

STARLIGHT THROUGH THE SHADOWS: VALUABLE COUNSEL ON GOD'S COMPASSION

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A collection of articles and writings by Frances Ridley Havergal from Starlight Through The Shadows: Valuable Counsel On God's Compassion, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

12 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Starlight Through The Shadows: Valuable Counsel On God's Compassion

Chapter 1: Softly and Safely

“I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure.” Genesis 33:14

The story of Jacob’s thoughtfulness for the cattle and the children is a beautiful little picture. He would not let them be overdriven even for one day. Verse 13: “My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.”

He would not lead on according to what a strong man like Esau could do and expected them to do, but only according to what they were able to endure. Verse 12: “Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.” He had had so much to do with them that he knew exactly how far they could go in a day; and he made that his only consideration in arranging the marches.

Perhaps his own halting thigh made him the more considerate for “the foot of the cattle” and “the foot of the children” (see margin). Besides, he had gone the same wilderness journey years before, (chap. 29:1 “Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east”), when they were not yet in existence, and knew all about its roughness and heat and length by personal experience. And so he said, “I will lead on softly.”

“For ye have not passed this way heretofore” (Josh. 3:4). We have not passed this way heretofore, but the Lord Jesus has. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). It is all untrodden and unknown ground to us, but He knows it all by personal experience; the steep bits that take away our breath, the stony bits that make our feet ache so, the hot, shadeless stretches that make us feel so exhausted, the rushing rivers that we have to pass through, Jesus has gone through it all before us. “For Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” (Matt. 8:17). “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted” (Heb. 2:18). He was wearied with His journey; “Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey” (John 4:6). Not some but all the many waters went over Him, and yet did not quench His love. “All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me” (Ps. 42:7). “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Cant. 8:7).

He was made a perfect Leader by the things which He suffered. Hebrews 2:10: “To make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Hebrews 5:8, 9: “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” For now He knows all about it, and leads us softly according as we are able to endure.

“For He knoweth our frame” (Ps. 103:14). And He does not only know, with that sort of upon-the-shelf knowledge which is often guilty of want of thought among ourselves, but He remembereth that we are dust. Psalm 78:39: “For He remembered that they were but flesh.” Think of that when you are tempted to question the gentleness of His leading. He is remembering all the time; and not one step will He make you take beyond what your foot is able to endure. Never mind

if you think it will not be able for the step that seems to come next; either He will so strengthen it that it shall be able, or He will call a sudden halt, and you shall not have to take it at all.

Is it not restful to know that you are not answerable to any Esaus, for how much you get through, or how far you are led on in the day! "They" don't know, or, knowing, don't remember, the weakness or the drawbacks. Maybe they wonder you do not get on farther and faster, doing the work better, bearing up against the suffering or the sorrow more bravely. And maybe you feel wounded and wearied without a word being said, simply because you know they don't know! Then turn to the Good Shepherd in whose "feeble flock" you are, and remember that He remembers. Talk to Him about it; and if too weary even for that, then just lean on Him with whom you have to do. For "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). It is only when we are coming up from the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved, that we can realize how softly He is leading us. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" (Cant. 8:5). For if we are pulling this way and that way, straggling and struggling, and wasting our steps by little turnings aside, He may have to resort to other means to keep us in the way. But if we are willing to lean, we shall soon find that He is leading not only rightly (that we never doubted) but softly too. And leading softly will not be leading slowly. "And He led them forth by the right way" (Ps. 107:7).

Minds are differently constituted, and some do not readily grasp as a real promise what is indicated in a figure. But if the figure is a true illustration, we are sure to find the same promise somewhere else in a direct form. So if you hesitate to appropriate the promise that Jesus as your Good Shepherd "will lead on softly," take the same thing from that familiar verse in Isaiah 40:11, "shall gently lead" is the very same word in the original; and in the dear old 23rd Psalm, "He leadeth me" is still the same word, and might be read, "He gently, or softly, leadeth me." These are the true sayings of your God.

One sees at a glance, by referring to a concordance, the touching fact that our Leader Himself experienced very different leading. Never once was He gently led. He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (Matt. 4:1); He was led by men filled with wrath to the brow of the hill, that they might cast Him down headlong (Luke 4:29); He was led away to Annas, led away to Caiaphas (John 18:13, Matt. 26:57); led into the council of the elders and chief priests and scribes (Luke 22:66); led to Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:2), and into the hall of judgment (John 18:28). And then He, our Lord Jesus Christ, was led as a sheep to the slaughter (Acts 8:32); led away to be crucified (John 19:16)! Verily, "His way was much rougher and darker than mine."

That is how Jesus was led. But as for His people, "He guided them in the wilderness like a flock, and He led them on safely, so that they feared not."

Not only safely as to the end of the journey, but as to each step. For He employs another figure to prove this, saying that He led them "as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble." "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest." Can you not see the steep stony path of the rocky descent into a desert valley, and the careful owner's hand leading the hesitating horse, keeping fast hold of his head, and encouraging him with tones which he can understand, till the halting place at the bottom is safely reached! "So didst Thou lead Thy people" says Isaiah. So He leadeth me! Responds your heart, does it not? Softly and safely, step by step, and mile by mile, till the desert journey is over and the Father's home reached!

Then trust Him for today
As thine unfailing Friend,
And let Him lead thee all the
way
Who loveth to the end.
And let the morrow rest
In His beloved hand,
His good is better than our
best,
As we shall understand;
If, trusting Him who faileth
never,
We rest on Him today, forever

Chapter 2: What Seemeth Him Good

“Let Him do what seemeth Him good.” 1 Samuel 3:18

Eli spoke these words under the terrible certainty of heavy judgments upon his house, because the Lord had spoken it. But how often God’s dear children tremble to say an unreserved “Let Him do what seemeth Him good,” though they are under no such shadow of certainly coming events! It is almost easier to say it when a crushing blow has actually fallen, than when there is suspense and uncertainty as to what the Lord may be going to do. There is always more or less of this element of suspense and uncertainty. One can hardly imagine a life in which there are no clouds, little or great, within the horizon, even when the sky is clearest overhead. We hold not a treasure on earth which we are sure of keeping; and we never know whether gain or loss, failure or success, ease or pain, lies before us. And if we were allowed to put our finger on the balance of uncertainties and turn it as we chose, we should be sure to defeat some ultimate aim by securing a nearer one, and prevent some greater good by grasping a lesser. I think if we were permitted to try such an experiment, we should soon grow utterly puzzled and weary, and find ourselves landed in complications of mistakes; and if we had any sense left, we should want to put it all back into our Father’s hands, and say “Let Him do what seemeth Him good,” then we should feel relieved and at rest.

Then why not be relieved and at rest at once? For “it is the Lord,” who is going to do we know not what. That is a volume in itself the Lord who loves you, the Lord who thinks about you and cares for you, the Lord who understands you, the Lord who never makes a mistake, the Lord who spared not His own Son but gave Him up for you! Will you not let Him do what seemeth Him good? Then think what it is you are to let Him do. Something out of your sight, perhaps, but not out of His sight. For the original word in every case is “what is good in His eyes.” Those Eyes see through and through, and all round and beyond everything. So what is good in His Eyes must be absolutely and entirely good, a vast deal better than our best! There is great rest in knowing that He will do what is right, that He crowns the rightness with the goodness; and when we see this, the rest is crowned with gladness. Ought it, then, to be so very hard to say, “Let Him do what seemeth Him good”?

It is very interesting to trace out that in each recorded instance of this expression of submissive trust at a juncture of dark uncertainty the result was always something most evidently “good,” in the eyes of those who ventured to say it.

First, there were the Gibeonites. They came to Joshua (who by his very name, as well as office, was a direct type of Christ), “sore afraid for their lives.” But, because he had made peace with them, they said, “Behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.” A beautiful illustration of confidence based upon a covenant. Now see how their trust was justified. “So did he unto them,” that is, as it was good and right in his eyes; and the first thing was, that he “delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel that they slew them not.” And the next thing was his ascending from Gilgal to fight their battles for them, conquering five kings for them, and calling upon the sun to stand still over their city “about a whole day,” so that “there was

no day like that before it, or after it.”

Next, we find the children of Israel sold for their evil deeds, into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites, and vexed and oppressed for eighteen years.

(Vexed and oppressed does that describe your case?) They come to the Lord with bare, excuseless confession, “We have sinned,” and then they cast themselves on bare undeserved mercy: “Do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee.” And what then? “His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.” Could anything be more humanly tender, as well as Divinely magnanimous! Is it not a lesson to come straight to His heart with any misery of which the sting is that we have brought it on ourselves, and deserved it a thousandfold?

First confess the sin, and then leave the sorrows wholly in His hands, and we find Him verily “the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy.” And mercy includes help, for the Lord did not stop short at grieving over their misery; He sent Jephthah to deliver them, so that they “dwelled safe” for about thirty years. (Compare Judges 11:33 and 1 Samuel 12:11)

Now turn to 1 Chronicles 19:13, “and let the Lord do that which is good in His sight.” Here Joab finds a double army “set against him before and behind.” He makes the wisest arrangements he can think of, and encourages his brother; and then he says, “and let the Lord do that which is good in His sight.” And what the Lord did was to give him a splendid victory. It does not seem that he had to fight or suffer any loss at all; the Syrians and Ammonites simply fled before him: verses 15, 16. “And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem. And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers and drew forth the Syrians that were beyond the river.”

The most touching instance however is David. “And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again and show me both it and His habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.” Driven from his royal home by his own son, passing amid tears over the brook Kidron, going toward the way of the wilderness, “weary and weak handed,” the wisest head in the land giving counsel against him, and the hearts of the men of Israel going after the traitor, and now losing the visible token of the presence of God Himself! I do not see how any of us could be brought to do all this! And yet he said, “Let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him.” But only a little while, and the Lord, whom he trusted so implicitly in such depths, restored to him all that seemed so nearly lost, and raised him again to royal heights of prosperity and praise.

Did not these things happen unto them for ensamples? If they, in the dim old days of type and veil, could so trust the God of Israel, should we, who have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, hesitate to utter the same expression of submissive confidence? And if He has caused such records of His gracious responses to their submission to be written, should we not take them as intended to encourage our hearts in the gloomy and dark day? See now if you cannot find something like your own case in one or other of them, and remember you have the same Saviour and the same Lord to do with. And then, venture the word! Just let Him do what seemeth Him good, and tell Him so! It may be you have been actually hindering deliverance and thwarting help, by not “letting” Him. Do not say, “But what difference can that make? He will do

what He pleases whether I am willing or not.” Not exactly that. Does it make no difference if the patient quietly lets the surgeon do what he thinks best? A remedy applied by force, or submitted to unwillingly, may be quite counteracted by fidget, or by feverishness induced or increased through setting one’s self against what is prescribed or advised. The Lord’s remedies do not have fair play, when we set ourselves against them. Even Omnipotence waits for the faith that will let it act.

If the “vessel made of clay,” that was marred in the hand of the potter, could have resisted that skillful hand, how would he have been able to make it again another vessel, as it seemed good to him to make it? The unresisting clay could not help letting the potter remold it, into a better and permanent form; but we can hinder, simply by not “letting.” But will you do this? For “now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our Potter.” Whatever may be our Potter’s mysterious moldings, or our Father’s mysterious dealings, let us give the one sweet answer which meets everything: “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

Not yet thou knowest what I do

Within thine own weak breast;

To mold thee to My image

true,

And fit thee for My rest.

But yield thee to My loving skill;

The veiled work of grace

From day to day progressing

still,

It is not thine to trace.

Yes, walk by faith and not by

sight,

Fast clinging to My hand;

Content to feel My love and

might,

Not yet to understand.

A little while thy course pursue,

Till grace to glory grow;

Then what I am, and what I do,

Hereafter thou shalt know.

Chapter 3: The Silence of Love

“Rest in (margin ‘Be silent to’) the Lord.” Psalm 37:7

An invalid was left alone one evening for a little while. After many days of acute pain there was a lull. “Now,” she thought, “I shall be able to pray a little.” But she was too wearied out and exhausted for this; feeling that utter weakness of mind and body which cannot be realized without actual experience, when the very lips shrink from the exertion of a whisper, and it seems too much effort of thought to shape even unspoken words. Only one whisper came: “Lord Jesus, I am so tired!” She prayed no more; she could not frame even the petition that, as she could not speak to Him, He would speak to her. But the Lord Jesus knew all the rest; He knew how she had waited for and wanted the sweet conscious communing with Him, the literal talking to Him and telling Him all that was in her heart. And He knew that, although a quiet and comparatively painless hour had come, she was “so tired” that she could not think. Very tenderly did He, who knows how to speak a word in season to the weary, choose a message in reply to that little whisper. “Be silent to the Lord!” It came like a mother’s “hush” to one whom his mother comforteth. It was quite enough, as every Spirit-given word is; and the acquiescent silence was filled with perfect peace. Only real friends understand silence. With a passing guest or ceremonial acquaintance you feel under an obligation to talk; you make effort to entertain them as a matter of courtesy; you may be tired or weak, but no matter, you feel you must exert yourself. But with a very dear and intimate friend sitting by you, there is no feeling of the kind. To be sure, you may talk if you feel able: pouring out all sorts of confidences, relieved and refreshed by the interchange of thoughts and sympathies. But if you are very tired, you know you do not need to say a word. You are perfectly understood, and you know it. You can enjoy the mere fact of your friend’s presence, and find that does you more good than conversation. The sense of that present and sympathetic affection rests you more than any words. And your friend takes it as the highest proof of your friendship and confidence, and probably never loves you so vividly as in these still moments. No matter that twilight is falling, and that you cannot see each other’s faces, the presence and the silence are full of brightness and eloquence, and you feel they are enough.

Even so we may be silent to the Lord. Just because we know He loves us so really and understands us so thoroughly! There is no need when very weary, bodily or mentally, or both, to force ourselves to entertain Him, so to speak; to go through a sort of duty-work of a certain amount of uttered words or arranged thoughts. That might be if He were only to us as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night, but not with the beloved and Gracious One who has come in to abide with us, and is always there! If this is His relation to us, there is no fear but what there will be, at other times, plenty of intercourse; but now, when we are “so tired,” we may just be silent to Him, instead of speaking to Him.

This is one of the expressions which are exclusively used concerning the things of God. There is no such thing as being silent to anyone else. Silent with a mortal friend, but never silent to any but the Immortal One. Though it has its earthly analogy, it is not identically the same. For none but our

Lord can interpret the unseen pulsing's of that which to human ken is only silence. He hears the music they are measuring out before Him. He takes the confidence of that hush at its full value of golden love. He sees the soul's attitude of devotion and faith through the shadows which hide it from itself.

Sometimes He takes the opportunity of our silence to speak Himself. He answers it "with good words and comfortable words." And do we not know that one such word from Him is more than anything else, worth ten thousand-fold all the weariness or exhaustion of pain which brought us to be silent.

But sometimes He answers silence with silence. What then? Are we to conclude that He is gone away, or is not thinking about us, forgetting to be gracious? We are judging Him as He would not judge us. He did not put such an interpretation on our silence; then why should we on Him? Let us take His interpretation of it; surely we should believe what He Himself asserts! "He will be silent in His love" (Zeph. 3:17, margin). Can any words be more beautiful! It is as if He, who made man's mouth, had made no words which could express His exceeding great love, and therefore He could only expand it in the silence which lies above and below and beyond all language. When we have said, as very likely we have often done, "Why art Thou silent unto me, O Lord?" why did we not take His own exquisite answer, and trust the love that was veiled in the silence? For whenever we can say, "Truly my soul waiteth upon (Hebrew—is silent to) God," we may rest assured that any apparent waiting on His part is only "that He may be gracious," yes, "very gracious unto thee."

We may be sure He has many things to say to us, when He sees we can bear them. But till His time to speak is come, let our silence of trust respond to His silence of love.

Chapter 4: The Dew of the World

“My speech shall distil as the dew.” Deuteronomy 32:2

But who hears the dew fall? What microphone could reveal that music to our “gross unpurged ears”?

The dew distils in silence. So does the speech of our God. Most frequently in the silence of trust already spoken of. In that stillness God’s silent love can be condensed into dew like communications; not read, not heard, but made known by the direct power of the Spirit upon the soul.

Most often He does this by thrilling into remembrance something from the written Word, already learned, but now flashing out in the quickened memory as if it had never been heard before.

We do not get much of this if we are always in the midst of noise and turmoil and bustle. He can, and now and then He does, send this “speech” through a very chaos of bustle or trouble. He can make a point of silence in the very center of a cyclone, and speak there to our hearts. But the more usual way is to make a wider silence for His dew to fall, by calling us apart into some quiet place of sorrow or sickness. So when we find ourselves thus led into a wilderness, let us forthwith look out for the dew, and it will not fail. Then our desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose; very likely much more so than the hot harvest fields, or the neat gardens from which we have been called away.

The dew distils in darkness.

Not in the darkness of external trial alone. It is easy to understand that, and most of us have experienced it. The beautiful thing is that the life-giving speech distils even in soul darkness. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.” There are times when we simply cannot see anything, when there is nothing for it but to hold on and trust in the dark; times when we do not seem even to be walking in the dark, but when, like Micah, we “sit in darkness,” too feeble even to grope. Such darkness often comes in a time of reaction and weariness after special work and exertion, very often indeed after great or exciting success, sometimes even after unusually vivid spiritual blessing. An interval of convalescence after acute illness, when the overtaxed nervous energy has more than it can do in slowly refilling the chalice of life that had been so nearly “spilled on the ground,” is peculiarly liable to it. And the sufferers who never pass beyond that stage, who are never any more than “a little better,” know its shadow perhaps best of all. It does not say so, but I think the Lord Jesus must have known it, because He was made like unto us in all things, and submitted not only to the causes but to the effects of all the natural experiences of the nature which He took on Him.

Now it seems to me that it is in this kind of darkness that His speech distils as the dew. You look out some dark night after a hot dusty day; there is no storm, no rain, there is not the least token to

your senses of what is going on. You look out again in the morning, and you see every blade and leaf tipped with a dewdrop; everything is revived and freshened, prepared for the heat of the day, and smiling at the glow. Just so His words are silently falling on your souls in the darkness, and preparing them for the day. They do not come with any sensible power, nothing flashes out from the page as at other times, nothing shines so as to shed any pleasant light on your path, you do not hear any sound of abundance of rain. You seem as if you could not take the words in; and if you could, your mind is too weary to meditate on them.

But they are distilling as the dew all the time!

Do not quarrel with the invisible dew because it is not a visible shower. The Lord would send a shower if that was the true need to be supplied to His vineyard; but as He is sending His speech in another form, you may be quite sure it is because He is supplying your true need thereby. You cannot see why it is so and I do not pretend to explain; but what does that matter! He knows which way to water His vineyard. These words of His, which you are remembering so feebly, or reading without being able to grasp, are not going to return void. They are doing His own work on your soul, only in a quite different way to what you would choose. By and by they will sparkle out in the light of a new morning, and you will find yourself starting fresh, and perhaps wondering how it is that the leaves of life which hung so limp and drooping are so fresh and firm again on their stems. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

The dew falls not in one mass of water, but innumerable little drops. What one drop does not reach another does. So it is not one overwhelmingly powerful word which does this holy night work in the soul, but the unrealized influence of many, dropping softly on the plants of the Lord which He has planted, one resting here, another there; one touching an unrecognized need, and another reaching an unconsciously failing grace. Each drop uncounted hath its own mission, and is duly sent to its own leaf or blade.

Sometimes God's dew goes on falling through many hours of the night. The watches seem very long, and the starlight does not reveal it. But none of it is lost; some is already doing a hidden work as it falls around the very roots of our being, and some is ready to be revealed in sparkling brightness when the night is over, lessons learned among the shadows to be lived out in the sunshine.

The object of the dew is to maintain life in dry places and seasons. Dwellers in rainless regions understand this better than we do, but we can see enough of it in any dry week in summer to understand the beauty of the figure. So this speech is spirit and life to souls which are, however feebly, yet really alive unto God. Dew does nothing for the stones. You would not know there ever was any at all if you only look at the gravel path. And it makes no difference at all to a dead leaf. But if it falls on the little fading plant that could hardly have lived through many more days of July sunshine, the weak little stem straightens up as the leaves absorb the life-renewing moisture, and the closed blossom can open out again with fresher fragrance than before. So God keeps on distilling His speech into our frail spiritual life, or it would soon wither up. Dryness is more to be dreaded than darkness.

Only let us be trustfully content to let this dew of heaven fall in the dark, and when we cannot hear or see, recollect that He says, "My speech shall distil as the dew." Our part is to believe this, and leave ourselves open to it as we read what perhaps seems a very dim page of the Bible with very tired eyes; or, perhaps, lie still through the long hours of a literal night, with no power to mediate on the fitful gleams of half recollected verses that just cross our minds and seem to leave no trace.

Never mind, the dew is falling!

Softly the dew in the evening

descends,

Cooling the sun-heated ground

and the gale;

Flow'rets all fainting it soothingly

tends,

Ere the consumings of mid-day

prevail.

Sweet gentle dewdrops, how

mystic your fall

Wisdom and mercy float down

in you all.

Softer and sweeter by far is that

Dew

Which from the Fountain of

Comfort distils,

When the worn heart is created

anew,

And hallowed pleasure its emptiness

fills.

Lord, let Thy Spirit bedew my

dry fleece!

Faith then shall triumph, and

trouble shall cease.

Chapter 5: With Whom We Have to Do

“Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:13

There are wonderful depths of comfort in these words. I cannot fathom them for you. I only want to guide you to look where the deep places are, asking the Holy Spirit to put a long sounding line into your hand, that you may prove just how great is the depth.

These words seem to meet every sort of need of comfort. If it is perplexity, or oppressive puzzle what to do, when we cannot see through things; or if it is being unable to explain yourself to others, and trials or complications arising out of this: just fall back upon “Him with whom we have to do,” to whose eyes all things are naked and opened. He is your Guide, why need your puzzle? He is your Shield, why need you try so hard or wish so much to explain and vindicate yourself?

If it is sense of sin which does not let you be comfortable, turn at once to “Him with whom you have to do.” Remember, it is not with Satan that you have to do, nor with your accusing conscience, but with Jesus. He will deal with all the rest; you only have to deal with Him. And He is your great High Priest. He has made full Atonement for you; for the very sins that are weighing on you now. The blood of that Atonement, His own precious blood, cleanseth us from all sin. Cleanseth whom? People that have not sinned? People that don’t want to be cleansed? Thank God for the word “cleanseth us,” us who have sinned and who want to be cleansed. And you have to do with Him who shed it for your cleansing, who His own self bare your sins in His own body on the tree.

If it is temptation that will not let you rest, come straight away out of the very thick of it; it may be with the fiery darts sticking in you. Come with all the haunting thoughts that you hate, just as you are, to “Him with whom you have to do.” You would not or could not tell the temptations to any one else; but then you have not got to do with any one else in the matter, but only with Jesus. And He suffered being tempted.

The very fact that you are distressed by the temptation proves that it is temptation, and that you have a singular claim on the sympathy of our tempted Lord, a claim which He most tenderly acknowledges. But use it instantly; don’t creep, but flee unto Him to hide you from the assaults which you are too weak to meet.

If it is bodily weakness, sickness, or pain, how very sweet it is to know that we have to do with Jesus, who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (The word is the same that is elsewhere sickness in John 11:2-4.)

Don’t you sometimes find it very hard to make even your doctor understand what the pain is like? Words don’t seem to convey it. And after you have explained the trying and wearying sensation as best you can, you are convinced those who have not felt it do not understand it.

Now think of Jesus not merely entering into the fact, but into the feeling, of what you are going through. “Touched with the feeling” how deep that goes! When we turn away to Him in our wordless weariness of pain which only He understands, we find out that we have to do with Him in

quite a different sense from how we have to do with any one else. We could not do without Him, and thank God we shall never have to do without Him.

Why enumerate other shadows which this same soft light can enter and dispel? They may be cast by any imaginable or unimaginable shape of trouble or need, but the same light rises for them all, if we will only turn towards the brightness of its rising. For Jesus is He "with whom we have to do" in everything, nothing can be outside of this, unless we willfully decline to have to do with Him in it, or unbelievably choose to have to do with "lords many."

And we are answerable only to Him in everything; for this is included in having to do with Him. To our own Master we stand or fall; and that latter alternative is instantly put out of the question, the apostle adding, "Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand," i.e., he who is his "own Master's" servant. To Him we have to give account, if from Him we take our orders.

We have to do with Him so directly that it is difficult at first to grasp the directness. There is absolutely nothing between the soul and Jesus, if we will but have it so. We have Himself as our Mediator with God, and the very characteristic of a mediator is, as Job says, "that he might lay his hand upon us both"; so the hand of Jesus, who is Himself "the Man of Thy right hand," is laid upon us with no intermediate link and no intervening distance. We do not need any paper and print, let alone any human voice, between us and Himself.

"To Thee, O dear, dear Saviour,

My spirit turns for rest."

That turning is instinctive and instantaneous when we have once learned what it is to have direct and personal dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ. Life is altogether a different thing then whether shady or sunshiny, and a stranger intermeddled not with our hidden joy. Perhaps it is just this that makes such a strangely felt difference between those who equally profess and call themselves Christians. Is Jesus to us "Him with whom we have to do" or is He only Him whom we know about, and believe about, and with whose laws and ordinances we have to do? This makes all the difference, and every one who has this personal dealing with Him knows it, and cannot help knowing it.

Do not let this discourage any one who cannot yet say "Him with whom I have to do." For He is more ready and willing thus to have to do with you, than you with Him. You may enter at once into this most sweet and solemn position. He is there already: He only waits for you to come into it. Only bring Him your sins and your sinful self, "waiting not to rid your soul of one dark blot." Nothing else separates between you and Him, and He will take them all away and receive you graciously; then you shall know the sacred and secret blessedness of having to do with Jesus.

I could not do without Thee,

O Jesus, Saviour dear!

E'en when my eyes are holden,

I know that Thou art near.

How dreary and how lonely

This changeful life would be,
Without the sweet communion,
The secret rest with Thee.
I could do without Thee!
No other friend can read
The spirit's strange deep
longings,
Interpreting its need.
No human heart could enter
Each deep recess of mine
And soothe and hush and
calm it,
O blessed Lord, but Thine!

Chapter 6: Things Which He Suffered

“The things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:8

If we have some dear one gone before, who “suffered many things,” there is neither comfort nor help to be had by dwelling on them. It would be a poor comforter who reminded you of them, and brought them back in detail to your scarred memory. One would rather do one’s utmost to turn your thoughts away from them, leading you to dwell only on the present bliss, and one would fain blot out your painful remembrance of a past which it does no good to recall.

Not so does our Divine Comforter work. When He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, we feel that the things which He suffered are precious exceedingly, and the Spirit-wrought remembrance of them powerful beyond all else.

These “things” are only past in act, not in effect. For He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities of this day; the chastisement of the peace of this hour was upon Him; and though the whole head may be sick and the whole heart faint, the stripes that fell on Him are full of fresh power to heal at this moment.

“Thy sin of this day

In its shadow lay

Between My face and

One turned away.”

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; yet that was only one of the things which He suffered, only the full stop at the close of the great charter of suffering love.

This pathetic plural is full of suggestion. How much suffering is dimly hinted in the one intimation that He bare our sicknesses! How much may be hidden under the supposition of the Jews that He was nearly fifty years of age, when so little beyond thirty! How sharp must have been the experiences which graved such lines upon the visage so marred more than any man! Think of all that must have gone on under the surface of His home life, where neither did His brethren believe in Him. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. Think what temptation must have been to the Holy One, and what the concentration of malice and great rage when the prince of darkness went forth to do his worst against the lonely Son of Man, whom he knew to be the Son of God. Think of Jesus alone with Satan! Oh, what things He suffered before He came to the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, which filled up the cup which His Father gave Him to drink for us men and for our salvation!

All this true! all this real! all this for us!

All this, that He might be made a perfect Saviour, having learned by personal experience the suffering from which He saves as well as the suffering in which He supports and with which He sympathizes; having learned by personal experience the obedience by which “many shall be made righteous,” and which is at once our justification and our example.

All this, that He might be a perfect Captain of our salvation, knowing all and far more than all the hardships of the rank and file.

All this, that He might be the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him, to you and me!

The things which He suffered.

The remembrance must touch our gratitude and love, if anything will. If when we looked back on some terrible suffering unto death of one who loved us dearly, suppose an elder brother, I really do not know how any heart could bear it, if we distinctly knew that all that prolonged agony was borne instead of us, and borne for nothing in the world but for love of us. But if to this were added the knowledge that we had behaved abominably to that dying brother, done all sorts of things, now beyond recall, to grieve and vex him, not cared one bit about his love or made him any return of even natural affection, held aloof from him and sided with those who were against him; and then the terrible details of his slow agony were told, nay shown to us, well, imagine our remorse if you can, I cannot! The burden of grief and gratitude would be crushing, and if there were still any possible way in which we could show that poor, late gratitude, we should take it at any cost, or rather, we should count nothing at any cost if we might but prove our tardy love. Only I think we should never know another hour's rest. But it is part of the strange power of the remembrance of our Lord's sufferings that it brings strength and solace and peace; for, as Bunyan says, “He hath given us rest by His sorrow.” The bitterness of death to Him is the very fountain of the sweetness of life to us. Do the words after all seem to fall without power or reality on you heart? Is it nothing, or very little more than nothing to you? Not that you do not know it is all true, but your heart seems cold, and your apprehension mechanical, and your faith paralyzed; does this describe you? Thank God that feelings do not alter facts! He suffered for this sinful coldness as well as for all other sins. He suffered, the Just for the unjust; and are we not emphatically unjust when we requite His tremendous love this way? Still you don't feel it, though you own it. You see it all, but it is through a transparent wall of ice. What is to be done? Ask, and ask at once, for the Holy Spirit, that He may melt the ice and take of these things of Christ, showing them to you, not in the light of natural understanding and mere mental reception of undeniable facts, but revealing them with His own Divine power and bowing your whole soul under the weight of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, as manifested in “the things which He suffered.” “For every one that asketh receiveth.”

Chapter 7: The Lord's Cherishing

"Cherisheth it." Ephesians 5:29

"Cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." The church is not only "one body," but also "many members"; "for the body is not one member, but many." And what is true for the whole is true also for the smallest part. Lest any one should think the individual is rather lost in the great whole, the gracious word of our God comes down to meet the possible or passing tremor, and says: "Ye are," not only the body of Christ, but "members in particular."

Do not hesitate to take all the revelation of love that shines softly through this one word "cherisheth," for your own self; for the more you feel yourself to be the weakest imaginable member of Christ, unworthy to be a member at all of His glorious body, the more closely and sweetly will it apply to you.

For it necessarily implies, on the one side, weakness and inferiority and need. It would be nothing to us if we felt extremely strong and capable and self-contained. The Lord would never have taken the trouble to cause it to be written for such people. They would neither want it nor thank Him for it. We do not talk about "cherishing" an oak tree, or an athlete, or even a "strong minded woman." Our heart welcome to this beautiful word, and our sense of its preciousness, will be just in proportion to our sense of being among the Lord's little ones, or weak ones, no matter what others suppose us to be. After all, are not even those who are chasing thousands, but little ones and those who are slaying Goliaths, but weak ones in their real and hidden relationship to their own great and mighty Saviour and Lord? Even a father in Christ or a mother in Israel may turn with the heart of a little child, lovingly and gratefully, and perhaps very wearily too, to their cherishing Lord, to be comforted afresh with the old comforts, and hushed to rest on the little pillow of some very familiar text.

The Lord Jesus has said of all who love Him. "I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." See how He manifested Himself to you in these words, as your Cherisher. The word conveys, on His side, nothing but affection, and gentle thoughtful care. How do we cherish a little weak plant? There were plenty of handsomer ones, but this little cutting or seedling was perhaps a gift in the first place; and then we took a fancy to it, so that we cared doubly for it. Then we felt a sort of pity for it, because it was such a delicate little thing; so we shielded it, and perhaps repotted it, that it might strike its little roots more freely. We watched it day by day, giving it just enough water and not too much. We set it in the light when it was ready, and turned it round now and then, so that even too much light might not make it grow one-sidedly. And when at last it put out a flower for us, we thought more of that than of any ninety-nine blossoms in the great garden. Is not this something like our Lord's cherishing?

Then think how "a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. 2:7). That is, a gentle and wise one. How the little ailments are watched and attended to; how the little weary heads are laid on her shoulders and stroked to sleep; how the little meals are regulated and given; never forgotten, who

ever heard of such a thing! How the little garments are kept clean and comfortable, changed and mended, as need may be. How the nursery fire is looked after (while all the while the guard is kept on the bars), so that the room should not be too hot or too cold. How the little bodies are cared for and loved every inch, even the little fingers and toes! How the little fancies are borne with and entered into, not unheeded or scorned; and the silly little questions patiently answered, and the baby lessons taught, and the small tempers managed, and checked, and forgiven! That is cherishing. Need we trace its close resemblance to the dealings of our infinitely patient and gentle Lord?

Then think of the still higher and closer cherishing of the weak wife by the strong husband, itself shown by the only possible stronger figure, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh but nourisheth and cherisheth it"; this set forth by the Holy Spirit through the pen of an apostle, to convey to you some dim idea of the Lord's love and care and thought for you. What could He say more? For even thus the Lord cherisheth you He gives you His name to bear as your honor, and His very heart to dwell in as the home of your soul. He gives you the right of constant access, the right of continual dwelling in His presence. He makes you partaker of His very nature, joining you unto Himself, not only in a perpetual covenant, but as "one spirit" with Him. He pays all your debts, and now all your wants lie upon Him, and these wants are each and all foreseen and provided for, and supplied with untiring love. He knows in an instant when you are weary or ailing, whether in body or spirit, and knows how to speak the right word for either, speaking verily to your heart, knows, too, when to be silent for a little while. His cherishing goes on night and day, just as much in the dark as in the light; and will go on, faithfully, ceaselessly, all through your lifelong need of it, unto the end; and there is no shadowing whisper to fall upon this life-long manifestation of love, no such word as "till death us do part." No absence of your Lord shall deprive you of it; and all that death can do is to take away the last veil, that you may see face to face, and know even as you are known. His care over you will then be exchanged for perfect joy over you. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

"From glory unto glory."

Though tribulation fall,
It cannot touch our treasure
when Christ is all in all!
Whatever lies before us,
there can be naught to feat;
For what are pain and sorrow
when Jesus Christ is near!"

Chapter 8: Fresh Glory

“My glory was fresh in me.” Job 29:20.

Who does not know the longing for freshness? Fresh air, fresh water, fresh flowers, the freshness of children, and of some people’s conversation and writings, all illustrate or lead up to that spiritual freshness which is both pleasure and power. For it was when Job’s glory was fresh in him, that his bow was renewed in his hand. Freshness and glory! and yet the brilliant music of such words is brought down to a minor strain by one little touch it “was,” not “it is”; a melancholy Past instead of a bright Present. Now, instead of saddening ourselves unnecessarily by sighing, “Ah, yes! that is always the way,” let us see how we may personally prove that it is not always the way, and that Job’s confessedly exceptional experience need not, and ought not, to be ours.

First of all, if our glory is to be fresh in us, it all depends upon what the glory in us is. If it is any sort of our own anything connected with that which decayeth and waxeth old in us or passeth away around us of course it cannot be always fresh, any more that the freshness of dawn or of springtime can last. Neither material nor mental states can retain their exquisite and subtle charm, and spiritual states are no better off; “frames and feelings” have an inherent tendency to subside into flatness, dullness, staleness, or whatever else expresses the want of freshness. There is only one unailing source of unailing freshness Christ Himself. “Thou hast the dew of Thy youth” the only dew that never dries up through any heat or dust. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” His word is, “For her.” Your word should be, “Thou, O Lord, art my glory.” I know it seems a great thing to claim, but the indwelling of Christ is not something reserved for only a few very exalted saints. The words are very plain: “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Take it just as you see it there. Jesus Christ is in you, if you have opened the door of your heart to let Him come in. He is “in you the hope of glory,” if you have admitted Him; and He is your glory. If so, you may sing, “My glory is fresh in me,” and never fear a change to Job’s minor! He had but a prophetic glimpse, through shadowing centuries, of a Redeemer yet to come; you have the full view of the fact of His finished work, and His promised, and therefore present, presence all the days; so this mournful experience only proves how different yours is meant to be.

Jesus Christ is always fresh.

Don’t we know it? Do we not always find Him so, when we are in direct personal communication with Him, with “nothing between”? Are we not conscious that when we lament over want of freshness, it really means want of Jesus? We go and bemoan about it to a friend perhaps, and ask what to do; and all the while, down at the bottom, we are secretly aware that they can do nothing more or better than advise us to “go and tell Jesus” to get into direct personal contact with Him, alone with Him, again! The very same time we spent, in this sort of second-hand cistern-seeking, would be far more resultful if spent in re-opening communion with Him, and drawing from the Fountain itself. That is always open. “All my fresh springs are in Thee,” not in our kind Christian friends.

All that we receive from Jesus is always fresh. How fresh His most familiar words come, when He gives them to us by His Spirit! What is ever fresher than the old, old story, when any part of it is heard with the ear of faith and our response is, "Jesus died for me"? What is ever fresher, whether in outward sacramental act, or in the thousand times repeated heart communion which waits not for time and place, than the remembrance of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, with its appropriating echo, "Jesus loves me!" The water that we draw out of these wells of salvation is always fresh indeed. And so is the manna on which He would have us feed continually.

And so is the oil with which He anoints us. There is the great first anointing to be His kings and priests, wherewith He "hath anointed us" (2 Cor. 1:21). Then comes the present, "Thou anointest my head with oil," as His received and honored guests, sinners though we be, when the table is prepared, and the cup runneth over, and we realize our new position as partakers of His grace. But then comes, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil!" A beautiful Future for all the days of our life; the always fresh anointings, the continual "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Fresh oil of joy in the midst of the mourning through which we may pass, fresh oil of gladness in fellowship with our holy King (Ps. 45:7), fresh oil of consecration as day by day is given up to Him who has redeemed our lives, fresh oil upon the sacrifice as we offer our "praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips." Fresh springs, fresh oil, fresh glory!

With such resources, ought we to feel dusty? Is not the fault in ourselves? And if so, what is to hinder us from coming at once to the Triune source of all blessed renewal and freshness? It is Jesus our Saviour who is the ever fresh glory within us. It is the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, who shall pour His fresh oil upon us. With such resources, ought we not to refresh those around us? Ought they not to take knowledge of us that we have such a well of water within us, springing up into everlasting life? Ought there not to be a dewy fragrance in our lives, in our words and ways, that may silently witness to the reality of the source of our freshness? It is one of our special privileges to do this.

Chapter 9: This God Is Our God

“This God is our God.” Psalm 48:14.

When once we have obeyed the beseeching command, “Be ye reconciled to God,” and, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a right as His reconciled children to take the strong consolation of these words. They are then a seal of appropriation upon the whole revelation.

Every part of God’s word is a revelation, more or less clear, of Himself. When we do not see this, it is only that we miss it, not that it is not there. Do we not know how very possible it is to read the historical parts merely as history, and the prophetic merely as prophecy, and the doctrinal merely as doctrine, and miss the vision of God which everywhere shines through the glass darkly, if only His good Spirit opens our eyes to see it! And even when we do trace out God Himself in His recorded works and ways, how often we miss the personal comfort of remembering our own close and personal interest in what we see of His character and attributes. It makes all the difference to recollect, at every glimpse of these, that “this God is our God!”

It is wonderful what a freshness and reality the simple application of this little verse will give to all our reading. Just try it at once, whatever may be the next passage you read! I question if there is a single chapter, from the first of Genesis to the twenty-second of Revelation, which will not reflect the light of this beautiful little lamp. First ask for the direct and present and fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, that you may behold your God. And then, whether your gaze is turned upon a promise which reveals Him as the Loving One, or a warning which reveals Him as the Just and Holy One; whether you read a history which shows His grand grasp in ordering the centuries, or a verse which shows His delicate touch upon the turn of a moment as you admire, say, “This God is our God.” When you read “Great things doeth He which we cannot comprehend,” and the splendid variety of His book gives a glimpse of His power and glory in upholding the things which are seen, from the hosts of million-aged stars to the fleeting flakes of the “treasures of the snow,” say, “This God is our God.”

When you come to the many direct and gracious declarations of what God is, you will find these words light them up splendidly. “The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” This God is our God! “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.” This God is our God! “Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.” This God is our God! “God is love.” This God is our God!

When you come to those parts of the Bible which are too often undervalued and left out of the daily reading, still, though it may be through a less transparent veil, God will reveal Himself. For instance, when you come to the genealogies in Chronicles, consider how His individual care is illustrated by the otherwise unknown names, noted in His book because of their connection with Christ; no matter how remote that connection, through the distant generations and collateral branches, might seem to human ways of thinking. And then remember that “this God,” who thus

inscribed their individual names for Christ's sake, is "our God" who has inscribed our individual names in the book of life for Christ's sake, because we are chosen in Him. And when we read the life of His dear Son, and see what that beloved Son, in the infinite loveableness of His exquisite perfection, must have been to the Father who yet spared Him not; and, most of all, when we read of the hand of God being laid upon the Man of His right hand, when He made the iniquities of us all to meet on Him, and let Him suffer unto death for us men and for our salvation, then, above all, let us turn to God the Father and say, "This God, who so loved the world, is our God!"

It seems as if this personal relationship to us as our "God," were one in which He specially delights, and which He would have us keep continually in mind. In Deuteronomy, that wonderful book of reminding's, He has caused this gracious name, "the Lord thy God," or "the Lord your God," to be written no less than two hundred and twenty-seven times. What a name for Him to be revealed by to the wayward wanderers of Israel and what comfort to us that He is the same God to us! When you want a helpful Bible subject to work out, suppose you take this, and trace out all through the Bible under what circumstances or with what context of precious teaching He gives these words, and let the gladness of the search be "This God is our God." And then trace out (with your concordance if you like,) the responses to this constantly repeated and heart-strengthening Name, noting and arranging the passages that speak of "Our God." Between these you will find every soul need for time and eternity supplied, from the first great need of the awakened sinner who is met with the words "He that is our God is the God of salvation, "to the fullness of present blessing, "God, even our own God, shall bless us," and the fullness of future joy when "thy God shall be thy glory."

As you study, the claim will grow closer, and the response will intensify from the wide chorus of "Our God" to the fervent thrill of the whisper, "O God, Thou art my God."

Some of us may have an unexpressed notion that, after all, this does not come so near to us as the thought of "Jesus, my Saviour." We almost feel dazzled at the vastness of the idea of "God." And we take refuge, mentally, in what seems more within reach. This is almost always the case in the earlier stages of our Christian life. Having been drawn by the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ, we almost lose sight of the Father in the Son, instead of beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as He intends us to do. Practically, some of us know consciously only one Person in the Blessed Trinity, and do not honor the Father as we honor the Son. If so, let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us on into all truth, and to mature our spiritual powers and widen our spiritual vision that we may know more of what God means when He reveals Himself, not only by some name which human relationships enable us to grasp, but as our God.

We shall not love Jesus less, but more, as we learn to love God, who was in Christ reconciling us to Himself. We shall not be less tenderly grateful for His coming to die for us, but more as we rise to adore the mystery of love which alone illumines the inconceivable eternity of the past when the Word was with God and the Word was God.

We shall find, too, that, while there is more than scope enough in the thought and revelation of God as God for the strongest hour, the very zenith of our intellect, there is rest in it for the weariest hour of the weakest frame. For when my heart and my flesh faileth, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. And this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.

For the sad and sinful
Shall His grace abound;
For the faint and feeble
Perfect strength be found.
I, the Lord, am with thee,
Be thou not afraid!
I will help and strengthen,
Be thou not dismayed!
Yea, I will uphold thee
With My own Right Hand,
Thou art called and chosen
In My sight to stand.

Chapter 10: Thy Hand

“Thy hand presseth me sore.” Psalm 38:2.

When the pressure is sorest, the hand must be nearest. What should we do in suffering if we were left to imagine that it was Satan’s hand that presses so sore! Our Father has not left us any doubt about it. This settles it: “Thy hand”; “Thou didst it” (Ps. 39:9); “It is the blow of Thine hand” (Ps 39:10); “Thy hand was heavy upon me” (Ps. 32:4). It cannot be otherwise, for “in the shadow of His hand hath He hid you” (Isa. 49:2); and how can any other press you there? What is hid in God’s hand must be out of reach of Satan’s.

The hand is the most sensitive member, gifted with the most quick and delicate nerves of touch. When it presses, it instinctively measures the pressure; the contact is the closest possible; the throb which cannot be seen is felt, truly and immediately. This is how His dear hand is pressing you; this is what the pain means.

Have you ever watched the exceedingly delicate and yet firm pressure of the hand of a skillful tuner? He will make the string produce a perfectly true note, vibrating in absolute accord with his own never changing tuning-fork. The practiced hand is at one with the accurate ear, and the pressure is brought to bear with most delicate adjustment to the resistance: the tension is never exceeded, he never breaks a string; but he patiently strikes the note again and again, till the tone is true and his ear is satisfied, and then the muscles relax and the pressure ceases. The string may be a poor little thin one, yielding a very small note; but that does not matter at all; it is wanted in its place: just as much as a great bass one, that can yield a volume of deep sound. The tuner takes just the same pains with it, and is just as satisfied when it vibrates true to the pitch, retaining its own individual tone. That string could not tune itself, and no machine was ever invented to accomplish it; nothing but the firm and sensitive pressure of the tuner’s own living hand can bring it into tune.

Will you not trust your Tuner, and begin a note of praise even under the pressure?

I take this pain, Lord Jesus,

From Thine own hand,

The strength to bear it bravely

Thou wilt command.

I am too weak for effort,

So let me rest,

In hush of sweet submission,

On Thine own breast.

I take this pain, Lord Jesus,
As proof indeed
That Thou art watching closely
My truest need:
That Thou my Good Physician,
Art watching still;
That all Thine own good pleasure
Thou wilt fulfill.

I take this pain, Lord Jesus,
What Thou dost choose
The soul that really loves Thee
Will not refuse:
It is not for the first time
I trust today;
For Thee my heart has never
A trustless "Nay!"

I take this pain, Lord Jesus!
But what beside?
'Tis no unmingled portion
Thou dost provide.

In every hour of faintness,
My cup runs o'er
With faithfulness and mercy
And love's sweet store.

I take this pain, Lord Jesus
As Thine own gift,
And true though tremulous praises
I now uplift;
I am too weak to sing them,

But Thou dost hear
The whisper from the pillow
Thou art so near!
'Tis Thine dear hand, dear
Saviour;
That presseth sore,
The hand that bears the nailprints
For evermore.
And now beneath its shadow,
Hidden by Thee,
The pressure only tells me
Thou lovest me!

Chapter 11: I Pray for Them

“I pray for them.” John 17:9

He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and so while you have been silent to Him, He has been praying for you. If His hand has been upon you so that you could not pray, why need you be mourning over this, when your merciful and faithful High Priest has been offering up the pure and sweet and costly incense of His own intercession? But if your heart condemns you, and you know you gave way to indolent coldness when you might have roused yourself to more prayer, will it not touch you to recollect that, in His wonderful longsuffering, Jesus has been praying instead!

What confident and powerful petitions for His disciples He was pouring out when He said, “I pray for them.” And how gracious of Him to let us overhear such breathings of Almighty love on their behalf. If He had said no more than this, we might have tremulously inferred that, being always the same Lord, He might give us a remote share of some reflected blessing from this prayer. But He anticipates a wish that we should hardly have been bold enough to form, and says: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” Have you believed on Him through their word? Then you have His plain and positive assurance that He was praying for you then, that verse by verse you may take that prayer of prayers and say, “Jesus prayed this for me.” And now that He is the center of the praises of heaven, whence no other echo floats down to us, what is our one permitted glimpse of the continual attitude and occupation of this same Jesus? “Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” That is what He is doing for you now.

Praying for His children

In that blessed place,

Calling them to glory,

Sending them His grace;

His bright home preparing,

Faithful ones, for you;

Jesus ever liveth,

Ever loveth too.

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