

# STREAMS FROM THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

by W.T.P. Wolston

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*Wolston's narrative accounts illustrating how suffering and life circumstances can lead to spiritual awakening and acceptance of Christ's salvation, including the conversion story of a young doctor through illness.*

13 Chapters

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## 01. A PARTING COMMISSION.

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A PARTING COMMISSION. The year 1873 was drawing towards its close, when a number of mutual friends gathered on the platform of one of our railway stations. We had come to say "Farewell" and bid "God speed" to some of the Lord's children who were just leaving Edinburgh for abroad. The foreign-bound travellers consisted of a lady, her youngest daughter and an attendant, proceeding now to join three other members of the family in a lovely part of the West Indies. Just ere the train departed, my friend called me to the carriage window, and, with all the tearful earnestness of a mother's love, said,- "You will keep your eye on Johnny, won't you? Promise me you will." To this I readily assented, adding,- "But you know, young men do not much care to be looked after by those like me." The next moment the train moved off, leaving the subject of this last request in our midst. His position as House-physician in the Infirmary prevented his going with the party to the port of embarkation to see the last of his mother and sister. While they sailed he was to remain in Edinburgh for a few months, and then, having added to his professional acquirements by a visit to the London and Continental seats of medicine, was to rejoin his mother in the before-named far-off isles, where already a bright vista of success and honour lay open before him.

Johnny was the youngest son of his mother — she a widow — and but a few months previously had graduated in medicine at the University of Edinburgh, shortly after attaining his majority.

Tall, slender, singularly muscular and agile, his well developed physique would have drawn the attention of a stranger, apart from the handsome face and head which his broad shoulders supported. His face was very attractive, for the natural grace of the regular and finely-chiselled features, and aquiline nose, was enhanced by a sparkling pair of eyes, brimful of merriment; while constantly the expression varied, and a pleasant smile sat ever on the countenance. His light brown hair, crisp, curly, and short cut, gave him the appearance of being what he was — a thorough-going man in every sense of the word.

Possessed of mental powers far beyond the average, which enabled him quickly to acquire, and easily to retain, whatever he set himself to master, he carried likewise within a tender and affectionate heart, only more powerful than the iron will which knew no controlling force, save when those affections were appealed to. Firmness and tenderness were each in full force, while his bright buoyant disposition, affability, and easy, graceful manners, coupled with a readiness to do anyone a good turn, made him at once, whether at home, at school, at college, or in society, by universal suffrage, that which he deservedly was — a general favourite.

It was with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain that the Christian mother parted from the handsome young Doctor, for while there was so much over which nature could rejoice, there was in his case, she well knew, and he also, the one thing lacking which most her heart desired for her son—the knowledge of Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and the yielding of the heart, yea, of himself, to Him. This I knew also, for I had been well acquainted with dear J- all through his student career, and many a time he had heard me preach the Gospel. On several occasions we had spoken freely

and closely on the matter of the soul's salvation; but, though sometimes interested, it always ended in his relegating the necessity of deciding for Christ to a future day. Enjoyment of the world shut out the claims of Christ; a poor choice surely, as the sequel will show.

## 02. A FOOTBALL MATCH AND ITS FRUIT.

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A FOOTBALL MATCH AND ITS FRUIT. The parting wish of my friend did not escape my memory, and I was pleased, soon after his mother left, to see the young Doctor appear at the Gospel meeting on the Lord's day evening; but plenty of work filled up his time within the hospital, and mine without, so we rarely met, till the month of February, 1874, when an accident which befell him drew us together.

Johnny was a great athlete. It mattered not what line he went in for, he was sure to be head and chief. One of the best all-round cricketers in Scotland, scarcely finding an equal in flat racing, and long and high jumping, his favourite game was football, at which he was such an adept, that a team was counted almost sure of a victory that had him in its ranks; proof of all which stood, on every hand, in his rooms, in the shape of numerous prizes of every description. His fearless play cost him dear. During the progress of a football match, late in January, he came into collision with an opponent, and was flung violently to the ground, receiving a severe and painful injury to one of his knee-joints. Undaunted by the sickening pain he rose, and endeavoured to continue play, an attempt which was followed by a dead faint, in which he was carried off the field, and thence conveyed to his rooms in the Infirmary. Of this circumstance I did not hear till the middle of February, when, one Saturday evening, a note, pencilled by a strange hand, at his request, summoned me to his bedside. Hastening to the Infirmary, I found the once stalwart man more helpless than an infant. The injury to the knee-joint, though at first seeming of but trivial importance, had paved the way for one of the most acute attacks of rheumatic fever I ever witnessed. The injured limb was cradled in a Salter's swing; every other joint was pained and powerless, the only motion possible being that of rolling the head from side to side. Severe pain at the heart told the tale of mischief working in and round that often-before overstrained organ, while the acid moisture that literally gushed from every pore of the skin, kept one nurse constantly employed in vain endeavours to dry the face and brow.

He thanked me for coming, and after getting the details I have just given, and expressing my sorrow at finding him in such a case, I enquired if in any way I could serve him, and why he had sent for me.

"Monday, the 16th, will be the mail day, and I want you to write to my mother," was his reply. To this I most gladly assented, noted what he wished said, and then added, — "And may I tell her that you have found the Lord? She will be sure to want to know that."

He quickly turned his face to the wall, while involuntary tears rolled down his cheeks as he answered, "I wish I could say that; I would give all the world, if I had it, to find Him: but I fear its too late now."

"Not at all," I replied, "it is never too late while you are in life. He is willing to have and to save you, and His word says, 'Now is the accepted time; behold, Now is the day of salvation.' Do you, my dear Johnny, really want to have Christ? This is the only open question.' His answer was very like

himself. "I have been praying to God all day. I am now anxious to find Christ, and to be saved, but I fear it's no use. Besides, it's a cowardly thing to turn now. I know it's only the fear of death that makes me turn."

Much more conversation ensued, during which he opened his mind fully to me, and I sought to open to him, as simply as I could, God's way of salvation, viz. the atoning work and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus on the one hand, and the sinner's simple acceptance by faith of God's offered mercy-apart from all his own works or feelings — on the other.

Having read the Word, and prayed with him, I then left, with instructions to say to his mother that now at length he was "really anxious to be saved."

Dear reader, I wonder whether these last five words express your state. If so, read on.

### 03. "IS THERE NOTHING TO DO BUT BELIEVE?"

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"IS THERE NOTHING TO DO BUT BELIEVE?" For many days dear Johnny's life hung in the balance as the fever ran its painful and wearisome course; at length the corner seemed to have turned, and those who were in constant attendance on him looked confidently for ultimate recovery.

During the space of a month from the first night I saw him in his sickness, I visited him constantly, to speak of Jesus, and press on him the urgent necessity of at once receiving Christ. Other servants of Christ also had access to him, and I doubt not were used of God in deepening the convictions, which it was evident to any soul-winner, he was passing through. A favourite nurse who had charge of the wards under his care, by his own request, late in his illness, was deputed to attend him.

Soon after this, noticing that he was reading a collection of Gospel narratives and papers entitled, "Crumbs for the Hungry," she said to him, "Do you know, Doctor, that it has been reported all through the house that you are converted?"

"Yes," he replied, "I wish it were true; I wish I were converted." That wish was soon to be gratified, to his joy and ours. By the mail of 2nd March, he had sufficiently rallied to be able to pen a few lines to his mother, telling her of his hope of full and rapid recovery. Perhaps the exertion of this may have been too much for his exhausted frame; but, be it as it may, within a few days bad symptoms again set in, and hopes gave place to the gravest apprehension on the part of those who watched him, when, on Friday, the 13th, vomiting of the most intractable character set in, and lasted persistently day and night till the end. This day I saw him, still unsaved; but his physical condition was such that I could say but a few words, pointing him again to the Lord Jesus as the friend of sinners. Pressure of work quite prevented an intended visit on the Saturday; but on Lord's day afternoon an uncontrollable impulse led me, spite of much hindrance, to his bedside. A glance told me that Death had marked him as an early victim. To me it seemed now, or never. By his request we were left alone.

Daylight was fading, but just enough remained to permit me to read from my little pocket Testament the lovely tale of the return of the wanderer, and the welcome he received (Luke 15:11-32.) Dear J- listened as he had never done before; he owned his sin, his misspent life, his often stifled convictions when in health, his ill-treatment of Christ, and of the grace of God. He had "come to himself," on the verge of the grave. "Repentance toward God," was manifest in the way he judged himself, and the whole, past in view of God and Eternity. "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" was as yet, however, wanting.

Turning to Paul's 1st Epistle to Timothy, I read once and again to him that blessed 15th verse — resting place of countless weary self-judged hearts and empty sinners;

"THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, OF WHOM I AM CHIEF." Its sweetness and

fulness the Holy Ghost applied in power to his soul, and he saw that Christ had come for such as he — sinners. One difficulty remained: he had done nothing good in God's sight-plenty of that which he now, and truly, judged bad. Satan, fearful to lose a victim, suggested the necessity of his doing something. To this I cited the case of the dying thief, saved in the very jaws of death, unable to do ought but fear God, judge himself, confess Christ, and cast himself unreservedly on Him (Luke 23:39-43), and reminded him of the dying words of the blessed Lord, "It is finished."

There was a moment's pause, and then the final query fell from his lips, "But, Doctor, is there nothing to do but believe?"

"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED," was my only reply. The setting sun gave me just light enough to see that with clasped hands, and eyes closed to all earthly scenes, his lips were moving in prayer. "Behold, he prayeth," is a great word for God to say of a sinner on earth (Acts 9:11). It is the moment of deliverance. A minute or two after he turned his head to me, as tears filled his eyes, and softly said, — "I believe Him now. I can trust Him now. I see it all."

Peace filled his heart, and praise filled mine, while deeper and fuller than either was the joy in heaven over this younger son, about whom the Father could say, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:24.)

He begged me to kneel and thank God for His abundant mercy to him in thus saving him. This done, I left him, with a restful look on his wasted, yet still handsome countenance, that had never been seen there before.

## 04. "WILL HE LET ME SLIP AT THE LAST?"

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"WILL HE LET ME SLIP AT THE LAST?"

Late visit on Lord's day evening, and one early on Monday morning, gave me glad confirmation as to dear Johnny's simple and real faith in the Lord. He now begged I would be with him as much as possible, and a promise of an evening visit was a comfort to him. In the afternoon his strength rapidly gave way, and now, for the first time, I think, he himself laid aside all hopes of recovery. This evidently led to a touching scene between him and the nurse I have already mentioned, which she narrated to me two days afterwards.

Some time before I saw him at night he had sent for her, and on her entering the room at once said, "Helen, go down on your knees, and give me both your hands." This she did, when he went on: "Promise me, Helen, that if I die, you will never cease seeking salvation till you find it."

Bursting into tears at this appeal, she sobbed, "I am too great a sinner."

"No," he rejoined: "remember, no one is too great a sinner to find salvation. I thought so too till yesterday, when Dr. W- led me to know and believe, that I was not too great a sinner for Jesus to save."

Noticing her tears, he added, — "Don't cry for me; I am going to heaven. Promise to meet me there. Don't believe in works, Helen; believe simply in Jesus."

Thus, immediately, did the new-born one seek the blessing of others: finest proof of grace really tasted. A little respite in his sickness now ensuing, she endeavoured to cheer him, saying, — "You are a little better, Doctor; try and bear up. Perhaps you will get better yet. Many a prize you have won, and many an honour gained."

Putting out his wasted hand he interrupted her, motioned her to silence, and then said: "Now I have gained the crown of glory. I am dying, and I am not afraid to die. I am dying happy." When I reached him between ten and eleven p.m., I saw a very great change since the morning. He welcomed me with a sweet smile, and — "I'm so glad you have come." The nurses leaving us alone, I got by his side, and then softly said, — "Going home, Johnny?"

"They think I'm dying," he replied. "What do you think?"

"It looks very like it, dear."

"Yes, I think so too," he quietly rejoined.

"And you are going to Jesus? "

He turned his lustrous eyes on me, and inquired, "Do you think He will let me slip at the last?"

"Not He," I said, "it is not like Him."

"But I have known Him such a short while"

"Never mind that; you do know Him?"

"Yes."

"And trust Him simply?"

"Yes."

There was a slight pause, and then, the enemy making a final assault on this babe in Christ, he took my hand in both his own emaciated ones, and with a wistful gaze right into my eyes that I can never forget, added, "But, Doctor, are you sure he won't let me slip, just at the very last?"

"Listen to His own words," I rejoined. 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE; and they SHALL NEVER PERISH, NEITHER SHALL ANY (man or devil) PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND. My Father, which gave them me, is GREATER THAN ALL; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand' (John 10:27-29). There, will that do?" The cloud was dispelled, the enemy routed by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" and as the sweetest smile of contented joy broke over his wasted countenance, he pressed my hand firmly, and said: "Yes, His will be done; but oh, comfort my mother!"

Much more passed that I need not relate, save to add that now, in the full light of eternity so near at hand, he again reviewed his life, only to judge it, while extolling the mercy of God which had met and saved him at the last moment of his earthly history. On my asking him if he was dying happily, he replied, "Yes, quite happily; nevertheless, I should have liked to have lived a little while, to serve and please the Lord." A parting message to his mother, and an assurance, with his love, that he would meet her in heaven, though never more on earth, exhausted his strength; and at his request, I again thanked the Lord for his salvation, and then, being called away, left him, promising to return at midnight.

## 05. "THE LORD HATH NEED OF HIM."

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"THE LORD HATH NEED OF HIM."

These were the words on which A's eye fell on the morning of Tuesday, 17th March, 1874, as she referred to the Scripture Almanack for the verses for the day.

Turning to her elder sister, she exclaimed, "Johnny is dead!" The sisters, with their mother, had received the first tidings of his illness a week previous to this date, and naturally were most anxious for each fortnightly mail. The Lord, in His tender mercy, took this wondrous way of breaking the news of joy and sorrow. Never were words more prophetic, and more precious.

Midnight had passed, and Tuesday, 17th, had begun its course with us when I got back to the Infirmary. My young friend was rapidly sinking. Though racked with pain, he listened gratefully through the night to the verses of Scripture I whispered in his ear, and would oft reply, — "Tell me more; tell me more." His last words to me, spoken about 7 a.m., soon after which he became unconscious, were, — "If I die, all is well." With his head resting in my hands, he gently breathed his last at 7.25 a.m., and his spirit leaving the now much-altered tenement, passed to be "for ever" with that Lord whose grace he had tasted on earth for but six-and-thirty hours.

Round his bed stood his grandmother, two friends, three nurses, and a kind fellow-resident physician, who had most tenderly and assiduously watched him day and night through his long illness; and as we thanked God for the eternal salvation, at the twelfth hour, of him who had just left our midst, not an eye was dry, not a heart that was not touched to its depths. The dying request, "Comfort my mother," suggested the wording of the message which the telegraph wires in due course carried abroad — "Seventeenth. Johnny departed peacefully in Christ" — tidings which at once would break and bind again the mother's heart, telling, as it did, of her loss, his gain, and God's mighty, faithful grace, and answer to those countless prayers which, until now, had apparently laid unanswered on His table. Christian mothers, go on praying for your unconverted sons! As long as memory endures will the scene of the beloved young graduate's interment abide. The tidings of his death produced universal regret through the University, not to speak of the sorrow, and expressed sympathy for his family, of numberless friends by whom he was loved both in town and in county. His compeers and fellow-students resolved on a public funeral. Four abreast, some six or seven hundred young men preceded the hearse, while on foot behind came the Resident Physicians and Surgeons of the Infirmary, and then a long string of carriages.

Perhaps, never again will the quiet and picturesque Dean Cemetery witness such a concourse round an open grave, as stood there that lovely Friday afternoon.

Funeral services are uncommon in Scotland, but just before the coffin was lowered, as the sun in warmth and brilliancy flung its rays full on the scene, nature the while restraining song of bird and sound of wind, so that a vast silence reigned over the mute assembly, the voice of prayer and thanksgiving was heard ascending. Thanks were rendered on account of him who was gone, sustaining grace and ministry of Divine sympathy besought for the sorrowing mother and family,

and present and eternal blessing for the many young men who knew him in life, and now witnessed the last of him on earth, invoked.

Then was read, "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still, And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." (Luke 7:11-15.) The parallel and contrast between that day and this was shortly pointed out. Then, the blessed Lord comforted the widow by giving life to her son, but only for time. This day, how much deeper and fuller was the comfort He was ministering to the widowed mother, in first giving eternal life to the young man, and then, with a full consciousness of where he was going, taking him home, to be for ever with Himself. Each heart responded to this, so then turning to the many who had known him well, I said: "You know how he lived, let me tell you how he died. The qualities which caused him to be loved by all, and envied by none, give no ground for acceptance with God: that alone is found, where he found it, in the blood of Jesus." The details I have already given were mainly presented, followed by an earnest appeal to all who were yet undecided for Christ, to at once turn to Him, receive forgiveness of sins, and eternal life through faith in His name, and then live for Him who died for us. Never saw I more young men with bowed heads, moved hearts, and melted feelings. What the result may be, the day of the Lord alone can declare. The remains were then laid in their last earthly resting-place; precious seed, sown in faith, soon to spring up in resurrection bloom and unfading beauty, when He comes for whom we wait; for truly saith the Scripture, "Sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory;" and "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And now, dear reader, permit me to ask, how stands it between thee and the Lord? Art thou still on the world's side? Art thou still a wanderer from God? Let me beseech thee no longer to do thyself harm. Young man — and it is for thee mainly that I have written these pages — wilt thou not now turn to the Lord? Venture not on delay, I pray thee. Because God's sovereign grace gave the one of whom I have written space to repent, and time to believe on a death-bed, is that an argument why thou shouldst delay? Nay. Beware! lest, cut down suddenly, the same mercy be not extended to thee.

Hast thou a lease of life? No. Then is there the more urgent reason why, as thou readest this, thou shouldst bow to the Lord Jesus, and believe Him simply. God loves thee. Christ has died for sinners such as thee. The Holy Spirit waits to seal the new-born soul that trusts in Jesus. Come to Him now, then. Surely the years now past may suffice to have wrought thine own will; begin this new one with God. Let 1876 be the year to which in eternity thou canst point back, and say with heart-felt joy, Then, I came to the Lord. Fear not to cast thyself simply on Him. None are too bad for Jesus to save. Let the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," since it is "worthy of all acceptance," have thy acceptance on the very spot where now thou readest this tale of God's grace to one like thyself. The Lord, in His abundant goodness, grant a present blessing to every young man who may read the foregoing narrative of His mercy!

## 06. FOUR THINGS WORTH KNOWING.

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### FOUR THINGS WORTH KNOWING.

I want to bring under your notice, beloved reader, four portions of the Acts of the Apostles, in which, occur the words, "Be it known unto you." They bring out four things which are well worth knowing. Thank God, I know them, and God wants you to know them too. They contain in themselves the true secret and spring of joy down here, and for all eternity by and bye.

1. JESUS MADE LORD AND CHRIST. Will you take your Bible and read the 2nd Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles?

There, "Peter standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice and said, Ye men of Judea, and all that dwell at Jerusalem, BE THIS KNOWN UNTO YOU . . . Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . . This Jesus hath God raised up . . . being by the right hand of God exalted. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (vv. 14-36). The consequences of the death and resurrection of Christ are stupendous. Here is a reversal of Babel; God had come down there and confused their tongues. Now Jesus has been obedient, Jesus has glorified God, Jesus has died, and the result of the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus, and His being raised from the dead, is that God can send down the Holy Ghost to teach in every language the things concerning Himself. Know this, says Peter, there was once in this world a man that honoured God, every one else has dishonoured God, but there has lived in this scene, and died out of this scene, a man whose every thought, and every word, and every action was suitable to God, and glorified God, and God has now glorified this One. But how did man treat Him whom God thus honoured? Man cast Him out! Have you ever thought of this fact, God's Son has been murdered in this world? A false friend betrayed Him, a true one denied Him, and all forsook Him and fled. Pilate would have released Him, for even to the hard Roman Governor it was plain there was no fault in Him, but what did the multitude cry? "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend." Caesar's friends must side with Caesar, and Jesus' friends must side with Jesus, and there was no one there that day to side with Jesus. "Away with Him, away with Him," is the cry: chief priests and scribes, the religious men and the rabble, all join to swell that cry; and now thought Pilate, "Caesar is my master, and I should not like to offend Caesar, I might lose my place or my popularity." Ah! beloved friend, many a man barter his soul rather than lose his popularity in this world. But Pilate does not want His death — he has another resource — he brings out the poor miserable guilty Barabbas, the robber and fierce murderer, and side by side they stand — the cruel robber and murderer, and the peerless Son of God, and Pilate asks which he should release unto them. You would have said there could be no doubt as to their answer. Jesus had healed their sick, raised their dead, done good to all, and the other was a wretched murderer — they must choose Jesus. Listen, then, listen to their awful cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" "Not this man,

but Barabbas!" And then they mock Him, and scourge Him, and on that peerless head they place a crown of thorns, and they lead him forth to die. The robber's cross, the heavy murderer's cross — prepared, I doubt not, for the robber, on which to expiate his crimes — was laid on Jesus, and He who had lift in Himself was led forth to dark Golgotha's scenes of agony and death. But you will say, "Do you charge us with being the murderers of the Son of God?" No, but if still unconverted, I charge you with being partners with the world that slew Him. You may not have swelled that rabble cry, "Away with Him!" but you are indifferent to Him. You take the side of the world that did it; are you not still in the world and of the world? Does it not own you and claim you? and does not God know full well you are not yet Christ's, and have never bowed the knee to Him? Do you say, The world is different now! Is it? Carry Christ into the street, and you will soon find if it is altered. A crowd will gather to listen to a German band or to see a puppet show, and no opposition be excited, but do you get up and speak of Christ at the corner of a street, and what will you find? Presently Policeman B274, comes up, and touching you on the shoulder, says, "You must move on, the thoroughfare cannot be obstructed;" or, "There is no room for this kind of thing here." Ah, no! there is no room for Christ; there is room for everything else; but I never knew the time yet when the world wanted Christ. The world does not care about God, — does not want Christ. It did not want Christ in that day, and it does not care about Jesus in this day. If any one does want Jesus, I have blessed news for that one. Jesus wants you, dear friend: more, far more than you want Him, Jesus wants you!

God has exalted the One you have not cared about as yet. God reverses the action of the world. The world mocks and, scourges Him; God sets Him at His own right hand. The world murders Him; God raises Him from the dead. God steps into the scene where man has done his worst — murdered the Son of God-and God lifts Him from the grave, and puts Him on His throne till he makes His foes His footstool. Are you His foe? "I hope not," you say. Are you His friend then? "I hope so." Well, I will tell you one thing, if you truly are the friend of Christ, you like His company, you like to be near Him. That is how I gauge my friends. My friend likes to be near me, likes to be with me. Do you say you are not His foe? Well, be honest, are you His friend then? A friend must show himself friendly. If you are not His friend, not siding with Him, you must be His foe, and it is a terrible thing to be a foe of the Lord Jesus; you will be His footstool in the day of His coming glory. But would you not like to be a friend of this blessed Lord Jesus? If you are not His friend, you are guilty of the deepest, blackest sin outside of hell, — indifference, aye, deep rooted enmity to God's blessed Son. Not merely are you a sinner, but you are a guilty sinner. Guilty of slighting the Lord Jesus. Peter says, Do you know this? The first fact God presses is this, you have slain the Son of God, there is your guilt. And God has put Him in glory. Have you been going on, wearing a garb of religiousness, without having Christ? Then you are a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you are not. And there is another side to it too, viz., covering up what is really there. It is hypocrisy, too, if you love Him and do not own Him, — are ashamed to take His side. Do you say, "He is Lord?" "Yes." But is He your Lord? You will have to own Him Lord some day, but will you own it only when you are His footstool? Which is better, to be a friend of Christ's now, and a friend of Christ's in that day, or a foe now, and His footstool when He comes to reign? My friend, look to it, have you only the name of a Christian, or have you Christ? Are you a real or a counterfeit Christian? If you are a counterfeit one, I will carry you on a little farther; perhaps you have grey hairs, and a long life of religiousness behind you, but death is before you, and when you die, a long funeral procession follows you to the grave, in which you are buried, and friends mourn you,

and your name is recorded on your tombstone, and a list of your virtues, perhaps, but what then? There is another day coming, the day of the first resurrection, but you do not rise, and the Lord's people, all the dead and living, go up to meet Him, but you do not go up; they are for ever with Him, but you are not there. And long after there comes another day, and another resurrection, and the great white throne is set, and the Lord whom you never knew, sits on that throne, and there you stand before Him and before the whole universe of God in your true character — an unveiled liar. All your robe of religiousness torn from you, and you in your sins before your judge! Do you say, "This is terrible language?" The more the pity that it should apply to you then. It is true language, as true as terrible.

Turn now for a moment to the next thing Peter wants us to know, viz., that 2. SALVATION IS IN HIS NAME.

"BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU all, and to all the people of Israel. that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him both this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:10-12.

Man slew Him, but God raised Him and put Him in glory. His name is down here on earth to be trusted in. And now this moment, as you read these lines, you may know the power of that name. God grant you may! Can you say, He is my Saviour? — can you say it honestly? Do you say "He is a Saviour." That will not do; it is no use to you His being a Saviour if He is not your Saviour. The moment a soul trusts in Jesus, it is saved. If you have come to Jesus, if you are looking to Jesus, if your soul is reposing in Jesus, salvation is your birthright, as a sinner now. You may know now that He is your Saviour. The reason I know I am saved is, not that I knew I was among the elect, but that I knew I was among the lost, and He came to seek and save the lost. He will never shake a sinner off that clings to Him, He will not shake off the feeblest soul that clings to Him.

Yes, His throne must come down ere He shakes a sinner off that trusts Him. Will you not trust Him? Will you not have salvation? Do you say, "I see that He is exalted up there, and I see that His name is proclaimed down here, and there is no salvation in any other, but is it for me?"

Let Paul answer that question, as he gives us the third thing God wants us to know.

3. FORGIVENESS PREACHED, AND JUSTIFICATION OBTAINED THROUGH HIM. BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39).

"But," you answer, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Whose sins? "Whose? why everybody's, of course." That is not true, you do not believe everybody is forgiven. Do you believe in the forgiveness of Paul's sins? He believed that himself. Do you believe in the forgiveness of mine? I believe that myself, thank God. But do you believe your own sins are forgiven? — it is all nothing to you if yours are not forgiven. Because Christ's blood has been shed, and He has glorified God about sin, therefore forgiveness can be preached to you. "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things." By Him, not by your tears or your prayers, or anything you can do.

God comes out and forgives, as we get in the case of the two debtors in Luke 7:1-50. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." The one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty, but neither could pay, and He forgives in His own style, "He frankly forgave them both." There is the action, and the style of the action — without a grudge — that is the way God forgives a sinner. Oh, taste His love just now, come to Him now, believe Him now, taste His forgiveness and believe His word. Here is the third thing that I am to know — that I am forgiven — I am justified. Praise the Lord! Do you believe on Him? Then you are to know you are forgiven and justified. All that believe are justified. Satan cannot raise a single charge. God justifies, who will condemn? Christ died for me and was condemned for me, that He might never condemn me. He will not condemn the one He has died for. Does Satan say, "Look at your sins?" Ah, I say, "Look at my Saviour." Does he bring up my unworthiness? "Look at my Saviour," again I say, "He has met every charge for me, and He is worthy."

Many tell me they do not feel saved, or feel forgiven; but you must know you are forgiven before you can feel forgiven know you are justified before you can feel justified, The last wondrous fact I bring under your notice is that, 4. THE SALVATION OF GOD IS SENT TO THE GENTILES.

"And when they had appointed him (Paul) a day, there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." His last words to them were:-

"BE IT KNOWN, THEREFORE, UNTO YOU, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." Acts 28:23-28. It is sweet to see how, in two or three words, God sometimes heaps up the whole of the blessing He proposes to bestow on the soul.

"The salvation of God!" The moment I hear the word "salvation" it brings this to my mind. if God sends me salvation, it is clear I have not got it, that needs no proving; and if God sends it, it proves, too, that I need it. Salvation comes from God, that is the source. You are the recipient, and the thing sent is exactly what you need! This was Paul's last sermon, and it was a very grand one, twelve hours long; his whole object was to make Jesus precious to their souls; and he kept them from morning till evening, speaking of Jesus to them, and it is the very sweetest work possible. I would rather be pleading with you for Jesus, seeking to make Him precious to you, than be Ambassador from the British nation to the greatest foreign court.

I will not detain you for twelve hours now, I promise you; but this I also promise you, that if you believe the word concerning Jesus, you will be a saved person ere you lay down this paper. Were you steeped in sins when you took it up, you may become whiter than snow ere you lay it down, through the precious blood of Jesus, God's beloved Son. Do you say, "I do not believe in sudden conversions." Well, I daresay you will be like those in the 24th verse of this chapter, "And some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not."

Why did they not believe? Because they listened to the Devil's insinuation, just as you are listening to it now. There is one who believes in sudden conversions more firmly than any in the universe of God. Shall I tell you who that is? The most firm and thorough believer in sudden conversions is the devil! Perhaps you never thought of that before. I will prove it to you. Look at Luke 8:12. "Those by the wayside are they that hear, then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of

their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." The moment you hear the word of God, you are on this platform — those by the wayside: then, — then what? Mark this. Then cometh the devil, the moment they hear, lest they should believe and be saved. Was I right? Did I tell the truth just now? Ah, the devil knows full well that if you believe the message God is sending you through this paper, you will be saved on the spot. Satan knows well what the effect of the Gospel is, — hear, believe, be saved, and how quickly? Quicker than the time it takes you to read the words. The devil knows the truth of this full well; he knows the Gospel, he knows the effect, knows the power, knows the force of the Gospel far better than most, even, of those who preach it, and because he knows the power of the Gospel so well, he comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. He does not care what he brings in to draw the eye off Christ, or distract the soul from believing the word of God.

I know you have never thought of this before, never thought you could be saved where you sit, you have thought salvation was a long process, something you had to do. Satan likes you to believe that; if he can possibly help it he will not let you believe God has done it all, and that you may have salvation just now through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Some believed, and some believed not," and so it will always be; but the man who does not believe is an infatuated man, has not the wariness of a bird even. "How can you say that?" do you ask. Well, the Psalmist says, "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and Satan sets his net for you now and whispers to you, "Do not you believe in sudden conversions, do not you take in this sort of thing, you have a good deal to do before you can be saved." But, I say, if Satan did not believe so firmly in sudden conversion himself, he would not be so anxious to keep you from believing in the possibility of it. Oh, believe the word that God has sent to you just now! He sends to you a message of salvation, and you must accept it or refuse it, and remember, my friend, if you will not take God's salvation you must take God's damnation, for there is no middle ground. So do not trifle with God's offer of salvation. Remember, there is no door out of hell, though there is an awfully wide door into it. Take care that you do not go in by that wide doorway — procrastination! Are you a rich man trusting in your riches? If you have not Christ, what is it all worth? You are a poor man if you have not Jesus, you have more sins than sovereigns, more guilt than wealth, and when you lie in the grave, and the worms feed upon you, who has your gold then? "My posterity," you say. Yes, but who has your soul? Satan has your soul, — your soul is in hell. Whatever you have got, if you have not Jesus, it is all nothing. And, Oh! tell me, would not you like to know Jesus, to possess Jesus today? "Yes," you say, "I would willingly barter all I possess to win this salvation:" that will not do. God is too rich to sell salvation and you are too poor to buy it. It must be His own free gift, salvation is free for everybody who cares to have it.

Having glanced at the four things that God would have us know, 1st, that Christ has gone to glory, God has put Him there, though man cast Him out: 2nd, His name is down here on earth to be trusted in: 3rd, that by Him I am forgiven and justified: and now 4th, the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it; I would ask you, my friend, one solemn question ere I close, Where are you? Do you believe the things, or do you not? And I warn you, if God sends you salvation, do not you refuse it You get salvation by accepting the Saviour. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Simeon said, for he held the Saviour in his arms.

What a salvation to refuse! Will you not take it? You have nothing to do but to take what God offers. Receive Christ, and salvation is yours both now and for ever. Receive Him and you have everything in Him. Christ is like a golden casket, and in that golden casket a magnificent specimen of every precious stone that is known. The casket is gold, and I have everything in that casket. Everything is in Christ, I have life in Him, acceptance too, He is made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Possessing Christ I all possess, I have everything in Him, and I have only to fall down and thank God. And can I lose it? Never! I shall lose eternal life the day Christ loses it, not before; for I have been accepted in Christ. He took all my sins and He is my righteousness. May you, dear friend, lay down this paper knowing what Christ is, that from your heart you may echo the lines of sweet hymn, "I have a glorious Saviour, Who died upon the tree; My sins he bare, and suffered there The wrath of God for me!"

## 07. GOD SAYS I AM SAVED.

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GOD SAYS I AM SAVED. Not long since I was asked to visit a young girl, about seventeen years of age, who had injured herself, and was thought to be dying. I had known her for some time, and was aware she was very delicate, but on calling learned she had fallen out of bed, and received an injury to the back of her head, which it was judged would eventually prove fatal. Being under the care of another surgeon, I had nothing to do with her treatment, so after making a few enquiries as to her bodily suffering, which was great (specially when moved by others, for she was almost completely paralysed), I began to speak to her about the state of her soul.

"Are you quite happy?" I said.

"No, sir."

"Why? Are you not saved?"

"I am not sure."

"But why are you not sure? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, but I don't feel saved."

"Do you feel lost? "

"Yes I do;" and she now began to weep.

"Why do you know you are lost?"

"Because I am a sinner, and God's Word says so."

"Then you believe His Word, do you?"

"Oh, yes, sir, indeed I do."

"Well, then, His Word says, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved;' do you believe that?"

"Yes."

"But are you looking to Jesus?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't feel as I should like to."

"Granted; but does it say, Look unto Me and feel saved?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Be ye saved."

"What?"

"Be ye saved."

"When is that, today or tomorrow?"

"When I look."

"But are you looking?"

"Yes, I am really looking to Jesus."

"Then are you saved?" She paused a moment and then firmly replied,

"I don't feel it, but God says I am saved. I see it now." The next moment her eye lit up, and her pallid face told the tale of a new spring of joy having been opened to her.

"Well," I said, "if any one were to come in and ask you now if you were saved, what would you say?"

"I would say 'Yes.'"

"And if they asked you how you knew it and were sure of it, what would you say?"

"I would say that I do believe in Jesus, and God says in His Word, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life; and though I don't feel it, I do believe what God says."

"Then you rest your soul on Jesus and on God's Word?"

"Yes, sir, I do; and I could die happy now. I'd like to go at once to Jesus."

"You have no fears No, none."

"No doubts?"

"No; why should I? I see it all clearly. I'm only a poor sinner — and Jesus died for me — and I believe in Him — and God says I am saved — and so I know I am."

I had a little more conversation, and called two days after to find her truly filled with joy and peace in believing. Her face shone with the joy the knowledge of God alone can impart. Leaving town for a few weeks, I found, on my return, that she had lingered about a month, giving a constant bright testimony of Christ to all about her, and, full of quiet, calm rest and joy in Christ until the end, had at length passed to be for ever with Him. And now, dear reader, a word with you about the state of your soul. Are you saved — or lost? Which? Don't shirk the question. It must be answered soon. The longest life has its end. Who has given you a lease of long life? A long eternity you shall have. Where will you spend it? Another day may find you in it. Gone for ever from earth, where Christ died, "suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Gone where? With Christ? Or without Him? Would it be without Him? You tremble to say "Yes." Stop — listen! Your future is awful. Forgotten by man — forsaken by God — for ever in hell. Oh! pause a moment in your downward course. List the voice of love speaking to you — speaking from heaven — "Come unto Me" — "Look unto Me" — "I am Jesus." — "By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

You have nought to do but take your true place as a lost sinner now before God. Acknowledge your sin. Justify Him — He'll justify you. It is all summed up in the sweet confession of the dying girl. May you this day be able to say, like her, "I'm only a poor sinner — Jesus died for me — I believe in Him — God says I am saved and so I know I am."

"Rise, my soul! behold 'tis Jesus, Jesus fills my wondering eyes;

See Him now, in glory seated, Where thy sins no more can rise!

## 08. THE FOUR SUPPERS.

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### THE FOUR SUPPERS.

You will find four suppers spoken of in the New Testament — all entirely different in character. God invites us to be present at three, but not at the fourth. It is because men will pay no heed to the invitation to the first supper that they will be present at the last. Whoever is present at the first supper, and a partaker of it, has the privilege of being at the second supper, will certainly be present at the third, and will not be at the fourth. On the other hand, whoever rejects the first, even though he takes the second, will certainly not be present at the third, and is in very great danger of being present at the fourth.

1. THE SUPPER OF SALVATION. The first is given from the lips of our blessed Lord in Luke 14:1-35, which I would ask my reader to carefully peruse. There we see the Lord going into the Pharisee's house; He heals the man with dropsy; He bids them choose the lower place, and then in verse 13 He says, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Here we get instruction from the lips of the Lord about the resurrection of the just, as contrasted with the resurrection of the unjust, and from other parts of Scripture we learn that the former takes place at least a thousand years before the latter.

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

I suppose there is no person but would echo this and say, What a blessed thing to eat bread in the kingdom of God! to be in the resurrection of the just — a time of full and thorough blessing under the hand of God in a future day -what a blessed thing to be with the Lord! a blessed thing to be saved! Yes, but let me ask you, — Do YOU know it? Are you saved? Are you blessed? Have you eaten this bread? You say, "I cannot tell." Then you do not really believe it is blessed. This man was a mere religionist, who wished to pay the Lord a compliment, like those in the present day who are content with a mere form of religion, who have never been broken down before God, and have never eaten this bread, have never entered into what Jesus is. If I really believe it is blessed to eat bread in the kingdom of God, I shall leave no stone unturned until I am sure I have eaten it. The Lord at once detects what the state of the man is. Everyone says, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" — but when you bring the Gospel down to man, alas! man does not care for it. Man is so deeply degraded, so full of himself, so proud too, that he does not care to go down amongst the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind — he has got a great many things between himself and God to hinder this. Have not you, dear reader, paid attention to everything within your reach, and the only thing you have really neglected is your soul? Your body you have cared for well — you have fed it, clothed it, cared for it, protected it, pampered it, indulged it; but as for your soul, you have cared nothing for it. The salvation of the soul with men was always a secondary thing, and is always displaced by pleasure and endeavouring to get on in this world; and is it not the same with you? Yes, unless you have been broken down by the grace of God,

smashed to pieces, as it were, before Jesus, and been made glad to take salvation. The Lord then says, as it were, to this man, "I will test you. You say, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread" etc. I will see whether you are in earnest. "A certain man made a great supper and bade many." The "certain man" is God. Mark the word great: it is not merely a supper, but "a great supper" — great because of the elements included in the supper, great because of the One who spreads it, great because of the wondrous grace that spread it for those who, alas! would only slight and despise it.

Why is it a supper? No doubt the Lord meant here the blessed Gospel, that love of God which is travelling out now to sinners, and pressing on them that which he gives — eternal life through the Saviour's precious name. There is something peculiarly interesting in its being supper — not breakfast, nor dinner, but supper. Which meal is that? The last meal in the day. I understand therefore that this is the last dealing of God in grace towards man; the Gospel now preached is the very last dealing of God in grace with man: the next dealing will be the midnight of judgment. When Israel was in Egypt, in Exodus 12:1-51 we read, "At midnight there was a cry heard." God is abroad in the land at midnight: there is nothing but destruction and ruin, and judgment for those who had no part in the supper inside, where the blood of the lamb was upon the door-post. What a lesson is therein taught us!

There was a morning of innocence, where everything was beautiful and bright, and all shone fair; but the woman was deceived by the devil, Adam followed his wife into ruin and sin, and man was cast out. Then came the noonday — the trying and testing of man under law, and man became a law-breaker. Then the Lord Jesus comes Himself in the evening of the ways of God, in fulness of grace, gentleness, kindness, and goodness. What then? They spit in His face, and say, "Away with Him." The last thing is, the Holy Ghost comes down and tells the news "It is finished" that God has spread a feast for man, and that all that man has to do is to eat of the feast God in blessed love has provided. Who has He bidden? He has bidden you. Have you believed it? Have you accepted it? God prepares a supper, and sends servants to say, "Come, for all things are now ready." There is the Gospel note! Do you want salvation? "Come, for all things are now ready." Do you want pardon, forgiveness, eternal life? "Come." Do not stop away and think you have something to do — "all things are now ready." How sweet is that word "Come." Whoever you are, Come! and find all ready. I want righteousness, you tell me. God has provided righteousness, in Christ-life, cleansing, justification, all things are ready in Christ. But now of the bidden ones, what did they do? "They all with one consent began to make excuse" — every one of them. Have not you made excuse? One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." The man puts his bit of land in between his soul and God. Another says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused." There is no open rebellion, yea, there is external politeness — "I pray thee have me excused." The moment God wants to have you and Himself in close quarters, you say No. Man cannot have it. "I pray thee have me excused." How solemn!

If God spreads a supper, it is not merely that you are to be blessed, though that is included — the grand and great thought in God's heart is that He wants you and me near to Himself.

If I go to a supper, I go because of the person who bids me and makes me welcome. God says, "I want to have you in My presence, to feed you with what I have provided." Man says, "I pray Thee have me excused." Oh! what a heart man has got! And what a heart has God got, longing to bless!

You say, "What a desperately bad man that must have been." Stop, have you eaten the bread? Have you accepted? Not yet. Then you are the man, because you have put something in between — it may not be a piece of land, it may not be five yoke of oxen, but it is something that keeps God and you asunder.

Another says, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Was that a good excuse for refusing God's supper? Had he been a right-minded man, had he had a sense of the grace of him who invited him, he would have gone himself and taken his wife with him; but he makes her the excuse. How easily the Lord reads thus the secrets of our hearts! How easily the devil finds an excuse in the things of life to hinder us!

If you are in earnest, if you have got a deep sense that you are on the verge of eternal damnation, you will not care for wife, husband, father, mother, brother, sister, master, or servant, you will fling all aside in determined, unquenchable desire to have salvation.

If you do not know your need, if you are not thoroughly broken down, you are always glad to make an excuse, and you think it a good one. Do you think it will be a good excuse when the Lord says, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" You will be speechless then, and He will say, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." If, my friend, you are an excuse-maker (what an awful occupation! yet the devil has crowds of apprentices young and old), give that trade up on the spot, for you are forging the chains, soldering the rings that must hold you through all eternity in the depths of hell!

Excuses have ruined and damned thousands of souls. Have you one solitary excuse that will bear the light of that day? Not one! You say, "I am too bad, too old, too young." No, the Lord says, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

Oh! that the Lord may show you the sin of these devilish, (for so they are in truth) excuses why you should not come to God. The true reason is that you do not like Jesus, you like anything and anybody but God, close dealings with any one under the sun but God. But you must have to do with Him, you must be brought face-to-face with God; better far be brought face-to-face with Him now in the day of grace, than in the day of judgment-now, when He calls you in love, and spreads before you a supper. Why not come? Why not accept Him? Do not hold back in the thought of anything you must do, anything you must bring or provide. Come as you are!

"So that servant came and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out, quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." These grand ones, these self-occupied ones, he says, shall not eat of my supper — bring in the poor. The sinner without Christ is a very poor person. Though he may have the riches of the whole world in his coffers, he is poor without Christ — poor indeed. There are very few rich people converted — riches are often the ruin of the rich. The Lord says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" When I get a person who is poor, broken down, outcast, with neither character nor fortune, I can tell him of one Friend — the Friend called Jesus. Tell me, have you a Friend called Jesus. Do you know Him, trust Him, adore Him? Is He the object of your heart, the One you delight in? There is nothing so sweet to me as the company of my friends, and there is no company so sweet as the company of Jesus. The "maimed" are those whom sin has wounded and crippled — and what maims a

person as sin does? — all vitality, vigour, freshness, and power gone. "The halt," that is the lame, those who are unable to walk. Who can enter the pearly gates crippled by sin, unable to walk in? Furthermore, "the blind" are called. Who are "the blind"? You are, if still Christless. Do you see any beauty in the Lord Jesus? "Well, I can't say I do." Then you are blind. Jesus is the most lovely object in the universe of God — the "Chiefest among ten thousand." If the Christian is asked what he thinks of Christ, he answers "He is altogether lovely." Though I might paint the most lovely descriptions on canvas, and tell of it to a blind man, he cannot understand it, for he cannot see it. The real state of man is that he is "born blind."

"The poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind," this is God's company — not the good, but the bad. Whoever you are, I am bidden by my Master to make you welcome.

Now see how the urgency of the charity of God comes out here, and the universality of its expression: "And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in."

"Yes, says God, I have still room for many wayward sinners — go, compel them to come in." I thank God for that word. May I not entreat, implore, invoke you to come? I am bid to compel you to come in. Perhaps you do not care to come, you are not interested or anxious: "Go," says the Lord, "compel them to come." Oh! sinner, do you want to be damned? "No," you say. You certainly must be if you turn your back on Jesus. Oh! listen to His grace — "Go, compel them to come in." You have nothing to do, His grace has provided all: the blood of atonement is shed, the claims of God have all been met on the cross by the Lord Jesus, and the sinner has now only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved on the very spot.

Oh! receive this word, let it sink down deeply into your heart; look back at the cross, see the blood shed of the Saviour, see the atonement finished, God's claims all met, the whole question of sin settled for ever. Now that work being done, the cup of wrath drunk, the righteousness of God vindicated, His truth maintained, His character fully revealed, and man's need fully met, what remains? Jesus has died, but God raises Him, puts Him at His own right hand in glory, sends down the Holy Ghost, and what then? God says, "Come and eat." You want to eat bread in the kingdom of God — come and be His guest. He would have you come. He invites you as you are to accept salvation. He invites you to His supper, to glory, to everlasting rest with Christ. He bids you to come to have forgiveness, and says if you do not you will offend Him. You must either receive or refuse. God brings before you Christ as a living, loving Saviour. Make your choice, but do not, oh! do not refuse, do not despise such grace; when He bids you, come, — when he invites you, respond. At your peril make an excuse. The Gospel feast, then, is the first feast, the supper of salvation. If you eat God's supper, you are a saved soul — if you look to Jesus you will be saved, and be washed whiter than snow. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That is the supper of salvation.

2. THE SUPPER OF COMMUNION. The second supper is the Lord's Supper, the supper of communion. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:16-21, 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." And who takes this supper? Do you who are not converted? you who are not washed in the blood? Oh! but you say, "It is a means of grace." No! it is a means of judgment, because the very thing the Lord will answer when you say, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence," will be, "Bind him hand and foot, and take

him away, and cast him into outer darkness." The only one who has the privilege of the Lord's Supper is the one who knows he has partaken of the Gospel supper — the real, true Christian. The Lord's Supper is, as it were, a photograph. A photograph is a faint and always feeble resemblance of an absent one. This supper, then, is a lovely, beautiful photograph of Jesus — not as He now is alive in glory, but as he once was, dead on the cross for our sins. Therefore the gathering round the Lord's table to eat that supper is the memorial of the Lord's death. There is nothing like it! it has the greatest and sweetest claim on our hearts. I remember a betrayed, denied, thong-bound, thorn-crowned, crucified Christ. If, being unconverted, you partake of this supper, I would warn you, never do it again. You reply, "I have the minister's communion token." Have you had God's communion token? "When I see the blood I will passover you." "And THE BLOOD shall be to you for a TOKEN." God's communion token is the blood. This briefly is the supper of communion. May the Lord give us to enjoy, understand, and appreciate it more. We are called to walk worthy of it, separate from all that is of the world. That cup tells me of the blood by which I am separated from my sins, from wrath, and from judgment; but it tells me also that I am separated from the world, and am to walk through it as a pilgrim and a stranger.

Let us look now at the two suppers given in Revelation 19:1-21.

3. THE SUPPER OF JOY. This is the marriage supper of the Lamb by-and-by (vv. 6-9). I do not wonder at the word, "Let us be glad and rejoice." Heaven breaks out in melody, the hosts of heaven in thanksgiving — it is the bridal supper. It is the moment when the Lord has gathered His own people up in heaven with Him — all are caught up to meet the Lord, all are bright with His likeness — the day of the marriage comes, the day of the joy of His heart and ours.

"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." In that day the Church, the bride of Christ, shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." We have done here some little sweet acts of service, perhaps, for the Lord: He has marked all, every cup of cold water, every loving deed, and He will reward it by-and-by. In that day the practical righteousness, the godly conduct of the believer down here in the world, will find its counterpart and answer. As you have walked down here, so you will be known up there; our practical life and conduct will be remembered and manifested in the presence of the Lord. It is spoken of as a garment, because it will be seen, — it is what is manifest, external. Nobody has seen your service down here, everybody will see up there what you have been and done for the Lord during your pilgrim sojourn on earth during His absence.

How beautiful to go to the supper of salvation, the supper of communion, and now to the supper of the Lamb — the day of joy when with our blessed Lord, we see Him face-to-face, and are like Him.

If, my beloved reader, you have not taken the first, though you may have taken the second, you will not be at this one — these three go together. The supper of salvation meets me as a sinner, the supper of communion as a saint, and by-and-by the bride will be with her Lord, and like Him.

4. THE SUPPER OF JUDGMENT. The last is not a supper of brightness, or gladness, or communion — it will be the dark, black supper of judgment, to which God will invite many guests, and they will all come, It is the Lord coming to deal with this earth in judgment (see vv. 11-21), coming down in solemn, fearful judgment on this scene where you and I now are. They refused Him on earth when He came in grace, but He will come back to make war. They crowned Him with

thorns, God crowns Him with glory; they parted His raiment amongst them, and cast lots upon His vesture — here on His vesture He has a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords," and they will see Him again clothed. The world will see Jesus come back again. When did the world see Jesus last? What was the last glimpse the world had of Him? They had stripped Him, crowned Him with thorns, nailed Him to a tree, His blood flowing down to stain the very earth they trod upon. When they see Him again He has still a crown, but not of thorns: "on His head were many crowns," crowns of glory. His hand, once pierced and nailed to the tree, hold, now a sceptre. He is clothed with a vesture dyed with blood. It is the Lord coming in swift, solemn judgment — a day that draws terribly near.

"He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." It is the wrath of God poured out on man, who has refused the supper of the blessed God. Now the dealings of God are reversed, it is not grace but judgment. The Lord Jesus comes as the administrator of the judicial power of God. He comes to tread the winepress. In the vintage time the luxuriant bunches are cut down one by one, and thrown into the winepress; presently down comes the weight, till every grape is crushed. So will the blood be crushed from His enemies. Do you know a figure more fearful? You have trifled with God once too often when that day comes. His patience then worn out, His wrath will come on the surface. He will come as "King of kings and Lord of lords;" you have never owned His Kingship, His Lordship, yet. Christ and you are strangers; He loves you, but you do not love Him, and now comes the hour when you must know Him in His Kingship and His Lordship, and be crushed by His wrath.

Oh! careless soul, brave not, risk not that day. Then goes forth the word, "Come, and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God." It is another "Come" — no longer the "Come" of grace, of invitation to the Gospel feast. It is, "Come, ye fowls, be a witness of the righteous judgment of God, eat the flesh of kings," etc. Man in the end rises up in daring rebellion against the Lord; the once despised, refused Jesus comes as King of kings and Lord of lords, and swift destruction overtakes them all. In the 20th verse we see the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire, — two men cast alive into the lake of fire, as in the Old Testament we get two men taken up to heaven alive. Men may delude themselves with the thought of coming days of brightness — but, one of these days, like lightning everything will be altered: the saints will be taken up, and desolation will begin to cover the earth. Satan will have the reins of government in his hands, the name of God will be cast out of the earth. Then the Lord of glory appears, and this fourth supper is enacted. Will you be there? It is possible, nay, probable — because if the Lord Jesus came this hour and took up His saints, not one Gospel-rejector then left behind would be saved; for God says He will send you strong delusion. "In the twinkling of an eye" we shall be taken. The world may miss us a day or two, but not one week or month will have rolled by before the mischief will appear, the power of Satan will be displayed. When the world is led astray by the devil, ruled over by antichrist, it will go on till at length God's patience tires, and then this terrible judgment takes place. The Lord shall come from heaven in judgment. And all this precedes the Millennium, the thousand years of blessing, when the Lord will reign on the earth. I would not risk being at the fourth supper. I have made sure of the first, delight in the second, know I shall be at the third, and am sure I shall not be at the fourth. Friend, be thou of the same mind. May God give you to hear and believe His word in faith, and by-and-by, when Jesus comes, be found in that bright company, with Him and like Him for ever!

## 09. THE BLOOD AND THE HYSSOP.

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### THE BLOOD AND THE HYSSOP.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt. . . . And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning." Exodus 12:13-22.

ISRAEL'S redemption and exodus from Egypt are a striking type of the Gospel and its effects now.

These verses show us God's way of salvation, and the way man must act in order to avail himself of God's rich and wondrous provision for his need. Judgment was about to fall on man. Egypt and all its households were exposed to this sure and certain judgment, the Israelite as much as the Egyptian — true figure of the world's present condition, with God's eternal judgment of sin drawing near to it. Death is at the very threshold. The Judge is passing by. Can His righteous wrath be averted? Can His entrance in this terrible character be arrested? These are the momentous questions of that night, and also of the present moment. Reader, can you answer them? Unless you know in reality the meaning of the two verses I have quoted you cannot do so; but if still in darkness, may God in His infinite mercy open your eyes!

There are a great many people who would tell you without hesitation that they fully believe the Word of God as to the death of Christ being the only ground of a sinner's hope before God, that they have given up all idea of self-righteousness as a means of keeping out the coming judgment and yet they are not saved. Why is this? They believe Jesus died, and yet they are not saved. Why is this? "Oh," you say, "they have not faith." I suppose that is at the root of it. No sensible man — no man honest, no man who has a notion of what God is, but must come to this conclusion, "I stand in danger." And then, too, he must believe, as an historical fact, the death of Jesus.

Still such are not saved. The reason is, the blood is still in the basin, and not sprinkled on the lintel and two side-posts. This is an illustration of what I mean.

It is as though you had gone into the house of an Israelite that night and put the question to him, — "Do you believe judgment is coming? Nine woes are past, but do you believe the last, worst, woe is coming?"

"Oh, yes, I believe it, and I have done as Moses commanded: the lamb is slain, the blood is shed."

"Is the blood in the basin?"

"Yes."

"Is it on the lintel and side-posts? No, not yet."

"And why not on the lintel and side-posts I do not know how to put it there."

"But are you safe from the destroyer? I am not sure; I hope so."

Now this is just your case, perhaps. You believe the blood of the Lamb has been shed; you know Jesus died. You know there is only shelter beneath that precious blood, but there has been no real application of the death of Christ to your own soul.

Why is this? There has been no taking the bunch of hyssop and sprinkling the blood with it. The bunch of hyssop is a very insignificant thing — a poor contemptible thing — and people are not willing to go down so low.

Knowledge may ruin a person if there is not the application of the thing known to the heart. Remember you may go down to hell with the Bible at your fingers' ends, for knowledge is not faith nor repentance. But the bunch of hyssop, though a very poor, insignificant thing, is a Divine necessity. Had it been a bunch of cedar, you could have understood it — the cedar, with its lofty grandeur, that could almost shelter an army beneath its wide-spreading branches.

Solomon spake of all things, "from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" — a little thing that does not take root in a decent fashion even, but springs out from between two stones! The cedar and the hyssop are the two extremes in nature, the highest and the lowest. You must take the blood up with a bunch of hyssop; that is, you must go and shelter yourself under that precious blood with a full consciousness that you are a lost soul, without a particle of innate worthiness or goodness. In Leviticus 14:1-57 the hyssop was buried out of sight; in Numbers 19:1-22 it was burned out of sight. David says in Psalms 51:1-19 : "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." There is no mistake about that man; he wants cleansing. "I will take hyssop," says David. "Oh, cast me where you will, treat me as you will, only cleanse me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and shall be whiter than snow." But further, it was on the end of a bunch of hyssop, that which spake of the lowest and most degrading thing in nature, they gave the Lord Jesus a sponge of vinegar in the day of His death, when He was suffering to put away sins. Yes, they could taunt Him with the bunch of hyssop in the hour of His agony, His deep untold suffering — His suffering for us; and Jesus, in the grace of His heart, received it, and said, "It is finished." What does that mean? It means that he was there undergoing from the hand of God the wrath, the dark, bitter agony that was due to you and me. He died for us, that we might live with Him. Are you prepared, dear reader, to accept the bunch of hyssop yourself; in other words, to take the place of repentance and self-judgment before God? Mark! there never entered an unrepentant soul within the doors of heaven. Faith and repentance go together. Using the bunch of hyssop is a man going down before God in, the acknowledgement of his truly lost and ungodly state; not resting content with saying, "I know Jesus died, but I must wait till I go through some edifying experience, as I have heard of others having done, before I can know I am saved," but sheltering himself as a lost man under cover of that precious blood — applying it to his own heart. "But," you say, "I never saw the blood of Christ." Nor did I! I never saw the blood of Christ, and never shall see it, but I believe what God has told me about it. It is not when you see the blood, but God says "When I see the blood I will pass over." But you ask, "Why sprinkle it only on the lintel and on the two side-posts? Why not on the ground, why not on the floor or basement?" I will tell you why. Because it is left for a careless soul like you to trample the blood of Jesus beneath the feet — to despise and scorn it. What does faith do? Faith looks up to it, shelters beneath it, and says "I stand beneath a blood-stained canopy." There was but one eye

saw the blood that night. No Israelite saw the blood. They simply obeyed the Word of God, they put it on the outside of their houses in faith, and they remained inside in peace, secure under its shelter; and if God has told you that on the cross His blessed Son died to put away your sins, what have you to do? I Simply to repose on the truth of what God has told you. God bids us shelter ourselves beneath that blood, that precious blood which has been shed (Hebrews 9:11-12). Christ's blood has been shed on the cross, and He having there suffered in our stead, once, and once only — having borne the judgment — has entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. On the ground of what He is, and what He has done and endured, we can enter in also.

Christ having borne sins, having taken them upon Him, having been on the cross made sin, put 'Himself in grace as a substitute in a place, out of which He could not extricate Himself save by putting away those sins. He was there on the cross with sins upon Him. He was on that tree under the judgment of sin, not His own, blessed be God, but ours! OURS! On the Cross in the deepest grace, He hung in the sinner's place. He endureth the wrath for the sinner, He died for the sinner. He was sacrificed for us, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." "Sacrificed for us!" Charming word! It might charm the heart of the most hardened sinner. He sacrificed Himself. Yes, HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR US, and yet you have never sacrificed a single half-hour for Christ. You never sacrificed a bit of pleasure for Christ, you never sacrificed your own will or your own way a single moment for Christ. You have sacrificed many a thing, everything for your own pleasure, but nothing for Him. Is this not so?

Pause, think for a moment. He sacrificed Himself for us, and then passed into the Holy Place, having obtained Eternal Redemption for us. And the apostle then adds: "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." If, in Exodus 12:1-51, the blood of the Lamb could preserve the greatest sinner all through that long night, so that no death or destruction could enter in there, "How much more," O careless sinner, "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" That blood that has met the claims of God—that precious blood that has silenced the accuser—how much more shall it bring a defiled, guilty sinner into God's presence, pardoned, blessed, forgiven, saved, to serve Him! Magnificent word "How much more!" Scripture all through speaks of the blood of Christ, and points the sinner to the blood of Christ that has met God, and satisfied His claims, and now there is nothing for you to do but trust it. If you despise it you must perish; if you shelter beneath it you receive eternal life.

It is an awful thing to despise the blood of Christ. Mark well the word in Exodus 11:1-10 which God whispers as it were in the ear of Moses to tell to Pharaoh. "Yet will I bring one plague more." Mark it, you who care not to be ranked among the despised followers of Jesus, who have trampled under foot His precious blood, there remains for you one plague more — one plague more - and oh! tell me, What will you do when this plague overtakes you? Will you try and escape it? Impossible! Will you try to put it off? Impossible! Impossible! Will you say as a dying man, a rich man, once said to his physician when he told him the plain truth that he could not live much longer? "Oh! doctor, I will give you all I possess if you can only give me one day more of life." Impossible! Impossible; that day he died. And, sinner, what will you do the day that plague overtakes you, the day the iron hand of Death seizes you in its relentless grasp? "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

God had only "one plague more" for Pharaoh, but, O, Christless soul, God has two plagues more for you! "After this the judgment!" "After this the judgment!" How will you meet it? Oh! if you have never decided for Christ before, will you not decide for Him now! Will you not come to Him now? Will you not put yourself under the shelter of His precious blood before this coming judgment day arrives? I put my queries to you specially who have been moved under the Word of God before, but are still undecided for Christ" still unsettled, Oh! I appeal to you, risk no longer meeting these two plagues more, No longer let the god of this world blind your eyes to the coming danger, or harden your heart. Let not procrastination lead you astray.

I would you knew my Saviour, my Jesus, the Saviour I know, the Jesus I know — my blessed, precious Saviour. Now just tell me, Would not you like to know Him? Does not your heart sometimes long to know rest and peace? You will find it nowhere else — but you will find rest in knowing Him. Do you tremble to meet these two plagues more — these two coming plagues, from which there is no escape? Then listen to this. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "So Christ." If my sin demands death and judgment — so Christ was once offered, bearing sins, and enduring judgment from the hand of God to bring me salvation! "I am content," I say, "I am content. Beneath the shelter of that precious blood I will crouch — I am safe, I am happy. I am to stay in the house until the morning, peaceful and happy, keeping the feast within-feeding on Christ, enjoying Christ — feasting on Him each day."

"None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning." I have clean done with the world; I want nothing from outside. Outside there is only death and destruction. The long dark time of Jesus' absence He calls the night. In the morning Jesus comes and takes us right out of the scene; and until then we are to remain in the house. Safely resting beneath the shelter of that blood, done with the world, we only wait till the morning, that bright and sunny morning, when He shall come to take us into the Father's house — when we shall hear His own voice calling us: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

"Ah," you say, "I would like to be there in that morning. Well, if you would be there then, decide for Jesus now. Who can say you will get another opportunity? And mark! mark well! there are two plagues more! Two plagues more! but not for me. He has taken those two plagues for me, and now what is a Christian looking for? Looking for Him! To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." An unconverted man is looking for two plagues more — he may shut his eyes to the fact — but there they are before him. Do you ask me: "What about the two plagues for you?" I answer: "They are behind me; Jesus has taken them for me, and I am looking for Him!" May the Lord bless His Word, and give strength and courage to those who receive Him to come clean out of the world, and to live only to please and serve and follow Him. Do you think that is hard work and dreadful bondage? That is because you know nothing about it! It is hard work and dreadful bondage to labour in the brick-kilns of the world, and then go down into the depths of hell at the end. I call that dreadful bondage to go on serving Satan now — and then to go down with him where no drop of water shall ever cool your tongue — where the voice of God is never heard-into the darkness of an eternal night, which no ray of light shall ever penetrate. Shut out from Jesus? Yes, shut out from Him then for ever! Oh! decide for Him now!

You must decide for yourself; no one can decide for you. What a difference! Shut out from Him for ever, in the depths of hell, or going to be for ever with Him! Oh, will you not decide? I made my choice long ago; so now I know that death and judgment are behind me, and only Jesus before me. Will you not make your choice and choose Him just now? The Lord grant it! God has provided the "Blood," do you use the "Hyssop!"

## 10. "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD."

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"ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD."

"The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me? . . . And He brought him forth abroad, and said, LOOK NOW TOWARD HEAVEN, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD; and He COUNTED IT TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And He said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to GIVE thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And He said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against the other: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." — Genesis 15:1-11.

"If Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." — Romans 4:2-3.

Romans 4:1-25 is the Divine comment on Genesis 15:1-21 — "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He believed God. Now there is not one person who has not thought at some time in his or her history that he or she had something to do to be saved. Christian, did not you think so? "Yes," you answer; "I always thought I had something to do, until I saw that Christ had died, and done everything for me." Yes, He has died and done everything, and therefore if the Word of the Lord comes to me and tells me the work is finished, I have nothing to do but to believe it. When God's Word appeals to you — addresses you — be like Abraham; believe it!

God first says to Abraham, "Fear not." And why? Because, He says, "I am thy shield." Is it not a blessed thing to have God for your shield? The soul that has God for its shield is securely sheltered; though Satan let fly his most fiery darts, they fall harmless to the ground—they cannot touch it.

God is coming to Abraham in grace, in this chapter, and Abraham is before God in need; and if you, dear unsaved one, are to get blessing you must take the place of a sinner in need. And what do you need? You need pardon, you need salvation, you need grace, you need to be washed from your sins, you need just what God has got for you. And God is ready to GIVE you just what you need. God Himself is the Fountain, the Source of the supply; the Gospel comes out from the heart of the Eternal God. Peace is preached unto you, but where does that healing stream rise which sweetly soothes the troubled conscience? It rises in the bosom of the Eternal God!

Well wrote the poet:- "The Father's boundless love we sing, The fountain whence our blessings spring How great the depth, how high it flows, No saint can tell, no angel knows. Its length and

breadth no eye can trace, No thought explore the bounds of grace The love that saved our souls from hell Transcends the creature's power to tell."

"Fear not," is the word which He loves to speak to the heart of the empty, troubled one. Do you ask, "What will He say to me?" "Fear not." "But I am afraid." "Fear not." "But I am unfit for God." He knows it well. "Fear not," He seems to say, "I will throw my sheltering wing over you." And oh! what can give the sense of protection like that? The moment you know God is on your side, though the devil may accuse you, and man may upbraid you, and your own conscience may convict you, you can go to God, and say, like Abraham, "Lord God, what wilt Thou GIVE me?"

Abraham takes his true place, that of a needy soul before God. It is the picture of a thoroughly upright soul who takes the place of nothingness, and goes to God with its need. Then the Word of the Lord came to him again, and God brings out Abraham, and there towards the starry firmament He points, and says: "LOOK NOW TOWARD HEAVEN, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them . . . . So shall thy seed be. AND HE BELIEVED IN THE LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness." And what, dear friend, does your soul stand in need of! And where are you bid to look for all the blessings you need? Toward heaven. Is it, Look within? No, Toward heaven. "Look unto me," He says, and faith, sweetly responsive, pierces the cloud; yes, faith unfolds her wings, soars aloft, and never droops her pinions till at the feet of Jesus she calmly rests. Faith says, Jesus died for me. He has done it all, and I trust Him. Oh, dear one, "LOOK Now." God never says, "Look tomorrow." Tomorrow is not thine; tomorrow may find thee no longer on earth, but thy guilty soul plunged for over in an everlasting hell.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," and if you believe God you will get the blessing too. "If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," blessing is ours. God calls you now to believe, to look, not as Abraham to the stars — you are to look beyond the stars. God bids you look at that precious Saviour once on the cross for sins, but now alive and in the glory, to look to Him and be saved. His heart lingers over thee in love now. He will bless thee now if thou wilt take thy true place, a ruined, wretched sinner at the feet of the Lord. If a soul takes its true place in need, God comes out in grace, calling on it to "believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Abraham was called on to believe what God was going to do. You and I are called on to believe what God has done. Abraham believed God. Everything was against him, but he believed God, and I think there are not three finer words in Scripture recorded of any soul than these three. There was Abraham in his littleness, and God in His greatness, but there was an indissoluble link formed that day between Abraham and God — a link that could never, never after be snapped asunder.

Another thing comes out in this 15th of Genesis — not merely blessing, but inheritance. "The stars" tell of heavenly blessings. When I know that Christ bore my sins in His own body on the tree I can look up and see Him by faith at God's right hand, and enjoy all that I possess in Him.

"Abraham believed God." Do you? The great point of the first part of Romans 4:1-25 is that you count God worthy of being believed — you credit what He says, and you stand before God, linked with God, and justified by Him. He espouses your cause because you trust Him. First, I get unfeigned confidence in what God says, then God enables me to know why I am so sure of

blessing. It was the grace of God that gave Abraham the blessing, and it is the grace of God that gives you pardon to your soul. Then Abraham gets the perfect knowledge of the ground of the blessing. Sacrifice. Why do I draw near to God? Because of the sacrifice. How are my sins put away? By the sacrifice. A sacrifice that you have made? No! but which God has provided. God's Word is what reaches my soul first of all. Then I want to know by what right I can know my sins are forgiven. And He says: "Take Me an heifer," etc., 1:e., because of the sacrifice. Peace springs from the work of Jesus. He "made peace by the blood of His cross." The WORD of God, and the WORK of Christ are the pillars of my peace. The work was completely done by the blessed Jesus, and with. His dying breath the last word for us He left on earth was "Finished." But rising from the dead, what was His first word? "Peace." His last word was "Finished," His first word, returning to bless, was "Peace." What a solid foundation for faith to repose on! But Abraham inquires, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And He said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, And a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon." You ask, Why the five; would not one have been sufficient as a sacrifice? I believe it would; but that these express the difference in the grasp souls get of the value of the work of Christ. I look back at the cross of Jesus and I may have a very feeble view of Christ; that would be the pigeon: but I might get by the side of a saint who has a stupendous grasp of the value of the work of Christ, that would be like the heifer. Which is the safest, the cleanest? the one who has the feeble grasp of Christ and His work, or the one who has the mighty grasp of it? You reply, I should think the one that has the largest grasp of Christ. Then you think perfectly wrong, because it is Christ the soul has hold of; however feeble your faith may be, one look at Christ links your soul with Him and that link can never be broken. Heaven may be shaken, and earth shall be shaken, but you shall never be shaken who have put your trust in Christ. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word shall not pass away he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." But most likely you will answer, I have such doubts, and fears. Listen then, "And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses Abram drove them away." The fowls are figures of Satan, and Satan's powers, and he will always try to disturb your view of Christ. "Abram drove them away," and that is what you must do. Do not allow Satan's suggestions a place for a moment; his one object is to prevent your eye being fixed on Christ. Rest simply on what God has said, and Christ has done, and what is the result?

Peace, peace, about the past, because Christ's work is so perfect that I cannot add to it. God has accepted that work for me and I will rest in it, and the Saviour that did it, and I have peace with God; and more, I am a justified soul. If I look at the past it is peace. Peace about my sins because they are cancelled by Christ, and I believe it, and my soul has a link with God; the sins that used to come between God and me have been borne by Christ, and now God has nothing at all against me. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace (or favour) wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Think of it, I pray you, how beautiful to know you stand in the favour of God. You stand according to the acceptance of Christ. You have a right to the presence of God; the blood of Christ gives you that right. God's favour rests upon you, because you trust Christ, and you "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Hope never means uncertainty in Scripture. We are not uncertain as to whether we will get it or not, we know the glory belongs to us, because the gift of God has made it ours. Oh!

believe now — listen to His own words: — "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they maybe one, even as we are one." It is a gift. How do I know that I shall be in the glory by and bye? Because it is my Saviour's gift to me. How do I know my sins are washed away? Because my Saviour died for me. How do I know God's favour rests on me? Because I stand accepted in Christ. The moment you come to Jesus, His blood cleanses you from all sin, and that moment you are as fit for the glory of God as the blood of Christ can make you. I get peace, deep peace about the past, grace for the present, - I know His love for me and rejoice in it — and glory for the future, my Saviour's gift to me.

Beloved reader, let me beseech you to decide to be the Lord's now. If you still persist in unbelief, never expect to hear the gospel again. Why? If you are cut off in your sins, and damned for eternity, will you not deserve it? Oh! look to Him now — believe on Him now, and do not be ashamed to confess Him, and to own to all that He is your Saviour. This year you began and have continued in unbelief, oh — let it not so depart. Is not God worthy of being believed? Surely. Is not the Lord Jesus worthy of your heart's affections? Most surely. Shall He not have both your confidence and affection? Would to God that I could hear you respond again, Surely, most surely; "I believe God."

## 11. ARE YOU READY?

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### ARE YOU READY?

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh." — Matthew 25:1-13

These are the words of the Lord Jesus, and you may say, "What is there involved in that?" Well, beloved friend, precious and profitable as is every word of God, whether spoken by the Lord Himself, or by any of His servants, yet there is always something very specially impressive and instructive in the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself. There is one simple point I want to press on you now; one thought I have before me, and it is this, that if you are not ready when Jesus comes, He will bid you depart into everlasting punishment; if you are not ready, there is nothing before you but eternal woe — eternal punishment.

"They that were ready went in," those that were not ready were left outside. There is nothing more simple, dear friend, but there is nothing more solemn. "They that were ready went in," and oh, if the Lord came just now, what it would be to our hearts who know Him! The voice of the archangel and the trump of God would be heard, and His own voice, the voice of the Saviour, would bid us rise up to meet Him. We should be caught up to scenes of joy and rest with Jesus. But, my friend, are you ready? ready to meet Jesus, ready for that trumpet's call, ready to go in? "No," you say, "I am not." Then do not lose a moment, I entreat you, "be ye also ready," be ready now.

God wants to have you as the companion of His Son for all eternity. He is seeking a bride for His Son, just as Eleazer goes down through the desert and tells Rebekah of all Abraham's wealth and greatness and that unto his son he had given all that he had. "That is," says he, "there is a bridegroom in the far-off land, and I want a bride for him, I want a heart that is prepared to go out to meet him." So God is seeking now hearts prepared to go out to meet Christ.

There was a going forth in early times, in the apostle's days, there was a constant expecting the Lord's return; but then wise and foolish all settled down and went to sleep. The wise were wrong in going to sleep, but there was this difference between them, that when the cry was made, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," the lamps of the wise were alight; they needed trimming, but there was

oil in them, they had never gone out. I have no doubt the Lord is gathering out a people now to wait for His Son, and one day when the world is expecting nothing, without any warning, He will come. He will come, and we who trust Him shall go up to meet Him, and the door will be shut. "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage."

He shows the bright side first, the joy of the marriage supper. "I desire," God says, "to make you the companion of my Son in Heavenly Glory. My heart's wish is that you shall share with Christ that bright scene of eternal blessedness." "No," answers the soul. "Then," says He, "you must share the fate of the devil and his angels; there is no alternative."

Soul, listen, listen! You must be with Christ for eternity; you must share with Him that bright scene of glory, or you must share for all eternity the fallen gloomy fortunes of Satan. Which is it to be? Soul, make your choice, your eternal choice. With Christ, or with Satan — which?

"Oh," you say, "I should like to be with Christ, of course; I have long made a profession of Christianity." Yes, but are you really a Christian? Are you ready? Profession is not enough; it is the lamp without the oil in it. Who are those who had the oil? They are those who had given their souls no rest till they had the certainty of salvation. The oil in the vessels is the Holy Ghost. They had not only "heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation," and trusted in the Lord Jesus, but, as Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:13 — they were "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

Many souls are stumbled because of this, they think they have to possess the Holy Ghost in order to believe. Not so; you believe, and then you get the Holy Ghost. It is like a man buying a number of sheep, and then marking them as his own. God buys with the blood of Christ, and marks with the Holy Ghost. The wise virgins had the oil, and if you are in earnest you will not be content without knowing you are saved; and surely it is high time you were in down-right earnest. God is in earnest in His desire to have you; the devil is in earnest in his desire to damn you; I am in earnest in my anxiety to see you brought to God, you are the only one who is careless in the matter, and it is your soul which is at stake for eternity. O, ye heavens, look down on this awful sight — a sinner unconcerned about his eternal salvation! God was so concerned as to send His only Son that you might not perish. The Lord Jesus was so concerned that He came, and suffered, and died, the just for the unjust. The evangelist is deeply concerned that you may be converted. The devil is thoroughly concerned to seek to hinder your coming to Christ. You only are unconcerned about the matter. Appalling spectacle! an unsaved sinner on the verge of hell, totally unconcerned!

Oh, dear soul, the day of your concern is coming. What concern there will be when you wake up to find there is no oil in your lamps, what earnestness, what terrible earnestness will be depicted on your face, as outside the door you stand. "Too late!" says God. "TOO LATE?" exclaim you. "TOO LATE" will be the echo of the arches of heaven, resounding through earth, as then you cry, "Lord! Lord! open to me!"

Oh, be in earnest now, the Lord would have you roused to your state, you may never have another opportunity. Can you risk being among that number who are refused from His door, or hear those awful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" This is no imagery of mine. These are the Lord's own words, most solemnly true. If you are not the Lord's you must be damned. If you are not linked with Christ you must be lost. If you are not His by living faith now, there is nothing before you but one of these two things, either to knock too late outside that door, or to

hear from His lips, "Depart from me." I have no doubt from Scripture that if the Lord comes and finds you unconverted, your history is over; the door will be shut, and not a solitary ray of hope will ever again fall on your benighted soul — the door will be closed for ever, Now ONLY is your time — oh, be in earnest NOW!

I believe the Lord is separating His own more thoroughly now. The Lord's people are banding together more, the world and the faithful are beginning to separate more and more even now, and much of worldliness as there is among the saints of God, yet the line of demarcation between them and the world is more distinct. What a tide of blessing too has rolled over the land; what means it all? He is coming! He is coming! coming quickly too. Are you merely a professor carrying the lamp in your hand? You must have the oil too. Have you ever known what it is to be broken down, tinder a sense of your sin? Have you ever been in earnest about your soul's salvation? Have you ever bowed in heart to Jesus? Have you ever been really converted? Are you ready to go in? Do not say, "I hope so," that will not do. It is not enough. You would not be content with a mere hope about things down here. No, it is only in the interests of their immortal souls that men are foolhardy and careless. Do you ask, my reader, "How am I to get to Christ?" If you are in earnest you will soon find the way to Christ. "But," you say, "what do you want me to do?" I want you to take salvation from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want your heart for Christ. I want you to bow down to Him, to love Him, to adore Him. May God turn your eye on His Son; for remember, He is coming. The heavens conceal Him now, but another hour and it may not be so. He may have come out, and those who are ready may have gone in, and the door may be shut, and shut on you for ever. Would you like to be outside? He wants to have you inside. He wants you to believe in His name, to believe in His love. He wants not merely to rescue you from the power of the devil, not merely to save you from hell, but to make you a sharer of the joy that is His, to taste the grace of His Father's heart, to bring you into association with Himself in the bright scene of his heavenly home. Oh let there be reality now in your heart, do not be content any longer with being a mere professor Perhaps your first real confession to Him may have to be, I have been only a hypocrite, and never a real believer at all," very likely: but believe Him simply just now, for if you are only dreaming of being a Christian some day, the time is soon coming when your dreams must be rudely broken.

"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Why midnight? The darkest time of all had come, and the dawn was near, the morning of His coming. The bright hope He gives to Christian hearts is that they shall be caught up to meet Him. If the Lord were to come today, there would be enacted a scene, of which the mount of transfiguration was a lovely picture. Moses is a type of those who have passed through death; Elias a type of those who go up without dying at all, but all are together with the Lord. Again, we shall be like Enoch, translated, taken off the earth without passing through death at all. No doubt Enoch was considered a pest to society in his day, because he prophesied of coming judgment, and warned men of their ungodliness. Men do not like to hear of coming judgment, but it is coming. The last time the world saw Christ, they put a reed in His right hand in bitter mockery, and then they pierced that hand with nails and fastened it to the cross. The next time the world sees Christ, He will be holding the rod of power, wielding the sword of judgment. Will you meet Him in grace now, or risk meeting Him in judgment then? Would you like to meet Him if He came today? "Well, no, I cannot say that I should. I would rather put it off a little longer." Quite so! that answer just shows where

you are. You do not know Him. The soul that knows the Lord will always like to go to meet Him. Every child of God delights to think he shall meet and see Jesus. My Saviour is the one who loved me and died for me, and I know nothing so sweet as this simple thought, to be with the Lord Jesus. It is transcendently sweet. Whose company does one love best on earth? The one dearest to us, of course. It is very simple; and whose company is so dear to us as His?

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps and the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." Their lamps had gone out, there was no oil in them; there had been the profession of Christ; no doubt they had been baptised, and if they lived where confirmation takes place, had been also confirmed; had been members of churches, but there had been no question of real conversion. Have you been really converted? Have you the oil? Have you the Holy Ghost? How do I know I have the Holy Ghost? Because I am quite sure God is my Father, and it is the Spirit of adoption that makes me cry "Abba, Father:" the soul that is really brought to God — could you hear that one on his knees alone with God — would be heard to say, "Father, Father." Do you look up and call Him Father? "How can I call God, Father," you ask. By believing in Jesus you become a child. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." God gives the Holy Ghost to those who believe in Jesus. The moment you, as a poor sinner, take your place at the feet of Jesus, believe in Jesus, trust. Jesus, have done with confidence in yourself, and trust Him, that moment you become a child of God, and the next thing is the gift of the Holy Ghost. You get the oil in your vessel.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Why does it say buy? Does it contemplate the possibility that anything we could give could purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost? Not at all. "Thy money perish with thee," Peter says to Simon Magus, when he suggests such a thought, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." It is without money, without price, and still he says, "Come buy," and again, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold," and why is this? Because it contemplates a soul willing to pay any price; it contemplates a thorough, positive, earnest desire in the soul to get what it needs.

Friend, are you in earnest, again I say Are you ready? You ask, "Can a soul be ready?" Yes. "But what about my sins?" Did you never hear this — "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many?" He settled for me the question of sin when He suffered, the just for the unjust. How do I know I am ready? Because He died for me, He bore all my sins on the cross, and met all the claims God had against me. Are my sins to be put away by what He will do? No, by what He has done. A Christian stands between the first coming of Christ and the second; between the cross and the glory. I look back to the cross and see the work all finished there, when He was offered up. If I think of my sins, I am ready, because of what Christ has done; our readiness consists in this, that we have believed in the One who died and rose again, and we look forward now to Him as the coming One, enjoying meantime all the fruits of His finished work. Do you say, It is presumptuous to be sure? Well, if God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," am I to believe God, or am I to doubt Him? "The gift of God is eternal life." Now what do you do with a gift from a friend, do you send it back, or do you take it? "I take it, of course," you say. Are you presumptuous to take it? I say if He speaks to me, I will believe His word. If He sends me a gift I will take it, let who will call me presumptuous. John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." I either believe God, or

make Him a liar. I believe Him when He says I am a ruined sinner; shall I not believe Him when He says He gives me eternal life? I must believe the witness to me, before I can get the witness in me — believe before I can feel. Is He not worth believing? Is He not worth trust?

Trust Him now, do not delay: remember, "they that were READY went in and the door was shut." But you say, "I do not like that word, 'the door was shut'." I do, because it prevents the possibility of the believer ever getting out again, he is shut in with Christ for ever. I grant you it is an awful word for those who are outside, and once more therefore ere I close, I would solemnly ask you if the master of the house rose up this hour and shut the door, which side of the door would you be? Do not risk it longer! Do not be infatuated, do not be outside the door in that day, with only the devil's portion for eternity! And now, dear Christian, what a glorious future is before you, to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air! It is part of the victory of the Lord Jesus that you and I need never taste death, because He has tasted it in all its bitterness and woe for us. It is part of the spoil that He has wrung from Satan, that you and I may go up to meet Him without being taken through death at all. May the Lord keep our hearts waiting more simply for Himself, and may the Lord press these words on your heart, dear unsaved one, "THEY THAT WERE READY WENT IN, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT!" Do not sleep this night without knowing that you are ready, for you may lay your head down on a bed of feathers and awake in a bed of fire. May the Lord have mercy. on you who have no mercy on yourselves!

## 12. THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

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### THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

2 Samuel 13:23, 2 Samuel 14:1-33. The narrative contained in these two chapters shows, most beautifully, the way in which God acts now, in His grace, and in His desire to bring back the sinner to Himself. There is one great point, though, in which the narrative differs from, indeed is entirely in contrast with the gospel; because whatever God does is righteous, and if He loves, it is righteous love; whereas the narrative shows us love travelling faster than righteousness, and the sequel is, there is a grand revolt, David's throne is upset, as we see in 2 Samuel 15:1-37. If God shows love, if God saves me, He does it righteously; He saves by His grace, He saves utterly, but He saves righteously.

David brings back this young man, but he brings him back unrighteously without judging his sin, and the consequence was he got bold; and that is what people who do not believe in hell now are, they are bold and defy God. Absalom was a murderer. However deep might be Amnon's guilt, there was no excuse for Absalom. He was a murderer, and yet you hear him saying in the end of chapter 14, "If there be any iniquity in me." His sin had been unjudged, he had been brought back unrighteously, his conscience was hardened, and the consequence was, the moral character of the throne of David was destroyed; and where the moral character is destroyed the throne is upset, it provokes a revolt, as chapter 15 tells us.

Now God cannot make light of sin, though He has only love in His heart for the sinner. You have outraged God's character and God's throne, but you have not changed one whit the heart of Him who fills that throne; and though you may be a sinner of the deepest dye, yet you are an object of the love of God; His love has not been destroyed by your sin. And so we see in David, his heart yearns after the runaway. Did you notice that it is recorded three times, "Absalom fled?" Why did he fly? Because his conscience, then fully alive to his guilt, told him that, though his father might be king, yet he himself was a murderer, and that there was nothing, in righteousness, for a murderer but death. So he fled, for sin makes cowards of us all, and when a man has sin upon his conscience, he feels he cannot face God. It is a solemn thing, my friend, to have to face God in your sins. Have to do with God you must; you cannot evade it; and you have sinned. I do not care how much or how little, you have sinned. It may not be like Absalom's, but what is sin? Sin is man following the desire of his own heart; and have not you done that? You know you have.

Here, the desire of his own heart makes Absalom a murderer, and he flies from the presence of the king. And have not you got away, have not you fled from God? Does not your conscience still keep you at a distance from Him? But oh, do not you desire to get back to God? May His word bring you back just now! Why is the gospel preached? Because the world is away from God. If you were not away from God, why need the gospel be preached to you? The gospel tells you that you are away from God, but that His love wants to bring you back. God wants to have you.

"Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Not to bring us to heaven, not to bring us to peace, but to bring us to God; and no soul is brought to God till it is brought to trust the blood of Christ. How the grace comes all from God's side, too! Have you been seeking to know God? God has been beforehand with you. He has 'been seeking you. He gave His own Son for me long before I ever had a thought about Him; and now the cross tells me God wants to save me: and the cross tells me God can righteously save me. Are you unconverted, with a weight of sins upon your conscience?

God wants to bring you back to Himself. The soul of David longed after Absalom; three years had Absalom been away! and how long have you been away? Twenty years? Thirty years?? Threescore years? Well, I do not know your age, but this I know, that if unsaved, you have never been near Him yet. You have spent your life at a distance from God, but God wants to have you brought back; God wants to have the link of relationship formed between Him and you.

Cast your eye back for a moment over life's pathway, and tell me what relationship has there ever been yet between your soul and God? Has Christ been uppermost? Has He had a place in your thoughts? Has He had a place in your plans? Has He been your object? The soul that is unconverted and holiest says, "No, God has had no place in my thoughts hitherto; my plans have all been formed without Him; Christ has not been my object." But you must meet God. Why not meet Him now in grace, when in the love of His heart He wants to save you? Call you meet Him in judgment? In your sins? Oh! when is so good a time to meet Him as this very moment? The reason man does not accept God's offer of mercy is because he does not care for it. Why did not the men in the Gospels accept the invitation to the feast? Because they were like you, who remain unsaved; they did not care for it, they had no heart to come, and you have not cared to be saved. If the heart had been right, the man with the yoke of oxen would have said, "The oxen are very fine, but I can wait until tomorrow to prove them," and the man with the piece of ground would have said, "I can wait till tomorrow to go and see that;" and the man who had married a wife would have said, "I am going to a feast, my dear, and you had better come with me," 1:e., he would have gone himself and taken her with him. But they had no heart to go, and you have no heart for Christ's invitation; but though your heart is all wrong, God's heart is towards you.

David's heart was towards the prodigal, but he said, "If this heart bring him back, this hand holds a sword that must be planted in his bosom as soon as he returns." Then Joab comes in through the wise woman of Tekoah, as you read, and the end of it is that David gives way and brings him back without judging his sin. But does God bring back His prodigals without judging their sin? No, no. He has judged it in the Cross of Christ.

Until the Cross, where Christ suffered and bare sin, there was a barrier between man and God. Until the Cross of Christ, God is behind the veil: God dwelt between the cherubim (symbol of His righteousness); and there was a thick veil between man and God. The High Priest drew near once a year; went inside that veil, alone, with blood of others; but he came out again, and the veil remained. But when Jesus dies; when man had nailed Him to the tree; when man had done his worst — for it was man's hand that drove in those nails, it was man's hand that Planted the crown of thorns upon that peerless brow, it was man's hand that plunged the spear into that blessed side-then, I say, when man had done his very worst against God, God seizes that very moment, in His matchless, His exquisite, His infinite grace, to do His very best for man. Christ, in that hour of

darkness, when God's righteous wrath and man's unrighteous wrath alike fell on His blessed head, does a work that enables God to come out in righteousness and in love to man, and save the vilest. When Jesus died, not only the rocks were rent, but he who entered the temple next found the veil rent from the top to the bottom. Why from the top to the bottom? Because it was God's hand that had done it. If man had rent that veil it would have only been to bring swift destruction on himself; and if man goes into God's presence now without Christ's blood, what must it be but sure destruction to him? But God Himself breaks down the barrier; that Cross where the Holy One died for the sinner, opened the way into God's very presence. "I am the way," says Christ, and if you seek another way, you are on the wrong way.

David's love, as we have seen, outstrips his righteousness, but when God brings back the sinner, He brings him back in righteousness. The Cross of Christ tells me this, that God's grace reigns now, in the place where death reigned before, and it reigns through righteousness, not at the expense of righteousness. Instead of death falling on the guilty soul, death falls on Jesus — the death of the Cross, death in the dark shades of Golgotha — and that death opens the way into God's presence for you and me.

If I were not brought to God in righteousness, I should be afraid some day he would rake up the question of my sins; but when I know my sins have all been taken up by my substitute Jesus, and that He has borne every one of them, not as I know them, but as God knows them, then I know that I escape the penalty due to them, through sovereign love indeed, but love that is based on righteousness. Do you believe this story of the Cross? Then do you not see in it how God loves you? Yes, He wants you. He tells me first of all that He has gauged my guilt, and that Christ took the full weight of that guilt on Him when He died; and "mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The wise woman of Tekoah said, "We must needs die," 1:e., the moral of her story is, Make haste; and the moral of my story to you is make haste, for you may soon die, you know not how soon, and you must meet God. "Yet," she says, "Doth he (God) devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." I have told you God's means. I know they find no acceptance in the eyes of man. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness," but the Cross of Christ is God's only way of salvation. Christ maintains the character of the Throne of God in righteousness, while He manifests the character of the heart of God in its deep, deep love. Can you, my friend, agree with a lunatic who once thus exquisitely expressed it?

"Could I with ink the ocean fill, Were every blade of grass a quill, Were the whole heaven of parchment made, And every man a scribe by trade, To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry: Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky."

Blessed! whatever else he did not know, he knew the love of God which "passeth knowledge."

Now there comes the contrast between the narrative and the gospel, between the King's message and God's message. The King's character breaks down; love reigns at the expense of righteousness; God's love reigns through righteousness. The King's message is, "Go, bring the young man back," but "let him not see my face." What is God's message to you? "Bring him, bring her to Me." "Christ suffered to bring US To God." Luke 15:1-32 says that while the returning prodigal was "yet a great way off, the father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

After two years Absalom gets the kiss, but how long has the sinner now to wait for the Father's kiss? Two years? No! Not two seconds! What do you find when you come to God? That He has open arms for you! I think that prodigal must have stood still in downright sheer amazement when he saw his father run; and he kissed his unwashed cheek! kissed him in his rags; fell on his neck and kissed him! What wondrous grace! God's own heart proposes the plan for our salvation. God gives up His Son to die; God's hand raises Him from the dead. God sends down the Holy Ghost, and God now Himself sends out the message, inviting the sinner to come near. It is all wondrous grace and love. In David's heart there is love, but not light. In God there is both. He has shown me up in my true character. He has to make no discoveries of me by and by. He has discovered my true state, and love comes in and meets that state. Light shows me my sin, love puts that sin away.

Oh! will you not turn to this One; the One in whom both love and righteousness are combined? Will you not receive Christ at once? With Him everything is yours. May you receive His grace, and taste the joy of it, and be a witness and confessor of how good is God, how perfect His way, and may you walk accordingly till the day when He shall take you up to Himself. But oh! my unsaved friend, do not you miss the day of His grace, the day of His love now and be left to face the day of His terrible judgment!

## 13. TODAY — A FAREWELL WORD.

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### TODAY — A FAREWELL WORD.

"This day is Salvation come to this house . . . For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:9-10.

Here is just one little word, my unconverted friend, that the Lord has laid very much on my heart, and I want to impress it on yours, and that word is Today. If you want to be saved, be saved today, if you want to escape the damnation of hell, escape it today. The Lord has come to seek and to save today; He wants to save you today. Let me ask you this question, Do you want to be saved? "Oh yes," I hear you answer, "of course I should like to be saved." When would you like to be saved? When? When? "When I die," you say. Let me tell you then, my friend, if this be your thought, you are doing your very best never to be saved at all. You are doing your very best to secure your own eternal ruin, for today only does God offer salvation to you; today only is yours.

Today is a moment of priceless value, tomorrow you cannot call yours. The Lord's gospel is today, the devil's gospel is always tomorrow. The Lord's word is today, for today you are lost. Perhaps you say, "I do not agree with you, I do not believe I am lost." Are you saved then? If not, what are you? The Lord has given me this message for you: Go and tell them that they are lost, and that I came to seek and to save them today. Oh, listen to His message then today, for literally there lies but a comma, between "the acceptable year of the Lord," and "the day of vengeance of our God." When the Lord was upon earth, and entered the synagogue, He read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:1-2). He stopped in the middle of the verse, and did not read "the day of vengeance of our God." Why? Because it was then, and it is now, the acceptable year of the Lord. But what is the next thing? Vengeance! Judgment is the next thing in this world's history; how soon it may set in, I know not, you know not.

God in goodness is restraining now the wheels of the chariot of His righteous judgment, that the energy of His grace may go out. He is restraining judgment, that you may have another hour to be saved in. Oh, will you not make use of this hour wherein His grace lingers over you? Do not trifle with God, for if you are not a saved person at this moment, God knows you are lost; whether you know it or not—whether you believe it or not. Again, I say, do not trifle with God, do not sport on the very verge of eternity, on the verge of everlasting ruin. Do not risk that day of judgment, the judgment of the God whose mercy you have despised and refused. Think how the heart of Jesus yearns over you, think what He feels at your refusing His love — Jesus, who came from the Paradise of God, down to the darkness and gloom of Golgotha, to save you, and yet you are utterly careless about it. Oh, wake up, wake up from your fit of madness, for madness it is. What madness so great, as for a sinner to say tomorrow, when God says today!

Christ has shed His precious priceless blood for sinners, and knowing this can you be longer careless? Can you bear to turn away from such love as His? Listen to this word "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." What is that? Cursed when He comes! What will it be, think for one moment, what will it be to be cursed when He comes, and to bear that curse for eternity? Will you risk it? Will you not rather hear the Lord's word today? Salvation today. Mercy and pardon for the penitent soul today, and who could remain impenitent, when He calls so lovingly? The devil would suggest putting it off till tomorrow. Today, says Christ; tomorrow, whispers Satan. Today Christ says, He will save you. Tomorrow He may be compelled to curse you. Why tomorrow? Because tonight He may come. Tonight, when all are wrapped in deepest slumber, the clouds may be parted, and the Lord descend from heaven, and those that are His will hear the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words, and be caught up in the cloud to meet their loving and beloved Lord in the air, and you, yes, you will be left behind. You, child of godly parents too, you will be left, and left for ever: they gone to be with Jesus, you left behind to meet His judgment. I know, then, you will raise your hand and knock at His gate, only to hear those terrible words, "Depart!" "Depart!" "I know you not." Think of it. What will it be to hear the voice of Jesus saying to you, "Depart from me," telling you it is too late!

Oh! be warned in time, do not put it off: do not think you may have plenty of opportunities. "Today," He says. Today may be your sole — your solitary chance — of accepting Christ. It is real agony to the heart of the evangelist to think of seeing one he has known on earth among the number of the eternally lost on that day. For once, once, I shall see you (God grant it may not be once only), but once we shall meet, and where? At the great white throne. You, will be there, and I shall be there, but I shall be with the Judge, and like the Judge, and you, where will you be? Oh, will you be among the impenitent, the condemned, the unwashed, the unforgiven, among those who stand clothed in their sins, before that great white throne, to be judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works? Preachers say sometimes, Sinners are judged only for neglecting Christ. God does not say so. That is the deepest, darkest sin of all — the sin of despising His mercy, refusing His love — but there is more than that against you before God. In those books are recorded all your sins, every one of them; each thing put down you have done, each evil word, each evil way, each idle thought, for these you must give account in that terrible day, and this, as the aggravation of all the rest, that you heard the gospel of His grace, time after time, and rejected it. Do not, I implore you, reject it any longer! Do not refuse to listen to His voice a day more!

Jesus says, He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He treats every one as lost who is not already saved by faith in Him. This is the point from which I behold the Gospel. I am lost; but Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; therefore He came to seek and to save me. He came to seek and to save you, will you not let Him? Do I hear you say — 'I am seeking Jesus?' Well, you are sure to find Him, for the Saviour-seeking sinner and the sinner-seeking Saviour are sure to meet. Whenever a soul is really anxious, the moment will come when the Gospel will fall on the ear of that one, and he or she will see Jesus, and get salvation. The soul that is anxious leaves, as it were, no stone unturned to get where it wants to get — to the feet of Jesus. Satan will always try to hinder the anxious soul; but his very devices bring out decision for Christ. Again I say, the soul that is really anxious will always get to Jesus. And where is the spot where you may meet Jesus, the Saviour? That spot, my dear friend, is the small circle of the consciously lost; for He came for the lost and only for the lost. Reader, if you are not lost, I have no Gospel for you. The really

anxious soul will not let anything hinder him in the deep desire of his heart to see Jesus, and do not you let anything hinder you, for today He wants you. Come then to Him today. Today He invites you. Answer his invitation today. Today you may have Jesus, today He bids you to His feast, do not hesitate then another moment, accept His offer, be His today, His only, His for ever. You know you have thought of these things before, have been "almost persuaded" to come to Jesus, have meant to come some day, but you have never quite decided, you have not come out boldly for Christ, and the time has passed on, and your convictions have passed, too, in measure. And today you are still undecided. Oh! I entreat you, I warn you, do not remain so another day. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

Perhaps you say, "I have plans laid for tomorrow, that must be overthrown if I were to decide for Christ today." Yes, you may have your plans, but let me tell you this, your plans may be well laid for the morrow, but tonight a marauder may enter your house, and rob you of them all, that grim marauder death. Death, the relentless thief, whose power none may resist; then what will become of all your plans, what will become of you and your never-dying soul? Let me tell you of one who had once plenty of plans; he laid his schemes well, and for years to come; he was a rich man too, and all seemed to go well with him, and in his heart he said, The future shall be as the present. But was it? No! No! listen! "Thou fool," says God, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Then what of his plans? — what of his schemes? "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Why in hell? Because he would not go to heaven; because he chose the world instead of Christ!

Make your choice now, my friend: let me counsel you; decide for Christ, make a thorough surrender of yourself to Christ, and what will be the result? The moment you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment salvation is yours. The moment you receive, in simple faith, Him who came from Heaven, and who died, and who is gone into glory, that moment you are entitled to know you have salvation. Salvation is a word that wraps up in itself all the blessings of the gospel. Be you like Simeon, take salvation the very moment you have the opportunity. The 2nd of Luke says that when His parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple, Simeon received Him into His arms, and "blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." That is it, I get everything in Christ, pardon in Christ, eternal life in Christ, He is my righteousness too, my sanctification, and my redemption likewise. Do I receive Christ? Then I receive everything. I get my sins forgiven, my soul saved, and I stand before God in the conscious possession of salvation, His free gift.

"Look unto me and be ye saved," says Christ. The moment a soul looks, in simple living faith, that moment it has salvation, for it has the Saviour. Christianity is no dry set of doctrines, for the mind to take in, but it is Divine truth and blessing for man, wrapped up in the person of the Man Christ Jesus, who came down and did a work upon the cross by which all my sins are put away, and who is gone up again into the glory, Himself to draw your heart and mind to Him up there; and now the Holy Ghost has come out, and says "You trust Him!" And oh, will you not trust Him? He is worthy of all your heart, shall He not have it!

Throughout this year, now drawing to a close, the gospel has been pressed on you again and again. You have over and over again heard or read it, and know well what its sweet sound means. Now I can only lay upon you the solemn, the awful responsibility of rejecting Christ any longer. Will

you not say, Today — I know I have eternal life because I believe on the name of the Son of God. It is presumptuous to doubt, for God has said, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God:, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." It is true humility to believe God. This day, if you will decide, He will receive you; this day He will bless you; this day He will welcome you; this day He will save you; this day He will give you eternal life, pardon, peace, everything He can give you; but if you put it from you till tomorrow, tomorrow He may have only to curse you, and that for ever and ever. The Lord give you, to believe, on Him today, and more, do not be ashamed to confess Jesus, do not be ashamed to own that He has saved you, and that you are His for time and for eternity.

Surely the past may suffice to have lived without Him, and the last moments of 1875 will be sweet to recall, if they mark the moment when you owned and confessed the Lord Jesus. Today, then, harden not your heart any longer, but, since God has said, "Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," do you say today — Lord, I can believe!

"Just as I am — without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am — Thy love I own, Has broken every barrier down:

Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come."

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