

# THE EARLY AND THE LATTER RAIN

by James Smith

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*Smith's work using seasonal rain metaphors, with 'early rain' portions designed to convince sinners and lead them to Christ, and 'latter rain' portions to comfort, refresh, strengthen, and sanctify believers.*

44 Chapters

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## 00 The Early and the Latter Rain

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The Early and the Latter Rain James Smith, 1856

## 00p Preface

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PREFACE The rain in Israel fell periodically, at set seasons of the year — the one about seed time, the other just before harvest. The former prepared the ground for the seed — the latter filled the ear and prepared the corn for the sickle. Truth is often compared to rain in God's Word, and in this book you will find truth calculated to impress the mind of the sinner, and lead him to seek salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here are some portions intended to convince of sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come — and to lead the convinced one to the cross for refuge and for rest. This is the early rain. And here also, are portions designed . . .

to comfort those who are cast down,

to refresh those who are weary,

to strengthen those who are weak,

to decide those who are wavering,

to stimulate those who are declining,

to recover those who have wandered, and

to benefit all classes in the family of God. This is the latter rain. As truth is like one tree with many branches, or one river with many streams; so this book seeks one object — the reader's everlasting welfare, by a variety of subjects.

Reader, the writer wishes to do you good — but he has no hope of doing so, without the power and influence of the Holy Spirit being put forth; let me beseech you therefore to pray that the Holy Spirit may descend on you while you read, and apply to your heart, the simple truths presented, with his own invincible power. If that power is exerted — you will be quickened, comforted, and sanctified, and will bless God, that the volume ever came into your possession! But without that power — all our efforts will be vain. We may never meet on earth — but we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ; may we meet there as justified believers to be rewarded, and may you testify that this book has been made a blessing to your soul. Peace be with you, and love with faith, from our Lord Jesus Christ. So prays, Yours in Jesus,

James Smith, 1856

## 01 Paul's Seven Wishes

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### Paul's Seven Wishes

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

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

First, he says, "that I may KNOW Him!" (Php 3:10.) Christ had appeared to Paul, he was revealed in him, and was constantly preached by him. Christ was . . .

the object of his trust,

the subject of his ministry,

and the joy of his heart. But he knew that there was much in Christ with which he was unacquainted. He knew but in part. He desired, therefore, to know more of . . .

the glory of his person,

the riches of his grace,

the magnificence of his work,

the excellency of his natures,

the majesty of his kingdom!

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

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

Throughout eternity we shall be learning Christ!

He is the lesson placed before us in the church on earth;

and he is the lesson placed before the church in Heaven.

Time is given us to learn Christ — and, blessed be God,

eternity will be given to us to learn Christ also.

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

Secondly, he says, "That I may WIN Christ!" (Php 3:8.) He was not merely satisfied to know Christ, as the property of someone else; he wanted Christ as his own! He was not only willing to receive Christ as a free gift — but he would win Christ as a prize. Was Christ to be run for — then he would run. Was Christ to be wrestled for — then he would wrestle. Were there any means by which Christ could be obtained, however painful, however costly, however difficult — then Paul would use them! Did he believe? It was that he might win Christ. Did he pray? It was that he might win Christ. Did he preach? It was that he might win Christ. Did he crucify the old man, mortify the flesh, beat his body and make it his slave? It was that he might win Christ. Did he suffer the loss of all things, and count them but dung and dross? It was that he might win Christ. Did he subject himself to stripes, imprisonment, hunger, cold, nakedness, and a martyr's death? It was that he might win Christ. To possess Christ was his one object, his ruling desire!

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

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

If he wrote — he wrote of Christ.

If he spoke — he spoke of Christ.

If he suffered — he suffered for Christ.

If he sorrowed — it was because professors dishonored Christ.

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

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

Fourthly, "To be FOUND IN Christ." (Php 3:9). Paul wished to be IN Christ. . .

as Noah was in the ark,

as the man-slayer was in his refuge,

as the jewel is in the cabinet,

and as Christ is in God. The closest possible union, the nearest and dearest communion — was desired by him.

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

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

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

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

Christ in Paul was his life.

Paul in Christ was his honor.

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

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

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

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

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

Fifthly, "To be CONFORMED to Christ." (Php 3:10). It was not enough to know Christ, to win Christ, to magnify Christ, or to be in Christ; Paul wishes to be LIKE Christ! He would . . .

breathe his spirit,

exhibit his temper,

copy his example, and

be just like Christ!

He desired to be . . .

like Christ in poverty,

like Christ in suffering,

like Christ in death itself.

Paul desired to be exactly like Jesus!

Meek — as Jesus was meek.

Patient — as Jesus was patient.

Loving — as Jesus was loving.

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

What admiration of Christ is here!

What love to Christ!

What self-renunciation!

What power of grace!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul dearly loved his work.

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

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

Paul had no idea of the soul sleeping, or of an intermediate state where Christ was not. His idea was, "Absent from the body — present with the Lord!" Therefore he was willing to lay down his body, to put off the tabernacle — if by doing so, he may be with Christ. To be with Christ, to him was far better than life with all its comforts. To be with Christ, to him was far better than the world with all its privileges and pleasures. To be with Christ! This is . . .

the flower of bliss,

the crown of glory,

the perfection of happiness. To be with Christ! Paul could desire nothing beyond this! My brother, can you sympathize with Paul here? Does not Jesus sometimes come to you? Are not his visits peculiarly sweet? Do you not, at such times — desire to be forever with him? Do you not? What! a Christian and a stranger to the visits of Jesus — or, enjoy the visits of Jesus, and not desire to be with him forever and altogether? How can one understand this? If one tastes of the grapes of Canaan — one wants to go and see the vineyards. If one obtains a pledge of the inheritance — one wants to go and take full and eternal possession of it. My soul, you do at times long to depart and be with Jesus! Oh, that this were more frequently my sweet experience! All saints feel this, and, blessed be God, that promise extends to it, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted!" Paul's desire is now realized; and if we desire as he did — ours, too will be realized by and bye!

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

Paul's desire was to meet all his converts then, and present them to his glorious Master. "For what," said he, "is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?" "That you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the Word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He is with Christ. With Christ, in the presence of his Father. With Christ, in the mansion prepared for him in his Father's house. With Christ, and with Christ forever! But the last wish waits to be realized — and it will be soon. For "he who shall come, will come — and will not tarry!" "The Lord my God will come, and all the saints with him!" The redemption of the body will soon take place — the redemption of the purchased possession will soon be realized; then . . .

the groans of creation will be silenced,

the prayers of the church will be ended,

the promises that refer to that glorious period will be fulfilled,

and the whole earth will be filled with his glory! Then the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. All flesh will see the salvation of God. The glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together — for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!

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

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

Paul, you see, begins with Christ, goes on with Christ, and ends with Christ. Christ was his Alpha — and Christ was his Omega. Christ was the circle within which he moved, the center to which he constantly tended. The grace of Christ converted him,

the preaching of Christ employed him,

the power of Christ sustained him, and

the glory promised by Christ attracted him.

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

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

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

Christ is my all, my sure defense,  
Nor shall my soul depart from thence:  
He is my rock, my refuge too,  
In spite of all my foes can do!  
Christ is my all, and he will lead  
My soul in pastures green to feed;  
'Tis he supplies my every want,  
And will all needful blessings grant.  
Christ is my all — where should I go?  
Without him I can nothing do;  
Helpless and weak, a sinner great,  
Yet in his righteousness complete!

## 02 The True Remedy!

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### The True Remedy!

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

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

We must look away from everything else.

We must fix the eye intently upon it.

We must exercise a steady confidence in it.

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

And, as soon as ever this is the case . . .

the guilt of sin is removed,

the power of sin is undermined,

the love of sin is destroyed, and

we are perfectly and eternally delivered from all the penal consequences of sin!

There is no remedy for sin — but the blood of Jesus! And that is an infallible remedy! It was never applied in vain — it never can be. It cleanses us from all sin. It justifies us perfectly before God. But to prove its efficacy — we must give up all other medicines! Religious services, sacraments, prayers, praises, priests, and presbyters — all must be renounced, and the blood of Jesus alone must become . . .

the sole object of our trust,

the sole ground of our hope, and

our sole plea for pardon and peace at the throne of grace. This is the true remedy for both sin and sinners. It is exactly suited to them, for its healing properties are infinite and eternal! It is to be obtained gratuitously, without money and without price — and its efficacy may be proved a thousand times over!

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

Another soul-disorder is FEAR, slavish fear! This springs either from . . .

guilt on the conscience,

ignorance of the gospel, or

the lack of simple faith in God, as a covenant God. The true remedy for fear, is faith in God — in God . . .

as revealed in Jesus;

as pledged to us by his precious promises;

as at peace with us, through the perfect work of His beloved Son.

"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me," said Jesus. If I believe . . .

that God is love;

that he has received full satisfaction at the hands of His Son for all my sins;

that He will rejoice over me to do me good;

that He will never leave me, nor forsake me;

that He will cause all things to work together for my welfare

— then how can I fear? What shall I fear? And, as a disciple of Jesus, how can I believe the gospel, the glorious good news — if I do not believe these things? They are spoken to all believers. They are the common property of every member of the living Church of God. Every slavish fear, then — must arise . . .

from taking the eye off the great atonement, or

from not understanding the everlasting gospel, or

from unbelief! And the trueremedy for slavish fear is to . . .

trust simply and entirely to what Christ has done for acceptance with God,

to keep the promises of grace continually before the mind, and

simply believe what God has said, because God has said it. He said it . . .

because He meant it,  
because He wished us to believe it, and  
because He was willing to give us strong and everlasting consolation. In every time of trial,  
in every season of darkness,  
in every severe conflict —

turn then to the Lord's Word, and with David say, "The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, therefore will we not fear!" Or, "The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?" This is the only true remedy!

Another soul-disorder is anxious care. Worry or anxiety is prohibited by the gospel, because it is injurious to us, and reflects badly upon the care and kindness of God. Yet we, like Martha — are anxious and troubled about many things. We lose sight of the fact that God is our Father, and as such is engaged to provide for us. We forget that we . . .

are in our Father's world,  
are living under our Father's eye,  
are fed by our Father's hand, and  
that our interests lie near our Father's heart! The true remedy for anxious care is to realize daily,  
and every hour of every day . . .

that the Lord cares for us,  
that he knows where we are, and what we are,  
that he has fixed the bounds of our habitation,  
that his feeding the sparrows is a proof that he will never neglect His children.

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

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

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

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

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

Another soul-disorder is spiritual weakness. This we deeply and daily feel. The longer we live — the weaker we appear to be; that is — we feel and realize our weakness more. When we look at

our duties, on our foes, on our difficulties — we feel at times almost overwhelmed under a sense of our weakness! We are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think a holy thought; and yet . . .

the old man is to be crucified,

Satan is to be conquered,

the world is to be overcome,

the journey through a waste howling wilderness is to be completed, and the crown is to be won before we wear it. But there is a remedy for our weakness; it is union to Jesus. When united to Jesus . . .

his wisdom becomes ours;

his righteousness becomes ours;

his strength becomes ours;

his fullness is placed against our emptiness;

his wealth is placed against our poverty; and

his strength is placed against our weakness. His grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in our weakness. Our needs are to drive us to his fullness;

our weakness is to cause us to lean upon his arm;

and our sense of nothingness to make him all in all.

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

Let us, then, seek daily to realize our union to Christ — that we are members of his body; and let us obtain mercy and grace from him to help us in time of need. Then our weakness will . . .

endear his strength,

increase our dependence,

stimulate us to earnest fervent prayer,

and glorify the riches of his free grace.

This is the only true remedy!

## 03 A Good Hope Through Grace

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### A Good Hope Through Grace

HOPE is the sweetener of human life. But for hope — we would dash down the bitter cup, and rush into desperation and despair! As painful as life often is — it would be ten times worse, but for hope. But hope sometimes is limited to time, and sometimes it rests on a false basis. Then comes disappointment, sorrow and woe. We shall not dwell on hope in general — but on the Christian's hope. "A good hope; a good hope through grace." A good hope is a steady expectation, raised in the soul, of the possession of some future good. Its author is the Holy Spirit, and the means by which it is produced is the everlasting gospel. For example, a man is convinced of sin, alarmed by the law, and realizes that his desert is Hell. He is afraid of God, he is terrified at the thought of judgment, and at times perhaps, longs for annihilation. He believes in Hell — and dreads it. He believes in Heaven — but has no hope of it. He is afraid to pray — and yet dares not neglect it. The pride of his heart gives way. He is ready to do anything, and willing to be anything — if he may but escape the wrath to come!

He now hears the everlasting gospel; it proclaims a full, free, and immediate pardon of all sin. It presents a glorious righteousness, to be placed to the account of all who believe. It opens a fountain which cleanses the foulest sinner, and makes him as white as snow. It reveals the infinite, undeserved, and sovereign love of God. It promises Heaven, with all its blessedness and glory, to every one who believes. The Holy Spirit now accompanies this gospel with his own sweet and invincible power to the heart. Unbelief gives way. Doubts, fears, and dullness depart. Hope, cheering hope, springs up. The man believes the gospel record, he has confidence in God, he casts himself on Jesus. This faith is the immediate parent of hope. He almost unconsciously begins to expect good things at the hand of God. His expectation deepens and strengthens. He is persuaded that God is love. He is filled with wonder when he hears that God beseeches him to be reconciled. He yields at once. His fetters are broken. The yoke of bondage is destroyed. Pardon and peace are enjoyed. The Spirit of adoption whispers, "Abba!" in his heart, and he cries out, "My Father!"

Good hope is now produced. It roots itself in the man's nature. It influences the man's heart and life. It lifts up his head. It brightens his eye. It strengthens his power of vision. It pierces the clouds. It passes through the distance with the velocity of lightning, and fixes on the glory provided in God's Word. The OBJECT of a good hope is good — the greatest good. Guided by the promises, it embraces all the good things which are limited by time. So that the Christian hopes for or expects, strength equal to his day, and that the grace of Jesus will be sufficient for him. He hopes .

to conquer every foe, however powerful, vigilant, or determined;

to master every difficulty, however great and startling;

to bear every cross patiently after Jesus;

to endure all the afflictions that may come upon him, whether they be losses, crosses, bodily pains, temptations, or disappointments;

to persevere to the end of his journey, and pass over the river in safety.

Faith often looks forward, and leads the mind over the whole journey — but hope accompanies it, and whispers, "You will endure that, you will overcome that, you will conquer that." Hope has a sweet voice, and though its strains are sometimes a little melancholy, it cheers the pilgrim as it sits in his bosom, like the nightingale in the thicket, amidst the gloom, and sings, "It shall be well — all shall be well — and well forever; for all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to his purpose. Heaviness may endure for a night — but joy comes in the morning." But a good hope is not limited to the good things of time; it embraces the invisible eternal world, the residence of God, the dwelling-place of Jesus Christ. A good hope cheers the dying Christian with the thought, "Absent from the body — present with the Lord." It persuades him that . . .

every pain will soon cease,

every sorrow will soon end,

every trouble will soon terminate. A good hope reminds him, that though he may carry his cross to the gates of glory — he can carry it no farther! Every cross must be laid down on the threshold of that blissful mansion. A good hope soothes his fainting heart, and cheers his sinking mind — as it speaks of the better land, and his saving interest in it, and holds up the testimony which sparkles like a cabinet of gems: "They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes!" A good hope even goes beyond this — to the coming, the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ — to set up his kingdom, fulfill all the glowing predictions of his Word, and make good his largest promises to his people. The coming of Christ is the most desirable, the most glorious event predicted in all the future — and, as such, hope fixes upon it. Oh, the flashes of joy that enter through the eye of hope into the soul, as it looks forward to the second advent! Oh, the pleasure that at times thrills the spirit — as it anticipates that sublime event! Hope looks, longs, and at times wearies — for the coming of Jesus. She rejoices in what is laid up in Heaven, in the priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! This good hope places the espoused spirit on the tip-toe of expectation for the coming of the beloved Bridegroom, openly to celebrate his nuptials. Hence, the believer is described by the apostle as "looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." This good hope is of GRACE — entirely of grace. It owes its existence to the free, sovereign, and unmerited favor of God. It originates in grace — not in works; in what is in God — not in anything in man.

It has cheered the hearts of the vilest.

It has visited the abode of the most wretched.

It has brightened the eye of the most unworthy. This good hope . . .

flows from the God of all grace,  
is generated by the Spirit of grace,  
by the instrumentality of the gospel of grace, and  
is intended to reflect the praise of God's glorious grace forever!

Oh, Grace!

You friend of man,  
you brightest emanation of the glory of God,  
you source of all good,  
you center of all excellence —

I admire, I adore, I love you! But for you — good hope would have never visited my poor, polluted, miserable bosom! But for you — I would have been languishing in gloom, sitting in despondency, or sinking in despair! But for you — I would have never . . .

wept over sin,

fled to Jesus,

embraced his cross, or

felt the sweets of pardon, peace, and liberty! But for you — I would have been a felon in chains, a criminal in prison, a malefactor doomed to eternal death!

Oh, Grace, how much I owe you!

Oh, Grace, how shall I sufficiently extol you!

Yes, good hope is through free grace — and free grace alone!

Grace devised it,

grace made provision for it,

grace produced it,

grace sustains it, and

grace shall have all the glory of it! This hope is a good hope. It is good in its author — which is God, who is called the God of hope. Sweet is that prayer of the apostle, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit." Whatever God produces must be good; whatever God gives must be excellent. Hope is his gift, one of those favors referred to by James, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." This hope is good in its nature. It is an expectation, founded on the goodness of God, generated by the good Spirit of God, of receiving good things from God. It is an expectation which does honor to . . .

the benevolence of the Divine Nature,  
the veracity of the Divine Word, and  
the glorious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. This hope is good in its effects. It . . .  
banishes sullen gloom,  
dissipates dreary fears,  
scatters distressing doubt, and  
conquers accursed unbelief!  
It lights up a candle in the prisoner's dark cell.  
It opens a door to the traveler in Achor's dreary valley.  
It kindles a fire in the sinner's icy heart. This hope gives . . .  
luster to the eye,  
color to the lip, and  
bloom to the cheek. This hope purifies the heart from . . .  
prejudice against God,  
enmity to man, and  
accursed selfishness!  
It sets the idle to work,  
sends the sick soul to the Physician, and  
stimulates the disheartened to run the race set before him.  
It is good, for it gives . . .  
God — praise,  
its possessor — comfort,  
and benefits all around.  
It is good, for it rests on a good foundation. A foundation . . .  
broader than time,  
firmer than earth, and  
as durable as the throne of God.  
It rests . . .  
on the infinite love of Father, Son, and Spirit;

on the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;  
on the meritorious blood and perfect righteousness of Incarnate Deity;  
on the many exceeding great and precious promises of the sacred Word;  
on the oath of God, that he will not be angry with his people;  
and on the immutable faithfulness of a God who cannot lie.

Glorious foundation of our hope!

What can shake it!

What disturb it! My soul, let your hope rest, not on anything within you, or on anything done by you — but on . . .

what God is,

what God has said,

what God has done, and

what God is pledged to do. This is the rock on which to cast your anchor — it will keep you steady amidst all the storms of life — and in the great earthquake of death. As the anchor grasping the rock holds fast the vessel, causing it to outride the storm — so your hope, grasping this glorious rock, will keep you safe and steady. It moors you to the eternal throne. Others may make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience — but you never shall. Other vessels may be dashed to pieces by the fury of the storm — but your never can. The metal of which this anchor is made is so strong, and so well welded — that all the powers of earth and Hell may try in vain to break it. The cable by which this anchor is held — the faith of the operation of God — is so powerful that no weight can ever snap it, or even strain it. The timber to which it is fastened in the vessel — the work of the Spirit of God in the soul — is firmer than any old English oak, or Lebanon's far-famed cedars.

Therefore it is — that every vessel of mercy is enabled to sail over the stormy and troubled ocean of time, and notwithstanding its dangerous eddies and tides, its rocks and quicksands, its whirlpools and waterfalls — not one ever perished yet. Perished! Forgive this thought, alike dishonorable to God and injurious to man! Perished! Utterly impossible, since He who holds the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hand, has said, "They shall never perish — ever!"

Perished! if so, then . . .

the promise must fail,

the oath of God must be violated,

the blood of the cross must be dishonored,

the everlasting covenant must be broken,

the Word of Jesus must prove a falsehood,

and Satan would triumph over the Savior!

Perished! No, never one! Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, my soul, in this! Hold this fast, and never give it up; for if one has perished, more may; and if anyone is likely — you are the man. Yes, my feeble, fickle, foolish soul would be sure to be found among the lost! But no, that hope that originated with God, is sustained by God, and will be consummated in the presence and glory of God. "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness." A good "hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit." But if I hope for victory — and lose the battle; if I hope for the prize — and lose the race; if I hope for Heaven — but am doomed to Hell — would I not be ashamed? And when tormented by devils and fellow-sufferers in Hell — would not my hope make me ashamed? But we are saved by hope. Saved from distraction, desperation, and despair now; and saved from the horrors of Hell forever.

Hope, eldest daughter of a living faith — you have cheered, solaced, and comforted me hitherto; will you not comfort me to the end? Yes, yes! And when, on my dying pillow, when heart and flesh is failing, when earth is receding, and the unseen world is approaching — you will whisper to me, "Grace reigns! Glory approaches! Heaven opens! Jesus calls you. Farewell; go realize forever what I have taught you to expect, and assured you of enjoying!"

Thrice blessed hope! You have been my helmet when fighting on land — and my anchor in the storm at sea;

you have opened a door of escape in the valley of trouble and sorrow;

you have moderated my grief under losses and bereavements;

you have stimulated me to activity when dejected and discouraged;

you have saved me from despair many a time, bidding me look out for better days, assuring me that there was a good time coming.

Comfortable hope! companion of my wintry seasons and darkest nights — you shall accompany me to the gates of the celestial city, and only expire in the blaze of its glory and inconceivable splendor! God of hope, I bless you for this grace, this fruit of your Spirit; strengthen it in my soul, and confirm it unto the end, for Jesus' sake!

Reader, have you a good hope? A hope you have, I doubt not; but is it a good hope? Was it preceded by conviction of sin, despair of help in self, and submission to the righteousness of God? Was it begotten at the cross? Is it nourished at the throne of grace? Does it rest on the faithful Word of God?

These are serious and important questions; for a false hope will deceive you. It may delude you in health and strength — but it will fail you in the hour of trial, and in the article of death. See to it . . .

that your hope rests on Jesus,

that it purifies your heart,

that it bears the stamp of Heaven upon it.

All the productions of that blessed Spirit bear his stamp — his private mark — upon them; that mark, is holiness. If your hope is good . . .

it centers in Christ,

it consecrates you to God, and

looks forward to a Heaven that is holy, as well as happy. A good hope always leads its possessor to sigh, cry, and pray for holiness — more than happiness. By this one mark you may prove the nature of your hope. Are you a hopeless sinner? You may become a hopeful, happy believer. Flee to Jesus from your sins, your guilt, your desert; he will receive you, and his Spirit will give you a good hope through grace. Are you a poor doubting soul? Jesus asks you, "Why do you doubt?" Mercy is free. His blood is infinitely efficacious. His righteousness is for every one that is willing to have it, and wear it. Doubt not, my friend — but hope in God, for you shall yet praise him. Are you just going to give up your hope? What, has it come to that? Well, then, even give it up. Give it up! You startle at this advice, I know, and something within you says, "Never!" No, no, you never will give up your hope, for hope will never give up you, or, rather, the God of hope will not. Hope on, hope ever, and never talk of giving up then!

## 04 I must Be Useful!

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### I must Be Useful!

Man's chief end is to glorify God on earth — and enjoy him forever in Heaven. We were created capable of this. We were redeemed on purpose for this. We are taught by the Spirit in order to this. Who that has tasted that the Lord is gracious — has not felt the desire to be useful? New converts always feel that they ought to be employed for God. The Holy Spirit always prompts us to glorify Jesus. It is His office. It is His work. It is His delight. But how many grieve the Spirit, by resisting his impulses! How many quench these workings of the Spirit, by refusing to yield and obey!

Reader, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have felt something of this. You have felt that you ought to do something for Jesus — that you ought to endeavor to do something to glorify Jesus, and benefit your fellow men. Do you feel so now? Do you allow these feelings to influence you? Or have you resisted them, until they have died away within you? Many are the means employed by Satan to quench this fire in the Christian's heart.

John Thomas was called by divine grace when young. Being brought out into the liberty of the gospel, his heart glowed with love, and he felt something in his soul which led him to say, "I must be useful!" But he was in humble life, and naturally shy, and these two things greatly hindered him. He made up his mind to speak to someone — but just when about to do so it was suggested, "It would be unfitting for one in your poor circumstances, to do so," and he refrained. He furnished himself with a number of tracts, fixed upon a row of houses where he would distribute them; but when he began his work, his natural shyness began to operate, and he felt as if he could not knock at a single door, and, with the exception of a tract or two given to some children — the effort was a failure. Satan prevailed, and no good was done. Plans were constantly formed, attempts made — but all ended in nothing. At length, hearing a perverted gospel, distorted views of the doctrine of election quieted his mind; "I see," he said, "God will have his own people; if I work, only the elect will be saved; and if I do not work, God will not allow his elect to perish, because I am inactive." Thus all effort ceased, and the impulse in his heart which made him feel, "I must be useful" died away. But God did not leave him — but by a long course of discipline, his views were corrected, the old flame revived, and again he felt as if he could not live if he was not useful. He believed the doctrine of election as firmly as ever — but he saw that it was no rule for his conduct. It was for his comfort, not his guide. He came to the conclusion, that it was his duty to work as if everything depended on his working; and when he had done all, to rest for success on the power of the Holy Spirit alone. This fed the fire, this fanned the flame, and, "I must be useful" was like an impulsive power in his heart. He wrote letters, spoke in private, at length published tracts, and in the end preached the gospel. Many have been converted, comforted, and established through his instrumentality; and though the former part of his Christian life was thrown away, he has labored assiduously since. John Thomas still lives, his pen is not laid aside, nor is his tongue silenced, consequently his usefulness is not at an end. He has risen above his shyness, understands how Divine sovereignty does not interfere with man's duty, and feels the impulse within him often, as if

his whole inner man exclaimed, "I must be useful!"

Reader, do you know anything of this feeling? Are you indeed converted to God? Has the love of God been shed abroad in your heart? Does your love of Jesus constrain you, and cause you to feel as if to be useful is to be happy — to be honorable — yes, to live? What is life without usefulness? If you have the grace of God in your heart, you may be useful — you ought to be useful. You have one talent, if not more. But in these days, few seem to be entrusted with only one. Education is so general, the press is so busy, and liberty is so common, that most of us seem to be entrusted with many talents. There are opportunities for usefulness in every direction, and facilities of all kinds; the church, the school, the village, the town, the world — all unite to open doors of usefulness to us. The pen, the press, the tongue, the influence — all may all be employed for God's glory and man's good.

If you feel the impulse within, urging you to do something for God, for souls — take heed how you quench it. Satan will suggest that there are plenty to work without you — but you are needed. He will tell you it is presumption — but no, it is duty. He will persuade you that you will do no good — but God blesses every honest effort. He will say you can do so very little — but every little helps. Little drops form the shower. Little drops constitute the ocean. Little seeds crowd the fields, and bring the harvest.

Satan will endeavor to pervert Scripture, the doctrines of grace, and the conduct of others; but your duty is plain, therefore "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Give no place to the devil." Your own idle heart may unite with Satan, and the influence of professors around you may combine to hinder you; but let this be your motto, "I must be useful!"

Though my circumstances are low, though my talents are small, though my efforts must necessarily be feeble, though my sphere of operation is obscure — "I must be useful!" Let the flesh cry out ever so loud, let friends advise as they may, let enemies oppose me as they please, let Satan suggest what he will, "I must be useful!"

Like my beloved Lord and Master, though I work for my bread, though I am the servant of man, though young in years, though overlooked and despised by others, "I must be about my Father's business." I was born to be useful. I was redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus to be useful. I was called by grace to be useful. And "I must be useful!"

Let us never forget that a solemn responsibility rests upon us, which we are not at liberty to forget, overlook, or evade. If we do not realize it now, it is because . . .

our understanding is perverted,

our conscience is benumbed,

or our hearts are carnal.

If we made the Scriptures our rule,

if we walked closely with God,

if we realized the design of true Christianity

— then we would feel that a deep and solemn responsibility rested upon us. May the Lord make us feel it — if we do not; and increase the feeling of it — if we do. We are responsible . . .

for the use of every talent,

for the improvement of every opportunity,

for the right employment of all our influence.

We must not shift off this responsibility — it is in vain to try, and to forget or evade it is consummate folly. The command is reiterated, it is presented in a variety of forms, and will be the rule of judgment when Jesus comes. God promises to bless us in working, and to reward us for working. Indeed it is only in the way of righteousness, that we are warranted to expect to meet him; it is only as we endeavor to be useful, that we can expect to be spiritually healthy or happy. We are not to work for life — but because we have life; not to merit Heaven — but because Heaven is freely given to us; not to bring in God as a debtor to us — but because we are debtors to his free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace! Do any deplore that they are not useful? Allow me to ask: Do you endeavor to be? Are you at work in God's strength, with a view to his glory? If so, beware of a hasty judgment. The seed sown yesterday, will not appear above ground for some time yet. The young tree lately planted, may not bring forth fruit for a year or more. We have no means of deciding as to the exact amount of our usefulness, or at times whether we are useful at all or not. Besides which, we are to work in faith. We must give God credit. He has said, "Your labor is not in vain." This is true — despite of appearances. This is true — however your desponding heart may conclude. This is true — however your hasty judgment may decide. This is true — notwithstanding all that Satan may suggest or say. Do any ask, "What can I do?" That is not the first question. Decide first what you are willing to do. Are you willing to begin low? Like the poor Israelite of old — will you bring the handful of goat's hair for God's tabernacle? Or, are you so proud, that unless you can bring something costly — you will bring nothing; that unless you can do something splendid — you will do nothing? Pride keeps many inactive, and generates sloth, and suggests a thousand excuses for doing nothing! You can do something. You may only be able to do a little at present; but begin, and your talents will improve and increase, your sphere of operations will enlarge, your efforts, which are but drops at first — will soon form a little stream, and that stream will deepen and widen as it flows, and eternity alone will reveal the good that a feeble instrument can effect!

O that God would kindle a fire in every Christian's heart, to burn up all the wood, hay, and stubble — of pride, selfishness, and love of ease; that each may feel it warming, working, and constraining them to say, "I must be useful!"

I live — if I am useful. I am happy — if I am useful. I am content to be poor or rich, sick or healthy, live or die — just so that I may be useful. Have I learning? I will employ it to be useful. Have I influence? I will employ it to be useful. Can I do much? I will do it. Can I do little? I will do it. Can I do but one thing — the giving only of a cup of cold water to some fainting disciple of Jesus? I will do that.

Let me be useful — though unknown.

Let me be useful — though despised and hated.

Let me be useful — that God's glory may be advanced.

Let me be useful — that my Lord and Savior may be exalted.

Let me be useful — that the effect of the Spirit's work in my heart may appear.

Let me be useful — that Satan may be deprived of his prey.

Let me be useful — that sinners may be plucked as brands from the burning.

Let me be useful — that saints may be made happy by my means.

Let me so work, walk, and live — that it may, with truth, be inscribed on my tomb, "He was useful!"

## 05 A Kind Wish

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A Kind Wish The religion of Christ is always benevolent. It wishes well to all. It desires the welfare of all. Its language is, "As we have opportunity — let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith." Bigotry, cruelty, covetousness, and oppression are diametrically opposed to the gospel. None of these were found in Jesus, and he is the only exact model of his own religion. Just in proportion as we resemble him, do we possess religion — but no further.

Many talk most about religion, who practice least; they are like the empty barrel, which always sounds loudest.

It was pure benevolence, or the working of the love of Christ, which led a Christian lady to say to her friend, "I hope you are not a stranger to Christ." And from the same benign principle, we wish to say to our readers, "We hope that you are not strangers to Christ."

Many hear of Christ — who do not know him; as I may hear of an officer in the field of battle — and know no more of him but that he exists.

Many read of Christ — who do not know him; as I may read of the Emperor of France — and yet not know him.

Many talk of Christ — who do not know him; as I may talk of some eminent physician — and yet be unacquainted with him.

Real religion stands in the knowledge of Christ; and the knowledge of Christ is always preceded by a knowledge of our need of him. The knowledge of Christ is like the man's knowledge of the Physician, who has been raised from the gates of death by his skill. Or the man's knowledge of his Liberator, who has been purchased from degrading slavery and introduced to liberty and comfort by his property. Or the child's knowledge of his Father, who having left home, squandered his property, lost his character, and reduced himself to abject wretchedness and woe; returning, has been received, forgiven, and restored to happiness and honor. Or like the subject's knowledge of his Sovereign, who having been a traitor, and having sought his monarch's life, has been invited to the palace, pardoned, and elevated to a most honorable post near his person. Or like a man's knowledge of his Friend, who at the risk of his own life saved him from a watery grave, took him to his own home, and made him his bosom friend and companion.

We, who are Christians indeed, were once sick with a mortal disease; but Jesus became our physician, visited us, prescribed for us, provided for us, yes, restored us to health by applying to us his own blood, drawn from his own heart!

We were in bondage to sin, Satan, and the world; but Jesus, at the expense of his own life, ransomed us, restored us to liberty, and introduced us to plenty and peace.

We were degraded prodigals, who had wandered from God, depraved our natures, and rendered ourselves odious in his sight; but when we came back to his feet — he received us graciously, forgave us heartily, and reconciled us to our Father and our God.

We were in rebellion against God, traitors to his throne and government; but Jesus took the vile traitors place, and suffered what we deserved; he then invited us to be reconciled to his Father, won our consent, and filled Heaven with new joy when we were restored to friendship with God.

We were perishing, and were all but beyond hope, when Jesus gave himself for us, and by his power, pity, and mercy, saved us from everlasting burnings! Our knowledge of Jesus produces confidence in him, and we commit ourselves, and all we have, into his hands. It produces love to him, and we give him our warmest affections, hearty praises, and ready services. It produces a preference of Jesus, so that he stands first in our desires, pursuits, songs, and estimation. No one is like Jesus to us. No name is like his. No righteousness is like his. No love is like his. No commendation is like his. No beauty like is his.

We admire him, prefer him, trust in him, commend him, obey him — and hope to spend eternity in praising his blessed name.

Reader, "I hope that you are not a stranger to Christ." Many are strangers — who imagine that they are not. John Barnes was boasting the other day that he had a good heart, and had never done anyone any harm; that he went to a place of worship, and pretty much kept to himself; and he had no doubt, as God was merciful, that if he died he should go to Heaven. But John Barnes is a stranger to Christ; he has never felt himself to be a lost and ruined sinner in the sight of God, nor his need of a better righteousness than his own, consequently he has never fled to Jesus to be saved from the wrath to come. He is trusting in his own supposed goodness, and is building upon the sand. John Barnes will find when he comes on a deathbed, and the solemnities of eternity stare him in the face — that his "bed is too short, and his covering is too narrow," as the prophet says. May the Lord open his eyes to see the true state of his own heart, the extensive requirements of the holy law, and the purity of the Heavenly world — and then he will not need to be told that he needs a Savior — but will be glad to make Christ his hiding-place, and look to his blood for peace. He will no longer live a stranger to Christ — but will pray, with Paul, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death."

Miriam Margretts was brought up in a Sunday school, and had the truths of the gospel constantly presented to her mind. Her teacher labored hard and long to lead her into an acquaintance with Jesus Christ. She could repeat great portions of the New Testament by heart, and a number of very sweet hymns. Her conduct was moral, and her manners pleasing. She felt in her heart that she wanted something that she had not got. She said her prayers regularly, read her Bible, attended the house of prayer, and passed for a hopeful character. But she was not happy. She was not at peace. There was a restlessness experienced within, a dissatisfaction with herself, with the world, with almost everything. She knew there was something in real religion that she had not got — but she scarcely knew what it was. She was a stranger to Jesus. A friend one day entered into conversation with her, and proposed the question, "Are you happy?" She confessed she was not. But why? She knew not; there was a gnawing within, on account of which she could not rest. Her friend spoke to her of Jesus, told her that he came into the world to do what the law required of her, and to suffer the punishment her sins deserved. That he had done all, and suffered all, that

was necessary to make peace with God, and give her a title to Heaven. And that Jesus was prepared to place to her account, all that he had done and suffered, and allow her to plead it before God as her own, the moment she committed herself into his hands, renounced all her feelings, promises, and efforts — and trusted in him alone.

Miriam listened, thought, and felt, that this was just what she needed, and the Holy Spirit enabled her to venture on him, and to confide in Jesus alone for salvation. That moment she felt peace. She saw that Jesus had paid all the debts she had contracted, and that as the perfect work of Jesus was made over to her, she owed nothing either to the law or justice of God. This brought tears into her eyes; love sprung up in her soul; and she was filled with joy. She at once made a full, entire, and deliberate surrender of herself, her time, her talents, her all — to Jesus, to be consecrated to his service, and employed for his praise.

She began to know Jesus. She felt him to be indescribably precious. He appeared to her to be the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one. The inward craving ceased. A sacred satisfaction was felt. True benevolence began to work, and she exclaimed, "Oh, that all the world knew Jesus!"

Reader, my paper is full, I must close; from my heart of hearts the expression wells up, whoever you are, "I hope that you are not a stranger to Jesus!"

## 06 Ignorance of the Future

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Ignorance of the Future "Not knowing what will happen to me." Acts 20:22 "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth!" Proverbs 27:1

Though the apostle was inspired by the Holy Spirit, there were some things which he could not do, and some things which he did not know. He could not heal Trophimus, so he left him at Miletus, sick; and he was now going up to Jerusalem — but he did not know what would happen to him there. He knew in general, that in every city he would suffer persecution — but with the particular results of this journey he was not acquainted.

It is just so with us, for we do not know what a day may bring forth. We are ignorant of the future!

It may be prosperous — or it may be adverse.

We may suffer much from sickness — or we may enjoy sound health.

We may meet with accidents — or we may be graciously preserved from them.

We may be losers by calamity or wicked men — or God may set a hedge about us, as he did about Job.

We may be bereaved of our children, other near relatives or dear friends — or we may soon be summoned by death to appear before God ourselves!

What may be our lot in future — we do not know. We are profoundly ignorant of it. But all is arranged — and arranged by our good, gracious, and infinitely wise God. Nothing is left to 'chance'. Still, all is hidden from us, and this is in order to prevent carnal security on the one hand, and despair on the other. We should never feel secure, or say with Job, "I shall die in my nest!" Nor with David, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved!" But rather attend to the admonition of Paul, "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed — lest he fall."

Neither should we despair, for the darkest night may usher in a bright and beautiful morning. The late and cold spring may introduce an abundant and glorious harvest. The sharp winter may end in a lovely summer. To despair is to sin; whether it be in reference to providence or grace. The God of providence is abundant in goodness; and the God of grace is rich in mercy unto all who call upon him. To doubt the goodness of God is to question the excellency of his nature and the truth of his promises; to despair of the mercy of God is to reflect upon the merit of Jesus, and the love, the infinite love, of the Father's heart.

All events are so ordered by our God as to encourage confidence, hope, and prayer. God alone, as revealed in Jesus, should be our confidence. We may trust in him. We ought to trust in him. We must trust in him — or be wretched. We should hope, for our God requires it, encourages it, and rewards it. We never can sink too low to hope. Our circumstances can never be such as to forbid hope. We should pray; pray for all that we need, and against all that we fear. Prayer will be found to be . . .

a relief in trouble,  
a solace in sorrow, and  
a medium of blessing to our souls.

Whatever may happen in the future, into whatever circumstances we may be brought — we should exercise confidence in God, hope still in his mercy, and plead earnestly at his throne of grace, believing that he has ordered all things in love, arranged all in infinite wisdom, and will overrule all for our ultimate good. "My times are in your hands!" Psalms 31:15

What should our ignorance of the future produce? It very frequently produces what it ought not. As for instance, it produces anxiety. Because we do not know exactly what is appointed for us, or for our families, we are full of anxiety respecting them. This is wrong, decidedly wrong!

If God was not infinitely good,  
or if he were not a father to us,  
or if he had not made so many great and precious promises,  
or if he had not bidden us cast all our cares upon him —

then we might have cause to be anxious. But to be anxious now, is sin. The holy apostle says, "I want you to be without concerns."

Because we are ignorant of the future, we sometimes become depressed, and give way to gloom or despondency. Nothing can be more dishonorable to God, or injurious to us! To despond, when perhaps the future may be bright and beautiful. To give way to gloom, when we are assured that the grace of Jesus is sufficient for us, and that his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness. Our ignorance of the future should produce simple dependence upon God. Realizing the fact, that I do not know what is before me, or even what would be best for me — I shall . . .

lean on the Lord's arm,  
trust in the Lord's Word,  
depend on the Lord's faithfulness,  
and leave all to the Lord's love.

I may well depend on him — after he has safely led so many through the roughest paths and greatest difficulties. I may well depend on him, when I know that he has never failed or forsaken those who trust in him, and has pledged his Word that he never will. Yes, I should exercise a simple, child-like dependence on God, in every step of my journey through this desert land. Our ignorance of the future should check presumption. We are prone to speculate and presume. We are often misled by appearances. We sometimes lose sight of our own weakness. We forget that our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, and that we are ignorant of his devices. Like Israel, we proceed in a certain course without a divine warrant, we go against the foe in our own strength, or we imagine that we can manage our concerns by our own wisdom. This is presumption, and such presumption as our ignorance of the future is calculated to check! Our

ignorance of the future should prevent foreboding. I do not know God's purposes — but I should judge of them from his perfections. I do not know his pre-appointments — but I do know his promises; and therefore I should never give way to foreboding. My Savior forbids it, and the prohibition flows from the tender love of his heart. He says to all who believe on his name, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them! But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own!" Matthew 6:31-34 Our ignorance of the future should fix our attention on present duties. Every day brings its own duties with it; and our concern should be to perform the duties of each day, in that day. Many people, while endeavoring to pry into the future — neglect the present. The happy man lives day by day. Whatever appears to be a present duty — should have present attention. Could you visit any sick person today? Do not put it off until tomorrow. Could you relieve any person today? Delay not to do it. Could you speak or write for Jesus today? Let it be done today. Beware of delay! Never postpone a duty — if you have an opportunity to perform it, for you do not know what things may befall you. Our ignorance of the future should lead you to prepare for the worst. If you are prepared for the worst — you may calmly and quietly meet all the rest. See to it, that you are cleansed from all guilt, that you have your wedding garment on, that your lamp is bright and burning — and then let what will befall you along the way — all will be right at the end.

Now observe, first, though we do not know what may befall us — God does, and he is our Friend, our Father, and our God. As our Friend — he will watch over us; and as our God — he will supply our need. Whatever may happen to us — we shall never be friendless, fatherless, or Godless; and, therefore, we can have no reason to be dejected or cast down.

Secondly, though we do not know what may befall us — we do know that all shall be well with us. This should satisfy us. More, it should fill us with gratitude, and excite in us the strongest confidence.

Thirdly, if we do not know how it will be with us in time — we do know how it will be with us in eternity. All will be well, and well forever then. However rough the road, however trying the journey — the rest, the peace, the pleasures of our eternal home, will more than make up for all.

There are no long, dark nights, in that perfect land.

There are no sighs or sorrows in our Father's house.

There are no trials or troubles in our Savior's glorious kingdom.

There are no wants or woes before the throne. "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!" Revelation 7:16-17. It is well with them now, and so it will be with us when we have done and suffered the will of God here below.

Fourthly, nothing shall happen but what God has appointed, and will overrule. He fulfills all that is appointed for us.

There may be 'accidents' with us — but there are none with God. Our plans may be frustrated — his never can be. Our purposes may be broken off — but his counsel stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Everything happens under his eye, and is ruled and overruled by his wisdom and power!

Finally, let the worst happen to us — we are still in union with Christ, and beloved of our God. Suppose the worst, the very worst. Enemies, trials, troubles, crosses, sickness, death itself — we may yet ask with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Romans 8:35-39. Glorious persuasion this! Blessed, thrice blessed confidence, thus forcibly expressed!

Beloved, let us then go forward into the future, leaning on our beloved; and let us rejoice in the fact that though we do not know what may befall us — yet he knows! And so deep is his interest in us, that he will not allow anything to harm us — but will cause all things to work together for our good.

We should suffer as Paul did, supported by the assurance that "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands!"

## 07 The Dying Missionary's Admonition

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The Dying Missionary's Admonition When the missionary Schwartz was on his dying bed, he said to his physician, "Ah, doctor! doctor! Be sure that you are not missing from the right hand of the Judge on that day!" These were solemn words, and were uttered under solemn circumstances. They were doubtless suited to the person to whom they were first addressed; but they are just as suited to us. The dying missionary would say to each of us, "Ah, sinner, sinner, be sure that you are not missing from the right hand of the Judge in that day!"

"That day!" Who needs be told what day is referred to? We know the reference is to the day of Judgment. The great day. The last day. The deciding day. The declaring day. The day on which our eternal doom will be decided — and the irrevocable sentence passed. The day in which we must give account of ourselves to God — of our conduct, our motives, our aims. Give an account of how we have spent our time, used our bibles, and employed our talents. Give an account of how we have treated the gospel sent to us, the Savior presented to us, and the Holy Spirit who has strived with us. Give an account of ourselves to God, to God who knows all about us — but will hear from us, and out of our own mouths condemn us — if it is found that we have slighted his mercy, neglected salvation, and ruined our own souls!

"That day!" Oh, what a day it will be! We are hastening to it. We must meet it. We are deeply interested in the decisions of it.

"The right hand of the Judge." Here on the RIGHT hand, all are placed who are acquitted. All who are justified. That is, all who . . .

believe on Jesus now,

walk with Jesus now,

work for Jesus now, and

strive to imitate Jesus in all they do.

Such may not be known now. They may be too humble to be noticed — too poor to be regarded. But, then, they will be separated from the rest — as the sheep are separated from the goats, as the wheat is separated from the tares. Then they will be distinguished, and placed at the right hand of the Judge.

Others will see them, envy them — but never be permitted to join them.

Reader, your father, your mother, may be there on the right hand — but not you! Your wife, or your husband, may be there — but not you. Your brother, your sister, may be there — but not you. Your servants, or your workmen, may be there — but not you. Your master, or mistress, may be there — but not you. Your friend, or neighbor, may be there — but not you.

There may be some there whom you have despised, reviled, persecuted, hated, sneered at, and reproached — but not you.

Oh, what if you should not be there! Then you will be at the LEFT hand — among the goats, the tares, the enemies of God and Christ. Then . . .

your doom will be dreadful,

your destiny will be awful, and

your punishment will be eternal!

"Be sure," then, "that you are not missing from the right hand of the Judge in that day." Nothing can be more important. Nothing can have an equal claim upon your attention. See to it then. See to it at once. See to it with all possible seriousness and earnestness.

You cannot be there without a new birth, "Unless a man is born again — he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You cannot be there without conversion, for "Unless you are converted, and become as little children — you shall never enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

You cannot be there without sincere faith in Christ, for "He who believes not — shall be damned!"

You cannot be there without repentance, for "Unless you repent — you shall all likewise perish!"

You cannot be there without love, love to God and man, for if "I have not love," said Paul, "I am nothing."

You cannot be there without holiness, for "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

Reader, are you born again? Are you converted to God? Have you faith in Christ? Do you repent of sin? Have you love to God and man? Are you holy? Be sure that such is the case, for if it is not, you will be missing at the right hand of the Judge in that day. Schwartz will be there. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs — all true believers in Jesus, will be there. But you will not be there! And if you are not — then who will be to blame? God says, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." Jesus says, "Come unto me — look unto me and be saved!" The missionary, the preacher, the writer, warns you, expostulates with you, and admonishes you.

Heaven allures you to its mansions.

Hell flashes forth its fires to deter you from rushing into its abysses.

God from his throne,

Jesus from his cross,

the Spirit in the gospel,

the preacher in his pulpit,

the writer at his desk,

conscience in your own bosom,

cry out, "Flee from the wrath to come!"

"Be sure that you are not missing from the right hand of the Judge on that day!"

## 08 Suspecting God

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**Suspecting God** A man of integrity, uprightness, and proven character — always considers it an insult to be suspected, or to have his word doubted — especially when solemnly and deliberately given. Nor are we in the habit of doubting the Word, or suspecting the character of an old, tried, and generous friend. We would think it beneath us to do so. But what we would be ashamed to do in reference to men — we are constantly doing in reference to God! Who has not suspected God? Who is there who never, under any circumstances, suspects him? Alas! the unbelief of our hearts is continually manifesting itself thus. Look around, and as you look on various characters, ask, "Does such an one, and such an one, believe God? Is there no suspicion of God there?"

Look at the lost sinner. He goes on in sin. He lives without prayer. He is unthankful and unholy. Day after day finds and leaves him in a careless state. He has no harassing fears. He has no dread of Hell. He has no desire for holiness. Does he know that God has threatened sin? Yes! Does he know that God has pledged to send the impenitent sinner to Hell? Yes! At least he has heard so, and he has read the same in the Bible. How is it then that he has no fear? How is it then that he does not seek to "escape the damnation of Hell?" Just because he suspects God. He does not believe that God means him; that the threatening refers to his sin; or that God can find it in his heart to send him to Hell. He thinks that, in some way, God will excuse him, extend mercy to him, or spare him.

O sinner, sinner! You are suspecting God's veracity. You doubt God's faithfulness. You undermine God's character. What! does not God mean what he says? What! is not God honest when he threatens to punish the hardened sinner? Will God allow you to go on in sin, slighting His mercy, rejecting His Son — and then take you to Heaven at last? Impossible! If you did not think God to be altogether such a one as yourself, if you did not suspect his truthfulness, or unchangeableness — you never could go on prayerless and careless as you do. You live suspecting God — but you will find His word true, perhaps too late, "I will reprove you, and set in order before you the things that you have done. Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!"

Look at the seeker. He really desires to find grace, to obtain a saving interest in Christ, and to be made fit for Heaven. He reads the Bible. He hears the gospel. He grieves over his state as a sinner. He prays. At times he hopes. But he is harassed with doubts. He is tormented with fears. He is often filled with gloom. But why is this? Is not God waiting to be gracious? Is not the invitation of the gospel free? Is not the promise of God plain, positive, and absolute? Yes. Does not the Lord delight in mercy? Is not his Word promised, "Him that comes, I will never cast out?" Yes. Why then is he not confident? Why not happy?

Ah, he suspects God! He does not take his Word as just meaning what it says, as absolutely true, as sure of fulfillment. There is a secret suspicion, "It may fail in my case. I am not the the person. My feelings are not right. I do not come as I ought." That is, though God says, "No money, no price." Though God speaks in words as simple, and in terms as strong as it is possible to do — yet

you have an idea that something on your part is necessary. You must do something, or feel something, or bring something — instead of receiving salvation as the free gift of the freest grace.

Ah, seeker, you are suspecting God! you do not take His word as addressed to you, and believing it, expect it to be made good in your experience. You do not understand the doctrine of salvation, which is, "man Nothing — God Everything." Or, you are not yet brought to like the terms, and made willing to be saved, as a pauper, on the footing of free and sovereign grace. When the Holy Spirit destroys all your suspicions of God, rolls you in the dust before God, and shows you that there is nothing between you and the flames of Hell, but the blood of Christ — then you will be glad to be saved freely, and you will cast yourself as a lost sinner at the feet of Jesus, and be at peace.

Look at the tried Christian. He is tossed to and fro like the locust. He is harassed with doubts. His rest is disturbed by night, and his peace by day. Why?

O, he is so tried. His burdens are so heavy. His crosses are so many. His disappointments are so painful. His griefs are so great. His pains are so severe. But has not God promised, "As your day — so shall your strength be." Has not Jesus assured you, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Has not the Most High said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Yes. Why then, do you not boldly say, "The Lord is my helper — I will not fear!" Why then do you not sing, "God is my refuge and strength, a very pleasant help in trouble!" Why?

Ah, you say, "My weakness is so great, my corruptions are so strong, my foes are so many, my unworthiness stares me in the face!" The fact is — you suspect God. You are suspicious of him. You do not believe that he will be true to his Word, and faithful to his promise. If you did, you would call on him, wait for him, and expect him to glorify his grace, and make good his Word in your experience. You would say, "The Lord Almighty is with me, the God of Jacob is my refuge; therefore will I not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea!" You would cast all your care on him, believing that he cared for you; and the peace of God would keep your heart and mind, through Christ Jesus. But this anxiety, this gloom this perturbation, plainly declares that you are suspecting God.

Look at the industrious Christian. He is working for God, employing his talents in the cause of God, seeking to advance the kingdom of God. He sows good seed, even God's Word. He uses his tongue, his pen, his purse, and the printing-press. Yet at times he is cast down, dispirited, and almost ready to relax in his efforts. He fears that all will be vain — that little good is or ever will be done by him. But has not God said, "He who goes forth and weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him?" Has not the Holy Spirit exhorted and promised, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." Did not the apostle appeal to the knowledge of the Corinthians, when he would stimulate to firmness and diligence, saying, "Be steadfast, immovable. Always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

How then can we yield to discouragement, or relax our efforts, or suspend our operations? If we do so — it is because we suspect God. For if God's Word is true, if God himself is faithful — it is impossible to run in vain, or labor in vain. We must succeed. Our work will be rewarded. A crop is sure. The harvest will certainly come. We shall bind up our sheaves and carry them to the garner. Brother, sister, toil on. Yield to no discouragement. Only let . . .

the seed be God's Word,  
the motive God's glory,  
the object the good of souls,  
the end the Savior's honor,  
and then sow on!

Write letter after letter. Give tract after tract. Never faint, never weary. Remember God has said, "As the rain and the snow comes down from Heaven, and returns not there — but waters the earth, and causes it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void — but it shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." God is faithful. Heaven and earth may pass away — but His Word shall never pass away. He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that He should change His mind; He has said — and He will do it; He has spoken — and He will make it good. Go on; plough in hope, sow in hope, and you shall be a partaker of your hope. Never, never, never suspect God. He is worthy of your highest, strongest confidence.

Fellow-laborer, cheer up; the soil may be dry, the clouds may refuse to drop their precious treasures, and there may be much to try your faith, patience, and determination — but go on, let nothing discourage you. You cannot labor in vain. In God's service, it is impossible to spend your strength for nothing. The Spirit will come down secretly, silently, and suitably; and His power will make your feeble efforts efficient. As in salvation, so in carrying on God's cause, the motto is, "Man Nothing — God Everything!" Therefore God must have all the glory. This is the reason why he chooses to work by the weak things, the base things, and things that are despised — that he who glories may glory only in the Lord. The grace of God is infinite, the work of Christ is perfect, the inspired Word is true, and our salvation and reward, as diligent believers, is sure.

## 09 A Word in Season

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A Word in Season A thoughtless young man was one day hearing some Christian's converse, and as they were speaking of divine things, one of them said, "If a man's heart is not changed — then he must be lost forever." The words sunk into his heart, occupied his thoughts, aroused his feelings, and produced the change referred to. He became an eminent Christian, a useful minister of Christ, and he died in a good old age, beloved and missed by many.

Reader, it is a solemn fact, that a man's heart must be changed. It is by nature alienated from God, and enmity against God. Men do not love God. They will not listen to God. They will not obey God. They will not seek after God. Thousands live like brutes, and die like brutes. No daily prayer to God for his blessing. No praising God for his mercies. No seeking to God for the pardon of sin, and the enjoyment of his favor. And where there is the form of religion, it is very often nothing but the form. They draw near to God with the mouth, and honor him with the lips — but their hearts are far from him. There is no sense of God's presence. No fear of his displeasure. No desire to enjoy his love. The heart is set upon worldly things — on money, on dress, on eating and drinking. A pleasant situation, high wages, fine clothing, men's applause, or indulging the appetites — are the things valued or sought. In many cases, God is not in all their thoughts. The heart must be changed.

There is Robert Brown, he is a good workman, he earns good wages, he sticks to his work, he is sober, and regular in his habits. Whoever heard Robert Brown swear? Whoever saw him drunk? He goes to chapel on a Sunday morning, and goes out for a walk with his wife and children in the evening. He reads a chapter in the Bible now and then, and perhaps a tract if it falls in his way. But he lies down at night without prayer, he rises and goes to his employment in the morning, without kneeling down to praise God for his mercies, or entreat his blessing. He never collects his family together to pray with them, or read God's holy Word to them. But if he keeps a good house over their heads, plenty of food in the cupboard, and a tolerable good suit of clothes on their backs, and avoids getting into debt — he thinks he does his duty.

Robert Brown is better than many; but if Robert Brown's heart is not changed, he must be lost forever. Salvation is not by works — but by grace. All Robert Brown does will not obtain God's favor, or procure for him the pardon of sin.

Besides which, he could not be happy in Heaven. All in Heaven are holy — Robert Brown is only moral. All in Heaven feel their obligation to the Lord Jesus, are filled with love to him, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb — but Robert Brown is a stranger to all this.

If we go to Heaven when we die, we must be trained for it while we live. Jesus said, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To be born again, is to have the heart changed; and if a man's heart is not changed, he must be lost forever — the Lord Jesus says so.

There is Susan Green, she is honest and industrious — a good worker, and always keeps her place. She was christened in her infancy, taught to read her Bible, and attends a place of worship. She has money in the savings bank, a good stock of clothes in her dresser, and occasionally sends a present home to her hard-working parents. No one ever saw Susan at the races, the theater, or the dancing-room. She was never detected in light company, or discharged from a job for being out late at night. She has a number of good books, she goes regularly to chapel, and is the picture of neatness and order.

Yet, if Susan Green's heart is not changed — she must be lost forever. She is not fit to go to Heaven! She never felt herself a poor lost sinner, condemned and cast off from all hope by the holy law of God. She never felt urged by guilt on her conscience, and a dread of the wrath to come — to flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before her in the gospel. She is in her natural state. She has acquired good habits, obtained a good reputation from her employers, and is a valuable worker; but she has not passed from death unto life. She could give you no account of conviction of sin, conversion to God, and having Christ formed in her heart the hope of glory. She rests on her own doings, and is ready to say, "If God does not save me — then who will he save?"

Ah, there is the stony heart still! The blood of Christ has never touched Susan's conscience. She has never cried out with the poor Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Nor does she know what our Lord meant when speaking of that Publican he said, "He went down to his house justified." If Susan's heart is not changed — she must be lost forever. And now, reader, let a friend, who wishes you well, and would be glad to see you happy, ask you in a friendly way, "Has your heart been changed?" How did you feel before it was changed, and how have you felt since? Nay, be not offended — but take the questions home, they can do you no harm; and it is a solemn truth, which a death-bed and the day of judgment will confirm, that "if a man's heart is not changed — he must be lost forever!"

God takes no one to Heaven until he has prepared him for the employments and enjoyments of the place; and there can be no preparation without a change of heart, for every man is — as his heart is. If you have never gone farther than Robert Brown or Susan Green, you have not gone far enough; and the Lord Jesus would say to you, as he did to the young man in the Gospel, "One thing you lack!" Let me beg of you, at parting — to look into your life, and then into your heart, and compare both with what you read in your New Testament; and as you do so, ask, "Have I experienced a change of heart?" Remember, oh, remember, "if a man's heart is not changed — he must be lost forever!"

Strait the gate, the way is narrow,  
To the realms of endless bliss;  
Sinful men, and vain professors,  
Self-deceived, the passage miss;  
Rushing headlong,  
Down they sink the dread abyss.  
Sins and follies unforsaken,

All will end in deep despair;  
Formal prayers are unavailing,  
Fruitless is the worldling's tear;  
Small in number  
Who to wisdom's path repair!

## 10 Israel's Need — and God's Mercy

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

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

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

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

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

First — Israel's Need. They needed a GUIDE.

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

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

Numerous foes would endeavor to obstruct their progress.

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

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

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

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

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

ever present,

ever vigilant,

ever powerful.

Yes, the FLESH lusts against the Spirit. We find a law in our members warring against the law of our minds. The world, the flesh, and the devil all combine to . . .

oppose our progress,

hinder us in our march, and,

if possible, to destroy us in the wilderness!

Then there are so many dangers:

the towering rocks of presumption,

the quagmires of doubt and fear,

the pitfalls of error,

the ravines of willful sin,

the fiery-flying serpent of temptation,

the scorpion of indulged lust,

the sunshine — and the shade;

the barren sands — and the verdant valleys;

the granite rocks — and the flowing streams

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

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

who well knows the road;  
who can conquer our many foes;  
who can lead us safely through all our dangers,  
who can bear with our stubborn hearts and lives!

We need a guide . . .

whose wisdom is perfect,  
whose power is almighty,  
whose care is constant,  
whose patience is immutable, and

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

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

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

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

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

us!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He guides them by his grace. His Word is our directory — the map of our journey. On that he shines by his Holy Spirit, and in us he works by the same divine agent. He convinces, he inclines,

he leads, he sustains, and at length introduces us to the eternal rest prepared for the people of God.

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

Under his guidance you will make progress both by day and night. In prosperity and adversity,  
in joy and sorrow,

in light and darkness,

in summer and winter,

you will still make way to the promised land. The true Christian can travel by day or night. He is not dependent on circumstances. He often rises beyond the region of second causes. He make progress — because the Lord is with him.

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

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

"Even down to old age all his people shall prove,

His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!

And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,

Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne!"

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

Doubts may beset you,

fears may assault you,

Satan and the world may conspire against you

— but your God will guide you!

He will support, supply, and defend you; and make all his goodness pass before you. When Israel was from Egypt freed,

The Lord who brought them out,  
Helped them in every time of need,  
But led them round about.  
They often murmured by the way,  
Because they judged by sight;  
But were at length constrained to say,  
The Lord had led them right! By fire and cloud their way was shown,  
Across the pathless sands;  
And Amelek was overthrown,  
By Moses' lifted hands. The way was right, their hearts to prove,  
To make God's glory known,  
And show his wisdom, power, and love,  
Engaged to save his own!  
Just so the true believer's path  
Through many dangers lies;  
Though dark to sense, 'tis right to faith,  
And leads us to the skies!

## 11 Willful Blindness

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### Willful Blindness

Walking up High-street the other day, I saw two men before me, who were talking rather loudly, and as I passed them, I heard one of them say, "Ah, there are none so blind — as those who will not see!" The words sunk into my mind, and I went on musing on them; and now, reader, I will just tell you a few of my thoughts.

I was going a little way into the country; the sun was shining, the birds were singing, the flowers were opening, and a soft gentle wind was blowing. As I looked around upon creation, and saw its adaptation to man and beast, as I gazed upon its glory, and the marks of design on every part — I imagined that there could be no difficulty in reading its Maker's name inscribed upon it. There were proofs of power, wisdom, and benevolence, and exquisite taste everywhere. I thought how impossible it seemed to doubt that this beautiful world was produced by a Divine agent, whose understanding is infinite, whose heart is kind, and whose resources are boundless; and yet know of some who deny the existence of God. "Surely, surely," said I, "the man was right: There are none so blind — as those who will not see!" From the volume of Creation — my thoughts turned upon the Bible. How natural it seemed to turn from the Works of God — to the Word of God. The eye of my mind passed rapidly over the sacred pages, and I thought, as I considered the histories, the poetry, the predictions, the promises, the facts, the doctrines, the prayers, and the precepts recorded there — who can doubt the inspiration of this book? Where shall we find one like it? One so ancient, so sublime, so simple, so impartial, so truthful, so benevolent, so harmonious as this? What man, what number of men — could tell us of . . .

the creation of the world,

the history of man,

the nature of God,

the way of salvation, and

the path to glory —

as the writers of this book do? And how could they have done so — if they were not inspired? I thought of the external evidences of its authenticity, and the correctness of its claims, and asked: Who can doubt? I considered the internal evidence of its divinity, and said: Here is demonstration — who can question? And yet there are some who deny the inspiration of the Bible! "Well," thought I, "the man must be right: There are none so blind — as those who will not see!" From Creation and the Book of Revelation, my thoughts turned to man himself — his different races; his ignorance, depravity, degradation; and cruelty; and as I looked at myself and my fellow-man, I thought we could not have been originally created so. Man must have been different once. He must have degenerated, for a being infinitely wise, holy, generous, and kind, as God is, as I learn from Nature and his Word — never could have created us thus. No, never! Then occurred to my

mind the divine testimony, "God made man upright — but they have sought out many inventions!" True, thought I, it must be so!

Then I went over in my mind the history of man's creation, his fall, and his consequent conduct — and there I saw all accounted for. Man is not what he originally was. He is not what he ought to be, because he is not what God made him. And yet some have taught that "Man is all right." They deny that his nature is depraved, that the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that the representations of the Bible are correct. How strange! How astounding is this! How is it to be accounted for? "Again," said I, "the man must be right: There are none so blind — as those who will not see!"

Having proceeded thus far, and as my journey was not completed, my thoughts traveled on; and being affected with the beauties of creation, the character of God, and the state of man, I naturally began to think of what might be the state of God's heart toward his fallen creatures; and was there a possibility of the fallen being restored? Here I felt constrained to bless God for the bible; for what would we have done without it? The Scripture is the only window through which I could look into the heart of God; but through this I can, and I see it beating with infinite, unutterable love! Yes, God loves poor, depraved humanity still. And to express at once the greatness and the design of his love — he sent his only begotten Son into the world. Sent him to be our substitute — to work out for us a righteousness. Sent him to be a sacrifice — and to make an atonement for our sin. Sent him to testify of his love, to prove his love, and to invite sinners of every class and climate to come and enjoy his love.

Jesus came and opened an infinite fountain, from which proceed streams of the richest and costliest blessings! Here is . . .

pardon for the guilty,

righteousness for those who have lost their character,

riches for the poor,

food for the hungry,

health for the sick,

happiness for the miserable,

salvation for He lost,

light for those who sit in darkness,

and life for the dead!

These blessings are all free. Whoever will, may come and take them. Jesus is the ark — and all who flee to him are safe!

Jesus is the hiding-place — and all who come to him are secure!

Jesus is the sanctuary — and there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus!

Salvation is graciously provided, it is clearly revealed, and it is freely offered. God takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner. Jesus wept because sinners would not come unto him and have life. The Holy Spirit is resisted and grieved when the gospel is put away with contempt. And yet there are some who reflect upon God, who speak of destruction as inevitable, who excuse themselves, and would charge their damnation upon God if they are lost! While others say that there is no hope for them! Once more, therefore, I am compelled to exclaim, "The man was right: There are none so blind — as those who will not see!" For even God himself asks, "What more could have been done to my vineyard — that I have not done in it?" And conscience echoes! And, reason re-echoes, What!

## 12 Prosperity Anticipated

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Prosperity Anticipated "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us!" Nehemiah 2:20 When God has a work to perform, he is never at a loss for an instrument; for if he cannot find one — he can create one. If he would punish Israel for their sins, he raises up Nebuchadnezzar to carry them to Babylon; and when he would free them from captivity, Cyrus and Darius shall favor them. If Jerusalem is to be restored, and the temple rebuilt — then Ezra shall lead the people to their own land; Zechariah, the priest, and Haggai, the prophet, shall reprove and stimulate them; and Nehemiah, the governor, shall come forward to complete the undertaking. When Satan stirs up enemies, God raises up friends, and the opposition eventually helps the work.

It was so of old, and it has often been so in more modern times.

If we are engaged in God's work,

if we are guided by God's Word,

if we are aiming at God's glory —

we may unhesitatingly adopt the language of the text as our own, and say, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us."

Mere possibility is enough to stimulate some.

Probability will encourage more. But certainty will encourage any one. In our case, success is not only possible, or probable — but certain; for "the Lord Almighty is with us," his "grace is sufficient for us," and his promise is pledged to us. Let us consider,

First, The Title, "The God of Heaven." The revelation of the Divine nature and character has been progressive. God was dimly seen in nature, more clearly in providence — but clearest of all in grace. "No man has seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father — he has declared him." "In the beginning God created." This is his first title — the Good One. Great, glorious, good. When he created man, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." The self-existent Creator formed a dependent, intelligent creature, to . . .

inhabit this world,

obey his commands,

worship at his throne,

enjoy fellowship with himself,

reflect his image, and

be happy in his love. The Divine nature is one, represented by the title Lord, or Jehovah. In that Divine nature, there is a plurality of persons — represented by the title God, or Elohim. As the

Lord, or the Lord God, the Creator was known, until, Melchizedek speaks of him as "The Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth." Then we find him entering into covenant with Abraham, and as an act of free and sovereign grace, separating him and his seed from all the people of the earth. He engaged to be Abraham's God, and a God to Abraham. From that time he was called the God of Abraham, by the covenant seed. The covenant was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob — then he was called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Or, the God of Israel, because they were his people; and the God of Jerusalem, because that was his dwelling-place. But during and after the Babylonish captivity, he was called "The God of Heaven." He is the God of Heaven, for he created it for his residence, and to be the home of his infinite glory; and he inhabits it as his house or his throne. Hence Jesus calls Heaven, "My Father's house;" and the Lord himself said, "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; where is the house that you build me, or where is the place of my rest?"

He came down to earth to speak to his creatures formerly — but he speaks to us from Heaven now; as says the apostle, "See that you refuse not him that speaks; for if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaks from Heaven." He is called the God of Heaven — to distinguish him from, and show his superiority to, the gods of the heathen, who were gods of the earth. "Our God is in the Heavens; he has done whatever he has pleased." He is on earth, working "all things after the counsel of his own will." "Do I not fill Heaven and earth, says the Lord?" — Having glanced at the title, we will now,

Secondly, look at The Persuasion or confidence expressed, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us." He did prosper his ancient people; and Jerusalem was built, notwithstanding opposition; and the temple was completed, though many were discouraged. And so now,

if we are engaged in God's work,

if we are hearty in God's cause,

if we are ruled by God's Word,

then "he will prosper us."

Prosperity is either temporal — or spiritual.

Temporal prosperity is no proof that man is godly, or that God approves of him. "Behold, these are the ungodly that prosper in the world; they increase in riches." Under the old dispensation, temporal things were more plentifully promised — and yet even then, the saints were "a poor and afflicted people." Under the present dispensation, which is spiritual, God has "chosen the poor of this world;" and we still see, that "not many rich men, not many mighty, ore called."

Temporal adversity is no proof of God's displeasure; for the objects of his highest love "wandered about in sheep skins and in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, they wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth," though the world was not worthy of them. The soul may prosper and be in health, while the body pines and decays under the power of disease. As to temporals, we may not be blessed — but as to spirituals, we may confidently say, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us."

Prosperity may be either personal — or relative.

Personal prosperity is enjoyed when the soul is happy in God. When we make him our portion, our solace, and our delight. When we acquiesce in the will of God, when we surrender our understanding to his Word, the affairs to his management, and our person to his disposal. When we are growing into the likeness of God, when we become merciful, as he was merciful; holy, as he was holy; and righteous, as he was righteous. If God is our source of happiness, if the will of God commands our approbation, and if the image of God is our model in our every day life — then indeed we prosper.

Relative prosperity is enjoyed, when, as members of the church of Jesus, we see that church thrive, flourish, and grow. When its members are edified or polished by the Word and Spirit, until they catch and reflect on others the rays of the divine glory. When they are united together in love. Not merely connected together by certainties — but vitally united to each other by holy love. They form one body, influenced by one Spirit, and rejoicing together in one hope of their calling. When they are sanctified — internally, by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit; and, externally, by separation from the world in spirit, object, and aim. When the heart is set apart for God, and the life is an answer to the apostolic exhortation, "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord." Then they are happy. For if the church is growing like its Head, if the members are united together, if the work of sanctification is carried on — how can the believer be otherwise than happy? The believer is then too busy to think much about his personal comfort, day by day. For comfort is most easily and certainly found — when not directly sought. But we do not think our representation of prosperity would be complete if it did not include the conversion of sinners. This is one great end of a church state, the grand design of the preaching of the gospel. When we feel the Holy Spirit to be with us, and see the effect of it in the conversion of sinners to God, the decision of seekers for God, and the union of the decided with the saints of God — then, without doubt, we enjoy prosperity. But a question arises — When may we feel persuaded or confident that "the God of Heaven will prosper us?" Six things are necessary to warrant and sustain such confidence. "I speak as to wise men; judge you what I say."

1. We must rest on Christ alone for our acceptance with God. Nothing must be mixed with the perfect work of Jesus as the ground of our justification, or our plea for acceptance at the throne of God. Christ alone must be the object of our trust.

2. We must depend wholly on the Holy Spirit for success. The most suitable means, employed with the greatest skill, and used with the greatest patience and perseverance — will have no beneficial effect without the direct putting forth the power of the Holy Spirit. As nothing must be allowed to come between us and God — but Jesus, when we are seeking pardon and acceptance at his throne — so nothing must be an object of trust or dependance, when seeking the revival of the church or the conversion of sinners — but the presence, power, and influence of the Holy Spirit alone.

3. We must be much in prayer for the blessing. God loves to hear us pray. He will have us pray. However positive his promises, however calculated to glorify his name, however beneficial to our fellow men — he says, "I will be inquired of to do it for you." If we agree among ourselves to ask the blessing, if we meet together for the purpose, if we persevere determined to prevail, saying as Jacob did, "I will not let you go except you bless me," then, without hesitation, doubt, or

qualification, we may say, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us."

4. We must keep a steady eye fixed on his glory. This is the mark we must aim at. This is the object we must constantly keep in view. When we aim simply, singly, and alone, at God's glory, "we may ask whatever we will — and it shall be done for us." But losing sight of this, we "ask and receive not, because we ask amiss — that we may consume it on our lusts."

5. We must actively employ every talent for God. There is a vast amount of unused talent in the church. How much speaking talent, writing talent, teaching talent, influencing talent — there is in God's church that is never used for God's glory. Never were there so many napkins in God's church, we think, as now; and they wrap up, conceal, and render useless — an extraordinary amount of talent. Our talent must be brought out, our Master's money must be put into the bank, that at his coming, he may receive his own with interest.

6. We must make sacrifices out of pure love to Jesus. Who makes sacrifices now? Many give much to the cause; but do they ever sacrifice fashion, taste, or appetite, for that cause? Let our dress, furniture, and meals, reply. But are we willing to sacrifice our feelings, our tastes, our habits, our indulgences — if the cause of Christ requires it? Are we?

If then, we rest alone on Jesus for our acceptance with God;

if we depend wholly on the power of the Holy Spirit for success;

if we are much in prayer for the Divine blessing;

if we keep the eye steadily fixed on the Lord's glory;

if we actively employ every talent for God; and

if we make sacrifices out of pure love to Jesus —

then, without hesitation, doubt, or fear, we may say, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us!"  
But if God prospers us — then Satan will oppose us!

As a serpent — he will wriggle in among us;

or, as a lion — he will go round, and roar at us! And if God prospers us — then men may be jealous of us, and even persecute us; but right-minded saints and angels will rejoice over us.

Oh, for soul prosperity! Oh, for the prosperity of God's one church, and every separate church that goes to make up the one great whole! But if God does not prosper us — then no one else can; nor shall we ever succeed. Let us then, beloved, set our hearts on prosperity. Let every Christian set his heart upon the prosperity of his soul; and let every church-member set his heart upon the prosperity of the church to which he belongs. Oh, that indifference were buried in the depths of the ocean! Oh, that every member of God's church were filled with faith, fired with love, and glowing with zeal — for the honor of our beloved Savior. May the divisions of the church soon cause great searchings of heart, anxiety of mind, and distress of soul, until they are healed and done away forever.

Let us inquire, Why is it? if we do not prosper. It was a worm at the root, which caused Jonah's gourd to wither. It was a Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold, which caused Israel to flee

before their enemies. And if we do not prosper — is there not a cause? If there is a cause — then may it not be ascertained? If it may be ascertained — then ought we not to "light the candle and search diligently until we find it?"

O Lord, you have said, that you will "search Jerusalem as with candles, and will punish the men that are settled on their lees;" search, oh, search your church, and let all that hinder her prosperity be discovered, condemned, deplored, and removed!

Let us carefully avoid everything that would hinder our prosperity. Paul was very careful and very accommodating, lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ. Let us imitate so excellent an example, and take care that there is nothing in our creed, conduct, spirit, temper, or deportment, likely to grieve the Holy Spirit, or prevent the truth from having free course. Let us not only carefully avoid everything likely to hinder — but let us diligently employ every means to secure it. Prosperity flows from God: it is a free-grace blessing; but it flows in a certain channel, and is generally attracted by certain means. Oh, for such a measure of grace to be given to the church of Jesus, that there may be no rest until God arises and has mercy upon his Zion, or until we can confidently say, "The God of Heaven — he will prosper us!"

## 13 Where Are You?

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Where Are You? Where are you? In SIN? If so, then . . .

you are under God's curse;

you are under condemnation;

the wrath of God abides on you;

every perfection in God's nature is opposed to you;

every threatening in God's Word is aimed at you;

justice frowns upon you;

the law sentences you;

Satan claims you;

Christ will judge you;

eternity will be dreadful to you! Where are you? In the WORLD? If so, then . . .

you are in imminent danger;

you are God's enemy;

you are Satan's slave;

you are surrounded by all the elements of misery;

you have within you a source of eternal torment and woe!

If you are in the world — then you are not in Christ; and, being without Christ, you are without hope, or peace, or the enjoyment of real happiness. Where are you? In ROME, or superstition, which is the same. The Roman Catholic Church is Anti-Christ. And to put anything in the place of Christ, as the ground of justification before God, whether prayers, or penance, or tears, or good works, is Anti-Christ! Everything must be renounced but Christ, in order to acceptance with God, or justification before God. A sinner may as well trust in his vices — as his virtues; in his foulest sins — as his best works, for justification before a holy God. We must count all things but loss for Christ, and seek to be found in him, stripped of our own righteousness, and clothed in his perfect obedience. Where are you? In CHRIST? Then you are safe, holy, and happy. But if you are in Christ now — then you were not once. You have been inwardly convinced of this. You saw and felt the need of it. You earnestly and heartily desired it. You diligently and prayerfully sought it. You doubted and feared that so high a privilege would never be yours. But you cried unto God until faith brought you to his feet, love looked up and was overcome with a sense of his glory, and the Holy Spirit united you to his person. You felt that Christ and your soul were one. You could claim

him — and he acknowledged you. Your sins were pardoned. You felt justified before God. Peace flowed into your soul, and you loved him, because he had first loved you. You realized . . .

that his blood had made your peace,  
that his righteousness was your wedding garment,  
that his wealth was your portion, and  
his Spirit was your Comforter, Guide, and Friend.

You could call God Father, look at the promises as your property, and anticipate Heaven as your final home.

Oh, the mercy of being in Christ! To such, there is no condemnation. To such, every providence is a blessing. To such, all things work together for good.

Christ . . .

represents them before God,  
often visits them on earth, and  
will soon come to receive them unto himself.

Reader, are you in Christ? You were in sin once — have you been delivered? You were in the world — have you been brought out of it? You were more or less superstitious — have you renounced everything of your own, and are you now relying on Christ, and on Christ alone? His blood alone can cleanse you from sin and guilt. His righteousness alone can justify you before God. His Spirit alone can make you meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Take heed that you are not found out of Christ at last. Beware of a religion that does not . . .

unite you to Christ's person,  
conform you to Christ's image,  
and make you happy in his love.

If you are . . .

living in any sin,  
walking in the course of this world,  
resting either in whole or in part on your own doings

— then you are eternally undone! Where are you? Oh, that every reader could honestly, heartily, and cheerfully say, I am in Christ! Then all would be well, and well forever!

## 14 David in the Forest

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### David in the Forest

"And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David in the forest, and strengthened his hand in God." 1 Samuel 23:16 The Word of God is full of important instruction and choice consolation. It meets every case, and suits us in every condition. Go where we will, there is something for the soul, something upon which we can feed. But it is profitable not only by what it directly states — but also by what it suggests. If the mind is spiritual, if we are lively in the Lord's ways — we shall often see Jesus, when others see him not; and enjoy spiritual blessings while reading literal Bible histories. The history of David is especially profitable to the Lord's people. We have often found Jesus, while reading of David; and traced out Christian experience, while following him through his trials and troubles. Let us look at one incident in his story.

He was hated by Saul, pursued by the enemy, and betrayed by the Keilites. His life was in imminent danger, and he went for safety into a forest. "And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David in the forest, and strengthened his hand in God." We will,

First, look at David and his situation. David was typical of Jesus, of honored saints, and of the faithful servants of God. We will now consider him not as representing his Lord — but as typifying the true believer. His very name indicates his greatest privilege — he was beloved of God. The eye, and the heart of God, rested upon him with satisfaction and delight. His name was registered in Heaven, and his interests were in the hands of Jesus.

Just so, every believer is beloved of his God. God loves him distinctly — personally — infinitely! He loves him with . . .

an everlasting love,

a love, the beginning of which can never be traced out, and which has no end,

a love as vast as infinity, as tender as the heart of Jesus, and as durable as eternity,

a love, which prefers its objects to everything beside, and never did, never will, never can part with one of them!

Oh, the honor, the happiness, of being beloved of God! But every Christian, the weakest, the poorest, the most infirm, is as really, as much beloved of God as David was!

David was appointed to the kingdom, he was chosen to this honor by God himself; and we, beloved, are appointed unto a kingdom too. As Jesus said to his disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed me." Not a carnal kingdom — but a spiritual one, not an earthly kingdom — but a Heavenly kingdom. We shall be kings and priests unto God. And when the days of our pilgrimage are ended, when our work is finished, and our testimony completed — then Jesus will say unto us, "Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Then the crown of righteousness will be

awarded us, the crown of life will be bestowed upon us, and the crown of glory will adorn us forever.

David was consecrated with holy oil. It was taken from the tabernacle by Samuel, conveyed to Bethlehem, and there poured upon the young shepherd's head. That oil represented the Holy Spirit, in his gifts, graces, and operations. We have received no natural oil, no literal anointing — but we "have an anointing from the Holy One." "The anointing which we have received of him abides in us." Jesus has given unto us his Holy Spirit, and we have experienced his softening, soothing, and solacing influences in our souls. That Spirit is the down-payment of the inheritance. It is the proof that we are appointed to the kingdom. Brought from the holy place by Jesus, the gift of God, it has been poured, not upon our heads — but into our hearts, and there it abides and works.

David was hated and persecuted by Saul. And those who are born after the flesh, still persecute those who are born after the Spirit. Satan hates and persecutes all God's anointed ones. He always follows the oil, and begins to vent his malice and his rage; and just in proportion to the consistency of our course, the clearness of our testimony, and the usefulness of our lives — will be the strength of his opposition. "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus — he shall suffer persecution." Poor persecuted Christian, cheer up; though hunted like a partridge upon the mountains — the kingdom is sure, the crown will be glorious, and the mansion grand and magnificent.

David was the friend of Jonathan, the king's son. Just so, we are the friends of Jesus, the Son of God. He calls us his friends, and shows himself friendly to us. Blessed Jesus, I had rather be your friend, than the conqueror of the globe, or king of kings! The situation of David was trying. Driven from the city, he was obliged to hide in the forest. A forest indicates loneliness, perplexity, and privation; and this very aptly represents our state at times, in reference to providence and grace.

How many of the Lord's Davids are in the forest now, as it respects their temporal affairs! They are lonely, for they cannot open their hearts to anyone. They are perplexed, for they do not know what to do. They are in privation, pinched, pierced, and troubled, by claims they cannot meet, circumstances they cannot control, and needs they cannot supply. There they are startled by the roaring winds, the howling wolves, and the rocking trees. They feel alone, they are perplexed and troubled.

Just so in reference to grace — how many of the Lord's people are in the forest! They imagine that their experience is singular — no heart was ever so foul, no corruptions ever so black, no blasphemies ever so dreadful — as what work or sound in their souls. They feel so hard, so stupid, so prayerless — that they are sure no Christian is like them. They are in the forest! They do as Jeremiah said, "He sits alone and keeps silence, he puts his mouth in the dust." They are filled with perplexity, they dare not go back, they cannot go forward — but, like a person lost in a forest, they wander about — weary, forlorn, and wretched, coming back again to the old spot. They startle at every sound, and misinterpret every voice. There are no bright views, no cheering rays, no sweet flowers. They feel bewildered, like David in the forest. They suffer many privations, for they cannot enjoy the ordinances, they have no sweet fellowship with God, they can hold no satisfactory communion with the Saints; pinched with hunger, parched with thirst, and drenched with night dews, they sigh, groan, and grieve — but see no path, no way of deliverance, no friend;

they are in the forest. We will now,

Secondly, notice Jonathan and his kindness. "And Jonathan, Saul's son arose, and went to David in the forest, and strengthened his hand in God." Jonathan, like Jesus, was the king's son, and David's best friend. Hidden from him, his heart still glowed with love to him, and he arose to go to him. He sought him, he found him, he strengthened him — his heart, his hand, in God's power, providence, promise, and protection. He strengthened him by reminding him of past achievements, by referring him to future prospects, by assuring him of safety, and by bringing forward the Lord's marvelous dealing with him.

Just so, Jesus, when his people are in the forest — comes to them. By his blessed Spirit, by some friend, or by his own sent ministers — he finds them out, and strengthens them. The heart is strengthened, and so the hand, which now lays hold afresh on God's gracious character, precious word, and covenant relations.

Outward circumstances may remain the same — a forest; but inward emotions and sensations are all changed. The soul can now rest upon divine power engaged for it, upon a special providence working on its behalf, upon the precious promises assuring it of deliverance and supplies, and upon God's faithful care, as its protection from all real evils. Faith becomes strong, hope lifts up its head, and confidence finds a center in God's glorious perfections.

One hour, one moment, with our spiritual Jonathan in the forest — turns the wilderness to Eden, and the forest itself into a delightful residence. O Jesus, whenever brought into a forest by your providence, or by your dealings with us in grace — come, come and visit us, and strengthen our hands in God! When Jonathan comes, we are reminded of the past — we remember how we were delivered out of the jaws of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, how Goliath fell before our sling and stone — and we come to the happy conclusion, "He who has delivered, does deliver, and in him we trust, that he will yet deliver us."

We are referred to our future prospects, and beyond the forest we see the fields of waving corn, the silver brooks, the sunny plains, and goodly mountains, and the everlasting hills. We see the end of our doubts, fears, misgivings, sorrows, conflicts, privations, and sins. We have before us the rest that remains, the hope laid up for us in Heaven, the city that has foundations, and the house not made with hands. This mightily strengthens both hand and heart in God.

We are assured of safety, for God's promise is pledged, his host encamp around us, and his potent arm is raised up to defend us. He will never leave us; but in forest or city, mountain or plain, in conflict or at peace, he will be with us to defend and secure us. We now remember the days of old, the years of ancient times. We call to remembrance our song in the night. We remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. These things soon dry up the cold damp dew, chase away our fears, silence the winds — and we see our way out of the forest clearly. We perceive that no temptation has taken us — but such as is common to man, and that God is faithful, who will with the temptation make a way for our escape, that we may be able to bear it. Blessed, forever blessed, be our condescending Savior, for coming to us in the forest, and strengthening our hands in God!

Now, beloved fellow-traveler, let us observe, first, that the way to the throne is through trial and dangers. David found it so. The apostles and martyrs found it so. All, more or less, have found it

so; and so must we. It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God.

Secondly, the useful and honored will be sure to be hated and opposed. Every Christian has his foe; but the most useful, the most honored, will have a Saul — the King over all the children of pride. The chief foe will be his foe; and the bitterest malice of the prince of darkness will be vented at him.

Thirdly, God will be sure to raise up a friend in the hour of need. As sure as we are driven into the forest by Saul, so sure will Jonathan arise and come unto us, to strengthen our hand in God. When the three Hebrews were in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace — the Son of God was with them. When Daniel was cast into the den of lions — the Lord sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths. So, poor, tried, troubled, dejected, and perplexed believer — the Lord will raise up and send some faithful friend to you. He will deliver you in six troubles, and in seven shall no evil touch you.

Fourthly, whatever forest we may be in, Jonathan will find us out, come to us, and comfort us. He may send his servant — but he will come himself. He has said, "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him, I will set him on high," on the throne, "because he has known my name."

Finally, through the forest of difficulty, danger, and perplexity — we pass to the kingdom. It seems a strange way to flesh and blood, and often, very often, we conclude that it is not the right. We imagine that we have missed the road. What! a road so lonely, covered with briars and thorns, where there are fiery flying serpents and scorpions, traps, snares, and pitfalls in every direction — is this the way to the kingdom? Yes, this is the way — walk in it. But if you would walk in peace, in comfort, and with courage — you must "walk by faith, not by sight." You must travel by your map, for if you trust your eyes — your heart will faint, your courage will droop, and your enemy will gain an advantage over you.

Go on, my Christian brother, however lonely your road, however perplexing your path, however many your privations; remember you are in the forest now — but soon you will reach your kingdom, your crown, your palace; and then you will subscribe right heartily to the fact, that he led you forth by the right way, that you might go to a city of habitations!

## 15 Great Searchings of Heart

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Great Searchings of Heart Being called upon to attend an association of churches during the past week, I was painfully affected by the fact, that out of more than twenty churches — only four could report an increase of numbers during the last twelve months, and that increase was small. Yet, in every church the gospel is preached, and in most, if not all, prayer-meetings are held. What is to become of the world, thought I, if things go on thus? What will become of our own beloved land? The population is increasing, souls by millions are perishing, and the gospel seems to have lost its power! The churches decrease. What a solemn, what an alarming fact! About three thousand sermons had been preached, about three thousand children had been taught in the Sabbath-schools, a great number of Bibles, tracts, and religious periodicals had been circulated — and yet the majority of the churches had decreased! Surely this is enough to make one weep, lie low before God, and ask, "Show us why you contend with us." Three questions arose in my mind, and have been exercising my thoughts since. Let me invite you, my fellow-Christian, to attend to them with me.

First, Is there not a cause? Surely we cannot ascribe our present languishing condition wholly to the sovereignty of God. In Old Testament times the Lord laid the blame on his people, and asked, "Have you not procured this unto my yourself?" And again, by another prophet, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these the things He does?" Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?" Many similar portions may be remembered by the reader, if he is familiar with the Scriptures. In the New Testament, the apostle James tells us, "You have not — because you ask not; or because you ask amiss, that you may consume it on your lusts." Surely there is some worm at the root, that causes the plant of God's right hand planting to wither. There is some wedge of gold and Babylonish garment hidden in some Achan's tent, which causes Israel to turn their backs on their enemies. Yes! There must be a cause. We have the same gospel to preach which the apostles had. We have the same promises of success. We have the same kind of people to address. Yet they were successful; they turned the world upside down; they triumphed in Christ, and spread abroad the savor of his knowledge in every place. But what are we doing? Where are our triumphs? We decrease; what is the cause? Let us then inquire,

Secondly, Can we ascertain the cause? Methinks we may, if we are hearty in our desire, and are willing to dig deep enough. It does not seem to lie on the surface; let us therefore plough up the fallow ground, and look deeper. God said that he would search Jerusalem, as with candles, and punish the men that were settled on their lees.

Let us who preach, look at our preaching, and ask: Do I preach Christ enough? Is Christ crucified, and Christ glorified — constantly kept before the people? Do I, in my ministry, exalt and extol him? Is it my delight to proclaim Him . . .

in the glory of His person,

in the merit of His blood,

in the riches of His grace? Do I present Him to my people as the only Savior to be trusted, and the great example to be copied? Do I preach Christ plainly, with deep feeling, and with a hearty desire that my hearers may believe in Him and live? Do I aim at the immediate conversion of every soul that hears me, travailing in birth for souls until Christ is formed in them? Do I honor the Holy Spirit in His Divine personality, office, character, and gracious work? Do I preach, impressed with the thought, that unless the Holy Spirit accompanies the Word with His power —

no dead sinner will be quickened,

no undecided hearer will yield to Jesus,

nor will the Lord's people be revived or comforted? Do I realize that it is personal, heartfelt, believing prayer, that brings down the power of the Spirit, which alone can render the Word effectual? And do I in private, among my people, in the pulpit, and even while preaching — endeavor to bring down the Spirit by such prayer? Do I strive to impress upon my people, the necessity of incessant prayer for this invaluable blessing, and set them an example by cultivating such a spirit of prayer? Am I an example to my people of . . .

deadness to the world,

zeal for the Lord's glory,

devotedness to the Lord's work, and

burning desire to bring souls to God? And let the brethren who are HEARERS examine themselves on this point also. Brethren, much depends on you. A praying, zealous, lively, working church, must be successful. We fear that many of you do not realize the value of the immortal souls around you as you should. You do not aim constantly at bringing souls to God, as if it was the first and grand object of your life. Souls are dropping into Hell around you — but where is your feeling? Souls are hardening in sin under the preaching of the gospel — but where is your concern? You know that though Paul preaches — yet without the power of the Spirit of God, no saving effect would be produced — and yet you hear sermon after sermon, without pleading with God for His Spirit to come down! You hear of the low state of the church, you talk of the low state of the church — but where are your tears? Where are your wrestlings with God? Where is your deep and heart-affecting concern? How few of you feel as if you could not live if the cause of God did not prosper? and yet this is how every one of us should feel. Ah, my brethren, I think a little examination will lead us to discover how we have grieved the Spirit, and why our churches are in the state they are! There is a cause — let us search it out, and then let us inquire,

Thirdly, Can we remove it? Are we willing to make the effort? Are we right heartily desirous to witness the change? If we are, let us ascertain what part we have had, in causing the Spirit to withdraw.

What sins do we indulge?

What duty do we omit?

What wrong feelings do we cherish?

What improper principles do we hold?

What unhallowed spirit or temper do we give way to?

There is some special cause in every one, though there may be a general cause spreading over the whole church.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!" Psalms 139:23-24. Let then our pastors, elders, deacons, and private members, commence the work of self-examination at once, and let us be impartial in the work . . .

sparing no sin,

tampering with no lust,

listening to no temptation. But let us make thorough work of it. Let every sin we detect be confessed over the blood of atonement; let us . . .

deplore it,

grieve over it,

seek the pardon of it, and

pray for grace at once to depart from it!

Let us humble ourselves before God. The guilty should confess, and the confession of guilt should lead to deep humiliation before God. Brethren, let us lie low. Let us abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. O for humbling grace from God, for I fear most of us think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think!

Let us plead with God in earnest prayer for deeper sanctification, for greater spirituality, that, like Jesus, our Master, it may be our food and drink to do the will of God. How little we resemble him, who left us an example that we should follow His steps! A worldly church can never be really a spiritually prosperous church. As our land, in a spiritual sense, is like what Israel's land was once in a literal sense, when for three years and six months there had been no rain, so that dearth and death were the characteristics of the country — let us, like Elijah, go up to the top of Carmel, and like him, determine never to leave our post until the Lord sends down revitalizing rain upon the earth. He is saying to us, "Ask the Lord for rain in the spring, for he makes the storm clouds. And he will send showers of rain so every field becomes a lush pasture. For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit." (Zechariah 10:1, Isaiah 44:3).

Remember, O remember, that the energetic prayer of the righteous man avails much! Who shall say how much? God is still love. We have his promise. He is on the throne of grace. He bids us to come to it boldly. He asks us to prove Him, by penitence, reformation, and prayer. (Malachi 3:10, Malachi 3:13.) He is true to His word. He will show himself faithful. He never did say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek me in vain," and He never will. It is still true that every one who asks aright — receives; he who seeks in faith — finds; and to him that knocks with importunity — the door of Heaven's storehouse is opened. Let us ask, seek, and knock, then, that our joy may be full.

O that I could write something that would touch the hearts of the Lord's people, and stir them up! O that the Lord would use my pen to awaken concern, quicken desire, and lead to hearty wrestlings for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Nothing will do but this. Without it we are like Samson, who lost his locks on Delilah's lap! We may go out and shake ourselves, we may make a stir — but we shall accomplish nothing! There can be no substitute found for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the church.

He is the only giver and nourisher of spiritual life. He is the only efficient teacher of the ignorant. He is the only life of the church. O that God, even our own God, would at once give us anew this great blessing, that we may see a great and glorious revival of pure and undefiled religion! O to see thousands pierced in the heart, led to the Savior, and introduced into the church! O to hear the dear name of Jesus sounded forth by the tongues of millions of ransomed sinners, brought by the promised Comforter to know, love, and serve him! Lord Jesus, pour out the ever-blessed Spirit, to sanctify the church, to gather together into one your scattered people, and fulfill the largest promises of the everlasting covenant! Amen.

## 16 "I'll Do it Now!"

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"I'll Do it Now!" A short time ago, the master in a family asked one of the servants to do some household work. She wished to defer it until the morning, when the master said, "I have given you the order — you will be responsible for the fulfillment of it; and if forget — it will involve you in trouble!" Immediately the hearty girl replied "I'll do it now!"

How like this young woman are many of us, always wishing to put things off. "Tomorrow, tomorrow!" we cry. And that cry of "Tomorrow," has ruined thousands! Hell contains thousands of those who have cried, "Tomorrow," and it is to be feared that it will receive thousands more.

We are just beginning a new year, and if, like the young woman we have cried, "Tomorrow," through the year 1855, let us hear the Lord speaking to us as the master did, saying, "I have given you the order — you will be responsible for the fulfillment of it; and if forget — it will involve you in trouble!" And now at the commencement of the year 1856, let us say with the servant, "I'll do it now!" But what does our order contain?

"God has commanded all men everywhere to REPENT." This supposes . . .

that we have sinned,

that God is unwilling to punish us,

that he is prepared to pardon our sins,

that repentance is necessary. For how can he consistently pardon one . . .

who loves his sin,

perseveres in committing sin, and

is unconcerned about the consequences of sin?

It is impossible! God cannot pardon the sinner — until he repents. That is,

until he looks upon sin as a wicked thing,

until he feels sorry for his sin,

until he desires grace to enable him to break off from sin, and walk in newness of life. The true penitent has new thoughts . . .

of sin,

of himself,

of God,

of the Lord Jesus,

of Heaven,

of Hell.

He has new feelings too. He is sorry, heartily sorry for his sin. He condemns himself for sinning. He feels guilty, and acknowledges that he deserves punishment, though he dreads it. He sees, he feels, that God would be just in punishing him. He longs for a pardon. He is willing to do anything, suffer anything — if only he can but obtain the pardon of his sins! This is just what God requires.

Reader, God commands you . . .

to think differently of sin, to what you have done,

to feel differently about sin to what you have done,

to act differently in reference to sin to what you have done.

What do you say? "Tomorrow I will." Or, "I'll do it now!"

"This is his commandment, that we should BELIEVE on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." God sent his Son into the world to save sinners. He came and obeyed the law, and suffered the desert of sin; thus satisfying the demands of Divine justice, and making it honorable for God to pardon our sins. And now God says, that if we are willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior, exercising confidence in his sufferings and death as an atonement for our sins, and pleading his blood for our pardon, and his obedience for our justification — that he will faithfully according to his Word, and justly according to the merit of his Son — forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To believe on the name of Jesus, is . . .

to believe all that is written of him in the holy bible,

to receive him as our substitute,

to rely on what he has done and suffered, and

to plead his merits before God for pardon, peace, and everlasting salvation.

Every one that really repents of sin exercises faith in Jesus, and every one that exercises faith in Jesus — is immediately, perfectly, and eternally pardoned! What say you then? "Tomorrow." Or, "I'll do it now! I will renounce my sins, forsake my old ways, believe God's Word, plead the blood of Jesus at God's throne, and place my full and entire dependence on Jesus Christ alone for my everlasting salvation — and I will do it now." Happy are you, if such is really and truly the case with you!

"This is my commandment, that you LOVE one another." So said Jesus to his disciples. The sinner's orders are, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins." And after having repented, believed, professed Christ, and turned to God — the order is then, "LOVE one another." The old law commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves; and if we do so, we shall not defraud, or reproach, or act unjustly, or unkindly toward him. This order is still in force. But the new law goes further; Jesus said, "Love one another — as I have loved you." This is true holiness:

to look upon all around us as Jesus looked,  
to feel toward all around us as Jesus felt,  
to speak to all around us as Jesus spoke,  
and to act to all around us as Jesus acted.

Love is the most delightful virtue we can exercise, and when we love God with all our hearts, and all around us as Jesus loved us — we shall be perfectly happy.

What do you say to this order? Would it be wrong to love your neighbor as yourself? If not, it must be right. Would it be wrong to love others — as Jesus loved us? If not, it must be right. If it is right, ought we not to aim to do it, and aim to do it today?

Reader, it is your order to repent of sin, and to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, and to love all about you. You are responsible for the fulfillment of it. If you neglect it, it will involve you in trouble, and it may be everlasting trouble. Oh, that God would give you grace to repent of all sin at once, to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ at once, and to set about obeying the new commandment at once! Then you would enjoy . . .

the sweets of a heartfelt pardon,  
the peace that passes all understanding,  
the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Then time would fly swiftly, being employed for Jesus — and eternity would be hailed joyfully, as it is to be spent in the full enjoyment of God.

Prostrate, dear Jesus, at your feet  
A guilty rebel lies;  
And upwards to your mercy-seat  
Presumes to lift his eyes!  
If tears of sorrow would suffice  
To pay the debt I owe,  
Tears would from both my weeping eyes  
In ceaseless torrents flow! But no such sacrifice I plead  
To expiate my guilt;  
No tears but those which you have shed  
No blood — but you have spilt!

## 17 Future Events in Which You Are Interested

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### Future Events in Which You Are Interested

We are so constituted, that we cannot help looking forward sometimes, and anticipating the future; and, within certain limits, this is right and useful. Many things we anticipate may never come to pass — but some things are sure to come; and it is well to look forward to them, and prepare for them. There are two events — solemn events — in which we are all alike interested; we must all meet them, we must all pass through them. Reader, I want your attention for a very few minutes, while I refer to them. The first is, DEATH. We must die. When we shall die, where we shall die, or how we shall die — are points totally unknown to us. Nor is it worthwhile troubling ourselves about either the when or where we shall die, but the how.

HOW shall I die? That will depend on two things:

First, upon my FAITH. Faith influences my life — and it will influence my death. If I die without saving faith — I shall die under God's frown, under God's curse. I shall die the death of a condemned criminal. For "he who believes not, is condemned already — because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Condemned! Condemned by God! Condemned already! Condemned for not believing on Jesus! And, to die under condemnation — what a fearful thing is this!

Yet a day never passes but someone dies thus! Alas! How many! What if you should die so! How awful the thought. But if we do not believe in Jesus — it will be so. What will this be like? Shall I sketch the picture?

There is a man apprehended under suspicion of having been accessory to the murder of the king's son. He is tried, convicted by the clearest evidence, and sentence of condemnation is pronounced. His execution is delayed, for the king is merciful. He sends to him to inform him, that for the sake of that murdered son, he is willing to pardon him, and not only so — but to raise him to an high and honorable station, near to his own person — that all he requires is, that he should be sorry for his sin; come before him and confess it, pleading for pardon in the name of his son. But he refuses. He receives message after message, for the king is reluctant to execute the sentence. Sometimes the message is in writing, and sometimes by one of his trusty servants. He is exhorted, entreated, yes, the king himself beseeches him to be reconciled. But he will not. He remains obstinate. He perseveres in his obstinacy, day after day, year after year. At length the king says, "Execute the sentence, put the murderer to death!"

He is brought forth to execution — but who can pity him? Who can shed a tear for him? On the very scaffold, the king sends a last message, in the form of an oath, swearing that he has no pleasure in his death — but would rather that he should repent and live. But no, he is sorry to suffer — but he is not sorry for his sin. He would escape the shame and suffering of the execution — but he will not acknowledge his guilt, and plead for pardon as directed. Does he not deserve to die? Is it not just that he should suffer? Who can say that it is not?

But, take heed, reader, how you answer; for if you are living in unbelief, I come to you as Nathan came to David, and I say, (O that the Holy Spirit would apply it to your heart!) "You are the man!" You have been accessory to the death of God's Son; your guilt is as clear as day-light; the sentence of your condemnation is registered — but the execution of your sentence is delayed. You are only living upon sufferance. Every day, God may say, "Death, cut that sinner down!" But he sends to you by his written Word, by the ministry of his servants. He offers you a full and free pardon. More, he offers you a perfect justification. More, he offers to adopt you for his son, give you a mansion for a residence, and to treat you as one of his special favorites, All he asks of you is to believe his Word, confess your guilt, and ask his pardon. But you will not! He expostulates with you, and most touchingly asks you, "Why will you die?" But you refuse to yield. He uses a solemn asseveration, and says, "As I live, I have no pleasure in your death — but if you will not bow, the law must take its course." You are obstinate still. Day after day, year after year, he follows you with warnings, threatenings, invitations, exhortations, and entreaties; but like the deaf adder — you stop your ear, and refuse to hear His voice. At length, the command is given to death to cut you down! You are plunged, with all your guilt upon you, into eternity!

Then comes the other event, you must MEET GOD. You must personally and individually face him. You must account for your conduct. You must account for all the deeds done in the body, especially for that part you took in the death of His Son, and the manner in which you have treated His grace!

What can you say for yourself? How will you answer Him? What reason can you assign? What excuse can you make? Alas! none. You will be like the man at the feast, without the wedding garment — you will be speechless. The justice of your sentence, and the baseness of your conduct — will seal your lips in silence forever!

Now, had you believed in Jesus, had you fled for refuge to the hope set before you — then all your sins would have been pardoned, your person would have been justified, the Spirit of adoption would have been given you, and you would have died in peace. In this sense, all depends on faith or unbelief. Faith admits you to all the blessings and benefits of the gospel — and unbelief excludes you from the whole! But remember, it is your own voluntary unbelief. It is not some blind fate, some dire decree. No, no — you can never charge your condemnation upon God, for He invited you, as Jesus said to the Jews — but you would not come! Like Israel of old, "you have destroyed yourself." But the manner of your death will depend, secondly, very much on how you LIVE. If, as a professor of religion — you live loosely, walk carelessly, grieve the Holy Spirit, and dishonor God — then you must not be surprised, if your Heavenly Father should put you to death in the dark. This has been the case with many. They have had no candle to read their evidences, no sweet whispers to soothe their pains, no precious promises applied to cheer their hearts, no foretastes of Heavenly glory. But there has been gloomy doubt, dark uncertainty, cutting convictions, heart-rending sorrows, bitter remorse, scalding tears, heavy sighs, and piercing groans! The death-beds of some of God's own children are anything but pleasant; in their life they sowed the wind — and at death they reap the whirlwind. They are saved — but "so as by fire." They escape Hell — but it is as "by the skin of their teeth!" They are "scarcely saved," instead of having "an abundant entrance ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom."

Christian, would you die happily? Then walk closely with God, work diligently in God's vineyard, and live for Christ who died for you. God has said, "Those who honor me, I will honor." O, to be called from the field of labor, exhausted with self-denying toil, when death brings me the message to "Come Home!" The other day I was called to the deathbed of my friend, James Fowles. Between twenty and thirty years ago he lost a beloved nephew, who was to him, as an only son. This event led him to think, and produced conviction; he sought the Lord, he obtained pardon, and tasted the sweets of reconciliation to God. More than twenty years ago I stood with him by the side of the baptismal water, where he was about to be buried with Christ in baptism. He was a quiet, peaceful, persevering Christian. I never heard anyone bring a charge of inconsistency against him. He was now seventy years old — but did not look so old. He had been ailing — but I did not anticipate his death so soon. I was summoned to his bedside just as I was preparing to preach the weekly sermon; I hastened to the chamber of death, and there he lay breathing hard — but possessed of all his mental powers. As soon as he heard my voice, he seized my hand, and gave me the last friendly squeeze.

I whispered, "Is it peace with God?" "Yes, O yes!" was the reply. "Have you anything on your mind?" "No, nothing." "Have you any fear of death?" As if surprised at the question, he said, "Oh no, I know that my Redeemer lives!" The candle of the Lord shone upon his head. I sat by the side of his dying pillow repeating precious promises, and verses of sweet hymns, until I was obliged to leave the sick bed for the pulpit. Within an hour he was "absent from, the body, and present with the Lord." No one that knew him, doubted his eternal safety. His lot was cast in humble life. His faith in Jesus was simple. His walk and life were consistent with the gospel. His end was peace. And I doubt not — but immediately after his dismissal — he stood before God, complete in Jesus. I could not but wish that my last end may be like his. But I must close my paper. Reader, these two events are before you:

You Must Die.

You Must Meet God.

There is no escaping. You must. Will you die in Jesus? Will you meet God, washed in His most precious blood, clothed in His glorious righteousness, and sanctified by His Holy Spirit? Are you in Christ now? If so, "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Are you robed in the righteousness of Jesus now? If so, "it is God who justifies." Are you sanctified by the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit now? If so you are "made fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Death to you will be the gate of life. It will simply be a departure from the field of conflict — to enjoy the crown; or from the field of labor — to receive the promised reward. To stand before God will be joyous, delightful, blissful to you! It will be to stand before . . .

a Father, who has loved you with an everlasting love;

a Savior, who redeemed you at the expense of His own life;

a holy Comforter, who quickened you by His grace, taught you out of His word, led you through the wilderness by His hand, and prepared you for the joys of Heaven. But if this is not the case, if you continue to listen to Satan, indulge unbelief, and go on in sin — then you will have to experience

these dreadful scriptures: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness!" "The wicked shall be turned into Hell!" "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" "Then they will go away to eternal punishment!"

Reader! Are you prepared for this? What! For an eternity of woe! For an eternity spent in weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth! This will be the exact condition of millions of the human family throughout eternity!

Choose then — seriously, deliberately — Heaven, or Hell! You must DIE! You must MEET GOD in judgement! Will you die as a criminal at the hand of inflexible justice? Or will you fall asleep in Jesus as a babe on its mother's bosom? Will you meet God as his enemy — who is bound by his Word and the justice of his holy nature to punish you eternally? Or will you meet God as a loving Father, to be welcomed to enjoy his presence and love forever? Which? Which? O which shall it be?

## 18 Card-playing

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Card-playing "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22 "Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31 A few years ago, a young man was called to dwell for a time in a strange country town. He was directed to a respectable householder — but was informed that he was very particular as to the character of his lodgers; application was made, and proved successful. The first evening of his residence there, when the whole family was assembled, he was surprised to see all present draw around the table, and a pack of cards introduced. He feared God, and felt dismayed. He was invited to join the party — but objected, saying that he did not understand card-playing. The reply was, "We'll soon teach you." But he felt determined never to learn, and therefore at once positively refused to join them.

Many days have passed since then, and the young man is now getting into the autumn of life — yet he has never regretted the decision of that evening; but he has often looked back, and thanked God that, young as he was, and naturally shy and sensitive, with a strong desire to please in his constitution, he was enabled to repel the temptation, and overcome the foe.

Reader, shall I tell you what young man's reason was for refusing to engage in what is called "a harmless game at cards?" It was not because he was not fond of amusement — for he was. Nor was it because he was not of a social, lively disposition — for he has often felt he was too much so. Fun, frolic, and all kinds of youthful games — were once thoroughly enjoyed by him; and after he knew "the grace of God in truth," he often went as far as was lawful in youthful games, and at times much too far. No; he was not dull, gloomy, or sour — but just the reverse.

Yet he would not learn to play at cards. He felt he ought not. His conscience was enlightened, and he dared not. But he had reasons for his conduct, and many reasons too. The great reason was, he believed that the New Testament was an inspired book, and therefore he took it for his guide; he believed that the words of that book would "judge him at the last day," and therefore he made them the rule of his life. Every departure from that rule, caused him grief — but in keeping its commandments, he found there was a great reward. But he had several particular reasons for not playing at cards. For instance, he knew he was required to "pray without ceasing," and he felt that he could not go down upon his knees, and pray to God to bless him in card-playing, before he began; neither could he lift up his heart, and pray for his Heavenly Father to smile upon him while he was playing. His New Testament also commanded him "in everything to give thanks," but he did not feel that he could praise God while playing, nor find a good reason, or suitable disposition to do so after he had finished. He was also exhorted thus, "Whatever you do in word or deed — do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." But he could not understand how he could play at cards in the name of the Lord Jesus. He certainly was not authorized to play at cards by his Savior; nor would he expect to receive his sanction while doing so.

He had often felt the force of these Scripture words:

"Abstain from all appearance of evil."

"Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

"What, don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Now he could not see how card-playing would glorify God. He did not believe that when people sat down to cards, they did so in order to glorify God. Nor did it appear to him consistent, that a temple of the Holy Spirit should be so employed. In addition to this he read: "Every one of us must give an account of himself to God." And the questions would arise: What account can I give of the time spent, the spirit excited, and the money lost or won at card-playing? Then conscience would ask: Would you sit down to play at cards — if you knew you would die before morning, or that the Lord Jesus would come while you are at cards, and call you to his bar? Would you play cards just before going to the Lord's supper? These questions convinced him that card-playing was not justifiable, and therefore he refused to play.

He knew also that card-playing was not necessary for his health, or to pass away his time, or to add to his enjoyments; for he could be healthy, occupied, and happy without it.

Reader, do you think this young man was justified in refusing to play at cards? Do you think he was to be commended? Do you ever play? If so, can you be justified? Will you reflect upon card-playing with pleasure on your sick-bed, or on your dying pillow? Will you be able, just before you launch into eternity — to thank God that you have spent so many hours at the card-table, or that you have played so many games? But perhaps my reader will say, "I make no profession of religion, and therefore the case is different with me." But why do you not make a profession of religion? Perhaps you say, "Because I have none." But ought you not to have religion? What will you do without it, when you come to die? But what is religion? Is religion believing God? It is; and if you do not believe God — then you make him a liar. How awful this! Is religion faith in Christ? It is; and this is God's commandment, that you should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ? What fearful disobedience, then, is yours? Is religion love to God? It is; and this is the first and great commandment. Is religion love to men? It is; and this is the second great commandment. Is not religion being and doing just what God requires in his Holy Word? Ought you not, then, to be what God requires and to do what God commands? To be a Christian is . . .

to be like-minded with God,

to walk in fellowship with God,

to obey from the heart the precepts of God,

and in all things to aim to glorify God.

None but the Holy Spirit can produce this, we know — but this is no excuse for you being destitute of it; for what said Jesus? "If you being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." If you have no desire to be religious — you will not ask for the Holy Spirit; and if you do not ask for it — then you have no right to expect it. But will this excuse you? Will this justify you in living as an enemy to God, and wasting your precious time in card-playing, and similar frivolous and sinful amusements. Is trifling with God's Word, insulting God's mercy, and refusing to ask for God's Holy Spirit — a

justification of your irreligion? Can it be? Conscience, to you I appeal, can it be? Be assured of this, you ought to profess religion; and you ought to profess it but only because you possess it! And possessing it, you ought to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world; and so adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. You ought to avoid the very appearance of evil; and spend every day as you would wish to spend your last day; so that whether you live, you may live unto the Lord, or whether you die, you may die unto the Lord; so that living or dying, you may be the Lord's.

## 19 Comfort For a New Year

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Comfort For a New Year "The Lord lives!" 2 Samuel 22:47

We live in trying times. The new year opens, as no new year has opened to us of late. Our country is at war. Provisions are scant. The future, though concealed from our view, appears to be hung with clouds. It is probable that there will be great changes. Many fears will be awakened. Many hearts will be wounded. The faith of many of the Lord's people will be deeply tried. Satan will be busy. Our principles will be put to the test. But amidst all, we, as believers in Jesus, have one comfort, "The Lord lives!" There will be no change in him. His Word will remain true,

his throne will be unshaken, and

his purposes rest undisturbed.

He will have his way in the whirlwind and storm, and make a path for himself in the deep waters. Yes, Jehovah is immutably the same, and he is our God. Ours by covenant engagement. Ours by promise and by oath. Ours in Jesus, his beloved Son. He is the object of our hope and love. His bosom will be our resting-place, his arm our defense, and his providence our friend. Unspeakable privilege! Unparalleled mercy! Jehovah, in all his greatness and glory, in all his goodness and grace, is our God. And as our God he ever lives, ever reigns, and performs all things for us. Here is then — An Encouraging Fact, with which to enter upon a new year, "The Lord lives!" Friends may die, the nearest and dearest of our friends; and most probably some of them will die this year. Our relatives may die, the wife may lose her husband, the husband may lose his wife, parents may lose their children. Oh, how many wives will be left widows, and children orphans, this year! But, the Lord lives, and that should comfort us under all. Church members may die, the most holy, the most useful, those upon whom the prosperity of the church seems to depend; but the Lord can do without any of them, and carry on his cause in their absence, as well as by their help. Ministers may die, the most exemplary, and the most successful. Many of our church leaders will be taken home this year. Many of our promising young men may be called away likewise. Many a pulpit will be vacated, and many a church will be left without a pastor — but the Great Shepherd lives, and his church is safe, his cause must go on. He is not dependent upon men, or ministers, to carry on his cause — and he often proves this to us, by removing early those who promise most. He can raise up any number and any kind of ministers he chooses; and, blessed be his name, he will raise up all that he needs.

If, therefore, during this year, dear friends are called away, if our most valuable relatives are taken home, if the active members of our churches are removed, or even if our preachers and pastors die — let us remember, "The Lord lives!" This will give us living comfort amidst dying circumstances, and dying friends. Our gourds may wither, our idols may be torn from us — but "the Lord lives!" and living — he loves all his people. His dispensations may change — but his love never. Fixed on his people in past eternity — fixed on his people as viewed in Jesus — it remains immutably the same. Everything outside of God will change; but his love to his people is himself

loving them; it is his nature, it is himself; and he is immutably the same.

I may lose the affection of my fellow-man — but God will still love me; for he rests in his love. Whom he loves — he loves to the end. While he lives — he loves his people; and as he ever lives — he ever loves.

Oh, consoling truth, amidst all the toils, trials, troubles, and temptations of the coming year — the living God will continue to love me! Love me infinitely! Love me so as to cause all things to work together for my good!

"The Lord lives!" and living takes an interest in all the affairs of his people. Having numbered the very hairs of their heads — he considers nothing too insignificant, nothing too trivial to interest him — if it affects them. Believer, your God will take an interest in your every-day affairs, and he wishes to hear from you in reference to them all. Hence the direction, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." He will look to all that concerns you, and desires to help you in every situation. He bids you cast all your cares upon him, assuring you that he cares for you. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

"The Lord lives!" and living, will listen to all the sighs, cries, groans, and prayers of his people. Not one will escape his notice. Each will touch his heart and awaken his sympathy. "I have heard," said he of old, "the groanings of my people who are in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them." Yes, poor, tried, troubled Christian, your God will hear your cries, regard your prayers, fulfill his promises, and end all your sorrows, by setting you before his face forever.

"The Lord lives!" and lives to fulfill his Word. His predictions shall all be made good. His promises shall all be performed. Creatures may break their word — but our God will never violate his. Every promise lies before his eye, is engraved on his heart, and shall he fulfilled in the experience of his people — to his own praise and glory. My poor tried brother, you may trust him. However rough your road. However severe your inward conflict. Yes, while floods of corruption are rolling through your soul, while Satan's fiery darts are sticking fast in you, while the world is frowning, and even your fellow-Christians are looking coldly upon you, or standing aloof from you — you may trust him!

"The Lord lives," and lives to accomplish his purposes. Toward you, they are gracious purposes. Trying they may be; beneficial they must be. They flow from his love. They bear the stamp of his wisdom. They were passed in Jesus. They are to issue in his glory.

Poor Job, in the midst of his affliction, saw something of this, and therefore said, "He performs the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him."

"The Lord lives!" and lives to perfect his works. The work of redemption will be perfected by the resurrection of all the saints in the exact likeness of Jesus. The work of grace in your heart will be perfected in the exact conformity of your soul to the soul of Jesus, in the day of his glorious appearing. The Lord began it — and he who began it, will complete it. He well knew all the opposition it would meet with. He knew how much and how often it would be hindered — but he determined that it would never die. He will carry it on by what means and by what agencies he pleases — but he will carry it on, until he can see the image of his moral excellencies reflected by

every power of your soul!

"The Lord lives," and lives to secure the glory of his own most holy name. "The Lord has made everything for his own purposes — even the wicked for a day of disaster." He will get glory by all he does, by all he prevents, and by all he permits. When the mystery of redemption is finished, we shall see that all his works praise him, and his saints bless him. His work will appear to be honorable and glorious, and his righteousness will endure forever. His glory will be great in our salvation. Sweet thought this: My God will get glory by me:

by all my toils and troubles,

by all my sadness and sorrows,

by all my conflicts and conquests,

by my weakness and strength,

by my sighs and songs,

by my life and my death!

Let us then, my poor tried fellow-traveler, enter upon this new year, drawing encouragement and comfort from the fact, that "the Lord lives;" and try and sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted!" We will now notice — The comfortable CONCLUSIONS to be drawn from this fact.

If the Lord lives — we shall not be FRIENDLESS, for he will be our friend, a friend that sticks closer than a brother. He will . . .

counsel us by his Word,

conduct us by his providence,

teach us by his Spirit,

feed us with his hand, and

at length receive us to glory!

If the Lord lives — we shall not be FATHERLESS, for he will be a father unto us, and we shall be his sons and daughters. He will treat us as his children. He will deal with us as with sons. He will perform a father's part. Therefore we may expect to be instructed, corrected, yes, sometimes scourged! "For what son is there whom his father chastens not." True, if we can do without the rod, we shall not have it; but if the fool's back calls for stripes — we shall receive them. He will not spare the rod — and spoil his child; much less will he ever allow one to die or perish from neglect.

If the Lord lives — we shall never be FORSAKEN; for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make them his people. His own most precious Word assures us of this. He speaks to us individually. He says to each poor, timid, troubled believer, "I will never leave you! I will never, no never, no never, forsake you!" As believers in Jesus, he has sworn that he will not be wrathful with us, nor rebuke us.

Precious, precious assurance this, with which to begin the year — that let what will take place in the family, in the world, in the church, or even in our soul's experience — we shall not be friendless, fatherless, or forsaken! But as it is said of old, "For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the Lord Almighty, though their land is full of sin before the Holy One of Israel" — so we shall find that amidst all that occurs, we have a faithful friend, a loving father, and a present God. Oh, for grace rightly to use and improve this glorious fact!

If the Lord lives — then we may go forward with CONFIDENCE . . .

in our Christian course,

in our daily labor,

into the deadly conflict! As our day — so will our strength be. The grace of Jesus will be found sufficient for us. Confidence befits those who have the living God with them to fight for them; with them as their friend and father. This is our privilege, therefore with confidence let us press on toward the mark for the prize.

If the Lord lives — then we may look forward into the future with HOPE. Clouds and darkness may surround us at present. Briers and thorns may be with us now. But the clouds and darkness will pass away, for light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. The briers and thorns will vanish; for instead of the thorn — shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier — shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.

If the Lord lives — we may meet the worst with COURAGE. Should it be persecution, or poverty, or reproach — we may then meet it, for since, and because, Jesus lives, we shall live also. Yes, we shall be more than conquerors — through him who loved us.

If the Lord lives — we may anticipate DEATH without dread. We may die this year! But suppose we do — we shall "die in the Lord;" we shall only depart from scenes of sin, sorrow, disappointment, vexation, and grief — "to be with Christ, which is far better." Besides which, the living Lord will be with us in the dying hour; he will watch beside our dying pillow; and give special grace, for this special trial. Oh, believer, what is death to you? A foe? True — but a stingless, powerless foe! A strange transition! Admitted — but One will be with you, who is no stranger to you, for even death cannot sever you from his love, or change his heart towards you.

If the Lord lives — we should . . .

publish his fame,

speak forth the honor of his name,

and make his praise glorious.

If the Lord lives — we should cleave to his friends; they may be imperfect, despised, and trying — but they are his friends still; and we should love them, prefer them, and cleave to them for his sake.

If the Lord lives — we should live in his family, and with his household. The church is the household of God; of that visible household we should be members, dwelling in it, working in it, and seeking our happiness in its great and precious privileges. We should abound in his work. If he works in us, the least we can do in return, is to work for him. To work heartily. To work regularly. To be, as the apostle exhorts, "Always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labor is not vain in the Lord."

If the Lord lives — our fears are follies. Whom should we fear? What should we fear? Nothing but sin — literally, nothing but sin. Through this year we should join with David and sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident!" Or with David, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

If the Lord lives — conquest is sure. He who once conquered for us, will conquer in us, and conquer by us. Our shout will be, by and bye, "We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us!" Therefore at present we may say to the Lord, "We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

Finally, if the Lord lives — supplies are certain. We do not know what we may need, nor how much we may need, nor how long we may need — but the Lord knows; and he has provided of his goodness for the poor. In eternity, he laid up for us; and in time, all through our time here, he will lay out upon us. Only let us . . .

exercise faith in his Word,

cleave to his cross,

wrestle at his throne,

watch in his way,

work in his vineyard,

and aim at his glory —

and then let taxes rise ever so high, let trade sink ever so low, let needs increase ever so fast — we may confidently say, "The Lord lives, and my God will supply all my needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus!"

## 20 Man's Choice!

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### Man's Choice!

Every man has the power of choosing for himself, and he exercises that power, either to his destruction or salvation. If left to himself — his choice ruins him; if swayed by the grace of God — that grace saves him. Man's nature and disposition may be known by his choice. How do men in general choose? Look at four points.

First, their course. The man that chooses his own course, chooses a course of sin.

He lies, because he chooses.

He swears, because he chooses.

He gets drunk, because he chooses.

He steals, because he chooses.

He commits fornication or adultery, because he chooses.

He despises the Gospel, because he chooses. The course he chooses is a sinful course, just the opposite of the course pointed out by God's holy and righteous law. Hence the Lord says, "They have chosen their own ways." If man deliberately chooses to disobey God, to break his holy law, and live daily insulting him to his face — can he complain if God punishes him for his guilty, daring, inexcusable conduct? Especially when he is warned of his danger, exhorted to desist, invited to turn to the Lord, and promised a free pardon of all sin upon doing so! Can it be unjust in God to punish such sinners? If they were reasonable — would they not expect to be punished?

Secondly, their companions. Sinners love sinners, therefore if a man choose his own companions — he will choose sinful companions. He will not choose the prayerful, the holy, the self-denying ones. The mirthful chooses mirthful companions. The wicked chooses wicked companions. Just look into the alehouse, into the brothel, or into the theater — who are there? Companions. How did they come there? It was their own choice. Why did they choose to go there? Because they were wickedly inclined, and had "pleasure in unrighteousness."

So, if we choose sinners, ungodly people, for our companions now — can we expect that God will put us among his children, or give us a place in Heaven with the saints when we die? If we enjoy the company of the wicked or the carnal on earth — could we enjoy the company of the holy, the spiritual, in Heaven? It is impossible! It, therefore, we choose the company of lost sinners now — we must expect to be associated with lost sinners forever. If we choose their pleasures now — we ought to expect to suffer their punishment in eternity.

Thirdly, their object of trust. We must have an object of trust — or someone or something in which to confide. Now, the Lord proposed himself to be that object — but man chooses anyone or anything before the Lord! Does he want to trust in someone for safety? He will trust anyone —

even a dog, or a stone wall, before he will trust the Lord. Does he want something on which to trust for eternal life, or on which to build his hopes of Heaven? He will trust his own tears, or prayers, or sufferings, or works; yes he would sooner trust in his very sins, than trust in the precious blood and glorious righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The very spirit of Popery is, refusing to trust in Christ alone for acceptance with God. The essence of Puseyism is, refusing to rely on the atonement of Christ alone for everlasting life. This is the stone that is set at nothing of all Popish, Puseyite, Socinian, and a thousand other builders. Yet God proposes the work of Christ alone, and the person of Christ alone — to be the object of our trust and confidence. If men refuse to trust in Jesus only, as God bids them, and prefer trusting in some spider's web, or building upon some sandy foundation — can they complain if God "rejects their confidences," and allows them to reap the due desert of their folly?

Fourthly, their end. There is an end that is divinely glorious — it is everlasting life; and there is an end which is unutterably dreadful — it is everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.

Now, he who chooses to walk in the way — may be said to choose the end to which it leads; especially if he does so after he is warned, and the result of his course is kindly and clearly pointed out. Now, strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there are who find it. But because wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction — many there are who go in thereat. Yet to all who read the New Testament, Jesus says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there he who find it." The same admonition is uttered from the pulpit, repeated in this book, and presented to the eye and ear of sinners in a thousand forms.

Now, if under such circumstances men choose the broad road, persevere in the broad road, and refuse to be either driven or drawn from it — are they not also choosing the end to which the broad road leads? And if they choose death in the error of their ways — can they complain if they find themselves at last in everlasting burnings? The fate of the sinner is both reasonable and just, it is but the wages of his sin!

## 21 The Proper Aim of a Christian's Life

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### The Proper Aim of a Christian's Life

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

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

Every wife should habitually aim to please her husband.

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

God is pleased or displeased . . .

with every thought we think,

with every word we speak,

with every action we perform,

with every emotion we feel.

Perhaps we do not sufficiently realize this. We think, speak, feel, and act — without ever considering whether we are pleasing God, or not. But this ought not to be, for He . . .

gave us our being,

redeemed us from sin and damnation,

called us by His grace, and

has blessed us with innumerable and interminable blessings

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

What makes Heaven so happy? Just this — all there keep the eye and heart intently fixed upon this one thing — pleasing God. What would make us permanently and solidly happy on earth? Only this — to aim always and in everything to please God. Ah! if we did this, we would have . . .

few cares,

few fears,

and no falls! The bosom would be a stranger to anxiety, and the heart to foreboding. The Savior's prayer which He taught his disciples would be in a great measure answered, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

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

Both reason and revelation unite in saying that we, as believers in Jesus, as partakers of the grace of God, as those who are absolutely dependent on God, who are so richly supplied by God, who are so infinitely indebted to God, and who are expecting to receive a crown and kingdom from God — ought in everything to endeavor to please God! The precepts of His word direct us how we may do this, and the Holy Spirit is ready to help our infirmities — if we heartily desire and fervently ask Him.

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

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

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

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

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

Now, in making use of our influence for worldly objects, and in withholding it from spiritual objects — do we not sin? Are we not displeasing God? Ought we not to ascertain what influence we have,

and how we may best exert it, so as to please God? Are we not accountable for the use or abuse of our influence? Is it not a talent, an important talent? Was it not given us to employ for God and the good of our fellow-men? Is it not important, then, in reference to using our influence, to ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" So also as to the connections I form, and the relationships into which I enter, the first question should be, "Will this please God?" A Christian is about to enter into partnership, to commence or carry on a business — -what should be his first object? Assuredly to please God, for if he loses sight of God's glory, and seeks only his own worldly advantage — God may blow upon it, and if it does not end in ruin, it may introduce him to trouble, care, anxiety, and perplexity, which will spoil his peace, rob him of his spiritual enjoyments, and make his life anything but desirable! Men of business should often ask in reference to their transactions, "Is this pleasing to God?" A godly man is about to choose a wife, or a godly woman has an offer of marriage — what should they do? What should be the principal aim? What should decide the point? Just an answer to this question, "Will it please God?" If they can, after much thought, prayer, regard to God's Word, and close examination, conclude, "Yes, it will please God" — then they have reason to expect the smile of Heaven upon their union, the blessing of God upon their household, and real happiness in their connection with each other — but not else. Do not forget that you ought not only to please yourselves — but to please God! And not only so — but you should aim to please God first and principally — before you please yourselves. For example, say that I am a laborer, and am about to engage in an employment — "pleasing God" should be my guide. The place may be respectable, the employment may be easy, the remuneration may be good; but can I have time for closet prayer? Can I have liberty to attend the means of grace? Can I adorn the doctrine of God my Savior here? Or, looking at the subject on all sides, and comparing it with other situations that may offer, I should ask, "Will it glorify God for me to enter into this employment?" Or, "Is it pleasing to God that I should enter into such an engagement, or undertake such a service?" This is the point, and we should stick to it. This is the rule, and we should walk by it.

Again, as to the way in which I perform duty. Many things are done — which are not well done. The way of doing them does not reflect honor on God, or do credit to ourselves. If I do anything out of fear, slavish fear — it is wrong. If I do anything merely to silence conscience — it is wrong. If I do anything merely to please men, or to raise myself in their estimation — it is wrong. My object in everything I do — should be to please God. The one grand end of my life, the grand thing I am to aim at — is to please my Heavenly Father. I have . . .

nothing to dread but His frown,

nothing to fear but His displeasure,

nothing to seek but His approbation.

If my Heavenly Father is pleased with me — it is enough. In prayer, in praise, in exercising benevolence, in every public duty, in every arduous enterprise, in every self-denying undertaking — I should just ask, "Is this pleasing to God?" If so, all is well. But His word must decide the question — and will always do so. In general,

if we do all to the glory of God,

if we do all lovingly or in a spirit of love,

if we do all to edify believers, and to win lost sinners —

then it is no question that God is pleased with us. In a word, in reference to . . .

the spirit we manifest,

the temper we indulge,

the object we aim at,

the design we have in view, and

the motive that influences us in every enterprise —

we should seriously ask, "Is this pleasing to God?"

Beloved, if we do not please God — then it matters little whom we please! And if we do please God — then it is of small importance whom we displease. What a comfort it is when . . .

the world frowns on us,

Christians misunderstand us, and

professors misrepresent our conduct

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

the world smiles on us,

Christians think well of us,

and professors applaud us

— but we have an inward conviction that in what we have done — we have sought ourselves before Jesus, and have been influenced by some carnal motive, instead of a simple desire to please God — and we go to the throne of grace to lay our work at our Father's feet — and He refuses to acknowledge it — there is no sweet smile, no access to His loving heart, no light from his countenance beaming upon us! What is the world's smile, what the opinion of our fellow-Christians, what the plaudits of professors — without the approbation of God? Ah, what? My brother, my sister — our Heavenly Father is pleased with our poorest performances, with our most imperfect services, with only a cup of cold water given to one of His children — if our object is to please Him! In all that we do — He looks into our hearts, to see what we are aiming at. He is displeased or pleased — with all we do. It is one thing for Him to accept our persons in Jesus, to pardon our sins for the sake of Jesus, and another thing to be pleased with our works, as the works of His beloved child. Of the former we should be assured, and the latter we should constantly aim at.

O what a mercy to be permitted to do anything for God, to visit His sick, to relieve His poor, to circulate His truth, and to speak well of His name! And what a comfort it is to know that our God is easily pleased — that it is not the amount of what we do — but the motive from which we do it, that

He looks at! "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that a man has not."

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

## 22 A Silent God

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A Silent God "I kept silence."Psalms 50:21

Men sinned — but God was silent. He said nothing. He did nothing. He just let them go on. This is just as the Lord acts with many now. All they wish is to be left alone, to be allowed to have their own way; and the Lord by his providence says, "Well, I will leave you alone. I will let you have your own way." And then, men sin without remorse, without compunction, and without any visible display of God's displeasure. They go on hardening their hearts, searing their consciences, and increasing their condemnation. They reject the Bible. They speak against God. They trample his law under their feet. They sometimes think, if they do not say, "If there is a God, why doesn't he interfere with me? Why doesn't he punish me, and sinners like me?" Oh sinner, God will not punish you yet. He will bear long with you. He has much patience. He is slow to anger. He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner. But he is ready to forgive. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

He is a Father, and feels reluctant to punish his own offspring. He is a God of mercy, and would rather pardon — than punish. Therefore he silently looks on, and allows sinners to go on. He sees them sin against his law, his gospel, their own consciences, and the striving of his Spirit; and instead of at once sending them to Hell, to reap the due desert of their deeds — he keeps silence. He looks down from Heaven to see if they will seek after Him. To see if they will return and repent. But, alas! the great majority go on in sin. They harden each other in their iniquity. They stifle conscience with infidel objections, or drown it in the intoxicating cup. They stumble over the sins of professors, and pretend to judge the gospel by inconsistent professors, rather than by the life of its Author, or its consistent professors.

Man, are you living in sin? Do you swear? Do you spend your money at the beer-shop, and get drunk on the proceeds of your labor? Are you guilty of fornication? Do you read infidel books, and encourage infidel thoughts? Do you put away from you the day of judgment? God observes you! He knows all that is done by you, and all that passes within you — but, at present, he keeps silence. A silent God often produces a silent conscience, and a silent conscience generates a false peace. Is this your case, reader? Can you sin without an inward accusation, an inward sting? You could not once. Your conscience is silent, and a silent conscience is one of the greatest curses! Remember, God will not always keep silence. He will speak by and bye. He will perhaps say to his messenger, death, "Cut that sinner down!" Then, with a stroke you shall fall. He may say, "Satan, convey that soul to Hell!" Then, in a few seconds you will be in that place of torment! He will call, "Arise, you dead, and come to judgment." Then, the dead, small and great, will stand before God. He will say, "Gather together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them! Then, infidels will be bundled up with infidels; swearers will be bundled up with swearers; liars will be bundled up with liars; drunkards will be bundled up with drunkards; whoremongers will be bundled up with whoremongers. Every class of sinners will be bundled with those whose company they have chosen on earth. Then comes the sentence, "Cast them into the lake which burns with brimstone

and fire!" Then, oh, then, an eternity of suffering follows. Conscience will slumber no more. The voice of God will be echoed eternally by the lost soul; Hell will appear to resound with the dreadful, the irrevocable sentence, "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"

Reader, has God silently borne with you. Has he endured with much patience, your guilty conduct! Oh, if you should be a vessel of wrath, fitting yourself for destruction — then for you there shall be everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power! If you should! It may be so. Beware! Reflect upon your course and conduct!

Consider what God has spoken in his Word. Remember, there is a Savior now; one who can save you; one who is willing to save you; one who invites you to approach him; one who promises that he will never cast you out; one who assures you that whoever believes on him shall have everlasting life. Listen to his Word, receive his invitation, believe his promise, put his assurance to the proof — and Heaven, with all its joys and glories, shall be yours! God will no longer be silent — but will "rejoice over you with joy, will rest in his love, and rejoice over you with singing."

## 23 The Inquiry

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The Inquiry "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" 2 Kings 2:14

Thus exclaimed Elisha, after the ascent of his master to Heaven, when he returned to the bank of the Jordan river. He desired to cross back over it, and folding the garment of Elijah together, he smote the waters, and put the veracity of his ascended master to the test. The waters parted, the promise was found good, and God was proved to be faithful.

Reflecting upon by-gone days, of which we have heard and read, and looking around upon the world, and especially upon the church — we feel prompted to exclaim, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

What Was the Character of Elijah's God?

He was a prayer-answering God. How wonderfully he answered the prayers of the prophet in the chamber of the widow of Zarephath! There on the bed lies the dead body of her son. Elijah cries earnestly to God for his restoration; he stretches himself upon the corpse; God listens to his cry — and the life of the child returns. The Most High God listened to the voice of a man!

Israel forsook God, Elijah was filled with holy jealousy, and he prayed that it might not rain, and it did not rain for the space of three years and six months. But when on the top of Carmel he pleaded with his God — the clouds gathered, and the Heavens gave rain, thus proving that the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much. The God of Elijah was a wonder-working God. How wondrously did he feed his faithful servant by the wild ravens, sustain him and the widow's household by a handful of meal and a drop of oil for many days, and as wondrously reserved to himself seven thousand faithful worshipers in the midst of the general apostasy. The God of Elijah was a sin-hating, sin-avenging God. He visited the sins of his people with the rod, and the sins of his enemies with the sword. He spared neither the monarch nor the plebeian, the self-righteous nor the idolater. To Israel especially he said, "You only have I known of all the inhabitants of the earth — therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

He was a holy, jealous God. As he was holy, he must necessarily hate and correct sin; as he loved his people, he was jealous of their love. When they withdrew their hearts from him and gave themselves up to idolatry — it provoked him, and he resented it at their hands.

Yet he was a tender, sympathizing God. He was soon touched with a sense of their miseries when he saw their sufferings or heard their cry. He pitied, he pardoned, and returned to them again. "His soul was grieved for the afflictions of Israel." They acted most basely, "nevertheless he regarded their afflictions when he heard their cry." Wonderful was the forbearance, pity, and compassion of their God! The God of Elijah was a God who honored his devoted servants. True, he tried them, allowed them to manifest their weakness, and display their folly; so proving that it was not for their good works — but of his own abounding grace, that he distinguished them. He honored Elijah before Ahab, in the presence of Baal's priests, and before the proud and haughty Jezebel. He

honored him in his life, and put a singular honor upon him when his work was done, by sending a fiery chariot to fetch him home to himself.

"This God is our God forever and ever." The God of Elijah is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God whose Word we believe, whose religion we profess, in whose cause we are embarked, and whose honor should be the great end of our lives.

"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" WHY do we make this inquiry?

Because so few prayers are answered. How many prayers are put up for the world, and for the church — -for pastors and private members — for the masses and for individuals; but how few of these prayers are answered! Oh! how few visible answers to prayer we have! The church languishes. Our graces languish. We pray for a revival. We sigh for a change. We want to witness a great and glorious work. We want Pentecostal times; we pray for them — but they come not. "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" — the God who answered prayer so speedily, so visibly, so wondrously, in his experience?

Alas! perhaps, we should ask, Where are the prayers of Elijah? — prayers full of faith, full of energy, crowned with fervor — prayers that would take no denial — but went right to the heart of God! Oh! to be enabled to offer up "the fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous man," which avails much!

Because so few wonders are wrought. We know that every conversion of a sinner to God is a wonder. It is the proof that God is with us, that his power is displayed among us, that he yet hovers in mercy over us. Every conversion is the evidence of a present God. But what wonders were wrought in early times! What wonders have been wrought in later periods! A few preached the Word — and great multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord. "Is the hand of the Lord shortened that he cannot save? Or is his ear heavy that he cannot hear?" How is it that we preach much — and there is so little effect; that we sow much — and reap but little?" "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

Because so little faith is exercised. We have the same promises our fathers had — the promise of the presence of Jesus, of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that prayer shall be answered. But where is our confidence — our living, working, pleading, expecting confidence? Is not God faithful? Are not his promises true? Is not the gospel the same? How is it that we have so little faith? Ah! faith is the gift of God; do we realize this, and ask for it, and cry right heartily with the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith!" Faith, living faith in God, proves the presence of God, the putting forth of the power of God, and such faith prevails with God. It is the lack of such faith, in its fullness, energy, and results — which leads us to cry out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Oh! that the spirit of faith may be given us, and a strong, steady, all-conquering confidence in God be produced within us!

Because so little concern is felt. It is generally acknowledged that things are low with us; that little is done by us; that whether we look abroad over the mission field, or nearer at home into our own village vineyards, or at home on our lovely gardens — things are in anything but a satisfactory state. We are not making inroads on the territory of the prince of darkness; we are not cultivating the waste lands; we are not building "up the old wastes, the desolations of many generations;" we are not taking possession of the world for Christ. Many churches languish. Many pulpits need men

full of faith, fervor, and the Holy Spirit. Our schools need teachers, and our village stations need right-hearted and right-headed preachers. Who does not admit this? And yet who feels it so as to stir up himself "to take hold upon God?" Does it keep any of us awake at night? Do we rise up, as Jesus did, "a great while before day," specially to plead with God? Do we gather together, as Israel did, "to ask help of the Lord?"

Souls are going to Hell by millions! Thousands of professors are at ease in Zion. Many are pleased with themselves and their puny efforts. Few feel deeply; few are properly concerned for the present state of the world, the church, the ministry, and the school. "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Oh! to feel the present state of things, so as to determine, in the Lord's strength, to carry out the Lord's own words, and "give him no rest, until his righteousness goes forth as brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burns!" Are we not very much like Israel, during the dreadful drought of "three years and six months"? We seem to be just kept alive by a little dew, or a trickling stream at the root. There is no coming down of the Holy Spirit in power, in demonstration, and with much assurance. "Where," oh where "is the Lord God of Elijah?"

We Will Glance at the Inquiry. Where is he? Has it not happened to us as he threatened Israel of old, "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their iniquity; in their affliction they will seek me early." Is not the presence of the Lord, and the power of the Spirit, very much withdrawn from us? Surely no one will deny this. He has returned to his place. What brought him out of his place at the Pentecost? Was it not the intercession of our newly ascended High Priest before the throne, and the prayers that ascended for ten successive days from the one hundred and twenty disciples on earth? God could not rest in Heaven then. The kingdom of Heaven suffered violence then. Groans, sighs, cries, and tears were mingled then; and thus they were put into the censer of the High Priest before the golden altar.

Oh! for such prayers and such prayer-meetings now! Oh! to see the Lord's people so stirred up, that there shall be no rest on earth nor rest in Heaven without a revival, a glorious revival, of pure and undefiled religion!

"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Hear his own testimony, "For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite." Does not this testimony speak to us? Does it not say, "Ah, you are not humble enough! You do not lie low enough! There is not deep, daily contrition and sorrow for sin! You need stripping, emptying, humbling, and bringing low — before the Lord God of Elijah can work wonders among you! You would rob him of his glory. You would ascribe much of his work to yourselves. You would boast of the works, and neglect to give glory, all the glory — to his most holy and blessed name!"

Brethren, in all humility, with deep searching of heart, I ask: Have we not thought more highly of ourselves than we ought to think? Have we not been proud of our colleges, schools, talents, and varied means of usefulness — and trusted in these, rather than in the preserving power and operation of the Holy Spirit? May we not have provoked the Lord to jealousy? Are there not with us, even with us, sins against the Lord? Is it not possible that some image of jealousy is set up in our hearts, our homes, or our temples? May the Lord reveal it to us, and help us to say —

"The dearest idol I have known,

whatever that idol be,

Help me to tear it from your throne,

And worship only thee!" Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? In the devoted, active, zealous, unworldly, single-minded church! But where are such churches to be found today? Where? Alas! there is a great lack of devotion in our worship, and devotedness to God's cause and service in our members. The late attendance of many, the irregular attendance of others, and the lack of realizing God's presence in more, must be displeasing in the eyes of the Lord. We have a few active souls; but are the majority of our church a embers active? Blessed be God, we have some zeal; but is it zeal enlightened by knowledge? Are we unworldly? Look at our dress, at our ornaments, at our attitudes, at our customs, and our habits. Have we obeyed the divine mandate, "Come out from among them, and be separate — and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." The spirit of the world influences the church; the pleasures of the world please our members; and the fashions of the world lead multitudes astray. Where is our practical testimony to the world — that its spirit, course, and end are evil? Are we single-minded? Is it our one object, aim, and end — to pluck sinners from the fire, to build up ourselves on our most holy faith, and to bring back God into his own world? Is it? If we were thoroughly devoted to God, alive and active for God, zealous and earnest in the work of God, distinct and distinguishable from the world, and singly bent on one thing — even our high calling to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" — we would not long have to cry out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" To What Should this Inquiry Lead Us?

It calls us to deep and serious self-examination. Every one of us should examine into the state of his heart, and into his own motives, which influence his religious actions.

It calls us to earnest, fervent prayer — personal prayer; private prayer; public, social, and united prayer. Nothing is so likely to bring back God to us — as heartfelt, confiding, and persevering prayer.

It calls us to doing our first works. The Lord is saying to us, as he did to the Ephesian church, "Remember, therefore, from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works." How was it with us in the closet, in the family, in the world, and in the church at first? Let us reflect, remember, and seek grace to return to the days of our youth.

It calls us to deep humility and penitence before God. Surely we ought to lay low before God, and be sorry, very sorry, that we have "vexed and grieved his Holy Spirit," causing him to depart from us, or at least to withhold the special manifestations of his presence, power, and love.

It calls us to bury our idols, as Jacob did. When commanded to go up to Bethel, he collected all his household gods, and buried them under an oak. Oh! that we may receive grace to detect, to despise, to bring out, and to bury every idol, every image of jealousy, whether found in the heart, the house, or the church of God!

"You shall have no other gods before me," is an immutable law to which we profess to agree — but by which we are not always ruled. May we never be too evangelical to be moral, or pervert doctrine to the neglect of duty.

Finally, it calls upon us to attempt great things in God's name, as Elisha did. This was his first miracle. It was a great act he sought to perform. He had faith, and he prevailed. The Jordan obeyed him, when he acted in the name and appealed to the power of Elijah's God. May we look around us and see what needs to be done, and aiming simply at God's glory and the honor of Jesus, let us "attempt great things for God — and expect great things from God," exclaiming, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

## 24 Come unto Me!

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Come unto Me!

"Come unto Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest!"  
Matthew 11:28

Reader, Jesus speaks to you. He calls you to him. He wishes you to approach him. He bids you come. Do you ask, "Why does he call me?" Because he knows that you need him. No one can save your soul, but himself.

Nothing can cleanse you from your sin, but his blood.

Nothing can justify you before God, but his righteousness.

Nothing can make you fit to go to Heaven, but his Spirit. No one can render you happy or honorable, but himself.

He knows that unless you go to him, you must perish forever. You must be restless, weary, and laboring in vain through life, and lie down in sorrow at last.

He has all that you need, for all fullness dwells in him. His heart is full of kind thoughts respecting you, and kind feelings toward you. He wishes you to be happy, to be holy, to be safe. He is able to make you so. He waits to make you so. Therefore he says, "Come unto Me!" Do you ask, "What must I bring with me to recommend me?" Nothing! Absolutely nothing! You need no recommendation. Your misery is enough. Your poverty is enough. Your danger is enough. Jesus invites you, therefore he wants nothing from you as a recommendation. He did not wait until you were willing, until you were crying after him; but before you were willing, and in order to make you willing — he sends his loving invitation and says. "Come unto me! Come just as you are. Come for all that you need. Come this moment. Let there be no delay. Let there be no hesitation. Let there be no fear; but, come unto me, and I will give you . . .

rest from your burdens,

freedom from your toil,

refreshment in this desert world,

and life everlasting beyond it!

Come unto me, and I will introduce you to my Father. I will secure your pardon. I will gain your access into his presence. I will procure for you his smile and eternal benediction. Come unto me, and I will . . .

conquer your foes,

subdue your iniquities,

supply all your needs,  
gratify all your good desires, and  
ultimately make you more glorious than an angel of light.

Come, for all things are now ready. Come, for I am waiting to be gracious. Come, and I will rejoice over you to do you good. Come, and I will fill you with all joy and peace in believing!"

Sinner, thus Jesus speaks to you. Thus he speaks to you today — after living in sin so long — after slighting his Word so long — after hardening your heart against his Word, his mercy, and his love, so often and so long. Jesus thus addresses you at this moment. What do you say? Will you go to him? Go — or refuse to go, you must. Go to him and be made happy — or stay away and be miserable, you must. There is no middle course. Which shall it be? Which? Can you refuse him? What, deliberately, again, after so many calls, refuse him! If you reject him now, it may seal your doom forever.

God may say, "Why should I invite him any more? Why should I allow him to trifle with my grace any longer? Why should I give him an opportunity to insult me to my face, time after time, thus? Let him alone! Give him up. He deserves Hell — for he chooses it. He ought not to be allowed to enter Heaven — for he refuses it. He prefers . . .

Satan to me,  
the world to my church,  
sin to my service,  
his own lusts to my grace,  
to wallow in the mire of corruption to walking in the ways of holiness.

Let him alone. Invite him no more. Record his conduct, register his choice, write down his doom. As he loves sin — let him have it. As he chooses Hell — let him go to it. As he refuses my counsel, as he will have none of my reproof, as he slights my warnings, despises my threatenings, rejects my invitations, and tramples upon my kindness — I give him up, and leave him to reap the due desert of his deeds!"

Oh, sinner, sinner, should this be the case with you — it will be all over with you forever. Jesus will no longer stand at the door and knock. The Spirit will no more strive with you. Your conscience will harden, your heart will become obdurate, and you will, perhaps, add open rebellion to your sin.

"Let them alone!" Matthew 15:14. There is a moment in every lost sinner's existence, when God gives him up. What a moment is that! What are the results of that just and holy act of God? One must know what the horrors of Hell mean, and what it is to have the stamp of eternity placed on those horrors — before one could answer that question.

Let me beseech you dear, dear reader, listen to the invitation of Jesus. Do not, do not put it from you, and pronounce yourself unworthy of everlasting life. Do not seal your own doom forever! Do not choose death in the error of your ways. Oh, do not, do not! But before God swears in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest, before the door of mercy is closed upon you forever, before

your light goes out in eternal darkness — come, come, come to Jesus, and be saved by him freely and forever! Hear the conclusion of the whole matter — you must come to Jesus and be saved — or refuse to do so, and be eternally punished for your sin! Which shall it be? God asks you, Which?

## 25 A Proposal

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A Proposal That the Holy Spirit is in the church of Christ, and will abide with that church forever, is a glorious fact — a fact which should produce confidence, excite hope, and draw forth fervent prayer. But, though the Spirit is in the church, it is to be feared that the church is not very spiritual, or does not receive very full or large supplies of the Spirit of Christ. The fountain is still in the garden — but the streams do not flow as they once did to irrigate and fructify it. There is a languor and comparative barrenness in the church.

Why is this? Is the Spirit less loving, or less willing to communicate to the mystical body of Jesus? O no; that cannot be. He is now, both in His nature, disposition, and resources — all that He was on the day of Pentecost, and on those occasions when it was said, "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great multitude believed and turned to the Lord." The church may change, the blessed Spirit never can. But though the Spirit cannot change in His nature, He maybe vexed and grieved — and consequently withhold His communications. May not this be the case at present? Is there not reason to believe it is? I think so. But how have we grieved the Spirit?

It may be that we have not exalted and honored Jesus in our ministry as we should.

We may have kept back and concealed the glorious doctrines of free and discriminating grace.

We may have relied too much upon the means employed, instead of relying wholly upon the Spirit as the divine agent.

We may have secretly imbibed some false notions as to power and ability in ourselves, apart from the constant renewing of the Holy Spirit.

We may have become proud of our position, numbers, wealth, and instruments.

We may have sought our own honor, instead of seeking the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus only and exclusively.

We may have looked to learning, logic, argument, eloquence, or even earnestness, to bring souls to God, instead of the secret, sovereign influence of the blessed Spirit.

We may have forgotten our calling — to witness for Christ; and our proper position — waiting for Christ, Alas! have not many of us become worldly, conceited, self-satisfied, and indifferent? Have we not neglected to exercise confidence in the promise, and to plead right heartily with God daily in the name of Jesus, expecting the blessing? I fear so!

It is certain that we are not as lively, spiritual, active, unearthly, or successful, as the Pentecostal church was; yet the promise is the same, the gospel is the same, the Spirit is the same, and the loving heart of our Heavenly Father is the same. We need stirring up and rousing! There ought to be with us, as with Reuben once, "great searchings of heart."

Self-examination would lead to detection,

detection would produce humiliation,  
humiliation would urge us to prayer,  
such prayer would take hold on God,  
and God would condescend to allow himself to be held by us, as by Jacob, until he blessed us.

Brethren, are not these things so? Can we deny them? Ought we to excuse them? Should we try to conceal them? I think not. Shall we not rather fall under them, seek grace to be deeply humbled for them, and unite in the use of all appropriate means to bring about a change? The church of Christ is unquestionably low, in a low place. It is not for lack of men, or money, or learning, or planning, or facilities to carry on God's work. The great need, is the power and unction of the Holy Spirit. We need to realize that all the spiritual energy, vigor, and success of the church flows from the Holy Spirit! That as a gift, He may be sought, as God He may be worshiped, and, as promised, may be confidently expected when sought aright. If, then, we wish to see Jesus exulted and honored; our Heavenly Father glorified in this fallen world; the Lord's people vigorous, industrious, and successful in their work; sinners brought in great numbers to the cross and the church; and the devil disconcerted, defeated, and driven from us — then let us unite to seek the putting forth of the power of the Holy Spirit among us.

Reader, what do you say? Will you agree that, at least, once, twice, or oftener each day, if possible — that you will go to the throne of grace, purposely to seek this blessing from our Heavenly Father, and persevere until you obtain it, or die in the attempt? Will you? Is it worthwhile doing so? Is it desirable? Would it pay? For some are always looking for profits. Should you not like to sit under a powerful ministry, to witness the power of God in the hearts and lives of the hearers of the Word, and to see hundreds flocking into the church, until churches must lovingly divide, and unite to erect new houses of prayer in every direction? If your heart is right, you have already said, "I should."

Well, then, shall we set about it at once? Let us go alone, at once, and upon our knees, before a heart-searching God; purpose, and seek grace to carry out that purpose, that we will daily (more than once in the day) snatch a few minutes from this greedy world, and plead with God to pour out His Spirit upon ministers and missionaries, teachers, village preachers, tract distributors, and the entire church. Especially that He will begin with ourselves, filling us with the Holy Spirit; so that we may enter into the truth, drink into the mind of Christ, labor mightily for God, and be very successful in winning souls.

What do you say? Are you prepared to carry this out? Will you take your pen and sign the following: "I, being deeply convinced that the church in general, and myself in particular, stand in need of the putting forth of the power of the Holy Spirit — do hereby solemnly engage, in the sight and presence of God, who searches the heart, once at least, in each day, to go directly to the throne of grace, on purpose to plead with my God and Father, that He will pour out His Spirit in all the fullness of His gifts and graces upon the church in general, and upon my own soul particularly. Witness my hand this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1856."

Come, Holy Spirit, come!

With energy divine;

And on this poor benighted soul  
With beams of mercy shine. From the celestial hills,  
Life, light, and joy dispense;  
And may I daily, hourly feel  
Your quickening influence.  
Melt, melt this frozen heart;  
This stubborn will subdue;  
Each evil passion overcome,  
And form me all anew.  
Mine will the profit be.  
But yours shall be the praise;  
And unto you I would devote  
The remnant of my days!

## 26 What Some Soldiers Did

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What Some Soldiers Did "The soldiers mocked him." Luke 23:36 The sight of suffering softens us. But it is possible to be so hardened by sin, as to sport even with sufferings. This was the case here. Here was a great sufferer. Here were hardened soldiers. Here they were mocking the sufferer in the very agonies of death. Had he injured them? Never! Had he offended them? He had not. Was he the enemy of their king, or their fatherland? No; he was the friend of men, the benefactor of the human race. Yet "the soldiers mocked him." Let us ask a few questions in reference to this subject. WHOM did they mock? Jesus. Who was Jesus? The Son of God — the Savior of the world. WHERE was Jesus? On the cross, hanging by his hands and feet; suffering, bleeding, and dying.

WHY was he crucified? Because the priests, elders, scribes, and pharisees were prejudiced against him; therefore they stirred up the people to demand his death, and prevailed with Pilate to pass sentence on him. He was the victim of envy and prejudice! The proof that man had lost all sense of shame, all love to justice, all proper feelings — is when the object of dislike was holy, and took God's part against man's sin. But there was another reason why he was crucified, though they did not know it. He desired that sinners should be saved. He knew that they could not without an atonement. That there could be no atonement without sufferings and death. That no one could suffer and die so as to make an atonement but himself. As his heart was fully set upon saving sinners — he agreed with his divine Father to become a man, to appear in our world, to allow himself to be apprehended, unjustly condemned, and cruelly put to death. His nature was holy. His life was one series of kind and benevolent actions; yet so great was their injustice, so cruel were their natures, that they took him, and with wicked hands, they crucified and slew him! The excitement occasioned by his condemnation being great, the soldiers were called out, they saw his meekness, his patience, and his agonies.

WHAT did they do? "The soldiers mocked him." These soldiers were heathens. They were the troops of the Roman Emperor. They had been brought up in ignorance, heathenism and sin. They had no Bible, no law of love. They knew not that the human race was one great brotherhood — that kindness, gentleness, and love were ornaments to human nature. Nor did they know that Jesus was the Son of God — that he came into the world to save sinners — that he was dying the just, for the unjust to bring them to God — that he was the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world. Had they known it, they might have been less cruel. But they were hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, therefore they mocked him. Do any soldiers mock him now? Yes! What, British soldiers? Yes! Soldiers who have a Bible, who have been brought up in a Sunday-school, and who have often heard the Gospel? Yes. Who are they, then?

There is that soldier who professes to be a Christian — but who lives in sin, who neglects private prayer, and who follows the course of this world — he mocks Jesus. He mocks him often, "with a solemn sound, upon a thoughtless tongue;" and oftener, by pretending to believe in him, to love him, and to profess his holy religion — while he acts directly contrary to it. No one mocks Jesus so

cruelly as the man who cries, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" with his lips — but cries "Crucify him, crucify him" by his life. Such "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Look, also, at that young man; he once lay on a sick bed, guilt lay on his conscience, and the thoughts of Hell made him afraid. He wept, he prayed, he promised the Lord that if he would restore him — he would become a changed character and live a truly Christian life. Such promises were often repeated on his sick pillow. He recovered, he became strong again. He returned to his old courses, he even became worse than he was before. He swears, he lies, he gets intoxicated, he is led captive by the devil at his will. That soldier mocks him.

Look at another case. There are many men in the army who profess to believe the Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that no man can be saved but by him, that his invitations and promises are sincere; and if you talk with them seriously, they tell you that they intend to accept those invitations and seek the fulfillment of the promises; but they make no move, they go on week after week, month after month, year after year — just as they always did; there is no change. Again, therefore, we may exclaim, referring to such as these, "The soldiers mocked him."

How many mock him at church, using the language of penitent sinners, or of true believers — while they are neither one or the other; nor have they any wish to be.

British soldier, are you one of those who mock at the Son of God? Or do you sincerely believe his Word, heartily rely on his atonement, daily worship at his throne, and constantly endeavor to do his will? One or the other you must be. Which is it?

How will the soldiers, who mock him, be able to stand before him? They must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive sentence according to the deeds done in the body. They must meet his eye, which is as a flame of fire. They must stand at his bar, and receive their sentence from his lips. How will they feel? What can they say? Memory will faithfully present every act of mockery, every insult offered, every sin committed — and the Judge will demand an account of it!

What, what will many British soldiers say? Will they not be like the man spoken of in the gospel, who appeared at the feast without a wedding garment? He was speechless. He had no reason to offer for his conduct. No excuse to make for his practices. What then will the Judge say? Will he not pronounce the sentence, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Or this, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

Then shall be fulfilled that fearful portion of the Divine word, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment — but the righteous into life eternal." They shall "go away," as though they were glad to escape from the glance of his piercing all-penetrating eye — as though they considered that Hell itself would be an asylum — if it would but hide them from his presence. But no — there will be no hiding, no concealment. They will be punished in the presence of the Lamb and his holy angels. They will be punished with everlasting destruction! But suppose any of the soldiers who have mocked him, should bethink themselves, be sorry for their conduct, and desire to be saved by him — will he receive, pardon, and save them? He will. He is now saying to every soldier in the British army, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." He calls, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He pledges his Word most solemnly to every coming soldier, even to the vilest who ever disgraced his regimentals and his nature, saying, "I will

never cast him out."

Brother soldier, there is salvation for you in Jesus — a full salvation — a free salvation — an everlasting salvation. The pardon of all your sins — grace to sanctify your nature, and make you fit for Heaven. Grace for the barracks — grace for the tent — grace for the battle-field. Grace that will make you not only loyal to England — but to the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Grace that will bring home the knowledge and enjoyment of salvation to your heart, your conscience, your inmost soul.

Come, then, to Jesus — come just as you are — come in sincerity of soul. Mock him no longer. Trifle with your soul no longer. But, as you must appear before him on the throne of justice — but may come to him on the throne of grace — come to this throne that you may obtain mercy, mercy that will pardon you, and grace — the grace that will help you in every time of need. He waits to be gracious. He has been waiting long. He will not wait always. Let him wait for you no longer — but, like the poor blind man in the gospel, arise and come to Jesus.

Bring all your sins — he will pardon them.

Bring all your needs — he will supply them.

Bring all your fears — he will remove them.

Bring all your doubts — he will solve them. In a word, bring all that tries, troubles, or alarms you — and receive all that you can need for the body or soul, for time or eternity! "Whoever will, let him come and take of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Reader, may God give you grace to say "I will," and to act upon it: then will there be no more mocking Jesus — but your heart will love him, and your tongue will speak well of his name.

## 27 A Stimulus

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### A Stimulus

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

Beloved reader, we live in peculiar times, and should exercise peculiar vigilance. We greatly need power — the power of God. This alone can convert the sinner, quicken the saint, and revive the church. God is willing to give it — but He will have us feel our need of it, believe his promise, and earnestly plead for it. He waits to be gracious. United, believing prayer, would do wonders. Many professors do not feel this. Do you? The design of these lines is to stir such up. Will you, before you read, go upon your knees for five minutes, plead with God for his blessing, then rise and read the remainder of this article, as under God's eye? Read, and lay it upon your conscience: having done so, carry out the admonition.

### INDUCEMENTS TO ATTEND THE PRAYER-MEETING

1. Would you avert the judgments deserved by our guilty land, and which, perhaps, like thunder-clouds hang over it? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for it.
2. Would you draw down blessings upon the world, the church, your family, and your own soul? Go to the prayer meeting, and plead with God for them.
3. Would you help to revive the church, and cause it to flourish, increase, and grow? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for a revival?
4. Would you encourage your pastor, and render his ministry powerful, unctious, and efficient? Go to the prayer meeting, and plead with God for him.
5. Would you comfort, assist, and stimulate your fellow-members? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for them, and with them.
6. Would you be useful to souls — to sinners in their conversion, backsliders in their restoration, and saints in their edification? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for them.
7. Would you resist and conquer Satan, both as a seducer and an accuser? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God against him.
8. Would you rise above business while in it, and live above the world while passing through it? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for his blessing upon it?
9. Would you stimulate and make a good impression upon dull, heavy, sleepy professors? Let them see that you go regularly to the prayer-meeting, and there plead with God for them.

10. Would you see the Word of God made effectual in the conversion of many sinners to Christ? Then, go to the prayer meeting, and plead with God that it may have free course and be glorified.

11. Would you be happy in your own soul, enjoying the testimony of an honest conscience, and a Divine blessing on the means of grace? Go to the prayer-meeting, and plead with God for others.

12. Would you please God, and obtain the testimony that you walked with God, as Enoch, did? Then, go to the prayer-meeting, and by earnest prayer, hearty praises, and cooperation with the saints — honor Him whose grace has distinguished you from those around you.

QUESTIONS TO THOSE WHO NEGLECT PRAYER-MEETINGS 1. Are you always better employed? If not, can it be right in you to be absent yourself?

2. Do you get more good to your own soul, and do more good to others, by staying away? If not, can you be acting wisely?

3. Does your own conscience justify you, or have you not sometimes a difficulty in keeping it quiet on the subject?

4. Will a death-bed commend your present course, or will you then look upon your neglect of prayer-meetings with pleasure?

5 Does not your pastor suffer by your neglect? Does it not hurt his feelings, cool his zeal, and hinder his usefulness?

6. Are not your fellow-members in the church discouraged by you, and may you not thus offend Christ's little ones?

7. Is not your own family injured by your neglect? How will your children think of prayer-meetings, as they see you habitually neglect them? Is it surprising if they despise them?

8. Just so, is there no reason to fear that unconverted sinners may be both hindered, and led to think lightly of prayer — by your conduct?

9. Can you have a proper concern for the prosperity of the Church, the spread of Christ's cause, and the conversion of sinners — if you never meet to pray for them?

10. Are you sure that you fulfill your duty as a church-member, while you neglect prayer-meetings? Is neglect of duty no sin, and is there no probability of your being called to account for it?

11. Did anyone ever really gain anything, either in temporal or spiritual things — by neglecting prayer-meetings? If you think so, can you prove it?

12. Is there no selfishness, or pride, or worldly-mindedness, at the root of your neglect? If so, ought such things to be encouraged?

13. Would it be right to give up the prayer-meetings? Do you think this would please God, or improve His cause? But if all the members did as you do — then must they not be given up? Could not the rest find excuses for staying away, as well as you? Do you not think they would, if their hearts were as worldly, or as cold, or as indifferent about the prosperity of the cause, as yours is?

WHAT DOES NEGLECTING PRAYER-MEETINGS SEEM TO SAY?

Actions speak louder than words!

1. I do not believe that there is power in prayer, or that there is more power in united prayer than in the prayer of one Christian alone, though the Savior says there is (Matthew 18).
2. I do not wish the church to rise, increase, and flourish — at least, if it cannot do so without my frequenting the prayer meeting, it shall not.
3. I do not trouble myself about sinners going to Hell, therefore I do not go to the prayer-meeting to plead with God to save them.
4. I have no sympathy with my pastor, who makes so much of prayer-meetings, and such a stir about the revival of religion.
5. I do not want too much religion, I like the middle way, and wish to avoid all extremes, especially being extremely zealous in religious matters.
6. I do not believe that God cares whether I go or not, nor do I think that he will ever trouble me or himself about it.
7. I say let those go — who have nothing better to do. I can employ my time better than in going to prayer-meetings.
8. I used to go once, because I imagined good was to be done by going — but I found out my mistake, and therefore I gave up going.
9. I am concerned to take care of the main chance, I mean my own business, therefore I give myself to it, and just take spiritual things by the way.
10. I do not believe that God requires the like of me to go to the prayer-meetings, who have so much on my head, hands, and heart. "He will have mercy — and not sacrifice."

Reader, do you neglect the prayer-meeting? If so, is the above your portrait? Is it at all like you? Is there no resemblance? Is it not just in plain words — what you say every week by your conduct? Let conscience be honest for once, and give a plain and direct answer.

#### EXCUSES OR REASONS FOR NOT GOING TO THE PRATER-MEETING

1. My pastor is so very anxious about these meetings, and so urgent upon the members to attend them — that it is like driving people to them, and I am determined that no man shall drive me. True, I did not go often before — but I will not go at all now, for I hate coercion, especially in religion; if I cannot be led, I will not be driven.
2. I do not go to the Sunday morning prayer-meeting, because it is rather early, and I prefer sleeping to praying. True, I get up as early, or earlier, every morning in the week — but that is to make money, which is a very different thing.
3. I do not go to the week evening prayer-meeting, because I can generally find something that needs doing in the counting-house or workshop — but if I do not, I prefer sitting down and looking over the newspaper, or some interesting book, or having a little interesting chat with a friend.

4. Besides this, it is some distance to the place where the prayer-meeting is held. True, I would go as far if I wanted anything from the market or shop, or if I was called out to do a little job of work, though the profit may be very small.

5. In addition to this, prayer-meetings to me are poor, dull meetings. I prefer a committee meeting, or a good public meeting, or an eloquent exciting sermon from some great man. I always go out when I think there is anything worth going to.

6. If I would live to retire, and get a house near the place of worship — I think it is very likely that I would go; as I think such meetings are very well for old people, and such as have much leisure time on their hands. True, I don't see many such that do go, they dine so late, keep so much company, and prefer the drawing-room to the house of prayer — but I hope I would be an exception to the general rule.

Reader, would not your reasons or excuses for neglecting prayer-meetings sound very much like some of the above — if put into plain language? But do you dare put them into plain language, and then go upon your knees, and present them to God? If not, why let them influence your conduct as they do?

## 27 It Will All End in Mercy!

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### It Will All End in Mercy!

I seldom pay any attention to dreams; indeed I have seldom any dreams worth paying attention to. But we are told, "For God does speak — now one way, now another — though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds" Job 33:14-15. In a dream, sometimes useful thoughts are suggested, and profitable matter for meditation may be found. The other night I had a dream, the particulars of which are not important, nor do I distinctly remember them all — but at the close of it, as if a voice sounded loudly in my ears, I heard the proclamation, "It will all end in mercy!" and again a second time, "It will all end in mercy!"

I awoke, with the words powerfully impressed on my mind, producing a sweet sensation in my soul; and several times since, when reflecting on subjects of interest, and trying subjects — the words have rolled over the mind, "It will end in mercy. It will all end in mercy!"

Well, I believe this, in my best moments. I feel confident of it; not because I heard the words in my dream, though that seems to impress them on my memory — but because I find the same truth in God's Word. We know that "all things work together for good." "The Lord shall bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." "The end of the righteous shall be gladness." And this comforting truth is very strikingly illustrated in the history of God's people, even the most tried of them.

"It will all end in mercy!" It did so in Joseph's case. He was cast into the pit, where no doubt he had many painful thoughts and gloomy forebodings. He was sold for a slave, and all the ties of relationship were sundered, and the endearments of home exchanged for foreign habits and menial employments. He was sorely tempted, and his principles were put to the most searching test. He was falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, and imprisoned. Here the iron entered into his soul. A cloud hung over him for years. Providence appeared, to have set him up as a mark for its arrows. He saw no bright light in the cloud. Many sore temptations no doubt harassed his spirit, many distressing fears agitated his soul. God seems to have forgotten to be gracious, and to have shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure. The trial was not only sharp — but it was long, and I dare say it appeared to him very singular. But it all ended in mercy. Pharaoh's servants are imprisoned, they dream, and Joseph interprets; the interpretation proves correct; nevertheless, "the chief butler forgot Joseph." But Pharaoh dreams — his wise men are confounded — Joseph is remembered — the dreams of the monarch are solved — the prisoner is liberated, honored, and raised to great dignity. He is the savior of Egypt and the savior of his father's house. The family is reunited, and exquisite joys are realized. "It all ended in mercy!" The Lord's way was in the sea, and his path was in the deep waters, and his footsteps were not known. But, though clouds and darkness were round about him — justice and judgment were the pillars of his throne. "It will all end in mercy!"

It did so in Job's case. Cast down from the highest pinnacle of wealth and dignity, into the low depths of poverty and pain, God and man seemed to have united against him. His property is destroyed or stolen — his children are cut off with a stroke — his wife alienated from him — and his servants treat him with contempt. His friends mistake his case, and, instead of comforting, they accuse, misrepresent, and irritate him. His body is full of disease, and his soul is full of grief. His patience fails him. His trials increase upon him. For a considerable time a dense, dark cloud covers him. But it all ended in mercy. His graces are strengthened by exercise — his character is cleared by his God — his property is doubled to him — and his latter end was more blessed than his beginning. We have heard of the patience of Job, we have seen the design of the Lord, and we discover that he is full of pity and of great mercy. His way was in the whirlwind and in the storm; the clouds were the dust of his feet. Reason was bewildered, sense was confounded, faith was tried, and knowledge was increased and became experimental, and it all ended in mercy."

"It will all end in mercy!" It did so in David's case. From the day he was anointed to the kingdom, and an especial honor put upon him by God, his troubles began. His was a path of tribulation. From the monarch on the throne, through all classes of his subjects, he found enemies and oppression. In his own family, in his own hear', he met with the bitterest sorrows. Time would fail us particularly to notice "the times that went over him." He sunk in deep waters. He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. He was an outlaw, and often within a step of death. David had a greater number, or a greater variety, of trials than David. From friend and foe, from God and man, from saint and Satan, his trials at different times proceeded. Often did his heart fail him, and faith appeared ready to expire — yet all ended in mercy. He filled the throne. He was overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness. He died in the bosom of infinite love. Never did he sing so sweetly as when heart and flesh were failing.

Tried, troubled, doubting, fearing Christian — come with me to his dying couch, look at the marks of death's fingers on his pale face — he is grappling hand to hand with the King of Terrors. But does his courage fail him now? Does he tremble, as he wrestles with the foe? Oh, no! Listen, listen to his dying song! "Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?" Oh, it all ended in mercy — and a blessed ending it was.

"It will all end in mercy!" It did so in Hezekiah's case When Sennacherib came up against him, blaspheming his God, threatening his destruction, and filling his mind with terror — it was a day of trouble, of rebuke, and blasphemy. Flushed with victory, filled with pride, and boasting of his successes — the haughty Assyrian general filled Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with alarm. It brought monarch, prophet, and people upon their knees; they pleaded, they prayed, they prevailed. The angel of death received a commission; that powerful agent went forth to execute it, and in one night the ground was covered with one hundred and eighty-four thousand dead corpses! What a sight! Surely the godly must have exclaimed, "You are terrible in your doings toward the children of men." But as far as Hezekiah was concerned — it all ended in mercy. So when the prophet announced to him that he was required to set his house in order, for he would die and not live — his soul was cast down within him, for his purposes were broken off — yes, the very thoughts of his heart. But he fled to the mercy-seat, he pleaded with God, and fifteen years were added to his life. But for his trials — he would have never known the power of prayer, the sweetness of deliverance directly from the hand of God, nor enjoyed such proofs of God's infinite

love. It all ended in mercy! But we must cite no more instances from Scripture. Who is there that cannot look around, and see instances in which God has made the wrath of man to praise him; in which losses, crosses, trials, troubles, difficulties, and disappointments — have all ended in mercy? The most lovely prospects are seen from lofty hills — and preceded by the toilsome, wearying ascent. The sweetest enjoyments are after the greatest trials — and are often preceded by doubts, fears, faintings, and false conclusions. No one enjoys health — like the person who has suffered from a long, debilitating, painful sickness. No one enjoys the sweets of liberty — like the man who has suffered from unrequited toil, chains, and imprisonment. No one will enjoy Heaven — like the poor tempest-tossed, troubled, and afflicted believer. The darkness of the night — adds to the splendor of the morning; and the barrenness of winter — adds to the productiveness of spring. Before honor is humility — so before our sweetest mercies, we often endure our bitterest affliction.

Just so we find, in every Christian experience, that however numerous his troubles, however rough his path, however, dark his nights, however short his days, however severe his conflicts, however painful his fears, however gloomy his forebodings — they all ended in mercy! And now, beloved reader, let me speak to you, as the voice that spoke to me in my night's dream. If you are a believer in Jesus, whatever may be your present difficult circumstances, however trying, however perplexing, "It will all end in mercy!" You may not think so now. You may be writing bitter things against yourself. You may be misinterpreting the designs of God's providence. You may be doubting the precious promises of God's holy Word. But, notwithstanding your mistakes, your doubts, your fears, your false conclusions, "It will all end in mercy!"

You do not think so, nor did Joseph once, nor did Job once, nor did thousands once — who are now in glory. But they were mistaken — and so are you!

They judged by appearances — and so do you.

They changed their minds — and so will you.

All your troubles are appointed in infinite love.

They are all weighed out by sovereign goodness.

They are all limited, as to time, by perfect wisdom.

There is no 'chance' in what happens to the Christian.

Everything is divinely arranged and appointed.

Cheer up, my poor weary fellow-traveler! You will soon arrive at Home, and then you will see clearly and enjoy sweetly the blessed truth — that to the believer "all will end in mercy!"

Take comfort, poor afflicted fellow-Christian! Your afflictions are God's furnace, in which He is refining you! He is only fitting you to occupy a mansion in Heaven, and to sing the sweet and everlasting song — the theme of which will be, "It all ended in mercy!"

Fear not, poor feeble, fickle, faltering follower of Jesus!

Though your faith is weak,

though your fears are strong,

though your doubts are painful,

though you conclude that your case is singular and your condition hopeless — "the year of release is at hand," and then . . .

your doubts will expire,

your fears will flee away,

your groans will be silenced,

your feeble hopes will be realized,

for "It will all end in mercy!" My brother, are you in poverty, persecution, or bodily sickness? Cheer up! Your light shall soon "break forth as the morning!" Write it down in your memorandum book, or impress it upon your memory, or, what is better still, pray the Holy Spirit to give you the sweet inward assurance of the fact, that "It will all end in mercy!" But if these lines are read by a lost sinner, a thoughtless, careless, hardened sinner, I dare not say to him that "all will end in mercy." No, all may end in judgment in your case! All your present pleasures, pursuits, hopes, and prospects, may end in "weeping, in wailing, and gnashing of teeth!" All may end in the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into everlasting tire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

Yet as careless as you have been, as thoughtless as you have been, as hardened up to this moment as you are — if you will seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; if you will as a wicked man forsake your ways, and as an unrighteous man your thoughts, and return unto the Lord — then he will have mercy upon you, and our God will abundantly pardon you!

Yes, yes, my fellow-sinner, begin at once; go upon your knees, confess your sins, plead the blood of Jesus with the Father, for the pardon of all your sins, seek the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify your nature, and make you fit for Heaven! Renounce self, trust in Jesus, fly "to the hope set before you in the gospel," and then to you, even you, I say, "It will all end in mercy!"

## 28 A Voice from Hell!

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### A Voice from Hell!

"I beg you, father Abraham — send Lazarus to my father's house! For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don't end up in this place of torment!" Luke 16:27-28

Jesus takes off the covering from the bottomless pit, and gives us a bird's-eye view of Hell! There is a young man there. He was rich. He was surrounded by a multitude of earthly goods. He has forfeited them all — and now he is in Hell. His doom is fixed, and fixed forever. He cannot obtain one single drop of water to cool his parched tongue!

He finds that it is now no use asking favors for himself. But he has brothers — five brothers. Can he prevent their coming to Hell? He will try. He therefore prays that Lazarus may become a missionary, and be sent on a mission of mercy to his father's house. Hear him: "I beg you, father Abraham — send Lazarus to my father's house!" Who would expect to find pity in Hell — or prayer in Hell! But here it is! Can earth be worse than Hell? Can professed Christians be worse than a lost soul?

Reader, do you have any relatives? In what spiritual state are they in? Are they on the road to Hell? How do you act toward them? This poor wretch in Hell could not go to his brethren — but you can. Do you go to them on purpose to testify to them — lest they go to that place of torment? When did you visit them expressly for this purpose? You can visit them — do you? When did you write a loving letter, well steeped in prayers and tears, to them — to endeavor to bring them to Jesus? When did you send them a pointed, powerful tract, accompanied with strong crying and tears to Him who is able to save them from death? When did you send them a spiritual book, beseeching God, as for your life, to make it a blessing to them? Shall lost souls in Hell wish to send someone to their ungodly relatives — if possible to prevent their damnation — and will you neglect your relatives? Has the love of Christ no power in your heart? Has pity for the souls of your lost relatives no influence? Is Hell only a fable? Is eternal torment only a trifle? How can you love your neighbor as yourself, and not put forth direct, personal, and frequent efforts for his salvation? How can you make Christ your example, when He came from Heaven on purpose to save sinners — and suffered, bled, and died to prevent their damnation — if you let them go to Hell without pity or concern?

Alas! alas! Where has zeal for God fled? Where is love to souls to be found? Paul could say that, when at Ephesus, for three years, he ceased not to warn every one day and night with tears. But where are they now, who are kept awake at night by love to souls? Where is he who daily weeps over careless souls, while he warns them to flee from the wrath to come? How few — how very few — do in public and private, by tongue and pen, by example and the press, beseech sinners to be reconciled to God! May God Almighty awaken us, rouse us, and fill us with burning zeal, so that we may resolve that if souls who live near us determine to go to Hell — that they shall go with the name of Jesus sounding in their ears, and the way of salvation plainly placed before their eyes. O!

for the power of the Spirit of God to awaken the church, to convert sinners, and grant us a great and glorious revival, which shall spread from east to west, from north to south! O Jesus, Savior, send the Comforter to convince of sin, and work salvation in millions of human souls, for your mercy's sake. Amen.

## 29 A Voice from the Continent

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A Voice from the Continent A minister of Christ, a few months ago, paid a visit to some of the churches of the continent of Europe, and visiting one church where there had been a great revival of religion, he asked this question, "Do your members consider it their duty to seek the conversion of sinners around them?" And he received this striking reply: "I do not know whether they think of it as a duty — but they esteem it a privilege to be allowed to do so."

This, said I, when I heard it — is just what we need.

Here is the secret of success. How could a minister help succeeding in leading souls to the Savior — if every member of his church felt it to be a privilege to seek the conversion of the sinners around him?

Here is the proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit must be present with a people who thus feel, and thus act. This state of things was the effect of much prayer. Prayer in private. Prayer in union with like-minded believers. The prayer of the heart.

It was the evidence of soul-prosperity. Such souls must be healthy. They breathe a pure atmosphere. They feed on Heavenly manna. They walk with God.

It was the result of nearness to God. O, if we could but get near to God! If we did but live near to God — then we would feel as He felt, when He said, "as I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies!" This is just what is needed in all our churches. We shall never get on as we wish, we shall never mold the masses, we shall never be full of life, love, and joy — until we feel it to be a privilege, and an inestimable privilege — to endeavor to bring sinners — the sinners immediately around us — to Jesus. This is just what we should seek for ourselves, and inculcate on others. Souls are perishing!

Hell is filling!

Satan is triumphing!

Time is flying!

We are the salt that is to season others. We are the light that is to enlighten others. Shall the salt be unused until it loses its savor? Shall we put our light under a bushel, or in a dark lantern? Or, shall we let our light shine, and spread our savor abroad? There are souls who, if they do not hear of Jesus from us — will perhaps be never spoken to respecting Him. If we do not seek their salvation, perhaps no one will. O, that the Holy Spirit would so come down upon us, that we may feel as if we could not rest — could not live — but as we seek the salvation of souls! May His Word be as a fire in our bones, that we may be weary with withholding, and unable longer to delay the work. It is our duty — but may we feel it our privilege!

Brethren, there are believers who feel it to be a privilege to bring others to Jesus — why should not you? Why do not you? Ah, why? Is it not distance from God — which makes you cold? Is it not

alienation from Jesus — which makes you careless? Careless! Is that word correct? Are you, can you be careless about the eternal happiness or eternal misery of the souls around you? Can it be said of any near you, "They perish forever without any regarding it?"

Where, O where is your love of Christ?

Where, O where, is your zeal for God?

Where, O where is your pity for poor perishing sinners?

What would not a church soon become, if only one half of its members felt it to be their privilege to seek the salvation of all around them? Surely it would soon look "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun." This, yes this is just what is needed in our churches, that every member should prove, by his daily conduct, that he esteems it a privilege to seek the salvation of sinners around him.

## 30 What Am I?

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What Am I?

If you a believer in Jesus — then you are a SON OF GOD; for we are "all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." As a son of God, you are distinguished from the world, you are honored above the world. To you belong . . .

the promises of grace,

the provisions of Providence,

and the prospects of glory. For you . . .

the throne of grace is erected,

the Word of God is preserved, and

the Intercessor in Heaven pleads. To you . . .

the glory of God should be dear,

the name of Christ precious, and

the work of God delightful. By you . . .

the cause of God should be espoused,

the people of God be encouraged, and

the enemies of God should be warned.

You should . . .

walk with God,

work for God, and

expect great things from God.

If you are a child of God — then you are a SERVANT OF CHRIST. Jesus died for you to redeem you, he paid the price of your ransom; and, being bought with a price, the one object of your life should be to glorify him. In your family, you should serve Christ. In the church, you should serve Christ. In the world, you should serve Christ.

You should serve Him right heartily, as if it were your delight.

You should serve Him daily, as if it were the object of your existence.

You should serve Him with your purse — by giving to His poor, and to support His cause.

You should serve Him with your pen — by writing to others of His name, fame, and glory.

You should serve Him with your tongue — by speaking of Him, and by speaking for Him.

You should serve Him with your hand — by giving the tract, or the book, which tells of His wondrous love.

If you live — live for Jesus.

If you work — work for Jesus.

If you spend property — spend it for Jesus.

If you die — die to Jesus.

Living or dying — be the Lord's.

Let there be no question upon this point. Act for Christ so that all who know you may be compelled to say, "If there is a Christian upon earth — that is one!" Live now, as you will wish you had — when you come to die!

If you ever ask the question, "What am I?" answer it by your life, and say, "I am a son of God. I am a servant of Christ. I am, therefore, an heir of glory!"

## 31 No Time to Be Lost!

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No Time to Be Lost! Is your soul in danger? Are you without Christ? Have you no solid Scriptural ground to believe that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

There is no time to be lost!

Sin is hardening you. The world is strengthening its hold of you. The Holy Spirit is being grieved by you.

Time is flying from you.

Eternity is rushing upon you!

If, therefore, you would be saved in the Lord — if you would become united to Christ — if you would receive the Holy Spirit — there is no time to be lost! Can you be safe too soon? Can you be happy too soon? You will never be out of danger — until you are in Christ. You will never be fit for Heaven — until the Holy Spirit dwell in you. Life is uncertain. Salvation is momentous. God says, "Today!" therefore there is no time to be lost! Have you been convinced of sin? Have you felt the need of Christ? Have you sought the Lord and found peace? Do you conceal the state of your mind?

You ought to decide for Christ; to put on a profession of Christ; and to unite yourself to his people. Say not, "There is no hurry," for there is no time to be lost. You were decided for Satan. You openly avowed your preference of the world. You delayed and hesitated long — and now your mind is made up to be on the Lord's side. You ought to confess it, and confess it at once, for there is no time to be lost. We cannot profess faith too soon, if we really possess it. We cannot unite with the Lord's people too soon, if we really love them. We cannot obey Christ too soon, if we are trusting in his obedience and blood for everlasting life.

Undecided soul, decide at once, for there is no time to be lost!

Secret disciple, own Christ as your Lord and Master at once, for there is no time to be lost! Are you thinking of engaging in God's work? If so, do it at once, for there is no time to be lost! Can you help in the Sunday school? Enter it at once. Can you distribute tracts? Commence at once. Can you bring any to hear the Gospel? Use your influence, try at once. Can you write to some friend at a distance? Do it at once — there is no time to be lost! You may be laid up with illness; you may become lame; or you may be rendered incapable of writing; or the children may die untaught — the tract may be taken too late — sinners may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin — or the friend you could write to may be suddenly called away. There is no time to be lost! The Holy Spirit says, "Whatever your hand finds to do — do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going!" Jesus says, "What you do — do quickly!" There is no time to be lost!

## 32 Sorrow for Sin

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Sorrow for Sin "I will be sorry for my sin!" Psalms 38:18 This is right, this is reasonable; but it is often difficult, for we are frequently more affected with the sins of others, than with our own.

"My sins!" What are they? — have you examined? — have you investigated? — have you tried to remember them?

There are heart sins. These perhaps never see the light; no eye rests on them, but the eye of God. Where would we hide our heads — if the sins of our hearts were published?

There are sins of the tongue, of the temper, and of the life.

There are sins into which we are betrayed, and sins more deliberately committed.

There are sins in the family, sins in the world, and sins in the service of God.

There are sins against man — and sins against God.

How numerous — how aggravated — how utterly inexcusable our sins are!

Some sin in the dark — but we sin in the light. Some sin against God's majesty — but we against God's mercy. The sins of some are against the Lawgiver — but ours are against the kind, the tender, the loving Father. Our sins are like scarlet and crimson! Our sins grieve the Holy Spirit, and dishonor the Eternal Father! Our sins crucified and murdered the only begotten Son! Our sins have marred creation, affected the course of providence, and done everything but baffle grace. In size they are like the great mountains — and in number like the sands of the sea!

Every sin deserves Hell; what, then, must sins so numerous, so great, so aggravated as ours deserve?

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would give us a clear, correct, and heart-affecting view of our sins! This would . . .

humble our pride,

destroy our self-righteousness, and

endear the precious, precious blood of Jesus more than ever!

Reader, has God ever shown you your sins in the light of his holy law? Have you ever seen your sins in the light of His countenance? Have you ever seen them in the agony and bloody sweat, in the cross and passion of the Son of God? If not, you will never be sorry for your sins, with that sorrow which works repentance unto life. In order to carry out this purpose, and be sorry for our sins — we must have correct views of God's covenant character. While we look upon God simply as a Lawgiver, as one pledged to punish our sins — we shall be filled with self-pity, alarm, and concern to escape punishment; but we shall not be sorry for our sins. But if we see that God is

love — that it goes to his heart to punish us for our sins — that, rather than do so, he will deliver up his only begotten and well-beloved Son for us — if we hear his loving voice warning us, expostulating with us, and beseeching us to be reconciled to him — if we see that our sins wound his heart — and yet he pities and pardons us — then we shall be prepared to be sorry for our sins.

It is love, the free, infinite, and eternal love of God . . .

which breaks the heart,

which opens the sluices of repentance,

and which fills us with godly sorrow.

It is when I realize that my sins are against the law of love, and the God of love — that I am sorry for them. It is when I see that they pierced and wounded incarnate love in the person of Jesus, and that they grieve his loving heart still — that my sorrow for them is stirred. When I sit on the brow of Calvary, and witness the sorrow, the pain, the death-throes of the Son of God, and realize that my sins were the procuring cause of all — then my heart breaks, then I weep, then I mourn for him as one who mourns for his only son, and am in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born — I am sorry for my sin.

Reader, are you acquainted with sorrow for sin? Has the fear of Hell been taken away — has the assurance of Heaven been given you — and yet have you felt as if your heart would break with grief on account of sin? Evangelical repentance, the repentance which is unto life, and which needs not to be repented of — is heart sorrow for pardoned sin — sin that cannot damn us — sin that will not turn away the love of God from us. It is the child weeping because he has grieved his Father — affected by his Father's love, which he has seen shining in his tears. To be sorry that I have incurred displeasure, and brought upon myself punishment, is one thing; and to be sorry that I have wounded the tender heart of God, is another. The former is sorrow for the effects of sin, and may be purely selfish; the latter is sorrow for the cause of sin — and flows from love to God in the soul.

If we are not sorry for our sin — we have no proof that God has pardoned our sin. And if God has indeed pardoned our sin — we shall not speak lightly of it, or turn it into jest. No; it will humble us, lay us in the dust, and make us loathe ourselves in our own sight! The deeper our repentance — the sweeter the joys of pardon will be! The greater our sorrow for sin — the more precious Jesus will be as our deliverer from sin! The more pungent our grief at the cross — the warmer will be our zeal in the church, and the more careful our walk in the world.

Holy and ever-blessed Spirit, give us such a sight of sin, such a sense of the love of God, such a realization of pardon, and such fellowship with Christ in his sufferings — as shall cause us daily and hourly to say, "I will confess my iniquity — and be sorry for my sin!"

## 33 Cheap Bargains!

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### Cheap Bargains!

"Woe unto those who call evil, good — and good, evil." Isaiah 5:20

Cheap bargains have long been popular in the world, and bargain hunters have always abounded. The command to love our neighbor as ourselves, has been supplanted by the maxim, "Every one for himself." But the principle that hunts for cheap bargains in temporal things, has got into the church, and you hear people say, when urged to attend to certain duties, "It is not essential, I can go to heaven without that. That will not interfere with my salvation." The spirit of this is, "I intend to get Heaven as cheap as I can, I want a cheap bargain, and, therefore, it is of no use urging me to do anything, unless I like it, or it is essential to my salvation."

I fear the professing church at present swarms with those who are for cheap bargains. If two churches present themselves, the one numerous, wealthy, and popular, the other small, poor, and despised; if the latter were more spiritual, the former would be preferred. Why? "O, the latter would make so many calls on my purse, require more of my time, and demand the employment of all my talents to help to raise or carry it on."

There are two ministers, the one smooth, pleasant, and general; the other plain, pointed, and rousing; the former is preferred. Why? "O, one wants comfort on the Lord's day, after the toils of the week; one does not like that rousing, stirring, very plain mode of address. It is so like faultfinding; it is too personal, and there is an everlasting call to work, work, that one can have no comfort there." The fact is, such people like cheap bargains. They not only want a salvation all of grace, which, is right; but they want a gospel without precepts, a religious life without duties. They would live to themselves, and for themselves on earth — and then go to Heaven to be regulated by the same principles there. They do not ask, how much can I possibly do, or how many things can I consistently engage in, or how much can I give to the cause of Christ, or what self-denial can I practice, to extend the Redeemer's kingdom? But "how good a bargain can I make? Cannot I go to Heaven without forsaking the world — without imitating Jesus — without crucifying the flesh — without joining a church?" In a word, they mean without honoring Christ, without obeying the gospel, without doing as primitive Christians did.

These lovers of cheap bargains among us are for . . .

giving as little as possible,

doing as little as possible,

suffering as little as possible, and

attending the services of the church as little as possible.

They never deny themselves a trifle, or their appetite a dish, or their flesh a pleasure — purposely to aid God's cause, and comfort the Savior's poor. Not them! And yet it would be considered an

insult to tell them so. Friend, beware of a cheap bargain religion!

## 34 Only Half Awake!

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Only Half Awake! When the holy, active, and useful Legh Richmond was near his death, realizing the solemnities of eternity and the condition of the world, and looking over his own efforts, he said to a Christian friend, "Brother, we are only half awake! None of us are more than half awake!" How solemn and affecting such a statement, from such lips, under such circumstances! No doubt but things appear very different when viewed from a dying pillow, when seen in the light of eternity — to what they do when viewed under other circumstances. Was Richmond only half awake? Was it his opinion, when dying, that his most active friends were only half awake? Then how is it with us? Let us, for a few moments, reflect on his dying words, and try to rouse ourselves up; for surely, as the Apostle said, "It is now high time to awake out of sleep!" Where are we? In a world populated by sinners; by sinners who are immortal; by immortal beings under sentence of eternal death; by souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge, who are doomed to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, who can never escape their deserved doom but by the Lord Jesus Christ, who cannot be saved by Jesus without a personal application to him, who are not likely to apply to him unless they are warned of their danger, exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, and lovingly invited to flee to him for deliverance. We know their state; we are fully aware of their danger; we see them dropping into Hell daily! We profess to be Christians; but we are scarcely half awake! Where are we? On the borders of eternity! A few more steps — and we step off the stage of time, into another and eternal state. We are not sure of one hour! Time is but a brief introduction to eternity. Life is intended to be a period of preparation for death and judgment. We are here today; we are gone tomorrow! The place that now knows us — will soon know us no more. Ought we not, then, to realize our solemn situation? Ought we not to be wide awake to our duties, responsibilities, and dangers? Surely we ought; but to these things we are not more than half awake!

What are we here for? As sinners — to secure a saving interest in Christ, to obtain the pardon of our sins, the renovation of our natures, the justification of our persons; in a word, to make our calling and our election sure. As Christians, we are here — to witness for God, to bear testimony to the truth. Our witness should be personal — individual. Our testimony should be clear, distinct, and constant. We should witness that God is love, that salvation is a free gift, that sinners must not necessarily go to Hell — but that whoever believes in Jesus "shall not perish — but have everlasting life." We should testify to sinners that their works are evil, that they deserve eternal death, that God is reluctant to punish them, that he waits to be gracious unto them, that he rejects no applicant, that if they perish, it will be because they choose death in the error of their way.

Every sinner with whom we are acquainted should hear these things from us. We should speak to them seriously, affectionately, frequently, prudently. We should so bear witness as to convince them of the truth and importance of what we say. We should so testify as to produce the impression upon the mind, "That man or woman thinks that I am in danger, is concerned for my safety, and is in real earnest to do me good!" If we were wide awake, this would be the case; but, alas! the best of us are only half awake.

What is required of us? As the servants of God, we are required to be wakeful, and to work. We were asleep in sin — and we would have slept on until we awoke in Hell — but God, in his mercy, aroused us! We have indulged in spiritual sloth since, and like the "ten virgins" we have "all slumbered and slept." But God calls to us by his Word, by his servants, and by his providence, saying, "Awake! you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Unless we are awake — we cannot work; and if we do not work for God and souls — we do not answer the end of our new creation and merciful emancipation.

While our souls find rest in Jesus from guilt, slavish fear, and carnal cares — we should work to win souls, to honor Jesus, and glorify our good and gracious God. Every day should be a working day with the Christian, nor should he consider himself entitled to cease from labor while anything remains to be done. Every idle day, every waking hour in which we are not working for God, or preparing to work for him — witnesses to the fact "we are only half awake." As the disciples of Jesus, we should be watching; watching the movements of our Master's foes, watching for opportunities to benefit our Savior's friends, watching to see what there is for us to do, and ready to do it as soon as it is presented to our eye. We should be watching for our Redeemer's return, for he has said, "Behold, I come quickly!" "I will come as a thief in the night!" "Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Can we watch — if we are not awake? Are we properly affected with the Lord's command, if we are not watching? If we really believed that our Savior would come soon, suddenly, unexpectedly — would we indulge in sleep? Surely not! Our negligence and unwatchfulness say, that "None of us are more than half awake!"

What, then, is our condition? Only "half awake," when we ought to be wide awake.

We are only half awake to our responsibilities. The Bible teaches us that we are responsible for the use and abuse of every talent given to us, for improving and neglecting every opportunity to do good, and assures us that when Jesus comes, he will reward every one of us "according to our works." If we heartily believed this — could we be so sleepy?

We are only half awake to our duties. Look at our family duties, how are they discharged? Look at our duties to the Church; how are they performed? Look at our duties to the world; how are they fulfilled? Look at our duties to God; how are they attended to? Alas! we are not awake. Our love is not half awake; our zeal is not half awake; our faith is not waif awake. But shall we always live at this poor sleepy rate? Or shall we attend to the Apostolic exhortation, "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober!" My poor, dear, sleepy brethren! When shall we wake up? Shall we be like the lazy dog, "lying down and loving to slumber?" Slumber! shall we slumber . . .

when the night is coming,

while souls all around us are perishing,

while the Church needs our best energies,

while the world is wide awake,

while Satan is wide awake,

while Hell is filling,

while eternity is fast approaching,  
while God is calling to us, and  
the Scripture admonishes us?

Slumber! What! when Jesus is coming, when preparation for the judgment is needed, when laurels may be won, when the plaudit of the Master may be gained? If we continue to sleep — we shall soon, from our dying pillow, look back with regret and bitter sorrow on our present folly, and in tones of sadness condemn our sinful sleep?

If there is mercy for men,  
if there is love for Jesus,  
if there is zeal for God,  
if there is hatred to sin,  
if there is opposition to Satan in our bosoms  
— let us wake up, thoroughly wake up, and keep one another awake, too!

## 35 To the Bereaved

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To the Bereaved "The Lord gave — and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Job 1:21 So spoke the patriarch Job, when stripped of all his property and bereaved of all his children in one day. Reduced at once from affluence — to poverty, from the highest elevation — to the lowest point of human suffering — he exclaimed, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Such language befits us; for all that we have is from the goodness of God; it is from His free favor — and not because we have a right to it. All claim upon God was forfeited by sin, therefore all we receive is a proof of his kindness. All we that have — he gave to us; or rather, lent to us. And whatever he has lent to us — he may recall — may recall at any time, and in any way, he pleases. There is nothing upon which we can lay our hand and say, "This is absolutely mine!" All is lent us by a gracious God — lent us to enjoy, improve, and return to its proper owner. Shall we complain? Shall we repine? Shall we murmur if God takes from us any one thing which he has lent us, especially when he leaves us with so much? The Lord has just bereaved you. He has taken away your beloved relative. The stroke is painful, very painful. You feel it deeply. Your hopes are blighted. Your prospects are now beclouded. The trial is severe. You are touched in a very tender part. You cannot but weep — and perhaps you refuse to be comforted. You dwell upon the excellencies of the departed, upon the plans you had formed, the hopes which were excited in your bosom, the pleasure you anticipated from that beloved one. But death appeared — and you trembled, you used all proper means to ward off the blow — but he "has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke!" Your heart feels desolate, the world has lost one of its principal charms; you sit alone and weep. But beware lest, while you mourn over your loss, your heart should rise in rebellion against God. You need consolation, you require sympathy, you need solace for your wounded heart — and the object of these pages is to endeavor to impart it. The AUTHOR of this bereavement is the Lord! This should silence your objections. It silenced the Psalmist's complaining mind. He says, "I was silent; I would not open my mouth — for You are the one who has done this!" Psalms 39:9. Had a creature done it, David might have acted unwisely, or unkindly, or both; but the Lord did it. Whatever was the means — God's hand guided and directed the stroke! It was not by 'chance' — but by Divine direction. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days like those of a hired hand?" Job 7:1.

"There is a time to be born — and a time to die!" Ecclesiastes 3:2. This time is arranged by God's infinite wisdom. Beware how you cast suspicion upon that wisdom. The Lord has done it — and "the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Psalms 145:17. He has made no mistake. He has inflicted no injury. He has not infringed upon anyone's right.

You may not, at present, see why he has done it, because "clouds and thick darkness are round about him;" but you are sure that his hand has done it. And he says to you, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalms 46:10. This painful visitation maybe among his choicest mercies; it may be intended to prevent many evils, or to be a source of the greatest good to your soul, or to your family. There is a reason. The Lord has acted worthy of himself; and if you could only see the

whole, instead of having your mind fixed upon a part of his plan — you would adore the wisdom, admire the purpose, and bow, in deep submission, before the throne of the God, who is chastening you.

It will be a great relief to you, if, at this time, you fix your mind upon God's character, as it is revealed in his Word. There he reveals himself . . .

not only as just — but gracious;

not only as holy — but merciful;

not only as angry with sinners — but as pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Jehovah has revealed himself to us in Jesus. "No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son — the One who is at the Father's side — He has revealed Him." John 1:18. If you would understand the character of God, if you would know him correctly, if you would know him so as to love him, so as to trust in him, so as to be satisfied with all that he does — then study the character, works, preaching, sufferings, and death of Jesus! There, as in a mirror — God is seen. When, therefore, "Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus replied, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me — has seen the Father!'" John 14:8-9. In Jesus, "God is love." In your present trouble, he invites you to his throne of grace. He is willing to bless you. He waits to see you come before him with humility, in the name of his Son, sensible of your lost state as a sinner — that he may be gracious unto you. And, if you come to him thus, "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when he shall hear it — he will answer you." Isaiah 30:19. Is your heart full of sorrow, burdened with grief, ready to burst with anguish? He invites you to him, to "Trust in him at all times; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge!" Psalms 62:8. Go then alone, fall upon your knees at his footstool, confess your sin, tell him the tale of your woes, unburden your heart to him, and seek grace from the fullness of Jesus to sanctify your present trouble. This will soothe, and soften, and relieve your heart. He will not upbraid you, he will not frown you away, he will not refuse to listen to your prayer — for he says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble! I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." Psalms 50:15. This is a day of trouble — accept his invitation; appeal to his mercy; plead his promise; expect to be accepted, answered, and blessed, only for the sake of Jesus; and he will receive you graciously, love you freely, and turn your sighs of sorrow — into songs of praise.

Read his holy Word, especially . . .

the Psalms,

the precious promises,

the sweet invitations, and

the striking answers to prayer, which he has given.

Read these as if written on purpose for you. Read them as immediately beneath the eye of God. By these — God speaks to you. He speaks to you of himself, of your sins, of the way of salvation, of the mercies he has provided, and of the comfort he is willing to impart to all who ask of him in

faith. Nor let your present trial lead you to overlook the many mercies still left to you. God has not taken away your all; he has continued many comforts to you — and he offers you more, for he offers you himself. He proposes himself to fill the place of the dear departed one; and he is worthy of the highest place in your affections and heart. Let not the loss of one comfort — lead you to slight, neglect, or forget the many thousands of mercies which remain. This solemn dispensation is intended to teach you some very important lessons, and to set before you truths which you are apt to pass over without much attention.

Here you see what are the nature and consequences of SIN. It is that "abominable thing which God hates!" Jeremiah 44:4. Sin is that to which he never can be reconciled. His hatred to sin is infinite and eternal. Sin is an evil so dreadful — that no language can describe it! Its consequences are so fearful — that no heart can adequately conceive them.

Natural death is but one of the consequences of sin. "By one man sin came into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned." Romans 5:12. Every sigh, every sorrow, every pain, every fear, every groan — is the effect of sin; all came into the world by the sin of man — and they can only be banished hence, by the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. In death, you see the faithfulness of God to his threatening; six thousand years have rolled away since God threatened to punish disobedience with death, and among the many millions who have inhabited our world, only two have escaped from that threatening. If God is so faithful to this one threatening — will he not be equally faithful to all? If the proof of his faithfulness is daily presented to our eye, is it not daring presumption to question whether he will deal with impenitent sinners, in eternity, as he has declared in his Word that he will?

God has said, "If man is disobedient — he shall die!" Man was disobedient — and he died! His posterity sinned — and all his posterity die. God has also said, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God!" Psalms 9:17. "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Luke 12:5. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power!" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. These are very dreadful passages, and there are many like them in the Word of God; they point out our danger, they warn us to escape; and, if we despise the admonition — they leave us without excuse! With such views before us, how important must SALVATION appear! God has provided a way of salvation — a way by which we can be delivered . . .

from the guilt of sin — which binds us over to punishment;

from the power of sin — which degrades and defiles us;

from the love of sin — which proves our depravity and enmity against God;

and from the consequences of sin — which are fearful and eternal!

"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1 Timothy 1:15. He came to save sinners — by obeying the law which they had broken, and by paying the penalty which they had incurred. He has done all that the law required, he has suffered all that justice demanded for our salvation; and "through his name, whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. "God

exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins!" Acts 5:31. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved!" Acts 4:12. "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38-39.

There is salvation in Jesus for sinners — for all sinners who feel their lost condition, and are willing to be saved by grace, through faith. Ephesians 2:8. There is pardon through the blood of Christ — but through his blood alone; "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. There is justification through the obedience of Christ — but through that alone; "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Romans 8:1. We must be pardoned in this present world — or not at all. We must be justified in time — or we shall be condemned in eternity.

Every unbeliever is now under condemnation; for, "he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

Every believer is now justified; for Jesus "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 4:25; Romans 5:1-2. "Whoever believes in the Son HAS eternal life — but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath REMAINS on him!" John 3:36.

Salvation is a present deliverance from sin by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; "not by works of righteousness that we have done," Titus 3:5, not by any of the outward ordinances of Christianity — but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Death and eternity stamp an infinite importance on salvation. Let me therefore ask you, my afflicted friend: Are you saved? Have you a living faith in Christ? Do you depend on his finished work for pardon, peace, and acceptance with God? Do you enjoy peace with God? Do you live in fellowship with God? Do you walk with God in filial confidence, as a child with his father?

These are important inquiries. They are put to you in love. They should be seriously considered, and be honestly answered. Unless you are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus, unless you are sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit — you are not made fit for Heaven; and if you are not prepared for Heaven before you die — then you cannot enter there at death. You "must be born again." You must be "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." You must be "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11.

If you have no holiness on earth — you will have no Heaven at death; because there is no fitness, no qualification for the employments and enjoyments of that state. Your present affliction teaches you also, the proper use of EARTHLY things. They are to be loved, enjoyed, and used — for the Lord's glory. We must not put them in the Lord's place, nor set our hearts upon them. If we make them our idols — then the Lord will certainly correct us, and perhaps by removing them from us. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3:2. Is the afflicted reader a Christian? Then this dispensation may be sent to bid you to "make your calling and election sure." Rest not satisfied with probabilities; be not contented with a feeble hope; but seek

the Spirit's witness, the inward, well-founded persuasion of your regeneration and adoption. Have you received Christ? Walk in him. Make more use of Christ. Live upon him as your daily bread. Walk with him as your tried and faithful friend. Consult his will in all things. Watch his hand in all events. Aim at his glory in all you do. Stand ready to surrender whatever he may demand. Hold all that you have, as the property of your Savior. Seek to enjoy his presence with all your mercies, and to extend his kingdom by all your means.

Remember, Jesus gave himself for you, that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you unto himself as one of his peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:14. Live for eternity. You are walking on its margin; become familiar with its solemn realities. God is now saying to you, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest — it is polluted!"

"As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord." James 5:10.

Look at Aaron: his two sons are slain by the Lord, burnt with fire in a moment, "And Aaron held his peace." Leviticus 10:3.

Eli is told that his two sons shall die in one day, both of them, and his whole family be reduced to poverty, and he says, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good to him." 1 Samuel 3:18.

David is driven from his throne, his palace, and the royal city, by the rebellion of his wicked son Absalom; the priest and Levites bring the ark of God out of the city with him; but he meekly says, "Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the Lord's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him!" 2 Samuel 15:25-26.

Remember, also, that God is faithful to his promises. He bids you, "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall." Psalms 55:22. He says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand!" Isaiah 41:10. Can words be more plain? Can a promise be more positive than this?

He has given you a kingdom, and he will lead you safely home to possess it. Meditate on that precious passage, "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." Romans 8:32.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you!" Psalms 84:11-12. But should the bereaved reader of these lines be unconverted — one who is living without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world; then we deeply sympathize with you, for you are indeed to be pitied! You have no resource. The promises of God yield you no comfort. The thoughts of eternity afford you no pleasure. Your wounded heart is desolate and dreary. The love of Jesus does not console and cheer your spirit. You have lost a beloved relative — but you have not the Savior to supply his place. Think, beloved friend, think of your dangerous state! What if death arrested you! What if that been your corpse! What if that coffin contained you! Where would your soul now be? In what a dreadful state would your destiny be fixed for eternity!

"Except a man be born again — he cannot see the kingdom of God!" John 3:3. This is the language of the faithful and true Witness. He does not refer to the effect of any religious ceremony — but to a change of heart produced by the Holy Spirit. Your heart must be changed, your nature must be relieved — or you must perish forever; there is no alternative. "Flee from the wrath to come!" Matthew 3:7. "Repent, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Ezekiel 18:30. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2.

"Hear the rod, and the One who has appointed it." Micah 6:9. The Lord calls you to him. He opens the arms of his mercy to you. He will give you, by his Holy Spirit, the repose that he has promised. He will . . .

soothe your sorrows,

heal your wounded heart,

pardon your numerous sins, and

make you fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. The only obstacle in your way, the only bar between you and the Savior, the only hindrance to your salvation, is Unbelief. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Acts 16:31. "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." Psalms 86:5.

Lose not the benefit of this painful affliction, turn not away from him who speaks from Heaven. "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!" Hebrews 3:15. "Seek the Lord while he may be found." Isaiah 55:9. Seek him at once. Let nothing tempt you to delay; you have already delayed too long — you never will have a more favorable opportunity than the present. The door of mercy is now wide open! The new and living way into the holiest, is consecrated for you. The throne of grace is accessible to you. The Father says, "Come NOW, and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet — they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson — they shall be as white as wool." Isaiah 1:18. The Son says, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden — and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:27-28. "If any man thirsts — let him come unto me and drink." John 7:37. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life!" Revelation 22:17 No one can be more welcome than you are; you will never be more welcome than you are at this moment; therefore do not put away the gracious message from you; for, "no doubt, the kingdom of God is come near unto you." Jesus is able to save you; he is willing. It is only for you to renounce all other grounds of hope, to reject all vain confidence — and to come to him just as you are, and cast yourself upon him, as the foundation which God has laid. His mercy is as infinite as his nature — and more tender than a mother's heart!

He asks, "My son, give me your heart." He complains, "You will not come to me — that you might have life." He repeats his invitation, "Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David!" Isaiah 55:3. He promises, "Him who comes unto me — I will never cast out." John 6:37. And he laments over some, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace — but now it is hidden from your eyes!" Luke 19:42 Can anything be more touching than such conduct as this? Is it possible to manifest more tenderness? And all this is to encourage you to go unto him and find

salvation in him. May this solemn visitation be made a peculiar blessing to you; and, at last, may you "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God!" Matthew 8:11-12.

There is an hour, when I must part  
With all I hold most dear;  
And life with its best hopes, will then  
As nothingness appear.

There is an hour, when I must lie  
Low on affliction's bed;  
And anguish, pain, and tears become  
My bitter daily bread!

There is an hour, when I must sink  
Beneath the stroke of death;  
And yield to Him, who gave it first,  
My struggling vital breath.

There is an hour, when I must stand  
Before the judgment seat;  
And all my sins, and all my foes,  
In awful vision meet.

O Savior, then, in all my need  
Be near, be near to me;  
And let my soul, by steadfast faith,  
Find life and Heaven in thee!

## 36 Continue in Prayer

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Continue in Prayer "Continue in prayer." Colossians 4:2 The Christian prays as naturally as he breathes; for prayer is the breath of the regenerated soul. Prayer is the effect of divine teaching, and the proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart. If forbidden to pray — the Christian would be wretched; if not assisted in prayer — he is downcast and feeble. The Christian must pray — and yet he often feels it difficult to pray. He is tempted to omit it, to hurry it over, and to undervalue it. Satan hates prayer, and tries in every possible way to discourage us in it. But the sinner must pray — or perish; and the believer must pray — or be wretched. But we do not pray as we ought — with faith, fervor, and importunity; nor so much as we ought! For from press of business, carnality of mind, and the discouragements we meet with — we too often neglect to pray.

Hence the apostle exhorts, "Continue in prayer," not only begin to pray — but continue praying. Keep on, let nothing silence you; but persevere in prayer. These words are especially applicable to three classes.

First, Discouraged Laborers.

Friend, are you at work for God? Do you preach Christ's gospel — or teach young children, and try to lead them to Jesus — or distribute Bibles and gospel tracts — or speak, in your poor way, as opportunity offers — in hope that God will bless a word from you? And are you discouraged, because no fruit appears, or because you see very little good result from your labors? You began in prayer — did you not? Your object has been the honor of your dear Savior, and the good of immortal souls — has it not? Then yield not to discouragement; but "continue in prayer."

You may have a late spring — but there will be a good harvest. You cannot labor for God in vain. Every suggestion that you may, comes from Satan — and you are to resist him. Pray — that you may pray more. That is, in prayer — seek the grace of prayer, and God will hear, the clouds will gather, the rain will fall, the seed will grow, and a glorious harvest will reward your toil. Therefore, my poor discouraged brother, my poor disheartened sister. Up and at it anew. "Continue in prayer" and God will never disappoint you.

Secondly, Tried Believers. Some Christians are very much tried. One trial seems to tread on the heels of another, like the messengers of Job. Nay, they seem at times to come in pairs, or two or three abreast. Tried in the soul, tried in the family, tried in the world, and, perhaps, tried in the church too. This is grievous. Prayer has ascended to Heaven. It has been repeated again and again. But no answer has been sent. The trial continues. Strength seems to fail. Hope reels to and fro. Faith staggers. The tried one is tempted to give up. But no, no, my poor tried friend, never for one moment entertain the thought of giving up; but "continue in prayer." God has promised to hear, answer, and deliver you — only he has not told you when. Do you not remember that he did not come to his disciples on the lake, until the fourth watch of the night? You are in a hurry; but God sees no need to hurry. You are not out of his thoughts. He has registered your prayer, and if

you could see his book — you would read the register, and perhaps, see written in the margin, "To be answered when faith has been well tried, patience has been sufficiently exercised, and sincerity thoroughly proved." Or, "To be answered just as the sun goes down today." Yield not, then, to temptation, slacken not your hand — but wrestle as Jacob did, all night, unto the breaking of the day.

"The promise may be long delayed,

But it never comes too late!"

Thirdly, The Persecuted Christian. Persecution is not what it was once — but many are persecuted still.

Many, many an honest laborer is persecuted by his cruel master;

many a poor tradesman is persecuted by his rich neighbor;

many a godly servant is persecuted by her proud and imperious mistress;

many a consistent wife is persecuted by her ignorant and carnal husband;

many a Christian child is persecuted by its foolish and worldly parents;

many a Christian subject is persecuted by Popish magistrates, under unjust laws. My poor persecuted brother, you find it hard work to suffer for Christ at times; however willing the spirit may be — the flesh is weak. Satan strangely harasses you, misrepresents your God, and perplexes your soul. But hold on; if you suffer with Jesus now — you shall reign with him by and bye. If you suffer for Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you. "Continue in prayer," and more grace will be given you. Grace that will enable you to glory in your tribulations. Grace that will enable you to take joyfully the confiscation of your goods. Grace that will make you more than a conqueror. And deliverance will come in the rear of grace. He who supports you now, will emancipate you soon — sooner, perhaps, than you anticipate. "Continue in prayer!" Prayer will . . .

soothe your troubled spirit,

relieve your burdened mind,

bring you to the presence of God,

fortify you against temptation, and

strengthen you with strength in your soul.

There are many REASONS why we should continue in prayer — take three.

First, because God requires it. He tells you, by the lips of Jesus, that you "ought always to pray — and not to faint." He directs you, by Paul, "to pray without ceasing." It is a surprising fact — but it is a fact, that God loves to hear us pray. He never wearies of hearing us. Poor though our prayers are, broken and unconnected though they are, so imperfect that we feel utterly ashamed of them — yet the Lord loves to hear us. And, perhaps, one reason why he does not answer sooner is, because he loves to hear us pray so much.

Secondly, then, because God approves of it. If he permitted us to continue praying, for our own relief merely — it would be a mercy. But he requires it of us as a duty, and approves of it as an act of obedience. He loves for his child to speak with him, treat him with confidence, and expect blessings from him! And therefore He says, "Continue praying — and as soon as it will be good for you, and honorable to Me — I will surely answer your prayers!"

Thirdly, because He rewards it. Those who pray most — get most. Not because there is any merit in prayer — but because it is the Lord's plan; he wills it to be so, it pleases him that it should be so. Hence Jesus said, "When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you!"

Let us "continue in prayer," then, when all is dark and dreary. Our Father can hear us then, and we can speak to him, and plead with him, without a light. Dark hours . . .

make the promises shine,

endear the throne of grace, and

enhance the value of our privileges.

"By night," says the spouse, "on my bed I sought Him." Let us, also, seek him, cry to him, call upon him, plead with him, and give him no rest — until he arises and has mercy upon us.

Let us "continue in prayer," when all is discouraging. If, like Jacob, we think that all things are against us; or even conclude with Jeremiah, "Surely God has turned against me! He turns his hand against me all the day!" — still let us pray on. If we restrain prayer — we shall be the losers. If we persevere in prayer — we must prevail. He said, "Seek — and you shall find; knock — and it shall be opened unto you."

Let us "continue in prayer," though all seems disheartening. It was disheartening to the disciples to toil all night, and catch nothing; nevertheless at their Master's bidding, they again let down the net. So, however disheartened we may be with long waiting, though hope deferred may have made the heart sick — yet "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up!" Let us, then, pray always — and not faint.

Dark, as the night may be,

discouraging as our circumstances may be,

disheartened as we may have been —

let us rouse up, start afresh, and say, "Let Satan say as he will, let unbelief work as it may, let my heart deceive me ever so much, let never so many circumstances rise to discourage me — yet will I continue in prayer, trust in the Lord, and stay myself upon my God!"

Let us "continue in prayer" though no answer is given. The poor Syrophenician woman cried to Jesus; but, "he answered her not a word." She fell at his feet, and pleaded, as only a mother could plead; but he repulsed her. She continued in prayer until he exclaimed, "Oh, woman, great is your faith — be it unto you even as you will!" Precious instance this of the power of prayer, of the importance of persevering in prayer. Keep at it then, though day after day you wait and no answer

comes; or if, after waiting long, a rough answer is given you.

There was nothing but love in Joseph's heart when he answered his brethren roughly; so there is nothing but love in the heart of God, when you have to say, "By terrible things in righteousness have you answered us, O God of our salvation!"

"Continue in prayer," though your enemies prevail against you. It may be no proof of God's displeasure, though they do. The enemies of Joseph prevailed against him: the enemies of Daniel prevailed against him; and the enemies of Paul prevailed against him — but were these instances any proof of God's displeasure? No, not any, and as it was said of Gad, so it proved true of them: "Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last." The triumphing of your wicked enemies is but short; for God will beat down your foes before your face, and will plague those who hate you in the end.

"Continue in prayer," though God seems set against you. He may cover himself with a cloud — as though he was determined that your prayer should not pass through. He may hold back the face of his throne, and hang a cloud upon it. But, as Jacob, when the angel would leave him without the blessing, refused and prevailed; as the disciples at Emmaus, when Jesus made as if he would go further, constrained him, and conquered — so must you. He may delay to answer prayer — but he will never deny the prayer of His child. He may try your faith now; but he will honor it in the end. If he frowns — still plead; if he is silent — cry the more; and if his chariot is driven on — run behind it, and refuse to be beaten from it. This must prevail.

If any one of God's family needs this exhortation to "continue in prayer" — I am the man!

Naturally backward to plead with God;

often discouraged by circumstances without,

and doubts, and fears, and unbelief within;

harassed by Satan, and prone to believe his lies

— how often have I restrained prayer before God!

If any one of God's family need prayer — I am the man!

Look where you will, you will see causes to "continue in prayer." In the world — how many! In the church — how many! In the heart — how many!

Oh, Spirit of God, as the Spirit of prayer — rest upon my soul, fill my heart, and daily draw me to the throne of grace! Help my infirmities, furnish me with arguments, fire me with zeal, impart faith, infuse power, and enable me to "continue in prayer, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving!"

Prayer was appointed to convey

The blessings God designs to give,

Long as they live should Christians pray,

For only while they pray, they live. The Christian's heart this prayer indites,

He speaks as prompted from within;  
The Spirit his petition writes.  
And Christ receives and gives it in. And will you still in silence lie,  
When Christ stands waiting for your prayer?  
My soul, you have a friend on high,  
Arise, and try your interest there!  
If pain afflict, or wrongs oppress,  
If cares distract, or fears dismay;  
If guilt dejects, if sin distress;  
The remedy's before you — pray.  
'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,  
Though thought be broken, language lame;  
Pray, if you can or cannot speak;  
But pray with faith in Jesus' name.  
Depend on him, you can not fail,  
Make all your wants and wishes known,  
Fear not, his merit must prevail;  
Ask what you will, it shall be done!

## 37 CERTAINTY

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### CERTAINTY

Certainty, on all matters of importance, is very desirable, and will be sought by every careful, cautious person. In the present day, when profession is so common, and deception works so secretly — a mistake as to the true state of the soul is more than possible. We fear that many take it for granted that they are all right, when they are not. Let us, then, spend several minutes in thinking upon this point.

Mistaken as to the state of my soul! Is it possible? It is.

Mistaken as to the state of my soul! Would it not be dangerous? It would.

Many have lived and died mistaken, and some have discovered their mistake when it has been too late to rectify it. If I am in a good, safe, and satisfactory state — it will be manifested by four things.

First, Christ will live in the affections. I shall love him. Love him above gold and silver, above health and pleasure, above every earthly thing. I shall fear to offend him, or grieve his loving heart. He will be the supreme object of my desires. As such I shall think of him, walk with him, and seek to enjoy him. I shall set my affections on things above, and not on things of the earth. Jesus will be the object of my highest love; and when my heart is cold toward him, or my affections wander from him — I shall grieve, sigh, groan, moan, and pray for the quickening and reviving power of the Holy Spirit, to bring me into a better state.

Reader, do you love Jesus? Do you love him supremely? If so, you are in a good state.

Secondly, Christ will rule in the conscience. He will be acknowledged as the only Lord of conscience, and his precepts will be its only law. We shall conscientiously endeavor to please him — and as conscientiously avoid offending him. Conscience will be tender of his honor, jealous of his glory, and concerned to advance his praise. If Christ rules in my conscience — I shall . . .

appeal to his Word,

tremble at his frown,

rejoice at his smile, and

cautiously avoid whatever he prohibits.

Reader, does Jesus rule in your conscience? Is your conscience sacredly kept for him? Is it tender, and habitually jealous of his honor? If so, you are in a safe state.

Thirdly, Christ will have possession of your heart. You have surrendered it to him as an act of homage, as an act of love. He dwells in you. He walks in you. Your heart is considered his lawful throne, his chosen palace. As the result of his dwelling in you — you have secret and intimate communion with him. You tell him all — all that tries, troubles, and exercises you. You tell him all

— all that pleases, gladdens, and delights you. Your faith in him is simple,  
your love to him is sincere,  
your hope in him is steadfast,  
and your joy in him is sweet.

He is . . .

the crown of your life,  
the object of your trust, and  
the subject of your sweet and frequent meditation.

He is your all, and to him you look for . . .

justification before God,  
fitness to appear in the presence of God,  
and boldness at the judgment-seat of God.

Reader, if Christ has full and permanent possession of your heart, you are in a happy state.

Fourthly, Christ will have your talents for his service. When the heart was surrendered — then all was surrendered. If Jesus has the heart — then nothing is withheld from him. The life is the index of the heart. By the outward actions — we learn what is passing within. Love to the person of Christ — renders it sweet to obey the precepts of Christ. If Jesus has secured my salvation by his death — then I shall seek to glorify his name in my life. My person, my time, my talents, my all — will be placed at his disposal. I shall feel most happy when most active in his service. The heart and the life should agree, and if we are in a good state — such will be the case. "By their fruits you shall know them," said our Lord; and when the life is a copy of the life of Christ, and the talents are employed in the Savior's cause — then we are in a holy state.

Dear friends, let nothing satisfy us, but certainly. If we do not feel certain as to our state before God, let us set our hearts upon it, and seek for it as for hidden treasure. Does Jesus . . .

live in our affections,  
rule in our consciences,  
dwell in our hearts, and  
get honor by our lives?

If so — all is well.

Let us impartially examine.

Let us fervently pray.

Let us make sure work for eternity.

We cannot be too sure or too safe. But we may rest short of the refuge, we may build beside the rock, we may cry, "Peace and safety," when there is no good ground for it. May God's Word be our only standard. May the holy and ever blessed Spirit search us, and try us, and then bear witness with our hearts — that we are in a good, a safe, a happy, a holy state. This is a real blessing, a privilege worth more than the whole world can bestow. May every one of our readers be privileged to enjoy it, for the Redeemer's sake.

## 38 Christ, the Substitute For His People

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### Christ, the Substitute For His People

God made man upright — in his own image — capable of knowing, serving, and enjoying him. He manifested Himself to him, gave him a law — and he was truly happy. Man knew, approved of, and could do, all that God required; obedience was to him easy, pleasant, and profitable. The precept of the law was to direct him, and the threatening to deter him; both were alike useful to him. He stood in Eden, as the father of the human race — the representative of his seed — the figure of Him who was to come. He reflected the wisdom, the holiness, and the goodness of his Creator — and doubtless, for a time, lived in sweet communion with him. But he listened to temptation, fell into sin, and became a rebel against God . . .

his nature became depraved,

his disposition entirely changed,

his person exposed to the curse,

his heart was now turned against God

his conscience alarmed at the presence of God

— and he became separated from God.

He had no right to expect anything, but the immediate execution of the threatening; for he justly deserved to suffer and to die.

Justice appeared as his foe,

guilt filled him with terror,

and God could only be viewed as a Judge! On the one hand was the threatening — and God was true;

on the other his crime — and God was just.

He was a criminal in a state of degradation and danger. He had no excuse, and he knew no way of escape. His situation was dreadful, for God must be true to his Word: and therefore the penalty must be inflicted. He, with his whole posterity, must die. His case appeared desperate — his condition hopeless. But at the cool of the day, his God appears — He calls him out of his hiding-place, convicts him of sin, reveals a way of escape, and lays a foundation for hope. Before sin was committed by man — it was anticipated by God, and provision had been made for its expiation. A substitute had been found and accepted; and now the good news is published that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head!" A way of access to God on the ground of atonement is made known, and man is directed to take a guiltless victim, a beast of the field, and, confessing sin over him, to slay him — and expect mercy through the blood-shedding of the

innocent victim. In the death of that victim, the sinner sees his own desert, and learns the important truth that "God himself will provide a Lamb for the burnt-offering." The beast was the substitute for the man, and set forth Him who was to appear once in the fullness of time, to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Hebrews 9:26. Sacrifices were continued, and beasts substituted for men, during the whole of the patriarchal age; and thus was the gospel preached — hope sustained — and salvation enjoyed. At length, a clearer revelation was to be made — and Israel, who had been long held in bondage by the Egyptians, were to be delivered. Moses is commanded to direct every family to take a lamb — to shed its blood, to sprinkle that blood across the top and the two door-posts of the house — and shut themselves in until morning. The destroying angel passed through the land, every Egyptian's house was smitten — but not one Israelite suffered. The lamb had been accepted for the family, and they could feast safely in their dwellings. This was to preach the deliverance of the Lord's people by the death of Jesus: and now that "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us" — we are safe, and "should therefore keep the feast," 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. The lamb of the morning, and the lamb of the evening, offered on the altar before God continually, kept the subject of substitution constantly before the people, as did most of the other sacrifices. But it was on the great day of atonement that this doctrine was set forth, in all its fullness and glory. Two goats were to be selected and presented before the door of the tabernacle — lots were to be cast, and by lot it was decided which goat should suffer — and which goat should escape. The goat for the sin-offering was to be slain — and his blood taken into the holy place, and to be sprinkled before the mercy-seat, and upon the mercy-seat; and so an atonement was to be made.

Then Aaron was to take the live goat, and lay both his hands upon its head, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat — and then the goat was sent away by the hand of a trustworthy man into the wilderness. The slain goat is substituted for the people, and its death makes an atonement; and the sending away the live goat sets forth the complete removal of sin from the congregation. The whole service is full of Christ, and sets forth his substitution and perfect work. By various types and shadows, this subject was kept continually before the congregation throughout the whole of that Old Testament dispensation; but at length "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8.) appeared — the fullness of time came, and God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, Galatians 4:4-5.

He had been announced as coming by all the prophets, and was declared to be "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace," Isaiah 9:6. He took our nature. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," John 1:14. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," Hebrews 2:14. He was made under the law and rendered perfect obedience to it; for this very purpose he came, as it is written, "Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin, you would not, neither had pleasure therein — which are offered by the law. Then said I, Lo, I come to do your will, O God; yes, your law is within my heart," Psalm 40. Hebrews 10.

He honored the precepts by obeying them in his life — and the penalty by paying it at his death; that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," Romans 5:19. He represented his people when he obeyed, and he

represented them when he suffered; He was "the second Adam — the Lord from Heaven," 1 Corinthians 15:47.

All the seed of Adam were represented by Adam — sinned in him, and became the subjects of disease and death through him, Romans 5:12-19. Just so, all the seed of Christ were represented by Him, and obtain righteousness and life through Him.

He was the Surety of the better covenant — engaged to make peace — redeem the people, (John 10:16) — and see all the promises fulfilled.

He was the Shepherd of the sheep, who took their blame — became liable in their stead, and laid down his life as the price of their redemption, John 10:11, 1 Peter 1:18-21.

He was the Husband of his bride; and out of love to her became a substitute for her; as it is written, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it — that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish," Ephesians 5:25-27.

He was the Redeemer, giving his life a "ransom for many," Matthew 20:28; — dying for them, "to redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14.

He was the Savior called Jesus, because he came "to save his people from their sins," Matthew 1:21; who that he might make expiation for the people with his own blood, "suffered outside the gate," Hebrews 13:12.

Thus as a substitute he labored, suffered, and died; and God accepted his obedience instead of ours — his sufferings instead of ours — his life instead of ours. He died for us, or instead of us, Romans 5:6, Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. As Aaron put the sins of Israel on the goat — so were our sins laid upon Jesus. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," Isaiah 53:6. Psalms 40:12. Jesus, as our substitute, really bore our sins, as it was predicted, "He shall bear their iniquities;" "He bore the sin of many," Isaiah 53:11-12. "Who, His own self, bore our sins in His own body, on the tree," 1 Peter 2:24. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Hebrews 9:28. In Him our sins were punished. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed. For the transgression of my people was He stricken," Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 53:8.

Christ also suffered for us. 1 Peter 2:21. "Christ also has once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Peter 3:18. "Christ has suffered for us in the flesh," 1 Peter 4:1. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture," 1 Corinthians 15:3. By him our sins are forever put away; they are as though they were not; therefore we read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which (takes up and) takes away the sin of the world," John 1:29. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," Hebrews 9:26. "He was manifested to take away our sins," 1 John 3:5. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us," Psalms 103:12. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day," Zechariah 3:9. "You have cast all my sins behind your back," Isaiah 38:17. "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea,"

Micah 7:19. See also Psalms 32:1-2; Romans 4:7; 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 1:3; Romans 11:27; Daniel 9:24; Jeremiah 1:20; Romans 8:33-34. The death of Christ as a substitute was a real sacrifice for sin, infinite in its value, and eternal in its efficacy. His soul was made "an offering for sin," Isaiah 53:10. "Christ has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor," Ephesians 5:2. "This priest after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God. For by one offering he has perfected forever those for whom he made expiation," Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews 10:14. "By the will of God expiation is made for us, by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all," Hebrews 10:10. The Savior offered his entire person a sacrifice for the sins of his people, by which offering justice is satisfied, sin is put away, reconciliation on honorable grounds is effected, (Hebrews 2:17. Romans 5:10. Colossians 1:20-22.) and "a way is opened for us into the holiest of all," Hebrews 10:19-20. By His death He purchased His people; therefore we read "Feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:21. Every saint is "bought with a price," 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23, "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1:18-19, and forms "a part of the purchased possession" Ephesians 1:14.

He not only purchased our persons — but procured our pardon, Ephesians 1:7, secured our reconciliation, Romans 5:10, and raised every believer above the reach of condemnation, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:33-34; John 5:24. As He represented us on earth, so He does now in Heaven; He, as our great High Priest, wears our names on his breast — calls us brethren — is preparing a place for us in his Father's house — advocates our cause against all our foes — intercedes for us with his Heavenly Father — stands as Mediator between us and the throne of glory — considers us as part of Himself, "members of His body, of his flesh, and of His bones," and will soon come to fetch us, that so we may be forever with the Lord.

He manages all our concerns in Heaven, and sends down His Holy Spirit to manage all within us, Rom, 8:26. Christ and His people are Owe; they were given to him, John 17:2.; they become one with Him, John 15:1. Ephesians 5:30. His love to them is . . .

as infinite as His nature;

as strong as His omnipotence;

and as changeless as His mind. For them He engaged in covenant before time — for them He appeared to do and suffer in time, and for them he will come at the close of time, that they may be like Him, and with Him, when time shall be no more. The result of the death of Christ is certain. He did not die at a 'perhaps'. He came into the world for a specific purpose, and that purpose must be accomplished. Whatever bearing the atonement may have on the world, as a means of moral government; whatever benefits may flow incidentally to others, from their connection with the saints, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end," Isaiah 45:17. He "gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father," Galatians 1:4. He "gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14.

It was expedient that He should die for the people, and also that He should "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," John 11:50, John 11:52. "He was made to be sin

for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," 2 Corinthians 5:21. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," Galatians 3:13-14. "He suffered for our sins, that he might bring us to God," 1 Peter 3:18. "He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 1 Thessalonians 5:10. He became "the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of his death, we who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," Hebrews 4:15.

If he died to deliver us from the world — to redeem us from all iniquity — to gather together in one all the children of God — to make them the righteousness of God — that he might bring us to God, and put us in possession of the eternal inheritance — all these things He will do, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. Surely he would not suffer and die (which is dreadful) to accomplish an end, and then refuse to employ his power (which is easy and glorious) to secure it. No, No! The Father has promised that "He shall see his seed;" with which he travailed in birth, "and be satisfied," Isaiah 53:10-11. "A seed shall serve him; and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born that he has done this," Psalms 22:30-31. He "came down from Heaven not to do his own will — but the will of Him that sent, him; and this is the Father's will, that of all which He has given him he should lose nothing — but raise it up again at the last day," John 6:38-39. As the Shepherd, he became responsible for the sheep; therefore He laid down his life for them, and said, "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," John 10:15-16. And speaking of all the Father gave him, of all for whom he became responsible, of all for whom he became a substitute, he said, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John 10:27-29. But of some he said, "You are not of my sheep, as I said unto you," John 10:26. To represent the result of the death of Jesus as uncertain — appears to reflect upon the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, and set aside the doctrine of substitution altogether. If, indeed, He represented HIS PEOPLE, if He obeyed the law for them, if He suffered and died in their stead, if "He lives to make intercession for them," and if He has unlimited power and authority — then will he not save them? If He really loved them, if He died to redeem them, if He atoned for their sins — will He — can He allow them to perish? If He intended to save them, and they are lost — is He not disappointed? And if disappointed, can he be God? — the God who says, "I will do all my pleasure!" Has He power to save whom He loves? If He really loves His people — then will He not exert that power to save them? His relation to His people as their substitute, flows from his love to them; His sacrifice is the effect of his substitution; having offered that sacrifice, He is proclaimed "Lord both of the dead and of the living;" and by his sacrifice, Spirit, and providence, He saves all whom He represented.

Whatever relation, therefore, the Savior may sustain to the world at large — it is clear that he fills a peculiar relation to his people. Their salvation is not left as a matter of contingency. He represented His seed; and as Adam's seed all died in Adam, so in Christ shall all his "be made alive," 1 Corinthians 15:22. FOR them He lived, suffered, bled, and died! TO them He sends the

Holy Spirit, and they are made willing in the day of His power. At His throne they confess their sins, and seek salvation — by faith they embrace His promises, and receive His fullness. And as believers they are pardoned, justified, accepted, and saved. They have everlasting life. For them the law is magnified, justice is satisfied, and God is glorified in their salvation; their sins are put away, their persons are the purchased property of Jesus, and He constantly represents them before the throne. For them, He abolished death — for them, He conquered Satan — and to them, he has promised Heaven. He is made unto them of God "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." But someone may ask, "How may I enjoy this blessedness?" Believe in the Lord Jesus; and by faith you are entitled to every promise in the bible — every blessing that is in Christ — and every privilege of the church of God: "He who believes has everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation!"

## 39 A Hint on Usefulness

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### A Hint on Usefulness

It is now generally admitted among real Christians, that as our days are few, our means are limited, our obligations great, and our responsibilities solemn — we should seize every opportunity to do good to our fellow-sinners in the name of the Lord Jesus, in order that we may extend his cause. Much is now done; and we are thankful that it is; but that much more may be done, is very clear. We certainly ought to take advantage of every circumstance that offers for the circulation of the truth of God. The present is a reading age; the generality of the people will read a Christian Tract — but they will not sit down to peruse a folio. The present arrangements of the post-office afford us an excellent opportunity of putting tracts into the hands of our correspondents. The post-office authorities engage to take a letter weighing half an ounce for one penny; and a tract of eight pages, a moderate sized letter, and an envelope will not weigh more. Now I think such an opportunity for usefulness, ought not to be trifled with or lost. Tracts are cheap, very cheap; and may be obtained on every subject, calculated to convert the sinner, edify the believer, or reclaim the backslider. Tracts are intended to preserve from sin, inculcate virtue, and honor our dear Lord and Savior.

Besides which, small books, under four ounces, may be sent by post for one penny to any part of the United Kingdom; if more than four ounces, and under eight ounces, for two pence; and so on, in proportion. Thus we may send small, plain, spiritual volumes to the neglected hamlet, the ignorant village, or the back lanes and streets of any of our towns. We can also send them to our own friends and relatives, to old acquaintances, or others we may hear of and wish to benefit. Who can tell the amount of good which will result from such operation, if fully carried out by the Lord's people.

Just look at the matter a little; a number of Christians adopt the plan recommended; a letter arrives at the counting-house, the tract is thrown on the desk; perhaps the master does not read it — but in his absence the clerk may. Or it is received in the workshop, laid on one side, and left, and the apprentice takes it up, and, at his leisure, peruses it. Or it is delivered in the parlor, laid on the table, and the children read it, or perhaps the servant reads it the next morning when she dusts the room. Now as God has promised a blessing to his Word, who can tell what good effects may follow in these instances? If sent to Ministers or Christians, they may, as I do, read them, and then enclose them again to someone else; and thus make them tell the same tale of redeeming love many times over to as many people. The times in which we live are such that no Christian can be justified in neglecting any means by which he can circulate the truth of God, and assist in driving soul-destroying, church-dividing error from our land. Papists write, and circulate; — puseyites write, and circulate; — infidels write, and circulate; — erroneous men of every description write, and circulate; nor can we blame them if they believe they are in the right. But shall we Christians be still, or allow our brethren to write, print, and publish — and not purchase and circulate their productions? Surely not. How can we justify our conduct if we do? Will not the love of Christ,

influence us to spread his fame? Will not love to souls, influence us to seek, by all means to save some? Will not zeal for the glory of God, influence us to circulate his truth? Is there more power in error than in truth?

We have been too, too negligent! Henceforth let our motto be — Circulate, Circulate, Circulate. Follow every tract with prayer, and the God who hears prayer — will send you an answer of peace. The way is clear, the path is plain, the means are provided, and difficulties are few. Reader! will you adopt this mode of doing good? Will you begin today? Send at once an order for your tracts, place them by your envelopes, and enclose one with the first letter you write; follow it up in faith and prayer, and you will find that "in due season you will reap, if you faint not."

Remember you are accountable for every talent you possess; if you cannot speak for Christ in company — if you cannot visit the sick for Christ — if you have not money to devote to the cause of Christ — you can enclose a tract in your letter, for Christ. Forget not that the Lord is now noticing your thoughts upon this subject; he will register the conclusion you come to, and how you act in future on this point. You may not before have thought of it, it may never have been presented to your mind; but do not wrap up this one talent in the napkin, nor hide your Lord's money in the earth — but lay it out for his glory and the spread of his truth. What is laid out for God in time, will be found to be laid up for the Christian in eternity. "And don't forget to do good and to share — these are the sacrifices that please God." "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Word of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

## 40 The Repeal of the Union

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The Repeal of the Union This subject in a political point of view, has engrossed the attention, and called forth the energies of millions of immortal beings; but who attends to it in a spiritual point of view?

There is an unnatural, degrading, and destructive union existing between the soul of man — and the prince of darkness; between the evil that is in the world — and every man, woman, and child, who remains in his natural state. This union must be dissolved — or the soul is ruined forever. He who is the friend of the world — is the enemy of God. All who serve the prince of darkness — are rebels against the authority of the Most High God. The union must be repealed — or the soul can never enjoy true peace, or be saved from everlasting woe.

It is by faith, and by faith alone, that we break away from our old connections, leave the service of Satan, overcome the evil that is in the world, and obtain true freedom and prosperity. Faith is believing God's Word and acting upon it. He bids me turn from sin to himself, and promises to receive me. He directs me to view his beloved Son, as a substitute suffering and dying in the sinner's stead — to place my sole dependence on him, and promises me eternal life. He calls me away from everything sinful and polluting — and promises to be a Father unto me. He tells me to pray, and promises to answer me. He tells me to hope, and assures me I shall not be disappointed. He tells me to obey his precepts, and pledges his Word that he will honor me.

Now faith is . . .

believing the promise and turning to God;

looking to Jesus and expecting eternal life;

leaving the evil practices of the world and calling God my Father;

praying and expecting to be heard;

hoping and expecting to receive;

obeying and expecting the tokens of God's approbation.

Faith is taking God at his Word. It is believing that . . .

he means what he says,

he intends what he promises,

he will make good his Word.

Faith repeals the union with evil. It separates from Satan and sin, and brings us into union with God and his Son Jesus Christ. A believer . . .

listens to what God says,

does what God bids, and  
expects what God promises.

Reader, are you in union with sin and Satan? If so, the sooner the union is repealed the better; you have not to wait for an act of parliament — but only to exercise an act of faith, and the union is dissolved! Not only so — but you are in union with God, who will . . .

pardon your sins,  
justify your person,  
supply your needs,  
listen to your prayers,  
conquer your foes,  
guide you through this world by his counsel,  
and afterward receive you to glory.

Think, pray, determine, and never rest — until the union with sin and Satan is repealed.

Believer, in your case the union is repealed; you are no longer in union with sin and Satan — but you are one with Jesus, one with God. Your person is united to the person of Christ, your interests are identified with the interests of Christ. His blood, is your acquittal. His obedience, is your righteousness. His entire work, is your everlasting salvation. His word, is your law. His example, is your rule.

You are one with Christ. You are being conformed to Christ, and are destined to dwell forever with Christ! Thanks be unto God for repealing the union! Everlasting thanks for uniting us to his Son!!

## 41 Have You a Saving Interest in Christ?

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Have You a Saving Interest in Christ? This is a solemn question, for without a saving interest in Christ, there is no salvation. Besides this, it is to be feared, that many take it for granted that they have — when they have not. Let us then look at the subject seriously, just for two minutes.

If you now have a saving interest in Christ — then you were once convinced that you had not. You saw the vast importance of it. You were stirred up heartily to desire it. Then you earnestly sought it. You perhaps doubted, and feared that you would never obtain it. You were, perhaps, kept waiting, watching, and praying for it. This deepened and strengthened your desire. At length, Jesus was revealed as exactly suited to you, as willing to receive and save you. Hope sprung up in your soul. You fell at his feet overwhelmed with a sense of your unworthiness. You were raised up and enabled to exercise confidence in him. Your heart embraced him. Doubt, fear, and unbelief fled; joy, peace, and gratitude filled your bosom. You felt Jesus to be precious, unspeakably precious to you. You could trust yourself, and your soul's salvation in his hand. You found rest. You enjoyed repose. You solemnly engaged to be his. To do his will. To copy his example. To wear his righteousness. To wash your robes and make them white in his blood.

You were consecrated to his service. Jesus was now yours, and you were his. You felt that you could withhold nothing from him, that you could do anything for him. You felt that you had a saving interest in Christ. His blood was your peace. His obedience was your justification. His cross was your glory. His word was your rule. His honor was your end. Have you felt anything like this? Is the above your experience? If so, there is no doubt of your interest, and your life should be spent in his service, to his praise. If you are a stranger to the above — beware, lest what you call faith, should prove presumption, and Jesus at last refuse to own you as his.

Reader, we must part. My work is done. Is your soul safe? Are you in Christ? We shall meet before the great white throne by-and-by. In what character shall we meet? As believers, or unbelievers? As saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation — or as lost, and lost forever? This is a solemn inquiry. Do not, I beseech you, pass it by. You are saved by Christ, or you are not, which is it? You have received the gospel — or rejected it. You have embraced Christ — or refused him; which is it? You will perhaps bless God that you ever read this little book, or, you may curse the day you ever saw it; for it may be the means of your conversion — or it may increase your condemnation. May God in his infinite mercy, accompany the reading of it with the power and demonstration of his Holy Spirit, that it may be a savor of life unto life in your experience!

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