

GLEANINGS AMONG THE SHEAVES

by C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's collection of illustrated teachings including reflections on the preciousness of God's promises, explaining how divine promises serve as wealth, armor, medicine, and sustenance for believers.

2 Chapters

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BOOK: Gleaning Among The Sheaves (Illustrations)

Gleanings Among the Sheaves by C.H.SPURGEON

Gleanings Among The Sheaves

1. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PROMISES The promises of God are to the believer an in-exhaustible mine of wealth. Happy is it for him if he knows how to search out their secret veins and enrich himself with their hidden treasures. They are an armory, containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword. They are a surgery, in which the believer will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs; nor lacks there an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knoweth how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God. The promises are to the Christian a storehouse of food. They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise and break them till his five thousand necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments. The promises are the Christian's Magna Charta of liberty; they are the title deeds of his heavenly estate. Happy is he who knoweth how to read them well and call them all his own. Yea, they are the jewel room in which the Christian's crown treasures are preserved. The regalia are his, secretly to admire today, which he shall openly wear in Paradise hereafter. He is already privileged as a king with the silver key that unlocks the strong room; he may even now grasp the sceptre, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle. O, how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had the tongue of the mightiest of orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceeding great and precious promises of God. Nay, they who have entered into rest, whose tongues are attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even they can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure house of God - the promises of the covenant of His grace.

2. SORROW'S DISCIPLINE The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction.

3. THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

It is a tough battle which the Christian is called to fight; not one which the weak and soft might win; no easy skirmish which he might gain who dashed to battle on some sunshiny day, looked at the host, then turned his courser's rein, and daintily dismounted at the door of his silken tent. It is not a campaign which he shall win, who, but a raw recruit today, foolishly imagines that one week of service will insure a crown of glory. It is a life-long war --a contest which will require all our strength if we are to be triumphant, a battle at which the stoutest heart might quail, a fight from which the bravest would shrink did he not remember that the Lord is on his side: therefore whom shall he fear? God is the strength of his life: of whom shall he be afraid? This fight is not one of main force or physical might; if it were, we might the sooner win it; but it is all the more dangerous from the fact that it is a strife of mind, a contest of heart, a struggle of the spirit--oft times an agony of the

soul. Do you wonder that the Christian is called to conflict? God never gives strong faith without fiery trial; He will not build a strong ship without subject-ing it to very mighty storms; He will not make you a mighty warrior if He does not intend to try your skill in battle. The sword of the Lord must be used; the blades of heaven must be smitten against the armor of the evil one, and yet they shall not break, for they are of true Jerusalem metal which shall never snap. We shall conquer, if we begin the battle in the right way. If we have sharpened our swords on the cross, we have nothing whatever to fear; for though we may be sometimes cast down and discomfited, we shall assuredly at last put to flight all our adversaries, for we are the sons of God even now. Why, then, should we fear? Who shall bid us "stay," if God bid us advance?

4. THE PRIVILEGES OF TRIAL

It is said that when the stars cannot be seen during the day from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a dark well, they would be visible at once. And certainly it is a fact that the best of God's promises are usually seen by His Church when she is in her darkest trials. As sure as ever God puts His children in the furnace, He will be in the furnace with them. I do not read that Jacob saw the angel until he came into a position where he had to wrestle, and then the wrestling Jacob saw the wrestling angel. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the angel of God till he was by Jericho, and then Joshua saw the angelic warrior. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord till he had become a stranger and a wanderer in the plains of Mamre, and then the Lord appeared unto him as a wayfaring man. It is in our most desperate sorrows that we have our happiest experiences. You must go to Patmos to see the revelation. It is only on the barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from all the world's light, that we can find a fitting darkness in which we can view the light of heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth.

5. THE JOY OF VICTORY The Christian's battlefield is here, but the triumphal procession is above. This is the land of the sword and the spear: that is the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight: that is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound, the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest. O, what a thrill of joy shall be felt by all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in heaven, when death itself, the last of foes, shall be slain, when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ, when the great shout of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be!

Something of the joy of victory we know even here. Have you ever struggled against an evil heart and at last overcome it? Have you ever wrestled hard with a strong temptation and known what it was to sing with thankfulness, "When I said my feet slipped, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up"? Have you, like Bunyan's Christian, fought with Apollyon and, after a fierce contest, put him to flight? Then you have had a foretaste of the heavenly triumph - just an imagining of what the ultimate victory will be. God gives you these partial triumphs that they may be earnest of the future. Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a pledge of the victory of heaven.

6. LIGHT IN THE CLOUD

"The Lord turned the captivity of Job." So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown forever; summer shall

soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods must retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness forever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath its wings. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job." Thus, too, our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had every-thing his own way. God, at Satan's challenge, had stretched forth His hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh; and yet the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job's faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew uprightly. The fire had been fierce, yet the gold was undiminished; only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was His own glory. And truly He was glorified abundantly. God hath gotten unto His great name and His wise counsels, eternal renown, through that grace by which He supported His poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit was mellowed, and any self-justification which lurked within was fairly driven out. And now that God's gracious designs are answered, He removes the rod; He takes the melted silver from the midst of the glowing coals.. God does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men for nought, and He shows this by the fact He never afflicts them longer than there is a need for it. He never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of His wisdom and of His love. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job." Despair not, then, afflicted believer; He that turned the captivity of Job can turn your captivity as the streams in the south. He shall make your vine-yard again to blossom and your field to yield her fruit. You shall again come forth with those that make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on your lip. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about your soul. Hope yet, for there is hope concerning this matter. Trust still, for there is ground of confidence. He shall bring you up again, rejoicing, out of captivity, and you shall yet sing to His praise, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness."

7. GOOD WORKS When once the human heart is put under the microscope of Scripture, and we see it with a spiritual eye, we perceive it to be so vile that we are quite sure it would be just as impossible to expect to find good works in an unrighteous, unconverted man, as to hope to see fire burning in the midst of the ocean. The two things would be incongruous. Our good works, if we have any, spring from a real conversion; yet more, they spring also from a constant spiritual influence exercised upon us, from the time of conversion even until the hour of death. Ah, Christian, you would have no good works if you had no fresh grace day by day! You would not find the grace given you at the first hour sufficient to produce fruit today.

It is not like the planting of a tree in our hearts, which naturally of itself brings forth fruit; but the sap comes up from the root Jesus Christ. We are not trees by ourselves, but we are branches fixed on the Living Vine. Our good works spring from union with Christ. The more a man knows and feels himself to be one with Jesus, the more holy will he be. Why is a Christian's character like Christ's character? Only for this reason, that he is joined and united to the Lord Jesus. Why does the branch bring forth grapes? Simply because it has been engrafted into the vine, and therefore it partakes of the nature of the stem. So, Christian, the only way whereby you can bring forth fruit to God is by being grafted into Christ and united with Him. If you think you can walk in holiness

without keeping up perpetual fellowship with Christ, you have made a great mistake. If you would be holy, you must live close to Jesus. Good works spring only thence. Hence we draw the most powerful reasons against anything like trusting in works; for as works are only the gift of God, how utterly impossible it is for an unconverted man to produce any such good works in himself. And if they are God's gifts, how little of our merit can there be in them!

8. THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE

It is the distinguishing mark of God's people that they know the love of Christ. Without exception, all those who have passed from death unto life, whatever they may not know, have learned this. And without exception, all those who are not saved, whatever they may know besides this, know nothing of this. For to know the love of Christ, to taste its sweetness, to realize it personally, experimentally, and vitally, as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the privilege of the child of God alone. This is the secure enclosure into which the stranger cannot enter. This is the garden of the Lord, so well protected by walls and hedges that no wild boar of the wood can enter. Only the redeemed of the Lord shall walk here. They, and only they, may pluck the fruits and content themselves with the delights thereof.

How important, then, becomes the question, Do I know the love of Christ? Have I felt it? Do I understand it? Is it shed abroad in my heart? Do I know that Jesus loves me? Is my heart quickened and animated and warmed and attracted towards Him through the great truth that it recognizes and rejoices in, that Christ has really loved me and chosen me and set His heart upon me? But while it is true that every child of God knows the love of Christ, it is equally true that all the children of God do not know this love to the same extent.

There are in Christ's family, babes, young men, strong men, and fathers. And as they grow and progress in all other matters, so they most certainly make advances here. Indeed, an increase of love, a more perfect apprehension of Christ's love, is one of the best and most infallible gauges whereby we may test ourselves whether we have grown in grace or not. If we have grown in grace, it is absolutely certain that we shall have advanced in our knowledge and reciprocation of the love of Christ. Many have believed in Jesus and know a little of His love; but, O! it is little indeed they know, in comparison with some others who have been brought into the inner chamber and made to drink of the spiced wine of Christ's pomegranate. Some have begun to climb the mountain, and the view which lies at their feet is lovely and passing fair, but the landscape is not such as would greet their eyes if they could but stand where advanced saints are standing and could look to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south, and see all the lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights of the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

9. CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN The sway of Christ as King, according to David's description, is like "clear shining after rain," whereby the tender grass is made to spring out of the earth. So have we often seen it. After a heavy shower of rain, or after a continued rainy season, when the sun shines, there is a delightful clearness and freshness in the air that we seldom perceive at other times. Perhaps the brightest weather is just when the rain has ceased, when the wind has drifted away the clouds, and the sun peers forth from his chambers to gladden the earth with his smiles. And thus is it with the Christian's exercised heart. Sorrow does not last forever. After the pelting rain of adversity comes ever and anon the clear shining. Tried believer, consider this. After all your afflictions there remains a rest for the people of God. There is a clear shining coming to your soul

when all this rain is past. When your time of rebuke is over and gone, it shall be to you as the earth when the tempest has sobbed itself to sleep, when the clouds have rent themselves to rags, and the sun peers forth once more as a bridegroom in his glorious array. To this end, sorrow cooperates with the bliss that follows it, like rain and sunshine, to bring forth the tender blade. The tribulation and the consolation work together for our good. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." The clear shining after rain produces an atmosphere that refreshes herbs and cereals: and the joy of the Lord, after seasons of sorrow, makes the soul fruitful. Thus we grow in grace and in the know-ledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

10. A QUIET HEART

Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm does not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by being tempestuous themselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us remember that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honor, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet, there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled, the whole life must be troubled too.

11. A RICH LIFE When one of our kings came back from captivity, as old chroniclers tell, there were fountains in Cheapside which flowed with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water, they made wine flow freely to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. You have known some such men. John Howard's life was not like our poor, common lives: he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known personally, it may be, some eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus; when he talked, there was an unction and a savor about his words, a solidity and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctuous as the words of such a one. Oh, I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a color, and as pure a taste, as the acts of some other. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house instead of my poor dross!" Well, Christian, this should stimulate you to keep your heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make your heart rich with precept, your head rich with understanding, and your bowels rich with compassion; then, your conversation, when it flows through your mouth, will be from your soul, and, like all that is within you, rich, unctuous, and savory. Only let your heart be full of sweet, generous love, and the stream that flows from your lips will be sweet and generous. Above all, get Jesus to live in your heart, and then out of you shall flow rivers of living water, more exhilarating, purer, and more satiating than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Go forth, with Christian, to the great mine of unsearchable riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make your heart rich unto salvation. So shall your life and conversation be a boon to your fellows; and when they see you, your visage shall

shine, and your face shall be as the angel of God.

12. "HE HATH SAID" The apostles, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. As inspired men they could have always used fresh words, yet they preferred (and herein they are an example to us) to quote old words upon which the seal of divine authority had been set aforetime — "He hath said." Let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the charm of novelty, yet the ancient words of God have the ring and the weight and the value of old and precious coins, and they will never be found wanting in the day when we require to use them. "He hath said," not only chases away doubts and fears, but it also yields nourishment to all our graces. When the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said"; and when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it thus forcibly, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by feeding us from Scripture with the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When another apostle would calm us with a lesson of patience, he says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job"; or if it be our prayerfulness that he wants to stir up, he says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed" and prevailed. "He hath said," is refreshing food for every grace and a decisive death blow for every sin. Here you have nourishment for that which is good and poison for that which is evil. Search, then, the Scriptures, for so shall you grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life. But besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by experience, and so often as a promise is proven to be true, we should make a mark against it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added, "Wait, I say, on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise; take God's bank-note to the counter and mark if it be cashed. Grasp the lever which He ordains to lift your trials and try if it possesses real power. Cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them. Take this salt and throw it into the turbid waters and witness if they be not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. "Taste and see that the Lord is good ... for there is no want to them that fear him."

13. SAFETY IN CONFLICT The way that God keeps His people in security is not by shutting out their enemies from attacking them, but by sustaining them while engaged in the conflict. It is not much to preserve one's self behind a wall which cannot be sealed, but to stand where arrows are flying thick as hail, where lances are being pushed with fury, where the sword cuts are falling on every part, and in the midst of all to prove invulnerable, invincible, immortal, this is to wear a divine life which cannot be conquered by human power. Such is the calling of the Christian. God will put us where we must be tried and tempted. If we are not tried, there is no honor to Him who preserves us; and if we are not tempted, there is no gratitude to His grace who delivers us out of temptations. The Lord does not put his plants into a hothouse, as some gardeners do; no, He sets them out in the open air, and if the frost is coming, He says, "Ah! but no frost can kill them, and they will be all the sturdier in the summer for the cold in the winter." He does not shelter them either from the heat of the sun or from the chills of the night. In this world we must have tribulation, and we must have much of it too, for it is through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom. What

God does for His people is this: He keeps them in tribulation, preserves them in temptation, and brings them joyfully out of all their trials. So, Christian, you may rejoice in your security; but you must not think that you are not to be attacked; you are like a stream from Lebanon, to be dashed down many a cascade, to be broken over many a rough rock, to be stopped up with many a huge stone, to be impeded by many a fallen tree; but you are to dash forward with the irresistible force of God, sweeping everything away, till you find at last the place of your perfect rest.

14. TOMORROW

If tomorrows are not to be boasted of, are they good for nothing? No, blessed be God. There are a great many things we may do with tomorrows. I will tell you what we may do with them if we are the children of God. We may always look forward to them with patience and confidence that they will work together for our good. We may say of the tomorrows, "I do not boast of them, but I am not frightened at them; I would not glory in them, but I will not tremble about them." Yes, we may be very easy and very comfortable about tomorrow; we may remember that all our times are in His hands, that all events are at His command; and though we know not all the windings of the path of providence, yet He knows them all; they are all settled in His book, and our times are all ordered by His wisdom. And, therefore, we may look upon the tomorrows as we see them in the rough bullion of time, about to be minted into every day's expenditure, and we may say of them all, "They shall all be gold; they shall all be stamped with the King's impress, and therefore, let them come; they will not make me worse - they will work together for my good."

Yea, more, a Christian may rightly look for-ward to his tomorrows, not simply with resignation, but also with joy. Tomorrow to a Christian is a happy thing; it is one stage nearer glory; it is one step nearer heaven; it is just one knot more sailed across the dangerous sea of life, nearer to the eternal port.

Tomorrow! the Christian may rejoice at it; he may say of today, "O day, you may be dark, but I shall bid you goodbye, for lo, I see the morrow coming, and I shall mount upon its wings, and shall fly away and leave you and your sorrows far behind me."

15. A FULL HEART

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, in which water for the supply of thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is the reservoir of man, from which the streams of his life flow. That life may flow through different pipes the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir in a proper state and condition, since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. Not only must the heart be kept pure, but it must also be kept full. However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for us to have an abundant supply unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; let the machinery be ever so accurate, let everything else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain for water. See, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question: "But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How Song of Solomon 1 keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this: "All my springs are in thee," said David. If you

have all your springs in God, your heart will be full enough. If you go to the foot of Calvary, there will your heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If you are often in the vale of retirement, talking with God, your heart shall be full of calm resolve. If you go with your Master to the hill of Olivet, with Him to weep over Jerusalem, then will your heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If you are continually drawing your impulse, your life, the whole of your being from the Holy Spirit, without whom you can do nothing, and if you are living in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of your having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer — he who lives with little prayer — he who seldom reads the Word — he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high — he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God -who spends much time in holy retirement — who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High whose soul is given up to Christ — who delights in His fullness, rejoices in His all-sufficiency, prays for His second coming, and delights in the thought of His glorious advent — such a man must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a life that will speak from the sepulchre and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for otherwise, the issues of your life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and you may as well not have lived at all.

Oh for a heart thus full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that has such a heart, and he is the man from whom living waters shall flow to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

16. PERSEVERING PRAYER Do not give up those prayers which God's Spirit has put in your hearts - for remember, the things you have asked for are worth waiting for. Besides, you are a beggar when you are in prayer; therefore you must not be a chooser as to the time when God shall hear you. If you had right ideas of yourself, you would say, "It is a wonder that He ever listens to me at all, so unworthy as I am. Does the Infinite indeed bow His ear to me? May I hope He will at last listen to me? Then I may well continue my prayers." And recollect it is your only hope: there is no other Saviour. This or none — Christ's blood or else eternal wrath. And to whom shall you go if you turn away from Him? None ever yet perished pleading for mercy; therefore keep on.

Besides, better men than you have had to wait. Kings, and patriarchs, and prophets have waited; therefore surely you can be content to sit in the King's antechamber a little while. It is an honor to sit as Mordecai did at the gate. Pray on — wait on!

"Ah!" says one, "that is just what I have been doing a long time." Yes, yes, there are different kinds of waiting. A man says, "I have been waiting": but he has folded his arms and gone to sleep. You may wait in that way till you are lost. The waiting I mean is "getting all things ready" — the waiting for the physician by the poor sufferer, who cries out in pain, "Is the doctor coming?" I will be surety for my Master when I say that none such will be sent away empty. He will never break His promise. Try Him — TRY HIM!

17. HUMILITY

What is humility of mind? Humility is to make a right estimate of one's self. It is not humility for a man to think less of himself than he ought, though it might rather puzzle him to do that; Some persons, when they know they can do a thing, tell you they cannot; but you surely would not call that humility? A man is asked to take part in some good work. "No," he says, "I have no ability"; yet, if you were to say so of him, he would be offended at you. It is not humility for a man to stand

up and depreciate himself and say he cannot do this, that, or the other, when he knows that it is untrue. If God gives a man a talent, do you think the man does not know it? If a man has ten talents, he has no right to be dishonest to his Maker and to say "Lord, thou hast only given me five." It is not humility to underrate your endowments: humility is to think of yourself, if you can, as God thinks of you. It is to feel that if we have talents, God has given them to us, and let it be seen that, like freight in a vessel, they tend to sink us low. The more we have, the lower we ought to lie. Humility is not to say, "I have not this gift"; but it is to say, "I have the gift, and I must use it for my Master's glory. I must never seek any honor for myself; for what have I that I have not received?" Humility is to feel that we have no power of ourselves, but that it all comes from God. Humility is to lean on our Beloved, saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is, in fact, to annihilate self and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as All in All.

18. LOOK UPWARDS

Christian, in all your troubles, look unto God and be saved. In all your trials and afflictions, look unto Christ and find deliverance. In all your repentance for guilt, look unto Christ and find pardon. Remember to put your eyes heavenward and your heart heavenward too. Bind round yourself a golden chain and put one link of it in the staple in heaven. Look unto Christ; fear not. There is no stumbling when a man walks with his eyes up to Jesus. He that looks at Christ walks safely.

19. THE USE OF TRIAL

Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil and let us see what we are made of; they just turn up some of the ill weeds onto the surface.

20. FAITH NECESSARY

"Whatsoever things are lovely, and pure, and of good report," try and gain them; but remember that all these things put together, without faith, do not please God. Virtues without faith are whitewashed sins. Unbelief nullifies everything. It is the fly in the ointment; it is the poison in the pot. Without faith — with all the virtues of purity, with all the benevolence of philanthropy, with all the kindness of disinterested sympathy, with all the talents of genius, with all the bravery of patriotism, and with all the decision of principle — you have no title to divine acceptance, for without faith it is impossible to please God."

Faith fosters every virtue; unbelief withers every virtue in the bud. Thousands of prayers have been stopped by unbelief; many songs of praise that would have swelled the chorus of the skies have been stifled by unbelieving murmurs; many a noble enterprise conceived in the heart has been blighted ere it could come forth by unbelief. Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian: cut it off, and he can do nothing. Peter, while he had faith, walked on the waves of the sea. But presently there came a billow behind him, and he said, "That will sweep me away"; and then another before, and he cried out, "That will overwhelm me"; and he thought, "How could I be so presumptuous as to walk on the top of these waves?" And as soon as he doubted, he began to sink. Faith was Peter's life buoy - it kept him up; unbelief sent him down. The Christian's life may be said to be always "walking on the water," and every wave would swallow him up; but faith enables him to stand. The moment you cease to believe, that moment distress and failure follow. Oh, wherefore do you doubt then?

21. CHRIST "ALTOGETHER LOVELY" In calling the Lord Jesus "altogether lovely," the Church asserts that she sees nothing in Him which she does not admire. The world may rail at His cross and call it shameful; to her it is the very center and soul of glory. A proud and scornful nation might reject their King because of His manger cradle and peasant garb, but to her eye the Prince is glorious in this poor apparel. He is never without beauty to her; never is His visage marred or his glory stained. She presses His pierced feet to her bosom and looks upon their wounds as jewels. Fools stand by His cross and find full many a theme for jest and scorn; she discovers nothing but solemn reason for reverent adoration and unbounded love. Viewing Him in every office, position, and relationship, she cannot discover a flaw: in fact, the thought of imperfection is banished far away. She knows too well His perfect Godhead and His spotless manhood to offer a moment's shelter to the thought of a blemish in His immaculate person; she abominates every teaching that debases Him; she spurns the most gorgeous drapery that would obscure His beauteous features; yea, so jealous is she of His honor, that she will hear no spirit which does not witness to His praise. A hint against His undefiled conception or His unsullied purity would stir her soul to holy wrath, and speedy would be her execration, and relentless her execution of the heresy. Nothing has ever aroused the ire of the Church so sully as a word against her Head. To all true believers this is high treason and an offense which cannot be treated lightly. Jesus is without a single blot or blemish, "altogether lovely."

Yet this negative praise, this bold denial of fault, is far from representing the fullness of the loving admiration of the Church. Jesus is positively lovely in her eyes. Not barely comely, nor merely fair, His beauties are attracting beauties, and His glories are such as charm the heart. Love looks forth from those "eyes of doves . . . washed with milk, and fitly set"; it flows from those "lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh," and it sparkles on those hands which are full of "gold rings, set with the beryl." But although this utterance of the Church is the very climax of the language of praise and was doubtless intended as the acme of all description, yet it is not possible that this one sentence, even when expanded by the most careful meditation, should be able to express more than a mere particle of the admiration felt. Like a son of Anak, the sentence towers above all others; but its stature fails to reach the towering height of Heaven-born love. It is but a faint symbol of unutterable affection, a choice pearl washed on shore from the deep sea of love.

22. THE REMEDY FOR DOUBTS The best way to get your faith strengthened is to have communion with Christ. If you commune with Christ you cannot be unbelieving. When His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at His table, and He brings me into His ban-queting-house, and His banner over me is Love, then, indeed, I do believe. When I feast with Him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, you that have been led in the green pastures and have been made to lie down by the still waters; you who have seen His rod and His staff and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, you that have sat at His feet with Mary or laid your head upon His bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away from Him, your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt Him. When you cannot see Him, then you doubt Him; but you must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the low-lands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

23. ALL THINGS WORKING FOR GOOD

Christ is the arbiter of all events; in everything His sway is supreme, and He exercises His power for the good of His Church. He spins the thread of events and acts from the distaff of destiny and does not suffer those threads to be woven other-wise than according to the pattern of His loving wisdom. He will not allow the mysterious wheel to revolve in any way which shall not bring good unto His chosen. He makes their worst things blessings to them, and their best things He sanctifies. In times of plenty, He blesses their increase; in times of famine, He supplies all their needs. As all things are working for His glory, so all things are working for their good.

24. THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE

It is one of the greatest of wonders that all men do not love Christ. Nothing manifests more clearly the utter corruption of our race than the fact that "He is despised and rejected of men." Those, however, who have seen the fountains of the great deep of human depravity broken up, are not at a loss to account for the treatment of the Messiah. It was not possible that darkness should have fellowship with light, or Christ with Belial. Fallen man could not walk with Jesus, for the two were not agreed. It was but the necessary result of the contact of two such opposites that the guilty creature should hate the Perfect One. "Crucify Him, crucify Him," is the natural cry of fallen man. Our first wonder is displaced, and another wonder fills the sphere of thought. Did we marvel that all men do not love? — it is a greater marvel still that any man does love Jesus. In the first case we saw the terrible blindness which failed to discover the brightness of the sun — with a shudder we saw it and were greatly amazed; but in this second instance we behold Jesus of Nazareth opening the fast-closed eye and scattering the Egyptian darkness with the Divine radiance of His marvelous light. Is this less a wonder? If it was a strange thing to witness the fearful ravings of the demoniac among the tombs, it is surely far more a prodigy to see that same man sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. It is indeed a triumph of grace when man's heart is brought to give its affection to Jesus, for it proves that the work of Satan is all undone and that man is restored from his fallen state.

25. RELIGION A PERSONAL MATTER

Some men say that they will test the holiness of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves — to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove His goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of His Gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, He intended you to read it and not to be content with reading men. You are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others; your only power to know true religion is by having His Holy Spirit operating upon your own heart that you may yourself experience what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you may usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a

man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No! no! you choose your own delusions, and you choose them at your own risk; you foster them at your own peril. For, if you take your religion from other people and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters: He has given you His own Word; the more sure word of testimony, Whereunto you do well that ye take heed.

26. STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS The way to grow strong in Christ is to become weak in yourself. God pours no power into man's heart till man's power is all poured out. The Christian's life is one of daily dependence on the grace and strength of God.

27. BEGIN WELL

I have known men to run the race of religion with all their might, and yet they have lost it because they did not start right. You say, "Well, how is that?" Why, there are some people who of a sudden leap into religion. They get it quickly, and they keep it for a time, and at last they lose it because they did not get their religion the right way. They have heard that before a man can be saved, it is necessary that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he should feel the weight of sin, that he should make a confession of it, that he should renounce all hope in his own works and should look to Jesus Christ alone. They look upon all these things as unpleasant preliminaries, and, therefore, before they have attended to repentance, before the Holy Spirit has wrought a good work in them, they have been brought to give up everything and trust to Christ, they make a profession of religion. This is just setting up in business without a stock in trade, and there must be a failure. If a man has no capital to begin with, he may make a fine show for a little time, but it shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot — a great deal of noise and much light for a little while, but it shall die out in darkness. How many there are who never think it necessary that there should be heart work within! Let us remember, however, that there never was a man who had a changed heart without his first having a miserable heart. We must pass through that black tunnel of conviction before we can come out upon the high embankment of holy joy; we must first go through the Slough of Despond before we can run along the Walls of Salvation. There must be ploughing before there is sowing; there must be many a frost and many a sharp shower before there is any reaping. But we often act like little children who pluck flowers from the shrubs and plant them in their gardens without roots, then they say how fair and how pretty their little garden is; but wait a while, and all their flowers are withered, because they have no roots. This is all the effect of not having a right start, not having the "root of the matter." What is the good of outward religion, the flower and the leaf of it, unless we have the "root of the matter" in us — unless we have been ploughed with the plough of the Spirit, and then have been sown with the sacred seed of the Gospel, in the hope of bringing forth an abundant harvest? There must be a good start in running the Christian race, for there is no hope of winning unless the start be right.

28. THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS Our court dress in heaven and our garment of sanctification for daily wear are the condescending gifts of Christ's love.

29. CROSS—BEARERS

What an honorable position was that of Simon the Cyrenian, to be cross-bearer to Jesus Christ! We could almost weep that we were not there, that we might have had the honor of carrying Christ's cross for Him. But we need not weep, for we shall have His cross to carry if we are His people. There are no crown-wearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers here below. There shall be none among the throng of the glorified who had not their cross on earth. Hast thou a cross, believer? Shoulder it manfully! Up with it! Go along thy journey with unshrinking footsteps and a rejoicing heart, knowing that since it is Christ's cross it must be an honor to carry it, and that while you are bearing it you are in blessed company, for you are following Him.

30. THE HAPPINESS OF RELIGION

Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man; and the deeper he drinks into the Spirit of Christ, the happier will he become. That religion which teaches misery to be a duty is false upon the very face of it, for God, when He made the world, studied the happiness of His creatures. You cannot help thinking, as you see everything around you, that God has sedulously, with the most strict attention, sought ways of pleasing man. He has not merely given us absolute necessities, He has given us more; not simply the useful, but even the ornamental. The flowers in the hedgerow, the stars in the sky, the beauties of nature, the hill and the valley all these things were intended not merely because we needed them, but because God would show how He loved us and how anxious He was that we should be happy. Now, it is not likely that the God who made a happy world would send a miserable salvation. He who is a happy Creator will be a happy Redeemer; and those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, can bear witness that the ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And if this life were all, if death were the burial of all our life, and if the shroud were the winding sheet of eternity, still to be a Christian would be a bright and happy thing, for it lights up this valley of tears and fills the wells in the valley of Baca to the brim with streams of love and joy.

31. UNCHANGEABLE

There is one place where change cannot put its finger; there is one name on which mutability can never be written; there is one heart which can never alter — that place is the Most Holy — that heart is God's — that name is Love.

32. INCREASE OF FAITH The way in which most men get their faith increased is by great trouble. We do not grow strong in faith in sunshiny days. It is in stormy weather that faith grows stronger. Faith is not an attainment that drops like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks; how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds, and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but the rough wind shaking the tree to and fro, causing its roots to strike deeper and to take a firmer hold. And so must it be with us. We cannot make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine; they must be trained far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. It is thus with Christians. Great faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great-heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to flight those foes and have been so valiant,

if the foes had not first attacked him. We must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

33. COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

One hour with Christ is worth an eternity of all earth's joys; and communion with Him is the best, the surest, and the most ecstatic foretaste of the bliss of heaven.

34. THE SOUL SATISFIED IN CHRIST

He who delights in the possession of the Lord Jesus hath all that heart can wish. As for created things, they are like shallow and deceitful brooks; they fail to supply our wants, much less our wishes. "The bed" of earthly enjoyment "is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it"; but in Jesus there is room for imagination's utmost stretch and widest range. When Jesus is enjoyed, He puts a fullness into all other mercies; His house is full when He is there; His throne of grace is full when He sits on it; and His guest chamber is full when He is master of the feast. "The creature without Christ is an empty thing, a lamp without oil, a bone without marrow"; but when Christ is present our cup runneth over, and we eat bread to the full. A dinner of herbs, when we have communion with Him, is as rich a feast as a stalled ox; and our narrow cot is as noble a mansion as the great house of the wealthy. Go not abroad, ye hungry wishes of my soul - stay ye at home, and feast on Jesus; for abroad ye must starve, since all other beloveds are empty and undesirable. Stay with Christ, and eat ye that which is good, and delight thyself in fatness.

35. THE LORD'S JEWELS

Goldsmiths make exquisite forms from precious material: they fashion the bracelet and the ring from gold. God makes His precious things out of base material, and from the black pebbles of the defiling brooks He has taken up stones which He has set in the golden ring of His immutable love, to make them gems to sparkle on His finger forever.

36. MEMORIALS OF JESUS The love of the Church extends beyond the person of the Bridegroom and reaches to everything connected with Him. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." His very vestments are precious in her esteem. She rejoices to sing of Him in His priestly garments.

"The mitred crown, the embroidered vest, With graceful dignity He wears; And in full splendor on His breast The sacred oracle appears."

Arrayed in His royal robes, He is not less glorious in her eyes: she loves to see His crown and own her King. There is not a word which His lip hath uttered, nor a place whereon His foot hath trodden, nor a vessel which His hands have handled, which is not wholly consecrated in her esteem. We are no worshipers of the ragged relics so fondly hoarded by Rome; but we have other and far better memorials - holy things that are of inestimable worth. His written Word, over which we even now see that loving hand moving as it did when, many a year ago, it wrote each character; the echo of His departed voice not yet buried in silence; His wine cup not yet empty; His blood still flowing; and His benediction still breathing peace upon us: all these still remain and are valued above all price. We esteem His ordinances, and we triumph in His teaching, however the worldly-wise may condemn it. His service is our delight; to stand at His gates is honor; and to run

before His chariot is bliss. As for His people, we greet them as saints, we call them our brethren, and they are most near and dear to us for His sake. The meanest beggar in His Church is of more account to us than the proudest monarch out of it. "Because he belongs to Christ," is always a sufficient reason for the outflow of our affection; for all that is His is dear to us.

37. "FREELY GIVE"

O Christian, whenever you are inclined to an avaricious withholding from the Church of God, think of your Saviour giving up all that He had to serve you! And can you then — when you behold self-denial so noble - can you then be selfish and regard your dainties of more account than their necessities, when the claims of the poor of the flock are pressed upon you? Remember Jesus; think that you see Him looking upon you and saying, "I gave Myself for you, and do you withhold yourself from me? For if you do, you know not my love in all its heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths."

38. RELIGION - A PRESENT ENJOYMENT

Religion has its present enjoyments. Speak, you that know them, for you can tell; yet you cannot recount them all. O, would you give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? O, you sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the heavy shades of your tribulation? O, you sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet repose? Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? O, you children of sorrow, racked with pain, has not religion been to you a sweet quietus in your sufferings? Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber? And you men of business, speak for your-selves. You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not . seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it pleasant to enter your closet and to shut the door and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And, O, you that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? Can you not say that your religion did gild your gold and make your silver shine more brightly? For all things that you have are sweetened by this thought, that you have all these and Christ too. Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die: did you ever hear of any one on his deathbed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity. We have seen Christians so suffering, that we wondered that they lived; so poor, that we wondered at their misery; we have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief; but we never heard them say, even then, "I regret that I gave myself to Christ." No; with the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing, we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all. If you would be happy, if you would be saved, if you would strew your path with sunshine and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, seek not happiness first; seek Christ first, and happiness shall come after. Seek ye first the Lord, and then He will provide for you in this life, and He will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come.

39. "OUR LORD JESUS"

Whatever blissful consequences flow from the perfect obedience, the finished atonement, the resurrection, ascension, or intercession of the Lord Jesus, all are ours by His own gift. Upon His breastplate He is now wearing our names, and in His authoritative pleadings at the throne He remembers us and pleads our cause. The advantages of His high position, His dominion over principalities and power, and His absolute majesty in heaven, He employs for the benefit of them that trust in Him. His high estate is, as much at our service as was His condition of abasement. He who gave Himself for us in the depths of woe and death does not withdraw the grant now that He is enthroned in the highest heavens. Christ has no dignity which He will not employ for our exaltation and no prerogative which He will not exercise for our defense. Christ everywhere and in every way is our portion, forever and ever most richly to enjoy.

40. PROVIDENCE The boundless stores of Providence are engaged for the support of the believer. Christ is our Joseph, who has granaries full of wheat; but He does not treat us as Joseph did the Egyptians, for He opens the door of His storehouse and bids us call all the good therein our own. He has entailed upon His estate of Providence a perpetual charge of a daily portion for us, and He has promised that one day we shall clearly perceive that the estate itself has been well-farmed on our behalf and has been always ours. The axle of the wheels of the chariot of Providence is Infinite Love, and Gracious Wisdom is the perpetual charioteer.

41. THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST The Lord Jesus has led captivity captive and now sits at the right hand of God, forever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture Him? Like a Levitical high priest of old He stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in His mien, and with authority He pleads. On His head is the bright shining mitre of His priesthood, and on His breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of His people are everlastingly engraven. Hear Him as He pleads — hear you not what it is? Is that your prayer which He is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered, Christ is now offering before His Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered, He is now uttering there. He is the Altar and Priest, and with His own sacrifice He perfumes our prayers. And yet, mayhap, you have been praying long and had no answer. Poor, weeping suppliant! You have sought the Lord and He has not seemed to hear you, or at least not answered you to your soul's delight, and you are full of darkness and heaviness on account of this. Look to Him, and be lightened. If you do not succeed, He will; if your intercession be unnoticed, His cannot be passed away; if your prayers can be like water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up, yet His prayers are not like that: He is God's Son — He pleads and must prevail. God cannot refuse His own Son what He now asks — He who once bought mercies with His blood. Oh, be of good cheer, continue still your supplication, for Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession" for you.

42. HOLINESS Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God buildeth up His living temple.

43. THE NEW HEART

God does not promise that He will improve our nature, or that He will mend our broken hearts. No; the promise is, that He will give us new hearts and right spirits. Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house which is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof, and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No; it is rotten through-out; the very foundations have been sapped; there is not a single timber in it which is sound; it is all rottenness from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation, and ready to fall. God

does not attempt to mend: He does not shore up the walls, and re-paint the door; He does not garnish and beautify, but He determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away, and that He will build a new one. It is too far gone to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be restored. If only a wheel or two of that great thing called "Man-hood" were out of repair, then He who made man might put the whole to rights; He might put a new cog where it had been broken off and another wheel where it had gone to ruin, and the machine might work anew. But no; the whole of it is out of repair; there is not one lever which is not broken; not one axle which is not disturbed. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing, but He says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

44. THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY CROSS Believer, Christ Jesus presents you with your crosses, and they are no mean gifts.

45. JOY OVER THE REPENTING The angels know what the joys of heaven are, and therefore they rejoice over one sinner that repents. We talk about pearly gates, and golden streets, and white robes, and harps of gold, and crowns of amaranth; but if an angel could speak to us of heaven, he would smile and say, "All these fine things are but child's talk, and ye are little children, and ye cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss; and therefore God has given you a child's hornbook and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what heaven is, but what it is thou dost not know. O mortal, thine eye hath never yet beheld its splendors; thine ear hath never yet been ravished with its melodies; thy heart has never been transported with its peer-less joys." Yes, we may talk, and think, and guess, and dream, but we can never measure the infinite heaven which God has provided for His children. But the angels know its glory; hence they rejoice over the repenting sinner who has thus become heir to such an inheritance.

46. GOD'S TENDER CARE

How careful God is of His people; how anxious He is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort. Does He say, "Strengthen ye, strengthen ye my people"? Does He say to the angel, "Protect my people"? Does He not say to the heavens, "Drop down manna to feed my people"? All that, and more also, His tender regard secures to them. But to show us that He is not only regardful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, He says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." He would have us not only His living people and His preserved people, but He would have us His happy people too. He likes His people to be fed; but what is more, He likes to give them "Wines on the lees well refined," to make glad their hearts. He will not only give them "bread," but He will give them "honey" too; He will not simply give them "milk," but He will give them "wine and milk." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." It is the Father's yearning heart, careful even for the little things of His people. "Comfort ye" that one with a tearful eye; "Comfort ye" yon child of mine with an aching heart; "Comfort ye my people, saith your God."

47. THE CHRISTIAN'S CROWN Have Christians a crown? Oh, yes; but they do not wear it every day. They have a crown, but their coronation day is not yet arrived; they have been anointed monarchs; they have some of the authority and dignity of monarchs, only they are not yet crowned monarchs. But the crown is made. God will not have to order heaven's goldsmiths to fashion it in aftertime; it is made already, hanging up in glory. God hath "laid up for me a crown of

righteousness."

48. OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He does not ask what shall it profit him - what shall be the good effect of it upon others, but he simply says, "Does my Father command it?" And his prayer is, "O Holy Spirit, help me to obey, not because I see how it shall be good for me, but simply because thou commandest." It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "Harkening unto the voice of his word."

49. THE GOSPEL

There is everything in the gospel that you want. Do you want something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the gospel: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace all-sufficient for everything which God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something to light up the eye of your hope? O! there are joy flashes in the gospel which make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss. Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the gospel there is that which can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There is no passion, no affection, no thought, no wish, no power which the gospel has not filled to the very brim. The gospel was evidently meant for manhood: it is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head; there is love for the heart; there is guidance for the foot.

50. BELIEVING PRAYER

Prayers are heard in heaven very much in proportion to our faith. Little faith will get very great mercies, but great faith still greater. It was the custom in old times for all the poor in the parish to call at every house with bowls for provisions; and whatever size the bowl was, every generous person would fill it. Faith is our bowl: if we have only "little faith," we shall get that filled; but if we have "great faith," we shall have that filled also. Little faith gets much; but great faith is a noble and princely merchant and does a great trade - it obtains millions where little faith only gains hundreds. Great faith gets hold of God's treasure.

51. WARFARE FOR SIN

O Christian, never take hold of sin except with a gauntlet on thy hand; never go to it with the kid glove of friendship; never talk delicately of it; always hate it in every shape. If it comes to you as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes. Whether it bounds towards you as a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour, or makes advances in an attractive form, with graceful mien, seeking by a pretended affection to entice you into sin — beware; for its hug is death, and its clasp destruction. Sin of every kind you are to war with — of lip, of hand, of heart. However gilded with profit; however varnished with the seemliness of morality; however complimented by the great; or however popular with the multitude, you are to hate sin everywhere, in all its disguises, at every time, and in every place. Not one sin is to be spared, but against the whole is to be proclaimed an utter and entire war of extermination.

52. HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

You may read the Bible continuously and yet never learn anything by it, unless it is illuminated by the Spirit. Then the words shine forth like stars. The book seems made of gold leaf; every single

letter glitters like a diamond. Oh! it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Ghost. Have you read the Bible, and yet have your eyes been unenlightened? Go and say, "O Lord, illuminate it; shine upon it; for I cannot read it to profit, unless Thou enlightenest me." Blind men may read the Bible with their fingers, but blind souls cannot. We want a light to read the Bible by; there is no reading it in the dark.

53. A VIEW OF CHRIST A view of Christ is always beneficial to a Christian — too much of Christ we cannot have there can be no tautology where His name is mentioned. Give us Christ always, Christ ever. The monotony of Christ is sweet variety; and even the unity of Christ hath in it all the elements of harmony. Christ on His cross and on His throne, in the manger and in the tomb — Christ everywhere is sweet to us. We love His name, we adore His person, we delight to hear of His works — the theme is ever new.

There are some who complain that their love to the Saviour is faint and cold. But this would not be if they were more with Jesus. The closer you live to Christ and the more you know Him, the better you will love Him. Do not try to produce in yourself a certain degree of love to Christ by some extraordinary means; but go into His presence, meditate upon Him continually, picture to yourself His sufferings for you, and then you will love Him - it will become easy to you, for He will draw your poor heart closer to Himself, as you thus think about Him. And your love to Him will grow just in proportion as you realize His love to you.

54. THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF FAITH

O Lord! of what small account are the best of men apart from Thee! How high they rise when Thou liftest them up! How low they fall if Thou withdraw Thy hand! It is our joy, amidst distress, when Thou enablest us to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; but if Thou take away Thy Spirit, we cannot even trust Thee in the brightest day. When storms gather round us we can smile at them, if Thou be with us; but in the fairest morn which ever shone on human heart, we doubt and we miscarry if Thou be not with us still to preserve and strengthen the faith which Thou hast Thyself bestowed.

55. THE GLAD COMMAND

"Delight thyself in the Lord." This law of one command is no stony law to be written upon tablets of granite, but it contains a precept, for sparkling brightness worthy to be written on amethysts and pearls. "Delight thyself in the Lord." When delight becomes a duty, duty must certainly be a delight. When it becomes my duty to be happy, and I have an express command to be glad, I must indeed be foolish if I refuse my own joys and turn aside from my own bliss. Oh, what a God we have who has made it our duty to be happy! What a gracious God who accounts no obedience to be so worthy of His acceptance as a gladsome obedience rendered by a joyous heart. "Delight thyself in the Lord."

56. UNTIRING DELIGHT Who ever called the sea monotonous? Even to the mariner, traveling over it as he does, sometimes by the year together, there is always a freshness in the undulation of the waves, the whiteness of the foam of the breaker, the curl of the crested billow, and the frolicsome pursuit of every wave by its long train of brothers. Which of us has ever complained that the sun gave us but little variety? What though at morn he yoke the same steeds and flash from his car the same golden glory, climb with dull uniformity the summit of the skies, then drive his

chariot downward and bid his flaming coursers steep their burning fetlocks in the western deep? Or who among us would complain loathingly of the bread which we eat, that it palls upon the sense of taste? We eat it today, tomorrow, the next day; we have eaten it for years which are passed; still the one unvarying food is served upon the table, and bread remains the staff of life. Translate these earthly experiences into heavenly mysteries. If Christ is your food and your spiritual bread; if Christ is the sun, your heavenly light; if Christ is the sea of love in which your passions swim and all your joys are found, it is not possible that you as Christian men should complain of monotony in Him. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"; and yet He has the "dew of His youth." He is like the manna in the golden pot which was always the same; but He is also like the manna which came down from heaven every morning new. He is as the rod of Moses,, which was dry and changed not its shape; but He is also to us as the rod of Aaron, which buds, and blossoms, and brings forth almonds.

57. DIVINE TEACHING In the depth of troubles we learn the sufficiency of grace. Well may they "glory in tribulations also," who have learned in them the most profitable lessons of grace, proved in them how ample is the provision of grace, and realized in them the certainty of the triumph of grace. I know not whether all soldiers love the thought of war — some do; there are many who pant for a campaign. How often an officer of low rank has repeated the murmur, "There is no promotion; no hope of rising; no honors; no prize money, as if we had to fight. Could we rush to the cannon's mouth, there would be some prospect before us of gaining promotion in the ranks." Men get few medals to hang upon their breasts who never know the smell of gunpowder. The brave days, as men call them, of Nelson and Trafalgar have gone by; and we thank God for it. Still we do not expect to see such brave old veterans, the offspring of this age, as those who are still to be found lingering in our hospitals, the relics of our old campaigns. No, brethren, we must have trials if we are to get on. Young men do not become mid-shipmen altogether through going to school, and climbing the mast on dry land; they must go out to sea. We must do business in great waters; we must be really on the deck in a storm, if we would see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. We must have stood side by side with King David; we must have gone down into the pit to slay the lion or have lifted up the spear against the eight hundred, if we would know the saving strength of God's right hand. Conflicts bring experience, and experience brings that growth in grace which is not to be attained by any other means.

58. SEEKING CHRIST

Consider, O waiting soul, that the mercy is worth tarrying for. Is it not salvation — your soul's deliverance from hell? A long tarrying at the gate of mercy will be well repaid, if the King, at last, will give you this jewel of exceeding price.

Think you, also, how utterly unworthy you are of the mercy; therefore be not loath to humble thyself or patiently to abide the sovereign will of Jehovah. Proud men must be noticed at once, or they will depart; but you have nothing to boast of and should feel that if He disregarded you for a long season, your unworthiness could demand no apology for His delay. Moreover, remember that He will hear at last. His promise would be violated if one praying soul could perish; for He has said, "Seek, and ye shall find" — "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The delay may be for your good, to lay you lower in the dust of self-abasement or to make you more earnest for the blessing. Possibly the Lord intends to try your faith, that, like the women of

Syrophénicia, you may reflect honor on Him by your confidence in Him. Pray on, for "the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."

59. "CHRIST IN YOU"

What is it to have "Christ in you"? The Romanist hangs the cross on his bosom; the true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart is one of the sweetest cures for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory — the cross of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah! there are many who are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ in them. Though they know a little about Christ on Calvary, they know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, that Christ on Calvary will save no man, unless Christ is in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save you, unless He is born also in your heart and lives there — your joy, your strength, and your consolation.

60. CONSOLATION

Consolation is the dropping of a gentle dew from heaven on desert hearts beneath; it is one of the choicest gifts of divine mercy.

61. SELF—EXAMINATION

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." "If — then there is a possibility that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and it is needful to inquire whether we are among the number who know the grace of God by heart-experience. There is no spiritual revelation which may not be a matter of heart-searching. At the very summit of holy delight we meet the challenge of sentinel "If" — "If ye then be risen with Christ"; and at the very bottom of the hill, even at Repentance-gate itself, He meets us with a warrant of arrest, until He sees whether our sorrow is the godly sorrow which needs not to be repented of. "If thou be the Son of God," is not always a temptation of the devil, but often a very healthy inquiry, most fittingly suggested by holy anxiety to men who would build securely upon the Rock of Ages. At the Lord's Table itself it is proper for us to pray, "Lord, is it I?" when there is a Judas in the company. And after the most intimate fellowship, Christ exclaimed, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Let no enjoyment of ordinances, let no high and rapt fellowship which we may have known, exempt us from the great duty of proving ourselves whether we be in the faith. Examine yourselves then in this matter, and rest not satisfied until you can say, "There is no 'if' about it; I have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

62. HEAVEN AN INHERITANCE

"The inheritance of the saints." So then, heaven, with all its glories, is an inheritance. Now, an inheritance is not a thing which is bought with money., earned by labor, or won by conquest. If any man hath an inheritance, in the proper sense of that term, it came to him by birth. And thus it is with heaven. The man who shall receive this glorious heritage will not obtain it by the works of the law nor by the efforts of the flesh; it will be given to him as a matter of most gracious right, because he has been "begotten . . . again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead," and has thus become an heir of heaven by blood and birth. They who come unto glory are sons; for is it not written, "The captain of (our) salvation" bringeth "many sons unto glory?" They come there not as servants; no servant has any right to the inheritance of his master. Be he ever so faithful, yet is he not his master's heir. But because you are sons — sons by the Spirit's regeneration - sons by the Father's adoption because by supernatural energy you have been born again, you become inheritors of eternal life and you enter into the many mansions of our Father's house above. Let us always understand, then, when we think of heaven, that it is a place which is to be ours and a state which we are to enjoy as the result of birth — not as the result of work. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That kingdom being an "inheritance," until you have the new birth you can have no claim to enter it.

63. THE SLEEP OF DEATH

"The sleep of death" - what is this sleep? We know that the surface idea connected with sleep is that of resting. The eyes of the sleeper ache no more with the glare of light or with the rush of tears; his ears are teased no more with the noise of strife or the murmur of suffering; his hand is no more weakened by long protracted effort and painful weariness; his feet are no more blistered with journeyings to and fro along a rugged road; there is ease for aching heads, and overtaxed nerves, and heavy hearts, in the sweet repose of sleep. On the couch, however hard, the laborer shakes off his toil, the merchant his care, the thinker his difficulties, and the sufferer his pains. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleep shuts the door of the soul and bids all intruders tarry for a while. So is it with the body while it sleeps in the tomb. The weary are at rest: the servant is as much at ease as his lord. No more the worker leans on his spade, no more the thinker props his pensive head. The wheel stands still; the shuttle is not in motion; the hand which turned the one and the fingers which threw the other are quiet also. The grave shuts out all disturbance, labor, or effort. The toilworn believer quietly sleeps, as does the child weary with its play, when it shuts its eyes and slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh! happy are they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. We would not shun toil, for though it be in itself a curse, it is, when sanctified, a blessing; yet toil for toil's sake we would not choose. And when God's work is done, we are too glad to think that our work is done too. The mighty Husbandman, when we have fulfilled our day, shall bid His servants rest upon the best of beds, for the clods of the valley shall be sweet to them. Their repose shall never be broken until He shall rouse them up to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel-watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, resting on the lap of mother earth, they shall sleep on, heirs of glory, till the fullness of time shall bring them the fullness of redemption.

64. FORETASTES OF HEAVEN Is it possible for us to know anything whatever of our heavenly home? Is there power in human intellect to fly into the land of the hereafter, where God's people rest eternally? Our inquiry is met at the outset by what seems a positive denial: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." If we paused here, we might give up all idea of beholding from hence that "goodly land and Lebanon"; but we do not pause, for, like the apostle, we go on with the text, and we add, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." It is possible to look within the veil; God's Spirit can turn it aside for a moment and bid us take a glimpse, though it be a distant one, at that unutterable glory. There are "Pisgahs" even now on the earth, from the top of which the celestial Canaan can be beheld; there are hallowed hours in which the mists and clouds

are swept away, and the sunshines in his strength, and our eye, being freed from its natural dimness, beholds something of that land which is very far off and sees a little of the joy and blessedness which is reserved for the people of God hereafter. By the Holy Spirit there is given to them, even now, in seasons of blissful communion, such experiences, joys, and feelings, as seem to bring heaven down to them, and make them able to realize, in some faint measure, what heaven itself must be.

65. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Let us ever remember that Christ on the cross is of no value to us apart from the Holy Spirit in us. In vain that blood is flowing, unless the finger of the Spirit applies the blood to our conscience; in vain is that garment of righteousness wrought out, unless the Holy Spirit wraps it around us and arrays us in its costly folds. The river of the water of life cannot quench our thirst, till the Spirit presents the goblet and lifts it to our lips. All the things which are in the paradise of God could never be blissful to us, so long as we are dead souls — and dead we are, until that heavenly wind comes and breathes upon us, that we may live. We do not hesitate to say that we owe as much to God the Holy Ghost as we do to God the Son. Indeed, it were a high sin and misdemeanor to attempt to put one person of the divine Trinity before another. Thou, O Father, art the source of all grace, all love and mercy towards us. Thou, O Son, art the channel of Thy Father's mercy, and without Thee Thy Father's love could never flow to us. And Thou, O Spirit, art He who enables us to receive that divine virtue which flows from the fountain-head, the Father, through Christ the channel, and which, by Thy means, enters into our heart and there abides, bringing forth its glorious fruit. Magnify, then, the Spirit. There never yet was a heavenly thought, a hallowed deed, or a consecrated act, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, which was not worked in us by the Holy Spirit.

66. PEACE The believer enjoys, in favored seasons, such an intimacy with the Lord Jesus, as fills his heart with an overflowing peace. O! there are sweet words which Jesus whispers in the ears of His people, and there are love-visits which He pays to them, which a man would not believe, even though it should be told unto him. He who would comprehend it must experience in his own heart what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is such a thing as Christ manifesting Himself to us as He does not unto the world. All doubting thoughts are banished then, and we can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." This is the one all-absorbing feeling. And what wonder is it that the believer has such deep peace when Christ thus dwells in the heart and reigns there without a rival? It were a miracle of miracles, if we did not have peace. But how is it that our peace is not more continuous? The only explanation of our frequent loss of peace is that our communion is broken and our fellowship is marred; else would our peace be like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. Live near the cross, and your peace shall be continual.

67. EARTH'S SEASONS The things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver. The very seasons of the year find their parallel in the little world of man within. We have our winter — dreary, howling winter — when the north wind of the law rushes forth against us; when every hope is nipped; when all the seeds of joy lie buried beneath the dark clods of despair; when our soul is fast fettered like a

river bound with ice, without waves of joy, or flowings of thanksgiving. Thanks be unto God, the soft south wind breathes upon our soul, and at once the waters of desire are set free, the spring of love comes on, flowers of hope appear in our hearts, the trees of faith put forth their young shoots, the time of the singing birds comes in our hearts, and we have joy and peace in believing through the Lord Jesus Christ. That happy spring-tide is followed in the believer by a rich summer, when his graces, like fragrant flowers, are in full bloom, loading the air with perfume; and fruits of the Spirit, like citrons and pomegranates, swell into their full proportion in the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness. Then comes the believer's autumn, when his fruits grow ripe and his fields are ready for the harvest; the time has come when his Lord shall gather together his "pleasant fruits," and store them in heaven. The feast of ingathering is at hand - the time when the year shall begin anew, an unchanging year, like the years of the right hand of the Most High.

68. LOVE UNDESERVED

There is nothing which makes one love Christ so much as a sense of His love balanced with a sense of our unworthiness of it. It is sweet to think that Christ loves us; but, oh, to remember that we are black as the "tents of Kedar," and yet He loves us! This is a thought which may well wean us from everything else beside.

69. THE INFALLIBLE COMMENTARY Those who would best know God's Word must study it in its own light.

70. A PLACE OF TRUST

Take care that you put all your dear ones into God's hand. You have put your own soul there, put their souls and bodies likewise into His custody. You can trust Him for temporals for yourself, trust your jewels with Him. Feel that they are not your own, but that they are God's loans to you — loans which are called at any moment precious denizens of heaven, not entailed upon you, but of which you are only a tenant at will. Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them, and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of the Lord. You shall find it greatly mitigates the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things which are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God.

71. "CONSIDER HIM"

O Believer, weary and disheartened because of the roughness of the way, look at the Master's foot-steps and see how He suffered. You are tried and troubled, and you ask for consolation. What better can be afforded you than what is presented to you in the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you in your nature - that He has suffered all that you are now suffering — that your pathway has been aforetime trodden by His sacred foot — that the cup of which you drink is a cup which He has drained to the very bottom — that the river through which you pass is one through which He swam, and every wave and billow which rolls over your head did in old time roll over Him. Come! are you ashamed and unwilling to suffer what your Master suffered? Shall the disciple be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Shall He die upon a cross, and will not you bear the cross? Must He be crowned with thorns, and shall you be crowned with laurel? Is He to be pierced in hands and feet, and are His followers to feel no pain? Oh, cast away the fond delusion. Look to Him who "endured the cross, despising the shame," and be ready to endure and to suffer even as

He did. You have His example to guide you, and His sympathy to cheer you.

72. THE JOY OF PARDON

Oh, what a joyous thing it is to have a ray of heavenly sunlight in the soul and to hear the very voice of, God as He walks in the garden of our souls in the cool of the day, saying to us, "Son, thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." The whisper of that heavenly voice may raise our hearts to bliss almost divine. It confers a joy not to be equalled by all the pleasures, the riches, and the enjoyments that this world affords. To have the divine kiss of acceptance, to be robed in the best robe, to wear the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet, to hear the heavenly music and dancing with which returning prodigals are welcomed to their Father's house - this, indeed, is bliss and blessedness worth worlds to realize.

73. INEXHAUSTIBLE PROMISES

God's promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before, and we may wait a second accomplishment of them. Man's promises, even at the best, are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply; but God's promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so you may draw from them the whole measure of that which they apparently contain, and they shall be still as full as ever.

74. THE FULNESS OF CHRIST At our very best we are strangers to much of the incomparable sweetness of Christ. We shall never exhaust His goodness by our praise, for He is ever so fresh and has so much of the dew of His youth, that every day He has a new song to sing. We shall find Him a new Christ every day of our lives, and yet He is ever the same; His surpassing excellence and unexhausted fullness thus constantly renew our love. O Jesus! none can guess how great is the least of Thine attributes, or how rich the poorest of Thy gifts.

75. TRUE BLESSING

Christ, when He blesses, blesses not in word only, but in deed. The lips of truth cannot promise more than the hands of love will surely give.

76. FAITH AND FEELING

We are saved by faith and not by feeling; yet there is a relation between holy faith and hallowed feeling like that between the root and the flower. Faith is as permanent as the root which is ever embedded in the soil; feeling is casual and has its seasons - the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem, far less is it always crowned with its many flowers. Faith is the tree, the essential tree: our feelings are like the appearance of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Some-times our soul is full of bloom and blossom, and the bees hum pleasantly and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. Anon, our feelings gather still greater vigor, and after we come to the summer of our delights, again perhaps, we begin to wither into the sear and yellow leaf of autumn; nay, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree, and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of verdure. And yet, so long as the tree of faith is there, we are saved. Whether faith blossom or not, whether it bring forth joyous fruit in our experience or not, so long as it be there in all its permanence, we are saved. Yet should we have the gravest reason to distrust the life of our faith if it did not sometimes

blossom with joy and often bring forth fruit unto holiness.

77. NEAR HOME The best moment of a Christian's life is his last one, because it is the one which is nearest heaven; and then it is that he begins to strike the keynote of the song which he shall sing to all eternity. O! what a song that will be!

78. BEAUTY IN CHRIST

There is a thing called beauty, which prevails upon the hearts of men. Mighty men, not a few, have bowed before it and paid it homage; but if you want true beauty, look into the face of Jesus,, for there you have the concentration of all loveliness. There is no beauty anywhere but in Christ. O sun, thou art not fair, when once compared with Him. O, fair world and grand creation of a glorious God, thou art but a dim and dusky blot compared with the splendors of His face. When we shall see Christ, we shall be compelled to say that we never knew what loveliness was before. When the clouds are swept away, when the curtains which hide Him from our view are drawn aside, we shall find that not any-thing we have seen or heard of, grand or graceful, in the wide universe, will bear a moment's comparison with Him, who was once seen as a root out of a dry ground, but shall presently fill heaven and earth with lustre and gladden all hearts with His glory.

79. THE SAVIOUR'S LEGACY

"Peace I leave with you." Our Saviour here means peace with God, and peace with our own conscience. Peace with God - for He "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," and now there is "peace on earth," and "good will towards men." Christ has put our sins away, and therefore there is a virtually substantial peace established between God and our souls. This, however, might exist without our clearly understanding and rejoicing in it. Christ has, therefore, given this further witness — peace in the conscience. Peace with God is the treaty: peace with conscience is the publication of it. Peace with God is the fountain: peace with conscience is the crystal stream which issues from it. There is a peace decreed in the court of divine justice in heaven; and then there follows as a necessary consequence, as soon as the news is known, a peace in the minor court of human judgment, wherein conscience sits upon the throne to judge us according to our works. The legacy, then, of Christ is a twofold peace: a peace of friendship, of agreement, of love, of everlasting union between the elect and God; and a peace of sweet enjoyment, of quiet rest to the understanding and the conscience. When there are no winds above, there will be no tempests below; when heaven is serene, earth is quiet. Conscience reflects the complacency of God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

80. NEEDLESS POVERTY Many a believer lives in the cottage of doubt when he might live in the mansion of faith.

81. THE SIN OF UNBELIEF To doubt the lovingkindness of God is thought by some to be a very small sin; in fact, some have even exalted the doubts and fears of God's people into fruits and graces and evidences of great advancement in experience. But to doubt the kindness, the faithfulness, and the love of God, is a very heinous offense. That can be no light sin which makes God a liar; and yet unbelief does in effect cast foul and slanderous suspicion upon the veracity of the Holy One of Israel. That can be no small offense which charges the Creator of heaven and earth with perjury; and yet, if I mistrust His oath and will not believe His promise, sealed with the blood of His own Son, I count the oath of God to be unworthy of my trust; and so I do, in very deed,

accuse the King of Heaven as false to His covenant and oath. Besides, unbelief of God is the fountain of innumerable sins. As the black cloud is the source of many raindrops, so dark unbelief is the parent of many crimes. It is a sin which should be condemned by every believer, should be struggled against, should if possible be subdued, and certainly should be the object of our deep repentance and abhorrence.

82. THE ONE FAMILY The universe of God is one: heaven and earth are not so separate as unbelief has dreamed. As the Lord hath but one family, written in one register, redeemed with one blood, quickened by one Spirit, so this whole household abides in one habitation evermore. We who are in the body abide in the lower room, which is sometimes dark and cold, but bears sufficient marks that it is a room in God's house; for to the eye of faith, it is often lit up with heavenly lustre, and we, even we, while we are yet here, are by blessed earnestness made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the same house, I say, but ours is the lower room, while our glorified brethren are up there in the upper story, where the sunlight streams in everlastingly, where no chilling winds or poisonous breath can ever reach. And, to a great extent, there is a likeness between the lower room and the upper room. As on earth we prepare for heaven, so the state of the saints on earth is heaven foreshadowed. In many respects the condition of the child of God on earth is a type of his condition in heaven; and what the character of the saints is above, that should be the character of the saints below. We may very safely take for our example those glorified spirits. We need not be afraid that we shall be led astray by imitating them, by learning their occupations, or by attempting to share their joys. Surely the things in heaven are patterns of the things on earth, and as they are before the throne so ought we to be. Nay; so we shall be in proportion as we live up to our privileges and receive the likeness and image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

83. THE SPIRIT OF PRAISE

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Wake up my memory, and find matter for the song. Tell what God has done for me in days gone by. Fly back, ye thoughts, to my childhood, sing of cradle mercies. Review my youth and its early favors. Sing of long-suffering grace which followed my wanderings and bore with my rebellions. Review before my eyes that gladsome hour when first I knew the Lord, and tell over again the matchless story of His mercy. Awake up my judgment, and give measure to the music. Come forth my understanding, and weigh His lovingkindness in the balance. See if thou canst count the small dust of His mercies. See if thou canst estimate thy unsearchable riches which God hath given thee in His unspeakable gift of Christ Jesus. Recount His eternal love to thee. Reckon up the treasures of that everlasting covenant which He made on the behalf and which was "ordered in all things and sure." Sing aloud of that divine wisdom which contrived, of that love which planned, and of that grace which carried out the scheme of thy redemptions. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" For doth not all nature around me praise Him? If I were silent I should be an exception to the universe. Doth not the thunder praise Him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of Armies? Do not the mountains praise Him when the woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Does not the lightning write His name in letters of fire upon the midnight darkness? Hath not the whole earth a voice, and shall I, can I, be silent? "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

84. LOVE TO CHRIST Have you a friend at court — at heaven's court? Is the Lord Jesus your friend? Can you say that you love Him, and has He ever revealed Himself in the way of love to you? Oh! to be able to say, "Christ is my friend," is one of the sweetest things in the world. The love of Christ casts not out the love of relatives, but it sanctifies our creature love and makes it sweeter far. Earthly love is sweet, but it must pass away; and what will you do if you have no wealth but the wealth which fades, and no love but the love which dies, when death shall come? Oh, to have the love of Christ! You can take that across the river of death with you; you can wear it as your jewel in heaven and set it as a seal upon your hand; for His love is "strong as death," and mightier than the grave.

85. THE FIRST LESSON The doorstep to the temple of wisdom is a knowledge of our own ignorance. He cannot learn aright who has not first been taught that he knows nothing. It is a good thing for a man to feel that he is only beginning to learn, and to be willing to submit his heart to the teachings of God's Spirit, that he may be guided in everything by Him. The prayer of the quickened soul is, "Teach thou me." We become as little children when God begins to deal with us.

86. DANGER OF PROSPERITY

High places and God's praise do seldom agree: a full cup is not easily carried without spilling: he that stands on a pinnacle needs a clear head and much grace.

87. IDLENESS

Some temptations come to the industrious, but all temptations attack the idle. Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they do tempt the devil to tempt them. Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar and asks Satan to come in; but if we are occupied from morning to night, should Satan get in, he must break through the door. Under sovereign grace, and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than obedience to the precept, that ye be "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

88. GRACE Grace is always grace, but it never seems so gracious as when we see it brought to our unworthy selves.

89. OBTAINING PROMISES

God sometimes gives His people fresh promises "by faith," just before a trial is about to come upon them. It was so with Elijah. God said to him, "Get thee ... by the brook Cherith; I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." This was at the beginning of the famine. There he abode, and God fulfilled the promise, for by faith Elijah had obtained it. Acting upon faith, still dependent upon God, he abode at Cherith, and as the result of this faith, God gave him a fresh promise, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath ... I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." The faith which received the first promise, obtained the honor of a second. So with us. If we have had a little promise, and up till now have realized it; if we have lived upon it and made it the stay and support of our souls, surely God will give us an-other and a greater one. And so, from promise to promise speeding our way, we shall find the promises to be rounds of the ladder which Jacob saw, the top whereof shall reach to heaven. Doubt and be distrustful about the promise which you have, and you cannot expect God to increase His revelation to your soul. Be afraid and unbelieving about that promise which was laid to your heart yesterday, and you shall not have a

new one tomorrow. But act in simple faith upon what God has already given you, and you shall go from strength to strength, receiving grace upon grace, and promise upon promise. The Spirit of God shall whisper into your soul some promise which shall come home with as much power as though an angel from heaven had spoken it to you, and you shall "through faith" obtain promises which before were beyond your reach.

90. SYMPATHY

Sympathy is especially a Christian's duty. Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish, he should be disinterested; if there were nowhere else a heart which had sympathy for the needy, there should be one found in every Christian breast. The Christian is a "king"; it becomes not a king to be meanly caring for himself. Was Alexander ever more royal than when, while his troops were suffering from thirst, he put aside a bowl full of the precious liquid, which a soldier offered him, and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty; he had rather share their sorrow with them? O you, whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness and act with the honorable liberality which becomes the seed royal of the universe. You are sent into the world to be saviors of others; but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights; and does not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you, as of your Master — "He saved others; himself he cannot save"?

91. "ENDURE HARDNESS"

Soldier of Christ, you will have to do hard battle. There is no bed of down for you; there is no riding to heaven in a chariot. The rough way must be trodden; mountains must be climbed; rivers must be forded; dragons must be fought; giants must be slain; difficulties must be overcome; and great trials must be borne. It is not a smooth road to heaven; those who have gone but a very few paces therein, have found it to be rough and rugged. Yet it is pleasant; it is the most delightful journey in all the world; not because it is easy in itself, it is only pleasant because of the company, because of the sweet promises on which we lean, because of our Beloved who walks with us through all the rough and thorny brakes of this vast wilderness. Christian soldiers, expect conflict: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." As truly as you are a child of God, your Saviour has left you for His legacy — "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Yet remember that this "tribulation" is the way to "enter the kingdom"; therefore "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

92. USEFULNESS Christ, my Master, goes about doing good, and if you would walk with Him, you must go about upon the same mission.

93. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Christian men ought so to live that it were idle to speak of a comparison between them and the men of the world. It should not be a comparison, but a contrast. No scale of degrees should be possible. The believer should be a direct and manifest contradiction to the unregenerate. The life of a saint should be altogether above and out of the same list as the life of a sinner. We should compel our critics not to confess that moralists are good and Christians a little better; but while the world is darkness, we should manifestly be light; and while the world lies in the Wicked One, we should most evidently be of God, and overcome the temptations of that Wicked One. Wide as the

poles asunder are life and death, light and darkness, purity and sin. There should be as much difference between the worldling and the Christian as between hell and heaven, between destruction and eternal life. As we hope at last that there shall be a great gulf separating us from the doom of the impenitent, there should be here a deep and wide gulf between us and the ungodly. The purity of our character should be such that men must take knowledge of us that we are of another and superior race. If we were what we profess to be, there would be no difficulty in detecting the Christian from the worldling. But, alas! the Church is so much adulterated that we have to abate our glorying and cannot exalt our character as we would. Oh, for the time when "our conversation (shall be) in heaven," and the ignoble life of the worldly man shall be rebuked by our Christ-like character! God grant us more and more to be clearly a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people that we may show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

94. THE FIGHT OF FAITH

Like the Spartans, every Christian is born a warrior. It is his destiny to be assaulted; it is his duty to attack. Part of his life will be occupied with defensive warfare. He will have to defend earnestly the faith once delivered to the saints; he will have to resist the devil; he will have to stand against all his wiles; and having done all, still to stand. He will, however, be but a sorry Christian if he acts only on the defensive; he must be one who goes against his foes. He must be able to say with David, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." He must wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and power. He must have weapons for his warfare not carnal — but "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." He must not be content to live in the stronghold well guarded, but he must go forth to attack the castles of the enemy and to drive the Canaanite out of the land. But there are many ways in which the Christian may, to a great degree, forget his martial character. And, alas! there are not a few who, if they be Christians at all, certainly know but very little of that daily warfare to which the Captain of our salvation calls His disciples. They have a soft religion; a religion which shuns opposition; a reed like religion, which bows before every blast, unlike that cedar of godliness which stands aloft in the midst of the storm and claps its boughs in the hurricane for very joy of triumph, though the earth be all in arms abroad. Such men lack the faith which shares the glory. Though saved, yet their names shall not be found written among the mighty men who, for our Great Commander's sake, are willing to suffer the loss of all things, and to go forth without the camp bearing His reproach. Oh, let us never be contented with such inglorious ease, but earnestly and manfully fight the Lord's battles. Is it a little thing for a follower of Christ to be losing the immortal honor of serving the Lord? What will men not do to win fame? and shall we, when it lies at our doors, turn idly aside and cast our glory to the ground? Let us be up and doing, for it is no light thing to be losing the honor of a faithful servant of Christ.

95. LIFE'S GREAT OBJECT As Christians, we ought ever to be distinguished from the world in the great object of our life. As for worldly men, some of them are seeking wealth, others fame; some seek after comfort, others after pleasure. Subordinately you may seek after any of these, but your main and principal motive as a Christian should always be to live for Christ. To live for glory? Yes, but for His glory. To live for comfort? Yes, but be all your consolation in Him. To live for pleasure? Yes, but when you are merry, sing psalms and make melody in your hearts to the Lord. To live for wealth? Yes, but to be rich in faith. You may lay up treasure, but lay it up in heaven, "where neither

moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." You can make the most common calling become really sacred by dedicating your daily life wholly to the service of Jesus, taking as your motto, "For to me to live is Christ." There is such a thing as living thus a consecrated life; and if any deny its possibility let them stand self-convicted, because they obey not that precept: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

96. LOVE'S CIRCUMFERENCE The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love. When the precious stone of love is thrown by grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart, it stirs the transparent life floods into ever-widening circles of sympathy. The first ring has no very wide circumference — we love our household; for he who cares not for his own household is worse than a heathen man. But mark the next concentric ring — we love the household of faith: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limit of the lake and has included all in its area, for "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, (are to) be made for all men." A follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.

97. THE WAY TO HEAVEN

There is no way to heaven, whatever thy hopes may be, but through Christ: there is no way to the gates of pearl but through the bleeding side of Jesus. These are the gates of paradise — these bleeding wounds. If thou wouldst find thy way to God's bright throne, find first thy way to Jesus' cross; if thou wouldst know the way to happiness, tread in that path of misery which Jesus trod. What! attempt another way? Art thou mad enough to think that thou canst rend the posts, and bars, and gates of heaven, from their perpetual places, and force thy way by thy created strength? Or dost thou think to purchase with thy riches and thy gold a foothold in paradise? Fool! what is thy gold where streets are made of it and where the gates are solid pearl? — where the foundations are of jasper, and the walls whereof are precious gems? And dost thou think to get there by thy merits? Ah! by pride fell the angels, and by thy pride thou hast fallen. Heaven is not for such as thou art. But dost thou say, "I will leave my wealth, after I have gone, to charities; I will build a hospital, or feed the poor?" Then let men pay thee: thou hast wrought for them, let them pay the debt; let them rear the stony pillar and set thine effigy upon the top thereof. If thou hast wrought for thy country, let thy country pay thee what it owes thee. But God — what does He owe thee? Thou hast forgotten Him; thou hast despised His Son; thou hast rejected His gospel. Be thou warrior, statesman, patriot — let men pay thee; God owes thee nothing; and all thou canst do, if thou comest not in the right way through Jesus Christ, who lived and died, and is alive forevermore, and hath the keys of heaven at His girdle, will not bribe Him to admit thee to His palace.

98. RELIGION EXEMPLIFIED

I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen. Lamps do not talk, but they do shine: a lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no gong; and yet, far over the waters its friendly spark is visible to the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious.

99. THE RIGHT ESTIMATE The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem.

100. "VESSELS OF MERCY"

God's chosen ones are spoken of as "vessels of mercy." Now we know that a vessel is nothing but a receiver. A "vessel" is not a fountain, but only a container and holder of that which is poured out into it. Such are the redeemed of God; they are not fountains by nature, out of whom there springs up anything which is good; they are simply receivers. At one time they are full of themselves, but grace empties them, and then as empty vessels they are set in the way of God's goodness; God fills them to the brim with His lovingkindness, and so they are proved to be the vessels of His mercy. They may as "vessels" afterwards give out to others, but they can only give out what God has put in them; they may work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, but they cannot work it out unless God works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. They may run over with gratitude, but it is only because God has filled them with grace; they may stream forth with holiness, but it is only because the Lord keeps the supply overflowing. They are receivers, and receivers only.

101. CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE

We find in the Scripture that most of the great appearances which were made to eminent saints were made when they were busy. Moses was keeping his father's flock when he saw the burning bush; Joshua was going round about the city of Jericho when he met the angel of the Lord; Jacob was in prayer, and the angel of God appeared unto him; Gideon was threshing, and Elisha was ploughing, when the Lord called them; Matthew was at the receipt of custom, when he was bidden to follow Jesus; and James and John were fishing. The Almighty Lover of the souls of men is not wont to manifest Himself to idle persons. He who is slothful and inactive cannot expect to have the sweet company of his Saviour.

102. "COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE"

God never gives His children a duty to do without giving them the means to do it; and when He tells us to "comfort" His people, we may be certain that there are means whereby they may be comforted. Child of God! are you at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Tell of the ancient things of former days; whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace and redeeming mercy and Divine love. When you find a troubled one, tell him of the covenant, in all things ordered well; tell him what the Lord hath done in former days, how He cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon; tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with His people; tell him that God, who divided the Red Sea, can make a highway for His people through the deep waters of affliction — that He who appeared in the burning bush, which was not consumed, will support him in the furnace of tribulation; tell him of the marvelous things which God has wrought for His chosen people: surely there is enough there to comfort him. Tell him that God watches the furnace as the goldsmith the refining-pot. If that does not suffice, tell him of His present mercies; tell him that he has much left, though much is gone; tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; tell him that now he is accepted in the Beloved; tell him that he is now adopted, and that his standing is safe; tell him that Jesus is above, pleading his cause; tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for him; tell the mourner that the everlasting God fails not, neither is weary. But if this is not enough, tell him of the future; whisper to him that there is a heaven with pearly

gates and golden streets; tell him that

"A few more rolling suns at most Will land him on fair Canaan's coast," and therefore he may well bear his sorrows; tell him that Christ is coming, and that His sign is in the heavens, His advent is near, He will soon appear to judge the earth with equity and His people in righteousness. And if that suffices not, tell him all about that Saviour who lived and died; take him to Calvary; picture to him the bleeding hands, and side, and feet; tell him of the thorn-crowned King of grief; tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood, who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of grief; tell him that He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Thus, by God's blessing, you shall accomplish your mission and "comfort" one of His people. "Comfort ye my people, saith your God."

103. SELF

Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong; for "self" is very much like what the gardener calls the "sucker" at the bottom of the tree which never bears fruit, but only draws away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which diverts the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up, or else your faith will always be "little faith," and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

104. STRENGTH THROUGH JOY It is when the mind is happy that it can be laborious. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

105. THE REFINER'S FIRE

There is not an ingot of silver in heaven's treasury, which has not been in the furnace on earth, and been purified seven times; there is not a gem which the Divine Jeweller has not exposed to every sort of test; there is not an atom of gold in the Redeemer's crown which has not been molten among the hottest coals to rid it of its alloy. It is universal to every child of God. If you are a servant of the Lord, you must be tried as gold is tried.

106. HEART-LEARNING

We can learn nothing of the gospel except by feeling its truths. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

107. THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

Believers are not only to be with Christ and to behold His glory, but they are to be like Christ and to be glorified with Him. Is He glorious? So shall they be. Is He enthroned? So shall they be. Does He wear a crown? So shall they. Is He a priest? So shall they be kings to share His dominion, and priests to offer acceptable sacrifices forever. Mark that in all Christ has, believers participate. They are to reign with Christ and have a portion of His joy; to be honored with Him, to be accepted in Him. This is heaven indeed! If you have this hope, I beseech you hold it fast, live on it, rejoice in it.

"A hope so much divine, May trials well endure; May purge your soul from sense and sin, As Christ the Lord is pure."

Live near your Master now, so shall your evidences be bright; and when you come to cross the flood, you shall see Him face to face, and what that is only they can tell who enjoy it every hour.

But if you have not this bright hope, how is it that you can live content? You are going through a dark world to a darker eternity. I beseech you stop and pause. Consider for a moment whether it is worthwhile to lose heaven for this poor earth. What! pawn eternal glories for the pitiful pence of a few moments of the world's enjoyments? No, stop, I beseech you; weigh the bargain ere you accept it. What shall it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul? What wailing and gnashing of teeth shall there be over the carelessness or misadventure by which men lose such a heaven as this?

108. REJOICE ALWAYS

Whenever a Christian man yields to a mournful, desponding spirit, under his trials; when he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully and cheerfully with trouble; when he does not ask his heavenly Father to give him strength and consolation whereby he may be enabled to rejoice in the Lord at all times, he does dishonor to the high, and mighty, and noble principles of Christianity which are fitted to bear a man up, and make him happy even in times of the deepest affliction. It is the boast of the gospel that it lifts the heart above trouble; it is one of the glories of our religion that it makes us say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock" shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

109. RELIGION A PRESENT CONCERN

Religion must be a thing of the present, because the present has such intimate connections with the future. We are told in Scripture that this life is a seedtime, and the future is the harvest. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." As the seed generates the plant, even so does this present life generate the eternal future. Heaven and hell are, after all, but the developments of our present character, for is it not written, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still"? Do we not know that in the heart of every sin condemnation slumbers? Is it not a fearful truth that the germ of everlasting torment sleeps in every vile wish, every unholy thought, every unclean act, so that hell is but a great breaking out of slumbering lava, which had been so quiet, that while the mountain was covered with fair verdure, even to its summit, death came and bade that lava rise, and down the steep of manhood's eternal existence, the fiery lava of eternal misery doth pour itself? Yet it was there before, for sin is hell, and rebellion against God is the prelude of misery. So is it with heaven; I know that heaven is a reward, not of debt but of grace; but still the Christian has that within him which forestalls for him a heaven. What did Christ say? "I give unto my sheep eternal life." He did not say, 'I will give,' but "I do give." As soon as they believe in Me, I give them eternal life. "He that . . . believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." The Christian has within him the seed-beds of a paradise; in due time the light which is sown for the righteous, and the gladness which is sown for the upright in heart, shall spring up, and they shall reap the harvest. Is it not plain, then, that religion is a thing which we must have here? Is it not prominently revealed that religion is important for the present? For if this life be the seed-time of the future, how can I expect to reap in another world other harvests than I have been sowing here? How can I trust that I shall be saved then, unless I am saved now? How can I have hope that heaven shall be my eternal inheritance, unless

the earnest be begun in my own soul on earth?

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