his prayer raised rain from the sea, and with it soaked the land.

Just so, when Hezekiah was directed to set his house in order, and was told that he would die and not live — he prayed, and the decree was reversed — fifteen years were added to his life, and the promise of deliverance from the hand of the king of Assyria was given him. To assure his mind and confirm his faith, the prophet was directed to say unto him, "And this is the sign from the Lord to prove that he will do as he promised: I will cause the sun's shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz! So the shadow on the sundial moved backward ten steps." In Joshua's case — the sun stood still; but in Hezekiah's case — it went backwards. Where were the laws of nature then? Which was strongest, prayer — or nature's laws?

Look at the three Hebrew youths in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace — is it not the law of fire to consume and devour all that is combustible? Did it not consume and destroy all the bonds that bound them — and yet on their garments or persons, it had no power. "Then the high officers,

officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!" Again we ask — where were the laws of nature then? Which was strongest — prayer or nature's laws? So in the case of Daniel — who was cast into the lion's den, whom the hungry lions had no power to touch. But enough, wherever God presides — he rules; and wherever he rules — all things must submit. He who made the laws of nature — can control the laws of nature; and if necessary for his own glory, or for the good of his people — he will. In prayer, therefore, let us keep in mind that we address a God who is omnipresent, all wise, and free, bound by no law but his own will; and who does according to his will in Heaven, earth, and Hell.

Especially let us pray with intense feeling — for spiritual good, and against spiritual evil. As valuable, as temporal things are, they are not to be compared with spiritual things. While therefore we pray for rain, if the earth needs it, or that it may not rain, if vegetation is suffering from it — let us pray with all our hearts, and with all our souls, that the dew of God's blessing, and the showers of his grace, may come down upon his church, and upon the hearts of his weary people.

Gracious God, withhold the storms of your wrath, and pour down the showers of your mercy, let the gales of grace blow upon us, and the sun of righteousness shine, making us fruitful in every good word and work, for Jesus' sake Amen!

15 Desires Regarded

Desires Regarded Our religion is sometimes at a very low ebb. What with trials without, stirring up corruption within, and the temptations of Satan taking advantage of our various defects — we can scarcely tell whether we have the root of the matter in us or not! At such times, we are led to look back, and to take hold afresh of those portions of God's word, which cheered and comforted us when we first began our pilgrimage. On one such sweet portion my eye is now fixed, may the Lord help me to write a few lines on it, which may do those good who are weak in faith, and weary in the way. "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them." Psalms 145:19. The Characteristics. FEARING. Our fear is often of a very mixed character, partly legal and partly evangelical. Our fears are often very painful; and seldom are they beneficial. When first awakened by the Holy Spirit, and led to see our lost state and condition — the principal object of our fear is the wrath of God. We know we deserve it, the guilt of sin in the conscience, fills us with alarm respecting it — and we fear that it will suddenly fall upon us. The eye of the mind is fixed on the threatenings of the word, and in them appears the holiness, justice, and majesty of an offended God. Our fears now gain strength, and terrible alarms often agitate the soul. We need the promises and invitations of the word, and long to appropriate them — but dare not so much as touch one of them. They are for the Lord's people — and we cannot believe that we are such; or they are for particular characters — and we dare not conclude that we are among them. O if we could but escape the dreadful wrath of God, if we were but delivered from his awful threatenings, if we had but a saving interest in his promises, or if we could but even claim his invitations — our fears would not be so strong, or so painful — but we cannot! When the mind has been led to see something of the graciousness of the Divine character, and the nature and design of the great atonement — hope springs up, and our fear is somewhat changed in its character. We now fear sinning against God. If we could but abstain from sin! If we could but live a holy life! If our hearts were but clean! But when we turn the eye within, and see what a horrid pit of pollution the heart is, and mark the working of corruption there — we fear that we are too vile to be noticed, or regarded with pity or compassion, by a holy God. O what painful fears we feel working within us now — we fear that we must be banished from God, that we shall never see his face, or feel his forgiving love! We see not how a just God, can ever forgive or justify such sinners as we are! If we could but pray, or repent, or believe, we might hope; but when we try to pray — we are all confusion; when we would repent — our hearts are as cold as ice, and harder than the nether-millstone; and when we would believe — we feel as if we could believe anything but the gospel, and every one but God. Yet under all this, there is the fear of God — for conscience is tender, the soul is set against sin, and the walk is in accordance with God's precepts. Of such, though they have not peace, though they do not enjoy rest, though they are not happy — we must say that they "fear God."

They have had many and painful desires working within them, which desires indicate the bent of the mind, and the working of the Spirit of God. The principal, the ruling desire, is for a saving interest in Christ. This appears to the soul, as the one thing needful. If soul had this — it could endure any privations, suffer any pains, and do anything God requires; but without this — every

duty is a task, and every privilege a burden. It cannot rest on general principles, saying, "Christ died for sinners, and therefore he died for me; or he is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and therefore for my sins." It wants something more definite, something more distinct, something more satisfactory. It wants to see that Christ was its personal substitute, and its all meritorious sacrifice; doing all that the law required of it, and suffering all that the law threatened to inflict upon it. Or to realize that it is savingly interested in the person, work, and death of Jesus — being identified with Jesus, represented by Jesus, and doing and suffering in Jesus. When such a sense of a saving interest in Christ is obtained, then the desire of the soul is to know Christ, to know all about Christ. To know Christ thoroughly, scripturally, and experimentally; so to know him, as to commit all to him, and leave all with him. Then the soul desires to hold near, dear, and close communion with him; often to hear from him, having his word applied to the conscience and the heart. The soul also longs to love him, trust him, obey him, enjoy him, and praise him; to share with his people in all their joys and sorrows, griefs and gladness, to be one with them on earth, preparatory to being one with them in Heaven forever. Such are some of the desires of those who fear him. The Lord's Loving-kindness. "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him." His Spirit kindled it, and his grace will fulfill it. This led the Psalmist to exclaim, "How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and you shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures." Not only satisfied — but abundantly satisfied. Not only satisfied — but filled with pleasure — drinking, as the thirsty traveler, of the river of pleasure.

O the sweet satisfaction felt, the intense pleasure experienced, when the Spirit seals home a sense of our saving interest in Jesus, unfolds the glory of his person and work, sheds abroad his love in our hearts, and seals us to the day of redemption! He gives freely, without any inducement on our parts, as it is written, "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." There was nothing in the party but hunger, poverty, and helplessness — and the Lord filled the soul, satisfying it fully. "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

Poor tried soul, the Lord will fulfill your desires, he may delay to do so for a time — but he will make good his word, and you shall rejoice in him, and bless his name.

"He also will hear their cry, and will save them." Pray they cannot, according to their own apprehension — but cry they do, they must. As Peter, when sinking in the water, cried, "Lord, save me!" And the poor woman, overwhelmed with distress about her daughter, cried, "Lord, help me!" So this poor soul cries, and cries often, and from the depths of the soul, "Lord, save me!" They cry — as the young ravens for food, or the young lions for prey, or the babe for the breast. Their brief prayers are the language of the new nature — the cry of the regenerated soul.

They cry, because burdened with sin, and terrified with a sense of wrath.

They cry for deliverance from their fetters, and the bondage in which they are held.

They cry against temptations, especially temptations to sin and despair.

They cry because of enemies, especially the enemy which would condemn their souls.

They cry for help in troubles, and deliverance from sin and Hell.

They cry for strength and direction, under a sense of weakness and perplexity.

They cry, and as the mother hears her infant, and flies to its relief; as the father hears his son, and runs to meet and forgive him, so the Lord hears the cry of a quickened soul, and saves it.

God-fearing souls are blessed. They hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they shall be filled. They want to be right, internally and externally, before God and before man, in state and in experience; for this they hunger and thirst — and with this they shall be blessed. They desire — for what God intends to bestow; they cry — for what God delights to give. He therefore will fulfill their desire, he also will hear their cry and will save them. Is my reader, a poor, doubting, fearing soul? If so, let me say for your encouragement, that if you can trace out within your heart — a desire for Christ and his salvation, and if that desire is the abiding, ruling desire of your soul — it is a proof of the work of the Spirit of God in your heart; it is the smoking flax which Jesus will never quench — but will raise it to aflame. If you have a cry put into your heart for deliverance from sin, Satan, and Hell — then God has put it there, and he who put it there, intends to answer it. It may be a feeble cry, a pitiful cry, a painful cry — but the Lord will hear and answer it. Cry on then as the woman of Canaan did — cry so much the more, as discouragements increase, as the poor blind man in the gospel did — and Jesus will soon hear you, and answer you to the joy and rejoicing of your soul.

God notices desires and looks. He hears the desires of the humble, and satisfies the desire of every living soul — that is, of every one made alive by the Holy Spirit. A look reaches his heart, raises his arm, opens his hand, and brings deliverance; as David testifies, "I sought the Lord and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." God reads the desires of your heart. God notices the uplifted eye. God listens to the feeblest cry. God promises to appear and save the crying soul. His promises meet our circumstances, and answer to our experience. The work of the Spirit within us, prepares us for the promises which God has made for us, and then the promises are fulfilled. When God fulfills his promises — he glorifies his own faithfulness, and fills us with joy and peace. Blessed, forever blessed, be our promise-making, and promise-fulfilling God. His mercy is ever great towards us, and his truth endures from generation to generation. In thousands and millions of instances — has he already fulfilled the desire of those who fear him, and he will do so in millions more. In all ages he has heard the cry of the soul which desires grace, mercy, and salvation at his hands; he hears it now, and he will hear it evermore.

Holy Spirit, comfort the heart of the poor, depressed, and sorrowful soul, whose desire is toward you, and who longs to enjoy the salvation of God!

16 Rest in Prospect

Rest in Prospect

Time is thickly sown with the seeds of trouble, and the soil appears most prolific. Every day, almost, brings something new to try us, and our trials are not often single, they come in troops. When we are most prosperous — we are often nearest some great trial.

Poor Job found it so. His troubles came unexpectedly, nevertheless he received them as from God, and blessed the Lord's name. But he was flesh as well as spirit, and when in addition to poverty and reproach, he was filled with pain — his heart failed him, and he cursed his day of his birth. He gave up all hope of comfort in this life, and looked forward to the grave, not only with hope — but with a longing desire. How pathetic, how touching are his words, as he looked to the tomb, or the place of graves. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest." Job 3:17. The Lord's People Are Often a Weary People. They weary — for they have but little strength, either physical, mental, or spiritual — they have a rough up-hill road to travel — and they have a heavy burden to carry.

They are weary of SIN, which is a constant plague and cause of discomfort.

They are weary of SELF, from which they cannot by any means be freed in the present world.

They are weary of the WORLD, to which they are crucified.

They are weary of SATAN, who is incessantly trying to disgrace, distress, and perplex them.

They are weary of the vain PROFESSORS of religion; whose inconsistencies grieve and wound them.

They are weary of OLD MAN, the body of death, the law in the members, which they have constantly to carry about with them, and which often presses them down to the earth.

Weary! O how weary is the believer often — in body and in mind — of almost everything within, and everything without! How is he ready to wish for the wings of a dove, that he may flee away and be at rest; or for his Lord's messenger of death to come, and set him eternally free. Weary one, look up — there is a hope laid up for you in Heaven; and look forward — there is a good, a glorious time coming!

There is a place and time — when the Lord's wearied ones will be at rest. The poor body — wearied and worn out with pain and labor, will find rest in the silent tomb. The soul — wearied with conflicts and disappointments, will find rest in the presence of Christ, with the spirits of God's elect. The body and soul at the resurrection, will find rest in eternal blessedness. The whole church, comprising all God's wearied ones, will find perfect rest in ultimate glory, when the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all.

Rest! Sweet word. Rest! Delightful prospect!

We shall rest from the voice of an accusing conscience, which often causes pain.

We shall rest from all our doubts and fears, which often becloud the mind.

We shall rest from all the temptations, used by Satan to lead us astray — or arising from our inbred lusts, turning us aside from the right way — or employed by the world to allure or alarm, in order to divert us from the right path.

We shall rest from persecution, arising from the malice and hatred of men.

We shall rest from all our toils and labors.

We shall rest from the evil designs of professors of religion.

We shall rest from all our pains and sufferings.

We shall rest in full and holy satisfaction, possessing all we can wish for in the presence of Jesus, the highest object of our desire.

We shall rest in the most delightful employment, for the honor and glory of God.

We shall rest in the sweetest composure of spirit, forever freed from all fear of a change.

We shall rest in the full enjoyment of perfect and perpetual fellowship with God.

We shall rest in the most complete state of perfection, to which such beings can be raised.

Reader, are you one of God's weary ones? Are you weary of earth, of yourself, and especially of sin? Are you looking forward to the rest of the grave, for the poor body; and to the rest of Heavenly paradise, for the emancipated soul? Are you in the midst of your exhausting troubles and trials, taking encouragement from the prospect of the rest that remains for the people of God? If so, cheer up, "There is rest, there is rest!" And you will soon reach it, and that rest shall be glorious.

Weary sinner, there is rest for you in Jesus — but no where else. Unless you find rest in Jesus now, you will find no rest at the end of life — but yours will be a restless spirit to all eternity. There is no peace, no rest, says my God, to the wicked! When I can read my title clear

To mansions in the skies,

I bid farewell to every fear,

And wipe my weeping eyes! Should earth against my soul engage,

And Hellish darts be hurled,

Then I can smile at Satan's rage,

And face a frowning world.

Let cares like a wild deluge come,

And storms of sorrow fall,

May I but safely reach my home,

My God, my Heaven, my all.
There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of Heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast!

17 The Power of the Spirit

The Power of the Spirit

God has done great things for his people — but he has not done all that he is willing to do. Unasked he gave his Son — but he wishes us to ask for his Spirit — for more of his presence, power, and grace we are to plead. Every believer may have more of the Spirit than he has, so may any individual church. More of the Spirit would make us more like Christ, fill us with joy and peace, and make us abound in hope.

Beloved, "the power of the Holy Spirit," (Romans 15:13.) is greatly needed at the present day, by almost all of us, and by almost all our churches. Let us think of that power, pray for that power, and may the Lord fill us full of it. Consider, Its NATURE. It is not physical force, or anything resembling it, for it acts on mind according to its nature, not interfering with its freeness of action, or accountability. It treats us as men, not as brute beasts. It is compared to three powerful elements. To the wind, which is invisible, useful, and strong. To water, which is softening, cleansing, and fructifying. To fire, which purifies, ratifies, and melts.

It is something like the power of music, which attracts, captivates, and charms. Or the power of scenery, which fascinates, rivets, and delights. Or like the power of life, as it operates in vegetables, animals, and intelligent beings.

It is secret, no one can discern it — but by its effects; it comes secretly, works secretly, and its manner of acting is a secret.

It is sovereign — it is exerted, directed, and regulated in sovereignty. No one can command it; and in many of its actings, no one can control it.

It is effectual — it changes the heart, it renews the will, and it transforms the life. It comes to accomplish the Lord's purposes, to fulfill his promises, and to answer his people's prayers — and it never fails.

It is the power of God, and therefore omnipotent. It is the power of the Spirit of God, and therefore spiritual. Our NEED of this Power. We need it. We deeply need it, for the gospel is inefficient without it. No matter who preaches it, or how it is preached; eloquence and earnestness, simplicity and sincerity, affection and tenderness, all may be employed — but all will be in vain, without "the power of the Spirit of God."

Sinners cannot be converted without it. The Spirit's power alone — can raise the dead in sin, open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, or new create the soul. We may change a man's opinions, and he may reform his life — but he is still under the power of spiritual death, still an enemy to God, and still walking after the course of this world — until quickened by "the power of the Spirit of God."

Anxious souls will not receive Christ without it. They will doubt and fear, attend ordinances and perform duties — but as to opening the heart, receiving the Savior, and enthroning him in the affections — this they will never do until they experience the working of "the power of the Spirit of God." The believer will not thrive, or grow in grace, or abound in the knowledge of Christ — but will be a poor, weak, stunted plant — without "the power of the Spirit of God." The backslider will not be restored, and brought back to the Savior and his fold; but will become hardened in sin, and will go on from bad to worse, except "the power of the Spirit of God" be exerted in his experience. The church will not be vigorous, nor will the pastor be successful — unless the Spirit puts forth his power — influencing, ruling, and controlling the whole.

O how dependent we are, both as individuals and communities, on "the power of the Spirit of God!" The MEANS necessary to obtain it. If we would enjoy the power of the Spirit, we must seek it — but we shall never seek it, unless we are deeply convinced of our need of it. We must feel that we are shut up to this; and that do what we will, let circumstances be ever so favorable, and suitable means be ever so plentiful — yet without the direct putting forth of the power of the Spirit, all will be in vain. There must be deeply embedded in our souls, and constantly rising up from our hearts, so as to influence and regulate our lives — a desire for this necessary and invaluable blessing. Desire is the life of prayer, and we shall never pray for the power of the Spirit, so as to obtain it, unless it is the one absorbing desire of the soul.

We must also have faith in the promise, and also in the God who made it. Coming to God, we must believe that he has it, and that he has the heart to give it — his word informs us that he has it, and his promise assures us that he is ready to bestow it.

It must then be sought in earnest, united, and persevering prayer. Unless our prayers are earnest, it is clear that we do not feel our need, or heartily desire it; unless our prayers are united, we cannot claim the promise made to social prayer for this and similar blessings; and unless we persevere until we obtain, it is clear that there is something wrong, or deficient in our experience. O that every member of Christ's church, deeply felt the need of "the power of the Spirit" in this our day, that every bosom glowed with a desire to possess it, that each one had a simple and steady faith in the promise, and that all would unite to plead fervently and perseveringly with God for this invaluable blessing.

Reader, do you feel the need of the power of the Spirit of God? Do you realize that it is necessary for yourself, for your family, for the church of God, and for the world at large? Have you the deep seated conviction, that the Gospel is inefficient without the Spirit's power, that no sinners will be converted, that no anxious souls will become decided, that no backsliders will be reclaimed, that believers will not grow and thrive, and that the church will not be strong, vigorous, and fruitful without "the power of the Spirit of God?" Are you anxious that the Spirit should be poured upon us from on high, that so our personal religion may be deepened, that the church, the garden of the Lord may flourish and grow, and that the wilderness may rejoice and blossom as the rose? Do you heartily believe the promise, that our Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit unto those who ask him? Without this, our efforts will be feeble, our prayers will be languid, and our hope will only be fitful.

Life is not more necessary to the flower in order to its growth, or the sun to our system in order to its fertility — than is faith in God, and in the promises he has given, to our success at the throne of

grace. Do you feel any responsibility on this point? Surely, if the Spirit is so deeply needed, if he is promised to the prayers of God's people, and if you can pray — then there is some responsibility resting upon you in reference to the matter. Has God, by his Apostle, commanded us to be filled with the Spirit? Ephesians 5:10. Does not this suppose that the Spirit may be obtained? Does it not lay us under a solemn obligation to seek to obtain this filling? If when Israel was dying with thirst in the desert, and God commanded Moses to take his rod and strike the rock, that the waters may flow out to supply them — Moses had neglected or refused to do so, and the people had perished for want — could he have been held guiltless? And when all around us we see sinners perishing, and the Church languishing, and we know that the one thing needed is the power of the Holy Spirit, and that God has commanded us to seek it, and has promised to give it in answer to our prayers, if we, from whatever cause — neglect to seek and obtain this living, life-giving water, and souls perish from the lack of it, or the Lord's church is fruitless and withering — can we be held guiltless?

It is in vain to say, "God can give it without our prayers." We know he can — and he could have given Israel water without sending Moses to strike the rock. But God is a sovereign, and in sovereignty — he chose to work through such instrumentality, so that man was honored; and yet held accountable. And so it is in this case, it is God's method and it is our duty to bow to it, acquiesce in it, and carry it out — and we are faulty if we do not. Shall we then have the power of the Holy Spirit? Will you, reader, help to obtain it? In your private prayers, in your family devotions, in your social meetings, and in the church of God, will you plead for it? Will you, to use the prophet's words, "Give him no rest," until he opens the windows of Heaven, and pour us out this blessing in rich and copious abundance!

18 Whose Son Are You?

Whose Son Are You?

There are many questions in God's word, which taken from their connection, and enforced in a more general way, are likely to be very useful, especially to the young. When David had slain Goliath of Gath, and was brought before king Saul, with the head of the giant in his hand, the king said to Abner the captain of his host, "Whose son is this youth?" And as Abner could give no satisfactory reply, he said to David, "Whose son are you, young man?" 1 Samuel 17:58.

Now as there are but two fathers in the world, I would like to put the question to every one who reads these lines. Much, very much depends on relationship; every one therefore should ascertain to which family he belongs, and be prepared to give an answer to the question, "Whose son are you?" There are,

1. The Children of GOD. These are all born of the Spirit, from whence they derive a new and spiritual nature, and by whom they are brought into connection with Christ. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." There must be a new birth, a new creation, for by nature we are carnal, sold under sin. We must be born again — or we can neither see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Convictions, impressions, or resolutions alone, will not do. Religious services and sacraments will not do. There must be a change of nature.

Now where this great change is wrought — it may be known, for its effects are always substantially the same. There is always a deep and abiding sense of the need of Christ. There springs up an ardent, earnest, desire for Christ. This works and increases until the soul receives Christ. Then the soul enjoys Christ, and possesses a happiness to which before it was a total stranger. The soul is put in possession of the Spirit of Christ, which leads to the imitation of Christ, especially in his filial faith, abiding humility, deep devotion, and expansive benevolence.

Now where the need of Christ is felt, where desire for Christ rules the heart, where Christ is received by faith, where the Spirit of Christ is possessed, and where the conduct of Christ is imitated — there can be no question but the soul is born of God, and knows God. Such can look up to Heaven and say to the Most High, "Doubtless you are our Father!" There are also,

2. The Children of the DEVIL. Not that they derive their being from Satan, for he is not the author of their nature, either physical or intellectual; but they resemble him morally, his likeness is stamped upon them. No child in nature, so accurately resembles its parent, in its physical developments — as the sinner resembles Satan in his moral qualities. Sinners are born after the flesh, and are fleshly, carnal, and enmity against God. They manifest this by rejecting Christ. They may not reject his doctrines, or his ordinances — but they do reject himself. To a religion of ceremonies, many of them do not object — but to receive Christ, to trust in Christ, to obey Christ, to take him to be their prophet, priest, and king — to this they do object. They will not have him to rule over them. They love the world, and prefer its society, its pleasures, and its honors, to Christ, his church, and the honor that comes from God only. They are influenced by Satan, who dwells in

them, works in them, rules and guides them. They are led captive by him at his will. They imitate him — in his conduct, spirit, and opposition to God; especially in his pride, deceit, and murderous propensities.

Satan is the arch-hypocrite, who transforms himself into an angel of light — and many of his children wear a mask. He is the great tempter, who subdues and leads multitudes into sin; and many of his children do the same. He is a false accuser, who accuses the saints before God, and to each other; and his children do the same. He is the chief persecutor, and those who are born after the flesh, will persecute those who are born after the Spirit. The child, may not have all the features of its father — and yet may be his child, so we may not in every particular resemble Satan — and yet our Lord's words may apply to us, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." Whose son are you, young man? The son of God — or the son of Satan you must be, and it is of the greatest importance you should know which. Search then, examine carefully, and come to a correct conclusion, that you may act accordingly.

If you are one of God's children — you are happy. Happy in your state, happy in your experience, happy in your relations, and happy in your prospects.

You are happy, for you have a good father — one that is infinitely wise, infinitely wealthy, and infinitely kind. One is your father, even God, and for you he will employ his wisdom, on you he will expend his wealth, and to you he will manifest his kindness.

You are happy, for you have a good home. Heaven is your father's house — and your home. There your Savior is employed in preparing a place for you, and when he has prepared it, he will come again, and receive you unto himself, that where he is, there you may be also.

You are happy, for you have good relations, for as God is your Father, Jesus is your elder brother, and all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors — yes, the whole of God's elect family, are your brothers and sisters.

You are happy, for you have also a good fortune, for all the unsearchable riches of Christ are yours. The wealth of God is yours, for you are an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Yes, you have a good fortune, "for all things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's. "Happy are the people that are in such a case, yes, happy are the people who have the Lord for their God."

If you are one of Satan's children — you are in a miserable case. Miserable in your state, miserable in your experience, and miserable in your relations too.

You have a bad father, one who is vile and degraded, despicable and base; one who is influenced by every evil principle, and prompted by the most wicked motives.

You have a miserable home — for Hell is the sinner's home. The lake of fire, the bottomless pit, the prison-house of despair. O what a prospect when the journey of life is ended! O what an anticipation, that you will have the just judge, the king of glory, say to you, "Depart from me you who are cursed — into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

You have awful relations — all the thieves and murderers, the swearers and liars, the adulterers and prostitutes, the tyrants and oppressors, the devil and his angels; all the debased, degraded,

and wretched of human kind, are your brothers and sisters. With them, you must be forever associated. By them, you must be forever tormented. O horrid society! O fearful doom!

You have a terrible portion — the wrath of God, without any mixture of mercy:

darkness without a ray of light,

despair without hope,

pain without ease,

sorrow without mitigation,

and agony without end.

Examine then, I beseech you, "Whose son are you?" Where are you most at home? With sinners or saints, in the world or the church? What company suits you best?

What employments do you relish most? If you prefer the carnal to the spiritual, the sensual to the holy — there is little doubt as to whose son you are. With whom do you sympathize? With God — or Satan? With saints — or sinners? With the serious — or the mirthful? With God's Israel — or with the ungodly Philistines? Where are you found? Battling with Goliath, or aiding and abetting the enemies of God? If you are doing battle with your Goliath-lusts, if you are striving against sin, if you are fighting against the corruption that is in the world, if you are seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness — then you are one of God's children. But if you are floating down the stream, if you are indulging your natural propensities, if you are walking according to the course of this world — then you are Satan's child.

After what do you aspire? Is it to be holy in body, soul, and Spirit? Is it to be useful in the world and in the church? Is it to be like Christ, devoted to Christ, and to be eternally with Christ? Then you are God's child. But if it is to be wealthy, to gratify your carnal appetite, to indulge in sin, and to rise in the estimation of the world — then you are of your father the devil, for the lusts of your father you do.

Reader, do get this matter settled, and if there is any doubt on the point, go to Jesus, cast yourself on Jesus, believe in Jesus, for "we are all the children of God — by faith in Jesus Christ."

19 The Proof of Faith

The Proof of Faith

FAITH in Christ is all important. It is both the gift of God's grace — and yet the exercise of man's heart. It is going to Christ, trusting in Christ, committing the soul to Christ, and relying alone on Christ. Wherever there is faith, there is also unbelief, and these two opposite principles will so contend in the believer's bosom, that he is at times unable to conclude whether he believes or not. At such times, we should repair to God's word, and seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit, search out the proofs of faith therein contained. Many such proofs are scattered through the word, and they are simple and satisfactory; but I want to confine your attention to one, and a very sweet one, "Unto you therefore who believe — He is precious." 1 Peter 2:7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They are foolish — He has wisdom.

They are unrighteous — and He has righteousness.

They are unholy — and He has holiness.

They are weak — and He has strength.

They are in bondage — and He has redemption.

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

Every Christian believes on Him to the saving of the soul. They trust Him to procure their pardon, peace with God, and everlasting life. Their heart goes out to Him,

they repose confidence in Him,

they commit their souls to Him,

they build on Him — as God's foundation;

they hide in Him — as the sinner's refuge; and

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

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

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

These are some SEASONS in which Christ is especially precious:

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

Christ is especially precious to believers — when the emptiness of the world is discovered. The soul having tried the world, has found it . . .

false and fickle,

an empty cistern,

a dry well,

a cloud without water,

only vanity and vexation of spirit! The Christian has experienced that . . .

the world's pleasures — end in pain,

its honors — end in disgrace,

and its wealth — ends in absolute poverty.

Now turning from the world, to Jesus — it finds . . .

solid happiness,

substantial pleasure,

full supplies.

It obtains . . .

a deep and lasting peace which passes all understanding,

unsearchable riches in Christ, and

honors which will never pass away.

O how precious is Jesus, when this world appears to be a valley of tears! Almost everything earthly is at times calculated to . . .

cause sorrow,

fill us with sadness,

and draw forth tears.

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

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

He makes up for every loss,

He sanctifies every disappointment,

and He fills for us every relation. His presence is . . .

like a flowing spring — in a dreary desert,

like a cheering fire — on a piercing winter's night,
and like a happy home — to the exhausted traveler.

O how precious is Jesus now!

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

Christ is especially precious in seasons of sickness. When shut out from the world, and obliged to be much alone. When exercised with strong pain, or extreme weakness. Then, to lie on the sick pillow and meditate on . . .

what he is,

what he has done,

what he is doing, and

what he has promised to do

— is indeed sweet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is the foot — which travels to Christ.

It is the hand — which lays hold of Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jesus is precious, says the Word,

What comfort does this truth afford!

And those who in his name believe,

With joy this precious truth receive. To them he is more precious far,

Than life and all its comforts are;

More precious than their daily food,

More precious than their vital blood. Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame,

Nor earth's deceitful empty name,

With all its pomp, and all its glare,

Can with a precious Christ compare!

He's precious, in his precious blood.

That pardoning and soul-cleansing flood!

He's precious, in his righteousness,

That everlasting heavenly dress! In every office he sustains,

In every victory he gains,

In every council of his will,
He's precious to his people still. As they draw near their journey's end,
How precious is their heavenly friend!
And, when in death they bow their head,
He's precious on a dying bed.

20 The New Creation

The New Creation "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Corinthians 5:17

It is a miraculous thing to be a Christian, for real Christianity is the effect of a new creation. To make a Christian, requires the same power as to make a world! Nothing less than the power exerted in raising the dead body of Jesus from the tomb — can raise a sinner from a death in trespasses and sins! In every instance of real conversion, the almighty power of God is exerted, a new creation is produced, and union with Christ who is the fountain of life is effected. "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." The distinguishing PRIVILEGE of the believer, is that he is "in Christ." We were all originally in fallen Adam, and from his loins we flowed. No one is in Christ by nature — but only by an act of sovereign grace. Yet all Christians are in Christ, nor can anyone be a Christian without being vitally united to Christ. As the manslayer fled to the city of refuge for safety — so does the believer flee to Christ. As Noah entered into the ark for preservation from the deluge — so does the believer hide in Christ, that he may be preserved from the wrath to come. As the branch is in the vine, supported and supplied by the vine, and forms a part of the vine — so is the believer in Christ, supported and supplied by Christ, and is really one with Christ. As the member is in the body, presided over by the head, and forms part of the body — so the Christian is in Christ, is presided over by Christ, and forms part of Christ. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Christ dwells in the believer — as his temple; and the believer dwells in Christ — as his refuge, stronghold, and ark of safety. The invariable RESULT of being in Christ: "If any man is in Christ — he is a new creature." Every one that is in Christ — is new created. He is "Created anew in Christ, unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." The believer is not to be looked upon as a Jew, or a Gentile — for in Christ Jesus "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." Being in Christ, we are new created — and have a new LIFE, which is spiritual, derived from a new source, not from Adam but from Christ. Being in Christ, we feed on new PROVISION — even the bread of life which came down from Heaven, and the living water which only Jesus can give. Being in Christ, we are occupied with new SUBJECTS, which are placed before us by the gospel, and engage our thoughts, affections, and time. Being in Christ, we are engaged in new EMPLOYMENTS, we work the works of God, endeavor to do the will of God from the heart, and to glorify our glorious Savior. Being in Christ, we walk in a new PATH — the way of holiness. We walk in newness of life. We walk with God — and desire to walk worthy of God, who has called us unto his kingdom and glory. Being in Christ, we act from new MOTIVES, for the love of Christ constrains us, and we no longer labor for eternal life, because we have it; nor for Heaven, because we have already received a title to it — but as bought with a price, we desire only to glorify God in our acts and thoughts. Being in Christ, we join a new SOCIETY, for we choose the company of the saints, whom we esteem as the excellent of the earth; and therefore we join ourselves to the disciples. Being in Christ, we look for a new HEAVEN, and in order to the possession of it, we wait for Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

O blessed state — to be in Christ! O glorious privilege and distinction — to be new creatures!

Union to Christ is of the greatest IMPORTANCE. Without this there is no eternal safety, no true dignity, no solid happiness. It is only as one with Christ — that we are justified, that we are sanctified, that we can be glorified. Let us never rest satisfied with anything short of union to Christ, and that manifested in living fellowship with Christ.

All who are in Christ are new created. Many are convinced of sin, many are deeply impressed, many are harassed with the temptations of Satan, and many suffer much from the terrors of the law — who are never brought into saving union with Christ. Only by a new birth, only as born of the Spirit, can we come into the enjoyment of this blessed privilege, or enjoy this high distinction. Let no one therefore stop short of that thorough change of heart, which results from saving union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

God looks upon his new creation, with more delight than he did upon his creation of the world! When he had finished the fitting up of the world to be the residence and home of man, he looked over and examined all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good — and God rested from his work. But he knew that that work would be marred, that his lovely creatures would fall into sin, and become his enemies — and these thoughts were present before him when he rested, and was refreshed. But as he looks upon his new creation, and sees his newly begotten children united to his beloved Son, invested with his righteousness, and possessed with his Spirit — he knows that they will never so fall, will never become his foes; but that all, each, and every one of them will be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation, and so he rests in his love, and rejoices over them with singing!

21 THE TRANSITION

THE TRANSITION "Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17 The change that takes place in conversion to God is very great; it has even been questioned, whether the change from grace to glory, is so great as the change from nature to grace. We can scarce conceive of a greater change than the new creation of the soul, when all within and all without is changed, as says the apostle, "Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new." To the regenerated soul, to the man that is in Christ, "Old things are passed away." The old STATE passes away:

He was in a state of condemnation — but he is now justified.

He was under law — he is now under grace.

He was a child of wrath — he is now an object of God's highest love. The old PRINCIPLES pass away:

He was under the legal covenant, and was influenced by fear.

He is now under the new covenant, and is influenced by love. The old DISPOSITION passes away:

He was once carnal, he is now spiritual.

He had the disposition of the slave, he has now the disposition of the loving child. The old CHARACTER passes away:

He was God's enemy, as living in sin; but he has now put off the old man with his deeds: and has put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. The old CONNECTION passes away:

He comes out of the world, becomes distinct from the world, and is connected with the church in its privileges and duties.

Thus "old things are passed away," he is not what he once was — but has passed through a thorough and abiding change. To him, "All things are become new."

There is a new FEDERAL HEAD; he is no longer represented by the first Adam — but the second; he is not connected with Adam — but with Christ.

There is a new PARADISE; with its flowers and fruits, its flowing river, and tree of life. The privileges of the gospel form a paradise now; and introduce to a yet more glorious one to come.

There is a new COVENANT; not of works — but of grace:

A better covenant, established on better promises. An everlasting covenant, which shall never give place to another. A covenant that provides . . .

a Substitute, to undertake our responsibilities,

a Surety, to pay our debts,

a Mediator, to officiate between us and God. A covenant ordered in all things and sure.

There is a new RULE of life; for the law goes forth from Zion — a law embodied in Jesus, represented by Jesus, and illustrated by the life of Jesus. True, it embodies in itself all that is moral in the Bible — but it descends to all the relations, duties, and circumstances of every-day life. A rule so perfect, so comprehensive, and so plain — that we cannot need a fuller, or clearer, or additional one.

There are new RELATIONSHIPS; all things stand in a new relation to the believer.

God is his Father.

Jesus is his Brother. The Holy Spirit is his Teacher, Guide, and Comforter. The angels are his guard, and servants. The earth is to him a wilderness.

Heaven is his home. The believer stands in a new RELATION to all things.

He is God's child.

He is the Savior's servant.

He is the Spirit's temple.

He is the angel's charge.

He is to the world — a witness and reprovcr.

He is Satan's foe.

There are new EXPERIENCES. The believer has . . .

new desires and wishes,

hopes and fears,

new joys and sorrows,

new conflicts and conquests,

new griefs and pleasures.

"Behold, all things are become new."

He is in a new WORLD, and to him the Bible is a new BOOK, prayer is a new EXERCISE, and fellowship with the saints, a new EMPLOYMENT. He hears a new LANGUAGE, understands new SUBJECTS, pursues new OBJECTS, and lives a new LIFE. He can say with Paul, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

He lives to Christ.

He lives for Christ.

He lives like Christ.

He is preparing to live with Christ.

Reader, have you experienced this great and solemn change? The question is momentous. Can you be new created — and not know it? Can you pass from death unto life — and not know it? Can you be in Christ — and not know it? Can you be a new creature — and not know it? Have old things passed away, and all things become new — and not know it!

We cannot conceive of this! The transition may be so gentle, so gradual, that you may be in some doubt about it; but if you examine your tastes, your desires, your general state of mind; and if you compare the present with the past, you must know something about it. Do not rest satisfied with any uncertainty upon the point: but seek the witness of the Holy Spirit, and by close communion with God, and put the matter out of doubt. Do you enjoy your privileges? Are you living as a new creature? Are you walking in newness of life? Do you realize that you are in a justified state, entitled to all new covenant blessings, and are God's beloved and accepted child? Greater privileges, if you are in Christ, you cannot have — but enjoy them more than you do — you may. Have you avowed the transition? Does the church know that you have passed from death to life, that you are in Christ, that to you all things are become new? Have you professed Christ, and publicly put him on before the world? If you have not — you should. The light that is in you, should not be put under a bushel — but on a candlestick. Your light should shine, that by your profession of Christ, by your imitation of Christ, and by the entire consecration of yourself and all you have to the glory and honor of Christ, men may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

22 The Great Deceiver!

The Great Deceiver!

It seems to me, that in the present day, the agency, power, and determined activity of Satan, in doing mischief, is too much lost sight of. If he can get us to lose sight of his presence and power — he can carry out his schemes with so much the more ease. The representations given of him in God's word are calculated, if not to excite alarm, to make us cautious, careful and watchful. Just look at one, "That old serpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world." Revelation 12:9. Here is, Our ENEMY. He is represented by a great dragon; because so quick-sighted and cruel. None escape his notice, or remain unmolested by him.

He is "that old serpent," full of subtlety, craft, and cunning — powerful, far beyond what most give him credit for — and bringing the experience of near six thousand years to bear upon his victims.

He is called "the devil," a forger of calumnies, an accuser, who accuses the saints day and night.

He is also called "Satan," an adversary, a legal adversary, one who is well versed in the law, and who opposes the Lord's people in the court of justice.

He is full of bitter hatred to believers, because they love the Savior, and desire to honor him. His malice is deep and dreadful, which prompts him in every way to seek to injure them. He hates them because . . .

they have escaped out of his hand,

they oppose his kingdom and government;

they hate sin, and pant, and pray, and strive for holiness.

He is a terrible foe, for he never wearies, and though foiled a thousand times — he will renew the attack! If he knows that he cannot devour us, he will do all he can to worry us; and though we may be off our guard — he is never off his. His WORK. "He deceives the whole world." He delights to deceive, and he will do so on any point — but especially in reference to spiritual things.

He deceives by misrepresenting objects.

He represents sin as harmless, painful, pleasant, and much to be desired.

He represents holiness as repulsive, injurious, gloomy, and undignified.

He represents man to himself as innocent, injured, dignified, and deserving God's blessing.

He represents himself as man's friend, pitying, and wishing to elevate him, and make him happy.

He represents God as severe, cruel, revengeful, and almost implacable.

He represents the law as harsh, severe, and unnecessarily strict.

He represents the gospel as degrading to man, and very little better than the law.

He represents the Savior as a stern law-giver, an unbending judge, and one very difficult to please.

Indeed every spiritual object is misrepresented by him!

Then by prejudices, errors, or superstition — he . . .

blinds the mind,

conceals the true nature of the gospel,

and hides the Savior from man's view.

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God!"

He is always on the watch when the Word is preached, endeavoring by himself or his agents, to snatch away the seed out of the heart, lest the sinner should believe and be saved.

He makes use of all kinds of error, and all sorts of false teachers, to . . .

hinder God's work,

eclipse the glory of the gospel,

and destroy the souls of men.

He counterfeits the work of the Holy Spirit, leading souls to rest in slight convictions, feeble impressions, false joys, natural excitement, or the performance of religious duties — and so stop short of Christ. He will do anything and everything — to keep the sinner from Christ, driving him to presumption or despair. If he can lull the soul into false security, his end is answered, and the doom of the poor creature is sealed!

If we were not so ignorant of his devices, or did not forget his unwearied activity, deep rooted malice, and fixed determination by all means to ruin souls — we would not speak of him as we do, or trifle with the representations of him in the scriptures as we do. The Extent of His SUCCESS. "He deceives the whole world!" He deceived the whole world at once, when he deceived our first parents, and led them into sin! He has been carrying on his work of deception ever since, in all places, under all circumstances — until the whole world lies in the Wicked One. The Church of God is rescued from his grasp, by sovereign and invincible grace; "being delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." But outside the true church of Christ — Satan exercises authority, exerts his power, and deceives all but the elect. In all places, among all parties, and in all people — he works; exciting enmity against God, opposition to the gospel, and the indulgence of sin.

We were all under his dominion once. We loved his service, believed his lies, and — but for the mercy of God, would surely have perished in our sins! "When the strong man is fully armed and guards his palace, his possessions are safe — until someone even stronger attacks and overpowers him, strips him of his weapons, and carries off his belongings."

All around us we see Satan working, deceiving, and leading souls captive at his will. This should make us think and act soberly, as Peter says, "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour! Stand firm against him, and be strong in the faith."

It should lead us to walk carefully, for this old serpent is almost sure to be lurking in our path.

It should lead us to examine diligently, lest we should be deceived, for if he deceives the whole world, with all its learning, shrewdness, and knowledge — we may well examine carefully, lest he deceive us!

It should lead us to pray fervently. Think of the fascinating power of the dragon, of the subtlety of the old serpent, of the accusations of the devil, of the legal lore and wit of Satan, and say — have we not need to cry mightily to God, that he would keep us by his power, shield us by his presence, and preserve us by his grace unto his kingdom and glory.

It should lead us to watch daily, for in a sense, we are always in danger! If we sleep — Satan does not! If we are off our guard — he is ready to take advantage, in order to injure us.

It should also lead us to sympathize deeply with those who are overcome and deceived by him. The poor wretched backslider has been beguiled, bewildered, and led astray — and is at this very time in Satan's net! Let us not condemn too harshly, nor dwell too severely on his fault — we know not the degree of power exerted by Satan, the means he has employed, or the deception he has practiced upon the soul. We may condemn the sin, and reprove the folly — but we must exercise mercy toward the sinner.

Just so with the unsaved world, even when they hate us, persecute us, and reject the counsel of God against themselves — we must still pity them. What a fine example our beloved Lord sets us, when sinners had done their worst to insult, degrade, and make him contemptible; and when they were doing their worst to inflict pain and anguish upon him. He looked up to Heaven, exercised sympathy, and recognized the deceiving influence of Satan, and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." So may we say of multitudes around us; and of more who are under the influence of popery, paganism, Mohammedanism, in far distant lands. They are deceived by Satan, the father of lies, who has succeeded in blinding their minds! The poor wretches go on in darkness; and unless they are plucked as brands from the burning — must perish in their sins. O for that sympathy that will pity, pray for, and send the gospel to them, that they may be saved!

O for wisdom to resist Satan, and overcome him!

23 Being Him unto Me!

Being Him unto Me!

"Bring him unto Me." Mark 9:19 The life of Jesus is full of instructive incidents. What part of it can we read without deriving encouragement, counsel, or instruction from it. When our Lord was on the mount of transfiguration, a man brought his son to the disciples to be healed — but the devil was too strong for them, and would not obey their command. When Jesus came down, he complained of their unbelief, and said, "Bring him unto Me." He was brought, and healed, and all were instructed. The subject is full of profitable and important instruction for us.

Here Is a Mistake Corrected. We often try to do without Jesus. The child was brought to the disciples, not to Jesus. So we bring our children to the means, not directly to Christ. We try to bear our sorrows, carry our crosses, master our difficulties, and overcome our troubles — without bringing them to Jesus, or calling upon him for help. We go to others before Jesus. We ought in all things — to go to Jesus first. We think over the subject, draw plans, and make efforts; we go to others for counsel and assistance, whereas we ought to go directly to Jesus, spread the matter before him, ask counsel of him, and entreat him to appear for us.

We keep many things from Jesus. But we ought to carry everything to Jesus. Whatever affects us, interests him, and he wishes to hear of it from us. Everything should be turned into prayer or praise. All should be laid before the Lord, that he may bless it, remove it, or sanctify it to us, as the case may require. Never, in the future, let us try to do without Jesus. In any place, or under any circumstances — never let us go to others before him — nor keep anything from Jesus — but let us employ him always, go to him first with everything, and carry all that concerns us, whether temporal or spiritual, to him.

Here Is a Direction Given. "Bring him unto me." Jesus had a full consciousness of his ability to do whatever may be required of him, and he expresses a readiness to help in time of need. Have you an enemy — a powerful, malicious, cruel enemy? Bring him to Jesus! The disciples may not be able to conquer him for you — but Jesus can. He can curb, restrain, or convert the foe into a friend. Put therefore your enemy into the hand of Jesus, and endeavor to leave him there. Have you a child, or a relative, for whose conversion or welfare you are especially concerned? Bring him to Jesus! You may have tried all means in vain. Books, sermons, expostulations, yes, tears may have been tried in vain. Now bring him to Jesus — he can cast out the devil, he can change the heart, he can transform him into a new creature. Have you a peculiar trial, a sore, heavy, almost overwhelming trial? Bring it to Jesus! He can give you wisdom to manage it, and to improve it; and he can make it one of the greatest blessings of your life. He will throw light upon it, enable you to derive advantage from it, and very likely lead you to praise and bless God for it. Have you prosperity, either temporal or spiritual? Bring it to Jesus, you need his blessing now more than ever. Never are we in so great danger — as in prosperity. Never do we so much need the grace and presence of Jesus — as when all things appear to go well with us.

Bring your foes to Jesus, bring your family to Jesus, bring your troubles to Jesus, and bring your prosperity to Jesus — yes, bring everything to Jesus, so will you prevent evil and secure good.

Bring it by prayer, and let your prayers be as simple as possible; let them be the simple telling the Lord all that you feel, fear, wish, or desire. Lay all out before him, just as the loving, confiding child, opens the whole heart to its kind and affectionate parent.

Bring it in faith, believing what Jesus says, and trusting in Jesus to make good his word. He loves to be trusted, and to the simple-hearted, confiding Christian, he never says, Nay.

Bring your foes in faith and prayer — that he may conquer them. Bring your children and friends — that he may convert them. Bring your troubles and trials — that he may sanctify them, and deliver you out of them. Bring all to Jesus that troubles, tries, or interests you — and bring the whole to him with perseverance.

If anyone was to ask, "How many times shall I bring anything to Jesus, before I give it up as a hopeless case? Seven times?" We should be ready to use our Lord's words upon another occasion. "I say not unto you, until seven times — but until seventy times seven." While the trial lasts, the trouble continues, or until the blessing is granted — bring it unto Jesus.

Above all, bring yourself to Jesus, if you have not come at all, come at once, and seek salvation from him. If you have come before, come again, and come daily, hourly to Jesus — that he may fulfill in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

Come to Jesus with all — whether pleasant or painful.

Come to Jesus for all — whether temporal or spiritual.

Come to Jesus notwithstanding all — let what will, work within you, or without you, or endeavor to stop up your path — force your way through all, and come to Jesus. Fears may beset you, temptations may be in the way, and unbelief may work to deter you — but press through all to Jesus. Take everything, even the most minute matters to Jesus, he will manage them for you, bless them to you, and make all things work together for your good.

Reader, does anyone at the present hinder you? Jesus says, "Bring him unto me!" Does anything just now trouble you? Jesus says, "Bring it unto me!" Does a son or a daughter, wife or husband, any relative or friend, cause you pain, and are you distressed for them, or by them? Jesus says, "Bring them unto me!"

O for grace to take every thing to Jesus, to cast every care on Jesus, to entrust all we value to Jesus! May we live in daily fellowship with him, and may a source of communion and fellowship with him be opened for us day by day, and hour by hour!

Precious Lord Jesus, we do bless and praise your dear and adorable name, for inviting, yes commanding us, to bring all our concerns to you. Teach us to live by faith on you, walking in fellowship with you, and daily making use of you for all the purposes of life and godliness!

24 Warned, Admonished, and Encouraged

Warned, Admonished, and Encouraged

"In the world, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." John 16:33

How apt we are to look for peace and prosperity here below! As constantly as we are disappointed — we nevertheless think that when we have overcome this difficulty, conquered this foe, or turned this corner in our journey — that things will change and we shall have rest. But this world is no place of rest for a Christian. It is an enemy's land, and is ruled by one who is a sworn foe to him and to his Lord, and therefore he must not expect to be left long undisturbed. Of this his Lord has forewarned him, for he said, "In the world, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." The Warning. "You shall have many trials and sorrows." We must not expect rest in the world. It is under the curse. It crucified our Lord. It is enmity against God. It will not submit to his law, nor believe his gospel, therefore, we cannot expect it to be on good terms with us.

Yet our troubles are limited to time, and are confined to this world. We shall not carry them with us where we are going, nor will any new ones meet us there. While here on earth, we shall have many trials and sorrows — but there we shall enjoy perfect, perpetual rest.

God sends trials and sorrows in love — to correct us, wean us from earth, and fit us for glory. Man produces it out of hatred to us, to injure and distress us. Let us not look so much at what man does, as at God's appointing, working, and overruling. Our enemies may be in power and rule, as Pharaoh and the Egyptians over Israel; as the Jews and Romans over the apostles and primitive believers. We may have cruel mockings, bitter persecutions, the loss of liberty, the lack of ordinances, bodily pains, and sore oppression. Any, or the whole of these may come upon us, and are included in the many trials and sorrows. Let us not then be surprised at trials, troubles, griefs, and vexation — for they are all included in our lot. The Admonition. "Take heart!" Do not be depressed or down-hearted. Do not give way to sorrow or sadness. But, take heart! Your sins are pardoned, your afflictions therefore are not punishments; they are only a fire to consume your dross, or a rod to correct your follies. Your person is accepted in Jesus, God therefore approves of you, though he permits these troubles to come upon you. Your redemption draws near, when you will be completely and eternally delivered, from every pain, and every cause of pain, and will enter into the joy of your Lord. As pardoned, as accepted of God, as near upon the year of Jubilee, you may well take heart. Be confident. You may be confident of the truth of the Savior's words, for every promise he has made is as firm as the pillars of God's throne. Heaven and earth may pass away — but his word shall not pass away. You may be confident of his presence and strength, for he will never leave you, or neglect or forget to impart strength unto you. In the Lord you have righteousness and strength. You may be confident of success in his cause, for his word shall not return unto him void, nor can your labor be in vain in the Lord. You may be confident that he will be faithful unto you, for he will not fail you — but will make good in your experience, all the sweet

promises of his word. You may be confident that all will end well; your life is insured, your inheritance is certain, and even now, as difficult as things may be — all things are working together for your good. To you therefore Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled, you have confidence in God, have confidence in me." The Encouragement. "I have overcome the world."

Jesus overcame the prince of this world, first in single combat in the wilderness, where he battled with him forty days; and afterwards on his cross, when he was accompanied by all the hosts of Hell. The god of this world is your Savior's slave, nor can he act without his permission.

Jesus overcame the trials of the world. He faced them all. He passed through them all. He was affected and afflicted by them all. He was tried in all points like as we are. He suffered being tried. He knows what pain of body, trouble of mind, anguish of spirit, and intense agony of soul are. As the man of sorrows, he became experimentally acquainted with all we are passing through, or can pass through — therefore he is able to support us in our trials.

He overcame the enmity of the world. He braved it. He endured it. He died from it — but he overcame it.

It is for us therefore to look upon the world as a conquered foe. Jesus overcame the world, by faith in God, so must we. Jesus overcame the world, by exercising kindness to men, even his bitterest foes, so must we. Jesus overcame the world, by direct, determined, and constant opposition to sin, so must we. Jesus overcame the world, by acquiescence in the will of God, and resignation to his lot, and so must we. Let us therefore, exercise a steady confidence in God our Heavenly Father, and in Jesus our beloved Savior; let us manifest kindness, self-denying kindness, to all about us; let us resist, oppose, and strive against sin, all sin; and let us endeavor, with the apostle, to learn the important lesson, in whatever state we are therewith to be content. In the world we must expect many trials and sorrows — but in Jesus we may have peace. In union with his person, and living in communion and fellowship with him, we may enjoy repose of soul, whatever may be our outward circumstances. Faith in Jesus, resting on the word of Jesus, and looking for the coming of Jesus — will keep us calm, quiet, and subdued; and though all around us are in confusion and excitement — we shall enjoy heavenly peace.

He who overcame the world for us, will overcome the world within us, and will overcome the world by us. The conquests and triumphs of Jesus, lays the foundation of ours. As one with him, as sustained and supplied by him, as comforted by him — we may meet all the trials of the wilderness, all the troubles of the way, hopefully looking forward to the rest, and the inheritance promised us. In our greatest trials we may enjoy composure — for Jesus has provided an antidote; we may be confident, for Jesus is with us, and for us; and we may be courageous, because greater is he who is for us, than all those who are against us.

Let not the worldling boast over the tried believer, for in the midst of his sufferings, he has inward consolations, secret comforts, invisible supports. Not only so, his troubles will not last long, for "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." The world passes away — but he who does the will of God abides forever. Weeping may endure for a night — but joy comes in the morning. If we go down to the grave weeping — we shall return with singing unto Zion; we shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! Our Savior says to us, to comfort us, "Blessed are you that weep now; for you shall laugh. Woe unto

you that laugh now! for you shall mourn and weep." Holy Spirit, lead us to make use of the warning which Jesus gives, to attend to the loving admonition he delivers, and to take the encouragement which he places before us! May we often dwell with profit on his words, "In the world, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

25 The Believer's Present and Future

The Believer's Present and Future "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:4 The sufferings of the true Christian in the present world, are often severe and long continued. But however severe they may be, or however long they may last — they must soon end; for the Lord Jesus is coming to introduce a glorious state of things, when paradise will be restored, and among other privileges which will be conferred on the Lord's people, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Look at, The Believer's Present Experience. He weeps, weeps often, and at times weeps much. How much he has to weep for, and how many things he has to weep over.

He weeps on account of SIN. The sins of his past life — sins committed in ignorance, before the Lord called him by his grace. The sin that dwells in him, and mixes with all he does. The sins he commits daily, in thought, word, and deed. He wishes to be perfectly holy — but he feels impure. He wishes to do all that God commands him — but how many duties he forgets or neglects. He wishes to do everything as God requires it to be done, but all that he does is imperfect and mixed with sin. He appears to himself at times to be nothing but a mass of impurities and defects — and this makes him weep!

He weeps on account of UNSATISFIED DESIRES. He desires to be just like Jesus, to live only and wholly for the Lord, to glorify God in his body, soul, and spirit, everywhere, and every moment of his life. He desires to exercise strong confidence in God, to enjoy the full assurance of his interest in Christ, and to live in close, intimate, and sensible communion with the Most High God. He desires to do much for Christ, to be just like Christ, and to bring many souls to Christ. But his wishes are thwarted, his desires are not at present fulfilled, and over this he weeps.

He weeps also on account of many painful DISAPPOINTMENTS which he meets with. Friends and relations disappoint him. The Church of God disappoints him. The dispensations of divine providence disappoint him. The state of his heart, and his own inward experience disappoint him. His way and walk to glory disappoint him. The failure of many of his plans and efforts disappoints him. Indeed so many, so various, and so frequent, are his disappointments — that he cannot but weep over them.

Then the AFFLICTIVE DISPENSATIONS of divine providence make him weep. Such trials in business. Such pain and weakness of body. The loss of so many friends by death and otherwise. The changeableness of creatures. So many losses and crosses. Then the last dying pangs.

All these things draw tears from the believer's eyes! In a word, what between . . .

the craft, cruelty, and opposition of Satan;

the power and prevalence of sin;

the mysterious dispensations of divine providence;

the changes experienced within and without; and

the constant working of unbelief in the soul

— it is no wonder that the believer weeps! But if he weeps now, he will not weep always; let us therefore glance at, The Believer's Glorious Prospect."God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes." This will be done — by answering his prayers for deliverance. He shall be delivered from the burden of the flesh, from the conflict within, from temptations without. In a word, from all sin — the cause of sorrow, and from everything that afflicts the body, or distresses the mind. This will be done — by satisfying his most enlarged desires. He shall see God, be with God, and be like God. He shall be freed from sin — and filled with holiness. He shall be delivered from fears — and be full of joy. He shall be surrounded with glory — and enjoy the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Whatever holy things he desired or longed for below — shall be conferred on him; so that he will have no losses to weep over, no objects of desire to weep for. He will be full — filled with all the fullness of God. Weeping therefore will be impossible — and sorrow and sighing will flee away!

God's people now weep . . .

as penitents over sin,

as parents over their families,

as patriots over their country,

as Protestants, because of the existence and power of popery,

as professors of Christ, because their Lord is so dishonored.

O how much they see which wrings their hearts, and draws tears from their eyes! But the weeping believer may take comfort, for he shall not weep always, nor shall he weep long. Soon, and it may be very soon — God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes! The laughing, merry, careless sinner, has great reason to weep, living as he does — at enmity with God, walking as he does — after the course of this evil world, he will shed tears enough at last. Unless he is brought to shed the tears of penitence now — he will have tears of bitter anguish and black despair, forever! Sinner, you will weep perhaps when it is too late — then you will . . .

weep without pity,

weep without cessation,

weep without relief,

weep forever!

26 The Lord's Remnant

The Lord's Remnant

"The survivors among them will escape and live on the mountains like doves of the valley, all of them mourning, each over his own iniquity." Ezekiel 7:16 In the worst of times, the Lord has preserved a remnant, and has had a people for his praise. He has never been without a seed to serve him, and a generation to call him blessed. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity, and the cup of Judah's iniquity was full; the prophet came forth to testify that the end was come, and to proclaim the most terrible and sweeping judgments — yet then, even then, he adds, "The survivors among them will escape and live on the mountains like doves of the valley, all of them moaning, each over his own iniquity." Just so it is now, the Lord has his mourners, his witnesses, and such as think upon his name. The Remnant. The Lord's people have generally been represented by a remnant, which is but a part of the piece, and generally a small part. A portion cut off, or left — when the rest has been disposed of. So the Lord has always spared some, and there has always been "a remnant, according to the election of grace." They shall escape the desolating and destroying judgment, the common ruin into which multitudes sink, the due desert of their sins. They escape by God's great mercy, not on account of anything in them — but because the Lord has grace and favor towards them.

God's mercy to them is manifested through the mediation of Jesus, who has engaged to do all that is necessary to secure God's honor in allowing them to escape. The mediation of Jesus secures for them the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who leads them to the cross, and guides them to a place of refuge. The operation of the Holy Spirit awakens prayer in their hearts, and produces faith in Jesus; and crying to God from a sense of danger, and exercising confidence in the Savior, they escape, not only from a deserved Hell — but from all penal evils pronounced against sinners. They escape, and escape completely, thoroughly — they are delivered, and delivered eternally! Their Condition. They shall be on the mountains, having fled from their natural homes in the towns and villages, they shall betake themselves to the caves and dens of the mountains. It indicates that their circumstances may be dreary, cheerless, and lonely.

Just so, many of those who escape from the wrath to come, in consequence of their ignorance of gospel privileges, the working of unbelief in their hearts, a lack of suitable ordinances and means of grace, the fierce temptations of Satan, and being destitute of the society of truly spiritual people — are in a lonely, cheerless, and uncomfortable condition, like the dwellers on the mountains.

"They shall live on the mountains like the doves of the valleys." The dove is naturally timid, gentle, and defenseless, and leaves its pleasant grove in the valleys, where it had built its nest, being startled and alarmed, and betakes itself to the mountain's side. Just so, the Lord's people are induced to withdraw from the pleasures, amusements, and associations of the world — to seek in silence and in solitude, the peace and comfort which they need.

"All of them mourning, each over his own iniquity." Sin and mourning are inseparably connected — he who sins, must sooner or later mourn. The Lord's people, like doves, are naturally mournful, and they have so much to mourn over. They mourn for their iniquity — charging it upon themselves, making no excuse for it; nor endeavoring to palliate it. They mourn also, for the effects of sin, especially, because it dishonors God — God to whom they are laid under such deep obligation, from whom they have received so many mercies, and to whom they owe so much love. They mourn also, because it grieves the Holy Spirit, that blessed Comforter, who quickened them when dead, enlightened them when dark, led them to Jesus, spoke peace to their souls, and took up his residence in their hearts. They mourn also, because it interrupts fellowship and communion with God, and so prayer sinks into a mere duty, and the closet becomes a tiresome place, and the ordinances of the gospel are like dry wells.

They mourn also, because iniquity burdens the conscience, disturbs the peace of the mind, and fills the soul with confusion and distress. It gives power to Satan to accuse and torment us, and opens the mouths of enemies to speak against God and his cause. On these, and many more accounts they mourn, each one over his own iniquities.

Am I one of the Lord's doves? Am I characterized by meekness, gentleness, and love? Am I one of those who mourn for my iniquities, sitting alone, dropping the wing, and pouring out my plaintive cries to the Lord? Do I mourn heartily, sincerely, and frequently, on account of my departures from the Lord? There is no escaping from endless mourning in Hell, without godly sorrow for sin. They who laugh at sin now — shall weep forever in Hell. But those who mourn now for their iniquities — shall be eternally comforted.

Better to be a mourning dove, though despised; than a prating parrot, though admired. Too many professors are like parrots, with a mirthful plumage — they learn to repeat the sayings of the godly. They say many gracious things — but without grace; they mimic the true Christian — but have no experience of divine things within them. They know nothing of a heart broken for sin, or of secret mourning before God, on account of secret sins, or the hidden evils of the heart. Of doctrines they can talk, and for ordinances they can contend — but they do not perceive or realize, that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." The tears which we shed for sin, out of love to holiness and God, sparkle like gems in the eyes of the Lord!

I thirst — but not as once I did,

The vain delights of earth to share;

Your wounds, Immanuel all forbid

That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of your dear cross,

First weaned my soul from earthly things;

And taught me to esteem as dross,

The mirth of fools and pomp of kings!

I want that grace that springs from thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.
Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream! For sure, of all the plants that share
The notice of your Father's eye,
None prove less grateful to his care,
Or yield him meaner fruit, than I.

27 Where is Sarah?

Where is Sarah? A young Christian has been lately removed by death. She was very active for the Lord, endeavoring by all means to bring souls to the Savior. The Lord honored her in this work, and many were benefitted by her. She was taken sick, the disease seized the brain, reason was dethroned for a time, and at length she was called hence by her Lord. The manner of her death startled some, though there was no need to be startled by it, for diseases come alike to all, and act upon all alike; but some who knew her and loved her, were ready to ask respecting her, as the three celestial visitants did about the Patriarch's wife, "Where is Sarah?" Genesis 18:9. The more important question is,

WHAT was Sarah?

She was a sinner — but a sinner convinced of sin, and aware of her true state as a transgressor in the sight of God. She was a sinner converted unto God, for being convinced of sin she fled to the Lord Jesus for pardon and everlasting life. She obtained mercy, and in her appeared repentance unto life, and faith in God's mercy through Christ. She was sorry for her sins, she grieved over them before God, and departed from the practice of them in her life. She saw clearly that Jesus was the only Savior, that his blood alone could cleanse her from all sin, she renounced all dependence on her own works, trusted in the finished work of Jesus alone, and found peace with God.

She was a sinner consecrated to God, for no sooner did she find peace with God, and taste the comforts of real religion, than she consecrated herself to God. She professed her faith in Christ, she united herself to the people of God, and endeavored to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. She looked upon herself as the Lord's, and to his service she consecrated herself, and all that she had.

She was a believer, and as a believer in Christ, she was justified before God. All her sins were forgiven her for his name's sake. She was invested with his righteousness. She was united to his person. She rested for her acceptance with God now, and for everlasting life at last — upon Christ, and upon Christ alone. As a believer, she was joyful. She knew the gospel as the joyful sound, and it made her heart glad. She felt the love of God in her soul, and it filled her with joy and pleasure. She was enabled to rejoice in the Lord, and to sing in the ways of the Lord. Hers was not a gloomy forbidding religion, for it brought a degree of Heaven into her soul, before she was called hence to be no more seen. As a believer, she was joined to the Lord, and could rejoice that she was one with Christ. She realized that it was her privilege to share in all the blessings of the gospel, and could rejoice that as one with Christ — his blood was an atonement for all her sins; his righteousness was the ground of her justification before God; and his intercession, would not only serve for all she needed — but be an effectual reply to all the accusations of her enemies.

She was a Christian, and as a Christian she worked for God. To spread his truth, to bring sinners under the sound of his gospel, and to speak well of his name, was her delight. Her influence, her

property, and every talent that she had was set apart for Jesus, and employed in his service. As a Christian she walked with God. To commune with God, to communicate all her joys and sorrows to God, and to imitate the character of God, was her object and aim. For, though as most Christians do, she passed through many changes, and at times experienced deadness, darkness, and deep soul conflict; yet with her, prayer was not a mere duty, or praise an empty form. She had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. As a Christian she waited upon God. In the means of grace, in the dispensations of divine providence, and at the Lord's footstool; in the duties of devotion, in simple confidence in God, and in the exercise of patience — she waited upon God. To hear the whispers of his Spirit, to feel the efficacy of the blood of Jesus in the conscience, to rest on the promises of God, to ascertain and to do the will of God from the heart — were the great outlines of her religion.

Such was Sarah. A poor sinner, lost and ruined by the fall — but saved by grace through faith, made an heir of God, and a joint heir with the Lord Jesus Christ! By faith in the Son of God she lived; by the providence of God she was arrested in her career of usefulness, and as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ she died. Where is Sarah? Absent from the body, she is now present with the Lord. She was smitten with disease, she suffered for a short time, and then she sunk to her eternal rest. Her body now rests in the grave-yard, free from all pain, and weariness, and want. Her spirit is with Christ, in the enjoyment of holy freedom. She is free from sin — which often caused her sorrow, while here. She is free from doubts and fears — which sometimes distressed and troubled her soul. She is free from foes — who often opposed her progress, and hindered her in her course. She is free from all the dangers — which at times alarmed her, and made her cry vehemently unto God. She is full of joy — for she is holy, and stands before the throne of God, and of the Lamb. Her peace is perfect, uninterrupted, and passes comprehension. She is in Heaven, where she sees God in his glory; worships with the angels in the beauty of holiness; and enjoys the society of the spirits of the just men made perfect.

All the desires of her heart are granted. All her prayers for holiness and happiness are answered. All that annoyed or troubled her, is far distanced from her — and the objects of her highest spiritual love, are present with her.

Happy Sarah, she now sees Jesus as he is — she now enjoys the presence of Jesus without interruption — her soul is just like the soul of Jesus — and she now understands the language of Paul, as she never could do on earth, "to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." O how much better to be with Jesus in perfect holiness and perfect happiness, to be with him in his Father's house — than to be here in this poor world!

Servants, seek the Lord. Sarah was a servant, and while in her situation she sought and found the Savior, and having found Jesus, she enjoyed his presence in her kitchen, and held fellowship with him, in her every-day duties. With Christ in the heart, with Heaven in the eye, and with God's word of promise cheering the soul — how happy may our servants be! With few cares, and many comforts; with a fine opportunity for honoring God in their situations, and with the prospect of reigning with Christ in glory soon — how much have our godly servants to be grateful for.

Seekers, decide for God. Sarah did, and she was happy. If you seek the Lord by prayer, and faith in Jesus, you cannot seek in vain; but do not rest satisfied with any desires you feel, or any efforts you make. Be satisfied with nothing — but a saving interest in Christ — with Christ in your heart

the hope of glory. Some of old could say, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote." Let nothing less than this satisfy you.

Saints, copy her example. Though but a servant, she was zealous for her God, she was active for Christ, she sought to save souls from eternal death. She sought out the young, and spoke to them of Jesus. Kindly and lovingly would she point out their danger as lost sinners, induce them to come and hear the gospel, and endeavor by all means in her power to bring them to Jesus. She would look out for enquirers, endeavor to remove their doubts and fears, pray with them and for them, and guide them into the way of peace. With what pleasure would she introduce seekers and young disciples to her pastor, that he may set before them the way of God more perfectly, and remove stumbling blocks out of their path.

Reader, are you at all like Sarah? Is her Savior yours? Have you felt yourself to be a poor lost sinner, and as such, have you fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel? Have you faith in Christ, and do you realize your union with Christ? Are you a happy Christian, producing a good impression in favor of religion on all around you? Are you endeavoring to save souls from death? If you were to be stricken with disease, and rendered unable to leave any dying testimony behind you — would those who knew you best and love you most, feel sure that you were gone to be with Christ? Or, if the question was to be asked, "Where is he?" Could those best acquainted with you say, "Unquestionably in Heaven! Undoubtedly with Christ!" Make sure work of it, my friend, while you have time and opportunity. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, and be sure that you do enter, for there is not, there cannot be, any safety outside of it.

28 The Lord's Requirement

The Lord's Requirement Therefore he says, "If any man serves me — let him follow me." John 12:26 From the reprehensible treatment done to the Savior — the glory of the Christian arises! His death — issued in our life.

He suffered — that we may sing.

He sunk in the horrible pit — that we may stand on an eternal rock.

He died the most painful, shameful death — that we may live the most happy and honorable life. The Church of Jesus is to be like her head. But as she is to be like him in glory, she must be conformed to him in a measure now. We must imitate him on earth — if we would resemble him in Heaven. Therefore he says, "If any man serves me — let him follow me." Jesus must lead — we must follow; he must set the example — and we must imitate it. The Supposition. If any man is willing to serve me — or to be my servant. If any man professes to serve me: that is: if he professes . . .

to own my authority, as his Lord;

to consult my will, as the rule of his life;

to prefer my service to all others;

to prize my approbation, above everything besides;

and to aim at my honor and glory always, and everywhere — that man is my servant. Such only will Christ own. Such only can expect to enjoy his approbation. The Requirement. "Let him follow me." Let him follow me in the path of affliction and suffering. Let him follow me in the field of labor and enterprise. Let him imitate me.

Every servant of Christ, should imitate his Master in the SPIRIT he displayed. His was a spirit of filial faith — for he exercised unlimited confidence in his Father. His was a spirit of yielding love — for he stooped to the very lowest. His was a spirit of quiet patience — for he went as a lamb to the slaughter. His was a spirit of cheerful self-denial — for his actions showed that he was the servant of all. His was a spirit of condescending humility — for he associated with the poor and vulgar. His was a spirit of consecration to God — for he always sought his Father's glory. His was a spirit of waiting hope — which enabled him to keep his eyes fixed on the joy that was set before him.

We should imitate Christ in the WORK he performed. His food was to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work. He wrought for God — that he may be glorified; and he wrought for man — that he may be saved. He was always at work — and always at the right work. Therefore he could say at last, "I have glorified you on the earth, I have finished the work which you gave me to do." We should imitate Christ in the sufferings he endured. Whatever was brought upon him by his adherence to the truth, by his diligence in doing his Father's will, or by his carrying out his engagements — he met with fortitude, endured with courage, and overcame with patience. He has

left a measure of sufferings to be filled up by us, and it befits us to meet them, endure them, and overcome them with fortitude, courage, and patience as he did.

We should imitate Christ in the PERSEVERANCE he displayed. He allowed nothing to turn him aside from his mark, or hinder him in his work. He pressed forward through all difficulties, overcame all obstacles, and has now set down at the right hand of God. So should we, let what will oppose us, or attempt to turn us aside — we should still press on toward the mark for the prize of our high calling.

Believer, you profess to be the Lord's servant. You have solemnly dedicated yourself to Jesus, to be his, to do his will, to suffer his pleasure, always and in all things. Take, therefore, Jesus for your model, endeavor to imitate him, and let your service to him, resemble as nearly as possible, his service to his Father.

Christian, you are to copy the conduct of your Savior, as his Father's servant, as nearly as you possibly can. He has set you an example, that you should do as he has done.

Professor, a mere profession is worthless, here is the royal standard, measure yourself by it. This is the touchstone, try yourself by it. If you profess but do not obey, to you the Savior speaks when he says, "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?" To all of us who have professed to receive his word and engage in his service, he says, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Let us then, all and every one of us who profess the name of Jesus, looking to the Lord for ability, and depending on the Lord for success — go and work for him. Work as a child for its loving and beloved Father. Work as one of the brethren of Jesus, with his brethren. Work diligently, devotedly, and perseveringly. Let us work from love to our Savior, out of gratitude for what he has done for us. Let us work all we can, as long as we can; and when we have done all we can do, let us rest for our acceptance, and look for our salvation to the finished work of Jesus, and to that alone. Let us bring all our works to the cross to be sprinkled with his blood, and expect them to be accepted of God only for his sake, and renouncing all idea of merit, in profound humility exclaim, "We are unprofitable servants, for we have only done that which it was our duty to do!"

29 The Servants Encouragement

The Servants Encouragement "Where I am — there shall my servant also be." John 12:26

Christ as the best Master, ought to have the best of servants — but this is far from being the case often. Yet it is not for lack of encouragement, for no one manifests such love to servants as he does. They have present pay, and the promise of a future reward. To each one of them he says, "Where I am — there shall my servant also be." Look at, The Relationship. Jesus is the Lord and Master of his people; and as a master, he has absolute power over them. They are his in every sense in which they can be, and he is at liberty to do as he will with them. Wrong he cannot do, the excellency of his nature and character prevent this, and therefore he employs them wisely, treats them kindly, and disposes of them suitably. He is a just master, neither wronging them nor allowing them to be wronged by others. He is jealous of his honor, and will not allow his servants to give the love, service, and honor that belongs to him, to another, without resenting it. But he is most generous, the least good act he notices, records, and will reward. He is an incomparable master, and every believer is his servant. They are engaged to him, in their conversion and baptism; they are willing, and therefore pledge themselves to him. They are obedient, doing his will, and doing it from the heart. Each of Christ's servants, should have . . .

a courtier's ear — quick to catch the sound of his voice;

the servant's eye — intently watching to ascertain his will;

the child's heart — confiding and attached, and

the wife's affection — which will do anything for the object of its love. The Promise. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." Jesus is with us now, where we are; and we shall soon be with him, where he is. Between death and the resurrection, we shall be with him in paradise, in a disembodied but happy condition. In the final state, we shall be with him body and soul, and be like him, ever seeing him as he is. Will Jesus be in his Father's presence? So shall we! Will Jesus be in perfect happiness? So shall we! Will Jesus be in glory, endless unparaleled glory? So shall we! His wish will be gratified, his desire will be granted, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

What more can we desire? Is it not our greatest wish, the very height of our ambition — to be where Jesus is? This desire, this wish, he has anticipated. Who could have expected so much? Who ever honors his servants in this way — but Jesus? With hearts like ours, with sins like ours, with such imperfect services as ours — how could we anticipate such a blessing?

What servants ought we to be — who have such a master? Can we ever do enough for him? Can any sufferings ever be too sharp for him? Enough for Jesus! Think of what you owe him, and how is it possible to make an adequate return? Think of what you expect from him, and say — can there be any comparison between your sufferings for Christ, and the glory that is to be revealed in

you?

What obedience ought we to render — who have such a prospect? How prompt and hearty, how cheerful, and thorough — our obedience ought to be. Always ready to work, and ready to do any work he may require of us; always ready to suffer, and to suffer just what he pleases, is our proper position. With the prospect of being with our Master, and being like our Master, and that soon, we should be ready to do anything, suffer anything, be anything, and go anywhere — if Jesus can but be glorified thereby.

How is the believer to be conformed to his Lord? He must work and suffer — and then enter into his glory. Work and suffer on earth — and rest and enjoy perfect happiness in Heaven. Do we not pray to be conformed to him? Do we not consider it an honor to be like him. If so, we must be content to resemble him in his humiliation — before we enter into his glory.

What a reproof does this subject administer to many professors. The LUKEWARM. What! Lukewarm in the service of such a master! Lukewarm in the prospect of such a glory! Lukewarm, with such a promise in your hand to stimulate and encourage you. The WORLDLY. And are any of the servants of Christ worldly? Alas! Alas! how many. It is but to look at their dress, or visit their homes, or observe their conversation, or mark their spirit — to discover how worldly they are! But if Christ is indeed your master, if you receive and believe his word, if you expect soon to be with him where he is — how can you be worldly? Has he not said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man loves the world — the love of the Father is not in him." The DO-NOTHING professor. And are there any who profess Christ — who do nothing for Christ? There are, or those who do next to nothing. Some even do worse than nothing, for they do mischief and hinder others! But how will they be able to lift up their heads before their master when he comes to take account of his servants, and reward every one according to his works! Reader, if you are such a one, how can you claim or appropriate his promise, seeing the promise is to his servants who imitate him? The Servant's Honor. It is better to be the servant of Christ — than the son of the greatest monarch upon earth. It is better to serve Christ — than rule a world. All the servants of Christ, will be kings by and by; they only serve now — they will reign shortly. Jesus employs us that he may honor us now, and prepare us for far greater honor in future. What can exceed his own words, "If any man serves me, him will my Father honor." John 12:26.

Here Is a Subject For Inquiry. What is it to serve Christ? It is to believe in him, and believe his word. The work that God requires of us, is to believe on him whom he has sent. To believe the gospel, is called obeying it. As the root and the plant are one, and may yet be distinguished — so faith and obedience are one, and are yet distinguishable. Faith is the root, obedience is the plant; or faith is the plant, and obedience is the fruit. Therefore Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them."

Believing in Christ, we are required to avow our connection with him. He would have us confess him, and threatens every one that is afraid, or ashamed, to own him. Avowing our connection with him, he requires us to observe his ordinances, thereby showing forth his death until he comes. Nor is observing the ordinances enough, we must be ready to do and suffer all his will. We must not only look to him for salvation — but be devoted to his service, making his glory and honor the end of our lives. To serve Christ from the heart, to serve him in the life, to serve him with all that we have, and to serve him with a single eye to his glory — proves us to be, not only, the servants of Christ — but the sons of God; and to all such, Jesus says, "If any man serves me, him will my

Father honor. Here is, A Promise To Claim. Our Heavenly Father will honor every servant of Christ. He honors them: by accepting their services — as poor, imperfect, and worthless as they appear to them. By giving them his sealing Spirit, as we read, "The Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." And again, "After you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." By admitting them into his presence, and holding sweet and hallowed fellowship with them. By visiting them in trouble, and imparting sweet and soothing consolations to their souls. By supplying all their needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ. By clearing their characters from aspersions and slanders; it is written, "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass: and he shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day." By cheering them in solitude, and indulging them with sweet converse with himself. By rewarding their labors, so that the least of their poor services shall not be overlooked, or pass away unacknowledged. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works."

Let us then examine, WHOM are we serving? We were the servants of sin once — are we now? Or, have we received the doctrine of Christ, taken upon us the yoke of Christ, and consecrated ourselves to the service of Christ?

We were the slaves of lust once, yielding to it, impelled by it, we broke God's bounds, and were found guilty of transgression. Have we put off the old man with his deeds? Have we crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts? Have we received Christ into the heart, and enthroned hi as sole monarch there? We were lovers of the world once, yielding to its maxims, customs, fashions, and follies. Is it so now, or can we say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

We were in the possession of Satan once, have we been rescued from his grasp, freed from his power, and have we voluntarily engaged ourselves to Jesus? Satan's slaves, or Christ's servants we are, we must be. Which is it? Do we serve Christ, and serve him from choice, for he does not approve of forced service — do we serve him impartially, for he cannot sanction our picking and choosing our duties. Do we serve him openly, for he cannot be satisfied with secret service alone.

If so, we may expect his Father to honor us, to honor us now, in the church and in the world; to honor us at death, by sweetly sustaining us and giving us power over the enemy; and to honor us at the end, publicly before assembled worlds, publishing what we have done for him, and then addressing us by the lips of the Judge of all, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, saying, "Come you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, For . . . " and then he enumerates our poor forgotten services, and thus rewards them!

30 Seek the Lord and Live

Seek the Lord and Live "Seek the Lord, and you shall live!" Amos 5:6 The penalty of sin is death. The separation of man from God, and the punishment of the sinner by the stern justice of God. The law says to the sinner, "You shall surely die!" and this is all that the law can say. But the gospel invites the sinner to come to God for life, to seek God and live. One of its many invitations is, "Seek the Lord, and you shall live! You deserve to die. You are condemned to die. But, in the exercise of my sovereignty, I can save you; I have made provision to do so, at no less a cost than the death of my only-begotten Son; and now I send to you by my servants, inviting, exhorting, yes, beseeching you, to seek me and live." The Warm-hearted Exhortation. Yes, it comes warm from God's loving heart — it breathes mercy and compassion. It seems to ask, "Why will you die?" It entreats, "Seek the Lord, and you shall live."

What is implied in it? It implies that we are at a distance from God, and are therefore grossly ignorant of God. That we are in danger from the threatenings of the law of God. That we shall never find any satisfaction but in God. That there can be no safety without reconciliation to God. That there is in us an indisposition to seek God. That there is a readiness, on the part of God, to receive us graciously, love us freely, and forgive us eternally.

What is expressed in this exhortation? God should be sought. By WHOM? By all, by each of us, especially the young.

WHEN? Now — immediately, "before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's wrath comes upon you."

WHERE? At his mercy-seat, where he shows mercy; on his throne, where he dispenses grace; in his house, where he exercises compassion.

HOW? With the whole heart, with a determined will, until successful.

WHAT? Seek the Lord, which is more than think, or wish, or desire. It implies effort, determined persevering effort. Actively seek the Lord. Diligently seek the Lord. Seek as for something of importance, of the greatest importance. Seek as for your life, for an eternity of happiness or woe depends upon it. The Encouraging Promise. "You shall live." Observe, it is absolute, "You shall live." Not you may live, or there is a probability of your being spared. No, you shall certainly live, and live forever. Not one of the threatenings of the law shall be executed on you. Every promise of the gospel shall be fulfilled to you. The highest expectations that can be raised within you, shall be realized by you.

"You shall live." Live, in God's gracious presence on earth, and in God's glorious presence in Heaven. Live, in the enjoyment of God's love, which shall be "shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit." Live, receiving the visits of the Father and the Son, as it is written, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our

abode with him." Live, freed from all charges, absolved from all sins. The prophet Ezekiel represents the people as asking, "If our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them — how should we then live?" But the Lord replies, for the encouragement of the seeking soul, "None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live." Live, exhibiting God's truth, and walking by God's word before man, which was one end of the great atonement, hence we read, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed." Live, to the glory of God's most free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace, as Paul says, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved — that we should be to the praise of his glory!" Live, at home in God's house forever, Jesus is gone to prepare the place, and will come to receive us, and introduce us to it; so that with David we may sing, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

What a blessing is life, especially life . . .

in God's presence,

in the enjoyment of God's love,

receiving God's visits,

freed from every change,

exhibiting God's truth,

to the glory of God's grace,

ultimately, in God's house,

enjoying his glorious communications forever!

Reader, God requires you to seek him, will you? It is to you he speaks when he says, "Seek the Lord — and you shall live." Many times no doubt, these words have been sounded in your ears already, have you obeyed them? When did you begin to seek him? With what feelings did you seek after him? Where did you seek him? Have you found him? Or have you turned a deaf ear to his exhortation, rejecting all his counsel, and refusing his invitation? Solemn questions these, much, O how much! depends on the answer given them. God promises you life if you seek him — will you accept it and enjoy it! To you it is presented as an act of grace. By you it is needed as a transgressor of God's law. By you it may be obtained and enjoyed.

You will either receive — or reject it; embrace it — or ungratefully put it from you. God threatens you with eternal death, will you dare it? Have you an arm like God? Can you do battle with the Almighty? Will you despise and pour contempt on the all-merciful God? In what solemn circumstances you are placed, God says, "Seek me." God promises, "If you seek me, you shall live." God threatens, "If you refuse, you shall die in your sins." Will you; can you, despise his mercy, neglect his great salvation, and reject the offer of eternal life? Seek mercy, or despise it — you must. Obtain salvation, or neglect it — you must. Lay hold on eternal life, or put it from you — you must. Which! Which!! O which shall it be!!!

31 Abiding Love

Abiding Love "Having loved his own who were in the world — he loved them unto the end." John 13:1

It is always pleasant to be loved, especially by the wise and good; but when love cools, or turns to hatred, it is sad indeed. It seems better never to have been loved — than for those who loved us once, to turn and hate us. Yet this is no uncommon thing among men, for man is a poor changeable thing, and cannot be depended upon. How sweet, when such thoughts exercise the mind, or when we are passing through the painful experience of them — to turn from the changeable creature, to the unchangeable God — to turn from the fitful changeable love of man, to the changeless love of Jesus, remembering the sweet testimony of John, "Having loved his own who were in the world — he loved them unto the end." The Relation. "His own." Not merely his own creatures, or his own property, for all creatures and things are his own in this sense. But his own in a particular sense, which implies great love, and high valuation. There are those whom Jesus calls and claims as his own. His own sheep, which his Father gave him, and for which he laid down his life. His own inheritance, which he bought with his own most precious blood. His own brethren, of the same family, and of the same flesh and blood with himself. His own bride, whom he loves above all creatures, and has espoused to himself, to be his special companion forever. His own body, of which he is the head, and of which every one of his people are members.

He calls his people — his jewels, his portion, his special treasure. His own — in the highest and most endearing sense. His own — for whom he was willing to live, labor, and suffer. His own — which he would rather die than part with. O how blessed to be among those whom Jesus considers to be peculiarly his own, whom he loves to the end, and with whom he will never, never part! Their Situation. "In the world." They are in the world, as the lily among thorns — as sheep in the midst of wolves. They were once among his foes, who hated and persecuted them. They were bearing his cross, and suffering for his sake. They were doing his will, and serving their generation, in order that he may be glorified. They were journeying as strangers and pilgrims, through the world, to his house and home above. They especially needed his care, and the encouraging manifestations of his love. They were in the world for its good, for the trial and exercise of their own graces, and in order to be fitted and trained up for glory. Placed in the world by Jesus, kept in the world for the honor of Jesus, raised above the world by the grace of Jesus — they are the only objects that attract and fix the love of Jesus. His Affection. "He loved his own in the world." His love was set upon them before they were in the world, for he loved them from everlasting; and having loved them from everlasting, he will love them to everlasting.

He loved them, and therefore he sought them, and distinguished them from all around them.

He loved them, and therefore he bought them, laying down his life as the ransom price for them.

He loved them, and therefore he taught them, giving them line upon line, precept upon precept, just as they were able to bear it.

He loved them, and therefore he honored them, calling them, not servants but friends, and treating them with confidence and love.

He loved them, and therefore he employed them, and employed them for the most high and honorable purposes. No tongue can tell, no pen can describe, no heart can conceive, how much Jesus loves his people who are in the world. The Duration of His Love. "He loved them unto the end." A phrase, importing that nothing could divert, or turn his love away — but that he loved them forever. He continued to love them — though they tried him, grieved him, and in various ways dishonored him. He continued to love them — though they were unworthy of his love, and appeared to become more unworthy of it the longer they lived. He continued to love them — though he corrected them, and his corrections sometimes appeared severe. Amidst all the changes that took place within and without them — he continued to love them, and therefore, he preached comfort to them; he poured out his whole heart in prayer for them; he excused their drowsiness in Gethsemane, stipulated for their liberty when the soldiers came to arrest him, died for them on the cross; arose from the dead for them; appeared to them; spoke peace to their troubled minds; bid them not fear though they had acted so cowardly, so basely toward him; promised them the abiding Comforter, and sent that Comforter to them on the day of Pentecost. Yes, "having loved his own who were in the world — he loved them unto the end," and as in the case of his first disciples, so in the case of all the rest.

Jesus is unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. As unchangeable as his Divine nature — is his love. Having loved, he loves, he ever will love, for he is in one mind, and none can turn him.

Jesus is the true friend. The same in adversity, as in prosperity; the same in Heaven, as when on earth; the same in life, in death, and forever.

Jesus is the faithful lover. Many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it. He fixed his love upon us with the full knowledge of all that we would be, or do; and having once loved, he loves forever. There is nothing fickle or changeable about him — his love is not like the floating thistledown — but like the granite rock; worthy of his nature, and worthy of his name. Jesus is the trustworthy Savior. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning. The soul once committed to him is safe. Whatever you entrust to him he will keep. He will never give up his charge, betray his trust, change his mind, or falter in his love. When once he loves, he loves to the end.

32 Love to Christ

Love to Christ "The upright love you." Song of Solomon 1:4

Jesus prizes the love of his people. He has done everything to win our love, even to the laying down of his life for us. He has said everything that is calculated to draw forth our love. He is determined that we should love him, and therefore he sends the Holy Spirit to reveal his excellencies, to unfold his beauties, and to enlighten our minds in reference to him. All believers love him — but not one of them love him as he deserves to be loved. The spouse in the Canticles, gives expression to her love, and often speaks of the love of others. She says, "The upright love you." The Upright. Who are they? There are none so by nature — and yet man was naturally upright. God made man upright — but he listened to temptation, he fell into sin, and now there is none righteous by nature, no not one. All are gone out of the way. There is not one upright person among them.

Uprightness is from God's grace, which creates us anew, imparts a holy principle, and awakens, an all absorbing desire to resemble Jesus, the great standard of uprightness. The upright are the justified. They have heard of Jesus. They have felt their need of Jesus. They have believed the testimony concerning Jesus. They have come to Jesus. They have entrusted their souls to Jesus. They have found salvation in Jesus. They love Jesus. Their daily aim is to imitate Jesus.

Though not always guiltless — they are sincere. They regard the eye of God as upon them, and act under this impression. They regard the word of God, and make it their rule and guide. They regard the approbation of God, and seek it above all things. They regard the judgment of God, and reverence it beyond the opinions of men. From an upright heart — proceeds an upright course, and the life is adorned with holiness and righteousness. The Upright Love Jesus. He made them what they are, that feeling their obligation to him — they might love him. They love him sincerely, there is no pretending to be what they are not, they never wear a mask; but professing to love him — they do so in deed and in truth. As a proof of their love, they rejoice in his presence, which to them is ever pleasant and delightful, a present Heaven — and the Heaven they hope for, is very much made up of the presence of Jesus. They grieve in his absence. No one can satisfy them but Jesus. Nothing will satisfy them but the presence of Jesus. So that if their Lord withdraws, or but hides his face from them, they are uncomfortable and dissatisfied. They desire the closest union and communion with him. They love to hear of him. They enjoy his ordinances. They are happy lying at his feet. But they want to be one with him. Nor will any union do — they will desire the closest, they want to realize and enjoy that they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

They aim to please him in all things. They do nothing without referring to him. In every plan they form, in every change they make, in every work they undertake — they think of Jesus, and ask if it will it please him. Indeed, when their love is strong and lively — to please Jesus is the highest aim, end, and object of their life.

They will give up anything for Christ. Everything is subordinated to him. As Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his Isaac, when bidden — so are they willing to sacrifice theirs.

Everything is held in subjection to Christ, so that as the Hebrews took joyfully the confiscation of their goods for his sake — they desire ever to stand ready, to surrender anything he may call for.

They speak for Christ, and always speak well of him. They do not always speak for Christ when they ought, nor do they ever speak of Christ as they wish; yet at times they feel that they must speak of him, and do speak for him. Nor do they ever leave any society very happy, if they have not dropped a word for Jesus, or if someone else has not spoken well of his name.

They are willing to do anything for Christ. Any duty however arduous, if Jesus requires it — they are willing to do it. Every sin that would grieve the loving heart of Jesus — they are anxious to avoid. For him they would pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand. Anything, everything which the Lord requires — they wish to do, and will do — if the Lord will only give them grace. They deeply sympathize with Augustine who said, "Give what you command — and then command what you will." That is, only give me grace to enable me to obey your commands — and command whatever you shall please.

They are prepared to suffer for Christ, rather than deny him. Yes, the sin of Peter appears most odious to them, and they would rather, with Paul, suffer the loss of all things, than with Peter deny him.

Reader, are you an upright soul? Do you deal honestly with yourself as before God? Do you act uprightly with your fellow men, giving no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully? Do you walk humbly with God, endeavoring to do his will from your heart? Do you love Jesus? Is his presence sweet to you? Is his absence painful? Do you want to get as near to Christ as possible, and to be as closely united to him as you can be? Is it your habitual aim to please him? Can you give up your carnal pleasures, worldly connections, and gainful sins — for Christ? Do you love to speak of Christ to others, and to speak well of his name to all? Are you desirous to do anything for Christ you can, cost what it may; and to give up every sin for Christ, however dear? Would you rather suffer for Christ — than deny him, or grieve him, or in any way sin against him?

These are close questions — but if the love of Christ is in your heart, you can reply in the affirmative to some of them, and you will desire from your heart, to be able so to reply to them all — and your soul will cry, "O to love Jesus, to love him uprightly!"

33 You Will Bring Me unto Death

You Will Bring Me unto Death "I know that you will bring me unto death, and to the house appointed for all living." Job 30:23

DEATH is a subject of every day occurrence. It is a subject in which all are interested. The Lord is constantly calling our attention to it. He speaks to us by it. He bids us improve it. He wishes to make us better by it. It is very well to look at it in reference to others. It is better to look at it as an event that must happen to ourselves. Let us therefore for a few minutes, look at the words of Job, adopting them as our own. "I know that you will bring me unto death, and to the house appointed for all living." The Fact Known. "I know that you will bring me unto death." God will certainly bring us unto death; there can be no mistake about that. He may bring us unto death suddenly — this entirely rests with him. He may bring us unto death very soon — for we are not sure of a day. A day! we are not sure of an hour. An hour! the next minute I may be a corpse! God will bring me unto death, but I know not when — it depends entirely on his will. I know not where — this is also fixed by his decree. I know not how — this will only be revealed by his providence. I may be cut down by a sudden stroke, or I may be removed by a long lingering illness.

We know that he will bring us unto death, for he has asserted it in his Word. And daily observation proves it. If God will bring us unto death — then man cannot save us. However skillful the physician, however kind the attendants, however wealthy the individual — there is no escaping our divine appointment with death.

"To the house appointed for all living." Death is under a divine appointment, there is a time, a fixed time to die. The grave is appointed to be our home. Whether the vault, the grave, or the ocean — it is our last home on this earth. What a home! Look at it — it is dark and dreary, it is damp and cold, it is lonely and narrow — and yet it is capacious enough, to receive us all! It is prepared alike for the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, the proud monarch and the humble pauper. To each, and all, the sentence, refers, "Dust you are — and unto dust you shall return."

The Use We Should Make of this Fact. It should prevent carnal security. We must die — we may die soon — and suddenly; let us therefore watch and be sober.

It should prevent trifling, especially with the soul and its salvation, with eternity and its solemnities.

It should prevent indecision, and bring us to a point on all essential matters, especially as to closing with Christ, and confessing him.

It should prevent procrastination, it says in the most emphatic manner, "Behold! Now is the accepted time." We should think of death seriously, of our own death, for it is a solemn subject. We should think of it frequently, for it is a most beneficial subject.

We should inquire, what is necessary in order to die safely — happily — and honorably? In reply to which we may say, there must be faith in Christ — the faith that receives Christ, that confides in Christ, and that trusts in Christ alone. There must be prayer — constant, hearty, persevering

prayer. There must be penitence — or sorrow for sin, hatred to sin, and forsaking of sin. There must be reconciliation to God, on the ground of the death of Jesus. There must be obedience, or doing the will of God from the heart. In a word, the best preparation for death, is constantly looking to Jesus. Looking off from everything else, and looking to Jesus for all that we need, for soul and body, for life and death, for time and eternity.

Reader, you must die — are you ready? You must die soon, and you may die suddenly — if you did, how would it be with you? Heaven or Hell follows death — to which would it introduce you? If you were called to die today — would you die in peace? Have you peace with God? Have you peace of conscience? Are you at peace with all mankind? How important it is, to be in that state at present, which we wish to be in, when we come to die. Do you live now — as you will wish you had when you come on your dying pillow? This is one of the lessons taught to us. May we learn it, and reduce it to practice. May we commence every day, as if it would probably be our last; and may we lay down to rest at night, as if it was probable, that we might never awake again in this world.

Gracious Lord, as we know that you will bring us unto death — O bring us to Christ first! Let us be washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and so be saved from wrath through him!

Blessed Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life, put forth your resurrection power in us, raising us from a death in sin, unto a life of righteousness, that we may reign in life by you!

Holy Spirit, you are the Great Sanctifier of God's elect, sanctify us, and prepare us to meet death with joy, to overcome death, and to pass through its perils singing praises unto God!

34 The Dew of Heaven

The Dew of Heaven

"I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon." Hosea 14:5

God's promises — feed the faith, support the minds, and stimulate the prayers of God's people. And the prayers of the Lord's people, have often obtained promises, as well as the fulfillment of them. It was when Israel had wandered long and far, that the Lord sent his prophet to invite and exhort them to return, directing them how to approach him, and obtain the choicest blessings from him; and when they prayed, deplored their wanderings, and sought his face — he promised them the richest and choicest blessings. He not only promised what he would do for them — but what he would be to them, even the greatest blessing. "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon." The Figure. "I will be to Israel like a refreshing DEW from heaven." As the rain only fell twice in the year — the land was dependent on the dew, which was constant and very copious, one of the greatest natural blessings. Israel was now like the thirsty soil, or the withered exhausted plants, and the Lord says, "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven." The Lord's dealings with us in a way of grace — are well represented by this figure.

Notice the dew's descent. How silently it falls, without the least noise. Just so, the Lord in working conviction, or imparting consolation, does so secretly and silently, none but the saved sinner, are aware of the work, or experience the effects. How slowly it comes down. You go out in the evening, and all is dry, you remain out for a time and you scarcely perceive a change — but at length every plant is covered, and the grass is wet. Just so, divine communications are at times made so slowly, that the mind perceives them not, it takes a considerable time to produce a thorough conviction of our lost state by nature, and longer still to bring the soul to confidence in Christ, or joy in God. In some cases the whole work is so secret, so silent, and so slow — that it is almost imperceptible. The dew falls invisibly, and so does grace into the heart often.

It is very gentle — it never broke the tenderest plant, or bruised the most delicate flower. And as gentle are the Lord's dealings with us — often the feeblest desire is encouraged, the weakest faith is strengthened, and the slightest movement of the soul toward God is accepted. He never breaks the bruised reed, nor will he quench the smoking flax.

Once more, the dew falls in the twilight or in the dark night. Just so, in the dark night of nature, or in the twilight of spiritual knowledge, when we see nothing clearly or distinctly, God communicates his grace, and diffuses the light of his truth, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

Consider the dew's effects. The dew softens the hard soil, that the feeble plant may force its way through, to enjoy the sunlight, and be fanned by the breeze. Just so, the grace that God gives, softens the hard heart, that the seeds of truth may spring up, and exhibit those virtues which are to the praise and glory of God. The dew quickens the exhausted plants, and puts new life into the

leaves and flowers. Just so, grace quickens all the plants of righteousness within us, and causes our faith and hope, our love and courage — to revive and grow. The dew refreshes exhausted nature, bathing the weary herbage, and painting it with new beauty and glory. Just so, the Lord in his divine manifestations — refreshes our souls, revives all our graces, brightens our evidences; filling us with joy, peace, and pleasure. The dew fructifies and makes the earth fruitful, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. Just so, when the Lord sheds abroad his love in our hearts — we become fruitful in every good word and work. Our souls are impressible, truth roots in them, and the seeds of righteousness spring up and bear fruit.

Mark the peculiarities of the dew. The dew is FREE, no one can produce or purchase dew. Just so the grace of God, and all his gracious communications. Nor does the dew fall more freely on the earth, than does the grace of God on us at the first. Though free, it may be expected, and so may grace, for God has provided it, and promised it, and is prepared to impart it. The dew is NECESSARY, we see not how creation could do without it — but however necessary the dew may be to the earth — grace is much more necessary to the soul. Without it, there would be no spiritual life at first; so without it, faith would droop and die, prayer would cease, and everything spiritual in the soul would expire. The dew is the fruit of a clear, calm, quiet sky; we do not expect it in seasons of storm and tempest. Just so, grace comes to us, because God is at peace with us. The cross of Jesus attracted the curse, removed sin which was the cause of it, and made peace with God for us. The whole storm of divine wrath fell on him, was endured by him, and was exhausted by him. The cross acted as a curse conductor — it cleared the Heavens, and now the gentle, reviving, refreshing dew of God's blessing, descends on our poor dry, barren, and languishing souls, making them fruitful and happy. Grace descends upon us, because God is pacified with us through Christ. The Results Predicted. "He will blossom like the lily." The growth of the lily is quick. Just so, when much grace is given — we grow rapidly in knowledge and spirituality.

"He shall blossom like the lily." The growth of the lily is beautiful. Just so, we grow in grace, and become graceful and ornamental. The growth of the lily is to the honor of God's bounty, which provides for and supplies nature's wants, so is our growth to the praise of the glory of his grace. The blossom of the lily is very beautiful and fragrant, and when it blossoms — it exhibits its colors, shows its fair proportions, and emits its lovely fragrance. Just so, under the influence of God's grace, we exhibit all Christian virtues, manifest a likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ, and breathe the sweet perfume of love, pity, and praise.

"It will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon." These majestic cedars which crowned its top, and which struck their roots so deep into its rocky soil, that they could defy the power of the terrific storms which swept over them, to uproot them. Just so, the believer in Jesus, as the result of God's being to him as the dew — roots his faith in God's word, faithfulness, and power — and becomes established, strengthened, and settled. His love roots itself in God as revealed in Christ, in the holiness of the divine character, and witnesses to his adoption and heirship. Hope roots in Christ as entered into the holiest, and in the promise of a glorious Heaven, and thus the soul deriving much spiritual nourishment — becomes fixed and steady. The Promise. "I will be", "they shall be." Thus God's promises generally run. There is majesty in every line, and authority stamped on every letter. He promises like a God whose will is law, whose resources are boundless, and whose purpose cannot be frustrated. "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. Israel will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in

Lebanon." This was the proof that God had heard and healed them. It was an evidence that he loved them freely. It was to show that his anger was turned away from them. O blessed promise, may we be able to claim it, plead it, and expect the fulfillment of it in our own souls!

Holy Lord God, be as the dew unto my soul — soften, refresh, revive, and fructify me! Let me grow as the lily, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let me blossom as the lily, exhibiting all the graces and virtues of the Christian character, to your honor and glory! O let me be rooted and grounded in love, rooted in Christ Jesus, that I may stand all the storms of time, and enjoy a glorious eternity! Lord Jesus, come down on my soul, as the rain on the mown grass, and as the showers that water the earth — so shall I grow up into you, and bring forth fruits to your praise!

35 Brought Low — but Helped

Brought Low — but Helped "I was brought low — and He helped me!" Psalms 116:6 The circumstances of the Christian often vary — and it is no uncommon thing for his frames and feelings to vary with his circumstances. On this account, many of the Lord's people are either elevated — or depressed, but seldom enjoy a calm, peaceful, and settled state of mind. Their depression is great — or their joys are high. But even this is overruled for their good, and is sanctified to the humbling of the soul, and the preserving it from self-importance and pride. What a mercy it is to have a God to go to — let our frames and feelings be what they may. What a mercy to have one that will sympathize with us, and of whom it is said, "Like as a father pities his children — so the Lord pities those who fear him." This was David's encouragement, and lay at the root of much of his experience, and led him to say, "I was brought low — and He helped me." His Painful Condition."I was brought low." O how low the believer is brought sometimes, into what straits and trials, into what troubles and distresses!

Sometimes in his outward circumstances, by the loss of property, or friends, or situation; all seems against him, everything seems to conspire together to bring him low.

Sometimes in body, by strong pain, extreme weakness, or nervous disorders; so that everything loses its relish, and he can enjoy nothing earthly. At other times it is distress in the soul, by violent temptations, by distressing bereavements, by the hidings of the Lord's face, or his withholding divine communications. Now everything appears to be covered with a pall — and gloom and darkness spreads over the soul. But at times the Lord so sanctifies the circumstances, as painful as they are, that they become real blessings:

pride is humbled,

false confidence is destroyed, and

the man walks softly before the Lord.

Yet at other times — faith is shaken, the heart is straitened, doubts spring up, fears are strong, the evidences are beclouded, prayer becomes a task — and we think that God must be angry with us. This brings us low, lays us prostrate, and we cry plaintively unto God. Then in answer to the cry of faith, the Lord sends help, or appears for our relief, and soon we are able to say, "I was brought low — and he helped me!" His Encouraging Testimony."He helped me." Blessed be his holy name, he never allows us to sink — but he comes to our help! He helps us in trouble:

by rendering his assistance,

by sending us supplies,

by raising us up friends,

by restoring us to health and strength,

by reviving our graces and raising our spirits;

or by imparting a little scriptural light, a little holy love, a little Heavenly dew, or a little spiritual unction.

Thus he draws out our souls in prayer, excites hope in his mercy, awakens confidence in his Word — and we sink in deep humility at his footstool.

Now we can bear trouble with patience, and look for deliverance with courage. He helps us out of trouble, by turning our captivity as he did Job's. Now . . .

providence smiles,

health returns,

promises are applied,

comfort is imparted,

the Spirit bears his inward witness,

the heart is enlarged,

confidence is produced, and

sweet communion with himself is granted. This is sending and taking us out of the deep waters. This is bringing us up out of the horrible pit — and setting our feet upon a solid rock. This is like returning to the days of our youth. Now we can sing in the ways of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord. Now we can say with the prophet, "O Lord, I will praise you, though you were angry with me — your anger is turned away, and you comfort me."

We must sink — before we rise. This is always true in grace, for before honor — is humility. We must pace the valley of humiliation, before we ascend the mount of high and holy communion with God. And very frequently is it the case, that the lower we sink — the higher we rise. If the Lord is stripping us, emptying us, pruning us, and bringing us low; so that we feel weak, empty and void of good — it is in order that he may strengthen us with his might, bring us to rest on his Word, fill us with his own love, and lead us to look for everything in Jesus. When brought low — hope should be encouraged. The Lord will help us. We ought not then to encourage fears, or yield to despondency — but should rather chide ourselves for yielding to such feelings, as David did, when he said, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." He who brings down — will raise up. If the Lord bring us down by his providence — he will support and raise us up by his grace. He may lay us so low — that no hand may be able to reach us but his own; or our affairs may become so perplexed — that no one can unravel them but himself. But as sure as this is the case, he will appear for us, and work our deliverance. He will never leave us prostrate, for it is his prerogative to raise up the poor out of the dust, and lift up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory!

None of God's people die in the pit. Joseph was cast into one — but the coming of the Midianite merchants, caused him to be taken out. Jeremiah was cast into a worse pit — but Ebed-melech

the Ethiopian, was used to deliver him. Just so with us, whatever pit we may fall into, or be thrown into — so sure as Daniel was taken up unhurt out of the den of lions — so shall we be delivered. The church of old testified, "We went through fire and through water — but you brought us out into a wealthy place." Just so shall we shortly be delivered, and when we stand on the borders of the promised land, when we are about to cross the river that separates time from eternity, when about to close the eyes on everything below, we shall then with our dying breath for the comfort of those we leave behind us say, "I was brought low — and He helped me!"

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters — I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty — you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression — you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

36 In Word and in Power

In Word and in Power

"Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." 1 Thessalonians 1:5 The purposes of God are accomplished in the use of means; and while God's rule is his purpose — our rule is the precepts of his word. In attending to duty, we expect the Lord to accomplish his will. We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature, and it is our duty to do so; and while we are doing so, God accompanies it with power to the hearts of his elect. In this way, Paul knew that the Thessalonians were elected of God, as he states, "Our gospel came to you not simply with words — but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." The Privilege Conferred. The gospel was sent unto them. The gospel is good news — good news from God — good news from God to every creature. It is the good news of salvation — of salvation for sinners — salvation for sinners which is all of grace. It is a salvation which prevents all penal evils — and secures all real, spiritual, and everlasting good. Paul calls it our gospel, because he was entrusted with it, he was commissioned, to proclaim it, he knew the power, savor, and sweetness of it in his own soul, and he preached it to others. This gospel he carried to Thessalonica, and preached it with much success, so that many were converted, a church of Christ was formed, and others were raised up to spread it further. The Difference Made in its Reception.

It came to ALL as a message from God, and it was delivered to all without distinction. To SOME in word only, as a fact to be believed, as a message to be received and acted upon, and as a subject commending itself to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart. But it came to OTHERS in power. There was a divine agent secretly working — even the Holy Spirit. There was an all-conquering energy put forth — even the power of God. There was a glorious effect produced — even a full persuasion of its truth and authority, of its high and infinite importance, and of its adaptation to their circumstances and needs. In consequence of this:

they cordially embraced it, with all readiness of mind;

they acted upon it, exercising faith in Jesus;

they were transformed by it, into the moral likeness of God;

and were filled with joy and peace in believing. This proved to the apostle that they were chosen to salvation, so that he could say, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

See, God's sovereignty. He sends a message to all — to every creature. A message full of love and mercy. He proposes and presents Christ to all and to each one who hears the gospel. He equally and alike invites all to come, receive, and enjoy salvation. But he sends the Spirit to some — in whom he exerts his secret power, in consequence of which they not only listen to the message — but embrace the offered blessing, and are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

See, why the gospel succeeds. Not because a certain class of men preach it, or because it is preached in any particular way; though the Spirit generally makes use of the most suitable means; but because the power of the Holy Spirit attends it! This irresistible power . . .

quickens the soul,

opens the eyes of the understanding,

and awakens the slumbering conscience.

There is an alarm felt in consequence of sin — the wrath of God is feared, and a dread of damnation fills the soul. Now the gospel appears just adapted to the sinner's case, and the Lord Jesus becomes the great object of desire. The soul feels a sweet all-persuasive influence prompting it to embrace the gospel, receive Christ, and be reconciled to God. The conquering power exerted subdues the enmity of the heart, overcomes the prejudices of the mind, and at length brings the soul into subjection to the obedience of Christ. The influence exerted, resembles the influence of light on flowers, or the thaw on frozen gardens, or the sun's rays on wax or ice. Gently, quietly, and gradually — the heart is changed; and the change of the heart soon appears in the life, as here, "You turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God — and you became imitators of us."

See, what we should especially pray for. We have the gospel, we have our ministers, and we have our sanctuaries; but one thing is still lacking — it is "the power of the Spirit of God." The gospel will have an effect without the Spirit — for it will be "a savor of death unto death." But the effect we desire to see, even the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of believers, the edification of the body of Christ, and the subjecting of the world to Christ — never will be, never can be — without "the power of the Holy Spirit." For the presence and power of the Spirit to accompany the word — we should earnestly, constantly, and unitedly pray. On this blessing our hearts should be set, to obtain this blessing all the saints should unite, and until we receive this blessing, we should give God no rest.

Reader, how do you feel on this point? Has the gospel been attended with the power of the Holy Spirit to your own soul? Are you very desirous that the same power should attend it to others? Do you cry mightily to God that the power of the Spirit may attend the gospel — be it preached by whom it may?

37 Love to the Word — a Source of Peace

Love to the Word — a Source of Peace "Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble." Psalms 119:165 The Lord's people must not expect outward ease and prosperity in this present evil world. The present life is like a journey through a parched desert, or a voyage over a stormy sea. Changes, frequent changes, are to be expected. But amidst all — we may enjoy peace. The mind may be kept calm and tranquil, while we pass through the troubles and trials of life. Let us exercise our thoughts upon this subject a little, as placed before us in the words of the Psalmist, "Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble." The Characteristic. They love God's law. By the law, we understand the whole Word of God — all that was then written — all that is now written. Scripture is one of God's best gifts — and one of man's choicest blessings! It is to be loved, believed, and obeyed.

They love God's law — they perceive its dignity and excellence, for the impress of its Author's mind is upon it. The illumination of the Holy Spirit reveals to them its superiority to all other works, and it stands out before them as a sun among ten thousand stars; as a clear, bright, flowing spring, among many dirty puddles. There is none like it — they see, they feel, they confess this.

They believe in its inspiration. They may not understand exactly how divine inspiration works — but they believe that the contents of the book were in the mind of God, who communicated them to the mind of man, and that holy men spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

They perceive that "the law of the Lord is perfect," that it contains all that is necessary to be known, believed, and practiced on spiritual subjects; and so believing and perceiving — they love the truth, not only for its author's sake — but also for its own sake. To their minds, there is none like it.

They love it for its simplicity, especially on all essential points, so that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man may understand.

They love it for its purity, reflecting as it does the pure and lovely mind of God.

They love it for its fullness, containing as it does all that is necessary for man to know, all that God sees fit to impart to man on spiritual subjects this side Heaven.

They love it for its variety, for it is not a monotonous essay on one subject, or a number of essays on many subjects. It is full of variety — a variety of subjects, conveyed in a variety of styles, bearing the impress of a variety of minds. Here are hills and valleys, mountains and oceans, mines and fields, clouds and sunshine, fruits and flowers. All we can want, and all we can wish for.

They love it for its suitability, for it just . . .

meets their case,

suits their condition, and

satisfies the craving of their souls. This leads them at times to cry out, "O how I love your law, it is my meditation day and night!" The Privilege. "Great peace have those who love your law."

They have PEACE with God, for through the word they come to enjoy pardon, and are released from guilt.

They enjoy SAFETY, for they see and know their way.

They enjoy divine FRIENDSHIP, for they commune with God. They see the road home, know God as their friend, and perceive that their resources are boundless. They are in union with the Prince of peace, they have fellowship with the God of peace, through the teaching of the Spirit of peace.

They have "great peace," for it is deep and profound — passing all understanding; it is settled and abiding — being supported by the covenant, the oath, and the promise of God.

"Nothing can make them stumble." Many stumble at the word, fall in the way, and perish in their own deceivings. But the lovers of God's word shall never finally stumble — but walk in a plain path, enjoying the light.

They do not stumble at the doctrines, because they are high, or mysterious, or difficult to harmonize — but believe them on divine authority.

They do not stumble at persecution, because they see that it is predicted, and therefore to be expected. Nor do they stumble at the worldly conduct of professors, because the word declares that they would act so. Nor do they stumble at the falls of believers, for they find that many have fallen — and have risen again. At these things many do stumble — but those who love God's word, revering its authority, and believing its teachings — are prepared for such things, and therefore are not taken by surprise. Do we love God's law? Love it, so as to . . .

read it daily,

believe it heartily,

meditate on it devoutly, and

walk by it as our directory and guide? Are we fully persuaded of its authenticity and inspiration, and therefore receive it as . . .

from God's hand,

revealing God's mind, and

intended for our everyday use through life? Have we peace? Great peace? Peace amidst all the troubles of life? Peace notwithstanding temptation and opposition? Peace though all things within and without us change?

Peace may be maintained, as says the prophet, "You will keep him in perfect peace — whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Do we go on in our journey without stumbling? But for the word of God, there is much to stumble us . . .

in the state of the church,

in the conduct of the Lord's people,

in the condition of the world,

in the dispensations of divine providence,

and even in what we discover in our own hearts! But the bible explains the whole, accounts for the whole, and tells us, that thus it must be.

Let us therefore keep close to the word of God.

Let us love it more than ever.

Let us read it more than ever.

Let us believe it more than ever.

Let us meditate upon it more than ever. And let us walk by its directions more carefully and constantly than we have hitherto done; thus shall we prove in our own experience the truth, "Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble."

38 Sorrow and Joy

Sorrow and Joy

"You now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you." John 16:22

How much we have to grieve over things here below. How frequently we are in sorrow. Well may it be said. "Long nights and darkness dwell below!" But it always was so with the Lord's people, and will be until Jesus comes again, or we depart to be with him. It was so with our Lord's immediate disciples, especially when he was about to leave them, which led his loving, sympathizing heart to say unto them, "You now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you." Their Present Experience. "You now therefore have sorrow." It was painful — very painful. Their beloved Lord was leaving them, just when they felt that they most needed His presence. Their knowledge was very imperfect, for though they had the very best teacher — they were such poor dull scholars, that they had learned but very little. Their faith was weak, it was the faith of the babe, not of the young man. This led the Master to say to them. "You believe in God, believe also in me." You have confidence in God, have confidence in me. Their hopes were disappointed. They expected that their Master would set up a temporal kingdom, deliver them from the power of the Romans, and reign in more glory than Solomon. Satan was busy with them, as he always is when the heart is sad and sorrowful. It was the hour of temptation, they were being put to the test, and a severe test it was. These things united filled them with sorrow, therefore Jesus said, "You now therefore have sorrow." The Savior's Promise. "I will see you again." This he did personally and literally after his resurrection, again and again. This he does often spiritually, when he comes and manifests himself to them, holding communication with them, and filling them with his joy and peace. Every believer knows what the presence of Jesus is, and how blessed it is to see him, open the heart to him, and rejoice and glory in him. He will see them again soon, at his second advent, when he will raise their bodies from the grave, and take them to be with him forever. Sorrowful believer, you will soon see Jesus! He will come and receive you unto himself, that where he is, there you may be also. Then his glory will never more be concealed from your eyes, then his sweet presence will no more be missed by you — but then you will be filled with joy, and glory in his name forever. The Effect of His Presence. "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you." The presence of Jesus, after his resurrection, filled his disciples with joy. Their faith in him was confirmed. Their gloomy fears were dispersed. His love to them was proved. His faithfulness was set in the clearest light. Their interest in him was realized. They felt that their Heaven was sure. The presence of Jesus with his people now, fills them with joy. It inspires them with holy confidence. It dissipates all their fears, giving them boldness and courage. It manifests his love in the sweetest and most affecting way. It proves him to be faithful to his word, and warrants them to trust in him evermore. It assures them of their saving interest in all he is and has, and enables them to read their title clear, to mansions in the skies. No man can take away this joy, for it flows from a source out of man's reach, it is supported by that which man cannot disturb, and it lives and triumphs in spite of all that man can do.

Sorrow on account of the absence of Jesus — proves that we have grace. No one can sorrow for his absence — who has not enjoyed his presence, who has not received his grace. Where Jesus has appeared once — he will appear again. He never pays a solitary visit. One visit, ensures more. If he has come once — he will come again; if he has shone on us once — he will shine again. If therefore we mourn his absence today, let us expect his return tomorrow. When Jesus comes, sorrow flees and joy returns. This is always the case, for the presence of Jesus is the life, the joy, the Heaven of his people. It is so now, and it will be so forever. Spiritual joy is independent of man. Man cannot give it, neither can man take it away. O may we enjoy much of the presence of Jesus on earth, as introductory to the enjoyment of his presence forever in Heaven!

39 Nothing Impossible!

Nothing Impossible!

"For with God, nothing shall be impossible!" Luke 1:37

Difficulties often crowd the believer's path, and trials line his way. Obstacles and opposition meet him at almost every turn. What to do at times — he scarcely knows, for he has been disappointed so often, and is now so completely baffled — that his way is hedged up with thorns! Look whichever way he will, or to whatever quarter he may — there is something to discourage him, and cast him down!

It is of no use looking any way, or to any one — but to the Lord; and while looking to Him, it will be well to remember what the angel said to the blessed virgin, to excite and strengthen her faith, "For with God, nothing shall be impossible."

Look at the Fact. There are no impossibilities with God! He can do — as He will. He will do — all that He has promised. He has promised to do all that you can need or even wisely desire. In Mary's case, much faith was required — it was exercised and honored. A virgin did bear a son. That son was free from all taint of sin. That son was divine. That divine Son was the Savior of men.

What can be more difficult than this?

What should stagger us after this?

Look at what God IS:

look at his power and grace,

look at his wisdom and wealth,

look at his pity and compassion,

look at his greatness and glory.

Look at what God has DONE:

in nature — by his power,

in providence — by his wisdom,

in redemption — by his grace. And looking at what God is, and at what He has done — you must come to the conclusion, "With God, nothing is impossible!"

Let us use this fact for our own benefit. Nothing shall be impossible with God! Not the conversion of that obstinate child. Not that hardened husband. Not that trying and degraded wife. Not the restoration of that backslider — as low as he may have sunk, and far as he may have gone. Not the pardon of those sins — as great, glaring, and numerous as they may be. Not the sanctification

of that trouble — as deep, trying, and dreadful as it is. Not the bringing of the greatest good out of that worst evil — though it may have alarmed and terrified you. Not the perfecting of the soul in holiness — as sinful and polluted as it is at present.

No, nothing is too hard for the Lord! Therefore cheer up, press on, take up your cross or burden afresh — and bear it after Jesus.

Let this precious truth, feed and strengthen your faith — that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Let it excite and animate your hope — that you may expect great things from God.

Let it stimulate you in prayer — that you may ask largely of God, and ask with confidence too.

Let it crush your fears — that you may press boldly on, until you reach the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Let it stir you up to exertion — for as nothing shall be impossible to God, so nothing shall be impossible to you, which you undertake with his sanction, and with a view to his glory.

Let it encourage and call forth praise — for how grateful and thankful we should be, that our God can do all things, and therefore will do for us, all that is necessary both in life and death.

Let us keep this sweet truth always in mind, and when cast down — chide our fears and excite our hopes, saying, "With God, nothing shall be impossible!"

Dear Lord, your weaker saints inspire,

And fill them with celestial fire;

On your kind arm may they rely,

And all their foes shall surely fly.

Now Lord, your wondrous power exert,

And every ransomed soul support;

Give us fresh strength to win our way,

To regions of eternal day.

There may we praise the great I AM,

And shout the victories of the Lamb;

Raise every chorus to his blood,

And triumph in the power of God!

40 Redeeming Love!

Redeeming Love!

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

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

our Substitute and fulfill the law in our stead;

our Sacrifice, and make a full atonement for our sins; and

our Ransomer, paying the satisfactory price for our redemption.

He engaged to bear the desert of all our sins in His own body — to suffer all that the inflexible justice of God could inflict on our Surety — and so put away our sins forever, by the sacrifice of Himself. He gave . . .

His person — for our persons;

His blood — as our ransom price;

and His life — for our lives.

He gave His entire self, doing and suffering all that was necessary to secure our release from sin's curse, and our everlasting salvation. O amazing grace of a gracious Savior! The OBJECT in View. He gave Himself that He might justly redeem, ransom, or deliver us — from the guilt, power, and

penal consequences of sin. He gave Himself to expiate the guilt, to destroy the power, and secure us against the eternal desert of our transgressions. He gave Himself to purify unto Himself, by fully expiating their sins, a peculiar people:

a people purchased — to be peculiarly His own;

a people sanctified, separated from all others — to be set apart for Himself;

a people to be His own subjects — as the King of Zion;

a people to be His own soldiers — as the Captain of our salvation;

a people to be His own servants — as the Lord of the house;

a people to be His own children — as the everlasting Father!

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

grace is gloriously displayed,

man's salvation is secured, and

God's glory by the good works of His people, is rendered certain!

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

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

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

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

O wondrous love!

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

Note, the special object that Jesus had in view. "That He might redeem us" — by a price, which no one but Himself could pay — that He might . . . satisfy all the demands of law and justice, acquire a peculiar right to us, and so honorably . . .

deliver us from every foe,

rescue us from all that is degrading,

and exalt us to the highest honor.

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

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

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

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

Notice then, what He expects from them. He expects zealous obedience. He expects . . .

that His word be studied,

that His will be consulted, and

that His honor be sought in all they think, speak, or do.

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

Reader, what do you think of Jesus?

How do you feel toward Him?

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

What effect has it upon you?

What are your views of sin — all sin?

How do you feel toward sin?

What think you of good works? Are you zealously endeavoring to perform them? And WHY, dear Savior — tell me why,

You thus would suffer, bleed and die?

What mighty motive could you move,

The motive's plain — 'twas all for love! For love of whom? Of sinners base;

A hardened herd, a rebel race!

That mocked and trampled on your blood,

And trifled with the wounds of God!

They nailed Him to the accursed tree;

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

41 The Painful and Pleasant

The Painful and Pleasant

"Make us glad according to the days wherein you have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." Psalms 90:15

Churches, as well as individuals — have their times of affliction and trial. It was so with the Church in the wilderness in the days of Moses. It is so with the church, and with individual churches now. For the church in the desert Moses prayed, "Make us glad according to the days wherein you have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." This prayer may perhaps suit us, let us consider it as containing A Glance at a Painful Past. "YOU have afflicted us." God is said to do — what he permits to be done. Men and things, are but God's instruments, by which he accomplishes his purposes, and fulfils the predictions of his word. The CHURCH is at times afflicted with the lack of success. She seems to labor in vain. She sows much — but reaps little. Her converts are few, her fruit is small and scant. The church is at times afflicted with declension — the zealous become cold, the active become idle, the spiritual become carnal — and this is an affliction. The church is at times afflicted with alienation of affection — the love of the pastor cools toward his people, and the love of the people toward each other. Jealousy, surmises, and evil speaking abound, so that instead of cleaving to each other in love — there is coldness, distance, and lack of love, and this is a sore affliction. The church is at times afflicted with bereavements — the Lord calls home the young and active, the energetic and useful, the serious and prudent. The graveyard fills, and the church is thinned — this also is an affliction.

"We have seen evil."

There is also the evil of dissension — when difference of opinion, leads to disputes, wranglings, and separations.

There is the evil of barrenness — when the ordinances do not profit, souls do not thrive, and the fire of devotion burns dull and dim.

There is the evil of inactivity, when the talents are wrapped up in a napkin, and church numbers live in self-indulgence, instead of being actively employed for Christ.

There is also the evil of indifference and lukewarmness, when the affairs of the church cease to interest, and the spread of the gospel is neglected and disregarded.

Then there is the evil of pride — the root of a multitude of evils, for only by pride comes contention, division, disorder, and confusion. When pride creeps in — peace, harmony, and success soon depart! Pride in the officers — will alienate the people from them; and pride among the people — will separate chief friends, and introduce a host of mischiefs. In the congregation often there is the evil of indecision, when people halt between two opinions, between the world and the church, between Christ and Belial.

There is the the evil of stifling of convictions, which many, too many do, so that instead of conviction ripening into conversion — it dies out, and the conscience becomes hardened, and the soul twice dead.

There is also the evil of neglect of ordinances, when public worship is only attended to weekly, and then once a week, and then at more lengthened periods.

These are evils which creep into the church and the soul — and may well cause us to pray with fervor and energy: "Make us glad according to the days wherein you have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." Here is, A Prayer for a Pleasant Future. "Make us glad." Change the CUP, take from us the cup of affliction — and put into our hands the cup of salvation — we have drank deep and long of the former, and now let us drink and enjoy the latter. Turn our captivity as the streams, and set us free to labor and enjoy our work. Grant us your presence and favor, filling us with joy with your countenance. Make us glad by healing our afflictions, by restoring peace and harmony, and by working in conversion and sanctification. Let there be a proportion between the pleasant and the painful; for days of affliction — give us days of prosperity; and for years of evil — give us years of good. O for a prosperous pleasant future! "Make us glad according to the days wherein you have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."

Brethren, our help is in God. He can deliver, restore, and prosper us. Our hope is in the promise. God's promises contain the seeds of our prosperity. Bright days are predicted, blessed times are before us. Our duty is prayer. The Lord, though he has promised — yet he will be inquired of. He loves to hear us plead, to see us on our knees, and to observe downright earnestness in his cause. Our prospects will brighten. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. We may be low now — but he will lift us up; we may be traduced — but he will bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon day. He will work for us so, that men shall say, "Truly there is a reward for the righteous, truly there is a God who judges in the earth!"

O when will the tempest subside,
The storm of affliction be o'er;
The sea shattered bark safe arrive.
Where billows can toss it no more?
I long for that haven of rest,
Where pleasures unfading remain;
Where troubles shall never molest,
Nor Satan e'er harass again!

42 Come unto Me!

Come unto Me!

Man naturally is a poor restless creature. Like a bird wandering from its nest — he can find no lasting repose. He tries a number of things, as religious duties, vows, and reformation — but he is still uneasy and dissatisfied. In this state the gospel finds him, and presents Jesus to him. Jesus in the gospel speaks directly to his case, and says, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden — and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. The Invitation. "Come unto me." WHO are invited?

Those who labor: Who are toiling to satisfy God's law, the claims of conscience, and the cravings of the mind. All who are working to obtain inward satisfaction, mental enjoyment, and rest for the soul.

Those who are heavy laden: Burdened with a sense of guilt, with distressing cares, with grievous disappointments, and a variety of troubles. All who feel unhappy, dissatisfied, and hardened. No matter what is the cause, if a Savior is needed — here is a Savior provided, and the Savior himself invites the wretched and miserable to come to him. Nor are you to think that it is your labor, your burdens, or your weariness, that warrants you to come — for it is not; it is because Jesus invites you. It matters not how you feel, you may come — but the worse you feel, the more you have to urge you to come.

If your heart is as hard as iron,
if your heart is as cold as ice,
if your heart is corrupt beyond description
— you may come to Jesus, for all this.

Yes, for this very reason you ought to come. The worse you are, or the worse you feel — the more readily you should come. The more unfit you feel to come to Jesus — so much the more reason you have to come. If you need a Savior — come to Jesus. If you wish to be saved — come to Jesus. If you wish to be saved at once — come to Jesus at once, and he will save you immediately. The moment you cast yourself on his mercy, the moment you place your dependence on his blood, the moment you venture your soul on him — be you who you may, be you what you may — that moment you are saved! WHO is it that invites sinners to come unto him?

It is Jesus, the tender-hearted Savior.

Jesus, the sympathizing friend of the poor and miserable.

Jesus, who came from Heaven to earth on purpose to save sinners.

Jesus, who has a thorough knowledge of the sinners that he invites.

Jesus, who pities those who have no pity on themselves.

Jesus, who desires to make . . .

miserable sinners happy,

poor sinners rich,

polluted sinners holy, and

enslaved sinners free!

Jesus, who has all things in his hands and at his disposal, and therefore said, "All things are delivered unto me by my Father." As the apostle testified, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand." Who would be afraid to come to such a Savior? What greater encouragement can be given? Whoever will, let him come, and he shall be saved, saved freely — fully — instantly! To WHAT are sinners invited? To come to Jesus, to Jesus directly — not merely to hear the gospel, perform duties, or receive sacraments — but to come to personally to Jesus. Sinner, come to Jesus, to a person, not a religious service. Come to the one who sees you, hears you, sympathizes with you, and desires to do you good.

Come to his cross, and there see him suffering, bleeding, and dying for sinners, and for just such sinners as you! He died that sinners might live, might live forever, might live forever in unspeakable happiness and glory.

Come to his fullness, in which is stored up all blessings! Every blessing you can need, desire, or enjoy — is in the fullness of Jesus, and there you may obtain it without money or without price!

Come to his throne — his throne of grace, there he waits to receive you, to listen to your prayers, and to give you grace to help you in every time of need.

Come, O come to Jesus — and come just as you are, weary and heavy laden, poor and wretched, lost and ruined, cold and unfeeling, polluted and unworthy! Come to Jesus, and come without delay, he will receive you, save you, and make you happy forever. The Promise. "I will give you rest."

Immediate rest. Not rest after a long period of toil and labor, not rest after much suffering and sorrow, not rest at death only — but immediate rest.

Rest from that burden of guilt that lies so heavy on your conscience, and is likely to sink you lower than the grave.

Rest from that load of cares which distresses the soul, and makes even life a burden.

Rest from the vexation and grief, which dries up your spirits, exhausts your energies, and sinks your mind.

Jesus will give you repose, sweet and soul-refreshing repose. He will . . .

bear your burdens,

silence your fears, and

soothe your soul to rest.

He will give you satisfaction, not with yourself — but he will satisfy you of his love to you, and of your salvation by his merit and blood.

He will give you enjoyment, the sweetest enjoyment, so that you will feel almost as happy as an angel.

Come then, O come to Jesus . . .

if you wish to be delivered from your burdens,

if you wish to enjoy solid happiness,

if you desire to be saved with an everlasting salvation!

Come to Jesus, and come now! Do not wait for a more convenient time, or for a fitter frame — but just as you are at this moment — come, and everlasting life is yours!

Reader, Jesus has exactly what you need, all that you need — and he has it to part with, he is willing to give it to you! He calls you to him — to confer it upon you, and to make you comfortable and eternally blessed. Jesus wishes to make you happy. This is his object in giving this invitation. It will not enrich him — but it will enrich you. It will not be to his advantage — but it will be to yours. On his part — it is pure love, tender sympathy, and infinite mercy. It would gladden his loving heart to make you, a poor miserable sinner, happy.

Jesus lovingly invites you once more. Often has he called — and you have refused. Often has he sent his servants — and you would not listen to them. Once more, and it may be the last time, once more he says, "Come unto me — and I will give you rest." After all your ill treatment of him — after all the ingratitude you have shown to him — after all the evil things you have done against him — he once more calls after you as you are wandering in sin and misery, and says, "Come unto me, come now, come, notwithstanding all that is past — and I will give you rest!" Sinner, from the word of his grace, from the cross on which he suffered, from the throne of glory on which he reigns — Jesus calls you, lovingly he invites you, and says, "Come unto ME!"

43 Prayer for the Dark Places

Prayer for the Dark Places

What mischief has SIN done in our world! What misery it has introduced! Sin is indeed a fearful evil — full of deadly poison! Wherever we look — we see the terrible effects of sin; and the further we look — the more fearful those effects appear. It is no wonder therefore, if we are often led to cry out with the Psalmist, "Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of cruelty fill the dark places of the land!" Psalms 74:20 The People's Condition. They are in the dark, therefore their dwellings are called the dark places of the land. They are in a state of ignorance, represented by darkness, gross darkness.

They are ignorant of God — of his nature, which is spiritual.

They are ignorant of his law — which is holy, just, and good.

They are ignorant of his gospel — which is a glorious proclamation of salvation — salvation for the vilest, salvation for all who need it, for whoever will — salvation without money and without price.

They are ignorant of themselves — of their immortality,

of their sinful and condemned state before God,

of their danger as rebels against God, and

of their need of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

They are ignorant of the church of God — it's privileges, happiness, employments, and prospects.

They are ignorant of the nature of the eternal state of the sinner and the saint; they know nothing of a dreadful Hell, nor of a glorious Heaven.

O distressing condition in which to be found! Their Conduct. Cruelty. Ignorance leads to cruelty; the ignorant are generally cruel. It makes men cruel to themselves — inflicting tortures, and putting themselves to terrible pain. It makes them cruel to their relatives — the husband to his wife, the parents to their children, the children to their parents, neighbor to neighbor, rulers to their subjects, subjects to their rulers, tribes to tribes, and nations to nations. What is the history of a heathen country — but the history of cruelty! O the cruel customs, the cruel ceremonies, and the cruel wars, which are still so common! Well may Asaph say, "haunts of cruelty fill the dark places of the land!" Nor is cruelty confined to them — but just in proportion as sinners are in a state of spiritual ignorance — are they unkind and cruel. Let us then join in The Prayer. "Have regard for your covenant." In God's covenant with Abraham he promised, saying, "In you and in your seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And in the covenant of grace he has said, speaking to his beloved Son, "I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Just the very thing they need, therefore it is repeated in another place. "I will also give you for a light of the Gentiles, that

you may be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." Well then may we plead, "Have regard for your covenant," and do as you have said. Fulfill your word where it is written, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." Then there will be no longer any dark places of the earth, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. This covenant was ratified, sealed, and confirmed with the blood of Jesus, called "the blood of the everlasting covenant." Of this covenant Jesus is the Surety, the Mediator, and Intercessor — we may therefore pray, "Have regard for the promise of the covenant — to the blood of the covenant, and to Jesus in whom the covenant stands, and who fulfills all its glorious offices."

What Is Our Duty? It is to sympathize, and to sympathize deeply with those who reside in the dark places of the earth, and who dwell in the haunts of cruelty. Nor is sympathy enough, we should pray and plead for them with God. Nor is prayer enough, we should use every means in our power to send the gospel to them. Nor is it enough to send them the gospel, we should so live as to stimulate by our example all around us, to engage in this important work. The knowledge of God, which they need, and we should send them — will civilize them, and teach them industry, civility, mercy, and love. The covenant rightly understood, encourages missionary effort, as it awakens sympathy, reveals God's provision, makes known his gracious promises, and sets before us the glorious end. Be sure then, the man does not understand God's covenant of grace — who shuts up his compassion from the heathen world, neglecting to pray for, and send the gospel to the dark places of the earth. O my brethren, can we read the accounts sent us from time to time of the cruelties practiced in heathen lands, remembering that those who do so, are our brethren and sisters in the flesh. Or can we think of the dreadful consequences of dying in sin, and in ignorance of God — and not from the deepest depths of our souls cry out, "Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of cruelty fill the dark places of the land!"

44 For — or Against

For — or Against "He who is not with me — is against me." Matthew 12:30

Decision, especially in matters of religion, is of great consequence. The undecided are never happy. They are never useful. They are not, they cannot be honorable. Jesus wishes us to be decided, to be decidedly on his side — or decidedly against him. If we do not decide, he decides for us, and says, "He who is not with me — is against me."

What is it to be WITH Christ?

It is to be reconciled to his OFFICES. To take him . . .

as a prophet — to teach us;

as a priest — to make atonement for us;

and as a king — to rule over us.

It is to be attached to his PERSON. We perceive his beauty and excellence, his exact adaptation to us; and we love him, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

It is to be identified with his CAUSE. We admire it, join it, and throw our energies and talents into it for its promotion.

It is to be numbered with his FOLLOWERS. We are not . . .

ashamed of their poverty,

alarmed at the persecutions they suffer,

or afraid to be seen in their ranks.

It is to be employed in his SERVICE. Doing his will, busy at his work, and aiming at his honor and glory. Where these things are found — that person is for Christ.

What is it to be AGAINST Christ?

It is to be careless and INDIFFERENT about him, so that we neither seek his favor — nor fear to encounter his wrath.

It is to be INATTENTIVE to him, refusing to listen to his voice, read his word, accept his invitations, or believe his promises.

It is to be ESTRANGED from him, having no love to his person, his people, or his ways.

It is to sympathize with his ENEMIES, and to be prejudiced against his sovereignty, requirements, dispensations, and word.

It is to stand aloof from his CAUSE,

refusing to help it if weak,
defend it if opposed, or
rejoice with it if it prospers.

It is to despise his people — for their poverty, or lack of education, or low standing in society, or their decided stand for him. Where these things are found — that person are against Christ.

What Is the RESULT? If you are against Christ, you cannot love him — and are therefore accursed; for the inspired apostle said, "If any man loves not our Lord Jesus Christ — let him be accursed."

If you are against Christ, you cannot believe on him — and are therefore condemned, for "he who believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

If you are against Christ you cannot confess him — and are therefore disowned, as Jesus said, "Whoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who to in Heaven."

If you are against Christ, you cannot enjoy him — and will therefore be banished far from his presence and the glory of his power. Are you for Christ?

What does your creed say — is Christ its Alpha and Omega, its first and its last?

What does your conscience say? does it witness that you are decidedly, devotedly, always, and everywhere on the Lord's side?

What does your conduct say? Do you come out of the world, associate with the godly, and make the conduct of Christ your pattern?

What would those say of you, who know you best? Would they say that you were for Christ?

What will Christ himself say? Will he who searches the heart and tries the thoughts of men say, "You are for me!"

What will a death-bed say? It is often a great revealer. Many find out their mistake there. What if you should! If then it should appear, that after all, you are against Christ — would it not be dreadful? Do you wish to be for Christ? If so, you will inquire about him, searching his word, that you may have correct views of his person, work, and requirements. You will go where you can hear of him, sitting under a ministry that exalts him, extols him, and sets him on high. You will personally apply to him, pleading with him, seeking grace from him, that you may become personally acquainted with him. You will give yourself to him, that you may be saved by his grace, employed in his service, and prepared for a place in his Father's house. You will avow your attachment to him — professing his name, walking in his ways, and uniting yourself with his people.

If you are against Christ, how FOOLISH — when he is the only Savior, the only way of escape from the wrath to come! To be against Christ, is to be against . . .

the only physician that can heal your sin-sick soul;

the only friend that can supply your spiritual and eternal needs;

the only advocate that can carry your cause in the court of Heaven.

If you are against Christ, how WICKED — when he came into the world, suffered, bled, and died, that sinners — such sinners as you; and you yourself if you will, may be saved. But except for him, every one of the human race must have eternally perished — all must have been eternally lost — and yet you are against him. Has he given you any cause to be against him? Can you assign one reason? Can you make one plausible excuse for your conduct? For Christ — or against him, you are; which is it? On this subject, there should be no doubt, not even the shadow of a doubt; let me beseech you to set it at rest, and set it at rest forever.

45 A Call on the Redeemed

A Call on the Redeemed

Salvation is truly a wondrous work, and calls for constant heartfelt praise. No case can be worse than that of the sinner under condemnation; no state can be more blessed than that of the man who is saved in the Lord. To call forth our gratitude, and incite us to praise, this glorious work is variously represented in God's word, and admonition on admonition is given. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so — whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy!" Psalms 107:1-2 The Redeemed of the Lord. These, literally, were the seed of Abraham, who were in captivity in Egypt, in Babylon, and elsewhere — who suffered bitter bondage, and were cruelly treated when in the enemy's power. They represented the Lord's people, who being born in sin, were in captivity to Satan, in slavery under the basic principles of the world, and under the enemy's cruel power. But for their deliverance, God entered into covenant, exercised his wisdom in forming a plan, and all the persons in the Godhead engaged to carry it out. The Father sent his Son to be our Redeemer; the Son of God came to give his life a ransom price for us; he sent the Holy Spirit to rescue and claim us, and implants his grace within us to incline and dispose us. The blood of Jesus was the price paid, and the energy of the Spirit was the power exerted, and the grace of God was the power imparted; and as the effect of these — our souls were redeemed. When the price was paid for us — we were rescued out of the hand of the enemy, who kept us in cruel bondage; from whom we could not escape, as he had full power over us. But God gave the command, the gospel proclaimed our freedom — yet only the power of the Spirit could bring us forth into liberty. Our redemption therefore was a divine work:

the Father planned it,

the Son laid down his life as the price of it, and

the Holy Spirit exerts his power within us to set us free. The Testimony Called For. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Say what? That the Lord is good. Good to the unworthy, good at great expense, and good beyond our highest expectation.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Say what? That his mercy endures forever. His mercy was shown not only to the fathers — but to their seed, not only once but frequently, not for a time only — but forever.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Say what? O give thanks unto the Lord. Call upon all to bless his name, to praise and magnify him forever. In Heaven they praise him for his redeeming mercy, and on earth we should praise him too. Our fathers celebrated his goodness, and their children should celebrate it too. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works unto the children of men."

We are either redeemed — or we are in bondage still. We know not what Christ has done for us — but by the work of the Holy Spirit within us. The blood of Christ alone will not set us free — the power of the Spirit must be added. The grace of the Father alone, will not bring us out of bondage — there must be the grace of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit — to effect the sinner's salvation. If we are redeemed — God is the one who has redeemed us. No one else could form the plan, pay the price, or exert the power. In our redemption the whole Deity is engaged, revealed, and enjoyed. We are therefore called, "The redeemed of the Lord." The thought of redemption originated with God,

the scheme of redemption was devised by God,

the ransom price for redemption was provided by God,

the power for redemption was exerted by God,

and all the glory of redemption belongs to God!

If God redeemed us — we should bear our testimony to his goodness and mercy. We can speak of it from experience, and if there is any gratitude in our hearts we shall speak of it, and call on all around us to unite with us in giving thanks to his name.

O how wonderful the love — the redeeming love of God!

How precious, how infinitely precious — the redeeming blood of Jesus!

How mighty, how invincible the power — the redeeming power of the Holy Spirit! To God, our own God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit — be praise, honor, glory, and thanksgiving, for our eternal redemption! And did the holy and the just,

The Sovereign of the skies,

Stoop down to wretchedness and dust,

That guilty worms might rise?

Yes! the Redeemer left his throne,

His radiant throne on high,

(Surprising mercy! love unknown!)

To suffer, bleed, and die!

He took the dying traitor's place,

And suffered in his stead;

For man, (O miracle of grace!)

For man, the Savior bled!

Dear Lord, what Heavenly wonders dwell

In your atoning blood!

By this are sinners snatched from Hell,
And rebels brought to God!
Jesus! my soul adoring bends
To love so full, so free;
And may I hope that love extends
Its sacred power to me!
What glad return can I impart,
For favors so divine?
O take my all — this worthless heart,
And make it only Thine!

46 God's Gracious Proposal

God's Gracious Proposal "Ask for whatever you want Me to give you." 1 Kings 3:5.

God's methods of communicating his mind to man have been various. In olden times, he often came to his people in their sleep and spoke to them in a dream, or a vision of the night. He may occasionally do so now — but we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed, as to a light which shines in a dark place. God's Word is a man's guide — and an infallible guide it is. No one errs, who walks by it. In that Word we read that God came to Solomon in Gibeon, and said unto him in a dream by night, "Ask for whatever you want Me to give you." The same question God puts to us, in various forms, in different parts of his Word, let us attend to it a little, and consider, The AUTHOR of the Proposal. If some people were to bid us ask whatever we want — we would think but little of it. But when God bids us ask whatever you want from him — it is worthy of our most serious consideration.

Look at his wealth — the riches of the universe are his. His by creation, and absolutely at his disposal.

Look at his condescension — how wonderfully he stoops to notice us, sympathize with us, and desires to do us good.

Look at his love — love which could part with his only begotten Son for us! And if he spared not his own Son — but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all things.

Look at what he has conferred on others — what he gave to David, to Solomon, and Hezekiah of temporal things; and what he has given to multitudes of others, of spiritual blessings.

Look at the glory he may get by conferring on you. He is glorified by giving, by giving to the poor and unworthy, by giving largely, and by giving often.

Now God, who possesses Heaven and earth, whose condescension and love are infinite, who has shown wondrous liberality in giving to others, and who can get great glory by giving to you — bids you "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Let us consider, The Proposal as Testing the State of the Soul. We may judge of a man's state — by the requests which he makes. If a man ask only, or principally, for temporal or worldly things — the man is carnal. But if he asks, and asks heartily for spiritual things — the man is spiritual. Real prayer is a correct index of the state of a man's mind: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Do you like Solomon, ask for wisdom? Wisdom "to win souls for God," to walk wisely and worthily before men, and to manage your trials so as to glorify God. It shall be given you — for the Lord gives wisdom to all sincere seekers, and upbraids not. Do you ask for an assurance of your saving interest in Christ — in order that you may profess his holy name, enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and lead all around you to see that religion makes you cheerful and happy? It shall be given you, for God, who bids you confess him, and rejoice in him, will enable you to do so, if you seek him. Do you ask for faith — that you may believe all that God has said, do all that God commands, and patiently bear all that God appoints?

It shall be given you, and he will work in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Do you ask for love — that you may cleave to Jesus, make sacrifices to further his cause, and daily offer up your whole soul to him? It shall be given you, and he will enable you to say, "We love him, because he first loved us." Do you ask for hope — to enable you to baffle despondency, rest with lively expectation on the promises, and anticipate all the good things which he has promised? It shall be given you, and the God of hope, will fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you ask for power — power to conquer Satan, overcome the world, and do something to purpose for God? It shall be given you, and the Lord will strengthen you with all might, according to his glorious power in the inner man. Do you ask for humility — that lovely grace — an especial favorite of God? Humility to lie low before God, to be pleased with all that is done by God, and to admire the free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace of God. It shall be given you, for God will so manifest himself to you, and bring you near to himself — as to make you truly lowly and little in your own eyes. Do you ask for a great and glorious revival of true religion. A revival in your own soul, and all around you, that thousands and tens of thousands may be converted unto God. It shall be granted, for God has said, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." But enough — God still says, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Will you ask of God? Will you ask good things — great things — spiritual things — glorious things? He says, "Open your mouth wide — and I will fill it." Will you expect from God? To ask and not expect, when God has bidden you ask, and has promised to give you — is highly inconsistent. God loves to give to his poor, needy, praying creatures. He loves to make us happy, and therefore he bids us ask for happy-making blessings. Solomon asked for wisdom — and became the wisest of men. Let us ask for grace — that we may be gracious, and very gracious. So shall we be happy in our souls, ornamental in the Church, and useful in the world. Lord, by your Spirit's power, say to each of us, both writer and reader, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

47 Jesus Preaching

Jesus Preaching

"Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him."

Luke 8:1

Missionary work is honorable work, whether carried on at home, or in the foreign field; and every believer ought to be a Missionary. Each one should endeavor to spread the gospel, and make known the glorious person, finished work, and free salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we know Christ, we should make known Christ, and should warn, exhort, and invite sinners to come to him. Jesus himself was a home missionary, and taught his disciples to be so too, as we read, "Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him."

WHAT did the Savior proclaim? Glad tidings, or good news from God. The good news of a very gracious design — that God was about to set up a kingdom — a kingdom, in which . . .

his will was to be law,

his Son was to be Sovereign,

his people were to be his subjects,

and his glory its end. The seat of this kingdom was to be the world . . .

where Satan had triumphed,

where man was ruined,

where his Son would be crucified, and

where himself had been fearfully dishonored. The nature of this kingdom was to be spiritual, so that without a new birth — no one could discern it, or be qualified to enter it. Its principles, its subjects, and its ordinances, were to be all spiritual. Its privileges were numerous, great, and glorious:

God was to be always present, as the source of its honor, safety, and success;

God was to be propitious, the God of peace, love, and mercy;

God was to provide, to provide for every subject, for every need, and for evermore. The design of it was to witness for God, to make known God, and to bring souls to God. So that every subject was to witness personally to God's character and conduct — to make known the riches of his grace, the tenderness of his mercy, and the fullness and freeness of his salvation — to endeavor personally and continually to bring poor rebellious sinners to submit to his will, embrace his

invitations, and seek reconciliation with him. In this kingdom . . .

Jehovah reigns and rules in grace,

the Bible and the Bible alone, is the statute book,

and glory will be its consummation. The kingdom which is now purely spiritual, and therefore greatly concealed, will one day become visible; that which is now limited, will become universal, and what is begun on earth, will be completed and crowned in Heaven. WHERE did the Savior publish the Good News? The Good News! "He went throughout every city and village."

All NEED the gospel, for all are unhappy — and only the gospel can give real joy. It is glad tidings of great joy. All need it, for all are in danger — and the gospel alone reveals the way of escape, the glorious refuge, and the stronghold of safety. Nothing will meet man's dreadful state, or suit man's hopeless condition — but the gospel, the pure gospel — which proclaims peace, publishes salvation, offers pardon, and beseeches sinners to be reconciled to God. As all need the gospel, so all are WELCOME to the gospel and are welcomed by the gospel to come to the King of grace, enter into the kingdom of grace, and enjoy all the blessings of grace — without qualification and without hindrance.

All must HEAR the gospel, for it is sent to every creature, it is intended for every nation under Heaven, and Jesus has said, "This gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all nations for a witness, and then shall the end come." To every part of the world therefore it should be sent, in every city, town, and village, it should be proclaimed; and to every man, woman, and child it should be addressed. Nor are we rightly employed, nor do we act in character, if we are not daily found in some way or other, with the tongue or the pen, by ourselves or others, "Preaching and showing the good news of the kingdom of God."

What Jesus once did personally, he now does by his servants — his subjects — his children. He still preaches by them, and shows the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. His servants, like himself, are generally poor and dependent on others to minister unto them. They go forth because he sends them, they publish the good news because he commands them, and they look to his people for supplies, because he bids them. The little flocks in many of our towns and villages are unable to sustain the Lord's servants as they ought to be, and therefore those who are entrusted with property in other places should help them. What is given to the Lord's servants, to enable them to go forth, and preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God — is given to Jesus — he will register it, he will manifest his approval of it, he will in the end publish it, and he will reward it.

Reader, are you in the kingdom of God? Are you one of the avowed subjects of the King of kings? Do you enjoy the privileges of his kingdom? Do you observe and obey the laws of the kingdom? Do you publish the good news of the kingdom? Do you endeavor to bring others to enter the kingdom? Do you by all means, and in every way, strive to carry out the will of God, obey the command of Jesus, and extend the boundaries of this kingdom? In a word — are you a loyal, obedient, active loving, subject of the King of Saints?

48 Paul's Last Testimony

Paul's Last Testimony

"But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet out of them all, the Lord delivered me!" 2 Timothy 3:10-11

However rough the Christian's journey may be — it is but short. However heavy his burden — he has not far to carry it. However severe his trials — they will soon be over. The Apostle Paul had as rough a journey, as heavy a burden, and as severe trials as any — but the Lord was with him in them all, and at length he bore this testimony, "Out of them all, the Lord delivered me!" Such will be our case soon — let us anticipate it, and now notice, The Painful Review. He had been PERSECUTED. Violently persecuted. Often persecuted. Persecuted both by Jews and Gentiles.

He was persecuted for Christ's sake. To serve Christ, was his delight. To make known Christ, was his great object. Wherever he went, he preached a personal Christ. A Christ who was a Jew. A Jew hated by his countrymen, and at length crucified. This Christ he preached as the only Savior, and everywhere affirmed, that there could be no salvation for anyone — but through him. This enraged the rabble, and grievously offended the polite. He was therefore persecuted and considered unfit to live!

He was persecuted for the truth's sake, for he everywhere proclaimed the unity and spirituality of the Divine nature — in opposition to the prevailing idolatry. He preached salvation by Christ alone — in opposition to the ceremonies, sacrifices, and services of priests and people.

He refers also to afflictions. His persecutions were from man, but many of his afflictions came from God. He was afflicted in body, and suffered much; therefore he said, "We who are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened." He was afflicted in mind, and complained, "Without were fightings, and within were fears." He was tried by good men, and he was tried by bad ones. Everywhere, and from all quarters — afflictions, troubles, and trials, flowed in upon him; and he was at times pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life. But now mark: His Honorable Testimony. "Out of them all, the Lord delivered me." The Lord supported him in them, and his strength was made perfect in his servant's weakness. He brought him through them. The fires were not extinguished, nor were the rivers drained — but step by step he was led on, until he could say, "We went through fire and through water, but you brought us out into a wealthy place." He benefitted him by them. They did him good, for they deepened his sanctification, led him to prayer, and exercised his trust and confidence in God. They made him more useful in his ministry, for they qualified him to speak a word in season to those who were weary.

They tended to his honor, exercising his courage and valor as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. They found work for all his graces, and taught him the value of his spiritual armor. The Lord delivered him out of them all. The last trial came, and he endured it. The last cross was laid upon him, and

he manfully carried it after Jesus. The last foe came up, and he conquered him in the strength of the Lord. The call of his Master was heard, and he replied, "I am ready!" He laid down his life for Christ on earth, and then went to reign with Christ in Heaven. His deliverance was full, perfect, and eternal. Long since has he rested from his labors, long has he been reaping in glory — what he sowed in grace; and gathering in Heaven — what he scattered on earth.

If we endure, we shall also be delivered. The cross always comes before the crown;
the wilderness always comes before the promised land;
and weariness always comes before rest.

We must suffer with Christ — if we would reign with him. The fierce and fiery persecutions endured by the apostles, we may not be called upon to pass through; but some measure, awaits most of the Lord's people. Our afflictions may not be as numerous, or as heavy as his — but they will be heavy enough sometimes. We may not be pressed beyond strength — but like our Master, we may just have strength enough — but none to spare. If we suffer now, we shall also testify soon. The bitter is before the sweet. The storms and frosts of winter, are before the flowers and fruits of summer.

If we suffer for Christ — we suffer with Christ; for he never leaves his people to suffer alone. If we suffer for Christ — we shall be sustained and supported by him. The time is not far distant when we shall be able to say . . .

of all our griefs and woes,

of all our trials and troubles,

of all our persecutions and afflictions,

"Out of them all, the Lord delivered me!" But such a time will never come in the experience of the unconverted sinner — for him there is no deliverer, for him there will be no deliverance. The sufferings of earth — will only conduct him to the more terrible sufferings of Hell! And the troubles of time — will introduce the torments of eternity! O sinner, let your present troubles, lead you to seek the Savior! Let your sufferings now, induce you to flee to Jesus, that you may not suffer forever. The design of your present afflictions may be to lead you to reflection, to produce conviction, and to urge you to cry for mercy, while mercy may be found. There is a deliverer now — he can deliver you, apply to him, and he will. Neglect to do so — and you perish. "Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." These are his own words — are they not alarming? Are they not solemn?

49 Wondrous Love!!!

Wondrous Love!!!

"For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him!" John 3:17

How very few appear to have correct views of the nature and character of God. They judge of him by themselves — or by some of his creatures — and therefore conclude that he is weak and changeable, or harsh and severe. But he is neither. He hates nothing — but sin. He punishes nothing — but sin. He is just — and must hate what is unrighteous. He is holy — and must hate what is filthy and impure. But though he hates sin — he does not hate sinners; though he punishes sin — he takes no pleasure in punishing sinners. He can distinguish between the crime — and the criminal; and he has devised a way, in which he can punish the offence — and spare the offender.

He wishes to be known and looked upon as Love and as Loving. Not loving at the expense of justice — but loving in accordance with justice; so that while he loves and pardons sinners — he is nevertheless just, and deals justly with sin. To do this he sent his only begotten Son into the world, in order that by his living and obeying the precepts of the law for the sinner; and by dying, and paying the penalty of the law for the sinner — he might be saved with ease and honor. Hear the Savior's own wondrous words. "For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him!"

Here Is a Marvelous Event. It is the most marvelous event which ever occurred in our world! The world had apostatized from God. Every man had gone astray. God looked down from Heaven to see if there were any exceptions — if there were any who sincerely cared about God, or would seek after him. But when he had carefully examined the whole world, and had looked into every land, every house, and every heart, the report he gives is this, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one!"

God was getting no profit by them, for they neither loved him, obeyed him, or worshiped him; he might therefore justly have destroyed them all, and been no loser. In another portion of his word he says, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one!"

What then will God do? If he really was what many think him to be — he would send his destroying angel, and miserably destroy them all. But no, he had a Son — but one Son, his only begotten, the object of his highest love, in whom was all his delight. That Son was his equal in nature, majesty, power, and glory; yet such was his love to man, that rather than destroy us — he would sacrifice him!

He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; we may therefore well conclude, that with him, he will freely give us all things. O what wondrous love! What amazing grace! God would

give his Son, his only Son, the Son of his love — for those who would not give anything to him!

Look at this subject a little further. As bad as man was, and God knew the worst of him — yet knowing the worst of him, he had a purpose of mercy toward him in his heart, and that purpose was to provide a way of salvation for him, a way in which he may be saved with ease, certainty, and honor. His Son sympathized with him in this purpose, for his heart was full of pity and compassion for poor man. He was therefore willing to carry out his Father's purpose — cost him what it might! "And you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich — yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich!" As the Son fully sympathized with the Father's purpose, and heartily entered into his design, the Father sent him to be the Savior of the world. In order to which,

he was born of the virgin,

lived in poverty,

rendered obedience to the law,

suffered in the stead of sinners, and

then died the death of the cross for them. In this way, he removed every impediment, procured every needed blessing, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Observe then, The Design of God in Sending His Son. Not to condemn the world, there was no need for that, for the world was condemned already! Nor was it in' God's heart to do that, for he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, being slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He therefore sent his Son, that the world through him may be saved. That is, that sinners of all sorts, of all ages, of all countries, and of all times — may be saved. None are excepted or excluded but those who exclude themselves. The greatest sinners, the oldest sinners, the most hardened sinners, the most singular and heinous sinners — may be saved. Whoever will, may come to this fountain and receive salvation. Whoever will may come to this Savior and have life.

God's design was to save sinners, that is — to deliver them from guilt and condemnation, to rescue them from sin and Satan, to separate them from evil, and save them from the transgressor's doom. God's design was to raise them to enjoy his favor, bear the image of his Son, and inherit eternal glory. Sinners may now be saved by the merit of Jesus, and by faith in his dear name. All that is necessary in order to salvation — is to come to Jesus, trust in Jesus, and so put the matter into the hands of Jesus. Jesus has done all that is necessary to meet the claims of justice, answer the demands of the law, and entitle us to everlasting life. Thus whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has passed from death unto life. Is not this love? Unparalleled love? Is not the love of God surpassing knowledge?

See then, the object of God in tending his Son into the world. It was to save sinners — all sinners who are willing to be saved by him. To save you if you are willing to be saved by Jesus. If you are not saved, it will not be because Jesus could not save you, or because there was not love enough in God's heart to save you — but because you would not come unto Jesus that you might have life.

See how God removes your objections. He does not say that he sent his Son to save a particular nation, or a peculiar class of people — but "that the world through him may be saved." You cannot

exclude yourself from the term "World." You may not be of the Church — but you are of the world. Surely this extensive word is wide enough to include you. If therefore, Satan should suggest that Jesus did not come to save you; you may reply, "He came, that the world through him might be saved — and I am one of the world." This general term is employed to show the vastness of God's love, to answer all the objections of every sinner, and to remove all our prejudices against any party, race, or nation.

See, from whence the salvation of sinners flows — from God's unmerited love! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish — but have everlasting life." In what way could God prove the greatness, or the freeness of his love — comparable to this. If he had created millions of worlds, and have given them for our salvation — it would have been as nothing, in comparison with his Son!

Mountains of silver, oceans of molten gold, or gems and jewels as numerous and ponderous as the Heavenly bodies — would have been nothing, and less than nothing — in comparison with his Son. Greater, love could not be — and yet less, would not have sufficed, for if God had withheld his Son, whatever else he may have given — our salvation would have been impossible.

See, the view we should take of Jesus, not a Judge — but a Savior. He said on one occasion, "I came not to judge the world — but to save the world." He will come again to judge the world in righteousness, when time shall be no longer — but now he is the Savior. He is the only, the all-sufficient, the ever-present, the ever-willing Savior; who never did refuse a coming sinner, however base his conduct may have been, or however numerous, or singular his crimes. He saves to the uttermost, and saves for evermore — all who come unto God by him.

See, how wrong it is to attempt to trace up our condemnation to God, or higher than ourselves. The blame of no man's damnation can be laid on God. If any sinner, who has the gospel, is not saved — the fault is exclusively and entirely his own. It would not have been right in God to force him, and he would not come to Christ without.

He was warned — but he turned a deaf ear to the warning.

He was threatened — but he disregarded the threatening.

He was invited — but he rejected the invitation.

Salvation was placed before him — and he was entreated to accept it — but he neglected the great salvation.

Salvation was presented and urged upon him — but he put it from him, and judged, or declared himself by his conduct, to be unworthy of everlasting life.

Salvation is of the Lord — damnation is of man.

Salvation is by grace — damnation is by sin.

Once more, sinner, let me place before you the Savior's own wondrous words, and may the Holy Spirit apply them with power to your soul. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish — but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be

saved. He who believes on him is not condemned; but he who believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation; that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Good and gracious God, deeply inscribe these precious, these solemn words on every heart that reads them, that so we may flee from the wrath to come, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel — Even Jesus!

50 The Christian's State

The Christian's State The believer's state, is a state of true blessedness. But it is to be feared, that many who profess Christ, do not understand it; and that some who seem to understand it, do not live in the enjoyment of it. May the Holy Spirit use my pen faintly to represent it, and so to represent it, as to lead some of the Lord's feeble ones into the enjoyment of it. Hear the apostle as he describes it. "Being justified by faith — we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1-2

Faith in Christ. Christ is revealed in the gospel as a great and glorious Savior, as able and willing to save any and every sinner to whom the gospel comes. He is set forth as God's appointed Savior, and he is set up on high that all may see him, betake themselves to him, and be saved by him.

Faith is looking to Jesus — looking to Jesus and expecting to be saved by him, just as the dying Israelites looked to the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and expected to be healed by looking.

Faith is taking the eye and the hope off of every other object and subject — and fixing it on Christ alone.

Faith is personal appropriating of Christ — taking him as God's unspeakable gift, presented to us in the gospel. For as we cannot be healed by a medicine unless we take it, or be strengthened by bread unless we eat it, or be refreshed by water except we drink it — no more can we be benefitted by Christ, unless we appropriate him to ourselves.

Faith is resting on Christ, placing our whole trust and confidence in Christ, and leaving ourselves in his hands to be washed in his blood, to be clothed in his righteousness, to be sanctified by his Spirit, and to be admitted to Heaven in his name.

Faith is putting our persons and cause into his hands, that he may deliver us from wrath, save us from sin, and rescue us from the grasp of all our foes. Then comes,

Justification Before God. "Being justified by faith," or by believing. When we believe in Christ, or put ourselves into the hands of Christ, he engages to carry our cause; and in order to this, he makes over his righteousness to us, and entitles us to all the merits of his death. This being the case, we are acquitted at the bar of God, and are pronounced righteous — yes, "the righteousness of God in him."

We are accepted at the throne of God, and "have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

We are placed among the children of God, and are taught to look upon God as our Father, and to believe that he looks upon us with loving eyes. Henceforth God-speaks to us as unto sons, he deals with us as sons, and loves us as his sons. He has no charges against us, as the just Judge;

he arranges all things for our good, as the God of providence; and he will at length receive as to Heaven, as the God of glory. Hence we have,

Peace with God. Viewing God as love, believing that his anger is turned away from us, realizing that he rejoices over us to do us good — the enmity of the heart is slain, all our prejudices against God die out, and love to him springs up in the soul. Seeing him hold out his loving hand, inviting us to come near to him, and ever beseeching us to be reconciled to him — we can hold out no longer, but we fall before him, confess our sins, deplore our misconduct, and yield ourselves to his will. We soon find ourselves in the arms of his love, and while he whispers, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you" — peace, a peace unutterably sweet, springs up within us. Our fearful restlessness now ceases, our mental nervousness departs, and holy tranquility pervades the bosom. We are at peace with God. Our reconciliation is perfect, a friendship is commenced that is to last forever. Grace reigns, mercy triumphs, and now we —

Stand in the Favor of God. We have access by faith into his grace, and can rejoice in the favor he bears to his people, being visited with his salvation. We are now delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held — and are under grace. We are done with the old covenant, and are done with it forever. We are now under the covenant of grace, that everlasting covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. We are received into the favor of God and know it, for his love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We now feel that in his favor is life, and to be God's favorites is the highest honor that can be put upon us.

Henceforth we are treated as children:

if sick, God pities us;

if ignorant, God instructs us;

if poor, God supplies us; and

if in fault, God corrects us.

He holds our right hand,

leads us in the way we should go,

guides us by his counsel, and

afterwards receives us to glory! To us, he is the God of all grace; on us, he confers the riches of his grace; and however highly we may be exalted, we shall still have to say with the apostle, "By the grace of God — I am what I am." Therefore we can look forward to the end, and,

Rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God. Glory is promised, as it is written, "The Lord will give grace — and glory." Saving grace received, glory is certain. Being one with Christ in grace now, we shall also be glorified together. The members will all share in the glory of the head. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." We therefore expect glory. Though now despised, persecuted, and afflicted: yet we believe, that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, it shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, and we shall share in it, partake

of it, and be adorned with it. Living in the prospect of this we rejoice, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. O bright, beautiful, and blessed prospect, "when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear — then shall we also appear with him in glory."

Observe then, the believer is righteous before God. The righteousness of Christ is his. It was wrought for him. It is imputed to him. It is received by him. He trusts in it, he wears it. and he pleads it before God. It is "the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all those who believe — for there is no difference." In this righteousness he is justified. His justification is not by the act of faith, or for his believing; but by the object of faith, or that which faith receives, even the righteousness of Christ. Every believer can say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." To every believer, Jesus is, "The Lord our righteousness." "In the Lord, shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Being righteous, the believer has peace with God. A friendship exists between God and his soul. He has nothing to fear from God — but may ask and expect every blessing of God. Like the prodigal, when clothed with the best robe, seated at his father's table, feeding on the fatted calf, and enjoying his father's smile — felt perfectly peaceful, so does the believer who is justified by faith. Being at peace with God — he has access to God. He can enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and cast his anchor on that which is within the veil. He views God on the mercy-seat, or throne of grace, and knows that coming to it he shall meet with sympathy, and find grace to help him in time of need. He needs no medium of access but Jesus, who is the one All Sufficient, and all glorious Mediator.

Having access to God — he enjoys the favor of God. The favor of God, is to him, like the dew to the mown grass; like the light of the sun, to the poor prisoner just liberated from a gloomy prison cell; or the flowing spring, to the thirsty exhausted traveler. Being assured of it, he thoroughly enjoys it, and therefore rejoices in it, and makes his boast of it.

Enjoying the favor of God — he joyfully anticipates the glory of God. He perceives that his salvation is bound up in God's glory, and that in the revealed glory of God he shall share; for when the glory of God, and of the Lamb shall be the light of the holy city, he, as one among the nations of those who are saved, shall wait in the light of it. God will be his glory, his crown of glory; and he will be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of his God.

Joyfully anticipating the glory of his God — he bears and is benefitted by all he passes through. This enables him to bear all with patience. Yes, at times it makes him exceeding joyful in all his tribulations, so that he can glory in tribulations also. With his eye fixed on the end — he bears all things, endures all things, hopes all things. With his eye fixed on the end — he carries his cross, faces his foes, masters his difficulties, and presses on toward the mark, looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior Jesus Christ.

Happy Christian — justified, peaceful, and rejoicing in hope! Happy Christian — God's favorite, Christ's servant, and Heaven's heir! Happy state — righteous before God, reconciled to God, at peace with God, standing in the favor of God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God!!

Reader, is this happiness yours? It may be; if you receive the gospel, and exercise full confidence in Jesus — it will be. All who believe are justified. All justified people are at peace with God. All such may, should, rejoice in hope of glory, for it is their unquestionable privilege.

51 He was Humbled

He was Humbled

Man is naturally proud, and pride sets him against God, and against his fellow men. Proud men are never devout men — and they are very seldom kind men. We are about to write a few lines, respecting one of the proudest of men. But those who walk in pride, God is able to abase, and He did so, for "he was humbled." 2 Chronicles 33:19. WHO was humbled? Manasseh, the king of Judah. Manasseh, who was . . .

as proud as Pharaoh,

as cruel as Hazael,

as idolatrous as Ahab,

as hardened as Judas, and

as degraded as the thief on the cross! In him, seem to find a home — all that is wicked, unfeeling, and opposed to God. His murders were wholesale, his idolatry was unparalleled, and his pride knew no bounds. The son of good Hezekiah, the anointed king of Judah — yet he broke through all bounds, setting God and man at defiance, and persevered until his head was hoary, and his heart was harder than the nether millstone, and his life was one long catalogue of crimes. He appears to have been the greatest sinner under the old testament dispensation — and yet "he was humbled." Who humbled him? There was but one who could, and he took the work in hand, proving that his hand was not shortened, that he could not save; neither was his ear heavy, that he could not hear. God alone had the power . . .

to break so hard a heart,

to bend so stubborn a will,

to enlighten so dark a mind, and

to elevate such groveling affections.

God alone had sufficient mercy, for so far had Manasseh gone in cruelty and crime, that the public voice would have execrated him, and voted for his destruction. But God who is rich in mercy, in the exercise of his wondrous love — saved him by his grace. God alone could command the means, and put efficacy into them, that they may accomplish the marvelous design. Because the power of God is omnipotent — because the mercy of God is infinite — because God has all means at his command, and can make any means efficient, "he was humbled."

HOW did God humble him?

By bringing his enemies upon him, and delivering him into their hand;

by stripping him of his royalty, wealth, and power;
by isolating him from all his relatives, friends, and courtiers;
and by casting him into the prison of a foreign king.

There alone, he could reflect upon his wicked conduct, his long life of transgression, his early religious education, the ancient services of the sanctuary, and the word of his God. These reflections were attended with invincible grace, and he . . .

was convinced of sin,
trembled at God's justice,
wondered at God's forbearance,
remembered God's mercy
— until his heart melted,
tears of contrition flowed,
cries for pardon ascended,
and throwing his guilty soul at the feet of a forgiving God, "he was humbled."

If Manasseh was humbled, God was glorified.

Every sigh that heaved his bosom,
every groan that escaped from his heart,
every tear that fell from his eye, and
every cry for mercy that ascended from his lips
— glorified God. The enemy was subdued,
the rebel sought forgiveness,
the idolator cast away his idols,
Hezekiah's prayers were answered,
the dethroned monarch was restored to his dignity,
the guilty soul was saved,
and in all, God was glorified.

If Manasseh was humbled — SATAN was disappointed. Having led him captive so long, having hardened him to such an extent, having plunged him into such depths of sin, having degraded him so far — he must have made sure of him as his prey. But the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive was delivered!

Though petrified by sin,

though at the very gate of Hell,
though apparently beyond the reach of mercy
— yet he was humbled, and Satan was disappointed.

If Manasseh was humbled — GRACE was triumphant. In sovereignty, it sought him,
using means it arrested him,
by its vital breath it melted him,
and as a poor, subdued penitent, it brought him to God's mercy seat.

Grace proved itself invincible — for if Manasseh is subdued, who can successfully resist? Grace proved itself free — for if Manasseh finds grace, how can it depend on any worthiness, or goodness, or excellency in the creature?

If Manasseh was humbled — then surely anyone may be. Can anyone be more hardened? Can anyone show more enmity to God? Can anyone more determinately break through all the restraints of a religious education? Can anyone sink lower, act worse, or run farther from God? If any case had been hopeless — would it not have been Manasseh's, who persevered in sin until he had grown grey in the service of the devil, and had done as many evil things as he could — yet "he was humbled," surely then any one may be.

If Manasseh was humbled — and humbled when he was an old man, dyed to the very bone in sin, and hardened beyond degree — then we should never give any one up. We should pray on, while life lasts; hope on, while we have breath to pray; and use all the means in our power, to bring the very worst sinners to repentance. My Reader, have you been humbled? You must be — or perish. Before the honor of being saved in the Lord; adopted into God's family, and placed among his princes — is the humbling of the soul to accept of sovereign mercy, to submit to God's righteousness; and the coming of the soul to Jesus as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Take heed of resisting the humbling thoughts suggested to your minds, and the softening influences felt in your souls; yield yourself unto God. Do as Manasseh did, of whom it is written, "But while in deep distress, Manasseh sought the Lord his God and sincerely humbled himself before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed, the Lord listened to him and was moved by his request."

Hail, mighty Jesus! how divine

Is your victorious sword!

The stoutest rebel must resign

At your commanding word. The strongest holds of Satan yield

To your all-conquering hand!

When once your glorious arm's revealed,

No creature can withstand!

Still gird your sword upon your thigh,
Ride with majestic sway;
Go forth, sweet prince, triumphantly,
And make your foes obey!

52 Moses' Hands

Moses' Hands

"When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword." Exodus 17:12-13

Israel's history is full of important instruction, admonition, and counsel. How much of ourselves we may see in them. How soon they murmured and complained, and how often they provoked the Lord. Yet did the Lord appear for them, work on their behalf, and deliver them. No sooner had they received the Manna, than they murmured for the lack of water; and no sooner did they obtain water, than Amalek came up against them. Then Joshua must choose his men and fight, and Moses must ascend the hill and pray. When his hands were up in prayer, Israel prevailed — but when they were down, Amalek prevailed. O the importance of prayer when engaged in the Lord's work! "When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset."

Apply this to our own state and circumstances: we are at war with Amalek, or the world — and it is at war with us; and we must conquer it — or be conquered by it. We want to win it for God. We have our Joshuas in the valley, and the army of God's elect — but we must have the company on the mount as well.

Moses signifies "drawn out," and may represent God's ministers, who are drawn out and separated from their brethren for God's work.

Aaron signifies "stability," and may represent what our deacons and elders ought to be — steady officers are a very great blessing.

Hur signifies, "fire or zeal," and may set forth God's people who should be zealous in his work and ways. The picture presents us with a godly minister, supported by steady deacons, and a zealous people. They are all on the mount engaged with God — yet their representatives are doing battle in the valley.

"When Moses' hands grew tired;" he was getting old, being past eighty; he had toiled up the hill, and was weary; and he was perhaps somewhat disheartened by the conduct of the people. How many of the Lord's ministers are just in this case. They have long labored up the hill, and are getting grey in the Lord's service; they feel weary and exhausted, and the conduct of their people often dispirits them, and their hands hang down.

Aaron and Hur "took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it," they united to give him rest and ease. Just so should our deacons and people do, they should remove all cause of care and anxiety, especially about temporal things, if possible, and set the pastor's heart at rest.

"Aaron and Hur held his hands up," which hands held the staff of God, that staff which wrought for, and spoke of God to the people. In the same way, we also hold up God's Word, and by it present God's truth, and God's Son to the world; and our hands are apt to be heavy, especially when we appear to labor in vain, and spend our strength for nothing and in vain. Then we need to have our hands held up by friendly counsel, united prayers, and zealous cooperation; and when officers and people unite, and all plead for a blessing, then God's ministers are encouraged, and God's work will go on. The result is certain victory, Amalek is routed, and the cause of God is triumphant.

Let officers and people, therefore, in every Church of Christ, combine and cooperate in God's work, keeping God's glory in view. Let nothing alienate their affections from each other, break the ranks, or puff any up with spiritual pride. Satan will aim to do this, and endeavor to lead some to think more highly of themselves than they ought to do, then they will want to leave the ranks and become leaders — aspiring to fill the post of Joshua, of Aaron, or even Moses. When this is the case, then comes confusion, disorder, and every evil work.

Even ministers, like Moses, may get tired and grow weary, being men of like passions with the brethren, and compassed with infirmities. This calls for the sympathy, forbearance, and energetic prayers of the Church; that they may enjoy the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and be strengthened with all might in the inner man. Hearty prayer and effort will be sure to win the day. Do we want a revival of religion in our own souls? Let us seek it by earnest, determined, persevering prayer, and we shall receive it. Do we want a revival of religion in the Church? Let us meet and get all we can to meet with us, striving together in prayer, that the Holy Spirit may be poured upon us afresh. Let us stand the trial of our faith, sincerity, and perseverance, and we shall see the Lord working wonders among us. Do we want to witness an awakening in the town and neighborhood? Let us set our hearts upon it, publicly and privately pray for it, making use of every means likely to produce it — and continue waiting upon the Lord until we obtain it.

Faith, prayer, and hearty effort — will obtain anything from God! As it is written, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Again, "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Once more, "Whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

53 The Spirit's Work in the Believer

The Spirit's Work in the Believer

"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." Romans 8:5-6

Spirituality flows from the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul, who . . .

kindles spiritual love,

awakens spiritual desires, and

produces spiritual devotion.

All spiritual people are led by the Spirit, and are taught by Him to know the truth as it is in Jesus. They are kept looking to Jesus — and depending on the assistance of the Spirit in every duty and every trial. They live and labor to glorify God — renouncing self and endeavoring to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. They rest upon the work of Christ outside of them, for their acceptance with God; but they do not, they cannot overlook the work of the Spirit within them — but often pay particular attention to it. The Spirit's work in the believer consists:

1. In convincing us of sin, when we go astray from the right ways of the Lord.
2. In working repentance and sorrow within us, and leading us to confess and mourn over our sins before God.
3. In opening up, and applying the Word of God, so that it . . .
meets our case,
feeds our faith,
fires our love, and
deepens our humility.
4. In exciting and drawing forth the soul in prayer, praise, and adoration at the throne of God — so that we sometimes . . .
melt in contrition,
are crumbled down in humiliation,
and are almost dissolved in love.
5. In making us bold in God's cause, and giving us to feel liberty in His presence, through faith in the blood of His dear Son.

6. In giving us soul refreshing glimpses . . .

of the glorious person of Jesus,

of the everlasting covenant,

and of eternal glory.

7. In melting us down in sincere gratitude before God, under a sense of His undeserved favor.

8. In removing all legal fears, and causing holy peace to flow through the soul like a river.

9. In melting us in meekness, and producing sweet submission to the sovereign will of God.

10. In sweetly soothing and consoling under trials and bereavements; and enabling us to look forward with hope and joy.

11. In giving us sweet intimations of the love of God to us, by pleasing impressions, and holy discoveries of His grace.

12. In witnessing to our adoption, awakening the cry of "Abba, Father!" in our hearts, and enabling us to claim a filial relationship to God.

13. In drawing forth our souls in love to God — under an overcoming sense of His free and unparalleled love to us.

14. In enabling us to mount upward as on the wings of an eagle, and to run with pleasure and delight in God's holy ways.

15. In quickening us to rejoice in the Lord, when all things around are calculated to fill us with despondency and gloom.

16. In producing patience in our souls, and enabling us to look away from the things which are seen and temporal — and to look to unseen and eternal realities. In all these things, and many more — the work of the Spirit in the experience of the believer appears.

Reader, do you know anything of these things in your own experience? Is the Spirit of God daily working in your heart, and do you pay attention to . . .

the lessons He teaches,

the impressions He makes, and

the direction in which He points? The Spirit works within the Christian, teaching him daily to make use of Christ as the panacea for all the ills of life!

O for more of the Spirit's work within us — that we may live to the praise and glory of Him who loved us, and died to redeem us from sin, death, and Hell!

Holy Spirit, work in us more and more — teaching us the truth, and conforming us to Christ! O for more of Your power, love, and holiness!

54 Lest They Should Be Converted

Lest They Should Be Converted

I know two young men, whose parents were godly people — but they would never accompany them to hear their minister; and the reason they assigned for this some years afterwards, when they were brought under concern about their souls was, they were afraid they should be converted. They had no fear of being converted under the minister they chose to hear, and such was their dislike to real religion, that they would not go to hear one that was more simple and more impressive, lest they should be converted. This was just the case with the Jews in Paul's time. Therefore he said to them at Rome, "For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Lest they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Acts 28:27. They were afraid of being converted.

What is Conversion? It is a thorough change of heart and conduct. It is a turning . . .

from sin — to holiness,

from self — to Christ, and

from the world — to the people of God. In conversion,

the man thinks seriously, upon serious and important subjects;

he feels deeply, the state and danger of his immortal soul; and

he acts wisely in fleeing for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He can no longer live careless and prayerless,

he can no longer reject the Bible or the means of grace,

he can no longer enjoy the pleasures and frivolities of the world.

He retires to think, to read the Bible and pray;

he seeks the company of the Lord's people, to hear them speak of Jesus, and tell out the experience of their souls.

He enters upon an entirely new course of conduct — if he has been living in sin.

He does everything from a new motive, and with a new object in view — if he has been moral. He becomes a new creature! To What Does Conversion Introduce a Man?

1. It introduces him to the enjoyment of the pardon of all his past sins; for feeling the guilt of sin on his conscience, he is concerned to get rid of it, he therefore inquires to ascertain how this can be done, and he is directed to exercise faith in Jesus. He receives into his mind, from God's word and

the gospel, right views of Jesus as the able and willing Savior; and exercising confidence in his faithful word and finished work — a sense of pardon springs up in his mind, and he feels in himself that all his sins are forgiven him for Christ's sake.

2. This introduces him to enjoyment of peace with God, for he perceives, that God out of pure love, gave his only Son, to live and die in order to put away his sins; and that Jesus has really put away his sins from the sight of God, so that God can now look upon him and love him, and does look upon him lovingly. This causes all dread of God to depart, all fear of his wrath expires — and confidence in God springs up, which fills the soul with peace and joy. God is now viewed as love, as gracious and merciful, as full of compassion and slow to anger; a perfect reconciliation with God takes place, and friendship and fellowship with God springs up.

3. This introduces to the enjoyment of Christ — whose glorious person, wondrous grace, and perfect work — fixes the mind, fires the affections, and consecrates the whole soul to his praise. Jesus is now precious. His name is as ointment poured forth. His word is as sweet as honey. His ordinances are pleasant and significant. His presence is a little Heaven upon earth. To think of Christ, to read of Christ, to hear of Christ, and to converse of Christ — gives joy and rejoicing to the soul.

4. This introduces to the fellowship of the saints. They alone can sympathize, with us now. They have passed through the same change. They have experienced the same sorrows, and they have felt the same joys. They know . . .

the sweets of pardon,

the pleasures of freedom,

the comfort of peace with God, and

the value of a saving interest in Christ.

They are therefore suitable society, and to meet with them to speak of Jesus, or tell out the experience of the heart, or join in prayer, praise, or some work to extend the cause of Christ — is a pleasure and privilege. Now we can say of the saints, "They are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight."

5. This introduces into the way of holiness: we love holy thoughts, holy people, and holy services. We pray for a holy heart, choose holy employments, and long for a holy Heaven. Holy tempers, holy words, and holy actions — call forth our admiration, and excite our imitation. We . . .

delight in the holy law,

feed on the holy gospel, and

glory in the holy Jesus. The desire, the object, and the aim of our life, is to be holy in body, soul, and spirit.

6. This introduces us to the joys of Heaven. We taste them even now. In fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, in the communion of saints, and in the service of God — we often feel a measure of the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, At times also, by faith, we seem to

anticipate the joy of the Heavenly world, and live almost in the light of glory. Nor will it be long, before we shall enter fully upon it, and

what is imperfect now — will be perfect then;

what is now commenced — will then be consummated;

and what is only occasional now — will then be perpetual, and forever.

If conversion introduces to the enjoyment to pardon and peace, of the presence of Jesus and communion with the saints, to the way of holiness and the joys of Heaven — why should any one dislike it, or fear lest they should be converted?

Why Do Some Dislike Conversion? That many do, beside the young men that I have referred to, is evident — or they would seek it, and make use of every means likely to lead to it.

It arises from the pride of human nature. Man is a proud creature, and the idea of being humbled before God, confessing sin to God, and seeking to be saved by the free grace of God alone — is so repugnant to the pride of human nature, that the sinner naturally revolts at it! To be nothing, to do nothing with a view to merit at the hands of God, to be on a level with the vilest of the vile — proud nature cannot consent to this! To give up one's own opinions, and adopt adverse ones; to renounce one's own righteousness, and stoop to be justified for the sake of another; in a word to adopt another's name, trust in another's merit, and seek in all we do, think, or say — to bring honor to another's work, grace, and character — is what unsanctioned human nature can never approve of — therefore it objects to be converted. That many dislike God's method of salvation, arises from the love of sin, which has become natural and pleasant, for the sinner enjoys sin — and looks upon holiness as gloomy and repulsive. He will not give up his pride, or his covetousness, or his indulgence of the carnal appetites.

What! Give up the world!

What! Forsake the mirthful party, the dance, the ballroom, the race course, the theater, the various scenes of carnal pleasure and fleshly indulgence!

What! Pore over the Bible, shut oneself up in the prayer closet, go to the prayer-meeting, attend service on weekdays as well as Sundays, and meet to talk about Christ! No, no! that can never be! Therefore they will not consent to be converted.

Then, there is the enmity of the heart against God, the sinner is very backward to admit this — but it is too clear to be denied — God's word states it in so many words, and man's conduct proves it. Does he not . . .

chose what God prohibits,

love what God hates, and

do just what God forbids?

If a man was not at enmity with God, would he . . .

shun his company,

avoid his presence,
refuse to listen to his messages,
and allow his word to remain unread?

Tis true, too true, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The heart must be changed — or God can never be loved, served, or enjoyed.

Then, there is also positive unbelief — man will not believe God. Does God speak to him . . .

of the true nature of sin and holiness,
of the pleasures of true religion,
of the need of a Savior,
of the glory and excellency of Christ,
of the joys of Heaven, or the pains of Hell

— man does not believe him! If he did believe, he would be affected by what God says. But as God's word produces no effect, or no lasting effect upon him, it is clear, that he does not believe him. While therefore man . . .

indulges in the pride of his heart,
loves sin,
nourishes enmity against God,
disbelieves his word, and
thus yields to the Prince of darkness
— he must dislike conversion.

How Do Some Try to Prevent Conversion?

They refuse to read plain, pointed, awakening books on the subject, which would be likely to convert them.

They avoid hearing rousing, energetic, soul-affecting preachers, who are used to bring many to God.

They turn away from some Christians, who will personally address them, and manifest concern for their soul's salvation.

They do all they can to get rid of convictions, and serious impressions, whenever they feel them.

They indulge in light, trifling, soul-deceiving amusements, and keep company with the frivolous, thoughtless, or profane. In a word, they avoid what would be likely to bring them to God, and humble their hearts before him; and they indulge in those things which would lead them further from him, and harden their hearts against him. They are afraid, "Lest THEY should be converted."

Reader! Man must be converted — or be lost forever! As he is, God can have no fellowship with him! Heaven is no place for him — he could not possibly be happy there. His nature, his tastes, his habits are all against it; therefore our Lord said, "Truly, I say unto you, Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall never enter into the kingdom of Heaven!"

Many will run the risk of being lost, rather than seek to be converted. If God promises a new heart to the seeker — they will not seek it. If God promises the Holy Spirit to those who ask — they will not ask. If Jesus invites them to come to him, that he may save them, and confer all spiritual blessings upon them — they will not come. If the Holy Spirit comes near them, they say, "Depart from us!" If he strives with them — they resist him. If he presents the free and full salvation of the gospel to them — they put it away from them.

Some people may read these lines, who have been afraid to be converted. My friends, do you know what you are afraid of? You are really afraid of being made truly happy, immensely rich, and eternally honorable! You are afraid of having God for a Father instead of a foe — of having Jesus for a Savior, instead of a Judge — of having the Holy Spirit for a Comforter, Teacher, and Guide. You are afraid of that which would place you under the guardianship of God, entitle you to all the promises of God's word, and the glories of Heaven at death. Yield to such foolish infatuation no longer — but listen to the words of the Holy Spirit, "Repent and be converted — that your sins may be blotted out." Repent and turn yourself from all transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin!

55 Paul's Determination

Paul's Determination

Most men have some favorite subject, and Paul had his. Many subjects were embraced in his ministry — but one fixed his eye, filled his heart, and occupied most of his attention. We may be sure, from the wisdom he generally displayed, and the abundance of grace that he possessed, that it was an important and worthy subject. It was Christ crucified. This he carried everywhere. This he preached always. This he preached to all. Therefore alluding to his first visit to Corinth, he said, "I determined not to know anything among you — except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2

Paul's Determination. To introduce one subject, and to keep pretty much to one point, which was — salvation by a crucified Savior, and by a crucified Savior alone. That Savior was a Jew — how offensive to the pride of Greece! That Savior was a God — how mysterious to the mind of man. A God-man, who on earth, had obeyed every precept of God's violated law — who had suffered in his own person, the whole penalty of sin, and had conquered and crippled all the foes of his disciples — who promised the greatest possible blessings to all his followers — and who engaged to secure admission to Heaven, for all who believe on his name. What a wondrous subject! What a wondrous Savior! Well may Paul determine to preach Christ crucified to all, Christ crucified as for all, and to preach Christ crucified always, and everywhere.

Paul's Reason for His Determination. This has partly been given — but we may be excused if we enlarge a little. Why did Paul determine to make known Christ crucified, and that alone, at Corinth? Because the Corinthians needed a Savior — and they could be saved by Christ crucified alone. Because God works by, and honors this subject. Because he lived upon and enjoyed this truth himself. Because he had seen glorious effects produced, by preaching it elsewhere. Because, also, he knew that if this doctrine would not win them, and bring them back to God — nothing could.

We have been preaching and writing about "Christ crucified" for many years. We have also seen glorious effects produced by it. We have seen . . .

the hardened, melted down into penitence and love;

the miserable, made happy;

the sorrowful, filled with comfort;

the guilty, put in possession of pardon;

the filthy, made clean and holy;

the troubled, made calm and peaceful;

and the cruel, made kind and gentle! But we have sometimes seen just the opposite, for we have seen some hardened; we have seen bad feelings excited; we have heard hard and wicked speeches uttered; and we have seen those who lived ungodly lives, live more ungodly still. Yes, the same gospel, is to one party, the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life.

Reader, you have heard Christ crucified preached, and you have read the same doctrine in God's word — what effect has it had on you? Has it reconciled you to God? Has it filled you with joy and peace? Has it inspired you with confidence and courage? Has it embittered sin, filled you with a love to holiness, and consecrated you to the service of God? If it has had its natural and proper effect — it has. But some effect it has had — if you are not better for it, you are worse. If not softened — you are hardened; if not brought near unto God — you are further off than ever. If it is not the means of your salvation, it will prove a stumbling block, over which you will fall and perish as many of the Jews did. Examine into this matter well, I beseech you, for it is of the greatest possible importance.

Christ crucified, was unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who were called of God, both Jews and Greeks, Christ was the power of God, and the wisdom of God — and one or the other will be the case with you!

56 A Message from God

A Message from God The gospel is a message from God, a message sent to every creature. A message that displays sympathy, manifests love, and proves a concern for our welfare. We may say to everyone we know, or with whom we come in contact, "I have a message from God unto you!" And at suitable and seasonable times, we should say so. Every lost sinner should be personally addressed by some believer, and every believer should personally address some lost sinners. Every one who receives God's message, should carry it to others, and personally deliver it to them. If we are sure we cannot deliver it with the voice, we should send it in writing, or carry it in print, and put it into the sinner's hand. No sinner, in a country like ours, should be left without someone to take an interest in him, and such an interest, as will endeavor to lead him to Jesus — that he may escape from the wrath to come.

O, it is a fearful thing for a soul to perish! For a soul to perish — when there is a Savior at hand! A Savior, who is prepared to save all who apply to him, and who has sent his word to sinners in order to induce them to apply to him.

Reader, "I have a message from God unto you!" for I have a message for lost sinners. For all sinners. For every sinner. For you therefore. Sinners often feel truly miserable, and know not what to do, or how to obtain relief or rest. They feel weary of themselves, of their state, and circumstances. Well, God sends word that he has mercy for miserable sinners. Mercy which will reach their case — and just suit them. Mercy that will pardon all their sins — however great or numerous they may be, and so thoroughly pardon them, that not one of their sins shall ever be brought against them in the judgment. Mercy that will pardon them the moment they believe in Jesus, and confess their sins to God.

They shall find, as David did, and he was no common sinner — but he found God ready to pardon him, and leaves this testimony behind him, "I acknowledged my sin unto you, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord — and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." As soon as he confessed — God forgave; and he is as willing to forgive you as he was David. He therefore sends this message, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet — they shall be as white as snow; and though the are red like crimson — they shall be as wool."

Lost sinners, when convinced by the Holy Spirit of their true state and condition, often feel very unworthy. Unworthy of God's notice or regard, and this sense of unworthiness often discourages them in their attempts to go to Jesus for salvation. But God sends you word that he has grace for the graceless — grace for the unworthy — free grace, for whoever will. Grace, that will change the heart, cleanse the conscience, and perfectly save the soul. He has abundance of grace, and he so loves to bestow it, that he never refuses one that applies for it. Refuses! Why he invites, exhorts, and almost beseeches us to come boldly to his throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.

Graceless sinner, God has grace for graceless ones, for unworthy ones; he has grace that will just meet your case, and save your soul — and the grace he has he gives, gives freely, gives freely to every one that applies for it. Only apply, and that grace is yours — obtain that grace and you are saved with an everlasting salvation!

You may be very poor, your needs may be many — but all you really need is included in the word grace; you may therefore obtain a supply for all your needs, by coming to God through Jesus. He has made provision for all the sinner's needs, and now sends this message to the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind, "Come, for all things are now ready!"

Some sinners, feeling their misery, and having a vivid sense of their unworthiness, give way to despondency, and conclude that for them there is no hope. Poor desponding soul, "I have a message from God unto you!" he says, "I have blotted out your sins as a cloud, and your iniquities as a thick cloud; return unto me, for I have redeemed you." And if you hesitate, or feel inclined to doubt whether you will meet with a kind reception, Jesus sends you this assurance, "I will in never cast you out." Nothing shall induce him to reject a coming sinner, or lead him to refuse the soul that flees to him for mercy. He says, and says to you, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted." Come then, poor desponding soul — come to Jesus, and he will . . .

receive you graciously,

love you freely, and

save you eternally!

Careless sinner, God sends a message to you, he asks you, "Why will you die?" If you refuse to accept of God's mercy, if you neglect his great salvation, if you trifle and carelessly let things take their course — you must die. But why, why do you choose death? Why, why do you refuse God's message, persevere in sin, and carelessly force your way to everlasting burnings?

Obstinate sinner, God asks you, "What will you say, when I shall punish you?" Again he asks, "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong — in the day when I shall deal with you?" O sinner, sinner, "Have you an arm like God, or can you thunder with a voice like him?" "Because there is wrath, beware, lest he take you away with a stroke, then a great ransom cannot deliver you." "Consider this, you that forget God — lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you." There is a Deliverer now — but the time is coming, when there will be no Deliverer; then there can be no deliverance for the sinner — but he must meet his inevitable doom, and that doom will be dreadful.

Now, God sends to all sinners, to every sinner, and proposes a reconciliation. There is nothing in the way of it. God is prepared for it, and therefore he proposes it. Nor is it a mere cold and heartless proposal — but he sends his servants to treat with you, and endeavor by all means to bring about a reconciliation. He came down in the person of his Son to meet you, and he sends by his servants to assure you of his mercy, grace, and love.

Consider carefully these wondrous words — "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We

implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!" Then seek the Lord, seek him first, seek him heartily, seek him believing his word — and you shall soon enjoy pardon, peace, and present salvation. Are you a backslider? God sends a message to you, exhorting, inviting, and entreating you to return unto him. He even puts words into your mouth. He assures you that he only requires you to acknowledge your iniquity — and then promises you a free, full, and everlasting pardon. Return then, backslider, return to your God — confess your sins, plead his promises, be restored to the enjoyment of his favor, and be happy once more.

Believer, "I have a message from God unto you!" He says, "I have something against you, because you have left your first love." You are not what you once were. You are not what you ought to be. God has something against you. But he has something for you too, he has more grace for you to receive, and more work for you to do. He bids you to reflect, "Remember from whence you have fallen." He commands you to repent. Change your mind, and change your course — for you have been thinking wrong, feeling wrong, and acting wrong. He requires you to engage yourself to him anew.

Come and join yourself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant. Return to your first husband — for then it was better with you than now. Go into his vineyard — and begin to work afresh. You have lost time, perhaps much time. You have let opportunities for usefulness slip away. Lose no more time — but repent and do your first works. Get the conscience thoroughly cleansed with the blood of Jesus; get the heart softened with the grace of God; get the whole soul stimulated with the love of God — and thus return to the days of your youth.

Reader, God's messages are plain — you may easily understand them; they are pointed — and you ought to feel them; they are profitable — and you ought to act upon them — so would they become pleasant, and you would bless and praise him for them.

God's messages should be received . . .

with reverence — for they are sent by the Great King;

with humility — for they are proofs of his condescension and grace;

with faith — for they are true and of the greatest importance;

and with a determination to heed and regard them.

What an honor God confers upon you, by sending a message to you at all, especially such a message. It is . . .

a message of mercy — to miserable sinners;

a message of grace — to unworthy sinners;

a message of provision made — for very poor and needy sinners;

a message of comfort — for desponding sinners;

a message to alarm — for careless sinners;

a message to solemnly warn — for obstinate sinners;

an invitation to backsliders to return — that they may once more be happy and holy;

a message of encouragement, direction, and winning love — to those who believe in Jesus.

Well, friends, I have delivered my Master's message. What answer will you return unto him who sent me? Will you receive his message with befitting respect? Will you attend to it at once, and with the heart? Will you treat it now, as you will wish you had treated it, when you stand before him in judgment? Much, O how much! depends upon the treatment this message receives at your hands. Do not insult the Lord by despising it, rejecting it, or ignoring it, saying, "When I have a convenient season — I may attend to it." The Lord is now noticing how you treat his message, and will call you to account for it at length, for "every one of us must give account of himself to God."

57 Our Gathering Together

Our Gathering Together Our Lord and Master is now absent from us — but in a little time he will return, to bless our earth with his presence, reign gloriously, and accomplish all the glowing and glorious predictions of his Word. This subject, the apostles keep constantly before the minds of the Lord's people, exhorting them, to be ready for it, and exhorting them to other duties by it. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Let us now for a few minutes direct our attention to this subject. The Object of Attraction. At present, this is "Christ CRUCIFIED" — for our rallying-point is the cross. Here faith fixes — and from it derives peace, strength, and courage. Here hope rests — expecting all that is good, great, and glorious, because Jesus died. Here love feasts — and enjoys sweet and hallowed fellowship with Jesus, in his sufferings and death. In the future — it will be "Christ in his GLORY". We look forward to, anticipate, and long for, the coming of Jesus — because then we shall see him in all his beauty, dignity, and majesty. Because, being savingly interested in him, we are interested in all that concerns him, especially in all the momentous events connected with his second advent. Not only so, but being united to him — we shall share in all his regal honors, for we shall be like him, and when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory. The Glorious Congregation. What a gathering! What an assembly! Now we are distant from him, and scattered from each other. Then we shall be gathered together unto him. WHO shall be gathered? All who look, long for, and love his appearing. All the chosen of the Father, all whom Jesus redeemed by his blood, all in whose hearts he has been formed by his Spirit. WHEN shall we be all gathered? When he comes the second time, when he sits on the glory cloud, and the arch-angel sounds the trumpet. FROM WHENCE shall we be gathered? From the depths of ocean, from the dark domains of death, from all parts of the world wherever we have been scattered.

HOW shall we be gathered? By his sweet, powerful, and attractive influence; at the sound of the trumpet, and by the ministry of the angels. For what PURPOSE shall we be gathered? To see him in his glory, in his Father's glory, and with his holy angels. To attend him, grace his triumphs, and sit with him in judgment on angels and men. To enjoy the light of his countenance, the fullness of his love, and all that was purchased by his blood. To be forever with him, forever like him, and forever filled with his joy. The center of the Churches' unity is Christ. Not a creed, nor a country, not a service book, or a constitution — but Christ alone — Christ crucified, and Christ glorified. The object of our hope is the coming of Jesus. Jesus coming in his glory. Jesus coming to subdue his foes. Jesus coming to collect his friends. Jesus coming to make his divided church one, and one forever.

There will be a glorious collection of God's people soon! Not one will be missing then. All of them who have ever lived, from all places and periods, will be gathered by Jesus, will be collected around Jesus, and will rejoice and glory in Jesus.

It will be a great congregation. Such a gathering as never has been seen yet. As numerous as the dew drops of the morning, as pure as the rays of morning light — all the redeemed will be

gathered around Jesus. All who have sincerely believed in Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles, will be assembled, and will unite to glorify and praise, the Savior's thrice blessed name.

What a glorious hope! Let us not look at corruption, earth, and worms — at death and all its gloomy associations; but let us look for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior! Jesus is pledged to come, to come and gather his people, to come and crown his gathered people with glory, honor, and immortality — conferring on them eternal life, in all its fullness, perfection, and glorious meaning!

Then there will be perfect satisfaction. Jesus will see of the travail of his soul, and will be satisfied. The saints will see Jesus, and be with him, and be perfectly satisfied. Jesus with all his people — satisfied. All the saints with Jesus — satisfied. All the saints together one with each other, filled with holy love — satisfied. Satisfied with Jesus, satisfied with each other, and satisfied with their glorified selves!

Reader, how will it be with you? Will you be among them? Are you among them now? Are you like them now? Do you look forward with earnest longing, and anticipate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him? You will either be gathered to Christ — or be separated from him forever! Eternity depends on the present; what you will be then — depends on what you are now.

58 The Law of Your Mother

The Law of Your Mother "Do not forsake the law of your mother!" Proverbs 1:8 A mother's influence is great; a mother's love is strong. Every mother therefore should endeavor to use her influence wisely, and for her child's eternal good. A very great responsibility rests upon godly mothers, which they should realize, and realizing — should act under a sense of it. The mother's life — should be the child's lesson; and the mother's words — should be the child's law. The authority of the mother — is essentially the authority of love; and the teachings of the mother — should be the teachings of love. With these thoughts in the mind, we want to enforce the inspired admonition to the young, "Do not forsake the law of your mother!" The OBJECT to Be Regarded. A godly mother's law. O what a privilege to have a godly mother! One who knows . . .

the value of the soul,

the person of the Savior,

the way of salvation, and

the power of vital piety in her own heart.

Such a mother will teach her child . . .

to value what is really important and spiritual;

to secure a saving interest in eternal felicity;

to avoid the sinful and the dangerous;

to do the necessary and the moral;

to enjoy the lawful and the profitable;

to prepare for the future and eternal. In a word, she will enforce on her child the advice of the Savior, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." The salvation of the child's soul — will be nearest her heart. The early and entire consecration of her child to God — will be the object at which she aims. For this she will teach, and pray and act. Nor will less than this, ever satisfy her maternal mind.

Every child should . . .

carefully attend to a mother's teaching,

treasure up a mother's lessons,

bear in mind the object of a mother's prayers,

and endeavor to carry out a mother's wishes.

Notice then, The TEMPTATION to Be Resisted. When young people leave home, and enter into a place of business, or some school to learn a trade, or a profession — they find themselves surrounded by new circumstances. They often fall in with new companions, and are often plied with new temptations.

Away from home, away from under a mother's eye, out of the reach of the sound of a mother's voice — they are apt to forget the law of their mother. They once thought that they never would, never could — but they do! Not only so, they are tempted to forsake a mother's law, and adopt a new and untried rule of life, perhaps the very opposite to that which their mother gave them.

Then they begin to pursue a different course, and a downward course too. This is smooth and easy at first. The flesh is pleased, youthful lusts are gratified, bad habits are contracted, and death, eternal death, is sought in the error of their ways! O how many young men, how many young women, have been ruined, by forsaking the law of their mother! Hence, The ADMONITION, "Do not forsake the law of your mother."

Think of a mother's love — so strong, so tender, and so constant.

Think of a mother's wisdom — implanted in her heart, by your mother's God.

Think of a mother's concern for her child — how deep, how lively, how uninterrupted. A child may forget its mother — but the mother will never forget her child. The child's interest in its mother may die out — but the mother's interest in her child never will. A mother's love — is an undying love. A mother's wisdom — is quick and inventive. A mother's concern for her offspring — is as lasting as her life.

Think of meeting your mother before God in judgment! Then her lessons will all be revived in your memory — then her prayers and tears will come up before you anew. Then she will rejoice in your salvation — OR acquiesce in the sentence of the just judge, when he bids you to depart from him into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! Yes, your mother will acquiesce in what is just, even in the eternal condemnation of her child — as a hardened, persevering rebel against God!

O how solemn the thought — a mother obliged to agree to the banishment of her child from God and eternal glory — unto eternal Hell! Think of having the image of your mother — a sainted mother, a glorified mother — stamped upon your memory forever in Hell. Think of hearing that tender, touching voice — warning, entreating, and beseeching you to flee to Jesus — stamped upon your mind forever in Hell. Think of having the law of your mother, and the efforts of your mother to save you — ever before you, when all hope is gone, and every way of escape is barred, and barred forever!

Think of how you may now add to her joy, by deciding for God; OR increase her sorrow, by going on still in your trespasses.

Young man, young woman, by all the tenderness of a mother's love, by the intense concern of a mother's heart — if you would not shorten the days of her life, or embitter her dying hours, I beseech you, "Do not forsake the law of your mother!" By the dread thought of meeting your mother as a witness against you at the final judgment, and hearing her testify her approval of the sentence of condemnation, pronounced on you, by the Savior you have insulted and rejected — I

beseech you, "Do not forsake the law of your mother!" By the horrid thought of being . . .

haunted by the remembrance of your mother's form,

tormented by the remembrance of your mother's prayers,

and pierced through and through with the recollection of your mother's tears — in Hell forever, I beseech you, "Do not forsake the law of your mother!" As you may greatly add to your mother's joys, OR increase your mother's sorrows; by all the love of a child, by the duty of a child — I beg you, "Do not forsake the law of your mother!"

Few realize the value of a mother as they should, while they have one — especially a godly mother. But when death has done its work in her, when her soul has departed, to look at a mother's corpse, to follow the coffin that contains a mother's remains, or to stand by a mother's grave — will awaken strange thoughts, new feelings, and perhaps bitter regrets. While you have a mother — love her, obey her, and make her heart glad.

Many forget and forsake the law of their mother, when away from her. This is unwise, it is unkind, it is ungrateful. A mother's advice . . .

is unselfish;

it is only for her child's good,

it is the offspring of the deepest love, and

often the result of the most earnest fervent prayers. But fascinated by our companions,

deceived by an unbelieving heart,

allured by a false and vain world, and

ensnared by a cruel and crafty devil

— too many of our young people forsake the law of their mother! Many will wish — but wish in vain, that they never had such a mother!

It will increase their condemnation,

it will add to their torments, and

will give intensity to the bitter pangs generated by black despair! The thoughts of what their mother was, what their mother did, and how their mother tried to prevent their ruin — will make Hell ten times hotter than it would otherwise be — to many a child of godly parents. But on the other hand, many will bless God forever for . . .

a mother's love,

a mother's example,

and a mother's law. That love — won the heart for Jesus;

that example — was a constant lesson of warning, reproof, and instruction;

and that law — constrained the soul to bow to the scepter of Jesus, and trust alone in his blessed name.

Young friends, endeavor to realize the value of a godly mother, while you have one! Never, never, let any one, or anything tempt you to forsake her law, lest in Hell you should bitterly and eternally regret it! But let a mother's love, a mother's example, and a mother's law lead you at once to Jesus — that you may meet your mother with joy at last, and dwell with her in Heaven forever!

59 How Old Are You?

How Old Are You?

Birthdays are solemn days, they remind us of our entrance into the world, and direct our thoughts forward to the period when we shall leave it. Like milestones on the road of life, they inform us how far we have traveled — but say not one word about how far we have to go! Every mile sensibly lessens the distance between us and our journey's end. Today I am reminded of a passage in Old Testament history, "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob: How old are you?" Genesis 47:8. What a touching question! How calculated to awaken solemn thoughts, and to call up interesting reminiscences! Let us glance at, The two PARTIES. A sovereign — and a subject. The greatest monarch of his day — and a plain unsophisticated shepherd.

One accustomed to rule in courts — and one in the habit of dwelling in tents. A citizen of the world — and an old pilgrim to mount Zion.

One who was of the world, and at home in the world — and one who was only passing through the world, to take possession of a better country. An idolatrous sinner — and a saint of the Most High God.

One who had no clear or correct conception of the divine nature and character — and one who knew God, and walked in daily fellowship with him. A greater contrast could not be, than between the patriarch Jacob — and the monarch Pharaoh.

Pharaoh appears to have had some excellent qualities, and in many points to have been a fine character — but he was . . .

a stranger to God,

a worshiper of dumb idols, and

was led captive by the devil at his will.

Jacob had many faults, and some striking defects — but he was a friend of God, walking with him in peace and righteousness. The pilgrim was introduced to the king, who perhaps to make him feel at ease during his interview, or from some other good motive, proposed the question, "How old are you?"

Let us look at the INQUIRY.

Questions may be meddlesome — and should not be answered.

Questions may be offensive — and should not be noticed.

Questions may be mischievous — and should call forth a serious reply. This sincere question by Pharaoh may have been called forth by the patriarch's venerable looks. What a beautiful sight is a fine old man! His locks are silver. His brow is wrinkled. His cheeks have fallen in. His voice is

tremulous. His form stoops. All unite to excite veneration, and may therefore well prompt the question, "How old are you?"

It may have been curiosity on the part of the king, or even a benevolent feeling, which led him to make the inquiry — but whatever it was, it may be turned to very good account. Let us take it home, and examine ourselves by it.

How old am I NATURALLY? I was once a babe, and then a youth — but I am such no longer. This should awaken REFLECTION — and lead us to remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us in the wilderness.

It should produce GRATITUDE. How many have been cut down younger, and cut down unprepared. How many are in Hell now — who were born since we were! How many have sunk in poverty, been crushed by troubles, or been hurried out of time into eternity — by disease.

It should lead us to REPENTANCE. This is always the design of God's goodness. This is also its tendency to a gracious heart. Upon how many points, we have seen reason to change our minds. For how much that we have done, we have reason to weep bitter tears. How necessary it is on some points, to change our course. Can we attend to this question, and not reflect on the past? Can we reflect on the past — and not be grateful? Can we reflect, and be grateful, and not repent, and turn again unto the Lord?

Let us then improve the question, for some neglect it — but it cannot harm us, and it may do us good.

How LONG have I lived? Twenty — thirty — forty — fifty — perhaps sixty years? To what PURPOSE have I lived? Have I secured my salvation? Have I served my generation? Is the world better for me being in it all these years? Have those about me reason to bless God for me? How would I live — if I had my time over again? Would I DO — just as I have done? would I BE — just what I have been?

What has been the grand end of my life? Have I lived to myself, or to him who died for me, and rose again? Have I lived to enlighten others by my knowledge, to help others with my property, to bless others through my influence?

How old am I SPIRITUALLY? This question is more important than the former one. Better never be born at all — if we are not born again. Our first birth will prove a curse — without the second birth. The first birth only fits us for earth, where, if left to ourselves — we fit ourselves for Hell! But the second birth fits us for Heaven.

If we are born again, can we tell anything about the time when? Can we remember when we were convinced of sin, felt our need of a Savior, and fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. That was the time of our new birth. But the time of the new birth is of little or no importance — compared with the fact itself. The great question is, AM I born again? Do I believe in Jesus? Is salvation mine?

If we are born again — where are the proofs? Who is the better for it? Are our relations, our children, our neighbors? Even the animals which serve us, or live to please and amuse us — will be the better for our religion, if it is genuine.

Whether our lives have been long or short — we have lived long enough to have LEARNED more; and if we were not great dunces — we would have done so!

We have lived long enough to have GAINED more, for we have had some fine opportunities. Grace was to be had for asking for, and our talents may not only have been improved — but increased, yes doubled — if we had been wise.

We have lived long enough to have DONE more. Alas! how little we have done for God, for Christ, for the Church, and for the souls of men — and how very imperfectly has that been done, which we have performed. O if we had but realized our responsibility, if we had but been zealous for our God and his glory, if we had but been fired with the love of Christ — how much might we have done, during the life we have lived here below!

How shall we act NOW? Let us flee to the open fountain — to wash away our stains; let us repair to the throne of grace — that we may find mercy, and obtain grace to help us; and then let us begin life afresh, determined if we live — to live unto the Lord; or if we die — to die unto the Lord; so that whether we live or die we may be the Lord's.

60 The Preparation of the Heart

The Preparation of the Heart The heart of man is the seat and source of all evil. From within, out of the heart — proceeds all sin, mischief, and misery. The heart is eager for all evil — but it is indisposed to all spiritual good. It needs to be enlightened by God's truth, softened by God's grace, and led by God's Spirit — if it is to approve, choose, or attend to anything really good. Except God takes the heart in hand — there will be no effectual work, no saving change, no preparation for glory. Solomon has said, "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue — is from the Lord." Proverbs 16:1 The Work.

1. Man's HEART needs a divine preparation, for by nature, it is naturally disqualified for anything, and everything good.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to submit to a sovereign God — otherwise it will exclaim, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" It will not submit to his authority, admit his rights, or yield itself to be saved by the righteousness he has provided.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to receive a divine Savior — or else it will rely on its own work, trust in some fellow creature, do anything, or suffer anything, rather than embrace the Lord Jesus, as God's Son and Savior.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to profess a despised religion — or it will consult its own ease, be ashamed to own Christ, and swim with the stream in an opposite direction.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to bear peculiar trials — or it will faint in the day of adversity, rebel and murmur against God, and be hardened against him who sends or permits them.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to meet the last enemy — or it will sink into despair, or harden into indifference, and die an avowed enemy of God.

Indeed for everything truly good — we need to be divinely prepared, for no one will come to Jesus — unless the Father draws him; no one will perform good works — unless God works in him to will and to do; and no one will persevere in God's way — unless the Lord who began the good work, carries it on until the day of Christ.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to fall in with God's plans — or he will resist, reject, and choose any plan of his own, before God's. It will never yield to be saved by grace through faith — until God makes it willing in the day of his power.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to seek first the Savior's honor — or it never will. Jesus may condescend to come into the world to save sinners, he may live and labor, and he may suffer and die, and man may be told that it was all for him, and his salvation; but he will never manifest gratitude, exercise self-denial, or seek to exalt and extol the Savior for his love — without the Spirit work in him as the glorifier of Jesus.

Man's heart must be divinely prepared to aim singly and principally at God's glory, which is the only legitimate end of his existence — or he never will. He will live to himself, and live for himself — and though he may do many kind, generous, and benevolent things — he will not do one of these with a single desire to glorify God.

2. Man's TONGUE must be controlled and directed; this also is God's work, for "the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." The tongue needs to be controlled and directed to speak as God's WORD speaks. God's thoughts should guide ours, and God's words should be a model for ours. We should speak as the oracles of God, which we never shall, but only as we are governed and guided by the Lord.

Man's tongue must be directed to speak of God's WORKS. We are very ready to speak of our own, or of the works of our fellow men — but are by no means so ready to speak of God's works.

How wonderful are his works of creation.

How mysterious are his works of providence.

How astonishing are his works of grace.

One would think that we would love to dwell upon God's works, and delight to talk of them. But no, only as God directs the tongue — do we speak of God's works with a befitting spirit and temper.

Man's tongue must be directed, if he speaks to God's GLORY. To exalt ourselves, or to honor our fellow men is easy, it is natural, it is common. But to speak, to honor God's great name, to exalt his rich grace, and to show forth his praise — is what no man is prepared to do — until God disposes him. Hence, the wise man's record, "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue — is from the Lord." Notice next, His Testimony. If man's heart is prepared to do any good, or is even disposed to do any good — it is because God prepares and disposes it. The Lord prepares the heart by his Spirit — who renews it, enlightens it, and leads it, as the Spirit of life, light, and love. The Lord disposes the heart by his grace — which softens, sways, and influences it. The Lord directs the TONGUE by his Word — which tells us when to speak, why we should speak, and what we should speak. Nor do we ever feel aright, will aright, or act aright — but as we are wrought upon by the Spirit, grace, and word of God. Hence the Church confesses, "Lord, you will ordain peace for us; for you also have wrought all our works in us." Let us then daily pray, that God would prepare our hearts for every duty, dispose them to every good work, and enable us to curb, control, and wisely use the tongue. This subject teaches us absolute dependence upon God, who must do all for us, all within us, and all by us — or nothing will be done well.

It encourages us under a sense of our unfitness — as God alone can prepare the most unprepared heart, dispose it to do what is holy and right, and make our tongue like a tree of life.

It directs us to take the eye off man, for wherein is he to be accounted of. We must look at man — as in God's hand, who will use him in his service, and overrule his thoughts, words, and deeds for his glory. Yes, even the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder thereof, he will restrain.

Let us take our unprepared hearts to the Lord — and ask him to prepare them for his work and way.

Let us take our indisposed hearts to the Lord — and ask him to influence them by his grace, that so we may choose those things which will please him, and do those things which will bring glory to his holy name.

Let us beseech him, to prepare the hearts of all his people to enjoy their high privileges, to do his righteous will, contribute for the comfort of the poor and the support of his cause, and to direct and enable them to speak for him, and for the good of their fellow-men.

Lost sinner, God can prepare your heart to enjoy religion on earth, and make it fit to enjoy his glorious presence in Heaven. He can teach you to pray, and to speak, consistently with his holy word. If then you have any wish to be a happy Christian now, and a glorified saint at death — go to the Lord and beseech him to prepare your heart for it! And if you wish to use your tongue wisely, and to do good by using it — go to the Lord and ask him to give you that wisdom which is profitable — and it shall be given you.

61 God's Request

God's Request "My son, give me your heart!" Proverbs 23:26

Majesty on earth commands — but the majesty of Heaven stoops to solicit. Sometimes God invites us, sometimes he exhorts us, and, sometimes he asks of us — as if requesting a favor. What wondrous condescension! What amazing love! The God of the universe stoops to his poor, depraved, degraded creature man, and says, "My son, give me your heart!" He created the heart for himself, he wishes it to be fixed on himself, and he asks for it, that he may fill it with himself. Has God my heart? Reader, has he yours? He asks for it now, let us then-consider two things:

1. WHO asks for your heart? Not a stranger — not a foe — not an oppressor; but a kind, gracious, loving Father! God speaks to us as unto his children. He says, "My son, give me your heart." It is our highest honor to be the sons of God — nothing can equal this. It is a source of the purest happiness — how can God's children be unhappy? What should make them so? It is a display of the richest grace, for it is an unmerited favor, and altogether an unmerited favor — for the Lord God to put us among his children. It is a mark of peculiar condescension, we are so poor, so polluted, so vile — and yet he calls us, sons. How tender! How alluring! How loving!

2. WHAT does he ask for? The heart, only the heart — but the whole heart. This intimates, that the heart is withheld from him. This intimates, that he will be satisfied with nothing less — with nothing else. This intimates, that the heart must be absolutely surrendered. This proves that God will take the heart, just as it is; and that he has a right to it — it is his own. This should lead us to inquire: what will he do with it? Do with it? He will sanctify and cleanse it! He will inhabit it as his temple, and dwell in it, as if it were his Heaven!

God may demand, for he has authority — but he stoops to ask, as if for a favor. All will be benefitted, and none can be injured by the surrender. The person shall be saved, his relatives shall get good, the Church will be increased, and even Heaven will become more populous.

Say then, friend — shall God have your heart? He will not force it from you — it must be voluntarily surrendered. Shall he have it? If so, when? Has it not been given to the world long enough? Has it not been inhabited by Satan long enough? Has it not been withheld from God long enough? How polluted it is, how unhappy it has been, what restless desires still work in it, to bring forth fruit unto death. What it has been, it will continue to be — unless you surrender it to God.

Now you have the opportunity. Are you young — that is the best season to present the heart to God. He will . . .

receive it at your hands,

purify it by his word,

perfume it with his graces,

fill it with his Spirit, and

cause it to overflow with joy and peace.

Give your youthful heart to God — and you will never regret it. Will you surrender your heart to God? If so, how? Will you do it promptly — at once, and without delay? Will you do it heartily — making a full, sincere, and honest surrender of the whole heart at once? Will you do it cheerfully — glad to have it in safe keeping, and in safe keeping for evermore?

Well, friend, how is it to be? Who is to have your heart — God or Satan? One of these must, one of them will, one of them has now. If you have not given the heart to God as your own solemn and deliberate act and deed — then Satan has it, dwells in it, and influences it! If God has your heart — he has . . .

your thoughts,

your desires,

your prayers, and

your affections.

If God has your heart — he will . . .

keep it by his power,

conform it to the heart of Jesus,

and will delight in it for evermore. But if God has not your heart, it is occupied by some base usurper, it is influenced by a principle of enmity to God — it will be found a vessel of wrath at last, and will be filled with an agonizing sense of God's just and eternal hatred forever. Now then, while God asks you — now while time is afforded you, now while opportunity is offered you — make the surrender and say, "Lord, take my heart, my whole heart — and let it be wholly, only, and forever yours!"

62 Hezekiah's Testimony

Hezekiah's Testimony

"But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this! I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul. O Lord, by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too." Isaiah 38:15-16 The believer's path is often trying, and he is required to walk by faith, and not by sight. But the most trying path is often the safest, and generally turns out to be the most profitable. Tried Christians are generally lively Christians, and very often shining Christians. Whatever hinders the growth of the flesh — helps to strengthen and invigorate the Spirit. This was Hezekiah's experience, hence his testimony in allusion to these things, "O Lord, by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too." Isaiah 38:16. The Reference. "By such things." He had been suffering from bodily sickness and pain. He had been exercised with fears of death and dying. He had been harassed with sad forebodings of the future. He had been tried by the nature of his prayers, which he compares to the chattering of the crane, or the chirping of the swallow. He had appealed to the Lord as one over-burdened, straitened, and oppressed, "O Lord, I am oppressed! Undertake for me." He had come to the conclusion to acknowledge God's hand, and ever walk as a poor, bruised, humbled penitent, "But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this! I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul."

He had been painfully disappointed, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." Yet he found deliverance, "But you have in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you have cast all my sins behind your back." Many Christians, have now to pass through a similar experience. "These things" are trying things. But let us consider, The Fact Asserted. "By such things men live." AFFLICTIONS are often used by the Holy Spirit to quicken sinners, who are dead in trespasses and sins; and many have to look back to a fit of sickness, or a painful bereavement, or a stripping loss — as to the time when, and the means by which, they were first led to seek the Lord. So also by such things, many are awakened who have fallen to sleep on the lap of ease, and have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins. Others are restored to the joys of God's salvation, who had wandered far from righteousness and God.

Believers in general by such changes and trials, are . . .

led to exercise a more simple, direct, and steady faith in God;

brought into closer fellowship, and sweeter communion with God;

revived and invigorated when they have grown dull and heavy;

and are led out of self, to live upon, and make use of the fullness of Christ. The most painful trials, are often most useful — in quickening, reviving, and animating the soul in the ways of God! Most probably Hezekiah found it so, let us look at, The Testimony.

It was PERSONAL. "My spirit finds life in them too." He felt that he needed them, and was really benefitted by them. The frost and snows of winter, are not more necessary to render the earth

fruitful — than are troubles and trials to render us fruitful Christians.

It was HONEST, therefore he bears it before the Lord, "O Lord, by such things men live." We may deceive our fellow-men, and in speaking to them, there may be a lack of sincerity; but we know that the Lord searches the hearts, and tries the thoughts, and there is no deceiving him.

It was intended to INSTRUCT others, and many have been instructed by it. The writing of Hezekiah has been made a blessing to many. We might not have seen that our afflictions and troubles were intended to revive and quicken us, and to deepen the work of grace within us — but for this, or some similar testimony.

It was likely to PREVENT MISTAKES, and no doubt but many a mistake has been prevented by it. The result of his troubles, was no doubt, very different to what he once thought or expected — he therefore bears his testimony to prevent our being mistaken as to the outcome of our own.

It is to the HONOR of God.

It honors his wisdom — in making a seeming evil, a real good.

It honors his kindness — in supporting him under, and bringing him out of his trials, not only uninjured — but really benefitted.

It honors his care of his people — showing its constancy, and proving its efficacy.

It was an EXPERIMENTAL testimony, and may therefore be used by us against Satan's devices and injections. We can point to Hezekiah, to his fears, cries, complaints, and doubts; and then quoting his testimony, reply, "And so will it be with us. By our various afflictive trials, painful and bitter — our spirit finds life in them too!"

Observe, the best and holiest of men — are often most tried. Look at Job, Jacob, Joseph, Hezekiah, and Paul. Where there are few trials — there are seldom many excellencies, nor is there much usefulness. Who ever suffered like Jesus? "He was made perfect through sufferings;" and as his character was completed or perfected by his sufferings — so must ours be.

Trials do us no good without divine grace. The natural effect of trouble is bad — but when accompanied with grace, and made the instrument by which the Holy Spirit deepens and carries on his work — they are real blessings.

We need to be constantly reminded, that everything is just what the Lord makes it; and does us good or harm — just as it is attended with his special blessing or not. We ought therefore, to be most anxious to receive grace with our troubles; and whenever we see a trial coming, we should cry mightily to God, that the Holy Spirit may come with it, and make it an especial blessing.

Sanctified trials always promote holiness. This accounts for so many of the Lord's afflicted ones — being especially holy. And this should prevent our being afraid of trials — for however painful to the flesh, or mortifying to man's naturally proud spirit — if sanctified, they will . . .

deepen our humility,

increase our gratitude,

strengthen our faith, and

foster our devotion.

Mature Christian experience is a trophy won in battle. No one can bear Hezekiah's testimony without his experience; and no one can have the experience necessary, without many . . .

sore trials,

severe exercises,

and deep afflictions. When we pray for mature Christian experience — we pray for trouble. So also when we desire to be very useful — we desire to be deeply tried, either inwardly or outwardly. It is an honor to be able to bear testimony for God. This honor may be ours in a greater or less degree; for though we may not be able to go so far as Hezekiah did — yet in some measure we can bear witness to the wisdom, care, and kindness of God in his dealings with us — especially in seasons of sorrow, grief, and pain! Yes, we can say that we have found God faithful — and all trials work for our good.

63 Constraining Love

Constraining Love "The love of Christ constrains us!" 2 Corinthians 5:14

Paul was a most extraordinary man, so full of energy, zeal and love. Always at work for his master. Ever seeking to save sinners. Everywhere preaching the gospel. He never appeared to rest — but urged on his way from place to place, seeking to save souls from Hell.

Just such men as Paul are needed now. Self-denying men. Men of one aim. Men whose whole hearts are set upon one object. What was it that made Paul so fervent, filled him so full of love, and inspired him with such energy? He tells us in one brief line, "The love of Christ constrains us!" He saw Christ living, dying, and interceding for sinners. He exercised faith in the Savior's love, and this fired his own heart with love to Christ, and love to souls. The Powerful Motive. The love of Jesus. The love of Christ to sinners, producing love to him in return, and love to them for his sake. The love of Christ is astonishing. It is unparalleled. It surpasses knowledge.

It was the love of God. It was the love of man. It was the love of God and man combined. The love of God and man meeting in one person, blending in one heart, and flowing forth in one living and life-giving stream!

It is a love that pities sinners, sympathizes with sufferers, and delights in saints. This love . . .

dwells in the heart of Jesus,

looks out of the eye of Jesus,

works with the hand of Jesus,

speaks with the tongue of Jesus,

procures good things for us through the influence of Jesus,

and flows forth in the blood of Jesus. The POWER of this love was wonderful, it led the Savior to consider . . .

no condition too low to stoop to,

no action too menial to perform,

no failing too flagrant to pass by,

no gift too great to bestow,

no sufferings too great to endure for his loved ones,

nothing in them too mean to prize, and

no distance too far to travel for their good. The EXTENT of this love is above expression, or conception. Its height is above Heaven,

its depth is lower than Hell,
it is wider than the earth,
and broader than the sea. No creature can adequately conceive it;
no language can possibly describe it;
no sinner, or number of sinners, can exhaust it.

It surpasses knowledge. O to know it, to feel it, to be inspired by it, and always and everywhere to illustrate it! Its Mighty Influence. It constrained Paul to part with everything for Christ, to consecrate everything to Christ, and to undertake anything at the bidding of Christ. And, if we believe this love, if we feel its power in our hearts, if we are influenced by this love — we shall also surrender ourselves with all that we are and have to Christ. We shall cheerfully and publicly profess Christ. We shall be ready to . . .

to do anything he bids us;
to give anything he requires of us; and
to suffer anything he appoints us.

We shall be prepared to . . .

publish his fame,
proclaim his excellencies, and
invite sinners all around to go with us to his feet.

We shall love him in return for his love to us, and so love him as to seek his glory above and beyond everything beside.

Reader, do you know the love of Christ? It is a wondrous subject, full of sweetness, and full of power. You know nothing worth knowing — until you know the love of Christ. This is a subject that will . . .

soothe your sorrows,
cheer your heart,
disperse your fears,
conquer your doubts, and

fill you with unutterable joy and peace. Do you realize the love of Christ? It constrains powerfully — but sweetly. It lifts us out of self; raises us above the influence of the smiles, or frowns of man; and makes us bold and conquerors in God's cause. This power will enable you . . .

to face the fiercest foes,
to endure the greatest tribulations,
to engage in the most arduous undertaking,

and to brave the most cruel death for Christ. Are you influenced by the love of Christ? So influenced, as to . . .

hate sin,

separate from the world,

unite with his people,

be active in his work,

zealous in his service, and

liberal to his cause?

Or, have you never . . .

seen its glory,

felt its power, or

acted under its influence?

If you are a stranger to the love of Jesus, you are a stranger to the best, the sweetest, the most profitable thing that a mortal can know. Better be a stranger to anything, to everything — than be a stranger to the love of Jesus. O Holy Spirit, shed your love abroad in our hearts, and may we be very zealous, self-denying and useful — because "the love of Christ constrains us."

O my Lord, I've often mused

On your wondrous love to me;

How I have the same abused,

Slighted, disregarded Thee! To your church, and you a stranger,

"Pleased with what displeased Thee;

Lost, yet could perceive no danger.

Wounded — yet no wound could see. But unwearied you pursued me,

Still your calls repeated came;

Until on Calvary's mount I viewed Thee,

Bearing my reproach and shame!

Then o'erwhelmed with shame and sorrow,

While I viewed each pierced limb,

Tears bedew the scourges' furrow,

Mingling with the purple stream.

I no more at Mary wonder,
Dropping tears upon the grave;
Earnest asking all around her,
Where is he who died to save?
Dying love, her heart attracted,
Soon she felt his rising power;
He, who Mary thus affected,
Bids his mourners weep no more.

64 The Best Friend

The Best Friend "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."
Psalms 27:10

What a dreadful thing is sin. It has not only alienated man from God — but it has alienated man from man, and even snapped asunder the nearest, dearest, and strongest bonds that bind society together. It sets men against men, nation against nation, and dries up the fountains of a parent's love. The Psalmist supposed the possibility of this, and drew comfort from his knowledge of God in the prospect of it. His words are touching and encouraging, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." The Trial Supposed. We may be forsaken by our friends, our near friends, our nearest and dearest friends. The child may be forsaken by its parents. It has been so. There are instances of such unnatural conduct still. Fathers have lost all paternal feelings, and mothers have outlived a mother's love. The love of strong drink has produced this terrible effect in some — pride in others — and licentiousness in others. Sometimes the fault has been altogether with the parent — and sometimes it has been occasioned by the sin of the child. The prodigal has left his home to live in luxury, riot, and debauchery — and parents from disgust have disowned their child. Some daughters have wounded their parents' hearts so deeply, and have sunk so low in society, that they have been excluded from the parental heart and home.

Some parents, poisoned by religious superstition, have hardened themselves against their Christian children, and for Christ's, and for truth's sake, they have cast them off. This has been the case often with Papists. Well, suppose the worst, both father and mother may forsake, and the poor believer may be cast on the wide world, alone. Will he be left destitute? Will he lack a friend? Mark, The Confidence Expressed. "Then the Lord will take me up." This supposes a knowledge of God, some faith in him, and an application made to him. God has revealed himself to us in his word, and more clearly in his Son; he reveals himself to us by his Spirit — and so we come to know him. This always produces faith in him, so that the soul can trust him, and commit itself unto him. So when troubles and trials come — there is an application made to him, and then he espouses our cause and takes us up. If like the poor forsaken infant cast out into the open field, we lie neglected and miserable — he will pass by us, look upon us, and bid us live, and perform every necessary act of kindness for us.

If like the rejected bride, he sees us desolate, lonely, and unhappy — he will call to us, and draw us unto himself. If like the wandering pilgrim, he see us wandering in the desert where there is no way — he will come after us, find us, lead us about, instruct us, and keep us as the apple of his eye. If like the lost sheep, we are wandering about upon every mountain, and every hill — he will, shepherd-like, both seek and search us out, lay us on his shoulders, and bring us to his fold, in safety and in peace. Or, without a figure, he will appear for us, especially indulge us, graciously adopt us for his own children, and be more than father or mother, or both unto us.

See what sin has done! It has made parents monsters, and many children little better! It has not only turned Eden into a desert, and the world into a wilderness — but it has entered our households, and broken up the sweetest associations, and divided the nearest relatives.

See how grace triumphs! God takes the creature's place, and becomes a father of the fatherless. He manifests more than a father's care, and more than a mother's love. How blessed a thing is real religion. We cannot lose by it, let us be called to part with what we may. Hear how sweetly Jesus speaks on this subject, "Everyone that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake — shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life!"

Young people, seek the Lord, and seek until you find him; for finding him you are forever blessed.

Fatherless children, come to Jesus, and God will be to you a father, a mother; yes, more than father or mother can be; look to the Lord, for "in him the fatherless finds mercy."

Tried soul, trust in the Lord, he bids you to trust him, he will honor the trust that you repose in him. If forsaken by friends, relatives, and acquaintances, look to God as your friend, and he will take you up.

Believer, prove the Lord, venture in his cause, plead his word, rely on his faithfulness — and you will find that when father and mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up.

Aged Christians, witness for the Lord. Can you not look back upon trying scenes, distressing circumstances, and almost overwhelming troubles; and did you not find, that when creatures failed you, when all on earth proved impotent to help you — that the Lord took you up? Yes, yes, he has helped you in six troubles, and in seven he has not forsaken you. Having obtained help from him, you continue until now, and in the decline of life, as you are going down the steep of time, you can lean on him, and peacefully leave your future with him.

65 The Sympathy of Jesus

The Sympathy of Jesus Who does not know the value of sympathy? How sweet, in the season of trouble, is the presence of a friend, who with a loving heart, has experienced personally, the very affliction under which we groan. Many may desire to comfort us, and with the best intention may endeavor to do so — but for lack of experience, they are not qualified, and therefore fail.

Sympathy generally flows from suffering, and it is that which makes the sympathy of Christ so sweet, he has passed through the same sorrow before us. He not only became man — but a poor man; not only a poor man — but a persecuted man; not only a persecuted man — but a man of sorrows. How sweet the Apostle's representation of him, "For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to support those who are tempted." Hebrews 2:18. The Savior's Experience. He was tempted or tried.

He was tried by his Father's command — to lay down his life for his sheep. John 10:18.

He was tried by his Father's providence — which arranged and brought to pass, all the sufferings he endured.

He was tried by poverty — having no home of his own in infancy, youth, or manhood. The endearments of one's own house were not for him. He had no where to lay his head.

He was tried by false friendships, and few things pierce deeper or wound us more, than when he who eats bread with us — lifts up his heel against us.

He was tried by the dullness of his disciples, who though he spoke so plainly, and wrought so wondrously — yet understood him not.

He was tried by bold and daring foes, the rabble and men high in office, soldiers and civilians, Jews and Gentiles — combined to oppose and persecute him.

He was tried by weariness, hunger, and thirst; but more especially by his bitter agonies in the garden, and on the cross. The pain, the shame, the degradation of his death, were dreadful. Every sense was insulted. Every limb was mangled. Every faculty of his soul was tortured. Heaven, earth, and Hell seemed to combine to bruise him, torment him, and put him to grief! Oh, Savior, yours was a life of sorrow, your was a death of agony! Was there ever sorrow, like unto your sorrow; or sufferings, like unto your sufferings? From your birth to your death, from your manger to your grave — your was a life of privation, self-denial, and pain! But he was tempted by Satan, or solicited to do evil. In the desert, for forty restless days, and sleepless nights;

on the top of the mountain, or the pinnacle of the temple;

in the garden of Gethsemane;

and on the cross on Calvary

— he was plied with every temptation, that was likely under the circumstances to succeed, and lead him into sin. Threatenings were employed, and promises were made, to induce him to turn aside from the one straight path of obedience. He could say with an emphasis, "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among those who are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword!"

Precious Lord Jesus, how was your pure intellect assaulted with the vilest blasphemies, the foulest suggestions, and the most horrible solicitations! How was your true and loving heart plied with evil thoughts, pierced with fiery darts, and assaulted with all the battering rams of Hell! Well, well may it be said, "He suffered, being tempted." The feelings of Jesus were most acute. His finely balanced and highly cultivated mind, must have felt severely his association with the lowest of human kind, and the most degraded of infernal beings. The prince of light — in contact with the prince of darkness. The Holy One of God — in conflict with the personification of every evil. His sufferings were constant — day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year. From friends and foes — from devils and from God. His life was a life of trial — a life of faith — a life of obedience. In every way, and by every agency, his integrity was tried — by faith in God, when everything was calculated to generate doubt or unbelief, he had to walk — and the most painful and flesh crucifying commands, he daily obeyed. To his Father's will — he always deferred; according to covenant arrangements — he always walked; and as predicted by the Prophets, he at length laid down his life. Blessed Redeemer, whenever tempted to think much of my sufferings, may I think of yours, and have fellowship with you as the suffering Savior of my soul! The Result. He is able to support those who are tempted, or tried. He is fully qualified, as he knows in his personal experience, what trials and temptations are. He can have a fellow feeling with us — and he has. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is at once a merciful and faithful High Priest. If our hearts are torn now — his was once, and he has a vivid remembrance of it. And as one, who has once suffered from a wound or disease, when he sees another suffering in the same way — remembers and seems to feel over again his sufferings, and therefore tries to soothe and cheer the sufferer, so does Jesus. He has the same human heart in Heaven, which he had here on earth. And still it is written, "In all their affliction, he is afflicted." Jesus remembers his own sufferings, when he sees ours, and is able to support, or ready to run to our help, strengthening us, and upholding us with the right hand of his righteousness.

He is merciful to the tempted. He takes their misery to heart; limits the power of the tempter; and faithful to his word, he makes a way for our escape. He deals faithfully with us, as well as mercifully: correcting our faults, reproofing our follies, enforcing his precepts, exercising our graces, and then delivering our souls.

Temptation to Jesus, was a solemn reality. He felt it far more acutely than we do, or can. His temptations were so timed as to give them additional force and power — in hunger, in weakness, and in the hours of suffering — he was tried most. Having passed through trials and temptations himself, he lives to bring his people through. This is his work now. With this object, he intercedes above. To this end, he works by his providence, and overrules all for our good.

He who once sunk in the deep waters where there was no standing — sympathizes with us when he sees us sinking. He who exclaimed, "all your waves and your billows are gone over me," watches over us when the storm and tempest beats heavy upon us.

Believer, rejoice that your Savior is a tried Savior, one who knows all your sufferings, from his own bitter experience. Tempted soul, look up, Jesus, who is at God's right hand, was once tempted in all points like as you are — he can support you, call upon him and he will. Sinner, make this Savior your friend — and then in all your sorrows, griefs, and woes — in life and all its trials, and in death and all its agonies — you will have one to support, support, and deliver you!

66 Confidence in God

Confidence in God The life of most Christians, is a life of trial. This always has been the case, and therefore, the Bible, which records the experience of the Lord's people, is such a precious book. We can always find a companion here. One who has traveled the same road, passed through the same afflictions, and felt the same fears. This is particularly the case with the book of Psalms, which contains the inward experience of some of the most favored of the Lord's people. Here we see how they felt, hear what they said, and learn what purposes they formed. When Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel turned traitor to his king, and most of the people followed these ungodly leaders, we are introduced to the secret thoughts of the man of God. We hear him complain, predict, and pray — and mark the wise conclusion he formed, as he said, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me!" Psalms 55:16. He did call, and the Lord did save him, and it is written for our instruction, encouragement, and comfort. Observe, His Trial. That which seemed to affect him most in this psalm, was the conduct of his false friend; one who had been very dear unto him — but was now turned his foe, and was with his foes planning his destruction, and giving counsel against him. Such conduct always wounds deeply, it pierces to the very heart.

Here was hope blighted. He expected better things, he looked for brighter days — but was bitterly disappointed. If the tree had not blossomed, or if the blossoms had not set forth fruit; or if hope had not been raised so high — the disappointment had not been so great. O how painful it is, when with us, as with Job, our hope is removed like a tree! The storm gathers, the tempest roars, the tree is torn up by its roots, and lays prostrate on the ground; so it was with David's hope, and so it is at times with ours. His confidence was destroyed. He had confided in Ahithophel, had opened his whole heart to him, and enjoyed sweet counsel with him — and now he plays him false! Can he ever trust another? Is it any wonder if he says in his haste, "All men are liars!" And have not we suffered from the same cause? Has not the advice of the prophet been applied with strange emphasis, "Trust not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide?" His prospects were beclouded. He was driven from his palace and his kingdom, and everything looked dark and dreary. The aged monarch, bare-footed, and bare-headed, went up mount Olivet, weeping as he went up, and all the people wept with him. It is painful at any time to have our prospects beclouded — but it is especially so in old age, when we feel unable to do as we have done, and need rest and attention. Let us not set our minds upon anything here below, nor make sure of anything, for our most promising hopes may be blighted, our confidence in our firmest friend may be destroyed, and all our prospects may be suddenly beclouded. Let us notice, His Purpose. "I will call upon God." When creatures fail us, then we must repair to the Lord, who has graciously promised. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Here is a sweet view of prayer.

It is calling upon God, to speak with him. This often eases the heart, and relieves the mind. Converse with our Heavenly Father, always does us good. "We can speak freely to him, telling out all that we think, feel, fear, or desire.

It is calling upon God to consult him. He has promised to counsel us, and in all cases of difficulty or perplexity, when we know not what to do, or which way to take — it is our wisdom to call upon God for his counsel. "The Lord gives wisdom." He says, "I will counsel you, my eye shall be upon you."

It is calling upon God to ask a favor of him. He says, "Ask, what shall I give you?" He directs, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." And true prayer is coming to God for favors, asking him for blessings, and those blessings which our circumstances teach us that we need.

It is calling upon God to confide in him. To tell him the secrets of the soul, to entrust him with what we value, to put our entire case into his hand. What a relief, what a comfort have we often found it, to cast our burden on the Lord, to commit ourselves and all our concerns into his hands, and leave them there.

It is calling upon God to get comfort from him. At the throne of grace, often, very often — do we obtain the sweetest comfort, in the midst of our bitterest sorrows, and the sweetest peace, in the midst of tumult and confusion. It is when we call upon God, that he comforts us in all our tribulations, and gives us songs in the night. Mark, His Assurance. "The Lord will save me." Prayer, often inspires us with confidence, and we feel sure that the Lord who listens to our cries, will appear for our deliverance. The Lord will save me — for he is able, being omnipotent; he is disposed — being my father, and possessing a father's heart; he only waits to be asked, for he loves to grant the requests of his children. Yet it may not just now be the best, or the fittest time. When it is, he will save me. He will deliver me in his own way, by the means he is pleased to select, in the time he has wisely appointed, and so as to advance his own glory and praise.

He will deliver me so as to prove the power of prayer — as in the case of Jacob and Hezekiah; so as to display the folly of my foe — as in the case of David and Daniel; so as to prove the truth of his word — as in the case of all his people. Yes, the Lord will save us, in answer to prayer, as his word everywhere testifies.

Let us expect to be tried, for we shall be, and perhaps sharply; yes and often. The Lord tries the righteous. Let us carry all our trials to the Lord, who will look upon them, sanctify them to us, and give us a happy outcome in them all. Let us call upon God for help in trouble, for wisdom to manage trouble, and for an honorable deliverance out of trouble. Let us look for the deliverance we ask, for the Lord loves to be trusted, and to see his children expecting him to be as good as his word. The Lord will save, cost what it may. Though it cost him the life of his dear Son — he would save.

Therefore the apostle's most comforting conclusion, "He who spared not his own Son — but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him, also freely give us all things?" The Lord will save for his word's sake, which is, "I will deliver you." He will save for his love's sake, which is stronger than death, as vast as eternity, and as changeless as his glorious nature. He will save for his child's sake, therefore he says, "How shall I give you up?" How can he give up his child, which has cost him so much, which he loves so much, and to whom he has promised so much? He cannot. He cannot. In all times of trouble, of trial, of persecution, and of distress — the purpose of David shall be mine, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me."

67 The King's Highway

The King's Highway "Set your heart toward the highway." Jeremiah 31:21 In anticipation of the expiration of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah was directed and inspired by the Holy Spirit, to stimulate, encourage, and direct the Jews in reference to their return to their own land. And among other things he said to them, "Set your heart toward the highway" — the way by which many of them were brought into Babylon, and the way by which all of them must return. Now as there was a highway from Babylon to Zion — so there is a highway from earth to Heaven, and to this I wish now to direct attention. The Object. The highway, that is Jesus — for he is the way, and no man comes to the Father but by him. Now this is the way that just suits sinners, and it is the only way that will suit them.

It suits them, because it is a way in which we can get rid of sin. We no sooner enter on this way, than we get rid of . . .

the guilt of sin from the conscience,

the power of sin from the heart,

the practice of sin from the life, and

the penal consequences of sin from the person.

It is a way in which we acquire a title to property. When a government wishes to colonize, it often offers a grant of property to emigrants, to induce them to leave their native land, and sail for a far-off country. So when we enter upon Christ, the highway to the land of glory — we acquire a title to an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.

It is a way in which we find provision made for the entire journey. What Joseph said in reference to his brethren, "Give them provision for the way," Jesus does in reference to all who seek to go to glory by him. Here we find strength and wisdom, comfort and courage, the bread of life, and the waters of salvation! No one can faint by the way, or fail of reaching the end, from lack of provision. There is provision made for us from the first step out of a state of sin, until we step into glory.

There is, in this way, the certainty of a safe arrival. The righteous shall hold on his way. No funeral was ever seen on this highway. No bleached bones of pilgrims who had sunk and perished along the road, were ever seen here. All who enter upon Christ, all who start aright — arrive safe at the journey's end.

O blessed way, where we . . .

get rid of all sin and its consequences,

get an unquestionable title to Heaven,

find plentiful provision for our journey, and

prove that as our day, so is our strength, until we arrive at Mount Zion! This way is PLAIN, the simplest mind cannot mistake it — it is only believe, trust in Christ alone, venture wholly on Christ — and you shall be saved.

It is a WELL-TRODDEN way, for from the days of righteous Abel until now, pilgrims more or less numerous have trodden this way. Millions have proved it to be suitable, safe, and certain!

It is very often found to be a SHORT way. The thief on the cross found it so, and so have many others. They have stepped out of self on to Christ — and have passed in a very brief space of time, to glory. It is just the way to suit weak, weary, and dying sinners.

It is a FREE way, no toll-booths, no fees, no conditions — all is free. Whoever will, may enter on it, pass along it, and reach the home of the blessed by it.

It is a PUBLIC way — the king's highway. The nobleman may walk with the peasant, and the pauper with the king. The publican and harlot have the same right to use it — as the most chaste and moral. Upright and moral character is not required. Whoever will, may come, and travel unmolested to the heavenly Canaan!

It is a LIVING way. It gives life. It increases life. It ensures life. It introduces to everlasting life. Death never set his foot on it, nor ever will.

It is the ONLY way. By this way, anyone can get to eternal glory — but by no other. By this way, the greatest number, of the greatest sinners, may escape from the wrath to come. But by no other way can anyone reach the promised land. O that it were thronged by perishing souls, hastening from earth to Heaven! The Exhortation. Set your heart toward the highway! Reader, do you need this exhortation? Or, are you on this road? Don't try any bye-path — neither pope nor prelate, priest nor presbyter, ceremony nor sacrament — but come to Christ at once — venture on Christ alone. Direct the eye to this highway — let the heart move in the direction of it, be sure you enter upon it, persevere in it, and think often of the glorious end to which it leads. Do not imagine that you are in the way — when you are not. Do not be deceived by a dream. But make sure work of it. In the way — you are safe; but out of it — you are lost forever! Are you willing to leave the Babylon of this world? Many to whom Jeremiah spoke were not willing to leave Babylon of old, and therefore they perished there. Will you start for Mount Zion at once? For what should you wait? Why should you delay? What will you get by it? Rather, what will you lose? If you are willing, listen to the prophets advice, "Set your heart toward the highway!"

Make up your mind then, solemnly, seriously, deliberately make up your mind. Be determined to escape from eternal wrath, to obtain salvation, to find a home in the promised land.

Never rest outside of this way. Do not rest in mere desires, resolves or wishes — but enter upon the way, make thorough work of it. The entrance is strait and narrow. You must strip, and give up self, sin, and the world — and then you pass through it. There is plenty of room for the sinner, the naked sinner, any naked sinner — but only the naked sinner. The way is narrow — but it is wide enough for you. Greater sinners than you, have traveled this way, and gone singing from earth to Heaven. As flagrant sinners as you, have entered the strait gate, and journeyed along the narrow way — the grace that enabled them, will enable you. It is only . . .

repent, or change your mind, which has been to live in sin, reject Christ, and go with the world;

believe, or venture on Christ, trust in Jesus, commit yourself to him, renouncing all and everything beside;

give God the heart, the whole heart, the heart just as it is! Give it him to cleanse, adorn, and save

— and thus make a start for eternal glory. Is there any difficulty finding the way? Be sure you ask of those who know. Take the prophet's representation for your example, "In those days, at that time, the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the Lord their God. They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten."

Imitate Israel in the days of Jeroboam, who withstood the temptation of the King, and "set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel." So you will enjoy the blessing of which David sung, "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, until each appears before God in Zion!"

Beloved, there is a way . . .

from earth — to Heaven,

from sin — to holiness,

from condemnation — to justification,

from eternal death — to eternal life! That way is Jesus, to that way you are welcome. In that way you may walk and . . .

find peace with God,

enjoy communion with Jesus,

escape dangers, and

obtain everlasting life.

You will either walk in it — or you will not. If you will not, there is but one other way, and that is the way of eternal death! "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it!" Matthew 7:13-14.

Therefore Jesus exhorts in another place. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate" — strive as if in an agony — as if eternal life and eternal glory depended upon it — strive, nor leave off striving, until you are safe through the gate, and traveling in the way to eternal glory!

68 I Do Not Change!

I Do Not Change!

"I am the Lord — I do not change!" Malachi 3:6 Every created thing is liable to change.

Angels have changed — and become devils.

Man has changed — and become a sinner. The world has changed — and lost its original beauty and excellence. The seasons change — winter gives place to spring, spring to summer, summer to autumn, and autumn to winter again. Our feelings change — the sad gives place to the joyous, and the joyous to the sad again. Our circumstances change — the poor become rich, and the rich become poor. Our relations change — some are removed by death, others to a far distance, and some become alienated from us.

All within and without us will change, and there may be greater changes than we have ever witnessed yet. But amidst all the changes we have experienced within, or witness without — we have one unfailing source of comfort: the Lord never changes! He is the same, and will be the same forever. He is in one mind, and none can turn him. Let us then seek to be impressed with this cheering declaration made by God himself, "I am the Lord — I do not change!"

Blessed be his holy name — with him change is impossible!

Here is our rock — on which we may rest secure!

Here is one friend — on whom we may always depend! An unchanging God, lays an unchangeable foundation for our faith, hope, and comfort. With David, therefore, amidst all the changes of life we may sing, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted!" What the Lord was to David — he now is to us; and what he now is — he ever will be.

There can be no change in his LOVE to his redeemed people. Other's may cease to love us, may turn against us, and even hate us — but if the Lord love us once, he loves us forever. Having loved his own that are in the world — he loves them unto the end. His love is everlasting. It is like his nature — eternal. If the Lord loves me in January — he will love me in June; and if he loves me in June — he will love me in December. The God of love, who has set his love upon us, says, "I do not change." Go back as far as we will, we shall never arrive at the beginning of his love; and go forward as far as we may, we shall never come to the end of it. The love of God is eternal love.

There can be no change in his PURPOSES.

Originating as they do in the highest wisdom,

formed as they are for the glorifying of his own nature,

comprehending as they do all our needs, and

aiming as they do at our welfare

— they are unchangeable.

According to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord — he arranged all things that concern his people, both on earth and in Heaven. And now he works all things, after the counsel of his own will.

All his purposes culminate in this one point — to do us the greatest good, and in so doing to get himself the greatest glory. God's purposes embrace all the days of the year, and all the events of every day in the year; and, therefore, though I know not what may take place, I know that all things shall work together for good to those who love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

There can be no change in his PROMISES to his redeemed people. The word of the Lord stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart unto all generations. God has made many exceeding great and very precious promises:

they embrace all his people,

they provide for all our needs,

they forbid all our doubts and fears,

and they secure to us all possible good.

There is a promise . . .

for every day,

to meet every trial,

to cheer every believer, and

to give us confidence under all the changes of life. By the promises, God pledges himself to his people, and engages to . . .

supply all their needs,

conquer all their foes, and

glorify himself in all their changes.

God's promises are as immutable as his nature, for Heaven and earth may pass away — but his words shall never pass away. Man may break his word — but God cannot; man may change his mind — but God will not.

There can be no change in his RELATION to his redeemed people. Is God is my Father today — he will be my Father forever. For me, he will ever feel a father's love;

over me, he will ever exercise a father's care;

to deliver me, he will ever stretch out a father's hand.

Earthly parents may cease to love their children, may cease to care for their offspring, may refuse to help those who ought to be dear to them as life itself — but it can never be so with God! He asks, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" He admits, "Yes, they may forget." But he adds, "Yet will I never forget you."

Correct us he may, he will, if we need it — but turn his back upon us, close his door on us, or shut up his heart against us — he never will!

There can be no change in his SYMPATHY. Through Jesus, God has a fellow feeling with his people; he is touched with a sense of their infirmities; in all their afflictions, he is afflicted. His heart throbs in unison with theirs. He ever makes their bed in their sickness.

He is full of compassion.

He is plenteous in mercy.

He is ready to forgive.

He waits to be gracious.

Let who will, become hardened against us — let who will, fail to sympathize with us — the Lord never will. "We may therefore rejoice in the prospect of all the changes that may take place in the future, and say, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear!" Does the Lord say to us, "I do not change!" Then he encourages us to trust him with an unshaken confidence. We may trust him at all times. We may trust him with what we value most. We may trust him to make good in our experience, every promise in his word. However the dispensations of his providence may change — he will remain the same, in his love, purposes, and sympathy to us. Therefore we may say with Job, "Though he slays me — yet will I trust in him." Let us endeavor to exercise a full, steady, and constant trust in the Lord from day to day, remembering that, "those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed — but abides forever!" Does the Lord say to us, "I do not change!" Then we may go to him in all our trials, difficulties, and troubles! We may pour out our hearts before him, plead his precious promises, and expect answers of peace from him. He who heard and answered Jacob — will hear and answer us. He who listened to David and delivered him — will listen to and deliver us. He who appeared for Israel in the desert as their circumstances required — will appear for us as ours may require. Abraham's God is ours, and he will be to us what he was to Abraham — even our shield, and our exceeding great reward. Does the Lord say to us, "I do not change!" Then let us rejoice and be glad, for God's immutability will be . . .

the ground of our security,

the source of our comfort, and

the foundation of our peace.

What shall we fear — with God, the unchangeable God on our side? Of whom shall we be afraid — with the omnipotent and immutable Jehovah, to take our part? Beloved, let us anew surrender ourselves to God, exercising confidence in God, and engaging to work for God.

Lost sinner, if God will not change — then you must, or your end will be fearful. He has said, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." You are either wicked — or righteous, depraved — or holy; if the former, your doom is dreadful, except you repent. Change — God will not; change — you must, or . . .

die without mercy,

perish without pity, and

be punished without end.

O come to Jesus, and obtain pardon, peace, and everlasting life!

69 Blessed of the Lord

Blessed of the Lord

God sometimes blesses his people so visibly, following their efforts and crowning their labors, that their very enemies see it. This was the case with Isaac when he dwelt at Gerar, so that Abimelech acknowledged it, and said unto him, "You are now the blessed of the Lord!" Genesis 26:29. The same may be said of all the Lord's people. Let us look at, The Favor. "Blessed of the Lord." They are . . .

the objects of his special love,

the care of his special providence,

the habitation of his Holy Spirit,

the bride of his beloved Son.

What a favor — what a privilege is this! They are blessed . . .

with the pardon of all sin,

with access to God with confidence,

with true and solid joy,

with the prospect of a glorious, immutable, and eternal inheritance!

O blessed state! Happy are the people that are in such a case! Yes, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God. The Proof. "You are now the blessed of the Lord." You have a spirit of prayer, drawing near unto God. You have faith in Jesus, as the Lamb that was slain. Christ is precious to you, as your life, your all. The love of God is shed abroad in your heart, leading you to love God in response. You have come out of the world, are distinct from the world, and live above the world. You are united to God's people, esteeming them as the excellent of the earth. You live upon God's providence, which ever proves itself your friend. Or, if you cannot see these things in yourself, you have a restless desire for God's blessing, an ardent longing to see the good of his chosen people, and an inward crying of soul to spend an eternity with his blessed ones! God's blessing is everlasting life, and all who possess it will reign in life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who enjoy God's blessing prove it in their life, conduct and conversation. Those who do prove it, will often be tempted and tried on the point, and doubts and fears will harass and distress them. It is very probable, if the Lord blesses them — that men will curse them; and if the Lord favors them — that men will persecute them. This is the great point to be inquired into, and ascertained: Am I the blessed one of the Lord? If so, all spiritual blessings are mine. If so, Jesus, as the king, will say unto me, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father — inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!"

If I am blessed of God — then man's curse cannot hurt me; all that happens will be overruled for my good, and at last, I shall enter into the joy of the Lord, to be happy and holy forever.

If we are not the blessed of the Lord — then we are under his curse. We have broken his law, and have not believed his gospel. We have grieved his heart, and have not applied to him for a pardon. To be accursed of God is dreadful. It was the bitterest ingredient in the Savior's cup of sorrow. It is the most terrible thing in Hell. Yet multitudes, multitudes, live unconcerned, while under God's curse. They may be delivered from it — but they will not seek deliverance. They may come under his blessing — but they will not come to Jesus that they may do so. O strange infatuation! O perilous condition! O terrible prospect!

Reader, what are you? Are you now the blessed of the Lord? Or, are you accursed of God? One or the other you must be — get the matter decided if it is not. Live not in a state of uncertainty, much less in a state of unconcern. To be blessed of God is to have eternal life, plenty, and glory — but to be accursed of God is eternal death, destitution, and everlasting punishment.

Gracious Lord, give us your blessing! Bless us . . .

with a correct knowledge of ourselves,

with living faith in Christ,

with a sweet sense of the pardon of sin,

with the witness of the Holy Spirit to our adoption, and

with pleasant foretastes of everlasting glory! For Jesus' sake. Amen.

70 Partial and Perfect

Partial and Perfect The present appears to be the twilight state of the believer's existence. He knows a little of many things — but is not profoundly acquainted with anything. All here on earth is imperfect and partial — but we are looking forward to the perfect and complete. As Paul says, "When that which is perfect has come — then that which is in part shall be done away." 1 Corinthians 13:10. **Our Present State.** "That which is in part."

We know in part — we have a partial knowledge of the nature, mind, and love of God.

We love in part — God's saints, and God's truth.

We enjoy in part — fellowship with Christ, peace of mind, and certainty as to our state and prospects.

We obey in part — the demands of the law, and the requirements of the gospel.

We possess in part — spiritual blessings, Heavenly enjoyments, and earthly good.

We conquer in part — the world, the flesh, and the devil. On none of these points have we reached perfection — but the perfect is coming, and when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away. **Our Future Prospect.** "That which is perfect." Our knowledge will be perfect — and yet we shall ever be adding to its stores. Our love will be perfect — and yet it will ever be expanding and increasing. Our joy will be perfect — and yet it will ever be deepening and widening. Our holiness will be perfect — and in purity we shall shine forth forever. Our obedience will be perfect — no duty will be omitted, nor any precept be violated. Our possessions will be perfect — for we shall inherit glory, and possess God himself as our portion forever. Our victory will be perfect — every foe shall be completely and forever overcome. Our satisfaction will be perfect — not one uneasy desire, or anxious wish, remaining.

Blessed state! Glorious prospect! Delightful anticipation! We shall then be perfect! All about us will then be perfect. Every enjoyment will then be perfect.

Once, we knew nothing at all of spiritual things, all was darkness. We were in darkness; nor only so, we were darkness itself. Thank God, that is not our state at present. Our present knowledge is all of free and sovereign grace. By the grace of God we are what we are. The present is preparatory to the future. We are not what we were. We are not what we shall be. We are in a kind of intermediate state. The end will crown the course. The perfect day will soon dawn upon us. Heaven and all its glorious realities will be ours in possession. The partial will soon give way to the perfect. Whatever we may possess or enjoy at present — God has provided some better thing for us.

Friend, do you possess in part? Have you any spiritual knowledge of God? Do you love God sincerely, though not perfectly? Do you enjoy spiritual things more than you ever did carnal things? Do you obey God's commands from your heart? Do you possess the Spirit of Christ? Do you gain

any victories over the world, and Satan, and your own fallen nature? If so, that which is perfect will soon come, and then that which is in part shall be forever done away! But if you know nothing of these things, your future is dark, and eternity will to you be darkest of all.

Believer, you will never meet with perfection here below — all within and all without, is imperfect. There is perfection only in Christ, keep the eye fixed on him. That which is perfect is coming, be daily on the lookout for that. When that which is perfect is come — then that which is in part shall be done away. Holy Savior — fix our minds on that. Ever blessed Spirit — daily fit and prepare us for it. Father of mercies — we bless you for the prospect of perfection. THE END

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