

WRITINGS OF GEORGE EVERARD - VOLUME 1

by George Everard

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by George Everard (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

99 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01.00. Before His Footstool
2. 01.000. Introduction
3. 01.01. Week 1
4. 01.02. Week 2
5. 01.03. Week 3
6. 01.04. Week 4
7. 02.00. Beneath the Cross!
8. 02.000. Preface
9. 02.01. Beneath the Cross
10. 02.02. The Beloved Disciple
11. 02.03. Around the Table
12. 02.04. The Feast of Remembrance
13. 02.05. Infinite Condescension
14. 02.06. Washed and Forgiven
15. 02.07. Dark Gethsemane
16. 02.08. The Crown of Thorns!
17. 02.09. The Love of the Cross
18. 02.10. Self-searching Beneath the Cross
19. 02.11. Cross-Bearing
20. 02.12. Until He Comes
21. 03.00. Bright and Fair!
22. 03.01. Bright and Fair!
23. 03.02. "My Sister!"
24. 03.03. "Give Your Hand to Fortune"
25. 03.04. Locked Gates, and the Key to Open Them
26. 03.05. Behind the Partition
27. 03.06. The Field of Sundew
28. 03.07. "Polished Corners of the Temple"
29. 03.08. Intellectual Culture
30. 03.09. "Able to Support"
31. 03.10. Live Today!
32. 04.00. Counsels to Christians on the Details of Every-day Life
33. 04.000. Contents
34. 04.0000 . Introduction
35. 04.01. How to Begin Well
36. 04.02. The Right Principle
37. 04.03. Daily Renewal
38. 04.04. Daily Mercies
39. 04.05. Daily Light

40. 04.06. Daily Prayer
41. 04.07. Daily Clothing
42. 04.08. Daily Work
43. 04.09. Daily Walking
44. 04.10. Daily Talk
45. 04.11. Daily Warfare
46. 04.12. Daily Consolation
47. 04.13. A Blessing in the Family
48. 04.14. Victory over the World
49. 04.15. The Great Account
50. 05.00. Help and Consolation from the Sanctuary
51. 05.01. The Piercing of Jesus' Side!
52. 05.02. Bread from Heaven
53. 05.03. Submission in Trial
54. 05.04. God's Love Manifested in the Law
55. 05.05. Loving Service
56. 05.06. Heavenly Guidance!
57. 05.07. The True Worshipers
58. 05.08. Preparedness for the Lord's Coming
59. 05.09. The True Light
60. 05.10. The Well of Bethlehem
61. 05.11. The First Miracle!
62. 05.12. Nicodemus
63. 05.13. I Have Sinned!
64. 05.14. The Best Cheer!
65. 05.15. The Nobleman at Capernaum
66. 05.16. Christ Has Risen!
67. 05.17. Joy in Christ's Ascension
68. 05.18. Our Exalted King!
69. 05.19. Our Melchizedek Priest
70. 05.20. The Promise of the Comforter
71. 05.21. The Way of Access
72. 05.22. Individual Faith
73. 05.23. Not One Forgotten!
74. 05.24. One in Christ
75. 05.25. Sanctification Through the Truth
76. 06.00. Help on the Way to the Better Land
77. 06.01. The Heavenly Ladder — and How to Climb it!
78. 06.02. Firm as a Rock!
79. 06.03. Christ's Blood More Precious than Gold!
80. 06.04. The Upward Glance!
81. 06.05. The Door Open — and the Door Shut!

- 82.** 06.06. Strength for the Strengthless
- 83.** 06.07. Deepen the Well!
- 84.** 06.08. Nearer to Thee
- 85.** 07.00. The Home of Bethany
- 86.** 07.01. The Sisters
- 87.** 07.02. The Dark Cloud
- 88.** 07.03. Love's Delay
- 89.** 07.04. The Master has Come!
- 90.** 07.05. Around The Tomb
- 91.** 07.06. The Mighty Voice
- 92.** 07.07. The Family Re-united
- 93.** 08.00. In the Secret Place
- 94.** 08.000. Introduction
- 95.** 08.01. First Week
- 96.** 08.02. Second Week
- 97.** 08.03. Occasional Prayers
- 98.** 09.00. Little Foxes, and How to Catch Them!
- 99.** 09.000. Contents

01.00. Before His Footstool

Before His Footstool

Family Prayers for One Month George Everard, 1874

01.000. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

It has been truly said, that "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof." Family prayer is the thermometer of home piety — it tells what is the spiritual condition of the household. If it is neglected, or frequently omitted, or if it is a form quickly hurried over, as a mere necessary routine of the day — we may be sure that religion is at a very low ebb in that home.

While, on the other hand, if it is regarded as a sweet and blessed privilege, if there is a heartiness and reality about it — then it is a plain testimony that the grace of God is there. In many thousand homes throughout our land, family prayer is regarded both as a duty and as a privilege. But many Christian people earnestly desire that it should be far more profitable — a far greater power for good than it has yet been. Can any hints be given which might be likely to make it so? The great matter is to make it a reality. Like everything else in religion, family prayer is very apt to degenerate into a mere form. It becomes too often like the winding up of a clock or a watch — something merely mechanical, without life or power or comfort. To counteract this, there needs first of all a well-spring of true godliness in the one who leads the devotions. True spiritual life in the one who conducts family worship is the all-essential requisite. A dead formal spirit is very infectious — whereas earnest living faith and devoted love to the Savior will be felt by the household in every chapter that is read, and in every prayer that is offered. "The mouth of the righteous is a well-spring of life." "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." To make family prayer a reality, it must be regarded as a matter of real importance in family arrangements. It must not be omitted, except for some very urgent cause. It must not be regarded as a small thing for one member to be too late to join the others in the morning. Children must be led to feel that the parents value it themselves, and wish to make it as helpful as possible to all under their roof. If the time is short for it on any particular morning, or if the engagements of the day have necessarily led to its being very late at night — it is far better to read a text of Scripture, and then to have a short, earnest prayer — than to let the morning or evening pass by without it altogether.

Then it is needful continually to watch against mere lip-worship. "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The utterance of the lips without the desire and faith of the heart, is not acceptable to God. We must never forget this. We must perpetually seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. We must depend upon His quickening grace. We must look to Him to stir up within us a constant sense of the absolute necessity of prayer for our soul's health. We must expect from Him, those Heaven-born aspirations, and that filial confidence through Christ's name, which make prayer to be indeed the prayer which is set forth as incense before our Father.

If we would make our family prayer a reality, we must study that there may be life and variety in every part of it. For this purpose it is well that the portion of Scripture read be not overly long. It should never be above twenty to thirty verses, and it is often better to make it shorter even than this. A few short words of practical comment upon the passage read is often most useful. If

anything particular has occurred in the house, let notice be taken of it in the Scripture that is read, or in the prayer that is offered, or in both.

If possible let a hymn be sung, at least occasionally. It often fixes the thoughts of those present, and draws them away from worldly matters.

It is important also to have variety in the prayers offered. If a manual of prayers is used, it is sometimes well to utter in your own words, your desires on behalf of your family. The words may be very simple and few, but they may reach the ear of God, and touch the hearts of those who join with you, if only they come from your own heart, and are inspired by an earnest longing for the Father's blessing. To assist in this point of variety in the prayers offered, I feel that a collection of family prayers may not be out of place. It need not be that any other volume which has been previously used and valued should be thrown aside, but a fresh one may be useful in supplementing the former. It may much increase the devotion of the household to have their needs expressed in somewhat different words to those to which they may have been long accustomed. My desire in preparing the present volume has been to bring before God the real needs of a household in plain and simple words, and which will be with the understanding of all its members. Oh! that each family where it is used may indeed fall low before the footstool of Jehovah, and delight in seeking Him in sincerity and truth! And may we all at length form part of the Great Family which shall meet before the throne of His glory!

"Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."
Matthew 6:9-13

"May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all Amen."

"May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you His favor and give you His peace." Numbers 6:24-26

"May the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make His face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon us, and give us peace in Christ Jesus, now and always. Amen."

"May the Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen."

01.01. Week 1

FIRST WEEK

Sunday morning

O Lord our God, our Father in Christ Jesus — we come before You this day in His name. We fall low on our knees before Your footstool. We humbly adore and bless Your holy name for this day of rest. It is the day which You have made, that we may rejoice and be glad in it! Fill our hearts with thankfulness, and our lips with praise. Teach us to see Your goodness in the provision which You have made for our salvation. You have given Your Word to guide and direct us. You have sent Your well-beloved Son to be the Savior of the world. You have sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to guide us into all truth.

We bless You, we praise You, we glorify You, Father, for all these proofs of Your love. We beg You give us grace this day, to live in the enjoyment of them. Give us a true delight in the services of Your House. Take from us the spirit of the world. Drive away all vain and wandering thoughts. Keep us from all lightness and irreverence, and fix our hearts on Yourself.

O Lord God Almighty, You are in Heaven, and we on earth. Teach us to worship You with holy awe. When we confess to You our sins — grant us genuine sorrow and contrition. While we seek You in prayer, let our petitions be real and fervent. Let faith be mingled with each desire we present to You. While we sing our songs of praise, let holy joy fill our hearts. While we hear Your Word read, or preached, let us receive it in meekness and obedience. O send Your Spirit to us this day, and may we behold the glory of Christ.

Blessed Jesus, exalted to the right hand of the Father, bestow upon Your Church the gifts which You have purchased for us by Your precious blood. Let Your ministers be clothed with righteousness, and endued with power from on high. Give unto them the spirit of wisdom, of love, and of a sound mind. Raise up many pastors after Your own heart, who shall feed Your flock in the wholesome pastures of Your Word. Be present, O Lord, in all the assemblies of Your people today. Bow down Your ear to hear — and open wide Your hand to give. Awaken the careless, guide the erring, and comfort the sorrowful. Let Your Word have free course, and run, and be glorified. Be very near to those who are unable to go to Your courts. Watch by the side of those in sickness and in suffering, and remind them of Your love. Be a staff of strength to the aged, and relieve the sorrows of those that are bereaved.

Accept these our humble supplications, and bless us for Your mercy sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday evening

O Heavenly Father, our God and Father in Christ, we come into Your presence and desire to thank You for Your mercy to us. We thank You for the rest of this Your holy day. We thank You for all the help which You have given us on our way to the better land. We thank You that this night we may

come to You again, and cast ourselves on Your forgiving mercy.

We confess, O God, that we are unclean in Your sight. Our services this day have been mingled with much imperfection. Our prayers have been defiled by worldly and wandering thoughts. We have not loved You nor served You as we ought to have done. We have too often worshiped You with our lips, while our heart has been far from You. But, Lord, we entreat You to cleanse us from the iniquities of our holy things. Take from us all our guilt, and clothe us with the fair clothing of the Redeemer's righteousness. Accept us in the Beloved, and deal with us favorably for His sake. Let "holiness to the Lord" be our aim in every service, and assist us by Your Spirit in all our prayers and meditations.

O Lord You have called us to labor in Your vineyard. You have given to each of us our talent, and would have us employ it for You. Help us cheerfully to obey Your call. Show us the work we have to do, and enable us to do it as in Your sight. Through this coming week may we watch for opportunities of usefulness. May we never refuse the least service we can render in the work of Your Church. Make us ready to condescend to men of low estate, and to give a cup of cold water to the least of Your disciples. Above all things, we pray that the love of Christ may constrain us. Send Your Holy Spirit to quicken our faith and love and zeal. Keep us from anything inconsistent with our profession, and may we adorn the doctrine of Christ in all things.

O Father, revive Your work in the midst of us. Show us a token for good, and lift up a banner for Your truth. Call forth many to work for You, and to bear witness for Christ in the world. Gather in a vast multitude of souls who are now strangers to Your grace. Turn them from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto You.

Keep us, O Lord, through the hours of this night, and guard us from all danger.

Awaken within us an earnest desire for Christ's appearing. Whether it be by day or by night — may we be found ready with our loins girded and our lights burning. O receive us now to Your care, forgive us and bless us for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Monday morning

O Lord God Almighty, our Creator, our Preserver, our Father in Christ Jesus — look upon us this morning with Your favor. Your mercies are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness. It is of Your mercies we are not consumed, because Your compassions never fail. You have mercifully watched over us through the past night, and guarded us from all danger. We are now met in Your presence to praise and bless Your name.

Grant unto us, O Lord, the spirit of true godliness. We would not be Christians in name only — but in deed and in truth. O make us to be such by the mighty power of Your Spirit. Show to us our need of pardon and grace and strength. Give us more contrition of heart, and more tenderness of conscience. Increase our faith, and enable us to rest all our hopes on Your dear Son Jesus Christ. You have given Him to be a sure Foundation, and a tried Cornerstone. You have promised to bestow on us the gift of pardon and of Your Spirit through Him. You have assured us that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Lord, we believe — help our unbelief. Fulfill to us these merciful promises. Freely blot out all our sins through His precious blood. Give us the Spirit of holiness, and renew us in Your own image. Stir up within us an earnest desire to please

You, and make us to hunger and thirst after righteousness. May we hate and abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good. May we follow after that which is honest and just and pure. Make us wholesome patterns of Christian living, so that men may find in us no cause of offence. Make us to live above the world while we are in it — and may we ever be looking for the glorious appearing of Your Son Jesus Christ.

Remember, in Your great mercy, our friends and relations far and near. Make them partakers with us in the blessed hopes of Your Gospel. Comfort and support them in seasons of sorrow and anxiety — and bring them at last to Your kingdom.

We beg You to bless the congregation to which we belong. Pour out the rich abundance of Your grace upon Your servants ministering in Your Word. Make them steadfast and immovable, always abounding in Your work. Pour out upon all the members of our congregation the spirit of prayer, the spirit of love, and the spirit of tender compassion for souls that are perishing.

Go forth with us, O Lord, this morning, to our various duties. You were ever with Your servant Joseph of old, and all that he did, You made it to prosper. We beg You thus be near to us to help and bless us. Give us wisdom in all perplexities, and strength to resist every temptation. Keep us ever mindful of Your presence, and bring us to the land of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday evening

O Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come once more to seek Your help. Another day has quickly passed by, and we are one stage nearer to our latter end. But You are the living God, unchangeable in truth and loving-kindness. With You is no variableness nor shadow of turning. You never fail those who trust in You, and Your mercy toward those who fear You is from everlasting to everlasting.

We confess, O Lord, that our sins have risen up toward Heaven as a thick cloud. By thought and word and deed we have provoked You to anger. We have grieved and vexed Your Holy Spirit by our continual backslidings. Spare us, O merciful Father, we humbly beseech You, and cast us not away from Your presence. Though we be tied and bound by the chain of our sins — yet let the pitifulness of Your great mercy loose us.

We plead before You the great work of redemption which Christ has wrought on our behalf. He has died the just for the unjust. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. O look upon Him wounded and bruised for our iniquities — and may His death answer for all our guilt. Impute not unto us the sins which we have done, but behold us with Your merciful favor for His sake.

We plead with You, O Lord, Your own faithful promises. You are God, and Your words are true, and that which You have spoken with Your mouth — You will fulfill with Your hand. You have promised eternal life to those who believe in Christ. You have promised deliverance from the guilt and power of sin to all who seek Your face. Grant us these blessings, we humbly beseech You. Give us Your grace on earth — and Your glory in the world to come. Be our refuge in the day of trouble. When trials come, You alone can support and comfort us. Be our Stronghold, our Hiding-place, and our Covert from the storm and tempest. Teach us, O Lord, to fear the judgments which You have pronounced against such as neglect Your salvation. You are faithful to Your

promises — You are likewise faithful to the threatenings of Your Word. O teach each one of us to flee from Your wrath, and take refuge in Your mercy. If any before You are yet unsaved, lead them this night to turn unto You, and wash us every one in the fountain opened for sin and impurity.

O Lord Jesus, abide with us by night and by day, and amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life — may we ever lean on You, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Keep us near to Yourself this night. May our last thoughts be of You. Refresh us with quiet rest, and raise us up on the morrow strengthened to serve and please You. Hear us for Your name's sake. Amen.

Tuesday morning

O God, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort — we come to You this morning as our Father in Christ Jesus. Your name is Love, and we beg You this day deal with us after Your mercy and loving-kindness.

O gracious and merciful Father, You delight to bless the households of such as serve and honor You. We need Your help continually. Except You build the house, their labor is but lost who build it. Except You are our Guardian and Keeper — the watchman wakes but in vain. Let Your presence ever be our defense and our glory. As the pillar of cloud rested over the tabernacles of Israel — so be near unto us to keep us and to guide us. May this dwelling-place ever be overshadowed by Your Fatherly care. Make this home a nursery for Heaven. Send us Your Spirit and make us humble and teachable, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Let the lamp of Your blessed Word be a light to guide and direct our footsteps. Shed abroad in our hearts, Your heavenly grace, and kindle within us the flame of Divine love. Make us to love You with all our soul, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Shut out of our home whatever may be hurtful either to our souls or bodies. Implant and nourish within us every good and holy desire. Enlighten our minds in the study of Your Word, that we may learn the secrets of heavenly wisdom. Establish and settle us in right principle, that we may never follow a multitude to do evil. Hold up our goings in Your ways, that our footsteps do not slip. And when heart and flesh fail — be the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

O Heavenly Father, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in Heaven and earth — protect and bless our beloved country. Direct the counsels of those set in authority over us. May they so order the affairs of this nation that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.

Finally, we beg You to bless all estates of men in Your holy Church, that every member of the same in his vocation and ministry may truly serve You in godliness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday evening

O God, our Father, the merciful God, the faithful God, we come to You again tonight. We have often come to You before, but You are never weary of hearkening to our prayer. You are always more ready to hear, than we to pray — and are accustomed to give more than we desire or deserve. O grant that we may never be weary of seeking Your face. May it be our continual joy and delight to draw near to You, and receive the blessing which You are so willing to bestow.

We come to You for pardon through the precious blood of Christ. Our feet are stained with sin. We have trodden forbidden paths. We have not walked as carefully as we should. O wash away all the evil that cleaves to us. Forgive the dishonor we have done to You among those with whom we have mingled.

We have failed to adorn the doctrine of our Savior. We have been too much like those who are walking after the course of this world. We have followed too much the devices of our own hearts. We have neglected many opportunities of doing good. O freely blot out all transgressions, and take us beneath Your Almighty Wings. We need Your protecting care. We know not what dangers may beset us, but our trust is in You alone. Keep us from all the snares of this wicked world. Keep us from the deceit and craft of the great Destroyer. Give Your angels charge over us and our dwelling-place; and You who never slumber, nor sleep — guard us during the hours of darkness.

O good Shepherd of Your flock, You know our sorrows, and understand the secret grief of every heart. We desire to cast all our care on You, for You care for us. Whatever may be the burden that oppresses us. You alone can help us to bear it. O give us grace according to our need. Undertake for each of us, and uphold us that we do not faint along the way. Say to each heart, "I am your strength and your salvation." Help us to lift up our eyes to You who pleads the cause of Your people. Allow no temptation to prevail against us, but lead us in Your narrow way. Bring us in Your own time to that blessed Home, where there is no more pain, or sorrow, or death, and where we shall see You face to face!

O Father, mercifully look down from Heaven on all those who are near and dear to us. Give unto them present peace in the assurance of Your favor, and keep them evermore in Your faith and fear. Ward off any danger that may threaten them, and may they abide in the secret place of Your tabernacle. Amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, may they ever be defended by Your most gracious and ready help, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday morning

Almighty and everlasting God, You have called us to Your throne of grace, and have invited us to draw near to You. You have bidden us in everything to make known our requests unto You. We would obey Your call this morning. We come to You as Your children in Christ Jesus, and we ask You for the help we so greatly need.

O Lord, pour upon us richly the spirit of prayer and supplication. Dispose our hearts to seek Your face. Give us an earnest desire for Your salvation. Give us holy boldness in approaching You through the blood and mediation of Your only-begotten Son.

We come to You, most merciful Father, and would cast on You all our burdens and our cares. You know that we are often cast down by the various trials of the narrow way — but Your hand is in every sorrow and in every disappointment. If we meet with wrong and injury through our fellow-men, teach us to realize that You have permitted it for our good. If others speak evil of us, and judge us harshly — may we rest in Your faithfulness and love. Keep us from the least willful misdoing, and in Your own time bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noonday.

If pain and suffering are appointed for us, give us cheerful submission to Your will, and in due season restore us again to health and strength. Give us a full persuasion that all our steps are ordered by You, and may we see Your wisdom and love in everything that befalls us. May we this day remember that we are called by Your name. We are pledged to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil. Make us faithful to our vows and promises. Be ever at hand to support and help us in the hour of temptation. Keep us from denying You, or being ashamed of Your Word, or Your service. Fill our hearts with inward strength, that we may confess Your name in a sinful world. May we adorn Your gospel by a very holy and consistent life.

God, the King of glory, who has exalted Your only Son Jesus Christ, with great triumph to Your kingdom and glory — send us Your blessed Spirit, the Comforter. May He dwell within us, to teach us, to sanctify us, and to guide us into all the truth. Through His grace, may we mortify every besetting sin and infirmity. Take us beneath Your gracious protection this day; and, though we are unworthy of any favor at Your hands, do for us far more than we can ask or think, through the worthiness of Your dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday evening

O Lord God Almighty, there is no God like You in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath. You are Great and High and Holy. We come to You with the deepest humility, for we are unworthy of the least of Your mercies. But You are our Father. You have redeemed us by the blood of Your Son. O give us childlike confidence in Your fatherly love, and may we believe the promises You have made to us in Christ.

We cast ourselves down this night before Your footstool, and confess to You our many sins. We have too often forgotten You, the Giver of all we possess. We remember the friends who show us kindness from time to time — but how seldom have we thought of You, our Father and our God. You have nourished us, and sustained our life by Your tender care — but we have not known or considered Your goodness. But You are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Forgive us, we beseech You, all that is past, for the sake of Him who died for our sins. Give us the spirit of true and sincere gratitude. Teach us henceforth to live as Your faithful and obedient children.

O merciful Redeemer, we fly to You as the only refuge of our souls. We hear Your voice calling us to Yourself. You have invited all who are weary and heavy laden. You have promised to give us rest. Lord, we come, for You have bidden us. We are weary of the evil which we have wrought; but we look unto You for the rest which You have promised. Give to us the rest of complete forgiveness. Grant us quietness and peace of spirit in the assurance that You love us. Refresh us with Your grace, and make us glad with the light of Your countenance.

O God, we beseech You, be gracious to this household and to all whom we love. Look upon any who may be at a distance from us, and who may be exposed to special dangers and temptations. Keep them in the hour of trial. Lead them and guide them by Your Holy Spirit, and make them truly to love and fear You. Have mercy upon all who live round about us, and grant that they may be numbered among Your people. Turn the hearts of the disobedient, to the wisdom of the just. Let those that love You be as the Sun when he goes forth in his might. Make us all to be harmless and blameless, living in holiness and love as Your children in the midst of all evil world.

We are now about to lie down to rest — let Your everlasting arms be beneath us, and Your sheltering wing over us. Be near to us through the hours of darkness, and when we awake may we still abide with You. Grant us these petitions for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday morning

Almighty Father, You are exalted far above all blessing and praise — and yet You delight in the worship of Your redeemed people. We come to You this morning in the Savior's name. We are unworthy of Your regard, but Jesus is worthy. We are altogether sinful in Your sight, but Jesus is our righteous Advocate. Look upon the face of Your Anointed One, and bless us with all spiritual blessings for His sake.

We would go forth to our daily occupations this day, and do all things as in Your sight. You have preserved our lives from day to day. May we spend them in cheerfully doing Your will. Teach us to walk before You and be upright in all our ways. May we never follow the example of those around us when it is contrary to Your Holy Word and commandment. Give us both to will and to do according to Your good pleasure. Lead us by Your Spirit in the paths of righteousness. May no temptation befall us which we are unable to resist. Clothe us with the armor of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left. Prepare us against every assault of the Tempter. Keep us ever watchful and prayerful, and may we at all times lean only on the hope of Your heavenly grace given to us in Christ.

O Lord Jesus, be our light in this dark world. You have come to us as the Day-spring from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. You are the Bright and Morning Star — yes, You are the very Sun of Righteousness, who have arisen with healing in Your wings. With You is the light of mercy and forgiveness for every sin-burdened conscience. With You is the light of love for the friendless and the desolate. With You is the light of hope for those who are ready to despair. Come, O light of men, and scatter all our darkness! Awaken us from the slumber of spiritual death. Take from us all indolence and sloth. Kindle within us the flame of Divine love. Fill us with Your light and joy. Make us to reflect Your own image, and may we shine as lights in the world.

O Lord, we plead with You for those who have not the same comforts which we enjoy. O God of mercy and love, be near to support the poor and needy. Be the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow. May all who are in distress have grace to bring their cares and their necessities to You. May those who are poor in this world, be rich in faith, and rest satisfied that You do all things well. Teach us all that the time is short, and that our light afflictions are but for a moment. May we so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that we finally come to the land of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday evening

O God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort — we come to You this night, and desire to commit ourselves to Your merciful keeping. Watch over us during the hours of darkness, and refresh us with quiet rest. The darkness is no darkness with You, but the darkness and the light are both alike. Your eye is ever upon us, and Your arm is Almighty to defend and protect us.

O Lord, You have taught us in Your Holy Word to be ready at all times for the second coming of Your Son. We know not the day nor the hour of His appearing. Lord, prepare us for that great and solemn day. Clothe us with the wedding garment of the Savior's righteousness. Blot out all our sins, through His most precious blood. Cover us with the covering of Your Spirit. Endue us with innocence of life, and make us holy in all our conduct.

We beseech You, O most merciful Father — quicken our cold and careless hearts, that we may watch and pray continually. May our loins be girded about and our lights burning. May we be like unto men who wait for their Lord, that when He comes and knocks — we may open unto Him immediately.

O Lord Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, fill our hearts with holy joy in the prospect of Your coming kingdom. You shall raise up those who sleep in You. You shall change our vile bodies, that they may be made like unto Your glorious body. May we live day by day as Your true servants, and may we look forward in assurance of hope to that blessed time.

O God, we beseech You to mercifully shield and protect every member of this family. There may be some whom You know to be in special danger. Health may be failing, or a sudden accident may bring peril when least expected. Be gracious unto Your servants according to their need. Keep them evermore beneath the covert of Your almighty wing. Give us that which will tend most to our everlasting welfare. Grant us that which is requisite for our present comfort, if it be Your holy will. But if it is otherwise, help us to trust You and to rely on Your Fatherly care.

Bless all our relatives and friends. We entreat You to give them whatever they need for time and eternity. Look upon all those traveling by land or by sea, and be near to help them in the hour of danger. Defend our soldiers wherever their lot may be cast, and make them faithful soldiers of the King of kings. Be merciful to all prisoners and captives. Give to them true repentance, and bring their souls out of soul-prison that they may praise Your name. Fulfill these our desires and supplications, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Friday morning

O Almighty Lord God Almighty, You are the High and Lofty One who inhabits Eternity — and yet You humble Yourself to behold the children of men. Behold us this morning in Your tender compassion. You know our frame — You remember that we are dust. We are frail and sinful, and our thoughts and desires are of the earth — but deal with us according to Your mercy. Be favorable to us through the merit and death of Your dear Son. Quicken our hearts by Your Spirit, and raise our affections to Yourself.

O Lord, we are called by Your name and profess to be Your servants. We have acknowledged You to be our God and our King. We are bound to serve You alone. Help us to be faithful to our high calling. Make us to be witnesses for You in a world that denies You.

O Lord, You have purposed that Your people should be as the salt of the earth. Fulfill in us this Your good pleasure. Endue us with the savor of Your heavenly grace, and make us in all things followers of Christ. Make us meek and gentle, patient and forbearing towards each other. Make us just and true in our dealings with our fellow-men. Grant us the spirit of constant prayer, and make us Your remembrancers. May we continually bear on our hearts before You the sins and sorrows

of those around us. Show to each of us the work You would have us to do, and give us strength and power faithfully to fulfill the same. Create within us a humble spirit, that we may be ready to help a little child, or speak a word in love to the poorest of Your flock.

O Lord, we would lay ourselves and all we have at Your feet. Be graciously pleased to use us in Your service. O good Shepherd, restore our souls whenever we go astray. Let not our light grow dim, nor the salt lose its savor. Let us not forsake You, nor turn aside to that which cannot profit. Give us ever increasing Life through Your Spirit. Give us more humility, more reality, more fervent zeal, and greater love toward Your name. Transform us into Your own image, from glory to glory, until we cast our crowns before You. Have mercy upon the lost and the perishing. Stir up Your people to seek after them, and bring them back to Your fold. Prosper every effort made to tell sinners of Your love. Fetch home to Yourself those who have gone the furthest astray. Touch their hearts by Your Spirit, and dispose them to return to You, the Shepherd and Guardian of their souls. Hear us, gracious Savior, and fulfill all our petitions, for Your name's sake. Amen.

Friday evening

O Lord our God, You are our Father, our Guardian, our constant Benefactor. Another day we have been spared in Your mercy. You have preserved our going out and our coming in. You have shielded us in many dangers. You have given us strength sufficient for our appointed work. O give us hearts to praise You for Your goodness. May we yield to You our hearty thanksgivings for all Your benefits, temporal and spiritual. May we take the cup of salvation, and call upon Your holy name.

We confess, Lord, that we have too often made an ungrateful return for Your loving-kindness. We have been unprofitable servants. We have been negligent in searching Your Word. We have not stirred up ourselves to take hold of You. Lord, our hearts are full of iniquity and evil. You desire truth in the inward parts, but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags before You.

O Father, we would hide from You nothing of the sin which cleaves to us. But we beg You to cleanse us from all iniquity. You are faithful and just to forgive those who confess their sins unto You. We cast ourselves upon Your abounding mercy — wash us from every stain of guilt.

We beseech You, O Lord, renew us in the spirit of our minds. We are the clay — and You our Potter, and we all are the work of Your hands. Work in us both to will and to do of Your good pleasure. Mold and fashion us after Your own image. Make us holy, pure, patient, and full of charity. Make us vessels unto honor, sanctified both in body and soul. Make us very useful in the Master's service, and prepare us to every good work.

O Lord, quicken us by Your Spirit, and help us to run the race set before us. Keep us from turning aside, through the cares or pleasures of this life. Give us patience and steadfastness when hindrances arise. Uphold our goings in Your way, that our footsteps may not slip. Lift us up when we fall. Let us never yield to unbelieving thoughts of Your grace or power. Help us to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets us. May we ever be looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Forgetting the things which are behind, may we press forward until we reach the goal. This night graciously protect this household and all those who are dear to us. Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. O Lord save us, and help us now and evermore,

for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday morning

O God, You delight in mercy, and have promised to hear the prayers of Your children. Draw near unto us this morning, as we draw near unto You in the name of Jesus. We come to You through the new and living way which You have opened to us by Him. For His sake regard us in loving-kindness, and cast all our sins behind Your back.

O keep us this day, we beseech You, from the manifold temptations and devices of the wicked one. Open our eyes that we may discern the danger that may be near. Keep our feet from being taken in the snare that may be laid for us. Deliver us from all distrust of Your providential care. May we never make use of sinful expedients to obtain that which we desire.

You feed the birds of the air, and clothe the grass of the field. Help us to believe that You will provide for all our necessities, and care for us in all our cares. Teach us to rely more confidently on Your Fatherly goodness. May we seek first Your kingdom and righteousness — fulfill Your promise, that all other things shall be added to us.

If for a season You try our faith, and permit us to lack anything — then remind us that our Master was once poor and needy for our sakes, and had nowhere to lay His head. Make all our trials work together for our good, and in Your own time send some angel of mercy to minister to our needs.

Father, deliver us also from all pride and vain-glory. Subdue within us every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge and obedience of Christ. Make us willing to follow in His footsteps, who was ever meek and lowly in heart. O grant us true humility. Show to us our exceeding sinfulness. In lowliness of mind may we esteem others better than ourselves. May we be willing to give place to those around us, and seek their profit and pleasure rather than our own.

O merciful and faithful High Priest, who were in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin — stand by us and support us in every season of temptation. Enable us to withstand all the assaults of the Tempter. Fortify our hearts with the promises of Your Word. Endue us with the grace of Your Spirit, that we may come off more than conquerors. Be our arm every morning, and our refuge and defense in the conflict of each passing day. Have mercy, we entreat You, on those who are hindered in their heavenly race. There are many placed in circumstances of great difficulty, where it is doubly hard to walk with You and do Your will. But, Father, give them strength according to their day. Keep them from the fear of man, and make them constantly mindful of Your loving Presence. Cheer them with Your smile, and uphold them with Your mighty right hand.

Accept, we beseech You, these our prayers for ourselves and for those in trial. Bless all those who are near and dear to us, and keep us holy and blameless unto the day of Christ's appearing, for His name's sake. Amen.

Saturday evening

O eternal God, the Everlasting Refuge of Your people — we fly to You as our only hope amidst the changes of this passing world. We come to You tonight at the close of another week. Our days and years are quickly rolling by, and we draw nearer to our latter end. Make us to know our end, and the number of our days, that we may know how frail we are. Teach us to live while we live,

and may we spend each day in remembrance that it may be our last. Whatever our hand finds to do, may we do it with our might, knowing that there is no wisdom or device in the grave to which we are going. Teach us ever to bear in mind that the end of all things is at hand. May we therefore be sober and watch unto prayer. May we walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.

O God, who searches all our hearts, and understands all the imaginations of our thoughts — we would be honest with You. We would hide nothing from You this night. We would lay open before You all our ways and doings, for You know us altogether. We plead guilty before You. We have sinned grievously. We have failed to perform the duties to which You have called us. We have too much neglected the care of our own souls, and of those about us. We have forgotten You days without number. We have not sought to glorify You in our daily life. We have all come short of serving You as we should. We have been unprofitable servants. We have grieved and provoked You by our backslidings, and have vexed Your Holy Spirit. But we plead Your mercy. Help us, God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name — and deliver us and purge away our sins for Your name's sake. Look upon Him who was made sin for us — that we might be accounted righteous in Him. May His blood remove each stain of evil, and purge our conscience from dead works to serve You the living God.

Prepare our hearts for the holy rest of the coming day. Help us to cast aside all that may have troubled or disturbed us through the week. Help us to leave behind all the concerns of our week-day work, and to rise up to nearer communion with You. Raise our thoughts to that better land where You shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. O that we might day by day so live by faith in Your dear Son, that we might be enabled joyfully to anticipate the pleasures which are at Your right hand for evermore!

We now commit ourselves to Your faithful care. Give quiet rest unto us this night, and grant us on the morrow a day of holy joy in Your worship, and when our days and weeks on earth are passed away, may we dwell forever in Your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

01.02. Week 2

SECOND WEEK

Sunday morning

O blessed Lord God, our Father and our God, we draw near to You once more at the beginning of Your own day. We come to You with thankful hearts. We would lift up our souls to You, and praise You with joyful lips. Early this day would we seek You. Our souls thirst for You, as the deer pants after the water-brooks. O give us more and more of this holy desire. Though our souls cleave to the dust, quicken us according to Your Word. Turn us again O Lord God Almighty, show us the light of Your countenance and we shall be whole. May we this day esteem the words of Your mouth more than our necessary food.

Direct the message spoken by Your servants, so as to reach every heart and every conscience. Make Your arrows sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies. Awaken the careless from the sleep of death, and bring home to every transgressor the conviction of his guilt and danger. Give to every mourning soul, the sense of Your Fatherly pity, and bind up the broken-hearted with the oil and wine of Your grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. Let none be sent empty away from Your courts, but grant to all the blessing and the help which they need.

Pour out Your Spirit very richly on all who are engaged in Your service. Especially be present to bless all the ministers of Your Word. May they hold fast Your faithful Word, and preach its blessed truths with wisdom and with power. Teach them to lift up Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Give them grace to exalt Him in His Work and Office as the only Hope of the lost sinner. Reveal to them the exceeding greatness of His love, that He may be the joy and strength of their own souls.

We beseech You also, most merciful Father, send down a plentiful rain of grace and blessing upon Your whole Church. Heal our divisions, forgive our iniquities, and bind together the hearts of all Your children in the bond of love and truth.

Extend far and wide the borders of Your kingdom. Take away from heathen and Muslim nations all prejudice against the name of Jesus, and lead them in humble submission to His footstool.

Turn to Yourself, the multitudes in our own land who are living without the knowledge of Your love. Touch the hearts of those who live by their daily toil, that they may seek first Your kingdom and righteousness. And grant that those to whom You have given largely of this world's goods, may rejoice to give freely and liberally for the promotion of true religion and the welfare of others. Hear us, Father, and be with us throughout this day for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate.

Sunday evening

O most gracious and merciful Father, we would hear Your voice speaking to us at the close of this Your day. O speak to us by Your Spirit words of comfort and peace and hope. You know all the iniquities of our holy things, and all the coldness and deadness of our hearts toward You. But we plead Your mercy, and beseech You to put away all our sins through the blood of Christ. Assure us this night that we are indeed Your own accepted children. Fill us with joy and peace in believing. Draw near to us in loving-kindness, and may we delight ourselves in the abundance of Your goodness.

We have heard Your Word this day, and have been reminded of the Savior's love to us. Help us henceforth to live more in the power of Your truth. Enable us to carry the message of Your love to others. Help us to teach the young, and instruct the ignorant. Help us to speak words of comfort to those who are cast down. May we despise no work however lowly, if by any means we can save a soul from death, or strengthen such as are weak and ready to faint. Show us, Lord, the work You have for us to do, and give us grace to do it for Your glory.

O Lord, we beseech You, reveal Your mighty arm in the conversion and salvation of sinners. May Your Gospel this day proclaimed, make a lasting impression on many hearts. O that You would rend the heavens, and come down in the power of the Holy Spirit. Turn to Yourself very many of those who are now treading the broad road to destruction. We bless You for every good wrought by the efforts of Your servants. We bless You for every soul brought to know and love You. But we plead for yet greater things. Come from the four winds, O mighty Spirit, and breathe upon the slain, that they may live! Manifest Your quickening power and raise up many faithful witnesses to Yourself in a world of sin and evil.

We beg You, Father, take us and all whom we love under Your care this night. May we lie down in peace and take our rest, knowing that You alone O Lord, make us to dwell in safety. Prepare us for that eternal rest which awaits Your redeemed people. In this world we expect tribulation, but an hour in Your presence will outweigh all the sorrows and trials of earth. O bring us safely to the land of Everlasting life, where every tear shall be wiped away, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday morning

O eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of mankind, the Giver of all grace — we come to seek Your blessing this morning. We are again about to enter upon the various duties of our daily life, and we need Your presence and Your help continually. Strengthen us to act with a single eye to Your glory.

Give us a true estimate of the value of life — as a precious talent to be used for You — a season in which we may lay up treasures in Heaven. If we use it aright, we shall have blessings from You, both here and hereafter. If we waste and squander it, we shall be indeed poor and lost and undone forever.

O Lord, we beseech You to teach us to walk wisely, redeeming the time. Much of our life has already been spent, and we know not how short a time may yet remain to us. Help us to live each day as if it were our last. While we have the light, may we walk in the light, lest darkness overtake us. The night of death will soon come — and there is no work in the grave where we are going. Keep this ever before us, and so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we this day sow to the Spirit, and not to the flesh. May we sow the seed of holy

thoughts, kind and loving words, and just and righteous actions. Keep us from all sin, sloth, and self-indulgence. Whatever our hand finds to do — may we do it with all our might. May we honor You by diligence in our appointed work. May we seize every opportunity to learn more of You and of Your Word. May we watch for occasions of doing good to those around us.

O gracious Redeemer, who is the All-wise Counselor of Your redeemed people, guide us in all the difficulties which befall us. We are often burdened with cares which we cannot escape. We know not the path we ought to take, nor the thing You would have us to do. O make our way straight before our eyes. May we desire only to know Your will, and may we readily follow the path in which You lead us. May we cast all our care on You, knowing that You care for us. Whatever trials You may appoint, make them work together for our highest good.

Accept, we beseech You, these our prayers and supplications. Receive our hearty praises for all Your mercies and loving-kindnesses. Pardon our many sins, negligences and ignorances. Do for us better than we can ask or think — through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our precious Lord. Amen.

Monday evening

O Lord God Almighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords, You are our Father in Christ Jesus. Even as a Father pities his children — so do You pity those who fear You. As one whom his mother comforts — so do You comfort each of Your own. You give us all needful blessings. Lord, we bless You with grateful hearts for all Your goodness to us.

Especially are we bound to praise You for the throne of grace to which You have invited us. We bless You that we are invited to bring to You all our needs and necessities. You have bidden us not to worry about anything — but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make known our requests unto You. Help us to delight in thus drawing near to You. May we come and pour out our hearts before You. At morning and evening, and oftentimes throughout each day — may we lift up our hearts unto You. May we ever come to You in full reliance on the name of Your dear Son. Look not upon us in our sinfulness and unworthiness — but look upon Him, our Righteous Advocate. Have respect to the All-sufficient Sacrifice which He has offered.

O grant unto us the spirit of prayer. Open our hearts that we may long for Your grace above all things. May we open our mouth wide to ask You for all we need. Give unto us the spirit of filial confidence in Your love, and in Your readiness to hear our prayers.

Give us likewise a ready ear to hearken to all Your precepts, and a heart to obey Your will when we know it. May no willful transgression make a separation between us — or hide Your face from us. May we more and more walk in the light of Your Word.

Make this home to be a home of love, and may we all have peace with You through Christ, and peace one with the other. Subdue all angry tempers within us, and everything that would grieve Your Spirit to withdraw from us.

Look down in mercy on all whom we desire to commend to Your Fatherly care. Be near to all who are dear to any of us. Bestow upon them Your saving grace, and make them partakers of Your favor on earth and of Your glory in Heaven. Have compassion upon our fallen world. Stay by Your mighty hand, the wars and contentions that bring desolation to so many lands. Send far and wide

the Gospel of peace, and dispose the hearts of many to welcome the joyful sound. Restrain the flood of vice and ungodliness that threatens to overwhelm our land, and raise up many true and faithful ministers to proclaim Your Word.

Accept, Lord, these our prayers and praises, freely forgive us the sins we have done this day, and keep us beneath Your sheltering wing, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Tuesday morning

O merciful God, our Creator and our Benefactor, our Father in Christ Jesus — we come to You this morning to thank and praise You for all Your manifold mercies. We thank You for the proofs of Your goodness which day by day we receive at Your hands. You have given us all things richly to enjoy. You have given to us home and friends, food and clothing — and You have preserved us in life and health. For all this we adore and praise Your holy name. But we would bless You most of all, for Your inestimable love in our redemption. You have given Your Son Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for our sins. Fill us with sincere gratitude, and teach us to praise You both with our lips and in our lives.

O God of love, circumcise our hearts that we may love You as we ought. You are worthy that we should love You far above all else. But we are carnal, and our affections cling too much to the things of the world. May Your Holy Spirit break the chains which bind us so closely to earth, and draw us nearer to Yourself. Shed abroad Your love in our hearts, that we may desire Your presence above all things. Kindle within each of us the heavenly flame, and may it burn ever more and more brightly.

Most gracious Father, we beg You to teach us to love one another with a pure heart fervently. May we show to the world around that we are indeed the children of a God of love. You have taught us that all our doings without charity are worth nothing. Without this, all our words and works are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Breathe into our souls this heaven-born grace of charity. Take from us all envy and malice and unkind suspicion. Help us to put away all bitterness and evil speakings one against another. May we charitably judge of the actions and motives of others. Make us gentle and forbearing towards those who wrong us, or wound us by cross and angry words.

We beg You, O Father, pour down Your Spirit upon Your whole Church, weakened and distracted by manifold evils. Preserve among us the purity of the faith. Raise up a standard for Your truth. May Your Word ever be the light to guide and direct us, and may Christ alone be the resting-place of every heart. Deliver us from all bitterness and hatred, and whatever may hinder our godly union and concord. Hear us, O God, and preserve us evermore by Your help and goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday evening

O Lord, our God, how excellent is Your name in all the earth. You are the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. You are righteous in all Your ways and holy in all Your works. Help us to adore and magnify Your name. Help us to come before You this night in the spirit of humble reverence, and may we worship You acceptably through Your dear Son.

O Lord, You have promised to make Your dwelling-place with the humble and the contrite. Give us true humility. Give us grace to know ourselves, and to feel deeply our ignorance, our sinfulness, and our helpless, and lost condition apart from You. We have continually broken Your law, which is holy, just, and good. We have not walked after the example of Your Son Jesus Christ. Most grievously have we provoked Your anger and indignation against us. O Father, we blush to lift up our eyes to You, for our iniquities have increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up unto the heavens. But look down from Heaven. Your dwelling-place, and when You hear, forgive. While yet a great way off from You, by reason of our sin and unbelief — draw near to us. Embrace us with the arms of Your mercy, and grant unto us a full reconciliation. We bless You that Christ was made an atoning sacrifice for us, when He suffered and died upon the cross. May we be regarded as righteous in Him, and cast all transgressions into the depths of the sea! May we thus look up to You as our Merciful Friend — yes, as our most Pitiful and Loving Father.

O Lord, we beg You this night revive the hearts of Your contrite ones. Refresh them with the dew of Your grace, and comfort them with the assurance of Your Presence. Dwell within us by Your Holy Spirit, and make us a temple worthy of You.

O God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons in one Glorious Godhead — come and make Your abode with us, and fill us with all the fullness of Divine grace and consolation.

We beseech You, O God, mercifully to regard all those who claim an interest in our prayers. You know those who are dear to each of us now before You. O let Your favorable kindness be upon them. Take away all pride and hardness of heart from any who may yet be in the far country of sin. Guide the footsteps of any who may be seeking their way to Zion. Lift up those who may be depressed and sorrowful by reason of life's trials and afflictions. Speak peace to any who may be near to their latter end. May their feet stand firm on the Rock of Ages, and may they have no trust but in the blood and righteousness of Christ.

We commit ourselves now to Your merciful care. May our last thoughts be of You, and may we rise in the morning with a fresh desire to yield ourselves to Your service. Forgive us all our sins, and mercifully fulfill all our petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Wednesday morning

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, we lift up our hearts to You this day in thankfulness for all Your undeserved mercies. We praise You, O Lord, for Your loving-kindness and truth. We would not forget Your countless benefits bestowed upon us. You forgive all our iniquities, and heal all our infirmities and backslidings. You redeem our life from destruction, and preserve us from dangers on the right hand and on the left. You give us the bread that comes down from Heaven, and have promised to fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

We bless Your holy name for all Your goodness toward us. Help us, O Lord, to show forth our gratitude, by living to Your glory. We gladly accept the gift of Your salvation offered to us through the mediation of Your only begotten Son. May we humbly rely on Your free promises made to us in Him.

O blessed Savior, the Good Shepherd of Your flock — may Your holy life be the pattern which we daily strive to copy. Teach us so to walk as You walked when sojourning here below. May our constant aim be to do the will of our Father in Heaven. May we be gentle and meek and forbearing towards all men. May we never willfully yield to the very least sin. May we give ourselves unto prayer, and make Your Word the rule of our life. May we go about doing good, and watch for occasions of comforting those in distress or anxiety. Fill our hearts with zeal and love, with patience and kindness, with humility, and hatred of all evil. May we daily fix our eye on You as revealed in Your Word, and may we be changed into Your holy image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of our God.

O Lord God, who hates nothing that You have made, be merciful to all those that are walking in the way that leads to destruction. Turn their hearts to Yourself. Stir up the hearts of Your faithful people that they may speak words in season to save the perishing. Bless the labors of Your ministering servants, and make them useful in the salvation of souls.

O Lord of the harvest — the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Send forth a great company of true and devoted messengers of Your Word into all the world and crown their labors with abundant success. Prosper all Societies for spreading Your truth. Give unto those who manage their affairs, the spirit of counsel and wisdom — and give unto those who support them the grace of cheerful liberality. May Your Church never lack faithful ministers to proclaim Your truth at home and abroad, nor the gold and silver needful to supply their needs.

Finally, we beseech You to receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before You for all estates of men in Your holy Church, that every Christian in his vocation and ministry may truly and humbly serve You, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday evening

O God, our Refuge and our strength — once more we approach You in your own appointed way. We come to You, trusting only in the merits of Your Son Jesus Christ. We beseech You, for His sake, favorably to hear our petitions, and to send us an answer of peace.

O Shepherd of Israel, look down upon us in tender love this night. We have gone astray like lost sheep, but seek after us and restore us to Your fold. Leave us not to perish in the wilderness of sin, nor on the mountains of vanity. Gather us with Your arm, and carry us on Your shoulder, for of ourselves we are unable to return to You. You are mighty to rescue and to save. None can pluck Your redeemed people out of Your hand. O keep us every moment, lest we fall before the snares of the Wicked one.

We bless You for the pledge that You have given of Your love to us. You have laid down Your life for Your sheep. You have bought them with Your own Precious blood. O forsake not those whom You have redeemed at such a price. You care for us far more than we can imagine. You love us with an everlasting and unchanging love. Manifest to us Your love more and more, and may we love You with our whole heart.

We beseech You to feed and nourish our souls with Your grace. Make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside the still waters. Let our souls be daily fed from the rich treasury of Your Word. May we delight in coming to You in secret prayer. May we be strengthened by the

provisions of Your house. Give us day by day the Heavenly manna, and may we thus grow in grace, and abound in all the fruits of the Spirit. Be very gracious to the weak and the burdened ones. Carry the lambs of Your flock in Your bosom — and gently lead all that are weary and heavy laden. Deal tenderly with the suffering, the sorrow-stricken and the aged. Bear them along in the arms of Your mercy, and uphold them lest they faint along the rugged way. If there are any such that know You not, may they now learn the things that belong to their peace. May they know the time of their visitation, lest their light go out in darkness and they stumble and fall forever!

We beseech You, O Lord, lead all Your true and faithful children in the ways of righteousness. Be their Counselor and Guide even unto death. Bring them at last to that blessed fold above, where there shall be no more sin and no more temptation. May we behold Your face in Your kingdom, and forever share Your glory.

Hear us, O Good Shepherd, keep us this night from all harm, and raise us up on the morrow that we may follow in Your footsteps. We ask all for Your name's sake. Amen.

Thursday morning

O Lord, our God, You have set Your glory above the heavens — and yet You have invited sinful men to draw near to You. We bless You for the open door which You have set before us. We come to You through Your beloved Son in whom You are ever well pleased.

O Lord, our sins testify against us, for we have sinned against Heaven and before You. We are no more worthy to be called Your children. But in Jesus have we righteousness and strength. Accept us in Him, and impute not unto us our old sins. May His death remove all our transgressions, and may we be clothed in His perfect righteousness. Through Him, may we appear before You this morning as having no spot or stain of iniquity.

We beseech You, heavenly Father, to make us as holy as Christ is holy. Search every secret chamber of our hearts. Show us the evil that is there, and help us to cast it out. Expel every unholy thought and every sinful passion. Cleanse us from all selfishness and self-will. Deliver us from the bondage of evil habits. Take from us the spirit of envy and discontent, and may we never distrust Your Word or Your Providence.

O blessed Savior, for our sake You bore Your heavy cross, that we might have eternal life. Help us daily to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow You. Make us willing to sacrifice our own pleasure, that we may the better do Your will. May we choose rather a little with You — than to gain the whole world and lose the comfort of Your love. Make us ready to part with all we possess, and even to lay down our lives — rather than willfully dishonor Your name. May we in all things follow the footsteps of Your most holy life, until we lay down the cross and receive the crown which You have promised to those who love You!

We beseech You, gracious Savior, let Your richest blessing rest on the younger members of this family. Guide their feet into the way of peace. Gather them with Your arm, and carry them in Your bosom. Teach them to remember You now in the days of their youth. Teach them to seek You early, that they may find You. May they never reckon it too soon to enjoy Your love, or to choose Your happy service.

O Lord God, we beg You to bless all estates of men in Your holy Church. Bless our civil leaders. Rule their hearts in Your faith, fear and love, and may they evermore trust in Your mercy. Endue with heavenly wisdom those placed in authority over this land. Give grace to all civil leaders, that they may maintain Your truth, and promote the true welfare of our country. Keep and defend us from all enemies within and without. Make us to be a people fearing You and working righteousness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday evening

O merciful and gracious Father, this night we venture once more to approach Your mercy-seat. You have opened for us a new and living way through the mediation of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. May we come boldly to Your throne of grace, and pour out our hearts before You. Bow down Your ear, Lord, and hearken to the prayers of Your servants.

O Lord, we are unworthy of all the mercy and truth which You have shown toward us. We have served our idols, and have wearied You with our iniquities.

We confess before You the sins of our country. You behold on every side a contempt for Your law, and a rejection of Your blessed Gospel. Your Sabbaths are profaned and Your name is dishonored. We cannot count the sins which prevail among us, nor worthily lament the evils which defile our land. But we praise You for Your patience and forbearance. Do not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. To You belong mercies and forgivenesses. In spite of all our provocations, continue Your mercy toward us.

We bless You for the rich provision which You have made for our necessities. You make Your sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and send rain on the just and the unjust. You are kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

We bless You for Your special goodness to our nation. You have shielded us for many years from the bitter curse of the sword. You have given us liberty and freedom to worship You according to our conscience. You have made life and property sacred among us.

We would bless You also for our family and domestic mercies. You have given to us a quiet and peaceful abode — while Christ had nowhere to lay His head. Your hand, Father, provides us day by day with food necessary for us. Your wing covers our dwelling-place and guards us from danger continually.

We bless You above all for our spiritual mercies. We would thank You with all our hearts for Your salvation in Jesus Christ. We thank You for Your Word which points to Him. We thank You for the Comforter whom You have sent to teach and sanctify us. We thank You for Christian Pastors to assist us in our heavenly course. We thank You for Christian friends with whom we can take counsel along the way. We would praise You without ceasing for all the help and consolation You give us through Your dear Son, and for the everlasting kingdom promised to those who love You.

O gracious Father, let Your mercies be the loadstone to draw our rebellious hearts to You. May Your goodness lead us to repentance. May Your constant love fill us with the longing desire to yield ourselves wholly to Your service. Be pleased to forgive all that has been amiss in our prayers and praises, and accept and bless us this night, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Savior. Amen.

Friday morning

O God, Merciful and Gracious, Long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth — we draw near to You this morning in the name of Your dear Son. Draw near to us according to Your faithful Word, and fill us with true and sincere gratitude for all Your benefits towards us. We have laid down and risen up in peace and safety — for You have watched over us. O Guardian of Your people, keep us evermore by Your help and goodness. Preserve our souls from all evil. Preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth and for evermore.

We would confess before You, our unworthiness of Your help and favors toward us. We have forgotten You days without number, and have grieved and provoked You by our backslidings against You. We have justly forfeited all claim to Your protection, and have deserved only Your wrath and displeasure.

O God, we flee to the refuge of Your mercy. Have mercy upon us according to Your loving kindness, and according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Sprinkle us with the most precious blood of Your dear Son, and may we be wholly cleansed from all the guilt and defilement of our sins. Grant us the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven and put away forever out of Your sight. Embrace us with the arms of Your mercy; give unto us the kiss of reconciling love. Upbraid us not, nor chide us for the days which we have spent in the far country — but clothe us with the best robe, adorn and beautify us with the garments of salvation, and give us grace henceforth to serve You with joyfulness for all the goodness You have shown unto us.

O Lord Jesus Christ, You have bought us for Yourself, not with silver or gold, but with Your own precious blood. Make us wholly Yours. As we beg You for Your pardoning mercy, so we beseech You to grant us also grace to live henceforth wholly for Your glory. As You have forgiven us much — may we love You much, and strive to manifest our love in our daily walk and conduct. Give unto us a sincere heart. Deliver us from all falseness and hypocrisy. May our words be spoken as before You, and be free from all taint and leaven of deceit.

Make us honest and sincere in all our dealings with our fellow-men. May we rather suffer any loss, than dishonor You or wound our own conscience. Make us also to forgive others as You have forgiven us. Subdue any rising spirit of revenge when others may wrong us, or speak harshly to us. May we conquer by love. May we overcome evil with good. May we ever give the soft answer that turns away wrath, and thus follow the holy example of Your well-beloved Son, who was ever meek and patient towards all men.

Accept, we beseech You, these our prayers and supplications, and fulfill all petitions through the mediation of Jesus Christ our only Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Friday evening

O almighty Father, the God of mercy, love and peace — receive us graciously as we kneel before You at the close of this day. Every day we have to thank You for fresh mercies, and to confess before You our perpetual backslidings. But Your heart is ever ready to have mercy and to forgive. Remember not against us our old sins, but show to us the abundance of Your grace in Christ Jesus.

We thank You for the Gospel of Your Salvation. The carnal mind is enmity against You, and we have been enemies to You in our minds through wicked works. We have provoked You to displeasure by our sins, and an evil conscience has made us afraid of Your presence. But we bless You that You have sent us a message of peace. You have offered to us a full reconciliation through Christ, for He has made peace for us through the blood of His cross. You have invited us to draw very near to You in His name. O receive us according to Your Word.

O blessed Savior, You have promised to Your people that peace which the world cannot give or take away. O grant us to enjoy Your peace in our hearts at all times. Though we may have tribulation, You can support and sustain us. In every hour of sorrow, enable us to lean on You and trust Your faithful care. When buffeted by the waves of this troublesome world, may we hide ourselves in You, our Strong Habitation. When oppressed and wearied in the conflict of life, O refresh our souls with the assurance of Your love. O God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We beseech You also, O Father, to bind together all the members of this household in the spirit of mutual forbearance and love. May we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Make us to walk in love as Christ has loved us. Help us to cast aside all bitterness and anger and evil speaking — and to put on, as Your elect children, affections of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. May we ever be ready to forgive one another, even as You for Christ's sake have forgiven us.

O Lord God Almighty, the Author of peace, give unto all nations unity, peace, and concord. Make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth.

O Prince of peace, set up speedily Your kingdom, and make Your Word to spread far and wide. Let those who have hitherto dwelt in darkness, behold Your light and rejoice in it. Reign in every bosom, and set up that kingdom which is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

Watch over our dwelling this night. Keep us safe beneath Your care, and refresh us with quiet rest that we may be enabled the better to serve You on the morrow. We ask all, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Saturday morning

O Lord of all power and might, Author and Giver of all good things, it is our blessed privilege to draw near to You in the name of Christ. Give us true joy in worshiping You. We adore and praise You for the daily mercies we have received through this week, and through our whole lives. Make us indeed thankful for all Your benefits, and may we show forth Your praise by living to Your glory. As week by week rolls by, teach us to see more clearly the shortness of time, and the nearness of eternity. Our joys and sorrows are but for a moment — but You have promised an eternal weight of glory to Your children. Help us, Father, to seek those things which are above. If any here before You have neglected to seek Your favor hitherto, may we seek You at once through Your Well-beloved Son. O draw us to Yourself, and open our eyes to see the vanity of things below. Keep us from making the pursuit of wealth our chief aim in life. Keep us from seeking too eagerly the success we desire.

If riches increase, teach us to use them for You. May we thus make Friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. If anxiety or want of any kind be our portion — bear our burden for us. In all our labors and sorrows, may we glorify You. May we so pass through temporal things, that we lose not the eternal things. May we seek first Your kingdom and righteousness, and may we be assured that all other needful things shall be added unto us.

O Merciful Redeemer, be ever by our side. In our daily conflicts stand by us and help us. Uphold us with Your right hand — and then we shall not fall. Make us in all things, to follow in Your footsteps and to keep Your commandments. Teach us to count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Your love; and may we reckon a little with Yourself far better than every earthly blessing without Your Presence.

We entreat You, O Father, draw us closer to Yourself by the cords of Your love. Bless the members of this household, present or absent, with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Bind us together in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and love. Prepare us for the great day of Christ's appearing.

We commend likewise to Your faithful care our relations and friends. Watch over them for good continually, and number them among Your believing people. Comfort any who may be in trouble, and restore to Your fold any who may have gone astray from You. When life is over, and You shall make up Your jewels, may none whom we love be found missing among Your saints. Receive these our prayers, we humbly beseech You, and forgive us all our sins through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday evening

Almighty and everlasting God, we would call upon Your Holy name at the close of another day and of another week. With You is no variableness nor shadow of turning. As our days and years roll on, You are ever Merciful and Gracious, and ready to hear the cry of Your redeemed children. Your sure and faithful promises are ever the same, and we know that You, Lord, have never failed those who seek You.

O Lord, remind us at the close of this week of the strict and solemn account which we must one day render before the judgment seat of Christ. To You all hearts are open, and before You no secrets are hid. You have declared that You will bring every work into judgment and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. May we often remember the issues of that Great Day.

We freely confess all the sin and iniquity that Your all-searching eye has seen in us. We acknowledge our willful transgressions and our continual shortcomings. Search us, O Lord, and try our hearts — and wherever we have offended against You, graciously forgive us. Our hope is in Jesus. Look upon the All-sufficient Sacrifice which He has offered for our sins. We plead before You, the blood shed for us upon the tree. O cleanse us in that blood from all iniquity. Lead us to rely wholly on the finished work of Christ, and assure us that there is no condemnation for us in Him.

O Lord, You have bidden us to make supplications and prayers for all men. O give us the spirit of true charity. Quicken our hearts in this blessed privilege of intercession. Have mercy, we beseech

You, on all the members of Your Church. Let the dew of Your heavenly blessing descend on all who love the name of Christ, and lean only on the hope of His grace. Strengthen by Your mighty Spirit, all those who are laboring for You, and prosper all the work to which You have called them.

Pour water upon every thirsty soul, and satisfy every longing heart. Let Your people everywhere be filled with Your Spirit. May they be harmless and blameless, living as Your children in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. May they hold forth the lamp of Your truth, and by a consistent and holy life, let their light shine before men.

Raise up all those that are bowed down either by temptation or by sorrow. Give unto the rich the spirit of meekness and humility, and may they be rich in faith and in good works. Give unto the poor the grace of true contentment, and may they have treasure in Heaven where neither rust nor moth does corrupt.

Prepare each of us now before You for the coming day of rest. May each returning Sabbath prove a blessed foretaste of our rest above. We commit ourselves now into Your Fatherly keeping. Be with us and guard us from all danger, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

01.03. Week 3

THIRD WEEK

Sunday morning

O almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords — we would praise and magnify You as the God of all mercy and grace. We praise You for this day of blessing and help. Your gate stands open wide, and You are calling us to Yourself. We would have forgotten You, and gone immediately down the road that leads unto eternal destruction — but You are very pitiful and of tender mercy. You invite us to return to You by all the ordinances of Your house, and by all the messages of Your Word.

O pour upon us the Spirit of grace and supplication. May we look on Him whom we have pierced. May we grieve for the sins which He bore in our place — and may we rejoice that through His precious blood, we can approach You as our Father.

We would desire this day to have closer fellowship with You. O God, You are our God, early will we seek You. Our souls thirst for You, for there is no true satisfaction if You are absent. Your loving-kindness is better than life. O let us see Your power and Your glory this day. Take away every veil that hides from us the all-sufficiency of Christ. May we look up to Him as our Shepherd and Physician, as our Friend and Redeemer. May we trust in Him as our Merciful and Faithful High Priest, ever speaking good for us to You our Father in Heaven.

O gracious Father, we beseech You to make this day to be one of true profit to our souls. We are going to Your house, and we beseech You go with us, and may we feel that You meet with us according to Your promise. May our prayers be offered in spirit and in truth, and ascend with acceptance to Your Throne. May we lay aside all malice and envyings and evil speakings, and may we receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save our souls. May we sing Your praises with a thankful spirit, and may we thus have a foretaste of the joys of the redeemed above. Let Your Word this day run and be glorified, and may those who hear it receive it as Your Word, and not as the word of man. Let Your people in every place delight to throng Your courts, and may Your ministering servants be cheered by the success of their labors. Gather together the outcasts, and bring them back to Your fold. There are many who stand in the way of sinners and sit in the seat of the scornful. Put forth Your own hand, and constrain them by Your grace to come to Your house and hearken to the joyful sound of Your Gospel. Be very present as the refuge and strength of all Your afflicted and sorrowing children. Be to them as a little sanctuary, wherever their lot may be cast. Leave them not comfortless because unable to meet with Your people, but make Your abode with them, and give them songs in this night of trial and distress.

O Lord, You know all our need far better than we can express it. Mercifully bow down Your ear and give to us according to Your infinite wisdom and the exceeding riches of Your grace, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Sunday evening

Most gracious God and heavenly Father, You are good and do good continually. Especially would we bless You for the help You afford us by Your holy Sabbaths. May every day of holy rest be a step onward to Your blessed kingdom.

O Lord, Your servants this day have been casting abroad the good seed of Your Word. Send forth the dew of Your blessing that it may abide in the hearts of those who have heard it, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold. Grant that the evil one may not be able to catch away that which has been sown. Grant that the stony ground may be softened — that Your Word may take deep root. Grant that neither the riches nor pleasures nor cares of this world may be able to choke the Word and prevent its bearing fruit. O let not Your Word return unto You void, but may it accomplish that to which You have sent it. May sinners be turned unto You, and Your people filled with holy joy. Instead of the brier, let there come up the myrtle tree; and instead of the thorn bush, let there come up the fir tree. Let Your people be as trees of righteousness, filled with the fruits of Your grace, to the praise and glory of Your name.

O Lord, we beg You, give unto each of us life eternal — which is to know You the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Remove the blindness which hides from us Your glory, and make all Your goodness pass before us. Show unto us the greatness of Your love, and make us indeed partakers of its blessedness. Make us truly to believe in Jesus, and to rest all our hopes on Him. Make us to know Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life — and may we ever walk in His footsteps.

Father, glorify Your name in us by renewing us in the image of Your well-beloved Son. We are Yours, O save us by Your mighty power. Holy Father, while we are in the world, keep us from the evil one. May the truths we have this day heard raise our hearts from earth to You, and enable us to triumph over the snares which surround us on all sides.

Keep us from being content with merely bearing Your name, and may we strive in everything to live for Your glory.

We beg You to sanctify us by Your truth. Without holiness no man can attain Your glory, and we would be holy in body and in spirit. Purify and cleanse our thoughts and motives and desires, by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit. May the words of our lips and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Knit us all together in Your love. Unite our hearts to fear Your name. Give unto all who love You, one heart and one way, and may nothing separate those who are joined together in the bonds of Your Gospel. This night be our Guardian and Protector. Bless all whom we love, and all who are loved by You. And grant that when all our earthly Sabbaths are past, we may be with You, and share Your glory and kingdom, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Monday morning

O almighty God, our Creator, our Preserver — we come to You this morning as our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. We thank You for the quiet rest of Your holy day, and we beg You that its lessons may not be forgotten. May we cherish in our hearts whatever You have taught us out of Your Word, and may every day of this week be hallowed by the sense of Your presence. Make us

desirous of giving ourselves entirely to Your service, and of living to please You in the duties of everyday life. Grant that in our various occupations we may not be drawn aside from the remembrance of You. Remember us, O our God, for good, through the merits of Your Son — and may we often remember You and think upon Your name.

O Lord, we beseech You look upon the younger members of Your flock. They are very dear to You, and it is not Your will that the least of them should perish. May they ever look up unto You as their Father and as the Guide of their youth. May they take Your Word as a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path. O keep them from being dazzled and led astray by the deceitful pleasures of a sinful world. Let them rejoice in Your Fatherly care, and find their greatest happiness in the love of the Good Shepherd.

O God, we entreat You likewise to give unto all parents a due sense of their solemn responsibilities. May they ever remember the great charge committed to them in the training of their little ones. Teach them to watch over them from day to day, and may they endeavor to bring them to Your footstool. Keep them from all harshness and anger, lest the young be discouraged. Keep them likewise from all false kindness. May they teach the children to fear and reverence Your holy name, and to hate all that is sinful. O may every home be a home of peace and love, and grant that both old and young may walk before You in holiness and righteousness all their days.

We beseech You, O merciful Father, give unto us, and to all who are dear to us, a single eye as to Your glory. Give us a tender conscience, that we may never willfully commit the very least sin. We pray that our love to You may abound more and more as we learn to more of Your love to us. May we love those things which are excellent, and be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. May we thus glorify You in our bodies and in our spirits, which are Yours.

O Lord, give unto us also a calm and quiet spirit. Keep us ever near to You. Empty us of all pride and self-will and covetousness — and enrich us more each day with the treasures of Your grace. May we have our eye fixed on the crown of righteousness which You have promised to those who love You. May we so pass through temporal things, that we lose not the eternal things. Grant us every petition, and forgive us all our iniquities, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday evening

O almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — be merciful unto us and bless us this night. Give unto us Your Holy Spirit to dwell within us, and make us Your habitation. Be our God, and may we ever rejoice that we are Your people. Make us separate in heart and mind from an evil world, and may we touch no unclean thing. Sanctify and cleanse us by Your Spirit and Your Word, and may we perfect holiness in Your fear. O receive us, and be a Father unto us through Christ. Grant that we may abide before You in filial trust and holy love, as Your sons and daughters.

O Lord our God, teach us continually to rely upon Your Fatherly goodness. Not a sparrow is forgotten before You — and You number the very hairs of our head. You regard every care and every sorrow that comes upon us. You pity us in all our fears and troubles. Your eye is open by night and by day. When we feel desolate and lonely, You are very near to comfort and uphold us. As You sent Your angel to Hagar in the desert — You are ready likewise to help us in distress. As You sent Your angel to feed Your servant Elijah by the brook — so You delight to supply all our

need.

Father, teach us to trust You evermore. Forgive all our unbelieving doubts and our faithless murmurings. Increase our faith, and make us joyful in Your salvation.

O Father, we have grieved You this day by our sins, but especially by our forgetfulness of You and Your love. Teach us the sinfulness of forgetting You, who are never unmindful of us. Stir up our hearts continually by some thought of Your goodness, or by some promise of Your Word. May we set You always before us, and walk before You in all good conscience. Make us upright and sincere in all our dealings, and may there be no deceit in our lips. May we do Your will, not with eye service as men pleasers, but as Your willing servants. May we serve You cheerfully with our whole heart, as we remember all Your love to us.

O Lord Jesus, make all Your ministering servants to proclaim Your Word faithfully. Keep them from all error in doctrine, and make them true witnesses for You, both by their lives and by the truth which they preach. Bless all missionaries wherever they have gone forth in Your name. Prosper all their labors, and by their means gather out multitudes to be the sheep of Your flock.

We would remember also before You those who are in any way connected with us. Bless all our relations and friends with Your grace and favor. Bless them and make them a blessing to others. Fulfill, O Lord, these our prayers and supplications for the sake of Him whom You hear always, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday morning

O God, our Heavenly Father, may we look up to You this morning and have fellowship with You through Your Son Jesus Christ. You are more kind than any earthly parent. Your heart is full of pity and compassion toward us. Your hand is full of blessing and grace. You are slow to anger, but ever ready to forgive and to help us. We turn to You for the support that we need. We have no plea but the atoning death of Christ. Receive us at all times through Him; and since He ever makes intercession for us before Your throne — abundantly answer all our petitions.

Help us, O Merciful Father, henceforth to walk and please You more and more. Teach us carefully to shrink from that which is evil in Your sight, and to cherish that which is right and acceptable before You. May we honor You by the steadfastness of our faith, and never give way to unbelieving fears. May we love You above those who are dearest to us on earth, and above all things which this world can offer. Help us diligently to improve the talents You have committed to our charge, looking to You alone to prosper us in all we do. Give us the ready ear for every call of duty, and the willing hand to give freely of that which You have bestowed upon us.

O blessed Savior, You have taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others as we would that they should do unto us. Give us the mind and disposition thus to act. Remove the veil of selfishness that so often hides from us the claims of those around. Make us ever considerate towards those who may be in distress. Make us willing to sacrifice our own comfort interests, that we may relieve the troubles of those in sorrow or need. Teach us to give care and time and money, when You call us to the sacrifice. Like the good Samaritan, may we be ready to bind up the wounds of others, and bear each others burdens according to Your Divine will.

O Lord, our God, remember with Your favor Your holy Church. Grant to every believer, grace, mercy, and peace, that each one in his vocation and ministry may truly and humbly serve You. O pour out Your Spirit abundantly in all His manifold gifts of grace. Raise up men of wisdom and power, who shall have knowledge of the times, and who shall be able to lift up a standard for Your truth. Beat down Satan beneath our feet, and increase the number of Your faithful servants in every town and city and village throughout our land.

Bless the families of all who love You, and may the children walk in the footsteps of their parents. Have mercy on any who have turned aside, and fulfill the prayers which have been offered for their salvation. Comfort the heart of every godly parent by the remembrance of Your faithfulness in rewarding the prayers which are offered before You in true faith.

Hear us, Father, and bless us exceedingly, according to Your good pleasure, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Tuesday evening

O Lord God Almighty, the Everlasting King, we bow before You this night with reverence and godly fear. May we approach You with holy awe, for Your name is Holy; but may we also come to You with boldness and confidence, for You are Merciful and Gracious. We would enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ, and look up unto You crying, Abba Father. We would bring to You our sins and our sorrows, our needs and our cares. Forgive us all that has been amiss, and let Your tender mercy relieve all our distresses.

We hear Your voice, O merciful Savior, bidding us turn unto You. You have said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden" — and You have promised to give rest to our souls. O Lord, we are grieved and wearied with the burden of our sins, and we beg You give us the rest that we need. Give us rest from a guilty conscience, and from all disquieting fears. Give us rest in the assurance of Your presence and Your love. Hide us in Your wounded side, and be to us a covert from the storm and a shadow from the heat. Be our strong Refuge whereunto we may continually resort, for You are our Rock and our only sure Defense. Enable us in Your strength to take upon us Your easy yoke and Your light burden. Put within us Your love, that we may find it our joy to serve You. Shed abroad Your Spirit in our hearts, that we may delight in Your commandments, and never grow weary in Your service. May we commend Your Gospel to others by our cheerfulness in doing Your will, and by the holy consistency of our lives.

O Lord, our God, our Father, watch over us, and all whom we love, through the coming night. When we lie down to sleep, may we not be afraid; yes, grant that our sleep may be sweet because You are near. The day is Yours and the night is Yours — and in both Your hand is mighty to protect and save. Grant that whether we wake or sleep we may ever abide under Your sure defense. And when the night of death shall come, may we have You as the Light and Life of our souls. May we live hereafter with a more earnest desire to please You in all things, and when our work on earth is done, may we be found fit for the inheritance of Your saints in glory.

Finally, we bless You for all Your mercies granted to us and to those who are dear to us. We bless You for all the comforts we have enjoyed this day, and for all Your goodness to us through our whole past life. We bless You for days and years of health and prosperity. We desire no less to bless You for days of trial and affliction — for these also You have sent in love to our souls. We

bless You chiefly for Your unspeakable gift, Your well-beloved Son, whom You have given for our salvation. We bless You for the means of grace and for the hope of everlasting life. Accept, O God, these our prayers and praises, through Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

Wednesday morning

O God and merciful Father, You are near to all who call upon You faithfully. Draw near unto us this morning, and quicken our hearts to seek You. You have been gracious to us in preserving our lives, and giving us fresh opportunities of seeking Your face. O grant that we may live for You, and may each day bring us nearer to Your rest.

O Lord, we entreat You, deepen Your work in our souls. gracious Savior, be dearer to us than any friend on earth. May the remembrance of Your precious name fill our hearts with unspeakable joy. May our eyes be ever looking unto You for all grace and help and strength. Give us great delight in Your blessed promises. Give us the comfort of Your Presence at all times, and be near to us whenever our hearts are cast down. Give us a desire to work in Your vineyard, and may gladly we lay at Your feet all we possess, to be employed in Your holy service.

O Lord, we beseech You, give us true humility. May we so behold You in Your glorious holiness that we may abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. Be merciful unto us, God, for our sins are great in Your sight. Wash us in the Savior's blood, and we shall be whiter than snow. As far as the east is from the west, so far do You remove our transgressions from us.

Help us diligently to use all the means which You have appointed for our spiritual growth. May we search deeply into the hidden treasures of Your Word. Open our understandings that we may understand the Scriptures. May we neglect no portion of that which You have revealed, but may we find it all profitable for our edification and comfort.

Teach us the value of the Mercy-seat, and may we rejoice continually that we are invited to tell You all our necessities. Give us more faith and reality in prayer. Let each petition be presented with a full expectation that the best answer will be granted, and may we ever behold our Great High Priest pleading on our behalf.

Stir up the hearts of Your children to seek more fellowship and communion one with the other. May we love each other as we are loved by You. May we bear each others burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Teach Your people likewise to prize more the Supper which You have appointed for a continual remembrance of the death of Christ. May all Your children draw near from time to time, and there feed by faith on Him who died for sinners on the cross.

We now go forth to the duties of another day. Guide us, direct us, counsel us in all we have to do. May our common duties be done for You, and be acceptable in Your sight through Christ. May we watch over our words and actions, lest we put a stumbling-block in the way of others. Keep us steadfast in Your fear and love, and uphold us in the hour of sorrow or temptation. Fulfill all our desires, and accept these our prayers and praises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday evening

O eternal God, who dwells in the High and Holy place, behold us this night with Your favor. We cast ourselves down before You with the deepest humility. God, You are infinite in power and glorious in majesty — but we are as a thing of nothing, and frail children of the dust. You are from everlasting to everlasting — but our days on the earth are as a shadow, and we spend our years as a tale that is told. You are the thrice Holy Jehovah, but we are as an unclean thing, and our iniquities bear witness against us.

We beg You, O Lord, to grant unto us true brokenness of spirit. Teach us more and more our exceeding unworthiness. Make us to know our iniquity and our sin. May we look at ourselves in the looking-glass of Your holy Word, and learn there our true character. May we cast away every self-righteous excuse, and own our guiltiness and just desert of Your anger.

O God, we bless You that You have promised to make Your dwelling with the lowly and contrite in heart. Fulfill this promise unto us this night. Come and make Your abode with us by Your Holy Spirit. May we rejoice that You are near to us as our Father and our Friend. We dare meet You only at the cross of Jesus. We would make His name and His sacrifice, our only plea. May the sweet savor of His Sacrifice be upon us, and may we ever have peace with You through Him, our only Hope.

Give unto us, Lord, the consolation of daily communion with You. May we hear Your voice speaking to us continually out of Your Word. May we delight to tell You all our needs, and pour out our hearts before You.

Let Your quickening Spirit ever abide with us and strengthen us in Your service. Work in us both to will and to do of Your good pleasure. You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our Potter. O forsake not the work of Your hands, but make us perfect in every good work to do Your will. Work in us that which is well-pleasing in Your sight, through Jesus Christ, and cleanse us from all the imperfection that cleaves to us in His precious blood.

We plead with You this night for all the children of sorrow, especially for any known to us. Have compassion on the widow and the fatherless, and on those who are anyways afflicted and distressed in mind, body, or estate. Leave them not comfortless, Father, but lead them to take shelter in Christ as their Refuge. Mercifully look upon any who may be near unto death. Turn their eyes to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Let Your rod and staff comfort them in the dark valley through which they are passing.

Father, receive us and all whom we love to Your care this night, and accept these our prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday morning O God the Father, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O God the Son, our adorable Redeemer, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three persons and one God — have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

We come to You once more, O Lord our God, taking shame to ourselves for our sinful lives — and yet looking to You for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Remember not, O Lord, our offences, neither take vengeance for our sins — spare us, good Lord, spare Your people whom You have redeemed with the most precious blood of Your dear Son, and be not angry with us forever. Regard us as Your children for His sake, and grant to us abundance of mercy and peace.

We beg You, O Father, to send unto us the Spirit of Truth to convince us of sin and righteousness and judgment. May we have no confidence in any works or doings of our own, for of ourselves comes no good thing. We have destroyed ourselves by our sins and transgressions, but in You is our help. Let Your mercy relieve our misery — and may Christ's righteousness in cover our unrighteousness. May we ever come before You, not in our own righteousness, but in that which is by the faith of Christ.

We would remember, Lord, that without holiness no man can see Your face. Bestow upon us the grace we need to renew us in Your own likeness. Make us as holy as You are holy, and let us this day walk before You in uprightness of heart. Teach us to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world. Give us a pure motive in all we do, and may it be our chief desire to please You in all things.

Enable us to forget the things which are behind, and press forward to those which are before. May our affections be set on things above, and not on things on the earth. Raise our thoughts continually to that merciful Savior who is exalted to Your right hand, and may we ever be looking for His appearing. On that day may we be found acceptable in Your sight, and share His glory and His kingdom.

O Lord God, it is Your will that all men should hear and believe the message of Your salvation. Stir up the wills of Your faithful people, that they may be zealous in sending forth able men to carry the gospel of peace to all lands. Let Your servants who are called to this work, be filled with the spirit of wisdom and love, and touch the hearts and consciences of those to whom they speak. Raise up to Yourself in every place, both at home and abroad — witnesses of Your truth. Gather into Your fold the lost and the perishing, and may the name of Christ be glorified in Your Church. O heavenly Father, fulfill these our desires and petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday evening

O Lord God, our Merciful Father, You are the Sustainer of all Your people. You behold our necessities — You care for us in all our cares and sorrows. We beg You this night that Your favor may rest upon this household. You have declared in Your Word that You will bless the habitation of the just. You have promised that the voice of joy and salvation shall be in the dwellings of the righteous. O fulfill to us Your gracious words. With Your blessing, let the house of Your servants be blessed forever.

O Gracious Father, make each of us to live in all things according to Your will; by the continued help of Your Spirit awaken any of or family who may still be dead in trespasses and sins. Subdue and mortify all our evil passions and sinful tempers, and make us to walk as children of light. Beautify us with the holy character of our Great Example, and draw us in heart and mind nearer to Yourself.

O You who hear prayer, make our prayers very acceptable in Your sight. Keep us from all lip-worship and formality. May we never approach You without due reverence for Your Divine Majesty. May Your Spirit make intercession within us, and fill us with earnestness and reality and faith. Whenever we meet together as a family to seek Your face, prepare our hearts to worship You, and plenteously answer us in Your goodness.

Give us likewise to revere and love Your Holy Word, and carefully to ponder its sacred truths. May we hearken to each portion that is read, as to a voice from Heaven. May we hide it in our hearts, and constantly think upon it by day and by night, that we may not sin against You. Give to us such daily help and consolation from the promises of Your Word, that we may be strengthened to resist and overcome every temptation of the Wicked one.

Prepare us all, blessed Lord, for the time when we must bid farewell to all earthly ties. This home must one day be broken up. We may be scattered far and wide, or death may come and summon us into Your presence. May we be found ready for any change. May we ever abide in the love and friendship of our merciful Redeemer. May His presence be with us in the day of separation, or in the hour of death. O grant that at the day of Christ's appearing we may all be found without spot and blameless, and be heirs together of Your everlasting kingdom. In Your great love, most Merciful Father, deal pitifully with all who love us. Have mercy upon our kindred and our friends. Bring those who are still far from You in true penitence to the cross of Jesus, and knit them to Him in the bonds of the covenant. Write their names in the Book of life, and give them the victory over sin and death, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Friday morning

O Lord, our God, our Father in Christ Jesus — we come this morning to praise You for the blessings of the past night. You have guarded us through the hours of darkness. You have refreshed us with quiet sleep. Be near to us also through this day. Defend us from all harm, and bestow upon us all needful good.

We bless You that You have promised to supply all our need, and to withhold no good thing from those who seek You. Fulfill, we beseech You, this Word on which You have caused us to hope.

Give us the wisdom we need for every difficulty. Give us strength and grace necessary to every duty. Give us a calm and patient spirit, that we may be kept from all anxious care. May we rest in Your promises and Your love. Lead us to the Rock that is higher than ourselves, and there help us to abide until trials and troubles are past. May Jesus be our stronghold and sure refuge until our journey of life is over.

O heavenly Father, we thank You for the hope that is laid up for each of Your redeemed children. How great is Your goodness which is prepared for those who love and fear You. We bless You for all the wondrous consolations of Your Word — and most of all, for Your fatherly pity and compassion towards us. May we take a firmer grasp of those exceeding great and precious promises which are made to us in Christ. May we add to our faith the spirit of true courage, that we may never be ashamed of Your name. May we increase in the knowledge of You, and of Your will concerning us. Make us temperate in all our pursuits and enjoyments. Make us patient in the time of tribulation. Grant unto us grace to walk before You in all godliness and righteousness of life. Fill us with love to all Your children, and may we cast a cloak of charity over their failings and

infirmities.

O give us daily fresh supplies of the grace of Your Holy Spirit, that we may not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ. And when the time shall come that the house of our earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, grant unto us an abundant entrance into Your everlasting kingdom.

O Lord, You have commanded us to pray one for another. We commend to Your care our relations, our friends, and our neighbors. Bless all whom we love with the richest enjoyment of Your favor, and may they count all things but loss in comparison of Christ. Bless the households of those who dwell round about us, and may they unite in serving You with willing hearts. Send upon our country showers of blessing, that Your fear and love may be the strength of this land. Accept us, and fulfill all our desires, we beseech You, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Friday evening

Almighty and everlasting God, we would hear Your voice this night bidding us draw near to Your mercy-seat. You have called us to Your throne of grace, and have promised that whatever we ask in Your Son's name, that You will give to us. O Lord, teach us to pray with a true heart, and with full assurance of faith. Give unto us all things needful both for our souls and bodies.

O Lord Jesus, we would lift our eyes to You, our Great High Priest and only Mediator. We would look unto You, once lifted up on the cross, and now exalted to the right hand of the Father. Speak peace to every heart through Your atoning blood. You are able and willing to save them to the uttermost who trust in You. Be our salvation. Save us from the guilt of our former sins. Save us from the power and dominion of evil. Save us from all the snares and temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Grant us daily grace and strength to walk in the narrow way. Uphold us with Your own right hand that we may never faint or grow weary. Keep us evermore by Your help and goodness. Leave us not, nor forsake us until You have brought us to Your kingdom in Heaven.

O Good Shepherd of Your flock, help us to follow in Your footsteps and to walk constantly after Your holy example. We would look unto You as our Great Pattern. Make us like Yourself in all things. Give us perfect confidence in our Father's love. Make us in all things obedient to our Father's will. Make us submissive in the hour of trial, and may we drink in meekness of the cup of sorrow.

Fill us with tender compassion toward those around us. Endue us with fervent zeal for Your glory, and make us patient towards those who may injure us. Give us a joyful hope of coming glory. May we bear our cross, and despise the shame in, blessed expectation of Your kingdom.

O Gracious Savior, You are soon coming to reign with Your saints. Prepare us for that day. May we ever be looking for that blessed hope, even Your glorious appearing. May we stand on our watch-tower ready to mark the first sign of Your approach. Keep us mindful of Your Word, and give us at that day the crown of righteousness which You have promised to those who love You.

O merciful Father, into Your hands we commits ourselves this night. Bless us and all Your children everywhere, with tokens of Your Fatherly kindness.

Accept our hearty thanksgivings for all of Your temporal and spiritual blessings — for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Saturday morning

O almighty and eternal God, You are in Heaven — and we are on earth; help us therefore to worship You with reverence and godly fear. Prepare our hearts to seek Your face, and incline Your ear to hearken to our cry. Your name is Great, Wonderful, and Holy. You are exalted far above all blessing and praise. The very angels are unclean in Your sight, and veil their faces before You. But we are sinful dust and ashes, and all our works defiled by sin. May we take the very lowest place, and cast ourselves entirely upon Your mercy in Christ.

We bless You that You are our Father. We are Your offspring, for You have created us. You are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him, You are our Father and our God. O may we be indeed Your children through faith in Jesus. May we be led and guided by Your Spirit, and thus manifest that we are Your sons and daughters. May our filial trustfulness, and our love and obedience to Your precepts, show day by day that we are Your in truth. As we draw near to the close of another week, we would beg You, O Father, to glorify Your name in Your Church, and especially on the approaching day of rest. Let Your name and Your Word be everywhere honored by Your children. Stem the tide of profanity which is heard in our streets. Pour out Your Spirit on the people of our land, that they may greatly fear You, and regard Your day as holy and honorable. Fill the temples of Your grace with devout and earnest worshipers, and banish from them all lightness, formality, and irreverence.

O Lord God Almighty, set up through this and every land, the Kingdom of Your dear Son. Cast down the Prince of darkness from his dominion over the souls of men. May the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace everywhere extend.

O gracious Savior, make our hearts Your throne, and subdue within us every proud thought and every unruly passion. Teach us to do Your will more perfectly. As the angels ever hearken to Your voice, and delight to execute Your commands — so may it be here below. Transform us by the grace of Your Spirit, that we may in all things know what You require of us. Strengthen us by Your mighty power to perform faithfully every duty, and to suffer patiently every cross laid upon us.

We beseech You, Father, forgive us all our sins of thought, word, or deed, through the atoning blood of Christ. Pardon our neglects of duty, and our lack of love to You. And give unto us the spirit of true charity, that we may ever be ready to forgive those who have in any way wronged us. Keep us henceforth from all evil, and especially from our besetting sins. Do not allow us to be tempted above that we are able, and in the hour of temptation, grant us the support that we need.

O our Father, to You alone it belongs to help and deliver us. Let Your power be manifested in our salvation, and to You will we ascribe all the glory. Hear us and bless us, Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Saturday evening

Most merciful God, our Father in Christ Jesus, we would come to You again at the close of another week. May we come to You with true contrition, for our sins and iniquities bear witness against us. May we come to You with holy boldness, for You are a God of mercy and love.

O Lord, we confess before You tonight that we are unprofitable servants. You have never been weary of doing us good — but we have continually turned aside from Your commandments. We

have been unmindful of Your love, and have lived too much in forgetfulness of You. We have pleased ourselves instead of seeking to please You. We have sought the favor of those around us, instead of the honor that comes from You. We have chosen the path of ease and self-indulgence, instead of taking up our cross and following Christ. But we bless You, O Father, that Your nature is ever to have mercy and forgive. You will abundantly pardon those who turn to You in true repentance. For Christ's sake revive us once more in Your mercy, and make Your face to shine upon us.

O gracious Savior, we beg You to cleanse us from all iniquity in the Fountain of Your precious blood. We have destroyed ourselves, but in You is our help. O Lord, wash us thoroughly in that blood which flowed from Your wounded side.

Grant us likewise the power of Your Spirit to cleanse and wash our hearts. Purify every thought and motive. Keep us daily by Your mighty power, that we may never soil our garments by the least touch of sin. And when our conscience condemns us in the very least matter, teach us again to turn to You, that we may be at once forgiven through Your mercy. Renew us continually by Your Holy Spirit, and grant that our whole body, soul and spirit, may be kept blameless to the day of Your appearing.

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, bestow upon Your Church the rich abundance of Your heavenly grace. May tomorrow be a day of blessing to Your people. Pour out the dew of Your Spirit on all the congregations of Your servants throughout the world. Stir up the hearts of Your ministers, and give them great boldness in reproofing sin and proclaiming the Gospel of Your dear Son. Turn back many sinners from their evil ways, and restore those who have forsaken the fold of the Good Shepherd. Be gracious, O Father, to all who are exposed to special danger and temptation. Bring into the way of truth all such as have erred and are deceived. Strengthen such as do stand. Comfort and help the weak-hearted. Raise up those who fall, and beat down Satan under our feet.

O Lord, we commend ourselves and all dear to us to Your faithful care. Be near to guard us by night as by day. And bring us at last to the city where there is no night, and where the Lamb is the light thereof. Hear us, Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

01.04. Week 4

FOURTH WEEK

Sunday morning

O most merciful Father, who are near to all who call upon You, be very near to us this day. Through Your Son Jesus Christ we have access to You with boldness and confidence. May Your Spirit rest upon us and draw us to Your mercy-seat. Remove every veil of unbelief, and every wandering thought. Fix our desires upon Yourself, and hallow this sacred day by giving us fresh tokens of Your gracious favor.

We would beseech You, O Father, to grant us Your special presence when we go into Your courts. Send out Your light and Your truth that they may lead us. Shine into our hearts, and reveal unto us the glory of Christ. May we behold Him as all-sufficient to heal our infirmities and supply all our necessities.

Blessed Savior, teach us to know You and to love You more. May we go forth in Your righteousness, and lean upon Your Almighty arm. O hear and abundantly fulfill the petitions which we offer up in Your name this day. Let Your Word sink deeply into our hearts, and give us more faith to trust Your promise, and more of the spirit of willing obedience to fulfill Your commandments.

Send forth Your Holy Spirit, and let the showers refresh the dry and thirsty ground. O that many may this day hear and believe the blessed Gospel of salvation. May those who are seeking You learn to rejoice in You, and may those who have hitherto been forgetful of Your love, turn to You in true penitence. Restore any who may have gone back, and freely forgive them of their backslidings and their sins. Touch the hearts of the young, and lead them early to fear Your name. Bring the little ones to Your footstool, and bless the labors of all those engaged in teaching them Your Word.

Give Your ministers a deeper experience of the power of Your truth, and grant them wisdom and unction and power, to proclaim it in all its fullness. Fill them with love to Christ and compassion for lost souls. Make them instant in season and out of season in speaking Your Word, and may they remember the Great day when every man's work shall be made manifest.

We now desire, O heavenly Father, to yield ourselves unto You. We bless and praise You for Your goodness and mercy toward us. May the remembrance of Your love lead us to present ourselves unto You as a living sacrifice. May the rest of our lives be wholly dedicated to Your service. Strengthen us this day for the various temptations of the coming week. Give us abundantly of the heavenly manna of Your Word, and may we never let the precious truths we hear slip. Be with us when alone, and may we delight in secret to pour out our hearts before You. Sanctify us wholly, both in body and soul, and evermore bless us with Your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday evening

O most merciful and gracious Father, it is our privilege at all times to come to You through Christ our Savior. We would approach You this night with grateful hearts. We bless You for this day of holy rest and for all the help which You have given us on our heavenward way. O that each day of rest on earth may fit us more and more for the home of Your saints. Too often have we misused these blessed seasons of grace. Forgive, we beseech You, our wandering thoughts and our lifeless prayers. Forgive us that we have so carelessly heard the messages of Your word, and so soon forgotten them. Quicken us by Your Holy Spirit, that Your truth may be inwardly graven on our hearts. May we ever stand before You accepted in Your beloved Son, and clothed in His perfect righteousness.

Father, teach us to know the exceeding privileges which belong to all Your believing people. Once we were far off from You, but You have made us near by the blood of Christ. Once we were strangers to the covenants of promise, and living without You in the world. But we thank You that You have saved us by Your grace, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We thank You that You have made us fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. You have made us Your temple, built upon the sure foundation, Jesus Christ. You have given us a foretaste of Your everlasting love, that each of us may be indeed partakers of all these blessings of Your grace. Let none of us fail to obtain them through our unbelief. Make us to be indeed Your people, and may we ever manifest the reality of our faith by the holiness of our lives.

Blessed Savior, bring each one of us near to You this night. If there is any among us who have been going astray, fetch us home to Your fold! Draw us, and we will run after You. Turn us unto You, and we shall be turned. Break every chain that binds us too closely to the world, and knit our hearts to You, that we may love You above all.

O All-merciful Redeemer, let Your Word, this day proclaimed in Your name, bear fruit abundantly. Cast Your bright beams of light upon Your Church, and dispel all error and division and formality, and whatever is a hindrance to Your truth. Awaken very many to a true and saving repentance, and lead them to rely upon Your faithful promises. Impress deeply on the minds of the young the exceeding blessedness of Your service, and may they early choose the good part which shall never be taken from them.

Make all who have begun to serve You more steadfast and decided in their Christian course, and may those who have hitherto served sin, henceforth choose Your service, which is perfect freedom. O Father, breathe into our hearts Your sanctifying Spirit, and grant that we may continue Yours forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday morning

O holy and most merciful Father, we come near to You this morning with humble thankfulness for Your goodness toward us. For all the mercy and the help given to us yesterday we heartily thank and bless You. We bless You for all the light and comfort given to us in Your house of prayer.

We bless You for any knowledge we may have gained of Your holy Word. It has been good for us thus to leave the world awhile, and thus to have fellowship with You and Your Son Jesus Christ.

Continue to us, Lord, through this week the blessing we have gained.

Sanctify all our toil and labor by the remembrance of Your Presence. Go forth with us to the conflict of life, and may we act and speak as befits Your children.

O may Your blessed Spirit guide and control our thoughts and ways, and make us perfect in every good word and work.

Help us O Father, to show forth by our daily life that we have been with Jesus. May His image be formed in us, and may His life on earth be the pattern which we ever strive to follow.

Make us patient and gentle and forbearing toward all men. Draw our thoughts and desires toward Yourself. Teach us often to frequent the Mount of prayer. Humble and subdue every vain and proud imagination, and make us willing to take the lowest room.

O exalted and glorified Redeemer, behold Your Church, and fulfill towards her all Your purposes of mercy and love. Bring out Your people from the darkness and bondage of sin, and beautify them with the garments of salvation. Manifest Your everlasting love toward them, and draw them to Yourself by the cords of Your love. May they perfectly know You, as bearing their sins on the cross, and now pleading their cause above.

O Savior, may we know that we are Yours, and that none shall pluck us out of Your hand. Keep us by Your mighty power from all the evil that is in the world. May Your love abide in us, and may we never be drawn aside by the love of present things. Sanctify us by Your truth, and may Your Word be our constant meditation. Bind us so closely to Yourself that we may be united together in love and sympathy one with the other. May all who believe in You be of one heart and mind, and at length together behold Your glory.

Bless and prosper throughout this week every effort which is made to advance Your kingdom, or relieve the sorrows and distresses of our fellow men. Stir up the hearts of Your people that they may always abound in Your work and service. Make them zealous in doing good, and may they watch for every open door. May Your Spirit accompany the reading of Your Word, and of every Christian book and tract. And now, O Father, be very near to us through this day and through this week, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Monday evening

O merciful Father, look down from Heaven upon us and behold us from the habitation of Your holiness. We are Your sinful and unworthy children. If You should mark what is done amiss — we could not stand before You. But there is forgiveness in You that You may be feared. You know the uttermost of our sin and iniquity, but You have provided an all-sufficient remedy. You have given Your dear Son to make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and atonement for us. O Father, behold Him bruised for our iniquities, and look upon us through Him. Freely and completely put away all our sin for His sake, and make us glad with the light of Your countenance.

Renew us likewise in the spirit of our minds. We are the clay and You our Potter, and we all are the work of Your hands. work in us both to will and to do of Your good pleasure. Fashion us in Your own likeness. Make us holy, pure, longsuffering, and full of charity. Make us vessels unto honor, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work.

O Lord, we have rebelled and grieved Your Holy Spirit, but withdraw not from us His sanctifying power. May He subdue within us all sinful passions, and quicken in us every holy desire. Teach us to avoid the least shadow of evil, and may we never tamper with any suggestions of the wicked one. Give us a tender conscience, that we may discern the approach of temptation. Preserve us from every wrong temper and disposition, and draw us very near to Yourself. In all doubtful matters give us wisdom from above, that we may know what we ought to do. Give us moreover strength and power faithfully to fulfill every duty that lies before us.

O Father, teach us to prove and examine ourselves whether we are indeed Your faithful children. There are many in Your Church who have a name to live, but are dead in Your sight. There are many who walk in a way that seems right unto them, but the end thereof is destruction. O let it not be so with any of us. If we have but the form of godliness, O give us the mighty power of Your Spirit, that we may live before You. If we have been trusting in anything we have done, show us that all our works are impure in Your sight, and that we merit death and condemnation.

Lead us henceforth to rely only on the meritorious death of our Surety. Make Christ our only hope and our continual dependence. May His life be our pattern, and His glory the aim of our lives.

O Father, hear us, and be our Guardian and Protector this night. Keep us, and all who we love, in close communion and fellowship with Yourself, through our only Savior and Advocate Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday morning

O Lord, You are a God full of compassion and gracious. We need Your help day by day. We come to You this morning as Your children in Christ Jesus, and we beg You to make all grace abound towards us.

Grant, O merciful Father, that throughout this day we may walk before You, and do only that which is right in Your sight. Give unto us a pure motive in all that we undertake. Make it our great desire so to live each day that it may bring us nearer to Your kingdom. May we partake of our necessary food with true thankfulness to You, who has given us all things richly to enjoy. In our seasons of rest and refreshment, make us temperate in all things. In our seasons of toil and labor, make us diligent in whatever our hand finds to do.

If the duty to which we are called in Your Providence is irksome or unpleasant, let us not shrink from it, but do it cheerfully for Your sake. May we seek Your glory in all that we do.

Deliver us, Lord, from being burdened by earthly cares and anxieties, and may we cast them continually on You. Deliver us from making an idol of worldly gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Teach us this day to be forbearing and ready to forgive. We may meet with many things that may disturb our minds and try our tempers, but give us the same meek and lowly spirit that dwelt in Christ. Make us to follow after peace, and those things with which we may edify one another. Make us considerate of the needs and feelings of those around us. Make us ready to give, and glad to distribute. Give unto us grace to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice.

O Lord, remind us this day that all below is passing away, and that we must soon enter upon our eternal state. O that every moment we may watch and pray, and still keep eternity in view! It will profit us nothing to gain the whole world, if we lose our own souls and Your everlasting kingdom. Keep us, we beseech You, in the way of life. Cleanse us from all our iniquities in the blood of the Lamb. Let Your peace rule in our hearts, and dispose us to keep all Your commandments. Fill us with the light and power and comfort of Your Holy Spirit. Lead us in Your truth, and teach us, for You are the God of our salvation. Remember toward us Your loving-kindness and tender mercies. Deliver us, O God, from all our troubles, and bring us to Your heavenly rest, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Tuesday evening

O heavenly Father, hear our cry and attend unto our prayer as we seek Your face at the close of another day. We have nothing to bring in our hands as the ground of our hope. We have no merit or worthiness of our own. We have to confess our manifold sins and iniquities. There is no good thing in us. Our best actions are impure in Your sight, and our only plea is Your abundant mercy in Christ Jesus.

O Lord our God, we bless You for the sure foundation which You have laid in Zion. We bless You that You have given Your Son to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. We bless You that He is the true Rock of Ages, and that none who trust in Him shall ever be confounded.

O blessed Savior, the only hope of lost and perishing sinners — help us to rest our souls on You! On You would we lay all our sins, for You have died for our salvation. Wash away all our guilt in Your blood, and set us free from all condemnation. On You likewise would we lay all our needs. You know how great they are, but Your grace is enough to supply every lack. Grant to us the spirit of true penitence and contrition. Take from us the heart of stone and give unto us the heart of flesh. Heal all our spiritual infirmities. Help our unbelief. Take away from us all indifference and deadness of spirit. Open our eyes, that we may behold Your marvelous love more clearly. Beat down Satan under our feet, and enable us to overcome all temptation. Be our Friend and Comforter in days of sorrow and adversity. To You would we bring our griefs and our cares, and we beseech You to bear them for us. Speak peace to every weary burdened one, and give them rest in Your faithfulness and love.

O gracious Master, draw us more closely to Yourself, and make Your name more dear to us every day. As we lean on You — uphold us with Your own right hand. May Your mercy and loving-kindness embrace us on every side. Let Your everlasting arms be beneath us, and when heart and flesh fail, be the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

We plead with You for all the members of this family, present or absent. Knit us together in the love of Christ, and prepare each one of us for our home above. Bless our neighbors and our friends, and may they all be the friends of Jesus. Lift up all who are cast down, and support all who are in sorrow and distress. Guide the footsteps of any who are seeking their way to Zion, and restore by Your grace any who have gone back from Your ways.

Finally, we beseech You to have mercy on all men, and hasten the day of Your appearing, when all sin and sorrow shall be ended. Hear us, O Savior, for Your mercy's sake. Amen.

Wednesday morning

O almighty and eternal God, who never fails those who seek You — help us to call upon Your name this morning. We have boldness of access to You through Your Son. Look not upon our sins, but upon His blood shed for us. Look upon Him our righteous Advocate, who ever stands pleading for us before Your throne.

O gracious Father, You have promised Your blessing to all those who trust in Jesus. You are our Shield, and our exceeding great reward. You are our Friend, and will keep us wherever our lot may be cast.

O that You would bless us indeed, and make us a blessing among others. Enlarge our hearts, and fill us with undoubting faith and abounding charity. Make us useful in our day and generation. May Your hand ever be upon us for good, to keep us from all evil, and to supply all our needs. Deliver us from all unbelief. Let us not limit Your mercy or Your grace. May we rely upon You as our sure Helper in every tune of trouble. May we lean upon Your arm alone — keep us from trusting in an arm of flesh.

O faithful Protector of Your people, may we rejoice in Your covenant of love. You will be a God to Your people and to their seed after them. Their sins and their iniquities You will remember no more. You will put Your fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from Your precepts. You will teach them by Your Spirit, that they may know You in truth.

O Lord, fulfill to us these blessed promises. Make us wholly Yours, and may Your Spirit abide with us. Make us willing to sacrifice all we possess rather than disobey You, or provoke You to anger. We acknowledge that we are but dust and ashes in Your sight — yet remember us in mercy, for Your truth and righteousness sake.

O Lord, make us as a household to honor Your holy name. May we, and all whom we love, serve You above all. May we keep Your way to do justice and judgment, and may we never swerve from the plain path of duty. May we fear You, and never withhold that which You require of us. If You should call us to resign our dearest treasures, may we have strength to say, "May Your will be done." You give unto us far more than we yield to You, and You will freely give us all things that are for our profit. Help us to believe Your wise love for us, and trust You to do all things for the best.

Most gracious Father, teach us that we are strangers and sojourners upon earth. Here we have no continuing city. But lead us onward to the better country. We shall soon lie down to rest awhile beneath the sod — but You will call us forth from the grave to live forever in Your Presence! O teach us to look forward in blessed hope. Enrich us with all the grace of Your Holy Spirit, and in due season receive us to Your glory and kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday evening

O God, Eternal, Invisible, Immortal, our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus — You are our refuge in all generations. Our time on earth is but as a shadow, but our hope is in You. This night we come to You once more, and we beseech You hide us beneath the Shadow of Your sheltering wing.

Most merciful Savior, the Friend of sinners, we bless You that You have promised to be present when two or three are gathered together in Your name. Come and make Your abode us. Draw us nearer to Yourself. Cleanse us from all the sin of the day that is past. Fill us with the comfort of Your love, and with the assurance of Your favor.

O Lord, You are our only Advocate and High Priest. Teach us to fix our eye on You alone. You can never plead in vain, and You will plead for every sinner that comes to You in truth. Plead our cause, we beseech You. Make mention of each of us now before You, and write our names in the book of life.

Whenever we fail in our obedience, plead Your perfect fulfillment of the Divine law on our behalf. Whenever we grieve Your Spirit by our forgetfulness or neglect — still plead for us, and restore us again by a fresh supply of Your grace. Whenever we faint along our way, and are cast down by sorrow or temptation, open our eyes to behold You standing at the right hand of God to support and to save us. And when our last hour shall come, and we must meet the summons to appear before You — be near at hand to receive us to Yourself.

Teach us, Lord, to look forward with joyful hope to the day of Your appearing. We believe that You will come in the clouds of Heaven to take unto Yourself Your kingdom and to reign forever. You will put every enemy beneath Your feet. You will raise Your people from the dust of the grave, to share Your glory.

Prepare us by Your grace, that we may all be found watching. Stir up within us the spirit of constant prayer. May we purify ourselves, even as You are pure. May we thus be found living as Your faithful servants, and when the hour of Your return shall come, may we receive at Your hands the unfading crown of glory.

Gracious Savior, speak peace to our hearts this night. Be our Guardian and our Friend. Watch over us, and all our kindred and friends far and near. May we see You close by, and when we lay down to rest, protect us from all harm and danger. Be with us in life and in death, and may we at last awake in Your likeness. Grant this for Your mercy's sake. Amen.

Thursday morning

O Lord our God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men — we draw near to ask Your grace this morning. We have a Great High Priest who is ever pleading with You on our behalf. Graciously regard us for His sake, and cast all our sins behind Your back. Incline our hearts to love You, and to walk before You in holiness and righteousness all our days.

We beg You, O gracious Father, grant us Your quickening Spirit, that we be not conformed to this world. May we be daily transformed by the renewing of our minds. Keep us from following the crooked ways of this sinful world. May we never make an idol of our business or our work. May we do all for Your glory, and be ever looking for our rest above.

We plead with You, most merciful God, on behalf of Your children scattered abroad throughout this evil world. You know those who love and fear You, wherever their lot may be cast. Keep them, O Father, from all the snares and temptations that surround them. Keep them from yielding to the persuasions of those that would turn them aside from Your ways. Have mercy upon those who are burdened with care, and give them grace to cast it all on You. Comfort those who are mourning for

the loss of friends. Uphold those who are sorely tried by the ungodliness of others. Give patience to those in pain and suffering. Grant to all Your people the aid of Your Holy Spirit, that they may shine as lights in the world, and may be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.

We bless and praise You, O God, for permitting us thus to kneel together at the beginning of another day. We praise You for the rest and comfort of the past night. We praise You for the light of Your Holy Word to guide our footsteps during our earthly pilgrimage. We praise You that You are always near to uphold and preserve those who trust in You.

We beg You, Father, accept these our praises and fulfill all our petitions. Be near to us through the passing hours of this day, and keep us in safety until its close. May all our days be spent in Your fear and love, until we reach at last Your heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Thursday evening

O Lord God almighty, the God of our salvation, we would close this day in humble reliance upon Your mercy. You have given us this day, fresh tokens of Your favor. You have permitted us again to meet as a family to worship You. You send us Your Word to teach us in Your way. Make these means of grace helpful to our souls. May the Spirit of grace rest upon us, and write on our hearts the truth as it is in Jesus. O Lord, we would humble ourselves before You, for our sins and backslidings. Our promises and resolutions are as the morning cloud. We have turned aside from You, and have borne but little fruit acceptable in Your sight. We have destroyed ourselves by breaking Your commandments and departing from Your ways.

But, O Lord, our help is in You alone. You would have us return unto Yourself. You will heal our backslidings and love us freely. In You the sinful and the sorrowful find mercy and grace. O take away all our iniquity, and receive us graciously. Turn away Your anger from us, and give us the joy of Your salvation.

Let the dew of Your Spirit enlighten upon us from day to day. Deepen our contrition and increase our faith. Make us to grow in holiness and love, and in every Christian grace. Make us more steadfast in our profession of Your name, and more fruitful in Your service. Make us useful by our example to those around us, and may our prayers on behalf of others be abundantly answered. May we cast away every idol, and worship and serve You alone. May we live as strangers and pilgrims on earth, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mercifully behold Your household, the Church, and bestow the fullness of Your Spirit on all who love You. Look upon Your flock throughout the world, and in every land multiply exceedingly the number of Your true servants. Make them pure in the faith, and holy and consistent in their walk with You.

We beseech You also to comfort all of Your people who this night are in trouble. Relieve the sick and suffering, and give them quiet rest. Bind up the broken-hearted with the consolations of Your Gospel. Speak peace to the lonely and desolate. Cheer the hearts of the fainting, and assure them that You will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Be very near to any whom we love. Keep them from all evil, and lead them in Your way.

Finally, we bless You for all Your servants departed this life in Your faith and fear. Give us grace to follow them in all virtuous and godly living, and may we come at last to those unspeakable joys which You have prepared for those who sincerely love You. Grant this and all our petitions, most merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Friday morning

O merciful God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we come before You this morning as Your unworthy children. You have richly blessed us in all things, but we have failed to serve You as we should. We have been unprofitable servants. Our light has grown dim, and the salt has lost its savor. We have had a name to live, but You search our hearts, and You know that too often we have been cold and dead. We have drawn back to an evil world. We have grown careless about our salvation, and have thought little of Your love and mercy. Your Word has been neglected, and Your mercy-seat well near forsaken. We have yielded to our besetting sins, and have often sunk down to the standard of those who live without You. But we turn to You again in Jesus' name. Hide Your face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities. Leave us not, neither forsake us for all the evil we have done. Search us and prove us, and try the ground of our hearts. Give us deeper sorrow for sin, and make us more watchful for the time to come. Cast us not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from us. Be near to help us through the hours of this day. May we walk in all good conscience before You. Let us not be easily provoked, and make us ready, for Christ's sake, to return good for evil. Keep us from selfishness and self-will. May we never grieve Your Spirit, or disturb the comfort of our home by the indulgence of evil tempers. Set a watch before our mouths, and may we never utter an unkind or hasty word. Make us very considerate of the feelings of those around us. May we put on, as Your children — kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Above all things may we put on the garment of holy charity, and love each other as we are loved of You.

We would present before You our prayers and supplications on behalf of the nations which have not known You. Send forth, we beseech You, the messengers of Your Gospel into all lands. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Give double grace and strength to Your servants who labor in Your vineyard, and greatly increase their number. Raise up faithful men to proclaim Your truth, and dispose the hearts of many to receive it. Breathe Your quickening Spirit upon the multitudes who still bow down to idols which their own hands have made. Turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto You. Establish and confirm the faith of recent converts. Build up the native churches, and raise up among them suitable agents to carry on Your work.

Hear us, gracious Father, in these our prayers, and do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Friday evening

Almighty and everlasting God, our sure Refuge and our Defense, we come to You in the name of Jesus. We need Your watchful protection this night, and we would commit ourselves, and all whom we love, entirely to Your care. As day by day so quickly rolls by, teach us to see the shortness of our sojourn on earth. In the midst of life, we are in death. We bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth. O teach us how frail we are, and

make us diligent in redeeming the time.

We bless You for every comfort and every mercy which You have provided for us. But we beseech You enable us to set our affections on those things which are above, and not on things below. Keep us from being dazzled by the world's attractions, or turned away from You by its riches or its honors. We would choose the pearl of great price as our treasure, and be willing to sell all rather than lose it. Help us to count all things but loss that we may win Christ, and reckon His reproach greater riches than any earthly good.

Merciful Father, grant us the assurance of Your favor, and may we never thirst for human praise. You have bidden us trample under foot whatever would rob us of the joy of Your salvation. If by one sinful word or deed we might gain the whole world, give us grace to refuse the tempting prize. May we love You with supreme affection, and long for nothing in comparison of Your presence here and Your glory hereafter.

We beseech You, O most merciful Father, pour down upon all the members of Your Church the spirit of sincere charity. Teach us to love one another with a pure heart fervently. May all who bear the name of Christ abide in the unity of the Spirit. Knit together in brotherly love, the members of the congregation to which we belong. Grant that all who draw near to Your Table may regard each other as joined together in one communion and fellowship. Unite as one man all who are engaged in any work in Your vineyard, and may we strengthen each others' hands by mutual sympathy. Fill our hearts with tender sympathy one for the other, and dispose us to bear each others' burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Count us worthy, through the merits of Jesus, to share the bliss of Your redeemed people, and to behold Your glory for ever. Grant this, Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Saturday morning

O holy and most merciful Father — our Father in Christ Jesus, give us the spirit of reverence and godly fear whenever we draw near to You. Keep us from the spirit of haste and distraction in Your presence. Keep our hearts from wandering thoughts, and may we fix our minds wholly on You.

Whatever be our work this day, we need Your blessing and help above all things. Remember us with the favor which You bear to Your people. Comfort us with the assurance of Your love, and prosper us in everything to which we put our hands.

We praise You, O Father, for all the bounties of Your providence. Day by day we are pensioners upon Your goodness. You open Your hand and spread our table, and give us all things richly to enjoy. We praise You still more for the unsearchable riches of Your grace and mercy in Christ Jesus.

We beseech You, God, give us grace to show forth our gratitude for Your great salvation by striving to make it known to others. May we endeavor to extend the knowledge of Your truth throughout this land, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Give us true compassion for the souls who are perishing in sin and ignorance. Have mercy upon all who are led astray by the snares of the Wicked one. Bring back the wanderers to the fold of the Good Shepherd.

O Good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in Your arms and carry in Your bosom, behold with Your special compassion the weak ones of Your flock. Deal pitifully with those who are yet weak in faith, and with such as are sorely harassed by doubts and temptations. Break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Give unto those who seek You more grace, that they may perfectly know You as an all-sufficient Savior, and steadfastly cleave to You with full purpose of heart.

Bestow likewise upon the young the abundant grace of Your Holy Spirit. Pour down Your rich blessing upon all young people in our Schools and Universities, and raise up many among them to be faithful witnesses for You. Give wisdom to all engaged in the work of education, and may they honor Your Word and diligently instruct those committed to them in its blessed truths. Bless the teachers in our various Sunday-schools with the true knowledge of Yourself. May they ever seek to win the little ones for You, and may the students have grace to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Your hand is not shortened the it cannot save, nor Your ear heavy the it cannot hear, O give us a large am lasting blessing, and fulfill all our petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Saturday evening

O Lord God, the Father of mercies, the Giver of all grace, we draw near to You tonight in the name of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Week after week and day after day passes quickly by, but Your mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. To Your mercy we flee at the close of this week. O receive us to Your care, and make us wholly Yours.

O Lord, we humbly confess that this week we have been too unmindful of Your love. You are the Well-spring of life. You are the Fountain of living waters, and the only source of holiness and peace. You can fill our souls with joy and gladness. But we have forsaken You, the God of our salvation, and have turned away to broken cisterns. We have sought our happiness in the things of the world, more than in You. We have been ashamed of Your name before others. We have yielded in the hour of temptation, and have disobeyed Your commandments. But we would come back to You, Father, once more, and seek Your blessed face. You have called Your wandering ones to return to You, and have promised to heal all our backslidings, O Lord, we plead with You to deal with us in mercy. Forgive us all that is past, and allow us sin no more against You. Grant us the full assurance of pardon through the death of Christ. Send Your Holy Spirit to teach us, and to convince us deeply of our sins, and make us truly to mourn for those things that have grieved and dishonored You. Give us genuine and sincere repentance, and make us more watchful against sin in time to come.

O Heavenly Father, keep back Your servants from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over us. Cleanse us also from our secret faults. Let us not fear the face of man, but may we ever fear You who has power to save and to destroy. Teach us to walk circumspectly in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. May we be faithful when others dishonor You — and may we hold fast to You in the day of trouble.

We beseech You this night, O Father, to make the light of Your countenance shine upon Your servants. O that we may daily grow in grace, and be made like Your Son Jesus Christ in all things. May the services of the morrow be profitable to us, and to all Your people. Nourish and strengthen our souls with the words of eternal life, and lead us onward and upward to Your heavenly kingdom.

O look upon all the dark places of the earth. Look upon the homes of vice and ignorance, and let the light of Your Gospel dispel all the misery and sin that is found there. Look upon the lands yet under the blight of heathenism, and send forth the message of peace and salvation to them.

Into Your hands, O Gracious Father, we now commend ourselves, and all our dear absent friends and relations. Make us all to be of one heart in loving and serving You. May the blood of Christ be upon us, that we may meet at last before Your throne of glory. May the Spirit of Christ dwell within us and renew us in knowledge after Your likeness.

O Lord, fulfill these our petitions, and draw us more closely to Yourself, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS

O most mighty God and merciful Father, we would cast ourselves down before Your footstool in true repentance and contrition of heart. Make us at this season deeply sensible of our grievous sins, that we may the more prize the salvation of Christ.

We confess, O Father, that we have rebelled against You and have not obeyed Your voice. O teach us our ingratitude toward You. You have nourished us and brought us up as Your children, but we have gone astray from Your commandments. We have gone into the far country, and wasted the talents committed to our care. O create within us new and contrite hearts! Pour out upon us Your Spirit, and give us true sorrow for our sins. Give unto us genuine repentance, and make us to hate every evil way.

O God, who are just and holy in all Your ways, teach us to fear Your judgments, and to turn unto You with all our heart. It is a fearful thing to fall into Your hands, for You are the living God, and a consuming fire to those who reject Your salvation. O help us to seek You early, for it will be too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice.

O Father, we beseech You freely to forgive us all that is past, for Your heart is always to have mercy. You have promised to blot out our sins as a thick cloud, and as a cloud our transgressions. Be favorable unto us according to Your Word. You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn to You and live. Accept us therefore for Your mercy's sake, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

O Lamb of God, that take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us, and grant us Your peace. You are our Righteous Advocate. You plead our cause before Your Father's throne. Hear our prayer, we beseech You, and justify us freely by Your grace.

O Lord Jesus, dispose our hearts in all things to do Your will. Quicken us in Your way, and direct our steps to walk in Your fear. Give us grace to desire the salvation of those who are yet in their sins. Teach us to pluck sinners as brands from the burning.

Pitifully behold the lost and the perishing. Restore the outcasts, and gather into Your fold those that have long been as sheep wandering on the mountains. Build up Your Church in our land, and greatly increase the number of true and faithful Pastors. Preserve our countrymen, scattered abroad in various parts of the world, from , the special dangers that beset them. And now, O merciful Father, we commit ourselves to Your faithful care. Be very near to us, both by day and by

night, and may we press forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O most merciful Father, we beseech You graciously to behold Your unworthy children, for whom You did give Your only Son to die upon the cross. We have deserved Your righteous anger, but You have freely loved us. We have gone astray like lost sheep, but You have laid on Christ the iniquity of US all You have given Him to be a ransom for our souls, and a Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Accept Us, O Father, for His sake. Since He was punished in our stead, let Your anger pass from us, and regard us with Your favor.

O Lord Jesus, who gave Yourself for us, lead us to Your cross, and bid us tarry there awhile, that we may ponder all You have suffered for us. We thank You for Your exceeding great love in thus dying for us, and for the innumerable benefits You have purchased for us by Your precious blood.

O teach us all the lessons You would have us learn as we thus behold You wounded and bruised for our transgressions. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, make us to abhor the sins which crucified You. Make us to shrink from the very least evil. May we never crucify You afresh by cherishing any willful iniquity.

Give unto us likewise true humility. You stooped for our sakes to the shame of the cross. Make us ever willing to take the lowest place, and may we mourn with godly sorrow for the sins which we have done. Slay in us all pride and self-sufficiency, and make us broken and contrite in heart. Give unto us meek submission to every trial appointed for us. You bore Your heavy cross to redeem us — may we cheerfully bear our lighter cross in obedience to Your will. You drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of wrath which our sins deserved — may we willingly drink the cup of sorrow or suffering which for our good You do put into our hands.

O Merciful and Loving Savior, give us, we beseech You, stronger faith in Your willingness and power to save. You have given to us the greatest proof of Your love. You have laid down Your life for those that loved You, yes, and for those that loved You not.

O Lord, make us to rely upon Your grace and mercy. Cleanse us in the blood which You have shed. May the living water of Your Spirit purify our souls. Form in us the same mind which shone so brightly in You. Make us forgiving toward our enemies, and unselfish in our dealings towards all men.

We ask all for Your name's sake. Amen.

New Year's Prayer

O eternal God, our Heavenly Father, You have been our Refuge in all generations. You have been our help in years that are past. Be still our Hope and our Strength. We praise You for Your longsuffering and mercy toward us. You have graciously preserved our lives through the year that is past, and we are this day among the living to praise You.

O most Merciful Father, freely forgive us the sins of bygone years, and wash them away in the fountain of the Savior's blood. May they never rise up to condemn us in the last day, but may we rejoice that through faith in Jesus we stand before You free from all charge of guilt.

O Lord, teach us that our life is a precious talent committed to us by You. For each day and each hour we must hereafter give an account. We confess that too much of it has already been wasted. We have not used it in Your service as we ought. We have not sought first Your kingdom and righteousness. We have given too much of our time to the things of this world. Forgive us, we beseech You, and help us to live more for You. Help us to walk each day in the footsteps of Christ. Help us to glorify You in all we do. May we desire to improve each leisure moment to advance our own salvation, or to do good to those around us.

We beseech You, O Father, to guide us continually with Your counsel through the coming year. As the pillar of cloud went before Your people in the wilderness, so direct us by Your Word and by Your Providence. Order our footsteps, and make our way straight before our face. Wherever our lot may be cast, be our Sun and our Shield. Let Your presence go with us, and never leave us nor forsake us.

If any of us should be called this year to pass through days of sickness or suffering, be near at hand, and let Your everlasting arms support and uphold us. If we should suffer any grievous loss or disappointment, cheer us with Your smile and assure us of Your favor. Make every loss to be our eternal gain. Whenever we are left desolate through the death of those we love, may we confide the more in You who are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If this year You should call and one now among us to bid farewell to all below, we beg You make us ready for the solemn change. Give to each of us even now, a good hope through grace that we may never be confounded. May Your Holy Spirit convince us of sin, and lead us nearer to Christ. May we cast away every false dependence, and may Jesus only be the resting-place of our souls.

Hear us, O Merciful Father, and keep us evermore in Your love and fear. Be the Strength of our hearts and our Portion forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen. A Prayer for a Time of Trouble

O God, our Refuge and our Strength, we turn to You as a very present help in this hour of sorrow and distress. We cry unto You, O God, now that we are overwhelmed by the great water-floods. Cast us not away because of our former iniquities, but receive us graciously for Christ's sake. According to Your mercy remember us for Your goodness sake, O Lord.

O Merciful God, You do not willingly afflict nor grieve Your redeemed people. In tender love, You smite us with Your chastening rod. It is Your hand, O God, which has cast us down. We would humble ourselves before You, and acknowledge that You are just and righteous in all Your ways. You both give, and take away. You both heal, and wound. You bring down to the grave, and bring up. In the midst of all, we would say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at Your hands and not receive evil also? O Lord, give us meek submission to Your will, and help us to glorify You in the fires, by our patience under all Your chastisements."

O Almighty Father, sanctify this time of trouble to us. Teach us more of the vanity of the world, and the fleeting nature of all below. Lead us closer to our risen and glorified Redeemer.

O Lord Jesus, You know our sorrows and all our afflictions. Your tender sympathy is our consolation and hope. Help us to remember that You wept with the sisters at Bethany — and that You are the same yesterday, and today, and forever. In every sorrow, whatever be its cause, You

are near to bind up the broken, bleeding heart.

O Lord, may we hide our weary, trembling spirits, beneath the covert of Your wing. Be our Stronghold, our Refuge, our Hiding place. Let Your hand supply our every need, and Your ear be open to each sigh and groan of Your afflicted ones.

Once more do we cast ourselves at Your feet, O loving and pitiful Father. We believe that You care for us, and will make all things work together for good for Your redeemed people. O increase our faith and trustful reliance on Your promises. O make the storm to be a calm, that the waves thereof may be still. Bid all our sorrows cease in Your own good time, and may this light affliction, which is but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We ask all, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A Prayer When One in Our Family Is Seriously Ill

God, our Merciful Father, we would call upon You in this our day of trouble and anxiety. We thank You that we may cast all our care on You, knowing that You care for us. We thank You that we are permitted in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests unto You. Most Gracious and Pitiful Father, behold us in loving kindness for the sake of Your dear Son. Our sins rise up to condemn us — but You blot them out of Your Book through the Savior's blood. Let them not hinder our access to You, nor cause You to hide Your face from us in this our time of need.

O Heavenly Father, we know that You work all things after the counsel of Your own will, and Your will is love to all who trust in You. We commit into Your hand our present distress. Restore again Your servant to health and strength — if it seems good to You. Bless the means used for his recovery. Give him quiet rest, and may nothing occur to hinder his restoration. But teach us, O Lord, to own Your wisdom, and to leave all in Your loving hands. You know the end from the beginning, and You order all our footsteps. Lead us onward to Your rest, whether our path is smooth or rough. Give grace to him who is now weak and suffering, that he may put his whole trust in Your mercy. Grant that living or dying, he may be Yours alone forever.

We beg You, O loving Savior, keep under Your special protection this household and all in any way connected with us. By night and by day be near to comfort, to support and to direct us. Make Your promises very sure to our hearts, and give us grace to rely continually on Your faithfulness and love. When heart and flesh fail, be the strength of our hearts and our portion forever.

Teach us to seek those things which are above, and may we live as strangers and sojourners on earth. May we perfectly know You as the Way, the Truth, and the life, and bring us at last to the land of everlasting rest, where there shall be no more sorrow nor sighing. O blessed Savior, plead You our cause and abundantly fulfill our petitions, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.00. Beneath the Cross!

Beneath the Cross! By George Everard, 1877

02.000. Preface

PREFACE

Of course the meditations and counsels given here, are but a fragment of a great subject. They do not profess to be anything like a thorough exposition of the scenes and lessons of our Lord's Passion. At best they are but a few clusters from this precious Vine. They are but a handful of fruit from the Tree of Life, but they will answer the purpose for which they are intended if they lead the believer nearer to the Savior, and quicken him in the closer study of His last hours on earth.

"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." John 19:25

"Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Song of Solomon 2:3-4

"My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches." Psalms 63:5-6 "My meditation of Him shall be sweet — I will be glad in the Lord." Psalms 104:34

02.01. Beneath the Cross

1. Beneath the Cross The cross of Christ is the believer's lesson book. The sufferings He bore for our sake, should be the subject of our constant meditation. It is true we should ponder the story of His wondrous life, and rejoice in the victory achieved by His Resurrection. We delight to think upon His Ascension to the right hand of the Father, upon His faithful intercession before the throne, and the hope of His coming kingdom. But the Cross is the central point. It is that to which through life He was ever looking forward. His Resurrection ensures to us the benefits there purchased for us. And as our exalted High Priest, He has no other plea than the work He completed for us. As the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, He abides in His mediatorial kingdom. It is to His death, that the redeemed will ascribe the glory of their salvation: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!"

Especially, in the Lord's Supper, it is our privilege to dwell on the scenes and incidents connected with our Lord's death. The whole value and significance of the Lord's Supper rests upon the work wrought out for us on the tree. It was instituted by Christ on the night of His betrayal, before He entered the dark valley of conflict, agony, and shame. It speaks to us not of His life or His resurrection — but of that dying love on account of which He gave His body to be broken and His blood to be shed for the redemption of sinners. "And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Savior, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He has obtained to us; He has instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort."

Nowhere, as in the Cross and in the scenes connected with it — do we see such revelations of the heart of Christ. Love bursts forth in every direction, both to friends and foes. The last touch of the hand so soon to be pierced, before it is fettered and bound, must be for the healing of one sent to apprehend Him. No thought for Himself, shall hinder Him from pleading for His disciples, that they might go their way unharmed. Mercy shines forth in her beauty, seeking pardon for His cruel murderers, compassionating the daughters of Jerusalem, and saving a sinner of the deepest dye. Justice, too, stands forth in unsullied glory. In paying the debt of human guilt, in bearing the penalty of a broken law — Christ is seen to be a just God as also a Savior.

It is our joy to remember that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." As He was then, in pity and compassion and, faithfulness and love — so is He now. The suffering and the shame of the Cross is past — but not the grace and truth which was there revealed. At this moment is He as tender and as true, as ready to support those who turn to Him, and to pray for those who have hated Him — as He was when suffering on Calvary.

It seems to me, moreover, that in our Lord's suffering and death, there is precious instruction for the believer in almost every matter belonging to the Christian life. What are the perils you are likely to meet with — and how best to overcome them; what should be your life in secret before God — and what your path in the world — what is your strength in the hour of temptation and in the

season of sorrow; how to crucify the world; how to glorify God in the position which you occupy — all this may be learned in fellowship with our suffering Redeemer.

Beneath the Cross likewise you may best learn to cultivate every Christian grace and virtue. Meekness and courage, zeal and love, prayer and patience and longsuffering, and submission to the will of God — are the fruits of a believing view of Christ's death. You may learn, too, to conquer sin by the sight of that which it cost Christ to save you from it. The nail and the spear may be driven through the sins which have been most cherished. You may thus be enabled to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. And beneath the Cross you may learn another lesson. You may learn how to die. Through death Christ has destroyed the power of death — the sting is gone. To him that believes, death is life; for it is departing to be with Christ, which is far better. Nor will the pattern left you by the Savior be without its consolation. His toil and suffering ended, He committed His Spirit into the Father's hand. And when you have finished the work given you to do, you may peacefully yield up your spirit to the faithful care of Him who has trodden the dark valley before you. To Him you can fly for refuge in the solemn hour. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Jesus, my God, to You I fly,

You are a refuge ever nigh,

When heart shall fail, when life is past,

You will receive my soul at last.

Therefore let us often betake ourselves to Calvary. Let memory recall and ponder those hours on which our everlasting peace depends. Let our faith bridge over the centuries that have passed between. Let us go and stand in thought, beside the faithful women who were last at the cross and first at the grave. Let us look again — and yet again, and discover new lessons of instruction and fresh grounds for the deepest contrition, as also for everlasting joy and thankfulness — beneath the cross.

"Upon the cross I gaze,

And there behold its sad yet healing rays,

Beacon of hope which, lifted up on high,

Illumines with heavenly light, the tear-dimmed eye." For such meditation we need, above all things, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who testifies of the Savior. It is only by the Spirit that we learn the truth for our soul's profit; therefore, in reading the following pages, I would ask you often to lift up your heart to Him, who is the giver of all true wisdom.

"O God, open my eyes to behold the light of Your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Give me the Spirit of grace and supplication, that I may look upon Him who was pierced for my sin, and mourn in godly sorrow for that which I have done amiss. Enlighten the eyes of my understanding, and give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know more of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and of the greatness of His love. Give me the unction of the Holy One, and renew and sanctify me through Your truth. Draw me closer to Yourself, and teach me out of Your book, whatever is needful for my everlasting good, for Jesus Christ's sake." To Calvary, Lord, in spirit

now,

Our weary souls repair.

To dwell upon Your dying love,

And taste its sweetness there.

There, through Your hour of deepest woe,

Your suffering spirit passed:

Grace there its wondrous victory gained,

And Love endured its last.

Dear suffering Lamb, Your bleeding wounds,

With cords of love Divine

Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee,

And linked our life with Thine.

02.02. The Beloved Disciple

2. The Beloved Disciple "Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?"
Song of Solomon 8:5

Near to the suffering Savior, what strange contrasts do we see! Light and darkness, good and evil, are found in close contact one with the other. We see the dark form of the traitor, and the Wicked One prompting him to his destruction; but we see also the beloved Apostle who "leaned on the Savior's bosom." This latter is a description full of instruction for every believer who desires near fellowship with Christ — it is a pattern for a believer. And if you are such, however sinful or unworthy, do not regard it as a privilege beyond your reach.

"I sit down at Christ's footstool" said one, "but I cannot get nearer than this." But the Master calls you both to abide at His footstool in lowliness and meekness — and also to lean upon Him and rest upon Him in fullest confidence of His tender love, so that it is no presumption for you to do so. Never forget that in yourself you are utterly vile, and altogether unworthy either to come to His footstool or in any way to approach One so holy and so great. Still are you bidden, accepted and beautified in His robe of righteousness, to come up out of the wilderness leaning upon Him. And it will be your comfort and joy thus to act.

Jesus, we rest in Thee —

In You ourselves we hide;

Laden with guilt and misery,

Where can we rest beside.

'Tis on Your meek and lowly breast

Our weary souls alone can rest.

1. This position, leaning upon the Beloved, implies an entire and abiding RELIANCE upon Christ and His salvation. We need continually to be reminded that all strength and consolation is found in . . .

cleaving to Christ,

confiding in Him,

taking to Him in prayer every need and concern, and

expecting from His hands every blessing that a God of love can bestow.

If I would go on my way happily and serve the Lord with a free heart . . .

I must trust to my Savior in everything and for everything,

I must trust His providence as I trust His grace,
I must ever see Him at my right hand in the midst of life's duties,
I must believe that He is able to keep me in every emergency,
I must never yield to any doubt that His blood cleanses me from my sin day by day,
I must assure myself, from His Word, that He will never deceive me nor disappoint my hopes,
I must learn more and more of His unchangeable loving-kindness to those who flee to Him,
I must thus, by faith, put myself and all that concerns me into His mighty and merciful keeping.
Whatever fails me — Christ never will. Therefore my soul rests upon Him — and I shall never,
never be confounded.

2. Leaning on Christ also implies SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. Leaning upon Christ, rejoicing in the sunshine of His love, delighting in Him as my rich and satisfying portion — why should I go and mingle in the doubtful pleasures of a world that crucified Him? Has He not told His people, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world!" Has He not warned us that friendship of the world, is enmity with God? If I lean on my Savior, shall I love to spend my time in scenes and places where His precious Name is blasphemed? If I go where I must leave Christ at the door — may He not withdraw from me and permit me for many a long day to mourn His absence?

I dare not excuse myself in this matter, by the example of others; neither would I ever claim permission to do as other Christians do. I must set examples, rather than follow them. Perhaps there is no sin that could be named, but might be excused on the ground that some child of God had at one time or another committed it. Nay, I dare not copy others in their inconsistencies; but I must drink into Christ's Spirit, and walk ever in His footsteps. I will ask myself again and again, "What would Jesus do — were He in my place?" and when I see this, I will go and do likewise. If friends around seek to lead me in another path, I will refuse to go with them. I will not dishonor my Lord by doubtful courses. I will go where Christ will go with me, and nowhere else. If need be, I will go with Him to exile, to prison, to suffering, or to death. But I will not turn away from Him to drink of the poisoned cup! I will never choose as my life-partner one who does not love Him. If I am Christ's, the ballroom and the theater is no place for me. Even the social evening has its perils for the soul as well as for the body. Therefore I must be on the watch.

O blessed Redeemer, give me grace to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and with pure heart and mind to follow You, the only God!

3. Here, too, leaning on Christ, is the place of WISDOM. Here may I learn secrets of Divine truth, which I cannot learn elsewhere. While John was leaning on Christ, the Savior whispered in his ear a secret not revealed to the rest — our Lord told him who the traitor was. And our Lord has many secrets to impart to those who keep near to Him. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him." In Christ are treasured up infinite riches of wisdom and knowledge; and while I keep near to Him, He teaches me by His Spirit. He gives me the anointing from above. He unfolds something of the mystery of His Providence. He throws a beam of light on some of the hard problems that in this world we cannot solve. He makes brighter and clearer the doctrines of salvation, and the hopes of

a glorious immortality. Would I become truly wise in the things which are most essential? It is not by human reasonings or abstruse arguments — but by the study of the Word in fellowship with the Son of God, that I shall best succeed. He will be my Teacher — He will open my understanding to know more of His truth, and in His light shall I see light.

4. I shall, moreover, abide in SAFETY while I thus lean on Christ. Resting in Jesus, reposing in His love — no harm can possibly come near me. Nothing in earth or in Hell can injure one hair of my head, while I stay my soul on Him. I am safe from condemnation. However guilty I am, conscious of evil and failure in heart and life — yet He cannot and will not condemn me. Will He condemn the soul for whom He died, and who is clinging to Him as his sole reliance? Will He take His poor feeble child, resting in His bosom, and cast him away from His presence? Ah, never will He do this — but He will confess him as His own, and set him before His face forever! In this position I am safe, too, from the assaults of the enemy. In myself I am too weak to resist the least temptation — but in Christ, as my Shield and my Fortress, I can overcome the greatest. He is stronger than the strongest. Until Satan can overcome Christ, he cannot destroy the soul that is trusting in Him.

Here, too, is my Refuge — whatever storm may blow or tempest may beat, I run to my Savior and hide in Him. In poverty or pain,

in disappointment or desolation,

in anguish of mind or sorrow of heart —

the living, loving Redeemer is my strong Castle. Therefore will I fear nothing. I have peace in Christ, though tribulation in the world. Though every earthly tie is broken and every human comforter is gone — yet I lean on Him as the Friend, the Helper and Support of all who cleave to Him.

5. I love this position, too, because it is one of HOLINESS. Every believer ought to seek progress in holiness, and strive after the very highest attainments. But where can this grace be found? Not in the bondage of legal fears,

not in multiplying external duties and ceremonial observances,

not in leaning too much upon the spiritual direction of ministers

— but in continually keeping near to Christ. If I am much with others, I cannot fail to catch something of their spirit — if I am much with Christ, I shall grow more and more like Him. I shall become meek, and gentle, and patient, and forbearing, for His Spirit will rest upon me. I shall watch against the least sin, for who would willfully wound and pierce the tender heart on which he was resting? I shall love the Savior more, for I shall know more of the reality and depth and tenderness of His love to me. And I shall be able to make progress in the paths of righteousness, for strength is ever being imparted to those who rely upon Christ. Though from first to last I shall ever fall short of the full standard of the image of my Savior, and need His blood and His righteousness as my only plea — yet in His strength I may press forward nearer and nearer to the mark. And thus abiding, I may find a pledge of the eternal heavenly rest above. At present I am passing through the wilderness — but by-and-by I shall reach the glory. Now I lean upon Christ in the midst of sorrows and troubles and cares — but then I shall lean upon Him in a world where not a cloud will darken the sky. I shall be forever with the Lord. My tears and temptations, my cares

and my sorrows, will be left behind — and I shall be with Him who loved me with an everlasting love!

I always go to Jesus,

When troubled or distressed:

I always find a refuge

Upon His loving breast.

I tell Him all my trials,

I tell Him all my grief;

And while my lips are speaking,

He gives my heart relief. When full of dread foreboding

And flowing o'er with tears,

He calms away my sorrow

And hushes all my fears.

He comprehends my weakness,

The peril I am in,

And He supplies the armor

I need to conquer sin. When those are cold and faithless

Who once were fond and true,

With careless hearts forsaking

The old friends for the new.

I turn to Him whose friendship

Knows neither change nor end:

I always find in Jesus

A never-failing friend.

I always go to Jesus:

No matter when or where

I seek His precious presence,

I'm sure to find Him there. In times of joy or sorrow,

Whatever my need may be,

I always go to Jesus,

And Jesus comes to me.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, You are my Hiding place and my sure Refuge. I bless and praise You for Your loving-kindness and Your truth. Manifest Yourself unto me more and more, and bring me still nearer to Yourself. Draw me — and I will run after You! Hide me in the secret place of Your tabernacle — and shield me from all assaults of the enemy. Keep me always mindful of Your presence, and teach me to lean continually on You.

I beg You, O gracious Savior, to fix my heart on You and renew me in Your own image. Send to me the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. May He ever fill me with all joy and peace in believing. Pour into my heart such love to You, that I may love You far above all things. Preserve me from the evil that is in the world. Keep me ever separate from sinners, and may I never choose the company of those who walk in the path that leads to destruction. Strengthen me by Your grace, that I may be fearless and bold in confessing Your name. O keep me as the apple of Your eye, and hide me under the shadow of Your wing. Cast about me the robe of Your righteousness, and be near to me by night and by day. Let those around me see that I have been with Jesus. Show Your marvelous loving-kindness, O my Savior. Give me the comfort of communion with You on earth, and then grant me everlasting rest in Your presence above. Bow down Your ear to hear, and defend me evermore by Your mighty aid, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.03. Around the Table

3. Around the Table

Perhaps it may be but a little company of believers with whom you join from time to time in remembering the Savior's death. It may be in a village church; and when the rest of the congregation has dispersed, you meet around the Table of the Master, and in His name partake of the bread and wine. But why should you do this?

Go back to Jerusalem — go back to the Upper room where Christ sits down with His chosen band of disciples. It is the Passover season, and He has earnestly desired to sit down with them at the feast. For the time is at hand — the end is drawing near when the true Passover must be sacrificed, when the Shepherd shall be smitten and the flock scattered. Our Lord partakes, with His disciples, of the Paschal Supper, so full of grateful recollections to the faithful Israelite, and still more precious as pointing forward to New Testament blessings. Christ then institutes a new feast, suited alike for His disciples in all countries and in all periods of the Church's history. He takes in His hand, the small loaf from the table. He gives thanks, and breaks it and distributes a part to each of those present, "Take, eat," He says; "this is my body which is given for you — do this in remembrance of Me." Then He takes the cup and hands it from one to another, saying to them, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins — this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Then He adds that He would no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until it should be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (Compare Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.)

Very simple and expressive is this ordinance. There is nothing so mysterious about it that we need shrink from the comfort and help which it is intended to bring. We need but humble, loving, believing hearts, to taste all the precious treasures of grace which it unfolds.

Let us now take but one thought. Let us consider it as a pledge of our love and obedience. In Eden a tree was given to our first parents to prove whether they would follow the will of God. They were neither to touch it nor to taste it, lest they should die. But they failed. They broke the simple covenant — they forfeited their inheritance of life and peace, and brought upon themselves and their posterity an evil heritage of sin and sorrow and death. In the Lord's Supper, the disciple of Christ has a way afforded him of proving his obedience. The command as so plain, the precept is so easy in itself, that he can have no excuse for disregarding it. Had the Christian been commanded to perform some hard and painful duty — as Abraham was called to offer up Isaac — or to go upon a distant pilgrimage — or to have done some great act that would have required length of time and considerable effort, and would have taxed his endurance to the uttermost — then no doubt he ought to have done it — it would have been only right for him cheerfully to obey, for the sake of Him who sacrificed all for us and laid down His life for our sake. But Christ has appointed it otherwise. The test He has given has nothing painful or laborious about it. It is a means of strength and consolation to all who use it in faith. He has bidden His people meet in His name. He bids them partake of bread and wine, and thus remember His dying love. It is His one

express command: "This do in remembrance of Me."

It may be that some reader hesitates to obey this precept of Christ; but if so, be careful to inquire of the reason. What is keeping you back? What is standing in the way? What is your motive for refusing? If you take Christ for your Master, if you reckon yourself as belonging to Him — can you excuse yourself from giving this proof of your sincerity?

Perhaps you say, "It is a very serious thing to come to the Lord's Table, and I am but a young believer, and I am afraid to come." But is it not a very serious thing to stay away? Shall you not be afraid to disobey so simple and loving a command?

If a dear relation or friend were dying — perhaps a mother who had ever shown her tender love for you — and she were to ask you to perform some duty or carry out some wish or plan which she had arranged — would you let anything hinder you from fulfilling her last request? But think of the love of Christ. What more could He have done to show His love for you? And was not this His last command? And does He not say, "If you love Me — keep my commandments"? Ah, is it not sad forgetfulness and great ingratitude to your best Friend, which leads you to turn away from doing that to which He calls you?

Think again what it is that you say as you leave the church, while others remain. Do you not declare, as plainly as if you spoke it with your lips, something of this kind, "Lord, I do not come to Your Table, for I am not one of Yours. I do not trust You, I do not love You, I have no part or lot in the matter. I confess that I am not one of Your disciples now, nor do I look to share Your glory hereafter" And is it not a serious thing, by thus turning your back on the Lord's Table, openly to acknowledge that you do not belong to Him?

Ah, suppose you disobey Christ in this way — is it not a proof that you do not truly love Him, and may you not look for it, that He may shut His door against you hereafter?

Years ago, in a village church, a few Christians met together at their monthly Communion. One man remained in the porch outside the door as the service was being held. To him the quiet half-hour seemed well-near a year. His conscience smote him — his thoughts accused him of ingratitude and disobedience. He remembered how month after month he had been a stranger to the Lord's Table. "Ah," said he to himself, "I am outside this door! What if I should be found at last outside the door of Heaven!" That quiet half-hour bore its fruit, and led him to a more entire consecration to the Lord's service and obedience to His commands. But if it is a command, it is no less an invitation of the most considerate kindness, that the disciple of Christ should come to this feast of love. When you receive an invitation from a friend to go to their house or sit down at their table — you regard it as an act of kindness on their part. But was there ever such kindness in the heart of an earthly friend as you find in Jesus, when He thus bids you draw near to Him? It is condescending love which prompts the invitation. Here is the great King of Heaven and earth, inviting one of His subjects — one who has been sinful, rebellious, and utterly unworthy — to come into His presence and partake of His goodness. At this feast there is the richest provision and the most lasting profit. You come to partake here of the finest of the wheat, honey out of the rock, wines on the lees well refined — you come to feed on Christ Himself. He nourishes your soul with the hidden manna of His grace and love.

Here, O my Lord, I see You face to face;

Here faith can touch and handle things unseen,
Here I would grasp with firmer hand Your grace,
And all my weariness upon You lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God;

Here drink with You the royal wine of Heaven;

Here would I lay aside each earthly load;

Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.

You may go the world's banquet — you may taste its choicest pleasures — you may find a passing gratification in the successful pursuit of wealth or of some object of ambition — but by-and-by you lose your interest in it — or disappointment comes, and you grow weary and tired and restless. But come to this banquet of heavenly love, come in faith, trusting in the Savior's gracious promises — and you shall sit down with great delight under His banner of love — you shall have fellowship with Apostles, martyrs, saints — men of whom the world was not worthy — and you shall find everlasting strength and consolation to your soul. But who are welcome? Whom will Christ reckon as worthy guests? Not the careless, the heedless, the indifferent.

If you have no earnest desire for salvation, and no longing for a holy, Christ-like life; if you are of the world and like the world — I dare not ask you to come. There is something you need first. You need new life in the Holy Spirit; you need conversion of heart to God; you need that mighty change whereby old things pass away, and all things become new.

Neither do I ask you to come if you are well satisfied with yourself. If you are content with your own condition and have no sense of your sinfulness and poverty — you cannot come acceptably. Only a humble and broken heart can feed on a crucified Savior. He who is most worthy in God's sight, is most humbled for his exceeding unworthiness. But there are many who are kept back by a painful conviction that they have so much evil about them — that they have so little faith, repentance, or love, that it would be presumptuous on their part to draw near. Is this your own feeling? Is it this which prevents your approach to the Table? If so, is it not a mistake? Are you not forgetting the purpose of Christ's work and the meaning of this ordinance? For if anyone comes in the right spirit — what is it which he professes? What does the true believer virtually say? Is it not this: "Lord, I am a sinner deserving damnation, and my only hope is in You. I trust only in Your all-atoning sacrifice. I trust only in Your finished work, and in Your blood which was shed for my sin." And is not this the plea for a sinner — for any sinner who turns from sin and flies for mercy to the Savior?

Look not at your repentance or faith or love — but rather fix your eye on Him who will never cast out any who sincerely come to Him. He knows all your sin and all that you lack — and yet He loves you.

"Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28.) These words make it plain that no anxious, penitent sinner need despair, nor anyone imagine that he is forbidden to draw near. Will not this assure you of a welcome? Whatever your burden — whatever your weary, toiling, troubled spirit may need — here is rest and refreshment provided in

Christ. Will not this promise meet your case? A world-wide compassion, a priceless gift, a message bringing home the offer of life to each soul. What more can you ask or seek?

Hear also what Paul says: "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15.)

What abundant consolation is here added. The blessing is for sinners — only for sinners — for all sinners who own their sin and will accept it. Christ came to save sinners. He died for sinners — sinners of every kind and degree, therefore for you. And it is a true saying. Why not believe it? Why not honor Christ by trusting Him as a Savior for sinners, even the chief?

Hear also what John says: "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 2:1.)

Here is yet further encouragement. Perhaps you have been a backslider, or have committed some special sin since first you sought the Lord. But you are not to give up. You are not shut out — the door of mercy is open. Though you have sinned, you have a righteous Advocate. His atoning sacrifice will answer for your guilt. He will plead on your behalf. The Father hears Him always. Therefore do not add the sin of unbelief to your other sins. Do not doubt your Savior's free love or His willingness to save. Cast on Him the uttermost of your sin — and be persuaded that to the uttermost He will save. Relying upon His all-sufficient, abounding grace and mercy — come to His Table and set your seal to His faithfulness and truth.

Mine is the sin — but Yours is the righteousness;

Mine is the guilt — but Yours is the cleansing blood.

Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace —

Your blood, Your righteousness, O Lord, my God.

PRAYER

Most gracious and merciful Father, I bless and praise You for Your loving-kindness and Your truth. I thank You for giving Your only Son for our redemption. I thank You for all the unspeakable benefits that come to us through His death.

O Lord Jesus Christ, my only Hope and Savior, I cast myself at Your footstool and beseech You to save and bless me. Make me to know more of my sin. May Your precious blood answer for all my guilt. May Your blessed Spirit ever dwell within me, and make me holy both in body and soul.

O Lord, in the days of Your flesh You received sinners and ate with them. It is thus that I come to You. I am sinful and vile, and have no good thing to bring to You. I come not unto You trusting in my own righteousness, but in Your great mercy. I am not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs beneath Your table. But I flee to You, and I know that You will not reject me. Oh, cast me not away from Your presence — but take me as I am, and make me all You would have me to be. Give me true profit from this holy feast; strengthen my faith and increase my love. Nourish me with all goodness, and make me bold and faithful in confessing Your name. Help me to crucify the flesh, and to subdue every sinful passion. Enable me to live henceforth only to serve and please You. O Lord, hear this my petition, and make me a true and faithful believer, for Your name's sake.

Amen.

02.04. The Feast of Remembrance

4. The Feast of Remembrance The ordinances of the Gospel are very precious and helpful when rightly used. They are golden pitchers, and, when filled with the living water, they minister refreshment and strength to the soul. But we need the exercise of faith and love — we need a right knowledge of the purpose for which they were given — we need to keep close to the teaching of the Scriptures, that we may obtain a true view of the way they bring comfort and help to the believer. This is especially the case with respect to the Lord's Supper. It may easily be perverted. Unless used aright, it may prove a hindrance instead of a help in drawing nearer to the Savior.

1. Remember that this is an ordinance, and not a sacrifice. It is in no sense a sacrifice, except as a part of that sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which the Christian ought ever to be offering. There was nothing sacrificial about the ordinance at its institution. It was in the upper room, and not in the temple — it was on a table, and not on an altar. Nor is there in its present observance anything of a sin-atoning offering or sacrifice. There is no priest to offer it, for Christ's ministers in the New Testament are never once spoken of as such. There is no altar, for it is the "Lord's Table" around which Christ's people meet. There is no victim, for the body of Christ is in Heaven and not on earth.

Remember, then, that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance, and not a sacrifice. The original meaning of the word "ordinance" teaches the believer a precious lesson. It was the word used for the oath of fidelity which the Roman soldier took to the Emperor — it may therefore remind you how faithful each believer is bound to be as a soldier of the great Captain of his salvation. But in its present meaning it reminds us that the Lord's Supper is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Through that which we see, we are to look up to that which we do not see. Through the outward ordinance, we are to look up to the invisible Savior, and learn more to rely upon Him.

Remember, also, that the Lord's Supper is the ordinance of remembrance. Its main design is to lead Christians to remember Christ — it is to lead us directly to Himself. We are not to rest in the ordinance, but to fix every thought on Jesus and His dying love. When you go to His Table, think on Gethsemane and Calvary. Ponder all that He has wrought for your salvation, that as you dwell upon His tender pity and loving-kindness, your hearts may burn within you, and every power of your soul may bless His holy name. Be careful ever to keep this in mind. Only in proportion as the Lord's Supper leads you straight to Christ Himself, and binds you closer to Him, do you reap its true profit. Too often Christ Himself, His love, His promise, His free salvation — is obscured, rather than set forth in this ordinance.

"I grieve over my church," said an aged Christian lady, with reference to a church where extreme views and practices prevailed: "they have hidden Christ behind the altar!" Alas, in many cases it is too true! The table is changed into an altar, and then, behind a cloud of ceremonies, behind exaggerated and unscriptural views of this ordinance — Christ Himself — the crucified, risen, exalted, glorified Savior, the living Friend, the great High Priest of His Church — is too often left in the background. The Sacrament is frequented; but the Savior Himself is forgotten, or not

enthroned supreme on the altar of the heart.

2. This ordinance is a Parable — and not a Miracle. As there is nothing sacrificial — so is there nothing miraculous about it. The bread remains bread — and the wine remains wine. There is no change in the elements, neither is there anything added to them. They are set apart for a sacred purpose; but neither the words of Christ Himself in the first instance, nor the words of His ministers now, effect any change in their substance. When people bow the head and worship as if Christ's body and blood were present on the Lord's Table — it is as truly idolatry, as if they worshiped an idol of gold or silver. A caution is needed in these days, and may be a word to guide the young believer. Never bow the head to anything you can see — whether it be to the elements in the Sacrament, or the so-called altar, or to any image of Christ or Virgin or Saint — whatever it is, never bow down to it! "Flee from idolatry." Shrink from any approach to so great a sin. Watch against the first step to that which is dishonoring to God, and so distinctly forbidden in the second commandment and throughout His Word. But if the Lord's Supper is in no sense a miracle — it is an exquisite parable of redeeming grace. It is a lively representation, a beautiful type and emblem of the marvelous love of Christ.

It is said that our Lord's words, "This is my body," ought, without question or dispute, to make us believe a presence in the elements. But what are words, except to show the mind of Him who utters them? And must we not judge one part of our Lord's teaching by another? And was not our Lord's teaching from first to last ever by figure and parable, leading those who heard Him to further inquiry and thought? And was it not so very evidently in this case? Our Lord takes into His hand the bread, and, having broken it, He gives it to each one of them, saying, "Take, eat — this is my body which is given unto you; do this in remembrance of Me." As if He would say, "See here in type and figure, my sacred body. Now you see it whole, active, living — but as I break this bread before your eyes, so before another day pass shall you see this body of mine bruised, wounded, torn, broken. The nails shall tear these hands and feet. The cruel scourge shall plough deep furrows on my back. The spear shall pierce this side. And it is all for you. Others may give you less costly gifts — but I give you myself, my body to bleed and die for your salvation. And whensoever you eat this bread, ever think of my dying love, and nourish your souls by trusting in my finished sacrifice." So likewise was it when our Lord gave them the cup: "Drink of this, for this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do you as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (Compare Matthew 26:27-28; 1 Corinthians 11:25.) As if He would say, "You know how in olden times the blood was perpetually shed. Moses took the blood of beasts and sprinkled both the book and the people. Aaron went into the Holy Place every year, with the blood of the sacrifices. But all this could never give peace with God, for such sacrifices could never take away sin. But now I make a new covenant with you — I offer you, in my blood, free and complete remission. And this cup is a figure of this new covenant, and of the blood which seals it — this wine poured forth testifies of the blood which tomorrow shall be shed for the sins of the world. It tells of that crimson stream of salvation in which the souls of my people shall be cleansed. Therefore drink of it, every one of you. Take this cup and drink this wine, and thus give a pledge that you accept my covenant and trust only in my precious blood."

Taken in this sense, all is plain and clear. There is nothing forced or unnatural about it. It is exactly in a line with our Lord's other teaching, and it gives us a very blessed view of the work Christ wrought on our behalf.

3. This ordinance is a blessed Channel of grace — but not the Fountain of grace. You are not to regard the ordinance as necessarily bringing grace to the soul — you are not to put the ordinance in the place of the Spirit, who alone can quicken and sanctify the believer. At the same time it is a channel of rich blessing to all who come to it in the spirit of faith and prayer. While we deny that there is grace in the elements, we most strongly affirm that there is grace to be found in a believing use of the ordinance. But it is all the work of the Holy Spirit. You obey Christ's command, you come to His Table, you eat the bread and drink the wine — and Christ, by His Spirit, draws near. You have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Your heart is cheered with a fresh sense of His pardoning mercy. You see His love in a clearer light; you are strengthened inwardly, as by faith you feed on His body once given for you. You are comforted, as you trust more fully in His cleansing blood. You know not how, but Christ has been by your side manifesting Himself to you as He does not to the world. You go back to the common duties of life with His peace in your heart, and longing more than ever to live to His glory. But how may you gain most of this true and lasting benefit? How may you come to this ordinance, that you may grow in grace and have nearer fellowship with Christ?

Secure a time for quiet, thoughtful communing with your own heart, before drawing near to the Table. Contemplate your daily life, and inquire whether you are walking consistently with your high calling. Have you been pressing forward — or halting along the way? Has any special sin been drawing you back? Then, in the remembrance of what you are, hiding nothing and excusing nothing — yield yourself afresh to the Savior without the least reserve. Fall low, and look up. Be humble, and yet trust the Lord fully. He will accept you and He will help you. Therefore "be not afraid, only believe."

Make it your habit to come regularly. Whether it be each month, or more frequently, have your fixed time for coming, and let nothing but the most urgent necessity hinder you. Do not keep back because of your failings — let them rather lead you to seek more strength by coming. Do not stay away because you do not feel as you desire. It is a great snare to dwell upon feelings — they are very changeable, but Christ is ever the same. When you seem to lack all right feeling, throw yourself on Christ, and He will in due season supply your need. When you come to the Holy Communion, draw near in a prayerful, trustful spirit. Come, ever taking the lowest place — sit down in the lowest room. What are you but a sinner — a saved sinner at best? "What do you have, that you did not receive?" Still, come praying, trusting, expecting. The Lord delights to fill empty vessels, and to make the weakest and most unworthy monuments, to His praise and glory. Open your mouth wide, and He will fill it. And when the Communion season is over, take heed to your heart, that you lose not the blessing you may have gained.

Keep the fire burning;

stir up the grace that is in you;

watch against declension in prayer;

study the Word diligently;

be faithful to your King, and work and live for Him;

cherish a spirit of genuine, sincere love to your fellow-believers. So shall you approve yourselves to be the Lord's. He will ever be with you, and set you before His face forever.

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus, the Hope of Your people, I come to Your Table, for You have bidden me. Teach me ever to come aright. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, reign in my heart. Give me the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that I may know Your truth. Fill me with the fear and love of Your holy name.

Blessed Savior, draw very near to me, and make this ordinance a means of blessing to my soul. Bring me into closer fellowship with Yourself. My soul cleaves unto the dust. Oh, quicken me, that I may love You with my whole heart. Grant unto me the grace of the covenant which You have made in Your blood. Remember no more against me, my sins and iniquities. Write Your law in my heart, that I may not depart from You. Anoint me with an unction from above, and keep me faithful to You forever by Your mighty power. O Lord, I beseech You, bless those who draw near with me to Your Table. Knit us together in Christian charity, and make us to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Stir up Your faithful people, that they may abound in every good word and work.

Hear these my prayers — and when You hear forgive, and do for us according to Your mercy, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.05. Infinite Condescension

5. Infinite Condescension

"Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." John 13:4-5 In many ways does Christ, before His death, set forth His endless love to His redeemed people. The Supper is ended, but not the love that appoints it. He abides for a short season longer with the little flock, and strengthens them for the coming trial. He tells them . . .

of the Father's house,

of the Comforter's presence,

of His own abiding with them, and

of the peace which the world gives not.

He gives them a sample of His future intercession in the prayer which He offers on their behalf. But in addition to this, we see Him performing an act of very peculiar kindness and condescension — He washes the feet of His disciples. I know nothing more touching in the whole story of our Lord's life, and the incident abounds in precious instruction for the faithful believer. The Master leaves the Table. He girds himself with a towel. He pours water into a basin, and goes from one to another of that little company, washing their feet and wiping them with the towel with which He is girded.

Once we read of a sinful woman washing the feet of Christ with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. But now it is the other way. It is not the sinner washing the feet of the Savior — but the holy Savior washing the feet of His sinful disciples. There was such an exceeding depth of tender, considerate kindness in the act. Christ was just entering upon the dark night of His Agony and Passion. Before His mind were Gethsemane, and the house of Caiaphas, and Pilate's judgment hall, and Calvary with its cruel cross. Yet, in the presence of these unparalleled sorrows and sufferings, His heart is set upon showing kindness to those who followed Him. He will show them that He is mindful not only of their salvation, but of their comfort and refreshment.

Remember it, Christian, for Christ is still the same. He cares for you in little matters as well as in great. Believe it, that in His sympathy and love, He will bestow upon you the lesser mercies of His providence, as well as the greater blessings of His grace. Learn to bring to Him each want, each necessity. Though it may seem trifling in the eye of others, He will not disregard your petition. But no less in this narrative do we see the depth of Christ's humility and condescension. He had said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." And again, "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:27 And by this deed of love He showed how true were these sayings. He remembered at that hour, the glory He had left, and to which He was about to return. He was fully

conscious of the supreme authority with which the Father had invested Him, for He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. Yet He stoops to this lowly deed of kindness.

It was the work of a slave boy, or of the lowest menial — to attend to the feet of the guests. So we read of Abigail expressing her willingness to serve David in any capacity: "Behold, let your handmaid be a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." (1 Samuel 25:41.) So we read of the Baptist reckoning himself unworthy "to unloose the latchet of Christ's shoe." Yet this position Christ willingly takes. He condescends to men of low estate; yes, and performs for them the very lowest office.

Never before had Christ been so glorious in grace and in humility. The Lord of glory, the King of angels — stoops to wash the feet of a few poor Galilean fishermen. We read, in the Book of Revelation, of Christ being clothed in a garment of royal majesty, and girt about with a golden belt. But in this laying aside His garment — in this girding with a towel for such an act of love, is there not something more glorious still? Never would the disciples forget that hour. All through their pilgrimage, they would ever remember the touch of those gentle, loving hands. Nor should we forget it either. It abides recorded in the Word as an everlasting memorial of the humility of the Lord Jesus.

What a lesson for each true believer, for each sincere follower of the Lamb! Let us speak to our own hearts as we ponder it — let us learn the life we ought to live.

Yes, if I am Christ's, I must learn of Him. I must make Him my Pattern. I must walk in His footsteps. Many a costly garment has been worn by the rich and great. But was ever any garment so beautiful as that towel — the token of the greatest humility the world had ever seen?

I, too, must be clothed with humility. I must watch against pride in any shape. Pride of dress, pride of personal appearance, pride of rank, or birth, or wealth, or gifts — all this I must trample under my feet. I must sit down in the lowest place. I must be willing to sacrifice my own right or position, when it may be for the glory of God or the good of His Church. I must be lowly in service, willing to do any work to which my Lord may call me. I must be willing that others should rise above me. If I would be greatest — I must be content to be the least. The violet is one of the most fragrant flowers — but it grows low, and often hides itself from view. The ear of corn, when ripe and most precious, bends down its head to the ground.

Great is the strength of humility. I read, in the old classic fable, of one whose strength was renewed whenever he touched the ground — his enemy could only destroy him when he lifted him up high in the air. So Satan can only prevail when he can lift me up in pride. If only I am humble, he can never harm me. For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

Great likewise is the reward of humility. It shall sit down in the highest mansion of the redeemed — it shall taste even now, the sweetest fruits of the Tree of Life. But we find a break in the story. Peter stops for a moment the completion of Christ's work. His love, his zeal, his view of Christ's glory, yes, and his rashness and self-will come in: "Ah, it is too much. I the disciple, You the Master! I the sinner, You the Savior. Lord You shall never wash my feet!" There was much here that was commendable. But mingled with this, self was lurking beneath: "I know better than Christ. This act does not befit Your majesty or glory."

Christ answers very tenderly, as if He would say, "I have a purpose you know not. Leave me alone to act as I think best. By-and-by I will explain it all. You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Christian, learn the lesson our Lord teaches. You must not dictate to the All-wise — you must not interfere with His working. In the most unlikely ways, He will fulfill His bright designs of mercy. By a path you know not and would never have chosen — He will perform that He has promised. Gladly leave all in His hands.

Though it be the storm that wrecks your treasure here,

though it be the mystery you cannot fathom,

though it be the sorrow that well-near breaks your heart,

though it be a loss or a disappointment that blasts all your fair prospects and makes life a desert,

though it be the pain that calls forth many a groan

— yet in the future all will be clear, and as bright as day. He has led you forth by the right way — that you may go to the city of habitation. In Peter's answer, we see nothing but self-will. He sets his will against Christ's, and refuses to permit Him to fulfill the task He has chosen. In the original the language is very strong: "As long as the world lasts — You shall never wash my feet!" Ah, bold and presumptuous speech! It was now all self — self — wretched self. But self must have a fall. Self-will is self-destruction. So Christ rebukes him sharply: "Unless I wash you — you have no part with Me." As if He would say, "Then I must disown and reject you. Unless you yield to my will, you can no longer have part in my kingdom." In a moment all is changed. The thought of being cast off is intolerable. "Nay, nay, this must never be! If this is the alternative, let Christ do as He will with me — let Him take me to the bath and wash me from head to foot. To be His, and His forever — this is all my salvation and all my desire. Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Nay, there is no need. He who has been in the bath in the morning, needs at night but the washing of the feet, from the dust that through the day may have clung to him. "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean." John 13:10 In this subject there yet lies in the background precious instruction as to the cleansing from sin. Meanwhile let us carry away the twofold lessons of humility and self-renunciation. We must rejoice to be nothing — and let Christ's will be supreme.

Renew my will from day to day,

Blend it with Yours, and take away

All that now makes it hard to say,

'May Your will be done.'

PRAYER

O GOD, my Father, behold me in Your mercy and loving-kindness. Give me the anointing of Your Spirit, that I may perfectly know You, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Lead me to the Savior's footstool, and teach me to consider Him in His life and death.

I thank You, O merciful Redeemer, for Your endless love to Your people. I thank You for stooping so low in Your pity for Your disciples. You are ever the same, yesterday, today, and forever. O make me truly to believe in Your care. In every trial and sorrow, may I trust in You. Supply every lack of my soul, and give me all that is profitable for me in this present life. Undertake for me in everything, both great and small — and in every hour of darkness make me patient, in hope of Your coming and kingdom.

O God, grant me by Your Spirit to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Give unto me the spirit of meekness and of true humility. You dwell with the humble and contrite in heart — make me to be such indeed. Break down my pride, and lay low every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of You. Make me more thoughtful for the needs of others, and willing to do for them that which lies in me.

Help me, O Father, and fulfill my humble desires, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

02.06. Washed and Forgiven

6. Washed and Forgiven

"Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." John 13:4-5 In the lowly act of condescending love which Christ performed in the Upper room, I see another lesson for the consolation of the whole Church. It is a true and blessed type of His redeeming work. It tells me what as a sinner I so greatly need — and how the blessing may be mine. If I would indeed be a worthy believer, if I would by faith be nourished by the body once given for me, and drink to my soul's health that precious blood which was shed for me — I may learn the secret here. Let me then tarry for a while in the Upper room, and learn for my everlasting peace, what my Lord would teach me.

I see here Everlasting Love stooping low to cleanse and sanctify His people. Christ lays aside His garments, taking the position of a servant. He takes the towel and the basin, and then washes His disciples' feet.

What was this, but an emblem of His whole work? He came from Heaven, He laid aside His Divine glory, and made Himself of no reputation. He took upon Himself man's nature, that He might live on earth as the servant of Jehovah, — yes, more, that He might work and suffer and die in the service of man. He humbled Himself to the death of the cross. He was despised, pierced, bruised, smitten. And why? Was it not that He might cleanse and sanctify His Church, and present her at last, without spot or blemish, to the Father?

I see too the individual application of His redeeming work. He washes the feet of the disciples one by one. He goes to James and John, to Philip and Andrew and Peter, and the rest — and thus manifests His special, peculiar love to each. It is thus with Christ now — He deals with man each alone by himself. He takes them as He took the deaf man aside from the multitude. He says to each one, as to Peter, "If I do not wash you — you have no part with Me." Nor is this the reception of baptism by water — the rite may be duly administered — but the inward and spiritual grace altogether lacking. Nor is it the washing of an outward reformation — certain sins in the life may be cast off — and yet the heart remain without any true spiritual renewal. The true washing which brings salvation is when the soul is led to heart-repentance and living faith in Christ's finished work.

Christ awakens and convinces the soul of sin, by the Holy Spirit. He leads the sinner to acknowledge his lost condition and to cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" He leads him on to discover that there is no salvation but in Him — and that His precious blood-shedding is enough to remove every stain of guilt. Thus is he washed, justified, accepted, saved.

We read of Naaman laying aside his robes of state, and washing seven times in Jordan — and then his flesh is clean as a little child. So the sinner comes down from the chariot of pride, and, casting off every vestige of self-glorying — is washed and cleansed perfectly in the precious blood.

It may be well to explain further what is intended by washing in the blood. Of course there is nothing material about it. If you could have been sprinkled with the blood which actually flowed from the crucified Savior — it would profit you nothing! If it were possible, as some teach, that you could now, by a miraculous change in the wine, drink of the same blood — it could be of no avail for the cleansing of the soul. The blood is the life. To be washed in the blood is to have your sins purged by Christ's life being given instead of your's. He gave His life as the sacrifice for your sin, and the Father accepted this on your behalf. You rejoice in this, you place your full confidence in Christ alone and in His all-sufficient offering — and you are washed in His blood and forever justified. Mark this well, for it is the very hinge and turning-point of salvation. Your sin is ever before your eyes. Pride, selfishness, lust, worldliness, ingratitude to your God and Savior — these and many other sins trouble and burden your conscience. But by-and-by the light shines further, and you see the value of Christ's work. You trust in Him who died in your stead — you cry to Him, "O Lord, I flee to the refuge of Your mercy! I rely upon Your death! I cast myself upon Your promise. Let Your sufferings be instead of mine — Your death instead of my death. In You alone is my hope and salvation."

Dust and ashes is my name,

My all is sin and misery.

Friend of sinners, spotless Lamb,

Your blood was shed for me!

Thus are you thoroughly cleansed from guilt. Your conscience is at rest. You have peace with God. You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

It may be helpful to consider the perfection of this cleansing. A beautiful thought is thrice given to us, with reference to it. It is compared to the snow as it comes from above: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18.) "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Psalms 51:7.)

Look at that field on which the snow has lately fallen — everything is covered — wrapped up in the fair mantle of snow which has descended upon it. Clods of earth, stones, weeds, blades of grass — all are hidden, not one is to be seen. In every direction nothing scarcely can be seen but the pure, white snow. And is it not thus with you, believer, in the sight of God? God looks upon you in Christ, as if you had never sinned. Your earthliness, your hardness of heart, your follies, your mistakes, your sins, your failings, your ingratitude and your utter unworthiness — all are alike forgiven and forgotten! You stand before God in the Divine righteousness of the Son of God, perfectly justified in Him from all charge and accusation of evil.

Mark likewise the exceeding beauty of the newly-fallen snow. It fringes the branches of the leafless trees, and forms a canopy over the evergreens. It makes often a sort of terrace over the roofs of our houses and trees, and traces many a fantastic outline in our gardens. Scarcely any natural object has more beauty than sometimes we have seen in the snow, especially when the Sun has just risen upon it. And is there not precious truth to be found here? If trusting only in the Savior — if His righteousness and blood are upon you by faith — then are you fair and beautiful in God's sight. True, in yourself there is nothing but defilement. Yet, as one with Christ, you are perfect through

His loveliness which He has put upon you. The beauty of the Lord God is upon you. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings — and your Father delights in you — yes, and rejoices over you with joy and singing.

Side by side with this perfect cleansing of justification, Christ renews and sanctifies the soul that trusts in Him. He purifies the heart by faith. He makes the Word effectual by the Spirit, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. He transforms the character, mortifying the love of sin and making the believer desire above all things to be holy and like the Savior.

"Lord, not my feet only — but my hands and my head!" The Christian would have every member consecrated to the Lord's service and freed from the power of evil.

O Lord, Your heavenly grace impart,

And fix my frail, inconstant heart.

Henceforth my chief desire shall be

To dedicate myself to Thee —

To Thee, my God, to Thee. The story of the Upper Chamber teaches me yet another lesson of great consequence. The believer needs daily renewal and daily cleansing. He abides in a state of justification — yet, for the peace of his conscience, for abiding in fellowship with God, for the maintenance of humility and self-abasement — he needs daily to confess sin, and daily to experience afresh the cleansing power of His blood. The traveler, though in the bath at the commencement of the day — yet needs the dust washed off from the feet at night. Thus the pardoned, justified believer needs daily to be cleansed afresh from the sin and evil which he may have contracted. In a large Hotel in Sweden, "the day's reckoning" was placed at night on the bed-room door. So the Christian should night by night recall the faults and failings of the day, and then bring them for pardon to the Savior.

Christian, go often to your Savior. Let nothing be permitted to remain on the conscience. When a still, small voice tells you of sin, however small it may seem — look at once to Christ for pardon and deliverance. Keep close to Him, and ever look to Him for the cleansing that you need.

One thought more. Let every believer be unwearied in praise and gratitude for the inestimable benefit of salvation through the blood. In words not my own, I would remind you of the spirit that should be nourished by every child of God:

"I confess that to me there is nothing in all creation so precious as the blood of Christ. I would rather part with all I have, than part with what I have in this precious blood. I have found in the blood of Christ — pardon, and peace, and everlasting felicity, and blessings, and gifts too vast, too numerous to estimate. I look inward upon this sin-polluted heart, and by this blood I see all my guilt removed. I look backward on my sin-stained life, which cries justly for vengeance — and by this blood I see my sins expiated, and the cry of accusation silenced forever. I look forward to the hour of death, when a lifetime's sins might compass me about in crowding legions — but I see them all scattered and dispersed like a summer cloud — all by this precious blood. I look downward into the dark pit, where wrath and wretchedness are mingled in the sinner's doom — my own just and proper doom — but in this blood I find the ransom that delivers me from the wrath to come. I look

upward — upward to the pure and hallowed scenes of Heaven, to the throne of God and the abode of spotless angels — and by that blood I find a full and sufficient title, by which I shall enter into the Heaven of heavens."

"Heaven, it seems to me, has no song loud enough, sweet enough to celebrate the praises of Him who shed His blood for me! It is the song of the saved on earth: 'Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood.' It is the song of the redeemed in heaven — the company who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: 'You are worthy — for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.'"

Glory be to Jesus,

Who, in bitter pains,

Poured for me the life-blood

From His sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal

In that blood I find.

Blessed be His compassion,

Infinitely kind.

PRAYER

O merciful God, I thank You for Your inestimable love in my redemption. I thank You for salvation through the death of Christ, and for all the benefits purchased for me by His blood. O Father, I am truly guilty before You. I have sinned against Heaven, and in Your sight. I have broken Your laws. I have forgotten Your love. I have been ungrateful for Your rich and abounding mercies. But I come to You for the pardon which You have promised. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity in the Fountain which has been opened for sinners. Forgive all the sins that are past, and reckon them no more against me. Cleanse me from all my present failings and infirmities, and cover me with the spotless robe of Christ. Sprinkle me day by day with the atoning blood, and make me to hate the sins which crucified my Lord.

I beg You, O Father, make me henceforth to be wholly Yours. I am not my own — for You have redeemed me with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect! (1 Peter 1:18-19.) Help me to praise and bless You with joyful heart, and to yield myself entirely to You. May every member be given up to Your service. In health and in sickness, in life and in death — may I glorify Your holy name, and do that which is pleasing in Your sight.

O Lord Jesus, keep me from all evil, and preserve me blameless to Your kingdom. By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection and ascension — good Lord deliver me. Amen.

02.07. Dark Gethsemane

7. Dark Gethsemane "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane." Matthew 26:36 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death!" Matthew 26:38

"And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground!" Luke 22:44

It were well for the faithful believer often to frequent this sacred spot. It was a garden to which Jesus often resorted with His disciples. And as in quiet thought and meditation we go thither also, we may learn in His name to overcome the Tempter and to be partakers of His sufferings.

Go to dark Gethsemane,

You that feel the Tempter's power:

Your Redeemer's conflict see,

Watch with Him one bitter hour,

Turn not from His griefs away,

Learn from Him to watch and pray.

Jesus had loved the stillness, the retirement, the loneliness of Gethsemane. What hours of peaceful communion did He there enjoy with His heavenly Father! What blessed repose for His wearied spirit did He there find, after the noise of the city and the strife of tongues! The contradiction of sinners,

the sights and sounds of evil around,

the mistakes, the failings, the slowness of the disciples

— all these must often have pained and distressed Him. But He found refreshment in solitude. Alone, with His Father, He found peace and consolation. And you, believer, may do so likewise — you may find joy and comfort in some secret pavilion of your Father's presence. Go alone, and shut your door, forbid worldly scenes, and, as far as possible, worldly thoughts to intrude — and there, in conscious nearness to your Savior and your God, look up for strength to maintain your warfare with the powers of evil. And if you have a garden, or some retired nook to which you can go away from the crowd, away from the haunts of men, hallow it by meditation and prayer. The calm retreat, the quiet shade,

With prayer and praise agree;

And seem by Your sweet bounty made

For those who follow Thee.

There, if Your Spirit touch the soul
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what joy and peace and love
She communes with her God!

"Blessed Redeemer, when I am in a garden, may I remember the ardent love You showed in Gethsemane! May the labors and enjoyment of a garden be sanctified by this recollection! O heavenly Gardener, happy is the heart which is Your garden, watered by Your blood. O break the rocks, root out the thorns, and make my heart a fruitful soil. Sow the good seed of Your Word therein; water it with Your grace; shine on it, O Sun of Righteousness; blow on it with the soft gales of Your Spirit — that the spices thereof may flow forth."

Eden and Gethsemane, each a garden — but what a contrast do they present! In the one, Adam tastes the fruit which was good for food and pleasant to the eye; and, in doing so, brought on himself and his posterity the bitterness of sorrow, shame, and death. In the other, the second Adam begins to taste the bitter cup of woe and anguish, that His Church might reap the fruits of endless joy and life everlasting. From Eden, Adam goes forth as a culprit, under the severe rebuke and judgment of the God whose command he had disobeyed. From Gethsemane, Christ goes forth, as bold as a lion, to die and to bring in deliverance and everlasting Righteousness for all His spiritual seed. But let me draw near — let me behold this wondrous sight. If Moses took off his shoe when the Lord came near at the burning bush, still more should I regard Gethsemane as holy ground.

I see the Redeemer of sinners prostrate on the cold earth. I hear a groan, a sorrowful complaint. Never before has Christ complained but for the sin, and impenitence, and unbelief of those around. But now it is otherwise. There is deep soul agony; there is sore dismay; there is darkness that may be felt. In a vision, a horror of great darkness fell on Abraham, foretelling the bondage of his seed. For three days a strange, mysterious darkness fell upon Egypt. Dark and gloomy was the shadow cast by those olive trees in the Garden. But a deeper darkness overshadowed the spirit of the Savior. Well might He employ the language of the Psalmist: "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon Me, and a horrible dread has overwhelmed Me!" For this hour He had come into the world — for this hour He had lived and prayed. To enter upon His work, He had eagerly trodden the path to Jerusalem, going before His disciples so hastily that they were astonished. But now He starts back from the path He has chosen. At least there is a solemn pause before He advances. His soul is amazed and very heavy. He prays in an agony. The conflict is great, and His sweat is as drops of blood falling to the ground. Who can pierce the darkness? Who can tell the secret of that hour? Who can explain the cause of that mysterious agony? Was it the last struggle with the great adversary? In the wilderness He had met the Tempter, and thrice had triumphed. When Peter would have Him put aside the cross, He discerned the Tempter's form: "Get behind Me, Satan!" and at once rejected the thought. Is it now the final struggle? Or is it that, in some way altogether beyond our thought — sin, our sin — is touching the Holy One? Is it the guilt of mankind oppressing our Surety — the judgment and the wrath we had merited, descending upon Him? Who shall answer? Who has known the mind of the Lord? Rather let us worship and adore.

O sinless Lamb, O Lord Jesus, I bow before You, and praise You for Your love! What marvels do I behold!

You, the source of all joy — are borne down with heavy sorrow!

You, the source of all comfort — faint for lack of it.

You, the Fountain of Life — wrestle with death.

You, the highest Majesty, before whom Principalities and Powers bow — bow down Yourself to the earth before Your Father.

You, before Whom cherubim and seraphim veil their faces — lie in the dust and tread the winepress of wrath for man.

Ah, I learn here the fearful reality of sin! Sin, sin! What have you done! This is your work. Never, but for sin, would we have seen the holy, spotless Savior thus enduring unspeakable sorrows. Never, but for sin, would Christ have drunk the cup of suffering, wrath, and death. Can it be a light thing which cost the Son of God such groans, such tears, such dismay?

O that I may abhor the faintest shadow of evil! O that I may shrink from the least taint of this deadly thing. Who can utter all that sin has done? The whole creation groans beneath the burden. Countries are filled with cruelty and oppression. Homes are made wretched by its power. Ten thousand times ten thousand hearts it has crushed and broken. On account of it, myriads of death-beds have been without one ray of hope — and unnumbered souls have perished eternally. But chief of all — who can tell the woe, the anguish, the misery it brought upon the Son of God? May God give me His grace, that I may . . .

hate it with perfect hatred,

mourn over it with godly sorrow, and

flee from it as the greatest and only evil! But I would learn from Gethsemane a lesson of prayer. It was our Lord's command to His disciples, as they entered it: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." But they fail. Some little solace would it have been to the Savior in His agony, had He found them earnest in pleading for themselves, and in true sympathy with Him in His hour of sorrow. But not so.

What do we find? The Son of God in an agony; Satan, with his artillery, preparing to attack the Shepherd and His flock; the enemies of Christ awake, and close at hand to bind Him and carry Him away to Annas — and the disciples asleep!

Poor, frail man! well is it that you have a pitiful and compassionate Savior! While He rebukes, He yet is ready to excuse and forgive. "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Truly does Christ fulfill that which was spoken of Him: "A bruised reed will He not break, nor quench the smoking flax." But while the disciples fail — Christ fails not; and His prayer may well teach us how to pray.

Let me copy His humble reverence. Christ fell on the ground as He prayed; and let me bend low before my Father in heaven — let there be the attitude as well as the spirit of true devotion. In the

house of God, and in the secret chamber, it is right to bend as we pour out our confessions and prayers before the Mercy Seat.

Let me copy the fervency of Christ's prayer. I would be distinct, and hearty, and real, in whatever I desire and ask of God. Whatever is my request — the removal of trial, the bestowment of temporal good, the forgiveness of sin, more grace and power in the Spirit — whatever it is — I would realize my urgent need, and ask for it with earnest and heartfelt longings. In the power of the Spirit, let prayer be prayer indeed. No mere utterance of words can be accepted as prayer by Him who ever looks on the heart.

Let me catch, too, the filial confidence which is seen in Christ's prayer. I need the humility of a sinner — joined with the happy confidence of a little child. As one with Christ, accepted and highly favored in the beloved, I may go before God, crying, "Abba, Father!" Even in seasons of deepest distress, I shall find peace while clinging fast to a Father's hand, resting in a Father's love, and telling out every care and trouble in a Father's ear. But with this there must be perfect submission. We must be willing to drink the cup even to the dregs — if it is our Father's will. We must not rebel or repine, if the petition is answered otherwise than we have desired. We must say, "Nevertheless, not as I will — but as You will." His will is love;

His will is unerring wisdom;

His will is covenant faithfulness and truth;

His will is our everlasting peace and glory —

and, therefore, we must be still in perfect submission.

"I would lie still,

Do Your holy will." And we must continue and persevere. We mark the thrice-repeated petition — we hear the same words yet again and again, until the conflict is over. So must we pray always, and not faint. My Father hears my first cry for help — yet He would have me pray on, though I see not how my petition is answered.

Large and abundant answers shall reward those who are constant and persevering in prayer. "For the vision is yet for the appointed time — it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it — for it will certainly come, it will not delay." Habakkuk 2:3

Christ's prayer was heard — an angel was sent to strengthen Him. And in going forth so calmly, so willingly to the scene of trial and of death, His request was plainly fulfilled: the Father's will was done, and He rejoiced to do it. "The cup which my Father has given Me — shall I not drink it?"

So, too, shall our desires be accepted and our prayers be fulfilled, in the very best way. We have an example in the Apostle Paul. Very beautiful is the parallel between Gethsemane and the narrative given in 2 Corinthians 12:1-21. Three times Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn — yet it remained; but grace was promised and was given: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And the Apostle is content; yes, more than content. He believes the promise, and glories in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon Him. Thus may we rest in God's dealings, and be assured that His way, not ours, is best.

Lamb of God, to You I cry!
By Your bitter agony,
By Your pangs to us unknown,
By Your heart's parting groan,
Lord, Your presence let me see,
Manifest Yourself to me.
Prince of life, to You I cry!
By Your glorious majesty,
By Your triumph o'er the grave,
Meek to suffer, strong to save.
Lord, Your presence let me see,
Manifest Yourself to me.
Lord of glory, God most high,
Man exalted to the sky —
With Your love my bosom fill,
Prompt me to perform Your will:
Then Your glory I shall see,
You will bring me home to Thee.

02.08. The Crown of Thorns!

8. The Crown of Thorns!

"When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews!" Matthew 27:29

It was a new and strange device. The Roman soldiers took a thorny shrub, and weaved together a few slender branches in the shape of a garland, and place it on the head of Jesus. A little before this our Lord had been scourged — the stripes which our sins deserved had fallen upon Him. Very soon His hands and feet will be pierced with nails — and the head of Christ has now its wounds also. That head so often bowed with grief for another's woe — that head which received from Mary's loving hand the precious ointment — now has, from the rough, unfeeling hands of the soldiery, this strange coronation. The cruel thorns pierce His brow, and there flows afresh the blood which redeems a lost world from sin. We have it in our hymn:

O sacred head! once wounded,

With grief and shame bowed down;

Now scornfully surrounded

With thorns — Your only crown!

O sacred head! what glory,

What bliss until now was Thine;

Yes, though despised and gory,

I joy to call You mine! A Crown of Thorns! It took but a few moments to make — it was a token of contempt on the part of the soldiers. Yet would I prize it far more than any crown of human glory; for it tells me of Christ, and His grace and love: it opens out to me fresh views of His work; it brings me nearer to the Savior whom I love. A Crown of Thorns! Let me be reminded of Paradise. When sin entered, the curse came; and, as a mark of it, the earth brought forth thorns and thistles. But Jesus had His crown of thorns, for He took upon Himself the curse. He was made a curse for our sake — that to us the blessing might come. His precious blood has washed the earth from its curse, so that to all who are in Him its fruits might come in blessing. Yes, by-and-by they shall have their part in the new Heaven and the new earth, where there is no more curse, but wherein dwells righteousness! A Crown of Thorns! It well points out the path of Jesus as "the Man of Sorrows."

We have here and there a thorn that pierces the foot as we journey along our pilgrimage: we cannot escape it if we would.

There are briars besetting every path,

Which call for patient care:

There is a cross in every lot,

And an earnest need for prayer.

Paul had his thorn in the flesh — and each Christian, ever since Paul's day, has had his thorn too — perhaps many. But Christ alone had the crown of thorns; for He was the King of sufferers — the chief among all the children of sorrow and affliction. Ah, this shall be my refuge in days of trouble! Should my head be racked with pain — should it be fevered and restless through disease, or be wearied with anxiety and care — I will think of the thorn-crowned Savior! I will remember that in all my affliction, He was afflicted — and that He can sympathize for me in the least, or in the greatest sorrows.

I will remember, too, that the thorns He wore extracted the pain from mine. For to Him they came as part of the great atoning sacrifice for man's guilt — but to me pain and sorrow come as wholesome discipline, to heal the diseases of my soul. Thus the sight of Christ wearing His crown of thorns, shall confirm my faith in His sympathy, and shall enable me more patiently to bear my cross. A Crown of Thorns! "He was despised and rejected by men." He enters into Jerusalem honored by the multitude who throng around Him. There is something like a day of triumph. The people greet Him as a King. They cut down branches and straw them in the way — they cast their garments beneath His feet. Young and old cry, "Hosanna!" and salute Him as David's royal Son. But a few days have passed, and all is changed. The fickle crowd have joined His enemies, and the soldiers mock His kingly pretensions. Hence the crown of thorns; hence the purple robe — some cast-off rag of royalty; hence the reed put into His hand in place of a scepter. Yes, and they bow the knee in scorn, and cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

"You, Galilean — a King! You, doomed to die as a malefactor — a King! No palace, no throne, no army — yet a King!"

Thus they dishonor the Son of God. And He bore it all without a murmur or an angry word. Let Him but move the hand, but utter a word, but will it in His heart — and the whole host of them would have perished!

Strange and marvelous forbearance. Oh! that I could learn the lesson, and be more gentle, forgiving, and patient towards those who wrong or reproach me! A Crown of Thorns! What was this but an acted prophecy of glory yet to come? The crown of thorns foreshadows the crown of glory — yes, the many crowns that Messiah shall wear!

"I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud sat one like the Son of Man, having a golden crown on His head." (Revelation 14:14.) "Now I saw Heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns!" Revelation 19:11-12

History tells of a Roman Consul who brought back from Macedonia four hundred golden crowns from the kingdoms and cities he had subdued. But more than these, shall be the crowns of our

Emmanuel. The Crown of creating power and wisdom,
the Crown of providence,
the Crown of earth and Heaven,
the Crown of universal dominion,
the Crown of a glorious redemption,
the Crown of victory over death, and Hell defeated

— all these shall grace the head of Him who shall be owned by all as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Nor these alone — for of the great multitude before the throne, all shall place on His head the crown of their salvation. It is His victory, and not theirs. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Your name give the praise, for Your glory and Your truth's sake!"

Meanwhile, until that day shall come, let us learn our duty and our privilege. But there is a word for the Lord's own people. Christian, crown the Savior by your unlimited confidence. Trust Him always, and under all circumstances. Keep back nothing from Him, but leave everything in His hand. Let your fellow-Christians see that your faith in Him is a reality, and brings you support and comfort in the most adverse seasons. Make Him your Hiding-place in the day of trouble. Bring to Him day by day your wants and your worries, your cares and your fears — and leave them in His hand. Let every fresh temptation or trouble give you a fresh errand to His mercy-seat. Take the key of promise, and then, by the hand of faith, you can open wide the treasury of His boundless grace. Lean your weakness upon His strength, and in every conflict look to Him to put your adversary to flight.

Crown Him by joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving. Since He is never weary of blessing you — you should never tire of praising and magnifying His name. Give thanks always for all things in His name. Stir up your heart perpetually in this blessed exercise. Every note of praise, every breath of thanksgiving, every remembrance of His loving-kindness and mercy — brings honor to His name, and is pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

Crown Him by yielding yourself entirely and in everything, to His rule and direction. Submit to Jesus as King indeed. Open wide to Him, the gate of your heart, and let Him rule in every department of your life. Let His will be your law. Submit to His sway, and own Him Lord and Master. Where you shall go,

what you shall do,

what vineyard-work you shall undertake,

what friendships you shall form,

what engagements you shall make and what decline,

what joys or sorrows may be your lot —

leave all to Him, and desire only to know and do and suffer all His holy will. So shall He lead you in the paths of peace and holiness, and give you at length the crown of life, purchased for you by His

bitter and painful Crown of Thorns!

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus, by all Your pain and suffering, by all the scorn You endured — I beg You to make me faithful in Your service. Teach me to prize You and Your crown of thorns more than all the world can offer me. Reveal Yourself to me in all Your majesty and grace, that I may ever bow before You with deepest reverence.

O lowly King of peace, hold out to me the scepter of Your love, and let me draw near and touch it by faith. You were clothed with a purple robe, in shame and contempt. O clothe me with the garments of salvation, and adorn me with the beauty of Your holy character. O Lord, may I behold and see the glory of Your love. May I trust You without a doubt, and cast upon You every trial and trouble, knowing that You care for me! Prepare my heart to welcome You at Your return. May I behold You, with joy, wearing the golden crown; and at that day, may You accept me to reign with You forever. Blessed Jesus, hear my prayer, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.09. The Love of the Cross

9. The Love of the Cross "To know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge" Ephesians 3:19 On leaving the harbor and setting out on a sea voyage in my early days, my ear was struck with the sailor's cry, "Ten fathoms deep!" "Twenty fathoms deep!" and so on, as they sounded the depth of water through which the ship was passing. By-and-by the cry ceases — they reach the deep water where they need to sound no longer. And so it is with the love of Christ — it is a deep we cannot reach! Who can fathom it? Who can conceive it? Who can express it? The Apostle can only stand on the shore and bid us pray, that we may know its height and depth and breadth and length. And then he tells us that "it surpasses knowledge." But let us dwell upon this heavenly theme. The faithful believer will love to ponder it; for in doing so he will learn more of Christ, and trust Him more, and love Him more, and possess Him more fully as his own everlasting Friend. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will be ready to enlighten and teach us; for it is His special office to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to His people.

Christ died for sinners. Not for the good and worthy — but for the lost and perishing, did He lay down His precious life. When we had no strength to do right or to keep God's holy law,

when we willingly went astray,

when our evil hearts hated the God of love,

when we were rebels and enemies against the great King —

then He loved us and died for us, and by His death opened to us the gate of everlasting life! "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6-8

Ah, here is one depth — a marvelous depth — love, pity, salvation, for the ungodly and for sinners! Need I doubt whether He died for me? Nay, surely, for I am a sinner, and more sinful than tongue can tell; and as a sinner only — I go to Him and trust in Him. And I would know and feel this more and more — so I go to His mercy-seat for the broken and contrite heart that befits a guilty one like me. But what a death He died! To die a common death for others would be love — but He died ten thousand deaths in one!

I have read of a soldier giving a cup of water on the battle-field to a dying comrade, and losing his life for his kindness; for a shell burst near the spot where he was tarrying, and he was killed. Here was kindness and love — here was life sacrificed for another's good. But the suffering was short. Death came in a moment, and the faithful friend was gone. But not so in the death of Christ. Wave upon wave, depth upon depth of unknown and unutterable woe — did He experience for our sakes. And was not each depth of woe, an evidence of the marvelous depth of His love toward us?

There are four great depths in our Lord's Passion — and, as we look down into each, though it is but a little way, may He teach us something of the ocean-depths of His redeeming love!

1. I think of all He suffered in the flesh during those long hours of the night and day, between His apprehension in the garden and the yielding up His Spirit to His Father on the cross.

How was that sinless body tormented with cruel anguish!

I see those hands, ever stretched out to bless, now pierced with nails!

I see those feet, which ever went about doing good, carrying consolation and healing to the sad and suffering — now transfixed to the cross!

I see that brow, so full of holy benevolence, now covered with blood!

I see the scourging, and the weariness, and those parched lips, and those hours of bitter agony, as life slowly ebbed away.

Ah, the suffering and the love it manifested! Who shall tell what it was! In my hours of pain and sickness, let me ever look back to Calvary! As I trust in Him, shall I not regard the suffering that may be appointed me, as light beside His; and not now the punishment of my sin — but rather the chastening of a Father's hand? But I see another depth in those sufferings.

2. What shame, what scorn and mockery and indignity did Christ willingly endure! He is taken as a thief, with swords and staves. He stands for whole hours as a prisoner before vile and wretched men. He is buffeted — yes, He hides not His face from shame and spitting. His very deeds of mercy are cast in His teeth. A murderer and a robber is chosen instead of Him — the Prince of glory. Oh, what a depth of love do I see in the endurance of all this!

How hard do I find it to bear a word of reproach for His sake! How a slight, a cutting remark, a look — wounds and pains me! How great the trial is to any honorable and upright man, to be taken for a defrauder, and to be contemned by those who formerly had him in honor! And what must it have been to the Son of God, who had been honored and worshiped by the holy angels above — to be the scorn and mockery of men, the outcast of the people? In this depth of shame and indignity, I see a vast deep of redeeming love!

I see yet another depth.

3. Let me think of the desolation of Christ in those dark hours. How forcible are the words spoken of Him in the prophetic Psalm: "Scorn has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none." Psalms 69:20

We think of David at Ziklag — his wives and children captive in the hands of the Amalekites, his abode laid waste, and all his friends turning against him and speaking of stoning him.

We think of Jeremiah sitting down amidst the ruins of the city, alone and desolate, lamenting the loss of the sons and daughters of Zion. But no desolation was ever like that of Christ. He was hated and rejected by His own nation. Their chief men unite for His destruction. One of the twelve betrays Him to them. Another of the twelve, in the very midst of His trial, denies Him thrice. The rest all forsake Him and flee. Where are those who have been healed by Him? Where are those

who have been comforted and instructed by His words of love? Not one will now stand up for Him, and plead His cause — not one will show the kindness and sympathy that might, in some measure, have alleviated His heavy sorrows. But chief of all these, was that exceeding great and bitter cry, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken Me!"

Ah, this forsaking of God, this hiding of the light of heaven — this was far more than all! Here was desolation indeed? Forsaken by man — this is much. But forsaken by His own Father, as to the comfort of His presence, as to the sweet assurance of His love — this were above all things terrible! And with this, we couple another depth — all the soul-anguish that came to Him through our sin. Here is that which we cannot conceive or tell. The travail of His soul in the work of atonement, in taking upon Him our guilt and condemnation, in making amends to Divine justice for a broken law — all this is in a region which no eye of man has seen, and no foot of man has trodden! So that here, most of all, we see the incomprehensible love, surpassing all knowledge. Oh, to bear such desolation of spirit, to drink such a cup of soul-anguish for our salvation — what can it mean? How can it be?

Jesus, the sinner's Friend,

We cannot speak Your praise:

No mortal voice can sing the song

That ransomed hearts would raise!

One thought more.

4. We see the marvels of this love, in the purpose of it all. It is for . . .

our forgiveness,

our deliverance from all condemnation,

our acceptance as dear children of the Father in Heaven.

Innumerable are the benefits purchased for us by the precious blood-shedding of the Son of God — and on every one of them we see inscribed the love that endured so great things for us. Where else could such love have been found? What earthly friend would have thus sacrificed himself, to obtain peace and life and salvation for us? A few words, once spoken by the late Sir James Simpson of Edinburgh, before a large number of his fellow-citizens, put it in a very telling way. This excellent man, laden with honors for his discoveries in medical science, late in life attained the still higher honor of rejoicing in the privilege of a son of God. Let us hear his words:

"When I was a student at the University, I saw a sight I never can forget — a man brought out to die. His arms were pinioned, his face already pale as death; thousands of eager eyes were upon him as he came up from the jail. Did any friend come up and loose the rope, and say, Put it round my neck! No, he underwent the penalty of the law! For many offences? No — for one offence: he had stolen money from a stage coach! He broke the law in one point, and died for it. It was the penalty of a changing human law — the last instance of death for that particular offence.

"But I saw another sight — myself a sinner, standing on the brink of ruin, deserving nothing but Hell. For one sin? No — for many, many sins committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again I looked, and saw Jesus, my Substitute, scourged in my stead and dying on the cross for me. I looked, I cried, and I was forgiven."

Oh, that each believer may truly see this great love, and more fervently love Him who first loved us!

It is a privilege beyond all price, that we may love Christ — that we may have an object that will never disappoint our affections.

He who once died for us, is now our living Redeemer — still retaining all the love He had for us when on earth. And, in the power of His endless love, giving us a safe resting-place for our longing hearts. It is well to set our love on the changeless, ever-living Friend.

Let me lean most on any man — and in an hour I may lose my treasure — and my heart's affections will be like ivy trailing on the ground, when the tree on which it grew has fallen. But let me lean only on Christ, let my heart cleave intensely to Him — and I shall never lose the One dearest to me, the One who alone can satisfy my soul forever.

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I gladly take my stand,

The shadow of a mighty Rock, within a weary land,

A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way.

From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

O safe and happy shelter — O refuge tried and sweet —

O trysting-place where Heaven's love and Heaven's justice meet.

As to the holy Patriarch, that wondrous dream was given,

So seems my Savior's cross, to me a ladder up to Heaven.

Upon the cross of Jesus, my eye at times can see

The very dying form of One, who suffered there for me;

And from my smitten heart with tears, two wonders I confess,

The wonders of His glorious love — and my own unworthiness.

I stand beneath its shadow, as my abiding place,

I ask no other sunshine, than the sunshine of His face.

Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,

My sinful self, my only shame — my glory all the cross.

PRAYER

O blessed and merciful Redeemer, I would come to Your footstool. Draw me — and I will run after You. Reveal to me Your heart of love, and make the light of Your countenance to shine upon me. O send Your Spirit to lead me into the fuller knowledge of Yourself.

I thank You, O gracious Savior, for laying down Your life for my sake. I thank You for the pain, and mockery, and desolation of heart You willingly endured. I thank You for drinking to the very dregs, the bitter cup of holy wrath, which my sins deserved. I thank You for all wondrous benefits You have thus purchased for me. O that You would make my heart Your dwelling-place, and fill me with Your love. I bless You, that I may love You; and that in loving You, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. O make me love You more and more continually. May Your love constrain me to live to Your glory. Crucify within me all selfishness and self-will, and teach me to serve You and do Your will. Make me like Yourself — meek and gentle and loving unto all men. Fulfill these my desires, and make me wholly Yours, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.10. Self-searching Beneath the Cross

10. Self-searching Beneath the Cross To be pleasing to God is the main desire of each faithful believer. To have a single eye,

to be genuine and true-hearted in serving the Master,

to keep a conscience void of offence —

such will ever be your object if you have known the grace of God in truth. And for this there needs self-scrutiny — an honest wish to know what you are, and what are your failures. "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts — and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 139:23-24.) "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." (Job 13:23.) "That which I see not, teach me. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." (Job 34:32.) Such prayers and desires as these, will often arise in the heart where the Spirit of God dwells. For many reasons it is our truest wisdom frequently to speak to ourselves as to the path we are treading, and to lay bare our inmost thoughts before the eye of the most High God.

Let me remember the sinfulness, the deceitfulness, the treachery of the human heart. It has its countless lurking places of evil. "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9.) "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Proverbs 28:26.)

Let me remember that sin concealed, shuts the ear of God to prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psalms 66:18.)

Let me remember that undiscovered evil is the root of all the terrible falls of professing Christians. The sin has been permitted to take up its abode within, and then by and by breaks out in the form of some gross and open transgression! Secret sins lead to presumptuous sins. (Psalms 19:12-13.) Sin is like a fire smoldering in some secret recess or hidden flue, which at length bursts forth, burning down the house, perhaps causing the death of some of those within. It is like the snake concealed in the grass — and yet whose bite is deadly.

I will remember too the ingratitude of sin. It is rebellion against the King who tenderly loves those beneath his sway. When an Emperor of Russia, whose life had been devoted to the good of his subjects, heard of an insurrection in a distant province of his realm, he heaved a sigh, and said, "They do not know me." Just so, if men but knew the love and mercy of our God — they would be ashamed to reject His authority and trample His laws beneath their feet. But sin is not only rebellion against a King, but it is turning against the kindest parent. It is like the sin of Absalom who was plotting against his father's life, while his father was giving charge to his soldiers not to touch a hair of Absalom's head. Our Father is kind and forbearing to the unthankful and the evil — and yet men forsake His laws and, if they could, would cast His throne down to the ground!

I will remember also the infection of sin. It spreads far and wide. As a man going about with some infectious distemper might easily convey it to hundreds and thousands around — so is it with the sinner. Any cherished sin may prove fatal to others, as well as to myself. My example may prove injurious to very many with whom I mingle. "O that I could bury my wicked influence with me," said a young man on his death-bed, who grieved over the evil he could never undo.

Neither may I forget that whether or not I am careful to search myself — God searches me through and through. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13.) The remembrance of all this will be helpful to me:

it will quicken me in this duty of self-examination;

it will make me really anxious to know the uttermost of the evil that is in me;

it will bring me low before the mercy-seat, in true confession and humiliation for my sin. But what is the right position for this? Not before the eye of a fellow-creature; not beneath the awful heights of Sinai — but beneath the cross of Christ shall I best learn to know my sin aright. For in the presence of Him who was crucified for me, I learn how fearful is the character of sin. Sin is . . .

the knife that slew my best friend;

the nail that pierced His hand;

the spear that wounded His side;

the scourge that bruised Him;

the thorn that marked His brow. With this sight before me . . .

let me hate my sin with deadly hatred;

let me never cloak or excuse it, though in the most subtle form;

let me abhor the very shadow, the very approach of evil;

let me keep at the utmost distance from that which crucified my Lord. And in thus desiring to know my sin and its exceeding evil — there is a thought of consolation. I need not lose my peace, because I cannot always grieve for sin as I would. Perhaps I feel that the language of the Confession with reference to past sins, "the remembrance of them is grievous, the burden intolerable," goes beyond that which I can realize. But the Lord knows my desire, and He accepts it. And the more I keep near to Jesus, the more shall I grieve over the evil I have done, and grow in humility before God. For another reason, too, to keep near the cross, to be looking up in humble faith to the dying Redeemer — is the best position for me to occupy in recalling my sin.

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I also see the completeness and the all-sufficiency of my sin's remedy. However great the evil I discover, help and salvation is close at hand. I can never despair, while I gaze on Him who was wounded for my transgressions and who bore my sins in His own body on the tree. As I look up to Him I know that He can cover and He can conquer them; he can give pardon and power; for He, the Crucified One, is now the exalted One; and He can support, and sanctify, and save evermore those who look to Him. In what way shall I conduct this search?

What guidance will be most profitable? By what standard shall I prove and try my ways? The whole volume of God's Word, and every part of it may be used for this purpose. But I will name a few of those points more especially needful to be considered.

I may take from time to time each of the Ten Commandments with the light thrown upon them in the New Testament. Though the condemnation of the law is past to those in Christ — yet it is still to be to them, a rule of life. And the various precepts given on Sinai, as in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, may assist us in applying the great law of love to the details of the Christian life.

I must consider how far I am striving to honor God and to do His will in the different relationships of life. In the world of commerce, in the house of business, in buying and selling, in payment of debts, in all my transactions with reference to money, in my dealing with the property of others — am I guided by the plain rules of truth and justice? Do I invariably speak the truth, and do unto others as I desire they would do unto me? In society, in fellowship with friends, in seasons of recreation, when I mingle with those I know or with strangers — am I watchful that my influence should be for good? Do I try to turn the scale, where I can, in favor of kindness, a hopeful view of eternal realities, a higher tone of conversation? Do I strive to check anything that borders on evil? Does my presence in any way tend to keep down lightness, and frivolity, and evil speaking, and the like? In the Church of God, what am I doing? Am I an element of help and blessing in the Lord's House? Do I engage my heart to approach God? Do I worship Him in spirit and in truth? Do I receive the Word with meekness and readiness, searching the Scriptures for confirmation of that which I hear? Do I join heartily in the songs of praise? Do I pray earnestly in behalf of my Pastor and of the congregation? Do I render all the assistance in my power, by gifts and personal labor, to advance the kingdom of Christ? In my own home, am I living out, day by day, the life of Christ? Am I bringing all the little details of common life, to the test of Christ's holy example? Do I ask myself again and again, "What would Jesus do if He were in my place?" Do I make a conscience of the smallest mutters? Am I earnest and thorough in all the work I have to do? Am I doing my duty faithfully as a parent or a child — as a brother or a sister? If I have those younger than myself around me — am I careful that my daily life and conversation is such that they may safely copy? Am I guilty of the neglect or omission of any plain duty? Do I redeem the time from indolence and sloth and profitless reading? Am I striving to add to the happiness of each member of the family? Do I readily yield to others when it may do good? Do I sacrifice my own pleasure and comfort, if by this means I may adorn the doctrine of Christ? Do I carry the sunshine of cheerfulness about with me? Do I watch against evil tempers, and sullenness, and repining, a clouded brow, and fretfulness, and fault-finding? In my own heart, has Christ possession of the throne? Is His Word and will supreme? Or is any idol set up there? Ambition, love of praise, sight-seeing, craving after riches, the world's pleasure, display in dress — is any one of these taking the rule of my heart and life?

What are my motives of action? Do I strive to put self down — and do all things for the love of Christ and for the glory of God? Do I act from Scriptural principle — or from the impulse of the moment? What is the bent of my thoughts when I am most free for quiet meditation? Are they earthward — or heavenward? Is it my desire to keep in the lowest place? Whatever talents God may entrust to my care — do I realize that I am but a steward and must give account for them all? Do I go often to the Savior's footstool, and learn to follow Him in meekness and humility of heart?

Do I trample beneath my feet all pride and vain glory and self-sufficiency, and act and feel as a little child towards my Father in Heaven?

Such self-examination may be very helpful to me. Let it only be genuine and sincere — let it be carried on as beneath the eye of my Father and in sight of a crucified Savior — for then it will not lead me to despair, however sinful I am, but to more hearty and continual dependence on Christ. In spite of all failure and short-coming and sin, if I humble myself and trust only in Christ, there can be no condemnation. I am accepted in the Beloved and justified from all things. The ample folds of the righteousness of my Surety covers my every spot and stain. And I know that Christ will perfect that which He has begun — He will not forsake the work of His own hands. His Spirit will rest upon me and cleanse me from evil and corruption. The old man in me shall be subdued more and more, and the new man — that which is born from above — shall grow day by day. Therefore will I watch and pray, and commit my soul to His faithful keeping.

Search, try, O God, my thoughts and heart,

If mischief lurk in any part;

Correct me where I go astray,

And guide me in Your perfect way.

PRAYER

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be opened, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden — cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, and make me to know the evil that dwells in me — make me to be an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit. Let my heart be sound in Your statutes, that I be not ashamed. O God, I beseech You, root out every covetous desire, and deliver me from pride and ambition, and the love of this present world. Teach me to hate every false way, and make me to love Your testimonies more than gold or precious stones. Save me from the crafts and assaults of the devil, and keep me ever in Your fear. Guard and protect me in the hour of temptation, and make me more than conqueror through Christ. O merciful Father, forgive, I beseech You, whatever You have seen in me contrary to Your will. Pardon anything of deceit and hypocrisy, through the Savior's blood. Grant that henceforth, my love may abound yet more and more in knowledge. May I approve the things that are excellent, and be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. Fill me with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

O Lord, regard me with Your favor, and fulfill these my humble petitions, for Jesus Christ's' sake. Amen.

02.11. Cross-Bearing

11. Cross-Bearing

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Matthew 16:24 The true believer must needs be a cross-bearer. The Master has plainly told us. The precept of cross-bearing is co-extensive with the promise of salvation — it carries with it the same breadth of expression. We have the "any man" of promise: "If any man thirsts — let him come unto Me and drink." So too of precept: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23.) We have the "whoever" in the glorious promise of salvation: "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." So too in plain word of duty: "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27.) When Peter would have Christ spare Himself and turn aside from the cross, the Lord rebuked him, and told Him that he too must be prepared to suffer, and even to sacrifice life itself for His sake. Nor is it otherwise in the history of the early Church and in the apostolic Epistles. All through, the Christian is seen to be a cross-bearer. The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Paul, who bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus — the evidence of the persecutions he had endured — yet still desired "to know the fellowship of His sufferings" and to be "made conformable to His death." Timothy is reminded that "if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with Him." And the Colossian Church is told that the Apostle rejoiced in his sufferings, and was content to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church." This is God's plan for our sanctification. In the path of cross-bearing, the Spirit molds the believer in the likeness of Christ. It is God's plan, moreover, to manifest to the world the reality of the Christian's faith — it is thus seen that he is of a different spirit to the world around; and thus, too, others are brought near to Christ. But what is to be your motive in taking up your cross? It must not be a thought of winning eternal life and glory — your sufferings can never be the purchase-price of the eternal inheritance. Suffering is the path to Heaven — but not your right and title to it. The price has been paid once for all in the precious blood of Christ, and you can never add to it by anything of your own. Ah, let your motive ever be the sight of Christ's cross, and His free love in bearing it for You! He says to you, "My child, I bore my heavy cross for your sake. For you, I went to Gethsemane and Golgotha. For you, I tasted the bitter cup of shame and death. It was to remove your guilt and to give you peace — it was to raise you from the pit and to set you on a glorious throne."

"All this I did for thee!

What will you do for Me?"

Come, hearken to the voice of your Redeemer! Take gladly and thankfully the pardon and the peace, the comfort and the hope that spring up beneath His cross. Trust fully in Him to grant you a sincere and complete and present forgiveness of sins, and failures, and backslidings, and short-comings. Rest your weary soul beneath the shadow of this Tree of Life, and doubt not that He welcomes you to shore His everlasting love. Then, in His strength, and in His name, and in the

joy of His salvation — go forth willingly to bear your cross, remembering that He is ever with you — that He bears the heaviest end, and will support and uphold you all your journey through. But what is this cross-bearing? What does it imply? In what way are you to act so as to fulfill the precept?

There can be no doubt as to the main purpose and intention of it — it does not mean simply that you are to endure a certain amount of affliction. You are to take up your cross, and be willing, if God calls you, to die on it — you are to be prepared, if need be, to yield up life itself. You may be so placed that it is your duty to lay down your life for the brethren, or for the truth of God. Therefore you must cherish a martyr spirit. You must rise above a common every-day Christianity, that would have the comforts of the Gospel — but shrink from its high and lofty responsibilities. You must catch the Spirit of the Master. You must look for His mighty resurrection power, even the power of His Spirit, to rest upon you — to make you glory in tribulation, and count it all gain to renounce all things and count them but dung, that you may win Christ, and glorify His name either by life or by death.

It may be well to add a few hints as to the way in which you must exercise this cross-bearing spirit in daily life.

Remember you have to take up the cross laid on you by the Master — but not to make a cross for yourself. There is a self-denial which the Word of God does not require. To put yourself needlessly to bodily pain,

to endure self-imposed penalties and austerities,

to shut yourself up within the four walls of a monastery,

to forsake those whom you are bound to love and honor —

such self-denial as this God neither demands nor will bless. There is neither peace of mind nor spiritual profit in a course like this. Neither are you required to seek for trials or to pray for them — crosses enough there will be of God's appointing, without adding to them.

Go straight on in the plain path of duty;

turn neither to the right hand nor to the left;

endeavor to fulfill every Christian duty to the utmost;

live for the good of others;

shine as a light in a dark world;

never be ashamed of the Captain beneath whose banner you serve;

glorify God by your devotedness in maintaining His honor and spreading His kingdom — and you will be sure to find crosses enough to tax your patience and endurance to the very utmost. Again and again you will have to cross your own will, and sacrifice your own inclinations. You will have to trample underfoot . . .

love of ease,

and sloth,

and self-indulgence,

and self-pleasing,

and self-will.

You will have to perform unpleasant duties.

You will meet with opposition from the world, and disappointment in your fellow-Christians. To bear all this meekly for Christ's sake, will require a life of continual self-denial. To be a cross-bearer, requires that you should be quite prepared to brave reproach and ridicule, and even harsh treatment it may be, in confessing and following Christ. You must make up your mind to own Christ as your Lord and King, in all places and in all companies where you may be placed. When the woman had touched Christ's garment and had gained an immediate and perfect cure, He would not let her go away unobserved. She could not be hidden — she must come forth and confess what she had done, and what Christ had done for her. Even so, must you act. Humbly, prayerfully, wisely — yet withal boldly and fearlessly — stand forth as a witness for Christ's name; and though it will often bring you discomfort or loss — yet it will deepen your piety and make your crown brighter by-and-by. When Dilawur Khan — a very devoted native convert in India — was sorely persecuted and ill-treated for Christ's sake, he would take it meekly and cheerfully, and even glory in it: "I never lost a little finger for Christ," he would say; "but He gave His whole body for me!" Even so let us never be ashamed of Christ, but ever glory in His grace and love.

You must not turn from the path of the cross, when it comes to you through keeping God's commandments and following the dictates of your conscience. Do not turn from the hot, sultry mountain side, or the track to the summit — when the sharp briars and thorns or the rough stones wound or cut your feet. It is the way home — it is the way the Master went, and you must faithfully keep to it. For instance, it may be easier to let a man pass by whom you are bound to reprove, or to permit some wrong to be practiced and say nothing about it. But would Jesus have done it? Does He not require it at your hand?

Then, too, you may find many a cross to take up in business matters. To be true and honest, as before God, is not easy. An employer may expect you to hide the truth, or speak falsely; those about you may say that trade lies cannot be avoided; deceit may appear as it were the only policy you could follow, or you must lose a situation and perhaps experience great difficulties. What are you to do? If you are Christ's disciple, there is only one course to adopt. Do what is right — and suffer for it! "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 1 Peter 3:14

Act according to the plain precepts of the Word, and leave all consequences with God. Don't worship the golden image — though you may be cast in the furnace for refusing. Stand alone, if need be, and remember there is One who can deliver and save, so that not a hair of your head shall perish. Or, if God should permit you to be tried for your faithfulness, refuse to sin, though you die for it. Nor shall it be loss. You shall receive a hundred-fold more in some shape — and hereafter the crown of everlasting life. In the various providential sorrows and afflictions which may come to you — you must accept them as from the hand of God, and take Christ as your Pattern and Example in the endurance of them.

It may be pain and bodily suffering;

it may be gradual failure of health;

it may be straitness of means or actual poverty;

it may be the loss of a parent, or a husband, or a child. But whatever it is — do not murmur or repine. Trust all in God's hand — and yield to His wise disposings. Let God's will be your pillow. Fret not, fear not, faint not. Forget not His loving-kindness in the past, nor His tender care for you in the present. Though He slays you — yet put your trust in Him.

Another point is important. Be willing to put your shoulder beneath the cross which others have to bear. Share the burdens of those who live with you. Let your heart go out in sympathy towards a sorrowing or suffering fellow-Christian. Stretch out your hand to lift the load from one sore oppressed with care and grief. Don't shrink from the trouble or expense which may thus come to you. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2 For all this, you have need of heavenly strength. But the strength is provided for you. Weak in yourself, you may yet be strong in the Lord.

He will strengthen you with might by His Spirit.

He will nourish and sustain you by the manna of His Word.

He will uphold you, that your foot shall not slip.

Take up your cross — let not its weight

Fill your weak spirit with alarm.

His strength shall bear your spirit up,

And brace your heart and nerve your arm.

Take up your cross and follow Christ:

Nor think until death to lay it down;

For only he who bears the cross

May hope to wear the glorious crown.

PRAYER

O merciful God, my Father in Christ Jesus, I draw near to You in His name. Teach me to pray aright. Grant me Your help and grace continually. Put forth Your mighty power in me, and quicken me by Your holy Spirit. Fill me with hearty thankfulness to You for Your great salvation, and teach me to follow in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. O Gracious Savior, I thank You that You bore the bitter cup of agony and shame for my sake. Make me willing to deny myself and take up my cross and follow You. Give me such love to You that I may desire in all things to be like You. Crucify in me all sin and self-pleasing. May I shrink from no cost or trial which You may appoint. Make me ready to sacrifice ease and comfort in doing Your will, and to count all things but loss for the knowledge of Yourself.

Blessed Lord, give me true sympathy for the sorrows and sufferings of those around me. Show me how to bear the burdens of Your people. Lead me in the path of self-denial — and may I never turn away my eyes from the miseries You would have me relieve. Make me to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Endue me perfectly with Your own mind and Spirit. Draw me — and I shall run after You. And when my work on earth is done — may I reign with You in glory. Hear me, O merciful Redeemer; and sanctify me wholly, both in body and soul, for Your name's sake. Amen.

02.12. Until He Comes

12. Until He Comes

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup — you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." 1 Corinthians 11:26 The faithful believer must be a watcher looking out for the morning of Christ's appearing. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. The power of darkness shall not always triumph. The King's chariot is on the way, and His presence will banish evil forever, and shed eternal sunshine over His chosen ones! And one purpose of our Holy Communion seasons is to remind us of this. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup — you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

We look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our Communion seasons are like a chain reaching from the last supper in the Upper room — to the hour of Christ's second Advent. From the very beginning, there has ever been found a little company of true disciples meeting to commemorate His dying love — and there will be to the end. And each genuine believer touches a link in that chain which is ever growing longer behind, and shorter before. Each successive Communion bears witness that more of the Church's waiting time is gone, and less remains. We hearken to the Savior's voice in ever clearer note proclaiming, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with Me to give to every man according to his works." And when the chain is finished, when the last Communion has been held on earth, and the purpose of its institution accomplished — then from every nation, and from every branch of the visible Church, will be gathered to one everlasting Communion above, all those who have by faith been indeed partakers of Christ. So you must be waiting and watching. If you are Christ's, you have great expectations. Your kingdom is being prepared, and He will come to place on your head the crown of life. So let your thoughts be often turning to this blessed theme. Read over again and again the promises of His appearing, given in the Gospels, Epistles, and in the book of the Revelation. Study also for this purpose, the book of Psalms, and the prophecy of Isaiah. They give a glorious view of the King coming in His Royal Majesty. Yes, and tarry patiently and hopefully for the King, though as yet His chariot wheels seem to delay.

I remember thinking of this one evening during my travels in Sweden. I had spent the afternoon in a lovely spot. In one direction the eye caught sight of a gushing cataract pouring forth its mass of waters into the abyss below. In another direction, one could see the calm, flowing river and the five-arched bridge which spanned it. Then, all around, the hills and pleasant pasture fields added to the beauty of the scene. On the occasion I refer to, the village was all astir. Crowds were seen wending their way to the river-side where arches had been erected, and flags of every color were waving in the breeze. Then came a season of long delay.

Some hundreds of men, women, and children were waiting all about, some standing on the bridge, some sitting on the hill-side, some gathered around the little village Inn, and many grew weary. The sun was sinking low in the West, clouds were arising that foretold storm and rain, and the chills of evening began to prevail. But hark! There is a murmuring of voices. And now a joyful cry:

"The King is coming! The King is coming!" was the shout that in a moment awoke the enthusiastic cheers of the throng, and dispelled every thought of weariness or fatigue.

Good King Oscar and his Queen were paying a visit to the place, and as the cortege of the royal party passed along from spot to spot amidst the glad greetings of those simple country folk — I question if there was one but felt happy and proud to welcome their King. An hour soon passed by, the King drove away, the crowd dispersed, and the only Englishman present that day walked on toward his resting-place for the night, thinking of another King and another meeting.

Yes, the King is coming, even the King of all the earth, the king of Saints, the King of Angels, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. But what a contrast to the scene at Elf-Karlby which has just been described! On this occasion some half dozen carriages and a few attendants accompanied the royal party, and a few hundreds of their subjects were present to meet them. But by and by, we shall see the air filled with the angelic hosts that will attend our King, and what countless myriads shall behold Him on that day!

I often recall a crowd that assembled at the time of peace being made with Russia. There could not have been less than three to four hundred thousand within sight of the spot where I stood. I remember well that sea of faces, and when the lurid light fell upon them. I could not but think of that hour when a far vaster multitude will be assembled, and the solemn light of the Great White Throne will make visible the presence of every single individual that has ever trodden our earth! But the King Himself! Upon Him every eye is fixed. He was glorious in the days of His humiliation. What glory shone forth in Him when as the infant in Bethlehem, the angels sang His praise! What glory shone forth at the marriage feast, at the grave of Lazarus, at His cross — when love could endure such contradiction of sinners, and, though suffering, triumph in the salvation of His Church. But in the eyes of His saints, He shall be still more glorified at His appearing. Together with the revelation of His everlasting love, shall He display the majesty of His power, and of His impartial justice, equity, and truth toward all mankind. The King is coming, and we must be awake and ready to meet Him. Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; let us cast aside the sleep of indolence, the sleep of false security, the sleep of ease and self-indulgence. "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?" the Savior once said to Peter — and thus He speaks now to each slumbering soul.

We see sometimes an advertisement on the walls: "Sleeping coaches from London to Bradford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the North." But no sleeping coach will convey you from earth to Heaven. You must be awake, and on the watch tower. A little while, He'll come again.

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain;

Our joy to serve and follow Him.

Watching and ready may we be,

As those who long their Lord to see. The King is coming, and we must be decided for Him. There must be no halting between Christ and the world. There must be no blowing hot today, and cold tomorrow. There must be nothing of veering round from North to South, from East to West, to suit the company in which we are thrown. We must . . .

acknowledge the King,
carry His standard,
wear His uniform,
boldly fight in His cause,
and glory in His name.

Shame on us for our timid, time-serving thoughts! If God is for us — then who can be against us? If the King is coming to reward His faithful ones — then can we be too bold, too courageous, too faithful in His service? He has said it: "He who is not with Me, is against Me!" The King is coming, and we must cast aside every sin and whatever will not endure the light of His presence. If you are a true believer, you must not excuse yourself in the least evil. You must not palliate any inconsistency, but search it out and forsake it.

Never forget that the sins of the Lord's own people are far more hateful to Him, than those of others. The more precious a jewel is, the more you grieve over any flaw in it, or any accident that might befall it. So the Lord is most dishonored in the evils that are found in those that He regards as His jewels. Or you might look at it in another light. A parent has a child dearer to him than all the world. But if that child is rebellious, or ungrateful, or unmindful of that father's wishes — will it not pain him more than the misconduct of all beside? Even so is it that God reckons His children very dear to Him, and therefore their sin and disobedience are doubly grievous in His sight.

Oh, watch against everything in word, in spirit, in temper, in action — that will wound the Savior's heart, or bring a shadow of dishonor upon His name! Think of His coming, and do nothing that will not stand approved in that day. The King is coming, and we must not grow faint or weary along the way. It may be somewhat with you, as at the village in Sweden. The sun of life or of prosperity may decline,

darkness may begin to overspread your home,
shadows may rest upon the Church of Christ,
unbelief and error may hide the light,
storms may lower, and tempests of trouble may threaten

— but be patient and hopeful and wait for the King. In one sense you know that even now you have Him always with you. He is near you in loving-kindness, in faithfulness, and in His readiness to comfort and help you. You have "the real presence" in a far higher way than if you could eat His body and drink His blood by any imagined transformation of the elements of bread and wine. "When I go to rest at night, the Savior is so near me that it seems as if He were walking on the stairs by my side," said a widow, who had lately lost her husband.

Ah, this is indeed a reality which supports and consoles the sorrowing heart! And then, when waiting time is over, the King shall come in His beauty — and His bride shall share His glory! "And if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also."

03.00. Bright and Fair!

Bright and Fair!

A Book for Young Ladies By George Everard, 1882

1. Bright and Fair!
2. "My Sister!"
3. "Give Your Hand to Fortune"
4. Locked Gates, and the Key to Open Them 5. Behind the Partition 6. The Field of Sundew 7. "Polished Corners of the Temple"
8. Intellectual Culture 9. "Able to Support"
10. Live Today!

03.01. Bright and Fair!

1. Bright and Fair! The glorious angels are bright and fair. They stand in God's own light, and reflect His glory. They are as bright as a flame of fire in His service — and fair, very fair, in the beauty of perfect holiness.

But, thank God, even here on earth are angels too. In a world where many dark shadows cast gloom and sorrow, on every side there are "angels bright and fair" — men and women illumined by the glorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness, perfect in the loveliness which the Lord has put upon them, ministering spirits too, carrying messages of mercy, doing deeds of unselfish kindness, leaving behind something of Heaven's own joy and light wherever they go.

Many a young lady, who has given herself to this Christ-like work of nursing the sick, and who does it in a kindly, loving spirit, does prove, by her tender, careful handling, as a very angel from Heaven to hundreds of poor sufferers in hospitals and elsewhere. But not only in hospitals, but in the homes of the poor, among kindred and friends, and everywhere, may there be the same spirit. I well remember one such. The freshness, the early bloom of the "teens" had long passed, but the youth renewed like the eagle's was ever seen in her. As I have watched the sparkling light of Christian joy gleaming in her eye, as I have heard her sing so heartily the songs of Zion, as I have marked her cheerful readiness to do the King's business, or run on the King's errands, my inmost thought has often been that I could better conceive the brightness of the angels before God's throne, doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word.

Truly her life was an answer to her own question and wish —

"What would you be?"

A blessing to each one surrounding me,
A chalice of dew to the weary heart,
A sunbeam of joy bidding sorrow depart,
To the storm-tossed vessel, a beacon-light,
A nightingale song in the darkest night,
A beckoning hand to a far-off goal,
An angel of love to each friendless soul.

Such would I be;

Oh that such happiness were for me!

"What would you be?"

With these alone were no rest for me.

I would be my Savior's loving child,
With a heart set free from its passions wild,
Rejoicing in Him and His own sweet ways;
An echo of Heaven's unceasing praise,
A mirror here of His light and love,
And a polished gem in His crown above.
Such would I be,
Your, O Savior, and one with Thee!

Francis Havergal And if the rose has still the dew of the morning upon it, if it is still the bud which is "no vain sacrifice," if you have the spring and elasticity of youth — will there not be a double glory and a double beauty, if there be this likewise, the light of Divine grace, the gladsome joy of a heart which has found its true portion beyond the skies, and its work below like that of the holy ones who are sent forth to minister to the children of men? Would you indeed be "bright and fair?" Remember the angels are such in the sunshine of God's perpetual favor. They know no sin, and they fear no separation. Through ages past and for ages yet to come, the love of God is their endless theme, their spring of constant joy. But how can it be thus with you? You have led no sinless life. Though perhaps shielded from evil in the bosom of a Christian home, nurtured with tender care in the pastures of truth, committed in your infancy to the Good Shepherd infrequent prayer — yet is there not much that is wrong laid up in the chamber of memory? Is there not many a fault, many an evil thought, many a dark stain, known at least to yourself and your God?

Ah, sister, you may be "bright and fair" in the eyes of those who love you. You may be attractive, you may be courted and flattered by companions, but there may be hidden sins cherished in the heart. There may be dark, gloomy caverns of envy, jealousy, unbelief, spiritual blindness and indifference. There may be a secret worm at work, which may in the end prove the death of all solid peace. There may be the natural evil and corruption of your nature, which you have never yet discovered. A short time ago, a young man had a very dangerous attack of small-pox. For a time it seemed likely to be fatal, but by care and medical skill he was brought through it. When recovering he wished to see himself, but his friends endeavored to dissuade him. At length he was so persistent that they were obliged to meet his wish. So a small mirror was brought to his bedside. When he looked at himself, he burst into a flood of tears, saying, "I did not think I could be like that!" My young friend, have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror of God's Holy Word? Have you ever looked at your heart and life in the light of God's holy law, of the precepts of His Word, and of the example of the Holy Savior? Have you ever learned to see that, in spite of outward attractions, it may be, your whole being is marred and defiled by sin? A simple poem by the Rev. Dr. Macleod, puts this thought in a striking way: At the brook, a maiden glancing,

Saw a form divine;

Said she, all her heart exulting,

"That fair form is mine!" As she spoke an angel whispered:

"Maiden, Heaven is fair."

Said the maiden to the angel:

"Angel, take me there."

"Maiden," said the angel sadly,

"Heaven is for the fair."

"Therefore," said the maiden proudly,

"Angel, take me there." At the gates the glory burning,

Smote her soul with dread.

"Angel, from that awful glory,

Hide me!" said the maid.

Then the angel, gently soothing,

Drew his robe aside,

"Maiden, in this wounded bosom,

Wounded souls may hide."

"O my Savior, pierced and wounded,

Heaven is for the fair:

I have sinned, but You are Holy;

Cleanse me, bring me there." And the gentle Savior, gently

Drew her to His breast,

Made her fair, and at the gateway

Through the glory pressed.

Here is the secret of true beauty. It must come from Christ Himself. You may be sinful, very sinful, far more than you think or imagine — but close at hand there is mercy, grace, and help. There is One who can remove all guilt. There is an open fountain where you can be cleansed from all defilement. There is a robe of "virgin white" that can cover all defects. There is a free justification by faith in Christ, in which you can stand before God as clear from all condemnation as if you had never sinned! A wondrous contrast in myself I see —

As black as sin can make me by the Fall,

As fair as Jesus is in God's account.

For, God be praised, it is not what I know,

But what the Father thinks, and sees, and knows

Of the exceeding beauties of His Son;

That's my exceeding comfort, joy, and rest,

In spite of all! But there is more than this. In Christ there is grace, and help, and power. The renewing Spirit can altogether change and elevate your whole life and character. Through the Holy Spirit you may become a new creature. Old things may pass away, and all things may become new.

Only come to the Savior in sincerity and truth. Hide nothing of your sin. Desire to know the uttermost of the evil that is in you. Confess at His mercy-seat whatever weighs upon your conscience. Then trust Him at once and for all. Take the lost sinner's place — and claim the lost sinner's Savior. Glory in Christ alone. So shall you have peace. You shall rejoice, even as the angels, that a Father's smile is ever upon you. His eternal love shall henceforth be the comfort of your brightest and your darkest days. Would you, like the angels, be "bright and fair?" Especially be mindful to copy their holiness, their fervent love, their burning zeal. They are ever spoken of as the "holy angels." Their zeal and love know no bounds. Ever on the wing, they go forth to fulfill all God's behests. And you must be content with no lower standard. Be this your petition, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Seek to be ever looking unto Jesus, that you may put on more and more of His image. An artist, in taking a portrait, will be turning every moment to look at the one who is sitting for a likeness. So must your face be turned continually to look at the glory of Jesus. So shall you be able to copy His spirit and character. Through His grace, abhor the least shadow of evil. Aim at perfect conformity to God's will. Crave intensely the uplifting power and inward working of the Holy Spirit. Would you be "bright and fair?" Be clothed with love. It is the most beautiful of all graces. It comes down from above, for love is one of the first-fruits of the Spirit. It is a plant of Paradise. It is a breath of celestial air. It is a beam from the countenance of a God of love. It is the golden belt, the bond of peace, that knits in one all heavenly virtues. "Follow after love." It is full of humility, forbearance, long-suffering. It is slow to anger, but quick to support and comfort those in trouble. It is full of tender consideration for the sorrows, trials, weaknesses, infirmities, feelings, of those around.

Here and there you find a young friend who is sadly inconsiderate. With no ill purpose, but through lack of thought, she will crush and bruise under her feet those who need all the help and consolation we can give them.

I have thought of the scythe-bearing chariots of olden time, the scythes protruding on either hand and driven into the hosts of the enemy, cutting, wounding, slaying whatever may come across their path. But there are those whose unbridled temper and self-will does this very same thing among those who love them best. A tender mother, an affectionate sister, a faithful servant, a school companion and friend — any one of these must bear the brunt of your angry and bitter words, if SELF is crossed or something has put you out.

Nay, sister, let it not be so. You are little like an angel at such a moment. You are rather catching the tone of him who delights in envy, strife, malice, and hatred. You must put away all this, and put on "meek and lowly, pure and holy, heaven-born charity." You must think of others and crucify self. You must mortify selfishness and self-will in every form. You must put on the spirit of self-sacrifice, and be always ready to bear another's burden, and lighten another's woe. Instead of causing

others grief or pain — you must learn of Christ, and then, wherever you go, you shall bring with you peace and blessing. Would you be "bright and fair "as an angel? Then let your feet be swift and beautiful in ministries of loving service. Angels came morn and eventide with provisions for the prophet Elijah by the brook. Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. An angel brought the good news of a Savior's birth, and the heavenly choir sang the glad anthem of redeeming love. And to the eye of many a child of sorrow, you may seem "bright and fair" as they — when you catch their spirit and do their work. Go and help that faithful servant of Christ who is laboring for souls, but is persecuted and tempted, and tried by the opposition of the world. Go and minister to your Savior in the person of that widow, or orphan, or suffering saint. Go and carry a sweet message of love and salvation to the lost and perishing. Go and sing, yes, sing the new song of Jesus and His love by the bedside of the sick and dying, in the cottage, the mission Hall, or by the wayside — when by it you may draw a soul into the kingdom of Christ. And thus living and working for Jesus, you shall still be "bright and fair" even in the last struggle.

Twenty-three years have passed since I watched by the dying bed of a lady who had been to many a messenger of good tidings. She had taken many a one under "her care," and had "speeded their flight to courts" above. But in the midst of her work, she was called home. She had but one regret. She scarcely desired to have done more in the vineyard, but she desired, if spared, to have done it better. But the sun shone brightly into her room, and the Sun of Righteousness shone still more brightly on her soul, and, like Stephen of old, with her "face as it were the face of an angel," she joyfully entered into everlasting life!

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you — so you must love one another." John 13:34

03.02. "My Sister!"

2. "My Sister!"

Here is one drop out of the ocean of Christ's love. It is a gem of purest water. It is a tiny seed of Divine truth that may fill a life with gladness.

It is one of the kindest words that ever fell from the lips of the Son of Man. I would that every young friend who may read these pages might appropriate it to herself, and treasure it up in her heart to her own exceeding comfort. But when was it, and how was it, that the Savior uttered these words? In Mark 3:1-35, you may find a great contrast in two of Christ's looks. Early in the chapter you see Him surrounded by His bitterest foes, full of envy and malice, and only finding in His merciful works some cause for blame. They watch Him whether "He will heal on the Sabbath-day." Then comes the first look of which I speak. It was a look of sorrow and distress, of grief and holy indignation, against their perverseness and unbelief. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5).

Never could that look be forgotten. Those eyes, which are as a flame of fire, flashed forth righteous displeasure against their strange and willful perversion of His ways and doings. It may remind us of the look that, as the Judge, He will one day cast upon those on the left hand, when He shall say, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire!" But later on in the chapter, you read of a very different look. A little company of disciples are sitting around the Savior, and are eagerly drinking in His loving instructions. But there comes an interruption. We know not the reason, but His mother and brethren come to Him and wish to speak with Him. But this momentary pause shall not be in vain. It shall leave blessed fruit behind. It shall bring sweetest consolation to His Church, even to the end of the world. "You tell me," He would say, "that my mother and my brethren would speak with me. But who are they? Whom do I reckon such? Whom do I regard as my true kinsfolk?"

Then came, the second look of the chapter. Stretching forth His hand toward the little flock, He looked round about on them with a tender love that no words could describe, and added an assurance of His favor toward them. "Behold," said He, "My mother and brothers!"

Then followed a few other words carrying the assurance of His love still further. That His look of love might be a precious heritage for all true disciples in all parts of the globe, and in all ages of the world's history, He gave it with a "whoever." And it is one of the most glorious "whoevers" in the whole book of revelation.

"Whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35).

"My sister" goes side by side with the look. So that if the one is your portion — so also is the other. Very comforting, very helpful shall it be to you all through life if you know that His favorable countenance is ever toward you, and that you are the dear sister of Him who is Lord of all.

"My sister!" Can you claim this word of love as your own? Can you say "my" indeed and in truth? Can you look up to Heaven, and say of the King of Zion, "He is my brother!" Can you rejoice in the assurance that He regards you as a beloved sister? But how can you tell? Let us see.

First, let me ask, are you in the same position as those who were then around Christ? Are you humbly sitting at His feet? Are you a learner in His school? Are you hearkening day by day to His voice, waiting at the posts of His gates? Are the words of love which He spoke your daily meditation? Are you ever looking up to Him for light and teaching, depending upon His Spirit to guide you into all truth? But Christ gives another test. The condition annexed to His promise is very plain, "Whoever shall do the will of God — the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

It is instructive to consider this side by side with the great "whoever" (John 3:16) "Whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!" But how shall we explain them? How shall we reconcile them? Shall we exalt one above the other? Shall we lay all the stress on "believing" and neglect the "doing?" Or shall we think much of the "doing" and care little for the "believing?" Not so. We will value both, and honor both, and use both for the object for which they were given.

Ever remember this. Believing and doing, faith and obedience — are never opposed one to the other. They are in perfect harmony, and ought ever to be thus considered.

Faith is the foundation — obedience the superstructure.

Faith is the root — obedience is the fruit.

Faith is the motive — obedience is the task it fulfills.

Faith accepts the balm which heals the deadly wound — obedience is the labor and the service which the soldier of the cross renders after his recovery. Would you rejoice in Christ as your Elder Brother, the Brother whose love will never grow cold, the Brother who will sympathize with you all through your pilgrimage?

Then go to Him in faith, and trust Him as your all-sufficient Savior. Take the benefit offered to you in His name — nay, more, receive Him as the Father's gift — as your Atoning sacrifice, your Righteousness, your All! A thought lately brought exceeding comfort to one who was full of anxiety and doubt. He was seeking the Savior but could not find peace, when a suggestion with reference to the promise removed every difficulty. "Whoever believes" is the warrant for our hope — but what is it to believe? I suggested that in place of "believe" he should read "receive," the parallel expression given in John 1:12. How clear, then, is the path of life to every humble soul!

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever receives Him should not perish but have eternal life."

God gives — man has but to receive. It is no hard condition. But welcome this blessing of Divine love, but accept the Son of God as your full salvation, but open the door of your heart to Him — and let Him take possession, and dwell and abide there — and life everlasting shall be your sure inheritance. To help you still further, take another view of faith. It has many aspects, and where you fail to find help in one you may be able to do so in another. Look at the rest which faith brings.

You have a burden of guilt — but by faith you transfer it to the shoulder of Jesus. You have infirmities, and temptations, and sorrows — but by faith you may leave them all with Jesus. You are weary and tired, and need repose — and you come to the Savior and find rest in Him. A native Christian in India put it very forcibly. In the part of the country where he dwelt, here are there are stone pillars on which men can easily place the burden they carry on the head. Then beneath this pillar is a seat sheltered from the heat where the traveler can rest. "Christ is my sumatanga," said the man, using the name by which these rests are called.

Let Him be your sumatanga, my young friend. On Him by faith roll your sin; or rather, believe that God Himself has laid it upon Him. On Him rest your weary, trembling, troubled spirit. Leave with Him all that concerns you. Present and future, soul and body, time and eternity — leave all in His loving care, and be assured that He will undertake for you. But do not forget the other side. There is a need for doing as well as believing. All in vain is the profession of faith in Christ — unless it leads you to love Him and keep His commandments.

"Not every one that says unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven — but he who does the will of my Father which is in Heaven." No greater stumbling-block is to be found in Christ's Church, than one who glories in the doctrines of grace and yet walks carelessly and inconsistently with such a profession. Not such is the faith of God's elect. Not such the faith that honors the Master, or brings true peace to the soul. Who has not known one or another young friend, accustomed to the Gospel from childhood, perhaps professing to trust in Christ, even engaging in Sunday-school or other work — and yet all the week through the life, the talk, the temper are all utterly contrary to the precepts of Christ. There is nothing of His likeness, no earnest aim to please Him — but the whole heart is given to the world! Be your spirit very far from this. Be ever about your Father's business. Leaning only on the Savior's grace, praying for the filling of Spirit — go forward to do the will of God more perfectly.

Now be honest about this point. What is your religion worth? Is it a sham and a pretense — or a reality? Are you daily waging war against these three deadly sins — sloth, self-will, and selfishness? Are you shining as a bright lamp in your own home? Are you careful about common, every-day duties? Are you mindful to curb the tongue, to watch against vain and evil thoughts, to be considerate of the feelings and needs of those around you? Are you ever ready to seize an opportunity for doing good, to lighten the burden of another, or to help a fellow-pilgrim on the way to Zion?

I lately met with a few simple lines which have a precious thought in them: Would you be happy?
Take an easy way;

Think of those round you, live for them all day;

Think of their pain, their grief, their loss, their care,

All that they have to do, or feel, or bear;

Think of their pleasure, of their good, their gain,

Think of those round you, it will not be vain. In this path of faith, obedience, and loving service you will find the comfort and privilege which Christ promises. Place not one grain of confidence in yourself, your works, your prayers, or feelings — but rely wholly on the work and sure word of the

Savior.

Then manifest your faith by a life of holy, devoted, and zealous regard to all His commandments. Live for Christ, spend and be spent for others, and take up your cross day by day. So shall you know assuredly, by the inward teaching of the Spirit, that Christ's look of love rests on you. He says of you, even of you, however unworthy you may be, she is "my sister!"

"My sister!" Sound if you can the depths of this loving word of the Master. It is but short, nevertheless it is rich in heavenly consolation.

It is one of those cords of tender love by which He draws you near to Himself. He does not keep you at arm's length. He does not treat you as a servant or a stranger. He does not speak of you as my "follower," my "disciple," or even my "friend." To be any one of these is a sweet privilege, but Christ goes beyond these, and says she is "my sister."

Thus Christ feels and acts towards you. He will be a true Brother, a Brother in heart as well as in name — kinder far than any earthly brother toward the sister he most dearly loves; one who will be faithful in all extremities, and to whom you can never appeal in vain. And be it remembered that He is the Brother to whom is committed the key of Heaven's Treasury. Whatever provision may be needful for any one of the household of faith, is at His disposal, and can come only through Him. So that you may lay all your needs upon Him. He cannot fail to supply you. Come to Him continually, and look to His hand to bestow each gift that may be for your profit. He will grant . . .

daily mercy for daily sins and shortcomings,

well-timed support for each temptation,

grace upon grace,

food for the hungry soul,

medicine for the sick soul,

water from the wellspring for the thirsty soul,

covering for the naked soul, and

eye salve for dim and defective sight.

Whatever you lack, whatever you desire, the Elder Brother can fully, abundantly supply, and He will do so in so far as it ministers to your highest good. "My God shall fully supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19)

"My sister!" Then in Him you are made a daughter of the Lord God Almighty! Christ is the well-beloved Son of the Father, and when you are thus brought near to Him, as a sister of the Lord Jesus, in the highest and fullest sense you are a dear child in the family of God.

What a spring of joy and consolation is this! You may be the member of a very happy home. You may know the love of very affectionate parents. You may have means in abundance. You may be a child of affluence, perhaps of one in high position — but the family circle must one day be broken up, and you can little forecast what your future position may be. But in the household of God, you

have a portion and a fixed abode, which can never part from you. You have resources which cannot fail. You have love which time can never change or exhaust.

Whatever Your sovereign will ordains,

O give me strength to bear!

Still let me know my Father reigns,

And trust a Father's care!

"My sister!" This relationship brings you at once into closest fellowship with all the people of God. They, too, are brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus — and therefore your brothers and sisters too. You may know what it is to be sometimes lonely and desolate. You may stand like a pillar in the desert, and alone have to bear the storm and the whirlwind — but there is a communion of saints, there is a true oneness between all God's people. There is a link that binds you to them, and them to you. Their prayers ascend to God on your behalf. And though as yet you are strangers in the flesh — yet a day will come when you shall be one in knowledge of each other, as you are now in the knowledge and love of Christ. Their struggles, their sorrows, their joys — are in many respects like your own. The day hastens on when the Church on earth and the Church above shall be forever one in the coming kingdom of our Lord!

We expect a bright tomorrow,

All will be well!

Faith can sing through days of sorrow,

All, all is well!

On our Father's love relying,

Jesus every need supplying,

Or in living or in dying,

All must be well!

03.03. "Give Your Hand to Fortune"

3. "Give Your Hand to Fortune."

I don't know why it is, but it is a curious fact that the clergy receive innumerable circulars, inviting them to invest money in every conceivable project, and to risk it in all sorts of ways. A little while ago I received one from Hamburg, setting forth the advantages of a grand lottery under government control. Six marks were to be paid for a share, and this would give a chance of a splendid prize. I thought I would read over the circular, though I have a perfect horror of lotteries, whether put forth in this way, or taking something of a charity form, such as in bazaars. I believe this and every form of gambling to be an unmitigated evil, and that to indulge in it, as a habit, is one of the surest means of ruining a young person. In fact, in my judgment, it is only a refined way of putting your hand in other people's pockets — or allowing them, if clever enough, to put their hands into yours.

I wish I could get every young friend who reads these pages to side with me in this matter. You may save many a one from a broken heart, perhaps from suicide, by using your influence against this terrible vice of gambling. It has been computed by those who have carefully studied the matter that there is about one suicide a week through the whole year in consequence of the public gambling-tables still allowed in one place in the South of Europe, Monaco, one of the fairest and yet the most fatal spot on the whole Continent. Set your face, my young friend, against this evil. Whether in a rubber of whist, billiards, betting on horses, speculation, or in any other way, use the power you possess to discourage it. It has been truly said that if man is the head, woman is the neck that turns it; and I am sure a young lady might do a vast amount of good, if she tried, in checking this fruitful cause of untold misery. In this particular circular I was struck with one phrase, "Give your hand to fortune." A very poor way, thought I, of giving your hand to fortune, but perhaps a better way might be found. So I noted it down for future use, and perhaps it may serve a turn in suggesting something for the help of those for whom this book is intended.

"Give your hand to fortune." How is this to be done? When I was a boy I remember rather a curious valentine being sent to a young lady who lived near us. She was wealthy, attractive, and accomplished, so that it was not to be wondered at if a good many young men liked to visit at the house, if they had the chance. The valentine was something of a satire upon this. It gave a picture of the house where she lived, and represented not a few young men on the doorsteps leading up to the front door. Some were just going up and knocking. Others were coming away, and they seemed to be returning in sore disappointment at the failure of their suit.

Now it seems to me that young ladies, whether rich and attractive or not, have many suitors for their hand. Or I might put it in another way. I might refer to the old story of Rowland Hill and the lady in her carriage. She had stopped the carriage to listen, as she passed the place where he was preaching. The moment he saw her, he thought how he might win her soul. So he directed his words to her, and said that a lady's soul was to be put to auction, and there were three bidders. Then he put it that the devil came and offered such and such things, and the world came and

offered its delights and varied pleasures — but then Christ came and offered far more, even peace, salvation, and eternal life — and so carried off the prize. Take which illustration you will, whether as bidders or suitors — there are those who lay siege to a young lady's heart and endeavor to carry it off as their prize.

Here comes Fashion, and, in its train, dress, and show, and jewelry, and whatever ministers to vanity and pride.

Here comes Mammon, with its presents of gold and silver, and perhaps a home where there is every luxury and comfort — but where there is no room for God.

Here comes Music, with its enchanting strains, taking the first place, becoming a ruling passion, perhaps bearing sway even in the House of God, occupying the whole attention, robbing God of the heart, shutting out all true, spiritual worship, and any earnest heed to the Word of life.

Here comes Pleasure, assuming a thousand forms, the dance, the drama, the theater, and I know not what else beside — alluring with its siren voice, deadening religious impressions — leading the soul far away from Olivet, Calvary, and Mount Zion.

Here comes Ambition, perhaps making use of intellectual gifts, perhaps of other means, to rise high in the scale of society — but with no thought of using such a position for the glory of God.

Here comes even Vice, clad in some fair disguise, fed by ideas taken from the light reading of the day, and beguiling the restless and unwary into paths of unspeakable peril. No doubt each and all of these have much to say for themselves, and will not resign without a struggle the effort to make you their prey. Have you given your heart or hand to one or another of these? Or, if not this, have you permitted any one of them to exercise such influence over you, that you have been hindered in serving and following Christ? I am sure you will find disappointment in either course. In the first, the present gratification may seem to be worth something — but what about the dregs of the cup? What will they leave behind when health or circumstances prevent your further enjoyment? In the second case, they will surely rob you of the true peace which Christ is willing to give you.

I have read of a lady in America who could not get the water to spring up in her garden. There was moisture and evidence of water, but no well-spring to refresh it. At length, in digging, she came upon an old under-drain, a hollow tree placed some distance beneath the surface which carried all the water away into the valley beneath. Ah, there is often the under-drain, the yielding to some earthly pursuit or amusement, that the soul is robbed of the real joy and gladness which would otherwise rise up and fill a young life with its overflow of peace and usefulness.

Some few years ago a young lady came to the Savior full of deep sorrow for sin, and asked Him to wash her in His precious blood. He did not cast her out, and she could rejoice that for her sins, He died upon the tree. But she made a great mistake. She trusted Christ as her Savior — but she did not take Him for her portion. She did not look to Him as the source of all her comfort and joy. It may be, she looked to Him for a few crumbs of happiness, but she tried to get most of it from the world. She took one draught of the living water, and then went back to the broken cistern. She wanted to be Christ's — but she loved the world, and was reluctant to give it up. She tried all the while to think she was right, but down in the bottom of her heart she knew she was not. But the Lord chastened and humbled her, and led her to see where she had gone astray. She learned that

what the world calls pleasure scarcely deserves the name, and very soon dries up like a brook in summer, but that Jesus is a fountain always near and overflowing with joy that never fails. So her heart was satisfied, and she could tell others of the comfort and help she had found.

"Give your hand to fortune!" I know of but one way in which you can really do this. I know of but one worthy suitor who may well claim your hand, your heart, your life, your all. Only yield yourself to Him in genuine sincerity, only give yourself to Him without the very least reserve, and you can never be disappointed, nor fail to secure the very best that your heart can desire.

Give your hand to the Heavenly Bridegroom! Take Him as your one chosen portion.

Marriage is a frequent type of the spiritual union which exists between Christ and His Church. In the Old Testament we have frequent reference to this, as in Psalms 45:1-17 : "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty" (Psalms 45:10-11). He betrothes to Himself His Church in righteousness, in judgment, in loving-kindness, in mercy, in faithfulness (Hosea 2:1-23.)

He nourishes and cherishes His redeemed Church. He gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And that which is true of the whole Church, is true also of each believer. In this spiritual union, he gives Himself to each and to all. So that the humblest member of His body may say, "My beloved is mine — and I am His!"

Give your hand to Jesus! Think of the honor and exalted privilege which this union brings with it. Who is Jesus?

The Son of the Most High God,

the Lord of life and glory,

the Ruler of all worlds,

the Almighty King,

yes, the Creator and Preserver of the whole universe! And who are you?

A child of dust, the creature of a day, a thing of nothing. Yes, worse than this, you are a sinner, sinful by nature, sinful in practice, and unable of yourself to remove a single stain!

Yet this merciful and gracious Redeemer stoops even to you. He comes to take you into closest union with Himself. He makes you His very own, and calls you by His own name. In this union of Christ and the believer, it is a spring of exceeding consolation that both are regarded as one in the eye of the Law.

Among ourselves we know that the husband becomes responsible for the debts of his wife, and the wife shares the property that belongs to the husband. And with Christ and the Christian, there is the exact parallel to this. When you come to the Savior and trust your soul to Him, then both are one. Your debts are Christ's debts. Your sin is reckoned to His account. And he says, "All your debt — all your sin I bore on the cross! The terrible score was settled once and forever. No more can the Law ever require either of me or of you." Henceforth "there is no condemnation to those

who are in Christ Jesus." But more than this. All that belongs to Christ, belongs to you! His righteousness,

His white robe,

His Spirit,

His kingdom,

His glory,

all things that the Father has given to Him

— all are yours, for you are His!

What a storehouse of eternal treasure is here! Who can tell the riches of Him who is Head of all things, and into whose hand all things are committed? Nor can this union ever be broken. God hates divorce. When people are joined together in marriage, the hand of one is placed in that of the other, and the words of Christ are repeated, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

If you are Christ's indeed, not by outward profession only, but by inward faith — you will consecrate yourself entirely to His service, and He will surely keep you even to the end.

You may remember the story of the old Christian who bade his daughter fetch the family Bible, and find the words, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35.) Then putting his finger upon them, he said, "I have breakfasted with you here on earth — but I shall sup with Christ in glory," and so entered into rest.

"Give your hand to the Heavenly Bridegroom." But you ask, How can I do this? How is the marriage tie cemented? How is it that people, once perhaps altogether strangers to each other, are knit together in a life-long union? Is it not by mutual consent, founded on mutual knowledge? When the two parties have learned to know and trust in each other, when this knowledge leads to affection, then there is the mutual "I will." The "I will" on the part of the bridegroom is met by the "I will" on the part of the bride. On both sides there must be willingness. If either refuses, there can be no marriage. Here, then, is the very hinge of life and salvation. Christ knows you, all your sin and unworthiness — and yet, out of His own deep tender compassion and love, offers you . . .

Himself,

His free forgiving mercy,

His righteousness,

His grace,

His heart,

His home in glory!

Every sin, all the evil in you and about you, is known perfectly — and yet He stretches out His pierced hands — hands full of precious gifts of grace.

He says to you, "Give me your heart, your life, your all. I will save you, I will bless you, I will be to you your all-sufficient and everlasting Portion!" What is your reply? Have you learned so much the goodness and love of Christ, that you truly, heartily, accept His gracious offer?

It was said by Dr. Chalmers, "I never have so clear and satisfactory a view of the Gospel salvation, as when I look at it in the light of an offer on the one side, and the acceptance of that offer on the other." Be assured that upon the acceptance or rejection of this kindness on the part of Christ — everything depends for time and eternity. Which is it? Is there a voice within which responds to the appeal of Christ? Do you say, "Gladly, joyfully, O Lord, do I take your offered mercy. I am poor and needy, I have nothing but poverty, misery, and sin — yet just as I am — Your promise and Your call is for me. I take You at Your word. I look for all from You. I trust myself wholly to Your care and keeping. Henceforth I am no longer my own, but Yours — Yours to do Your work below, Yours to dwell with You forever above."

Just as I am, Your love unknown

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Yours, yes, Yours alone,

O Lamb of God! I come.

If this is so, if you thus by faith accept Christ and yield yourself to Him — then you must not question that all the privileges of this union are yours. In Christ's death you have died — and no more can guilt be charged against you. In Christ's life you live, and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit you have life-giving power and all the grace the Spirit brings. You are risen in Christ to newness and holiness of life. In Christ you are even now exalted to heavenly places. He has sat down in His kingdom, and in Him you are to reckon yourself as already dwelling in Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:1-29).

Moreover, you are to rely upon His tender sympathy in all your cares, trials, and difficulties. You are never to look upon yourself as left alone to bear the very least of them, but to remember you are one with Him, and He knows and provides, and will order all for good. Nor are you to forget that there is one very special duty linked to these privileges. You are separated unto Him. The worm at the root of half the religion of the present day is, that Christians come down to mingle too much with the children of the world. You ought to be courteous and considerate to all. You ought to be congenial and kind and bright and pleasant wherever you go. But mind that you do not step out of Christ's pavilion, to sit down among His enemies, or among those who turn their back on Him. That word of Christ, thrice repeated at the most solemn hour of His life, ought to be often pondered by His own loved ones, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 15:19, John 17:14, John 17:16).

Whatever others may say, be faithful to your Lord. Cleave only to Him. As many a young lady has been willing to go far from former acquaintances in company with one to whom she has been united; and if the object of her choice is really worthy of her, she is happier far than ever before — so must the duty of the Christian to Christ be paramount above every other consideration. He never bids you immure yourself in a nunnery, or take vows of celibacy, but He does bid you be separate from evil, and whatever tends to evil or to hinders your service to Him. A few lines of a

recent Christian hymn point out the deep, the abiding joy which is found in Christ alone:

O Christ! in You my soul has found,
And found in You alone,
The peace, the joy, I sought so long,
The bliss until now unknown.
Now none but Christ can satisfy,
No other name for me;
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

There is a matter of great practical importance to young Christians very closely connected with this subject. Union with Christ is the very hinge of life and salvation — and both in cementing this union and maintaining it, much precious help may be found in the use of various means of grace.

Holy Communion, received in faith, is a blessed means of maintaining unbroken your fellowship with Him. It brings you nearer to His cross. It reminds you of His matchless love. It tells you that He is always near. It points you to His glorious appearing. When you come to His table from time to time, He meets with you, and breathes upon your heart His gentle Spirit. He strengthens your faith, and feeds you with the heavenly manna. He recalls to your recollection His faithful promises, and you renew your covenant with Him.

I do not forget that, by prayer and meditation in His Word, He likewise mightily works in the hearts of His people, and of these means I have spoken elsewhere. But you can afford to lose no help, and therefore never neglect His dying command, never be ashamed to confess Christ at His table. Never turn away with those who refuse His grace and mercy.

See, the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread,
Sweet memorials, until the Lord
Call us round His heavenly board;
Some from earth, from glory some
Severed only until He comes!

03.04. Locked Gates, and the Key to Open Them

4. Locked Gates, and the Key to Open Them

Around a bright and pleasant home in the Lake District, there are many acres of wooded parks intersected by walks from which you can gain many a fair prospect of the surrounding scenery. To preserve the privacy of the estate, there are several gates along the walks, and these are usually kept locked. But in the hall hangs the key, which the visitor at the house can always take, and thus at his pleasure range through the whole property.

It seems to me that there are many locked gates in life, and sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, the key is often found to open them. For instance, occasionally a silver or a golden key is used to obtain a position of trust and influence. Money is given to purchase a preferment in politics, unlimited and systematic bribery is resorted to in the hope of gaining a seat in Parliament, and in many other directions unfair practices of the kind are not infrequent. In another way, I fear, a golden key is often used in a way that does great harm. It is used sometimes to open a young lady's heart; at least, it apparently does so. It may be true that the bridegroom is twenty or thirty years older than the bride; it may be true that there is very little congeniality of disposition, and perhaps even the barrier of moral unfitness; but there are plenty of means and everything which wealth and position can give; so the young lady hopes for the best, and the gate flies open, and friends smile and congratulate, though perchance it is the blighting of a young life, and a weary heart carries its secret burden even to the grave.

Another thought may be added here on the same matter. If you have the love of Christ in your heart, I trust you will follow His will as to any marital engagement. He has set a limit for His followers. "Only in the Lord" is a plain precept that ought never to be transgressed. If you are Christ's, never marry any one with whom you cannot have real fellowship in Him. If you do, you will be drawn back into the world, or will have constant cause for sorrow in the barrier that separates you. Do not deceive yourself with the idea that the one you care for will one day become a Christian. If you grieve the Savior by your disregard of His will — then how can you expect that He will afterwards fulfill your desire and turn the heart of the one you marry? But if you are faithful to Him, and refuse to link your life to one who is a stranger to His grace, you will never regret it. He knows how to recompense your fidelity in some way.

Nearly forty years ago a Christian girl engaged herself rather hastily to a young man to whom she was deeply attached. But the thought came to her that she had not consulted God's will in the matter. She knelt down and prayed most earnestly that if it were not His will, He would put a hindrance in the way. Soon after this, her father desired to break off the engagement — circumstances occurred which made him feel it was best. The young lady saw in it the hand of God. She took off the pearl ring and enclosed it in a paper with these words, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Thirty-five years after she discovered this paper in an old pocket-book of her father's, and could thank God with all her heart for the grace that had enabled her to make the decision.

There is another key of a different kind, though I fear the evil it brings is no less extensive and widespread than that to which I have just referred. The key of an assumed priestly authority is exercised to draw out the secrets that ought never to be laid bare except to the great High Priest. In the confessional a young lady tells in the ear of a priest that which she would not divulge even to a mother. And very great is the evil that results. It leads to far too much dependence upon man. It hinders the penitent going straight to the throne of grace. It makes a veil and a barrier between the soul and the Savior. It puts the minister of Christ in a wrong position, and fetters the conscience of Christ's disciple. It utterly destroys the liberty which is our most precious heritage, and sadly misinterprets the royal invitation of the King, "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Never was I so far from my Lord," said a young lady who had escaped from this snare, "as when I tried to come to Him through another." But while I trust you will never yield to either of these temptations, there are three keys I should like you to use. I will name them in the order of their relative value. The first key is Patience. In many ways, this is found to open locked gates. For instance, take some difficulty in Scripture. There is no doubt that if men wish to find them, they may find many knots they cannot untie, many apparent discords and contradictions, things which at first sight may seem contrary to God's love or justice or truth. Science, too, has its objections, and the great truths of atonement, divine renewal, and eternal judgment have many adversaries. But let patience have its perfect work. Go deeper in the study of the Word. Lay firmer hold on the great foundation evidences, such as the existence of the Christian Church, the manifold proofs of Christ's resurrection, the moral fitness and marvelous effects of Christian truth; and as to the rest, wait patiently for light and it will surely arise. The difficulties and objections of past ages have in most cases utterly vanished — and those of the present day will do so likewise. Only be patient, and God will reward you by stronger faith, and by making you helpful to others also in saving them from the dark pit of unbelief. But with this key of patience we must also use another, that of Prayer. Faithful, humble prayer will prevail, both as to doubts with respect to Scripture and also in the ordinary difficulties of daily life which often cross the Christian's path.

You have given yourself to Christ, and wish to follow Him, but there is a "locked gate." There is a something in the way. Perhaps you are in a house of business, and practices are carried on which are not thoroughly honest. You are expected to say that which is not true, or at least that which has a spice of deceit about it. Or in your own home the trouble comes. You feel unjustly treated. You are put into the shade, and duties thrust upon you which others ought to do. You have to stop at home while others go out and have a pleasant evening. All this frets and disturbs you, and hinders you from acting as a Christian ought. Or perhaps the difficulty assumes quite a different form. Parents, brothers, and sisters do not look at amusements as you do. The theater and the ball-room seem to them perfectly harmless, though to you they are a hindrance and a stumbling-block. They . . .

make spiritual things less real,

dampen your love to the Savior, and

are a waste of time and money which ought to be better employed.

Under such circumstances, you need much wisdom and grace. Be courteous and considerate, but hold fast that which you know is right. And take the key! Make it a matter of constant prayer. Go and tell Jesus. Ask for plain guidance and direction, and it will not be withheld. A few years ago an incident occurred which bears on this point. A ticket had been given to a young lady by a favorite brother that she might go with him to a public ball, and she was quite willing to go. But, meanwhile, a mission was held in the town, and she threw herself very heartily into the good work, and both received profit herself and persuaded others to go with her. She gained quite a new view of life and its responsibilities. She gave her heart to the Savior, and much that she before cared for, had now no attraction for her. But what was to be done? She had the ticket, but she neither wished to go nor to wound her brother's feelings. But she prayed about it, and left the matter in the Lord's hands. For some days, "that ticket" was her constant burden, but it was soon rolled away. Her brother saw she was in trouble about something and soon found out the cause. He only joked her about the Evangelistic fever, and then gave the ticket to a cousin who had no scruples in the matter.

I am sure this is the best way to get rid of a burden, whatever kind it may be. Roll it on the Lord. Commit it to Him. Ask Him to undertake for you. And in the end He will make all plain. For a time, the gate may resist all attempts to open it, but some day it will fly open, and the long trouble or anxiety pass away.

I cannot see the path

Which I must take,

But You can see, and You

Will not forsake. So when the path is rough,

I will be still;

And feel content to know

It is Your will.

Until in the Father's Home,

Where all is light,

I shall confess with joy

Your ways were right! But there is another key still more precious. You remember the story of Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle. On Saturday night they began to pray, and a little before daybreak Christian remembered that he had the Key of Promise in his pocket, and he was persuaded that it would open any lock in the way of their escape. So Christian pulled it out of his bosom and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt gave back and the door flew open with ease. Then he went to the Castle Yard, and the iron gate, and though the lock of the latter went hard, the key did open it. But, though the creaking of the gate waked up Giant Despair — yet he could not follow them, and they reached the King's highway in safety and went on their way rejoicing.

Well, we have the key of Promise still, and there is no lock it cannot open. Take the whole range of human needs, reckon up every need of things temporal, or whatever you lack of faith, or love, or any other grace — why should you question the goodness of our God? Have you not the key, "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Add together every accusation which conscience and the memory of past days can bring against you. Think of the sins of your childhood, and the faults and failures of the last few months or years. Sins of omission and of commission, sins in secret and such as have been seen by others, sins against God or against your fellow-creatures — acknowledge them all and hide nothing. But have you not the key? Is it not written, "Who is a God like unto You, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy" (Micah 7:18). And again, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin!" (1 John 1:7). Or look at life's troubles and all the sorrows that may befall you. Fears and cares may harass and distress you, and the clouds may gather thick over your head. But what of that? Have you not the key? Hearken to the word of promise, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who trust in Him" (Nehemiah 1:7). "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" (John 14:18). "As your days — so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

I thank You for this promise, Lord;

I praise You for Your gracious word,

It falls like music on the ear,

Dispelling doubt and stilling fear;

And soothing pain and calming grief.

Giving true solace and relief. No sweeter voice from Heaven for me

Than, "As your days — your strength shall be."

For as I think how coming years

May bring sharp troubles, bitter tears;

How strong temptations may assail,

And faith and hope alike may fail.

While duty seems beyond our power,

And grace is needed hour by hour;

This from dark bondage sets me free,

"E'en as your days your strength shall be."

Each cloud shall have its line of light,

Each storm be arched with rainbow bright.

Fresh wells of comfort at our feet
Shall send forth streams as pure as sweet.
And in our very darkest time,
Like silver bells, will sound this chime,
Sweeter than earthly minstrelsy,
"E'en as your days — your strength shall be."
And when upon the brink I stand
Of the unknown and silent land,
And the last dreaded hour draws near,
From which the heart recoils with fear,
Along the spirit's trembling chords
With melody shall ring the words,
Causing all doubt and dread to flee,
"E'en as your days — your strength shall be."

03.05. Behind the Partition

5. Behind the Partition

It is an old saying that "he who observes providences will never lack a providence to observe," and I think it applies equally to illustrations of Divine truth. If you are ready to mark them — they are sure to come. By giving one that lately struck me, I may possibly be helping some young friend in two or three matters of real importance.

I was rather late, so instead of going straight into our Mission room, where a service was being held for the poor, I turned into a side room, and sat down quietly close to the thin wooden partition that usually separates it from the larger Mission hall. To tell the truth, that evening I had also another reason for not going into the midst of the congregation. A young friend was making his first address, and I know by experience how easily a beginner may get a fit of nervousness, and so be embarrassed and hindered in his address. So I remained out of sight in the smaller room — and yet heard distinctly every word as if I had been sitting in the midst of those gathered together.

While listening to very useful practical words on the Prodigal Son, a thought flashed across my mind which has never left me since.

It came to me somewhat in this shape: "I am carefully listening to my young friend. Just so, there is One too who hearkens to me when I speak or preach in His name. Truly I cannot see Him, but He is very near, only a very thin partition, the veil of sense and sight, separates me from Him, and He marks every word I utter. And more than this, He hears all, not only the words I speak, but the thoughts and motives which breathe within. If I speak amiss; if, through neglect of prayer or preparation, I withhold instruction I ought to give, or fail in the boldness, earnestness, reality, and love I ought to manifest; if I shrink from reproofing sin, or do not exalt the Savior, or plead for holiness as I ought — then He is grieved and dishonored. If on the other hand, I am faithful in pointing sinners to Him, if I warn and exhort in faith and power, if I build up His people in the truth, He is near to hear, and He accepts and approves my words." And may not this be a calming, quickening, strengthening remembrance to some who may read these pages? You may be a governess, and have charge of a little flock of three or four children, and out of love to the Master, you wish to do all you can for them. You teach them day by day out of the Holy Scriptures, and to the best of your ability you guide the little ones to the Master's footstool. You endeavor to impart the secular instruction which is needful for them, and in every way you wish to make them useful in their future life.

Take in the thought and dwell upon it, that Christ is with you in your toil. Whatever you teach — teach for Him and believe that He is near, close by to assist and reward your efforts. Parents may not always sympathize with you. They may not be always wise, nor may they appreciate your desire to win your pupils for Christ — but He sees and knows and rejoices in your work. Let this be your consolation. Whatever you may have to put up with, there is a Friend who understands and cares for you, and will never leave you comfortless if you trust in Him.

You may be a teacher in a Sunday school, and your scholars may be at times unruly, and you may lack the gifts you would desire for the work. But remember the One behind the partition. Carefully prepare your lesson. Ask of the Lord both for yourself and your children the prepared heart. Go forth with your seed-bag well stored with the precious grain of God's truth. Then believe that the Lord Himself stands by to hearken, to strengthen, to accept and prosper each word you speak for Him, and to make your words living words in the hearts of your pupils. Or you may be a worker in some other division of the Great Vineyard. You may be a nurse in a hospital, or from time to time in a private home, and you desire to be as useful to the souls as well as the bodies of those whom you tenderly watch over. You may be a visitor among the poor of town or country, earnestly striving to help and comfort the suffering and careworn, and to guide stray ones back to the fold; you may have a special vocation to our navies, or our bargemen, the waifs and strays of our streets, or the friendless girls who need so much care. You may have a work in a far-off land, among strange faces and heathen customs, for the Master's sake, and trying to raise your black sisters out of their ignorance and degradation. But wherever you are, and whatever your work, there is the same cheering thought. The great Friend, the Almighty Worker is close at hand, and though unseen, most surely by your side, sending His Spirit, upholding you by His presence, making your least utterance powerful for the purpose for which He sends it. Within sight it may be, are those who oppose, misjudge, and sorely hinder you — but beyond your sight, behind the partition is another form — One greater and stronger than all — and He says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Help me, O Lord,

To give Your work the foremost place of all;

To keep my post, whatever may befall;

And never to hold back, when You do call

To work for You. But another thought came to me in close connection with the one on which I have been dwelling: If the Master is behind the partition to hear the words I speak for Him — no less is He there to hear the words I speak to Him or to the Father in His name. If He marks each word I speak in the pulpit, in the school, by the wayside, in feeding His flock — may I not be sure that He hears likewise every word uttered in prayer, whether in the secret chamber, in the family, or in the church? The thought seemed to give a new reality and power to prayer. Would that I could fully realize it! Whenever I kneel down or lift up my heart in silent petition, there is One very near whose ear is open to receive it. Every desire, every sigh of a trembling, sorrowful spirit, every note of grateful praise — is heard, and is pleasant and acceptable to Him. Do you, my young friend, esteem as you should this privilege of prayer? Do you reckon it a real joy that you are allowed to pray? Do you resort to the mercy-seat as a little child runs to a most loving parent? Do you delight to bring your troubles and your fears — that you may find relief and comfort? Do you seek rest from a burdened conscience, when you have done amiss, by bringing your sins and failures to Jesus? How many times have you prayed during the last seven days? And was it real prayer — prayer that meant just what you said? Or was it only empty words? In a letter from a friend who had not written to me for a long time, I was struck with the heading, "The heart's neglected duty." My friend excused himself by telling me how long he had been waiting for time to send me a long, full letter of all he had been doing, and so delayed until he could wait no longer. But is not prayer

too frequently "the heart's neglected duty?" And what can be our excuse for so often failing in it? Is not our Great High Priest ready to accept a few moments' prayer, if only it be sincere? May we not set apart a few minutes for quiet retirement morning and evening? May we not despatch, again and again, through the day, in our walking or in our resting, a message by this heavenly telegraph?

Never, never neglect prayer. Countless blessings you will lose if you do. Temptation and sin will come upon you unawares, and, having laid aside your armor, you will be powerless to resist. Pray often. Pray humbly. Pray with a real desire for whatever you ask. Pray in dependence upon the aid of the Spirit. Pray in full assurance that your prayer will be heard. The blood is sprinkled around the mercy seat, and answers every charge of guilt. The merciful and faithful High Priest is ever interceding on your behalf. At the same time, by virtue of His Divine nature, He is near to you. Utter but His name, and in a whisper, and He hears you. Only lift up a longing eye to Him, and your petition is accepted.

O tarry and be strong,

Tell God in prayer,

What is your secret grief,

Your hidden care.

Yet if no answer come,

Pray on and wait;

God's time is always best,

Never too late.

O tarry and be strong,

Faint not, nor fear —

God's blessed leisure time

Will soon be here. Your prayer has not been lost,

Your God has heard,

And carefully stored up

Each whispered word.

O tarry and be strong,

Through sorrow's night;

Soon will the sun arise,

And all be bright.

O weary, waiting heart,

Longing for rest;

Look up, and trust in God,

His time is best.

There is another thing that I would leave with you. The subject is a wide one, but it seems to come distinctly within the range of the illustration I have employed. There is One behind the partition who hears every word, good or bad, which our lips utter.

I suppose if one were a little mouse in the sitting-room, or somehow were able to overhear the talk of young ladies where they were able to speak freely and without fear or restraint — we would now and then catch up curious bits of conversation. It might not always be very profitable. It might not be such as they would always wish a mother to hear. Bits of scandal now and then, the plot of a novel whose moral tone was not very high, thoughts and plans about the future which were not in the line of a consistent Christian walk — well, we all know that the human heart has its folly and vanity and evil ever bubbling up like a fountain, and as are our thoughts and feelings, so will be the talk of the lips. But it may help you, to remember the Father's ear from which nothing can be kept. It grieves His love when you speak amiss. Half-untruths, envious or suspicious remarks about others, jokes and jesting which have a touch of evil which you would not openly put into words, harsh judgments about parents or teachers, irreverent talk about Church or Bible, or this clergyman or that, speaking behind another's back what you would never say before their face, speeches, more or less tainted with falsehood, spite, jealousy, unchastity, ungodliness — these, my young friend, are not spoken into the air, but are heard and recorded by One who loves you with the tenderest love, and for this very reason cannot bear that you should defile your tongue with anything contrary to His holiness and truth. But remember other words are heard also. I can imagine two Christian girls having quiet talks about better things. Both have found out the great secret of happiness. Both have discovered the pearl of great price, and love the Savior and His Word. And where their treasure is, there their heart is also. So their talking is of His great salvation. Many a hidden jewel of the Word is passed on from one to another. Many a word is spoken by the one more advanced to help the other in temptation or doubt. Many a suggestion is made about Christian work, or about reaching one who is yet away from the fold.

Such words as these are not forgotten by the Master. Spoken "in the ear secretly in closets," they shall be "proclaimed upon the housetops." They shall be recognized one day as blessed evidences of true grace, and as having been a precious means of advancing the kingdom of Christ. There is One behind the partition, and He hears and rejoices in your faith and love. "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession!" (Malachi 3:16-17).

There is one other thought that arises in connection with this subject that may cheer and comfort some of my readers. You may have lost Christian friends, or near relations, perhaps a father, or mother, or sister, whose love made the brightness of your home. Through their absence, you may often be lonely or sorrowful. But to those who love the Savior, this world and the next are very close together. It was the saying of an African woman, "Heaven is far, very far from the wicked —

but it is near, very near to the righteous." The Good Shepherd has but one fold, though there is at present a partition between those here below and those who have entered within the veil.

Let the remembrance of this abide with you. You may not hear the voice of the one you have loved — but such a one is not far off, only behind the partition. The one so dear to you is under the care of the, same Almighty guardian, beneath the same Almighty wing, as yourself. And such separation as there is, is only for a little while. There is a glad meeting in store for you. Therefore be of good courage. Dry your tears and hope for the coming kingdom. The Lord will appear, and all his saints with Him, and both you and those you mourn, will be forever with the Lord. The saints that enter Heaven,

Only appear to die,

Like stars that shining bright at even

Fade in the morning sky. Their conflicts are all o'er,

Their sorrows past and gone,

They sigh not, weep not, any more;

The fight is fought and won.

They now see face to face,

In God's own perfect light,

And scan the wondrous depths of grace,

Faith turned to open sight. Could we but glance within

The world where is "no night,"

How should we long to pass from sin,

And end this weary fight!

O happy saints and true,

That are forever blessed,

Would we could pass the veil with You,

And enter into rest!

03.06. The Field of Sundew

6. The Field of Sundew

I have a friend in Australia, and not very far from his house at Melbourne he lately saw a field covered with a small plant called "Sundew." Every morning hundreds of very small dew-drops are seen glistening in the eye of the plant; and as the sun shines out upon them, you might almost imagine the field scattered over with diamonds. But there is something very treacherous about this little plant. The flies are often enticed by the brightness of these dew-drops, and light upon the plant for the purpose of tasting the sweet little bait thus presented. No sooner, however, does the fly light upon the tiny stem, than the legs become entangled with the gluey matter which the plant gives forth. Instead of pleasantly sipping a drop of early dew, and then flying off to light upon some other flower, the trespasser becomes a prisoner, and is embraced with a firm and tenacious grasp by the tiny but innumerable arms which the plant throws out. The fly soon finds it impossible to escape from his cage. Gradually but surely it is drawn in, sometimes remaining a living prisoner for days, but seldom if ever free again to fly abroad in the world. Almost every flower of the plant which you pluck contains a fly living or dead; and though you may try to release one from its captivity, it will almost certainly cause the death of the little prisoner.

I trust, my young friends, you will not be angry with me if I draw a comparison. It may not be very flattering, but it is a true one. I cannot but think that young folks are too like the flies caught in the trap which this plant seems to set for them. The field covered with sundew, and the dewdrops glistening in the sunshine, is just like the world and its numberless enticements. It invites you, perhaps, young and inexperienced, to sip the sweet drop of pleasure from its flowers, and promises you all sorts of delight and enjoyment, beguiling you with an expectation of months and years in which no ill shall happen to you — and that tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. But there is treachery beneath this flattering voice. It promises far more than it gives. It may hold out the cup in one hand — but there is a chain or a knife in the other hand! Too soon the pleasure is turned into pain, or if not, the soul is tied and bound with a fetter which enslaves it. Go your own way, gratify yourself, and do just as you like. Indulge yourself in whatever form your own inclination leads you — drink in the sweet bait of the world's praise, throw yourself into the excitement of the ball-room, and withhold no joy from your heart. But what does it all come to? What strength does it give for duty? What support does it minister in life's inevitable sorrows? What does it leave behind when the present is passed?

You remember perhaps the despairing cry of Micah in the Book of Judges, when the Danites had taken away the young Levite, and the gods he had made. "You have taken away the gods that I made — and what have I more?" (Judges 18:24). That is just the cry of numberless hearts who have found their comfort and pleasure only in the world. You have taken away my wealth, my opportunities for self-indulgence, my companions, my prospects, my days of health — and what have I more? Oh, what a bitter experience is this!

What a contrast to the child of God! Take from him every earthly thing, and then let him ask — what have I more? What is the answer?

"I have a good conscience, sprinkled with the atoning blood.

I have all the promises, and every one faithful and true, and sure to be fulfilled.

I have God's favor and His changeless loving-kindness.

I have a Savior's grace and presence ever with me.

I have the help of the Comforter.

I have fellowship with all God's people.

I have a right of citizenship in the Heavenly Zion.

I have an eternity of joy and felicity awaiting me."

Especially does the illustration I am using teach us the thralldom and bondage which the world brings with it. In many ways this is felt, and the soul is often powerless to break the chain. The gluey matter on the Sundew is so like the attractive, adhesive power which the things of the world exercise over us. They lay hold of the human heart, and forbid it to rise above them.

Oftentimes there is a secret consciousness of something higher and better, of a deep and holy peace which you have seen some child of God possess. Yet these aspirations are crushed and kept down, and while all alive to the busy scenes of the mirthful circle in which you move — you perchance remain dead to the true life which alone is worthy of the name. A wealthy Russian lady of high position at St. Petersburg had an English maid who knew her Bible, and loved the Savior. Sometimes she dropped a word in the hope that it might lead her mistress to think. One day the lady was dressed for a ball, and called her in before leaving her room, and asked her if everything was right about her dress.

Everything was in its place, and her maid said so. But the lady noticed that she heaved a sigh. She asked her whether anything was the matter. She said nothing for a time, but, on being pressed, she remarked that she was thinking on the words, "She who lives for pleasure, is dead while she lives." The word went right home to her conscience. She permitted the maid to explain its meaning. She saw that a heart wrapped up in life's vanities and amusements, was dead to a Father's love and all the blessedness of His kingdom. Years afterward, when the nurse had settled in England, her old mistress, while over for a visit, found her and told her that the message spoken long before had drawn her to the Savior's footstool. But the description of this plant reminds us of the enormous power of little things. The plant itself is small — yet no less does it slay its victim. The arms which it throws out are very tiny, almost invisible to the naked eye — yet no less do they perform their deadly work and hold their captive in their firm embrace! Is it not thus with little sins, little temptations, a thousand little matters which seem almost too small to do much mischief, and which yet practically lead on to the most painful consequences?

Men are apt to excuse themselves for yielding to some snare of the tempter, because it seems but a very trifling offence — but it may prove the ruin of a precious soul! An hour or two spent in an atmosphere of evil, a sensational and worldly novel, a single word of flattery eagerly drunk in, a

few minutes' conversation with one who may be attractive in appearance and affable in manner — but who does not bear a spotless character; a moment's irresolution in rejecting a proposal of secret correspondence, a little nonsense or flirtation that you mean nothing by, a wrong thought cherished in the heart — any one of these may be the cause of fatal mischief — just the lighting down on the flower — just the first step in a lifelong bondage to your enemy, and which may end in final apostasy from Christ.

Oh! beware of little things! "He who despises little things, shall fall little by little." One stray footstep, one misspent moment, one inconsiderate word or heedless act — may bring you a world of misery and regret. Will you remember this, young friend, when danger is near, when the heart is light and giddy, and you may be entrapped before you think? Will you strive to keep as far as possible from the region of danger? Will you shrink from the very shadow of sin? Will you reject at once and forever, whatever a tender conscience whispers to be wrong? Will you often lift up your heart in prayer, "Lord, deliver me from evil!"

Perhaps some young friend has found out the truth of these words by personal experience. You have tried the world, and the world has not satisfied you — and yet you cannot get free from its spell. It has caused you many an hour's pain and disappointment, but it has never given you a moment of true peace — and yet the chain is not easily broken. But remember there is a Deliverer. There is One who came to "deliver us from this present evil world." He can set the captive free, and bring you out into the glorious liberty of God's children. Though the world has been too strong for you, and its sweet little baits and morsels have drawn you into its power — yet Christ has overcome the world, and He will enable you to do the same.

"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Christ?"

Then cry in faith to Him who can support and help you. Look to Him, pray earnestly to Him, and He will teach you the secret of victory. When you know and love Him, when you have tasted the streams of His forgiving mercy — then you will learn that there is something better than earth can afford. You will learn, too, how real and deep and satisfying are those pure joys which He provides for His people.

There are flowers which have upon them the dew of Heaven, and which have no snare or peril lurking beneath. There are Divine promises, heavenly hopes, bright encouragements to a Christian life; there are revelations of a Father's love, of a Savior's grace, of the fellowship of the Spirit, of a kingdom not of this world, which may well cheer those who turn to them and taste them by meditation and prayer and praise.

More than this: there are Christian books, Christian friends, means of grace of various kinds, the sanctified joys of a happy Christian home — sweet flowers from which you may sip the dew and drink the honey — and, instead of being injured or enslaved, you shall be refreshed, revived, and comforted in running the heavenly race, and pressing forward to the Father's kingdom. Which shall it be — the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment — or the joy and peace of true religion, which lead to the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore?

God calling yet! — and shall I never hearken,

But still earth's witcheries my spirit darken?
This passing life, these passing joys, all flying,
And still my soul in dreamy slumbers lying!
God calling yet! — and I not yet arising,
So long His loving, faithful voice despising,
So falsely His unwearied care repaying,
He calls me still, and still I am delaying!
Ah, yield Him all! — all to His care confiding,
Where but with Him are rest and peace abiding?
Unloose, unloose, break earthly bonds asunder,
And let this spirit rise in soaring wonder.
God calling yet! — I can no longer tarry,
Nor to my God, a heart divided carry;
Now, vain and giddy world, your spells are broken,
Sweeter than all, the voice of God has spoken!

03.07. "Polished Corners of the Temple"

7. "Polished Corners of the Temple"

"May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like polished corner-stones of the Temple." Psalms 144:12

There is something very beautiful in this prayer of King David. He is longing for the happiness and prosperity of his people. And here is one blessing which he seeks: "May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like polished corner-stones of the Temple." The vigorous activity of the sons is here combined with the quiet beauty of the daughters. The former are like robust plants, shooting upwards with powerful energy. The latter are like fair, sculptured cornerstones, or decorated columns, perhaps garnished with many a precious jewel, remaining peacefully in their own places, adorning the temple with beauty and symmetry; and, moreover, adding to the strength and stability of the whole structure. May you be such a corner-stone or pillar in the Great Temple which the Lord is even now building for His own eternal praise and glory! But how may this be? How may you be a polished corner-stone in the Spiritual House which is the habitation of the Holy Jehovah?

First of all, you must be fixed in the building, firmly placed on the foundation, and knit to the Chief Corner-stone. This is all-important. There are many who are only as the scaffolding, or as stones loosely lying around the ground. They are only as the wood, hay, and stubble, which may be used in some way as the building is being erected, but that will never stand the fire which is to try every man's work. Alas! is not this too true of thousands who worship with us in our churches week by week, but as yet have no saving part or lot with Christ?

You may be a Christian in name, but not in deed and in truth. You may be in the roll of the church on earth, and baptized — but yet your name may never have been written in the Lamb's book of life. You may be often in the sanctuary, joining with Christ's people in prayer and praise — and yet never be one of the true worshipers whom the Father delights to accept.

Let there be no mistake about this. Man looks at the outward appearance — but the Lord looks on the heart. Judge your own self. Are you in the Temple, or near it? Through the Holy Spirit's teaching have you been brought out of the quarry, seeing your own natural corruption, and trusting only in the Savior's grace? Have you been laid on the sure foundation, so that now every hope rests on Christ alone?

Remember the words of Peter. Many speak of him as the Rock, but what is his own testimony? Does he not point men away from himself, and from all beside, to the Great Rock, the Chief Corner-stone, laid in Zion by God, and bid us come to Him, and come to Him continually?

"To whom coming (that is, to Christ) as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious — you also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-8).

If you have never known the secret of peace before, come straight to Christ now. Let your youth be yielded to Him.

You may seem to yourself to lack everything that is good;

you may be troubled with strange doubts about God or His Word;

you may be conscious of much willful evil;

you may be oppressed with your own utter inability to walk in the right path

— yet let nothing of all this hinder your coming to Him. A young lady was desirous of becoming a Christian, but was unable for a time to see her way. However, on one occasion Miss Elliot's beautiful Hymn — Just as I Am — was sung in the church which she attended. She felt she dare not let her lips utter the words without her heart going with them. So she prayed then as in the very presence of Christ:

"Just as I am, and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark blot,

To You whose blood can cleanse each spot,

O Lamb of God, I come!" Her humble desire was accepted. She came to the Savior and He received her, and gave her the peace she sought. But when you have come to Christ, you must rest in Him and on Him. As every part of a building rests continually on the foundation — so must each Christian on Christ. Amidst all fears, temptations, sorrows — stay your soul on Him. Let your inner spirit repose on His faithful promise and never-failing loving-kindness. Let the thought of Him as being always "able to save" and "able to support" you, keep you from sinking into despondency or unbelief:

Trust in Jesus all the day,

Trust in Jesus all the way;

Trust in Him whatever befall,

Trust in Jesus Christ for all. But I would like you to be "a polished corner-stone." To be in the building at all is an unspeakable privilege, and gives you a sure hope for eternity. But there are rough diamonds and rough corner-stones, with many sharp, jutting points, which were far better gone, for they greatly hinder a young lady's usefulness, and mar the work she might do for the Master. If I had the power with some young friends, I should greatly like to use the chisel now and then, and perhaps the blow might not always be a gentle one!

Well, suppose I do try my chisel, and see what I can do. I am sure you will thank me in the end, though possibly one or another might be angry with me for the moment. What do I mean? I will tell you. Let me just question you a little about your faults. Let me just point out as plainly as I can a few things that very often stand in the way of a young girl, and spoil the true beauty and attractiveness which ought to be manifest in her. And first, if I could, I would like to take my chisel and touch that neglect of home duties, which is such a serious matter in many cases. If you are a Christian, it is in the home that you are called first to shine. The very essence of a life of

discipleship is the taking up, moment by moment, the duty the Lord puts before you — however small or trivial or uncongenial it may be — and doing it as well as possible and as brightly, because you are His, and He gives it you to do. This bright, sunny, satisfied spirit greatly adorns the doctrine of Christ, and sheds a marvelous light and gladness over the home. When a daughter is ever on the tiptoe to do some little office of kindness for the mother, "Oh, do let me help you in this, mother!" When the sister is ever looking out for means of making the home more attractive to brothers or younger sisters, when self is put aside to watch over a sick or aged member of the family, when little duties are taken up pleasantly and done with a smile — then such a one will reap no small reward in the real good she will be able to effect. But there is very often the neglect of all this. A young lady goes on writing her letter, or doing some fancy needlework, when she knows a few notes on the piano or a quiet song would soothe the brain of a father or brother who is tired with the day's work. It is not asked of her, because it might be done grudgingly, and thus fail to give any gratification — but nevertheless, it would have been gladly welcomed if cheerfully offered. Or perhaps a mother or sister is left to toil on with things that must be done at home, and another sister will not give five minutes help, but is consulting her own pleasure, perhaps by going to an early celebration, or perhaps trifling over a painting, or drawing, which might just as well be done some other time.

Whatever you do, my young friend, don't slight your home fireside duties. A candle "gives light to all that are in the house," so ought you to let your religion benefit every one who lives with you. It is very easy to do a certain amount of work in a church — but let home stand first. Then whatever you do outside, will have double value, because backed up by your own home example.

Then I might take my chisel and touch those sharp points and excrescences which come from some failure in temper, or at least the appearance of it in your manner. Since we are none of us angels, but sinful men and women, compassed by infirmity — there must ever be need to exercise much forbearance with those who are around us. We are not perfect — nor must we expect perfection in others. Besides, we are frequently liable to mistakes, and our own self-love too often hides the fault which is in ourselves. So we need to guard both tongue and temper with constant vigilance.

How is it with yourself in this point? Do you ever utter hasty, angry words, which are like sharp spears or knives, and wound and cut the hearts of those who love you? Do you ever yield to a sullen, dreary sort of frame, or such a hard, rocky, stony one, that nothing will move you, or lead you to relent, or to speak a kind word, or break through the reserve in which you have wrapped yourself? Do you ever sit side by side with a sister or class-fellow at school, and any one can see the scowls and black looks which tell a tale of ill-will and bad temper only too plainly? Do not conceal from yourself that all this is downright, positive sin before God! It is a breach of the sixth commandment, for it is the very spirit of murder cherished in the heart. Give no quarter to such terrible enemies to your soul's peace. Look well at them and see their hatefulness and deformity. Then through the power of the Spirit, cast them out, and let the love of Christ and the peace of Christ rule within. Instead of these sharp excrescences on the corner-stone — let there be the very reverse. Let it be set with the fair gems of meekness, gentleness, tender thoughtfulness for others, a fixed resolution never to give pain by the least look or expression of ill-temper. And where you fail, let there be deep humiliation and earnest prayer for the upholding of the divine arm.

Closely allied with the evils of temper is the depreciation of others, and the evil speaking which is often heard in the school or the family. A clever girl will make unkind remarks about the dull, plodding girl, who may be far more diligent than herself, and guided by a far higher motive. The girl who has something of personal attractions, whose means enable her to dress more expensively, or whose parents are in higher position of life — will show by a haughty look or word how far she thinks she excels the companion walking by her side. In a thousand ways, vanity and pride, envy and jealousy come in and put many a stumbling-block in the way. If young folks only knew the beauty of a lowly, humble, loving spirit! If they only knew how this clothing of humility, this ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is infinitely more precious than any amount of natural ability, rank, money, or good looks! If only they would judge themselves by the standard of Christ — the only measure which will stand in the great day! If this were the case, there would be more consciousness of personal failings, and far more kindness and charity towards others.

There is another fault which is not uncommon, and which is very injurious both to yourself and others. Lack of punctuality is an evil which is treated very lightly by those who are guilty of it — but which is very destructive of your own peace and that of those whom it affects. Late in the morning, so that private prayer is omitted or hurried over — or your chair is vacant at family prayer. Late in meeting a friend, so that half an hour is wasted. Late at church or Sunday-school, so that you fail to get benefit yourself or to do much good to those under your care. Late for dinner, late for tea, late, late, always late, is the story of some lives, to the infinite annoyance of those about them! Give yourself a bad mark, or put yourself to some severe penance, when you find this becoming your habit more or less. When traveling in the Lake District on one occasion I saw on the splash-board of the coach a brass case, and within it a large turnip-shaped watch. I soon found out the purpose of it. The coach must be punctual. It must be at each station at the appointed time. So it was. Never once was it late. I wish I could impress on the heart of each young lady the message that watch seemed to sound in my ears, "Keep good time. Never keep others waiting. Minutes and moments are gold dust, and ought not to be wasted. In everything you do be punctual."

There is only one other matter on which I would touch. There is a lack of thorough truthfulness and sincerity, which perhaps is the worst fault of any I have named. I am not speaking so much of positive lying, which is one of the most deadly sins that any one can commit. If any reader is given to this, be assured that you are as yet in the power of him who is "the father of lies," and that you have no part or lot in Christ. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!" But I am rather speaking of those habits of deceit and double-mindedness, of those lesser perversions of truth which some practice, and yet try to imagine that they are followers of Christ. There is a very wide field for self-examination as to this.

One tries to shake off her own share of wrongdoing by laying it at the door of another. A second pretends to study and do good work — when in reality she has used others' brains, or has looked at the answers. A third is always exaggerating, or telling what is not true, but something like it. A figure is altered — a quarter of an hour is added to the clock — a turn is given to a conversation which was never intended. Again and again you have noticed something of this kind in a young person, until it is plain as noonday that there is a lack of sincerity, which destroys all your confidence in her.

If you have the least suspicion that this traitor of insincerity lurks in your breast, let there be no truce with it. Search it out from its hiding-place and bring it into the light of Heaven. Be true as steel. Be genuine and sincere as before the great Heart-searcher. Possibly, through bad example, or through training under a governess who drew you into it — you may have been wrapped in the coils of this sin for many a day — nevertheless by grace you may conquer. You may become thoroughly open and honorable in the smallest things and in the greatest. You may be known to be so truthful that no one would ever doubt a word you said. You may put to shame everything that is dishonest and dishonorable, and raise the standard of all who live with you.

If you would be a polished corner-stone in the Temple of the Great King, allow none of these sins and failings to abide. Be watchful over your own heart and life. Place yourself often in the presence of Christ and study His perfect character. Give no quarter to sins, small or great — but fight against them day by day. And remember the promise of the Comforter. The Holy Spirit alone can effectually mortify in you all evil, and fashion you in the likeness of the Savior. Every good thought, every holy desire, every right motive, every righteous and loving word or deed — is the fruit of His indwelling and transforming power. Therefore look up to the exalted and glorified Savior, to allow His Spirit to fill in you more and more. Study the declarations of His willingness to bestow this all-needful gift (Luke 11:9-13; John 7:37-39; John 14:16-17, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-15). If thus you act, watching against sin, looking to Jesus, depending on the Spirit — then faults and blemishes will be subdued, and in the Eternal Temple you will shine forth to the praise and glory of God.

Gracious Spirit! dwell with me;

I myself would gracious be,

And with words that help and heal

Would Your Life in mine reveal:

And with action bold and meek,

Would for Christ my Savior speak.

Truthful Spirit! dwell with me:

I myself would truthful be,

And with wisdom, kind and clear,

Let Your life in mine appear;

And with actions brotherly

Speak my Lord's sincerity.

Tender Spirit! dwell with me:

I myself would tender be;

Shut my heart up like a flower;

At temptation's darkest hour;
Open it when shines the sun,
And His love by fragrance own.
Holy Spirit! dwell with me;
I myself would holy be:
Separate from sin, I would
Choose and cherish all things good.
And whatever I can be,
Give to Him, who gave me Thee!

03.08. Intellectual Culture

8. Intellectual Culture In speaking of your being a polished corner-stone, there is one needful point on which I have not yet touched. It does not rise to the level of the moral and spiritual growth which is beyond all things essential. But at the present day it cannot be neglected without great loss to yourself and others. "Knowledge is power," and the careful study which will furnish you with it in its various branches, will make you far more useful than you could be otherwise. It is not wise or right for any Christian girl to neglect those fields of knowledge which are spread out before her.

Unless by force of circumstances, your time is so much engaged that it becomes impossible — endeavor in some measure to cultivate carefully some or other of them. Language, poetry, history, recent discoveries in distant lands, natural science, works which tend to elucidate the meaning of Holy Scripture, or to confirm the evidences of revelation — all these become most valuable in self-improvement, and in giving you that treasury of information which will be of real help to you wherever your lot may be cast.

Some of us have had few opportunities for this in our earlier days, and we never cease to regret the loss it has been to us. We can never make up for it; we can never overtake the years that are gone. Hence we press it the more earnestly on those who have youth and opportunity on their side.

Remember such culture is a precious gift you may lay at the feet of the Divine Master. God's chosen servant in the Old Dispensation was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." And in the kingdom of Christ, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth, was the one far above the rest in his acquaintance with the literature of the day in which he lived.

Such servants, Christ needs both among men and women. In possession of this gift of secular knowledge you may often catch up a thread in conversation and leave a good impression as to some point that is being discussed. The wife may guard the husband, and the mother the son, from being carried away by some popular fallacy. You may use the facts of science, history, and the like to illustrate Christian truth in the Sunday school, the Bible class, or among a few pupils committed to your care. Besides this, posts of vast importance in society are open to those who are fitted to enter upon them, and if you can fill such a position you may have immense influence in upholding Christian truth.

Especially is this the case in the education of young ladies. As a principal or teacher in a College or High School, or as taking charge of pupils in the higher circles of society — who can tell how far your words may go, and whether you may not lead to the Savior those whose position may enable them to do noble service for our King?

There is another reason for earnest diligence in this matter which ought not to be overlooked. It may at any time become almost essential for your subsistence or your comfort. By a single turn of the wheel, by a failure in business, by the breaking of a bank, by some neglect or unfaithfulness in

the care of trust money, or by some other casualty — many are suddenly reduced from wealth to the barest pittance or to absolute poverty!

I could tell of a near and dear relation of my own who was brought down from an income of some four hundred a year, and left with only about fifty to bring up a family of six young children. But she had the gifts she needed, and she buckled to hard work, gathered a school of little boys, and for many a long year drilled them well in the elements of Latin, and in a good English education, and so fulfilled nobly the task to which God in His providence called her.

I can only in this chapter give a few brief hints as to the best way of gaining the knowledge and culture which is so helpful.

I need scarcely say many words to any young friends who may yet be at school, or in the schoolroom. To you the path is very plain. Go heart and soul into whatever you do. Be thorough in every lesson and in every branch of study. Do your very best. Strive to grasp very firmly the underlying principle in arithmetic or any branch of mathematics, so that you can easily apply it to practice. Never be content with merely using the memory, without understanding the "why" and the "wherefore."

Throw yourself into your work, and it will become a real pleasure and delight to you. Never give up in despair, because your work may be more difficult to you than to another. You are not responsible for the measure of ability you possess, but only for the good use of what you have. Remember too that what is dearly won, will be dearly prized. In most cases the knowledge acquired with most effort, will become a more enduring treasure to you than if it came more easily.

Neither relax your efforts because you can easily complete your task and keep up with those in the same class with you. When I was at the University I noticed in many cases, that through trusting in their natural ability and neglecting hard, patient study — the first became last, and often took a very poor degree indeed. The path of those who have finished their school days is far more difficult. To carry on the work you have begun, and to make constant progress when very much left to your own resources, is by no means easy. But it is worth any effort and any self-denial.

Settle it in your mind when you leave school, that while you may have the foundation, you need — to build upon it day by day. Whatever you know already, whatever interest you have found in any part of study, only take as vantage-ground for new work.

It is well to choose out some particular branch of study, and give time steadily to pursue it. It may be some language, of which you have learned the elements — but determine to know thoroughly. It may be geology, or botany, or history — but, in any case, give your strength to some one thing, though, for the sake of variety, you may turn for a time to something else. You might find help in joining some such society as the "Christian Women's Education Union," which has been formed to help young ladies whose schoolroom days are over. By means of correspondence, and a certain amount of time for reading, promised by themselves, at least six hours a week, there is considerable encouragement afforded. Once a quarter accounts of studies and lists of books read are to be sent in, and in return members receive comments upon work done and suggestions for continuing it. The following subjects are specially suggested: English language, English literature, Greek, Latin, French, German, history, physical geography, mathematics, logic, political economy.

Another suggestion I would make. I believe nothing would be more useful than carefully prepared essays on Christian or general subjects. The evidences of Christianity afford a wide and most useful field for such work — especially the internal proofs of its Divine origin — from the character of Christ and the power of Scripture to meet the various needs of the human heart. If a few young friends who have known one another at school or college could agree on something of this kind, and then send their essays one to the other, it might be still more useful. In every way the frequent use of the pen is most valuable in taking a firm hold of whatever you learn. Have your note-book and make extracts of choice passages. Take down the outline of able sermons, or lectures, or addresses, or illustrations, and thoughts from them. Endeavor also to gather out gems from any book you read, and especially be on the look-out to glean illustrations from science, from the events of daily life, from the lives of those you meet with. Noted down carefully for future reference, these will aid you very materially in any Christian work you may hereafter undertake; and possibly may enable you to write the article or book which may be of real service in Christ's Church.

There are two cautions with which I will close this chapter.

Beware of the mania for novel-reading, which is the most real hindrance to many young ladies. It is an enemy to all self-improvement, and it is a terrible stumbling block in the way of a true Christian life. It robs you of your greatest treasure — precious days and hours which can never be recalled. It unfits the mind for anything requiring deep thought and attention. It not seldom lodges deadly poison, the venom of the old serpent, within the soul. It puts evil for good — and bitter for sweet. It suggests wrong trains of thought, though with such subtlety, that sin looks fair and lovely.

Even when grace has come and given a new taste and a new desire, many a dark stain abides on the memory, which cannot be erased.

Besides, the time wasted might have been so spent as to have brought in great or lasting profit. An elderly lady, who had learned to love the Master, found her sight growing dim, so that she could no longer read the Scriptures. It was her delight to speak of the Savior and to hear of Him, but she had one constant source of regret. It stung her to the quick to remember, when her sight was good in early life, how she had used it in constant novel reading. It seemed as if her dim sight were a direct chastisement from God for sight misused previously. How thankful would she have been if only she had well-stored her mind with the truths of Holy Scripture. How great the comfort and help they would have been to her afterward! And many others, too, have regretted the same evil. Through this one fault, through this habit being formed, many a life has become a blank. As to any real peace or usefulness in the home or out of it — all has been sacrificed to this pernicious form of self-indulgence. Let it not be so with you. Whatever it may cost you, take the novel back to the library, or put the book in the fire — rather than waste time that is given for a far higher and nobler purpose.

I am not condemning all works of fiction. An occasional hour given to a really wholesome tale can do no harm. But this is very different from the hours and days given to the novels usually taken from the circulating library. It would be very injurious to your health to live upon pastry and sweets, especially if large measures of arsenic were among the ingredients. The moral from this is not far to seek. It will be a lifelong blessing, if you are willing to learn it.

There is a second caution I should like to add. Do not let intellectual culture take the highest place. The heart needs culture as well as the intellect, and I know nothing more painful than to meet a young lady who is far ahead of most others in secular knowledge — yet with little home affection, with little kindly interest in others, and still less care for spiritual things. Ah, it is a sad exchange to have a keen and polished intellect, but a heart shriveled up and withered, and scarcely to be discovered at all! A most sorrowful feature of the day is to find not a few young ladies so occupied with their studies, that they turn away from Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If but Jesus of Nazareth is named, if some portion of Scripture is referred to — the young friend who the moment before was full of life and animation in discussing a new book or magazine article — looks over her shoulder, begins to yawn, or thinks that other duties call her away.

There are others too who take up one or more of the broad skeptical theories of the day. They sail further and further from the shore of plain scriptural teaching, and in a light, frivolous way take up current views without an idea of the tremendous outcomes at stake. I for one would not gag conscience. I do not wish you to live or act a lie. If you are troubled with real, earnest doubts — then honestly face them, and seriously consider what they are worth, and what answer can be given to them. But beware of accepting new views, because their novelty makes them attractive. The spirit of unbelief is abroad, and pervades very much of the literature of the day. There is danger both to morals and to faith in almost every novel and magazine that is published. I quote the words of Miss C.L. Maynard in an excellent paper on the Cultivation of the Intellect, and to which I am indebted for several thoughts in this chapter: "Think of the novel where the keen edge of right and wrong is blunted, and a false estimate of the value of life is the rule in story after story. Think of the poem, where amid a crowd of beautiful images, we are taught to think more leniently of sin, and to excuse it in many of its forms as natural. Think of the brilliant article on the forms of society in our day, with carelessness expressed in every sentence, and delight in defying old landmarks. Think of the semi-religious essay, where the Savior's words are praised, and His mission denied, and the Son of Man is betrayed by a kiss — and say if we are not indeed in danger."

If these pages should perchance fall into the hands of any young friend who has hastily taken up loose views on Scripture and revelation, may I ask you at least to pause and consider before you plunge deeper into the gulf. Have you ever taken the trouble carefully to see what may be said on the other side? Have you ever thought whence these views came, and where they lead? Have you ever read and studied the New Testament with the earnest heed it demands? Suppose you cast aside your early faith — have you anything to take its place? Have you considered the awful void, the fearful desolation of a sick-bed, or a death-bed, without a hand to uphold you, without a ray of hope as to the future? Ought you not to think twice and thrice before you take up any view which shuts out a living, Personal Savior? Is it possible that there can be no truth in the cheering words of the Son of Man, which have been a staff of strength to ten thousand times ten thousand children of sorrow, and which have lighted so many a pilgrim through the dark valley? For my part, as years roll on, I am more and more firmly persuaded of the truth of our most holy faith. There are objections against prayer, against atonement, against the eternal judgment threatened against sinners. There are difficulties in reconciling certain statements of Holy Scripture with facts or theories which we may believe. But these cannot shake my faith. They are not to be weighed in

the scale with the positive evidences which assure me of the truth of the Gospel.

Take but one fact. The Resurrection of Christ has a historical basis which can never be overthrown. The strange and marvelous unbelief of the disciples, the rising of the Christian Church in Jerusalem, the courage and steadfastness of the apostles in their testimony, the Apostolic Epistles which bear the stamp of truth in every line, the way in which the resurrection of Christ underlies almost every doctrine — exhortation and precept in the epistles of Peter and Paul. All this and much more make it to me as plain as noonday, that this fact is no "cunningly devised fable," nor any mere vision of a few enthusiasts. It is truth — truth standing as firm as a rock, and attested by unnumbered witnesses who had nothing to gain by their testimony — but stripes, imprisonment, exile, or death. And if this is so, I am at rest. Christ is true, He is the very Son of God, His promised Spirit was given to His Church, and His Words stand fast for evermore. The waves of unbelief and doubt may beat against this Rock — but they will never overthrow it. Men may launch their puny weapons at this miracle or that, at this doctrine or that — but no weapon shall prosper. Christ has risen, Christ has conquered, Christ lives as our glorious King, and He shall reign for evermore! By and by He shall come, and the whole universe shall confess that He is Lord. May God keep you steadfast in this faith, that you may at that day receive a crown of glory that never fades away!

If this be your desire, may I entreat you to act wisely and cautiously as to the evil which is abroad. You pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And is it not to rush headlong into the very sorest temptation, to read books and periodicals which are saturated with doubt or error? There may be those who are bound to read such, that they may more wisely speak or write on the topics discussed. But unless you do it as a duty, unless you are well grounded in the truth, and have opportunities of reading on the other side of the question — is it not better to let such works alone? But the best defense against all enemies of the truth — is the thoughtful, prayerful study of the Word. It has a mighty power. It speaks to the heart, and often with irresistible force, bears witness to its own perfect veracity. Do not let the unbelief that is abroad, lead you to cast aside the Scriptures, but to search more deeply into the mine of wealth which they contain. Do this and you will rejoice in fresh certainty of their truth, and in richer possession of the precious lessons which they unfold.

03.09. "Able to Support"

9. "Able to Support"

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16 In early days I remember at one time being very much cast down. In various ways I was hedged in by trial, and seemed scarcely able to rise above it. But I went for a few days' mission work to a friend in the north. On entering my bedroom, above the bow of the large window, I noticed a few words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "He is able to support those who are being tempted." So I took it as a message from God. And in the work of that happy week, I found fresh strength and comfort on my way.

There may be a thought here to cheer and strengthen some who read these pages. You have great need of this support. It must be a heart of stone indeed — that cannot feel for the painful difficulties, sore trials, and bitter sorrows that many young people have to pass through. In many lives, they are a great and terrible reality. It is not all spring and summertime between fifteen and twenty-five. There are sunless days and cheerless nights. There are hours when life seems more than a blank — a desert, and a wilderness, which bleak winds and driving hail make almost intolerable. Moreover there are miry wastes and deep pitfalls, where the young traveler may sink, or stumble and never arise again. The infinite variety of the forms in which the Tempter comes makes the temptation still greater. As from time to time, the wind blows from every conceivable point of the compass — so too does temptation change from day to day and from year to year.

Today it may come in the shape of a craving, half-mad desire for some comfort or enjoyment for the present denied to us. Tomorrow in the darkness of a bereaved and sorrow-stricken heart. Today it may come in the form of self-display, as to voice, personal appearance, dress, or natural gifts. Tomorrow may come other some shaft of the wicked One — a doubt about God, His existence, His mercy, or His faithfulness.

Today it may be the distraction of some great anxiety about the future which fills up every niche and cranny of the soul. Tomorrow it may be the gloomy, chilly shadow of the fear of death.

Very often temptation comes in a form so new, so peculiar, so tangled, that the tempted one seems utterly alone in it — as if no one, since the world began, had ever passed through the same experience. There is something within that hinders our peace in God — and then with this comes a burden here, and a trouble there, and no human sympathy at hand — and what remains but to yield to utter despair? I know nothing more painful and perplexing than this interlacing of one temptation with another, and the absence of all relief; and it may be, worst of all, conscience whispering in an undertone of sin unforgiven, and God far away.

You remember, when the disciples were on the lake, there was something of this multiplied trouble. The wind was contrary, three long night-watches had been spent almost in vain, they were

toiling in rowing, strength almost exhausted; it was dark, and Jesus had not come to them. But help came at last. A form appeared on the water. A well-known voice was heard, "It is I, be not afraid." So shall it be with you, if only you are true to the Master, and in every temptation wait on Him and for Him.

"He is able to support." The word employed in the original is very suggestive. It is to "run to the cry" of another. It is this which Jesus delights to do. He sees your peril. He knows your fears. He comes quickly in answer to your cry!

Why should I fear the darkest hour,

Or tremble at the tempter's power?

Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?

Why must I either fly or yield,

Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

Here is our refuge, our hope, our rock of defense. In ourselves we are powerless. We are no match for the Adversary. We cannot battle with one who is a subtle spirit, who has the experience of long ages, who is as a roaring lion, who has myriads of agents to forward his designs. Especially is it our weakness, that there is evil within as well as without, a traitor in the camp who is ever ready to correspond with the enemy — indwelling sin, which will not easily be dispossessed of its power, and which will only die when we ourselves crumble into dust. But in Christ we have power and might which must prevail. He for our sakes withstood the tempter and gained a threefold victory. And He is still the same in us and for us. His strength is made perfect in weakness. He loves to support and uphold the weak.

It seems to me that Christ's power to support in temptation, rests upon six mighty pillars, six immovable grounds of confidence.

1. His Divine glory and dignity as the Son of God. "We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14). He shared in the glory of creation. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. He is far, far above the angelic throng, for they delight to worship at His footstool. He is exalted far above Moses, as the builder is greater than the house he builds. He is greater than any prophet, priest, or king that ever went before Him. Of one being and essence with the Father, as the Only-begotten Son, as the One to whom is committed all power both in Heaven and earth — He pleads with authority the cause of His people. What a strong rock of confidence is this! You have an Almighty Redeemer and Helper! As the very Son of God, He cannot fail in the support He gives.

2. His exceeding mercifulness and tender compassion. He beholds with pity and love, the soul that is bound and tied by the chain of sin. He is ever ready to forgive and save. He despises not the very worst — nor does He wait for any goodness or merit or rightness in any way, in those who turn to Him. His nature is ever to have mercy and forgive. As it is the nature of fire to burn, water to flow down from a higher level, a stone to fall to the earth — so it is His nature to rescue and save

and bless sinners of every name who fly for refuge to Him.

3. His unchanging faithfulness. "He is a merciful and faithful High Priest." He is faithful in doing the Father's will, and this will is the eternal salvation of all who believe. He is faithful to every promise, so that Heaven and earth may pass away — but His Word shall not pass away. He is faithful to the least of His flock, and will never leave him nor forsake him.

4. His great Atoning sacrifice. He has made "reconciliation for the sins of the people." He has offered one sacrifice for sins forever. He has become the sinner's substitute; He has borne the sinner's load; He has finished the transgression, and made an end of sin. His work upon the cross, His all-sufficient offering is a sweet savor to the Father; and whoever by faith touches the sacrifice, is purged from all guilt, and the sweet savor of Christ's death and merit passes upon him, so that he too is fragrant and acceptable to the Father in Heaven.

Unspeakable is the comfort of this, in every temptation which concerns the conscience. Whatever sense of past guilt may arise, whatever consciousness of unworthiness or failure — go afresh to Calvary! Again touch the sacrifice there offered. Again draw near in humble reliance upon the Redeemer's finished work — and peace will be yours. You will be able to look up to God with grateful confidence, and the sense of pardoned sin will strengthen you to fight the good fight of faith.

5. His perpetual, unfailing intercession at the Father's right hand. "He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

"Able to support," "able to save to the uttermost" to all completeness, to the uttermost of sin, sorrow, temptation, time, through all possible circumstances — He is able to save, and He will save those who plead His name, who make Him their ground of access to the Father. But why? Because He intercedes. Because evermore He appears in Heaven for us. Because He is the righteous Advocate whom the Father hears always.

O You, the contrite sinner's Friend,

Who, loving, lov'st them to the end,

On this alone my hopes depend,

That You will plead for me.

6. His own experience of ill. "In all things He was made like unto His brethren." "In all things He was tempted like as we are — yet without sin." There is no dark chamber in life you may pass through — but He went through it before you! Are you in straits as to your means of subsistence? So was He. He was hungry, and waited patiently on His Father's will until angels came and ministered unto Him. Are you often weary and tired? Have you toilsome journeys and busy days when you can scarcely bear the fatigue and labor? So was it with Jesus. Remember how He sat down wearied at the well. Remember how He "had no time so much as to eat." Remember how He fainted beneath the weight of His cross. Have you to battle sore with temptations to evil? So had Jesus. The devil dogged His steps, and tried evermore to draw Him from His steadfast allegiance to a Father's will. Have you to endure scorn, ridicule, reproach, false witness? Do you know what it is to be forsaken and desolate? Are you afflicted and tried by days of agonizing pain? Is your cup

full to the brim of life's woes and sorrows?

All this was true of Jesus, and He knows how hard it is for you to bear. Therefore will you not trust Him? Will you not go to Him and lean upon Him for the sympathy you need?

I remember once saying to a lady who was far from strong, and who was walking a few steps with me along the garden walk, "I do not feel your weight." I wished her to get more help from leaning on my arm. I had scarcely said it, but the thought occurred to me — Does not the Savior chide me thus? Do I "lean hard" upon Him as I ought? Do I let Him know that I am depending upon His aid in all my weakness and infirmity? And why should I not? Why should I doubt or question His mighty help?

He is "able to support." He can support — and He will. Therefore I will wait upon Him. I will remember that He is the Lord of providence as well as grace. All things are in His hand. He can put a limit to Satan's power. He can remove the burden or the snare. He can raise up friendly help or counsel. At the very nick of time, He can take away the greatest stumbling block I may ever have had, and make my path plain before me. I may be assured that He will not allow me to be tempted above that I am able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that I may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13)

I will remember that He has the gift of the Spirit in His hand. If the enemy pours water on the fire to quench it — then He can pour in a supply of oil to maintain it. If He permits the thorn in the flesh to remain — He can make His grace sufficient, and make the trial profitable to myself and to others. By His Spirit, as the Spirit of remembrance, He can suggest helpful words of Holy Scripture, which will strengthen me in time of need.

Am I cast down because my repentance is not deep enough? He tells me that "He is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins."

Am I afraid that my prayers will not be heard? He tells me whatever I shall ask the Father in His name He will give me.

Am I more than ever conscious of the vast debt of sin, and can I scarcely see how it can be forgiven? He reminds me of Himself. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Am I afraid of going astray, and do I feel that I need a guide continually? He speaks of His love and care. "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by them."

Am I lonely, and long for someone to be with me? He brings back the glorious "Fear not" of Isaiah 41:1-29 : "Fear not, for I am with you — be not dismayed, for I am your God."

Am I ready to fall into some sin? He suggests the petition: "Hold me up — and I shall be safe! Keep me as the apple of Your eye." Is temper and irritability and sharpness my special bane? He gently whispers, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and gentle in heart." Is it the fear of the last enemy that oppresses me? He still can comfort. "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus in many ways He can support. He can remove the temptation — or give strength to meet it. He can sustain the soul by the assurance of His sympathy and all-sufficient grace. He can guard you in the furnace, so that not a hair of your head perish. He can support in deep waters, so that you shall never sink. Only remember one thing. The hand of your Redeemer is mighty — but it is faith and prayer which lays hold of it, and clasps it tight! The everlasting arms can surely support you — but you must repose within them by humbly waiting upon the Lord, and trusting in His faithful help. In temptation do not look around for help to this friend or that. Do not look to yourself, to your own resolutions or promises, or to anything you have been, or done, or can do. Do not look down on the earth, yielding yourself a prey to dark and gloomy thoughts, but look up. Look up, and see Jesus ever standing by you, and ready to assist you! Look to Him to increase your faith, to break through the meshes of the net which encompasses you, and to bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Look unto Him now. Look unto Him always. Look unto Him continually, even to the end. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will make you more than conqueror through His mighty aid.

03.10. Live Today!

10. Live Today! Not next year, next week, or even tomorrow — but live today, and live to purpose! Put aside all anxiety about the work you may have to do in the future — and this very day do your best, do your utmost to please the Master — and leave the concerns of tomorrow in His hands.

Make a little fence of trust

Around today;

Fill the space with loving work,

And therein stay.

Look not through the sheltering bar

Upon tomorrow;

God will help you bear

What comes,

Of joy or sorrow.

Live today! For life is so little — and yet so great. It is marvelously little if you look at it in itself. "There is only one beat of my heart between me and death," said a man to me once. It is true in another sense of each one of us. Not only in a time of extreme illness but in full health — let but something come and cause the heart to cease to beat — and we are gone! A young lady was sitting at the fireside working while her sister was reading. Her mother spoke to her, but had no reply. In a moment, while the needle and work were still in her hand, her spirit had suddenly departed! The longest life is but short. Each year we live, more rapidly it seems to fly. And never can we be certain of its continuance even for an hour. We cannot stay here in this world forever. Those younger than ourselves are coming up after us and pushing us onward and forward, and soon we fall into the deep river of death, and leave room to others to take our place. How frail, how fickle, is our sojourn here!

Though they seem to us so real — yet how little are . . .

our busy toils,

our joys and sorrows,

our cares and fears,

our losses and gains,

our successes and our disappointments!

Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,

And then is heard no more! But take the lamp of truth. It gives another view of life. It tells of its frailty, its uncertainty — it tells also of its greatness. It reveals a glory, a grandeur, a reality about our present brief existence, which we should never have imagined.

Life is your one great opportunity. If the stability or welfare of a kingdom hung upon the outcome of a single battle, how anxious would be the king or general in command to put forth every possible effort to gain the victory! And the permanent glory and peace of a mighty kingdom, even of your soul, depend under God on your being able by divine grace to fight the battle of life well. Could we listen to the secret thought of many a one in a dying hour, could we tell what is passing within while the lip is no longer able to speak, would we not often hear the sorrowful lament, "I have lost my life and cannot recall it. Oh that I could give all I once possessed to have back but a year of my short life below."

Life is great and precious, for you are now molding and building up a character which will abide evermore. Every hour, every day you are forming habits which permanently affect your being in the future. Whatever you think, or say, or do — your commonest actions, your very looks, your cherished thoughts — are all the die, the stamp, the impression of which you will never lose. Your very neglects and omissions of duty, also leave their mark behind.

Live in prayer, holiness, watchfulness;

be humble, trustful, loving, unselfish;

walk with God, and do His will —

and you become more and more like the Savior, and thus fit for His presence. On the other hand, yield yourself up to fleshly indulgence, be the slave of appetite, worldly sloth, selfishness, passion, or sin of any kind — and the character becomes more and more depraved and marred, until all its beauty is forever lost.

Life is great and noble, because of its marvelous powers for usefulness. A man in America had once a field which he valued but little, and was about to sell. But a friend gave him good advice, "Mind what you do," said he, "I believe there are oil-springs in your field if you only search for them; and, if so, your field will be worth a large sum." He found the words of his friend were true. Oil-springs were discovered, and the field became to him the source of immense wealth.

Young friend, do not waste life. Do not throw it away. Do not reckon it of small value. If only you search for them, you will find oil-springs in it. You will find it full of power for blessing to yourself and to others. You will find it, if well improved, a means of bringing spiritual light, and health, and comfort to those around you and to many beside. If only your life is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and spent for the glory of God — then think how much you may make of it. The influence of a holy example, the fruit of lips filled with divine truth, a purse closed to all extravagance and luxury — but open to the claims of sorrow and distress, a heart devoted to Christ's cause and the souls he died to save — each of these may be as an oil-spring, a fountain of temporal and spiritual good to many of your fellow-creatures.

Once more. Life is great beyond all expression, because eternity is inseparably linked to it. If upon the use of one day or one hour, the comfort and happiness of the rest of your life depended — you would be very careful to use it aright. But infinitely greater is the disproportion between our little day of life here — and the vast eternity that follows. Yet upon the one hangs the other.

How shall we think of eternity? How shall we measure it? How shall we grasp it? How shall we get at least some faint idea of that ever-abiding, unending existence, which stretches away into the far horizon, and whose boundary we can never reach?

Take it in this way. Suppose that for every flower that blooms in summer time you could count a thousand years — and add together the sum of all. Suppose that, for every leaf that trembles in the breeze you could also count a thousand years — and then could add together these two sums. In a similar manner, for every bird or insect that flies in the air, for every living creature that treads the earth, for every fish that is found in the mighty deep — count a thousand years. Then, if you can, add together these vast totals, and imagine the time they demand, and remember that, when these cycles of ages have rolled by, the great clock of eternity has only just begun to tick!

True, our highest thought is at fault; it is utterly beyond us. But God is true, and from everlasting to everlasting He abides, and the souls that He has made. And this great eternal future hangs on this short passing life! What a reality does this give to it! What a vast importance attaches to every moment of it! But how may you use it aright? How may you redeem its precious hours? How may you make the best of every day as it comes around?

Remember that the only true life is that spent in union with Christ. Your life must be one with His, by the link of faith. By humble, hearty dependence on . . .

His promise,

His power to save,

His precious blood,

His perpetual intercession on your behalf

— you have that life, that eternal life, that indestructible life, which no disease, no accident, no decay of nature can ever affect.

Unless you begin here, life must be a failure. Without this, its noblest aims can never be accomplished. Would you have life truly blessed, let it be passed in close fellowship with the Son of God. Let Christ dwell in you by faith. Live in Christ, live for Christ, live like Christ, live with Christ — and Christ will show forth through you His joy, His love, His light, His grace — and thus both to yourself and to many about you, life shall abound in ten thousand blessings.

If you would use life well, let the seven days of the week be elevated and sanctified, by the careful observance of Sunday. Sunday is the market-day of the soul. On that day you may gain your richest treasure. Getting good and doing good, true worship, heart-felt praise, thoughtful hearing of the Word of life, glad service for the King among the lambs of the flock, in the Bible class, or in visits to those you can reach on Sunday better than other days, the best book well studied, and another book or two which you find helpful in the Divine life. All this will make your Sundays

stepping-stones to the Father's house and sweet seasons of refreshment that will cheer you before the work of another week begins.

If you would use life well, trade well with "the pound," the talents which the Master commits to your charge. Beware of rust. Sloth is rust, and will destroy the greatest talent, if it be indulged. Whatever gifts you possess, trade with them diligently. Let no grass grow under your feet. Lose neither time nor opportunity. Abhor all trifling with the few precious years you may have to live.

Remember that many talents are forever lost through being left unused — while a single talent well employed may grow exceedingly. Strive to use all your talents, and not to neglect one. You may have five talents, and make good use of four, while perhaps the fifth is the most precious of all — and yet it is forgotten and despised. To avoid this danger, carefully consider what talents and gifts you have. Often stop and ask yourself whether you are making the most of them.

What precious talents are these three, if God has preserved them to you — sight, hearing, and speech! What a power for self-improvement and for usefulness do they afford!

What a precious gift is money! Whether more or less, if liberally and freely given, if self-denial is exercised in the way in which you spend it — what burdened hearts may be relieved, what helpful books may be given on birthdays to friends, or scattered far and wide among those who need them! What open doors may be entered for preaching the gospel of Christ, and what untold good may be done both at home and abroad!

What a precious gift is influence! If you are consistent and in earnest, your daily life may tell for good on all about you! What you are, has often a far greater effect than what you directly aim at doing for others. Your being an abstainer, may save some young friend from the pit of strong drink. Your prayerfulness may awaken the conscience of someone who sleeps in the same room with you, and who never bends the knee. Your habit of plain dressing, may save another from the snare of vanity and display. In the use of your talents, especially remember the enormous power of littles. There are tradesmen in our large towns who are driving a splendid trade, making thousands a year — and yet they very seldom take half a sovereign, but most of their trade is done in very small amounts. The multitude of customers makes up for the smallness of the sums received.

Here is a lesson for you who wish to trade well with that which is put into your charge. If you cannot do great things — do many little things. You may immensely increase your talents by continual use and diligence. Never disregard the least opening for good. Ever be on the look-out for quiet and humble ways of pleasing Christ and doing something for His glory. A penny saved by an act of self-denial,

a kindly word, even a pressure of the hand,

some expression of your sympathy for one in trouble,

a book lent to a servant in the kitchen,

a suggestion that may guide a young Sunday-school teacher,

a note to cheer a sufferer on Sunday morning when shut out from the means of grace,

a soft answer to one who is nervous or irritable,

a quarter of an hour given to pass on to another a page or two in your reading that has stirred or encouraged you,

a hearty Christian letter to an old schoolfellow at Christmas or the New Year

— a thousand such ways of trading with your pound you may embrace where you could not find one for any greater or more showy effort.

"Live today!" But are you living? Are you alive to God? Are you cleansed in the atoning blood, and renewed by the quickening Spirit? Are you journeying with your face Zionward? Are you walking in faith, love, and obedience? Are you prepared for a sudden call to appear before God? If some unlooked-for danger arises, if there is an accident to the train or the steamer in which you are traveling — can you calmly face it, knowing that all is well with your soul? If some fever or disease should attack you, could you in peace commit yourself to the Keeper of Israel?

I am permitted to mention an incident in the life of a very dear and valued friend. As a young man he was laid low with an attack of cholera. Though surrounded by every comfort and assistance that kindness and medical skill could suggest, he rapidly grew worse. One evening he heard the medical man speaking in a whisper to the sister who was nursing him. His quick ear caught the words, "He cannot live until the morning!" No words could express the distress and fear that filled his soul. Death so near — and he altogether unprepared to meet it! No ray of hope pierced the midnight darkness that brooded over his spirit. What could he do? Where could he turn? In the deepest agony, almost in despair, he had but one resource. "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" was his one cry and prayer. Many, many times all night long did he still plead this one petition, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And the cry was heard. God is very pitiful and of tender mercy. So his prayer was not in vain. He who heard the prayer of the dying thief, heard his likewise. The disease abated. In the morning he was better. Life was given back almost from the grave. Nor was the lesson lost. He never went back. He sought the Savior and yielded himself to His service. He never forgot the claims of young men, and never failed to do all in his power for their temporal and spiritual welfare. But you would not wish to run such a terrible risk! You must never forget that if one thief was saved — the other continued in worldliness, impenitence and unbelief, even to the last. And might it not be your case too, if now you refuse the loving voice of Jesus? And how much you lose! What peace, what faithful guidance, what power for usefulness, you forfeit even now — if you delay coming to Christ. Why should not your whole life, short or long, be bright and joyous in the Lord's service, and then end in the brightness of the celestial city?

Surely you will come. Surely you will kneel down and ask life of Him who gives abundantly. Surely you will trust Him utterly for all you need, and henceforth strive to please Him in all you do. May He dispose your heart to do it, and by His own blessed Spirit work in you to will and to work of His good pleasure!

Only a step

From life to death!

The leaves are falling, and the flowers fade,

The sun is setting, deeper grows the shade,

Shorter the breath!

Only a step

From death to Life!

The trees are budding, and the flowers spring,

The sun is rising, light and joy to bring —

Ended Earth's strife!

Only a step

Jesus, my light,

O take You step with me; O draw near,

Hold You my hand, for then I cannot fear.

All must be bright.

04.00. Counsels to Christians on the Details of Every-day Life

Counsels to Christians on the Details of Every-day Life George Everard, 1866 The original document was found in www.gracegems.org

04.000. Contents

Contents How to Begin Well The Right Principle

Daily Renewal

Daily Mercies

Daily Light

Daily Prayer

Daily Clothing

Daily Work

Daily Walking

Daily Talk

Daily Warfare Daily Consolation A Blessing in the Family Victory over the World The Great Account

04.0000 . Introduction

Introduction:

"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Genesis 5:24

Such is the simple and sublime description of a godly man, given by the Holy Spirit Himself. God does not change; and godliness does not change, except in its more complete development. From age to age the godly have walked with God — and until the Lord comes, every truly godly man will continue thus to walk. He perseveres in his godly walk unto the end: and then, as in Enoch's case, the Lord takes him — not indeed the body yet, which sleeps until the general resurrection — but the spirit, which at once joins the company of the redeemed before the throne. It follows that there is no subject of deeper interest, or of more paramount importance to all who desire to be forever with the Lord, than walking with God.

It is the object of this book to tender some Scriptural aid to the Christian pilgrim in his heavenward walk. It shows him where spiritual life, the indispensable pre-requisite to walking with God at all, alone can be found. The dead cannot walk — the lifeless branch produces no fruit.

"It is the Spirit who quickens." Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life." Union with the Lord, through the Spirit, brings with it true spiritual existence to the soul. Of those who are united to Christ, the Apostle says, "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The means by which this life is imparted to each consciously responsible member of the Church, is faith. Imperfect as Enoch's knowledge must probably have been, he believed all that had been revealed to him of God, and of that future Savior, of whom God Himself declared that He should bruise the serpent's head. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read, "By faith, Enoch was taken up to Heaven without dying; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God." Hebrews 11:5 The same Divine principle animated all the godly men, without exception, whose lives are recorded in Holy Writ. They lived and died in faith. The teaching of our blessed Lord is the same; but clearer, fuller, mightier, proceeding from the brightness and life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, He who hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." The Apostles preached this truth, and none other. "The just shall live by faith." Paul has drawn it out with marvelous concentration, in the precious words, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Here we are taught that all who have a spiritual life by virtue of their union with Christ by faith, will not only be absolutely free from condemnation, but also under the gracious guiding of the Spirit, walk habitually in the steps of that Lord in whom they are. And this walking is not confined to great and extraordinary efforts, but more properly belongs to the common every-day temptations, and trials, and duties of daily life. Great efforts have occasionally to be made by the Christian. At one time he must cross the parched and desolate wilderness: at another it will be his duty to climb

some mountain height of difficulty; or with the utmost rapidity to run from dangerous temptation; or with dauntless courage to advance to attack the enemies of the Church and the Lord. But ordinarily the walk of the godly in spiritual things resembles the walk in this world of the healthy in body. Each has to proceed quietly, steadily, actively, step by step, and day by day. The truly godly man, whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does — will do all to the glory of God. Every step is to be consecrated to the service of his Lord, even his very words are to be under Divine influence: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." In the beautiful language of the prophet Zechariah, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses: Holiness unto the Lord."

They who most desire, most strive, most pray for this consecration to the Lord, of all the little things of daily life — best know how difficult it is. Such gladly welcome any help which one of their brethren in Christ can bestow. It is hoped that the following pages may, by the help and teaching of the Spirit of God, be found a real and practical benefit by many a sincere pilgrim. The book may be read by many who have not yet begun the spiritual life. To such it may prove, by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, a blessed means of leading them to Him who said to the woman of Samaria, "If you know the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, Give me a drink — you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water!" "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This book is designed, and by God's help well fitted, to lead men through the Spirit to attain, retain, and maintain the spiritual life. It may be hoped that at the last great day it will be found that many godly people will own, with devout songs of gratitude and praise, it was from this book they were led to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith. May the number be very great. May they on earth, like Enoch, walk with God; and hereafter, like Enoch, may they be forever with the Lord.

Thomas Vores, October, 1865.

04.01. How to Begin Well

How to Begin Well In the life of most, the duties, the cares, the trials that are man's daily portion on earth, are the drag-weight that keeps them from rising to higher and nobler thoughts.

Yet it need not be thus. Every day the earth revolves upon its axis, and yet, at the same time, it is being carried along in its immense circuit around the sun.

Even so may it be, that a man daily performing his round of duties, and patiently meeting the trials that befall him — may yet by grace be moving onward along his heavenly course. Common life may be the discipline by which he may learn to rise above the world. It may be the battlefield, on which he may fight the good fight of faith. Nothing less than this is true religion.

True religion is not wearing a garb of piety on the Sabbath, to be cast aside with the Sunday clothing. It is not saying, "Lord! Lord!" while a man walks in his own way, and disregards the commands of the Master. Rather is it Christ reigning within, and His will followed in the trials and temptations that every day come upon us. It is Christian principle so rooted within, that it issues day by day in Christian practice. Godly living is but the necessary fruit of living faith abiding in the heart.

True religion has been compared to the blood in our system, which is not confined to one or two grand arteries — but warms, and vitalizes, and moves the whole man. It pours the tide of life through a thousand vessels, some of them almost too minute to be seen.

Just so, pure religion is the moving principle of the new man. It is not confined to special places or seasons, but will ever diffuse itself through all the thousand little actions that are every day performed. To this subject, the following pages are devoted. It is of primary importance that a subject so intimately connected with the interests of the Church of Christ should not be neglected. It has been alleged that those who proclaim most fully the doctrines of grace, are not sufficiently alive to the necessity of enforcing practical godliness. This complaint, whether it is true or otherwise, may do good. Let it lead Christian ministers more forcibly and more in detail, to press home practical duties upon the consciences of their hearers. Let it also lead Christian people more carefully and diligently to perform them. Let such duties, however, be placed on their right footing. They are not to be legal strivings to obtain justification, but the necessary fruits of living faith abiding in the heart. To enter upon the duties of life aright, it is therefore essential to begin well, and to examine the foundation upon which they rest. The true foundation is the free forgiveness of the sinner through Christ.

Here is the starting point of a happy useful course.

If a man sets out upon a distant journey, how can he do so with any comfort while he is laden with a burden beyond his strength?

If a tradesman is responsible for long arrears of debt, how can he with any reasonable hope of success, enter upon a new business? In like manner, unless the weight of sin is removed, it is

impossible cheerfully to run the race set before us. Unless the enormous sin debt is cancelled, it is impossible, hopefully, to commence afresh the duties that are incumbent upon us. A few thoughts on the forgiveness revealed in Scripture, shall occupy the remainder of this chapter.

God delights to forgive. Guilt makes men suspicious. It makes those whose conscience is awake, afraid to credit the amazing mercy of the Most High. So seldom do we see a frank hearty forgiveness among men, that men cannot believe how readily God pardons those who return to Him. Joseph had long before, thoroughly forgiven his brethren the wrong they had done to him; yet when Jacob was dead, they imagined he would surely avenge it. So slow are we to believe that God frankly forgives His erring ones. To be assured of this, study carefully the declarations of the Word. Even Sinai bears witness to it. Scarcely had the revelation of the law been given amidst the fearful tokens of His awful justice, than Jehovah steps forth to proclaim His mercy and love. Little conception can we now form of the preciousness to a penitent Israelite, of the declaration made to the Mediator of the Law, and within a short time after its promulgation. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus 34:6-7)

Notice, again, a passage which occurs, with little variation, at least four times in the Old Testament. It is found in Psalms 103:8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

Nearly two hundred years pass, and the prophet Jonah takes up the same strain, and declares, "I knew You that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

Some fifty years more pass, and the prophet Joel repeats it: "Turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."

Three hundred and fifty years more pass, and Nehemiah gives it as a reason why such forbearance had been shown to the Jewish people. "They hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage. But You are a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Here we have handed down from century to century, from prophet to prophet, the same precious declaration.

Even when the sense of sin may be most oppressive, let us never doubt the readiness of God to forgive us — even us. At Glasgow, a man was charged with the commission of murder. The crime was clearly proved. The sentence of death was passed. The criminal uttered a most piercing cry, "Mercy, mercy!" A tear of pity spontaneously arose in every eye. The judge himself was so moved that he left the court. Had it been possible, how gladly would he have spared the guilty man. There was deep compassion in the heart of the judge, and of each one present — but what a drop compared to the well of compassion in the heart of the Great Father of mankind!

God forgives righteously. Never can one attribute of the Divine character be set aside, for the display of another. If God is merciful and gracious, He is also just and righteous in all His dealings. Not one shadow of a cloud must rest on the perfect equity of Him, who is alike the Governor and Judge of the universe. The very pillars of the eternal throne are the faithfulness and truth of Him who sits thereupon. This is manifested in the forgiveness of sins. Look at the great expedient, which has been planned for our salvation. "God devises means by which His banished may not be

expelled from Him." The glory of the Gospel is found in the principle of substitution, by which the Righteous One stands in the place of the guilty.

View this principle as standing out clearly in the Levitical ceremonies. What could be the intention of all the sin offerings, of the sacrifice of bulls, and goats, and lambs — were it not to engrave upon the hearts of men, as with a pen of iron, the great truth that guilt could only be removed by the death of another, and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin! The same truth is also revealed in the prophetic Scriptures. Take but one single chapter: study Isaiah 53:1-12. It is evident from this passage that to the Messiah, and not to any other, the ancient Jews believed the prophecy in question to apply. With equal clearness is this truth revealed in the New Testament. What could be clearer than the words of Christ at the institution of His Supper, "This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." What could be clearer than the testimony of Paul, "He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." What could be clearer than the words of Peter, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed."

Reader, let none rob you of the consolation that arises from this doctrine. To satisfy the conscience that has been thoroughly convinced of sin, nothing less will suffice than this, "Jesus has answered for me — He has paid the debt of my transgressions to the very last farthing — He has suffered every whit what was needful in the sight of the Most High — He has made an end of sin — He has made full reconciliation for iniquity — He has made it a just and righteous thing in God to pass over the evil that I have done!"

"Be sure you keep close by the cross," was the direction once given by a peasant woman in Switzerland, to a traveler climbing a mountain. A large wooden cross stood by the path leading to its summit. "Be sure you keep close by the cross" — would I earnestly say to every pilgrim on the way to Mount Zion. Ever regard the blood which was shed there, as the only plea by which you can approach to God.

God forgives freely. Now that full reconciliation has been made by the blood of our Surety — to us, mercy is free. No compensation is required of us for the wrongs we have. No sufferings of our own, either in this life, or in purgatorial fires hereafter, are needed as a make-weight in the scales of justice. The gift is without money and without price. It is open to those whose sins lie heavy upon them, and who see nothing in themselves — not one single thing as a ground of hope. An aged servant of Christ, who had long been faithfully serving the Master, once told the secret of the joy and peace which he enjoyed. "Some fifty years ago," he said, "I was a hearer in a London church. The preacher pressed home the freeness of salvation. He dwelt upon the text, 'And when they had nothing to pay, he freely forgave them both.' That was just my case," he added, "I felt that I had nothing good in me, so I rejoiced that the message was for me, and I have rejoiced in it ever since."

God forgives now. The inward thought of many is, that at some distant day, possibly forgiveness may be theirs. "I hope I may be forgiven before I meet my Judge," is the feeling that is uppermost in their minds. Even those who are seeking after salvation frequently imagine, that it would be mere presumption to expect this blessing, until after many months, or years.

Reader, it is a dangerous thing to leave this to a dim, uncertain future. Have we not present dangers? Have we not present sorrows? Have we not, daily, fresh sins to lament? Need we not, then, a present pardon, that in the midst of all these, we may be emboldened to look up for consolation to our Father above? It is the will of God, and for His glory, that without delay we should accept and rejoice in the forgiveness which He offers. The prodigal son has long been a stranger to his home; in the far country he has been wasting his father's substance. But he begins to reflect; he contrasts his own lot with that of the lowest of his father's servants; he turns homeward. He says in his heart, "I will arise, and go to my father!" And, as we imagine, with much trembling, with many fears, he comes back. How is he welcomed? "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him!" How quick and ready was the forgiveness! Before he reaches the door, before he could utter the confession which he purposed — a father's arms are around him, and the kiss of tender love has been given to him! A palsied man is brought by his friends into the presence of the Great Healer. He who knew the thoughts of man, could doubtless discern within him a conscience troubled by the remembrance of by-gone days. The man felt the weakness and suffering of the body, but he felt still more the burden of sin. How does the Savior greet him? What is the very first word He addresses to him? No sweeter word was ever spoken, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" An immediate forgiveness is granted to him! An outcast and immoral woman presses into the house of Simon. Long a stranger to peace with God, she has begun now to desire it. She disregards the scorn of those who would keep her back, and comes close to the feet of Jesus. Burdened by guilt, she has no words to utter, but her flowing tears are a prayer which cannot be despised. What does say Christ to this perishing one? Does He bid her go home and amend her life, that she may at length obtain the mercy which she seeks? Does He bid her come again on the morrow, or a week or month hence, and He will forgive her? Nay, nothing of the kind. He will not keep her waiting for a single hour. Just as she was, stained through and through with sin — He freely and at once forgave her. He said unto her, "Your sins are forgiven!" He feared not that she would abuse the pardon He granted. Constrained by grateful love, she would henceforth live to Him who so freely loved her.

Reader, cast away the thought that a long preparation is needed before you may rejoice in Christ. Be not led astray by the idea that you must bring so much repentance and so much right feeling, before you can be accepted by Him. Has the false security of your former state passed away? Has the Spirit of God so convinced you of sin, that you are willing to take the place of the publican? Do you cry from your heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Do you lay bare before God the iniquities of the past, and long to walk henceforth in newness of life? Then do not doubt the free love of God in Christ. Own, without hesitation, the greatness of your sin — but set over against it the preciousness of Christ's blood. In spite of much hardness of heart, in spite of much every way that would make you fear — yet at once take up your position as a child of God, only for Christ's sake, and by reliance upon Him maintain it without wavering.

Just as I am — and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark spot —

To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,

O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am — You will receive,
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Your promise I believe —
O Lamb of God, I come.

God forgives perfectly. It is not partial and limited, but a complete and entire forgiveness. "All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven;" "justified from all things;" "having forgiven you all trespasses;" "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Such are some of the statements of the Word of God, showing forth the perfect remission of sin to those who believe.

Mark, also, how God searches Heaven and earth for figures and illustrations by which this truth may be made plain. Do we gaze upon the unblemished purity of the newly-fallen snow? Then hear the promise, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Does a man search in vain for that which is irrecoverably lost? Hear the promise given by Jeremiah, "In those days, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Does a man cast behind him that which he will no longer regard? Hear the words of Hezekiah, "You have cast all my sins behind Your back!" Do you look on the wide ocean, and feel assured that you will never again see that which you cast into it? Hear the promise given by Micah, "You will cast all their sins," not into the shallows, but "into the depths of the sea!" Do you look upward and watch the dark, heavy cloud gradually disperse, until not a speck is to be seen upon the clear blue sky? Hear again the promise by Isaiah, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." Do you stand on a high mountain, and look eastward and westward, and imagine the vast distance that lies between the two horizons? Hear the words of the Psalmist, "As far as the east is from the west — so far has He separated our transgressions from us."

What a marvelous variety of figures have we here, to set before us the completeness of forgiving mercy! An illustration of the same truth may be taken from the manner in which the lives of God's servants in previous ages, are referred to in the New Testament. In the historical narratives of the Old Testament, their lives are recorded with the most transparent truthfulness. No attempt whatever is made to conceal their grievous falls, or their lesser infirmities. Not a word is said to excuse or palliate the evil.

Noah is drunk in his tent;

Job is impatient, and curses the day of his birth;

Abraham acts deceitfully with respect to Sarah;

Lot is no sooner saved out of Sodom, but he falls terribly;

Jacob deceives his aged father;

David commits adultery, and then slays Uriah;

Elijah flees, from fear of Jezebel;

Jonah is first disobedient, and afterwards murmurs against God's goodness.

All this is fully and most clearly narrated. But turn over the pages of the New Testament, and what do you find? Not one single mention of all these sins! The graces of these saints of God — their deeds of faith and obedience — are referred to continually; but not a word is said, as to all the sins and spots and blemishes which were found in them. Is there not a purpose in this? Is it not the silence of Scripture teaching us, in a very striking manner, that the sins and iniquities of His people God remembers no more forever?

Christian, take courage. Sin may harass you — but it cannot condemn you. There may fall across your path the dark shadow of old sins. You may remember with sorrow of heart, the years you spent in the hog pens of the far country, and the unnumbered negligences and failings of your walk with God, but neither the one nor the other shall be brought against you. "Who is he who shall condemn us? It is Christ that died; yes, rather, that is risen again." "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Why is it then, that so large a proportion of those who hear these glad tidings, still carry with them the tremendous load of unforgiven sin? Since the mercy of God is so abundant — why do so few avail themselves of its mighty efficacy? Why is it, that as yet there rests upon them the bitter curse of a broken law, and there awaits them the dread woe of eternity without hope? It is because . . .

the burden is unfelt,

the conscience is slumbering,

and the soul is dead!

What does it matter, though you lay upon a corpse the heaviest weight? It is not felt by him, who lies silent and dead. What does it matter to the soul that is dead in sin, though the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the guilt of a lifetime of iniquity is resting upon him?

It is but too true, that men are well content with the state into which sin has brought them. They have no desire for a higher, holier life. Years ago, when the Bastille was about to be destroyed, a prisoner was brought out who had long been lying in one of its gloomy cells. Instead of joyfully welcoming the liberty which was granted to him, strange to say, he entreated that they would take him hack to his dungeon. It was so long since he had seen the light, that his eye could not endure the glare of the sun. Besides this, his friends were all dead; he had no home, and his limbs refused to move. His chief desire now was, that he might die in the dark prison, where so long he had been a captive.

What is this but a picture of many a sinner? There is no desire for the glorious liberty which Christ offers. The eye has been so long accustomed to the darkness of alienation from God, that it cannot bear the light of His presence. Outside the prison-house of a carnal state, the soul can see no friend, no shelter, and so the sinner would gladly be let alone to live and die without Christ, without God, without hope in the world.

Oh, for the Spirit of the living God to quicken dead sinners! Oh, for His mighty power to awaken within, a sense of their extreme peril, and a desire for salvation in Christ. Then will they find Him near to save; their very first cry for mercy shall not be disregarded. He will open to them the door of everlasting life, and bestow upon them the full blessing of redeeming love.

Let the Christian reader remember that forgiveness is not the end — but the beginning of service in the vineyard. It is not the goal — but the starting-post. If salvation has been truly received, it must lead . . .

to self-dedication,

to grateful labor,

and to holiness of life. Were the forgiveness of sins in any measure the reward of holiness, or of our service in the vineyard — there never could be certainty — there could never be the assurance that enough had been done. Beside this, the motive could not be right — in part, at least, it would necessarily be self-righteous striving, rather than self-renouncing love. On the other hand, let it not be forgotten that he in vain boasts of pardoned sin, who is not led by it to love Christ, and faithfully to endeavor, after His example, to do the will of God. Be assured that the doctrine of free forgiveness is one according to godliness. It is written, "There is forgiveness with You — that You may be feared." (Psalms 130:4) Mark the connection. It is not written that God is to be feared that we may obtain forgiveness — but that He forgives that we may fear Him. It must ever be so. Here is our motive and our strength. He who is forgiven much, will love much. He who loves much, will gladly, joyfully obey God. Who ever honored God more, or labored more abundantly than Paul? Yet who, more than he, gloried in the free justification of the Gospel?

It is our wisdom day by day to rejoice, in the midst of all infirmities, that our acceptance is secured, and our sins forgiven in Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is our wisdom also, in the strength of this, to serve God more and more, never to grow weary in running the way of His commandments, but to make manifest to all around us, that no motive is so influential as the love which arises from being freely forgiven and "accepted in the Beloved."

04.02. The Right Principle

The Right Principle

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do — do it all for the glory of God!" 1 Corinthians 10:31 The Christian is entitled to very exalted privileges. He is freely, eternally forgiven. He is perfectly justified from all charge of guilt. He stands in the position of a dear child, made near to God by the blood of Christ. He is no more an exile, a stranger — but a citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem, a partaker in all the rich blessings of the covenant of grace. This brings with it great responsibilities. It demands a proportionate return. It requires of us, that we should walk worthy of our heavenly calling. If our privileges are far above those of others — then so also must be the standard at which we aim, and the motive by which we are guided. This can be nothing short of aiming in all things to glorify God, and to live entirely to Him. When the Egyptians obtained from Joseph the food by which themselves and their families were preserved alive, he said to them, "I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh." Jesus, by bestowing upon us His precious blood and the rich benefits which are derived from it, says likewise unto us, "I have bought you and all you possess for God." The apostle Paul reminds us, that such is the purpose for which we have been redeemed. "You are bought with a price — therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Let not the child of God be satisfied with any lower motive, than is here set before us. It is well often to set before us the prize of our high calling — it is well to stir up our hearts, by pondering the crying necessities of the world we live in, and with true compassion to assist in meeting them — but there is something far beyond either of these motives. It is to glorify Him who is . . .

our Creator,

our Savior

our Preserver,

our most loving Father. In every way this principle is the best, as well as the highest, by which we can be actuated. It greatly simplifies our course through life. Take the man who would serve God a little, and yet chiefly consults his own interests — and how often will you find him in a strait as to the course he should follow. Duty points in one direction, self-interest in another — and which is to be obeyed? Which of the two shall yield? There is the fear of conscience troubling him afterwards — and yet such a man has no strength to follow its dictates. Of all things the most painful, a wavering, undecided course, is very frequently the result. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The prophet Balaam affords a remarkable example of such a spirit. He was unwilling, positively and directly, to disobey God — and yet he loves the wages of unrighteousness. He would gladly die the death of the righteous, and yet he cannot refuse the golden bait which Balak offers. More than once he yields a forced obedience — when the angel meets him along the way, he declares his readiness to go back; he cannot but open his mouth to bless Israel, though he desired to curse him. What is the outcome of all this? What profit did Balaam reap? A conscience

ill at ease — shame and disgrace in Moab — destruction at length among the enemies of Jehovah — such was the reward that he most justly received.

Reader, would you have your way plain and clear before you? Aim at serving God first. "Trust in God — and do the right." This motto will cut the knot of a thousand difficulties, while often the half-Christian is entangled in the net of his own weaving. A determination, at all hazards, to walk by the strait rule of God's commandments, will, in most cases, make everything plain.

It may bring loss or reproach,

it may thwart our own plans,

it may cross our own inclination,

but it will bring peace to the mind, as well as glory to God. This principle also ennobles life. It is the highest life that can possibly be conceived. It elevates the most ordinary duties, and makes them a service acceptable to God. Even the elect angels can have no higher aim. In this, the youngest lamb in the fold is one with the great Apostle, who proclaimed the Gospel far and wide. The humblest cottager who endeavors in his calling to glorify God, has the very same object before him as the highest archangel before the throne.

It is the motive by which the Son of God was ever guided throughout His earthly pilgrimage. We see Him guided by the same spirit, as the end draws near. A few days before His sufferings, there comes before Him the dark shadow of that heavy cross, which He was so soon to bear. The flesh shrinks, though the spirit is willing. He considers within Himself what petition He shall offer to the Father. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause," He adds, "I came unto this hour." Then notice how the petition is changed. It is not now, "Father, save me from this hour," but it is, "Father, glorify Your Name." On the last evening of His life, Christ is comforting His disciples, before He left them, with some of the kindest words He ever spoke, and then, in a sublime prayer, commended them to the care of Him who could safely shield them amidst the perils of the world. In this prayer, he sums up in a few short words, the life which He had lived. "I have glorified You on the earth, I have finished the work which You gave me to do." It is a blessed thing to follow the example of our great Pattern, to tread in the footprints which He has left on earth, and thus to seek above all things to glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

HOW MAY WE BEST CARRY OUT THIS PRINCIPLE IN THE DAILY ROUTINE OF LIFE?

It is well, at the commencement of every day, distinctly to set it before us. When we arise in the morning, let our first thought be upon our Father's love, relying afresh on His pardoning mercy in Christ. But, coupled with this, let us offer the prayer, "Father, glorify Yourself in me this day!" Do not desire merely to get through the day with as much comfort and ease to yourself as possible — but in its varied duties and occupations, aim so to perform them as to please God. It matters not what the work may be. It may be the merest drudgery. It may be connected with matters of great importance. Be assured that it is the singleness of eye in the doing of it, which God regards.

It has been said that if two angels were sent from Heaven, one to sweep the streets, and the other to rule a kingdom — they would be equally satisfied in obeying the command. No doubt there is truth in this. Let us cultivate the same spirit. Let us regard each day that is granted to us, as

affording us fresh openings for service.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,

All I design, or do, or say;

That all my powers, with all their might,

In Your sole glory may unite. In all our plans, in all arrangements for the future, let this object stand foremost. You may be undertaking some important business, or entering upon a new pursuit, or changing your home, or your condition in life, or setting out on a long journey, or taking a fresh employment — and you cannot the least foresee what may be the outcome. The change may seem to you as one likely to advance your interests, or minister to your comfort — but little can you positively know with respect to it. It may turn out very differently to what now you expect. New trials and difficulties may arise, which have never occurred to you. The only safe way is to bring the matter before God. Desire in it to please Him rather than yourself. Go or stay, follow out the scheme or not, according as His Word, and Providence seem to direct — and as will be most for His glory. You have then ground for confidence. You may look for a favorable result. A courtier once desired permission of his king to go and look after his private affairs. "Look after my affairs," was the reply, "and I will look after yours." God deals with us in the same way. If we are faithful to Him, He will not be slack in providing the very best for us. It is written, "Those who honor Me, I will honor."

Fear Him, you saints, and you will then

Have nothing else to fear:

Make His service your delight,

He'll make your needs His care! Do not lose sight of this motive, either in the smallest or the greatest matters. Very broad is the precept laid down for our guidance. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do — do it all for the glory of God!" The occasion which called forth these words, was a dispute that had arisen in the Church of Corinth. It was questioned, whether it were lawful to eat meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Some regarded the matter in one light, and some in another — and it is referred to the judgment of Paul. He declares that an idol is nothing in the world. All things are the Lord's property. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." It cannot, therefore, be wrong to partake of that which God has granted for our use. Yet wisdom was needful. It was lawful, but it might not be beneficial. It might prove a stumbling-block to a weak brother. If it were to be so, let them rather abstain from partaking of such meat as was sacrificed to idols. Above all, the Apostle would say, "Let your eye be single, let your aim be to bring honor to God." "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do — do it all for the glory of God!" The circumstances which led to this discussion, have long since passed away; but the principle here laid down is forever. Eating and drinking are common every day matters. They come to us as a matter of course, and yet even in these, the right principle is to come in. We are to exercise moderation. We are to receive with true thankfulness the bounties by which we are daily sustained. Thanking God before meals should not be a mere form. The strength given to us in the use of these gifts, is to be employed for God.

It is to be the same in all other common actions and every day affairs. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." No single moment of our lives, no single action — ought to be taken outside of the sphere of this rule. Our rising up and lying down,

the disposal of our time,

the spending of our money,

our social gatherings,

our conversation,

our recreations,

the way of conducting the affairs of our household,

the books we read,

the letters we write,

buying and selling,

business transactions of various kinds —

all these, and a multitude of other suchlike matters, are all to be ordered under the daily guidance of the same principle.

Reader, beware of neglecting to exercise this Christian principle in little things. Great occasions for serving God occur but seldom; lesser ones arise every moment. Little things are not to be despised. "He who despises little things, shall fall little by little." Little omissions of duty, little acts of disobedience, as they may seem to us — may prove a great hindrance along our path. A few grains of dust, or a small insect in the eye, will often cause great pain and annoyance. A little stone in a horse's foot will make it stumble again and again. The Christian will find much the same thing from the indulgence of apparently trivial sins. They will

harass the mind,

destroy the peace and comfort which he might enjoy,

prove a stumbling-block to him as he endeavors to run the heavenly race. In greater matters, also, the same principle is to be our guide. Though to follow it may bring great temporal loss, though it may oblige us to relinquish that which seems essential to us — yet we must not hold back.

Abraham followed it when, at God's command, he first left his country, and afterwards shrank not from offering up his beloved Isaac. The three Jewish young men followed it, when they chose, in preference to bowing down to the idol, to endure the burning fiery furnace. The same rule is to guide us, in seasons both of prosperity and adversity. When the sun shines overhead, when the path before looks bright and cheerful, when nothing seems for the time to threaten our comfort — let us be careful how we walk. We need to stand on our watch. We must rejoice with trembling. We must employ His gifts as talents, for which an account must be rendered. We must cherish a thankful spirit, and delight more in the Giver than in the gift. In all Your mercies may our souls

A Father's bounty see;
Nor let the gifts Your hand bestows,
Estrange our hearts from Thee.

Then when a change comes, when dark clouds lower over us, when approaching trials weigh heavy on the spirit — we must not murmur. We must kiss the rod that smites us. We must cheerfully accept the chastening which our Father sends. "Glorify the Lord in the fires." Never, perhaps, is God more glorified on earth, than when some child of suffering or sorrow is patiently and joyfully taking up daily his appointed cross, and in quiet submission yielding up his own will to that of the Father.

We must carefully watch over the spirit in which all religious actions and services are performed. It is perfectly possible to bring religion into the common every-day concerns of life. It is equally possible, and much more frequent, to bring a secular spirit into religious duties. What is more painfully apparent, than that many who minister in holy things, enter upon their work as they would upon that of any other calling? Preparing and preaching sermons — visiting the sick — administering the holy ordinances, without any solemn sense of the presence of Christ or the value of souls; offering to others the water of life — and yet never stopping to drink at the fountain themselves; calling upon their hearers to taste of the good things provided in the Gospel feast — and yet themselves being obliged inwardly to cry, in the Prophet's language, "My leanness, my leanness!" through lack of a personal appropriation of them; reading or uttering prayers, which never arise from the depth of their own hearts, or return in blessings to their own souls — all this is seen and felt every day.

What is more common, again, than to see the most lamentable ungodliness among those, to whom are entrusted the accessories of Divine worship? Who has not known deacons, singers, ushers, and the like, setting an example of at least utter indifference to all spiritual religion? What is more common than unconverted Sunday-school teachers, who hear lessons and teach Scripture, and profess to feed the lambs of the flock — and yet have never begun by loving the Master? Are there not tens of thousands who, month after month, partake of the memorials of Christ's death, and yet feed not upon the bread of life? Are there not multitudes every Sunday who appear in the sanctuary, and yet their hearts are wandering to the ends of the earth? Are there not very many who, morning and evening, bend the knee at the family altar, or even in secret offer a form of prayer, and yet never once sincerely prays from the heart.

Beware of a mere outward formalism in religion, as its most deadly bane. It is like the parasite, which clings to a tree so closely that it destroys its vitality. Endeavor to throw life and reality, into every part of religious worship. "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Pray incessantly for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Spirit to quicken you. In every prayer which you offer, in every service in which you take part, in every word you speak for Christ — be genuine, be real; let it be as before God. Mingling with it all, let the fervent cry of the heart be the prayer taught us by Christ, "Hallowed be Your name." In seeking the glory of God, we must not forget to labor for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. In no other way is the name of God more glorified, than when the kingdom of His dear Son is being extended. When, in our own land, souls are brought from darkness to light; when, in answer to prayer, and as the

reward of faithful labor — worldly men become men of God, kinsmen in the flesh become kinsmen in Christ, the thoughtless child becomes a lamb within the fold of Christ — then is God glorified in His Church.

When, again, fresh laborers are thrust forth into the harvest-field abroad; when the word of truth is proclaimed in the ears of willing and obedient hearers; when worshipers of blind idols become spiritual worshipers of the living God; when congregations are gathered together for prayer and praise — then is being hastened forward the fulfillment of the promise, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty." It is an object worthy of untiring effort to be "God's workers" in the salvation of precious souls. It is a far better one than that of personal ambition or aggrandizement. In the same year two young men went up to the great metropolis. Each had a fixed purpose in his mind, and the desire of each was accomplished, but great was the contrast between them. One said in his heart, "I will get rich," and so he did. His wealth could be estimated by millions — yet so wretched was he in his latter days, that he constantly feared a pauper's end. The other young man said in his heart, "I will do something for the London poor." He did do much for them: and the name of Nasmith will ever be had in honor as the founder of the London City Mission — a Society which has been the instrument of untold good in the great city. Who would not choose thus to be honored by God, rather than to amass any amount of this world's treasures?

Let us only cherish prayerfully the same desire, and it cannot be in vain. Let the constant breathing of our souls be that of David Brainerd, "Oh that I were a flame of fire in the service of my God!"

Christian reader, be not afraid because the standard set before you is a high one. Your salvation is not dependent upon the measure which you are enabled to attain, if only you truly desire it and honestly strive after it. It is true you fall very far short — yet are you complete in Christ, freely saved through His merits and not your own. Rejoice evermore in Him. At the same time press forward to the things which are before. The Holy Spirit can raise you far above anything you may yet have reached. Plead earnestly for this, and it will be given to you.

04.03. Daily Renewal

Daily Renewal A new birth unto righteousness is essential to salvation. The religion that brings salvation is heart deep;

it is the implanting of a new nature;

it is the bestowal of a new heart;

it is the Holy Spirit restoring the image of God in the soul.

Nicodemus, a master in Israel, comes for instruction to the Great Prophet. He has seen the miracles that Christ has wrought, and is persuaded by them that He is a teacher sent from God. What are the words with which Christ greets His new disciple? On the very threshold He meets him with the solemn truth that without the new birth, to enter the kingdom is impossible. "Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you — you must be born again." He who spoke these words knew both the nature of man, and the holiness that belongs to the eternal kingdom. He has power to declare the terms of admission; in His hand are the keys of Heaven and Hell . This new birth is not merely an external change, or the performance of any outward rite. The water of baptism typifies it, but the grace of the Spirit is not limited to any time or place.

Neither is the new birth always found where education, or the refinements of society, or an amiable disposition have wrought much that is excellent. There may be also a great amendment of life, and yet the Spirit of God may not be dwelling in the heart. These may be but as the polished brass-plate on the outer door — while within the house, the chambers are unswept. They may be as a wreath of roses laid on the coffin, while, as much as ever, death reigns within. In the first Epistle of John we have the chief marks of the new birth explicitly declared: "Every one that does righteousness is born of him." "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin," (that is, he does not practice it, he does not make a trade of it.) "Every one that loves, is born of God." "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "Whoever is born of God, overcomes the world."

These passages combined form an inspired commentary on the meaning of our Savior's words. They show us the character of that change which is wrought by the Spirit in the new birth. The new birth ever brings with it . . .

new views of sin,

new views of the world,

and new views of Christ.

It makes men hate what once they loved — and cleave to that which once they despised. Above all things, it reveals the beauty of the Savior, and leads men to regard Him as their chief joy. A captive woman, we are told, once stood in the presence of her conqueror. Death was to be her portion. Her husband, however, came forward and entreated that he might take her place, and in

her stead suffer exile or death. The conqueror was so touched by the tender affection that existed between them, that he gave to both their liberty. "Were you not struck with the grace of deportment and dignity displayed by our conqueror?" was the inquiry made by the husband afterwards. "I had no eyes but for him who was willing to die, or to suffer exile for me," was the reply. The man born of the Spirit will thus regard Christ. He will ever be looking unto Him who died that he might live.

There is another point closely connected with the new birth, and, in its place, of equal importance — the soul, regenerate through the Spirit, needs a constant renewal. In the same garden, within a few yards of each other, there stood three young trees. Very great difference might be noticed between them. One of them was full of life; in every direction fresh shoots and leaves were bursting forth. Another was as evidently dead; for some reason or other when transplanted, it died — either the roots were injured or the new soil was unsuited to its growth. The third tree was unlike either of the other two — it was still alive, but it looked very unpromising; it put forth no fresh branches; it seemed as if, before long, it would wither away. As with these trees, so is it in the Church of Christ. Some Christians are full of life and zeal, of faith and good works. Some, who once professed at least to be such, fulfill the solemn description given by Jude — they are "trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." There are others, however, who are like the third tree — it is hard to tell what their condition really is.

They have passed, it may be hoped, over the threshold of the strait gate;

they have known something of the new life;

conscience has been awakened;

Christ has been seen to be an all-sufficient Savior;

they have joined themselves to His people

— yet, there they stop. They are not happy, growing Christians; they lack warmth, and zeal, and activity in the service of Christ.

What has been the cause? In some cases it may be that there is a lack of thorough dedication — or some evil thing has been cherished. Doubtless in others, it is because the Christian has been depending upon grace already given, instead of asking for fresh supplies. The third chapter of John pointing out the need of regeneration, has been thought of — but the fifteenth chapter, showing the need of abiding in Christ, has been forgotten. The analogy of things around us suggests to us the absolute necessity of renewal in grace. The fire on the hearth requires a constant supply of fresh fuel. The most fertile plot of ground will soon become barren and worthless, unless it be turned over year after year, and supplied with its appropriate nourishment. It is the same with our frail bodies. Would we continue in health, would we have strength for the performance of duties that devolve upon us, we must have the requisite food, exercise, and rest. The spiritual life within no less requires to be renewed continually. The fire of zeal will go out, if fresh oil be not poured in. The heart will no longer produce the fruits of righteousness — unless the heavenly gardener "digs about it and fertilizes it." The soul will grow feeble in grace and in duty, it can no longer prosper and be in health, unless it be invigorated by active efforts, strengthened with the bread of life, and refreshed by calm rest in the Savior's love. The wear and tear of every day life are apt to blunt and deaden spiritual feelings. As we have often seen the

inscription on a flat stone in the aisle of a church, which has been almost obliterated by the treading of many feet, and requires the chisel of the workman to deepen its letters — so heavenly thoughts and heavenly desires fade away through friendship with the world, and we need the Spirit afresh to stamp them on the heart.

Natural corruption also still cleaves to us. On account of this we are ever prone to go back to that which we have forsaken. As the weights of a clock are no sooner wound up than again they begin to descend, so has the Christian often found it with himself. He has no sooner been drawn a little nearer to God, than the evil that dwells in him has again begun to work.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;

Prone to leave the God I love. The Tempter also never ceases to hinder us. It is his daily business to keep men from fleeing to Christ at first, or if he cannot effect this, to make a separation between them afterwards.

What can avail to counteract these various impediments, unless we are evermore renewed by the Holy Spirit? The Scripture reveals this as the great means of steadfastness and progress in the Divine life. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "Be not conformed to this world; but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind," "Though our outward man perish — yet the inward man is renewed day by day," To obtain this renewal we must diligently make use of all appointed means. They have been instituted for the very purpose of quickening and refreshing the souls of Christ's people. They are the green pastures where the flock are fed. They are the wells of salvation from which, with joy, we may draw forth living water.

What Christian is there but has found his faith strengthened through joining in public worship, and in hearing the message of glad tidings from the lips of some faithful ambassador of the cross? What close fellowship with Christ has been enjoyed when partaking in faith, of the symbols of His death! What a change has been often wrought in the feelings of the believer by a few moments spent near the mercy-seat!

Especially must we daily wait upon God for fresh anointings of the Holy Spirit. Unprofitable disputes have arisen, whether it is right and good for Christian people to pray for the filling of the Spirit. Surely of all things, it is most necessary. Though in measure the Holy Spirit dwells within the heart of each member of the family of God — yet have we not often grieved Him to withhold for a time His quickening power? Is not the soul often tied and bound by the chain of some besetting sin, or of some earth-born affection? Is there not a depth of joy in God, and of love to the Savior, which we have scarcely conceived and still less attained? What can meet our case, unless it be the Divine Spirit descending upon us in fresh might? Blessed be God, there is an all-sufficiency in the power and grace of the Spirit that can fully meet our need, and which needs only to be earnestly and perseveringly sought for. On the coast of Yorkshire there stands a lighthouse, and, from its lofty position, ships at great distances are guided by its light. In a room below is kept the supply of oil, by which the lamps are replenished. The visitor is struck as he enters, by the huge casks standing round. They are of various dimensions; 50 gallons, 80 gallons, 100 gallons, 120 gallons, are marked upon them. For so important a purpose, a most abundant supply is always at hand.

It is of infinite importance to the Church of Christ, that the light of each believer should burn very brightly. An excellent illustration has been given of this. A visitor put a question to the keeper of the lighthouse at Calais: "What would happen if your light were ever to grow dim, or to go out?" "My light grow dim! my light go out! No, never!" indignantly exclaimed the man, "why, if it were, a letter might come a year hence from India, or some other distant country, saying that at such an hour on such a night, all the ships in the harbor were in danger through my neglect. I feel as if the eye of the world were fixed on my light. My light grow dim, or go out — no, never!"

If such would be the danger of the Calais light growing dim, or going out, who can tell the danger to souls, when the light of the Christian becomes faint or uncertain? Young beginners are discouraged. The world rejoices, and Satan triumphs. It need not be so. Our light may shine clearly and steadily. Its brightness depends entirely on the supply of the pure oil — the unction of the Holy Spirit. This supply is unlimited. Abundance is always at hand. The room already mentioned, with vast quantities of oil in store, is but a faint picture of the sufficiency of grace, through the Spirit, provided for us. Only let us long for it. Only let us not lose the blessing, though failing to bring our empty vessels. The more we desire, the more we ask, the more shall we obtain.

"O God, grant that I may burn this day with pure oil!" was the prayer of a child, after hearing a simple explanation of the golden candlestick placed in the temple, and of the oil with which it was supplied. It is a desire that may well arise in our hearts. Side by side with it we may pray: "Grant that we being regenerate, and made Your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Your Holy Spirit." Those who earnestly seek for it, will assuredly, day by day, be renewed by an unction from the Holy One.

Daily renew, through the Spirit's aid — your repentance for sin, and your trust in the blood of atonement. A broken, contrite heart is a companion we should never wish to part from. To confess our sins with shame and sorrow of heart is not legal bondage, but it is a preparation for the truest joy. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." This is true from the beginning to the close of our pilgrimage. Never until our last day ought we to put out of sight the dishonor we have cast upon God by the sins of bygone years, or forget to acknowledge our daily shortcomings. If we are kept from open acts of disobedience — yet how much unbelief, how much indolence, how much selfishness, how much turning away, is there which ought to bring us low? Not a day passes but we need to make our own the resolution of the younger son in the parable, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son." But we must not stop here. We must acknowledge our failings and iniquities — and then bring them all afresh to the blood of the cross. Daily sins need daily mercy. The foot-prints made each day on the sea-shore, are washed away by each returning tide; so when sin is confessed and brought to Jesus, the overflowing mercy of our God, like the full tide, is ever near to remove it every whit. A constant application of the blood of Christ, ever again and again cleansing the conscience, has a most blessed effect. It quickens every power of the soul. It brings with it new energy and life. An African convert was standing by a water-mill. He gave, in a few words, the result of his own experience. "I see here," said he, "something which gladdens my soul. When the water passes over the great wheel, then at once all the rest are set in motion; but when the water ceases to flow, the whole machinery at once is stopped. So it is with me: when the blood of Christ touches my heart, everything within me is alive in the service of God; but when I cannot experience this, everything is dead." The subject of

renewal in grace may strengthen the hands of those who are ready to faint by the way. Does your repentance seem to you so slight, your faith so feeble, your love and zeal as yet so different from that you desire, that you fear lest you never should hold out to the end, and overcome the dangers you must encounter? "If so many who seemed once far more advanced than myself, have yet fallen back, how is it possible," you ask, "that I can abide steadfast?" Be not cast down. Take firm hold of this blessed truth. What could be more discouraging to all appearance, than the prospect that once lay before the widow of Zarephath? A famine was in the land — a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse — this was all that she possessed — and yet that scanty provision sufficed. In the providence of God, it was renewed from day to day, and thus held out until rain was sent. In like manner, you may have but little grace — yet believe in God, and wait upon Him continually. Remember it is written, "He gives more grace." He gives more faith — more contrition — more love — more zeal. Live upon the fullness which is in Christ. If you have little in yourself — you are not straitened in Him. Cleave to Jesus perpetually, and He will complete that which He has begun. This subject also suggests a note of warning. There are stagnant Christians in the Church — professors who build their hope on bygone experience, while now there is little sign of any reality in their religion. There is no painful sense of deficiency — no daily washing in the open fountain — no increase of faith or love — no longing for more holiness — and yet, because of apparent marks of conversion in former days, they trust that all is well with them.

It is said of a great man among the Puritans, that before his death, he asked one of his chaplains whether those who had once been the children of God were always such. Upon receiving a reply in the affirmative, he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with respect to his safety, since he was persuaded that once he knew the Lord. Though most firmly we may believe in the final salvation of the elect people of God — yet surely we must feel a foundation of hope like this is a very dangerous one. It places past experience, which after all is very apt to deceive us — in place of present faith and present grace. When there is no renewing — it is too often because there is no life! Imagine not that there must necessarily be spiritual life, because there is much that bears the appearance of it.

Art has fashioned figures which greatly resemble living men and women. At a short distance you would say they were certainly alive. They stand or sit: they move the head, the hand, the foot: they are clad with rich and elegant attire: one is arrayed as a king — another as a queen. Yet for all this, it is only an imitation. Come close to them, and you perceive that they have no breath, no feeling, no life.

Numbers of such-like professors of religion are to be found everywhere. See them in the sanctuary — see them in religious meetings — see them in conversation with a minister of Christ, and you would say, "Surely these men are Christians indeed." But come nearer. Examine them more closely. Watch them in their every day walk. Discover the character of their secret converse with God. Find out the ruling principle of their life — and the truth cannot be hidden. Like the Church of Sardis, they have a name to live — while they are dead. "They profess and call themselves Christians," but that is all. They have never possessed true spiritual life. They have never been quickened by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Let any who read these pages stay for a moment to put the question, "Lord, is it I?" It can do no harm, and it may do much good, to press this inquiry home upon your own conscience. If you are a

sincere, genuine follower of Christ, your confidence will stand upon a surer basis after you have carefully examined it. If you be otherwise — if there has hitherto been the form of godliness without the power, it may be a first step to your salvation. Bring the matter before the throne of grace. Be willing, nay, truly anxious to know your own heart — to know the worst of your spiritual condition. Study Psalms 139:1-24. Offer the petition of Psalms 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

If you do this, whatever you may be, there is no reason for despair. Christ can save to the uttermost! Even those who have hitherto deceived themselves or others, may yet rejoice in hope of everlasting life. "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

04.04. Daily Mercies

Daily Mercies

Among matters of every day life, nothing claims more of our attention than the remembrance of our daily mercies. They are apt to be forgotten; they frequently estrange the heart from the Giver; they are often used amiss; because laid out for some idol. "She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold — which they used for Baal. Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness." Hosea 2:8-9 But where shall we begin? Where shall we close? Who can tell out their number? Who can speak of them as they justly demand? In the Great Exhibition a catalogue was prepared of the various products of different countries. They were numbered by thousands and tens-of-thousands, but what were they compared to the daily mercies experienced by every one of us? "Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand!" Psalms 139:18

Two thoughts may assist us in duly considering them. None can rightly estimate even temporal blessings, except those in covenant with God.

It is often true that a large proportion of those who live upon the goodness of God, have no sense whatever of His bounty. Is there not many a one who has lived as a pensioner upon His mercy for thirty, forty, fifty years, or even more — and yet has never lifted up his eye beyond the ground he treads — has never yet once heartily thanked the gracious Being who has thus nourished and preserved and blessed him?

Search the depth of their hearts, and will you find one single grain of real, genuine gratitude to God? Why is this? A dark cloud hides from their sight the Father of mercies; guilt upon the conscience and wrong views of God, darken the mind. But let this be removed, let faith in Christ be grafted within, let them realize "God is now my most loving Father — He has pardoned me, He has received me" — then what a change will there be! From a joyful heart, praise will arise like a springing well — and even the most ordinary mercies will draw forth songs of thankfulness. It was the case when David was restored to the favor of God. "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's!" Psalms 103:1-5

Consider also that our numberless mercies can only rightly be estimated, when placed side by side with our numberless sins. There are two loads we have to consider. One load we lay upon God; the other load He lays upon us. The first load is the multitude of our sins by which we weary Him. The second is the load of His mercies, which He is never weary of bestowing upon us.

Look at the iniquities of a single city.

The cries of the oppressed;
the determined opposition to His law;
the profligacy and profanity that are so rife;
the hidden iniquities that are before His eye —
these must indeed weary Him, who is nevertheless so patient and forbearing to the sinner.

Look again at the life of a single individual. Who can sum up the transgressions even of the most watchful Christian? They are as the sparks from the anvil, which cannot be counted. On the other hand we place the load of God's tender mercies. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits — even the God of our salvation." In this way Jacob estimated that which God had done for him: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and the truth which You have showed unto Your servant." In this way Daniel measured God's mercies to the Israelites: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses — though we have rebelled against Him." Let the Christian also weigh his mercies in the balance of his deserts.

What would be our lot if God were to deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities? What single gift could we claim at His hand? Instead of countless benefits, he who judges of sin aright, will not shrink from owning that he justly merits the eternal displeasure of the most High God. A passage already referred to, reminds us that God "loads men with His benefits." These words suggest very striking ideas of the fullness of God's mercy. The bee returns to her hive laden with her precious freight, gathered from many a flower. The tree bends beneath the weight of the fruit which hangs upon its branches. The ship enters the harbor, sinking almost to the water's edge because of the rich merchandise with which she is stored. The wagon comes home in harvest, so pressed down with sheaves that the weary team can scarcely draw it along. May not these illustrations serve to fix in our hearts the truth here brought before us?

Take the last of them especially, and examine a few of those sheaves of rich mercies which we receive from above.

Consider the mercies which are common to the wide world in which we dwell. Wherever we look, around, above, beneath — we mark the wonderful fullness of God's bounty in creation. We have the glorious lights of the skies — the sun, moon, and stars, all give forth their light for our benefit. It is named as a proof of our Father's compassion for the unworthy that, "He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good." Has the reader ever heartily thanked God, that he has been permitted to enjoy the bright beams of that great luminary which brings light to the whole world?

Within a solitary cell a man once in high position, but found guilty of fraudulent practices, was passing the gloomy years of his imprisonment. There was but one thing that came to him from time to time, as some little relief. When the sun sank low in the west, for a few moments its beams would shine into his lonely chamber. How he longed for that evening hour; how he rejoiced in it when it came — few of us can understand.

Perhaps the remembrance of this incident may quicken our gratitude. It may lead us to value more this among our other mercies — that for years we may have been enjoying as much as we would of the warmth and brightness of the sun's beams.

Again, look around. What rich provision is everywhere made for the needs of man. We have ever returning again and again, fruitful seasons — precious harvests gathered in, sufficing for earth's teeming myriads — fresh supplies of grass and herb for the use of cattle.

We have the earth enriched with hidden wealth — coal fields — yet unexplored, which may supply fuel for centuries — mines of gold and silver, and other metals constantly being opened up — all these mercifully laid up in store for the successive generations of men.

We have the depths of the sea likewise replenished for our use. Vast shoals of fish are yearly being taken, affording a means of livelihood to tens of thousands, and increasing the comforts of a large proportion of mankind. Here, in mercies common to the world, have we reason for abounding praise.

Add another sheaf. Consider the mercies peculiar to our Island Home. In days gone by, Judea was the land which the Lord was said especially to care for, and upon which His eye was fixed from the beginning of the year to the close of it. But what is the case now? Where is the land toward which God has seemed, in our day, to show special favor? Is it not our own? What kingdom has been of late so richly blessed, and so graciously protected, as England?

What long freedom have we enjoyed from the bitter curse of the sword! Within this present century, there is scarcely a country in Europe but has suffered beneath it. Across the Atlantic, during the past few years, what a sacrifice has there been of human life! But we have been in peace. From time to time our soldiers have been fighting elsewhere, but our own shores have been unmolested.

What even-handed justice is administered among us! Of course there must ever be imperfection in all human things; but, as far as it is possible, every man may expect to be fairly dealt with — no man may be condemned without a trial. Our judges can be charged with no taking of gifts or unfair partiality. Before a man can suffer the penalty of any great offence, twelve men must agree that he is guilty.

Life and property are also sacred among us; such protection is granted as but rarely is to be met with. In some lands wholesale robberies and murders are of every day occurrence. With us, but seldom does the murderer escape. Never was there a greater proof of the value in which life is held among us, than the speedy capture of one who had already left our shores. The special steamer, so quickly despatched, and the culprit, shortly after brought back, show that no man may dare, without the prospect of swift punishment, to stain his hands with innocent blood.

Every man has liberty to worship God according to his conscience. Various opinions are freely held, and none may be molested because of them. Religious liberty is our birthright in this Protestant land. Think of Spain. There, for no other crime than reading together the Scriptures, or meeting together for prayer and exhortation — men may be cast into prison and sentenced for years to the galleys. In England we may worship God as we will, and none may make us afraid.

Oh that the Protestants of our country would be alive to the bold encroachments of the Church of Rome! Let the reader be assured that wherever her power is fully established, religious liberty will perish beneath her shadow! She herself openly avows this. The Pope has not hesitated to proclaim, before all Europe, that the right of private judgment is a monstrous heresy. Wherever her

power is limited — she is ever demanding, as a right, perfect equality. Wherever she reigns supreme — she will trample beneath her feet the rights of Protestants. Unless men despise, like Esau, their birthright, let them resist to the death the efforts of Romanism.

Add another sheaf. Our family and domestic mercies. Many who read these pages may possess the blessing of a peaceful, quiet home. Wherever it is, in a retired village, or in the street of a large town or city — it is a most precious gift.

Think of the numbers of homeless wanderers who rest at night in some crowded lodging house, or can scarcely find a shelter to lay their head. Think of the many homes from which sin, and strife, and angry tempers, have driven all comfort away. Think of the comfortless abodes of a large proportion in our overgrown towns and cities, where a single room contains a whole family. Think of the huts and cabins in the sister isle, where such squalid poverty and wretchedness exist.

Then think of your own happy home. Think how, day by day, the hand of a Father bestows upon you needful bread. As much is it from Him, as if each morning He brought to your door a basket with the provision you required for the day! Think how the Wing of the Almighty is continually over your dwelling. What dangers might otherwise overtake you! How easily, by night, when all are asleep, might fire break out — or timbers or tiles give way — or floods of water burst forth — or evil men disturb and injure you. Yet often, weeks, and months, and years pass, and no harm comes near us. When in the morning we arise, and all is well with us — we ought not to forget Him who has safely guarded us. Our hearts and our lips should echo some sweet note of praise. We should be ready to acknowledge to whom it is due. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning — great is Your faithfulness!"

New every morning is the love,

Our wakening and uprising prove:

From sleep and darkness safely brought,

Restored to power, and life, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day

Hover around us, while we pray;

New perils past — new sins forgiven —

New thoughts of God — new hopes of Heaven. Nor less thankful should we be for the cheering companionship of kindred and friends. To most dispositions, long solitude is painfully depressing. Shut out from the society of those dear to us, deprived of all sweet converse — more than half the joy of life is gone. If there are those around us who can rejoice in our gladness, and sympathize in our sorrows — let us not fail to number this among the tokens of our Father's care.

While in the flesh indeed, we may not look for a paradise even in the happiest home. Crosses and cares will come — unruly tempers will arise — harsh words will sometimes be heedlessly spoken — but let not this damp our gratitude. It is but a part of needful discipline, through which we must pass before we are fit for the Father's house.

Add another sheaf. Our personal individual mercies. There is nothing which affects us so nearly as that which happens specially to ourselves. It is wise therefore, to mark well the peculiar proofs of a Father's regard for our welfare, which we may, each one of us, have received. Has the reader still preserved to him unimpaired the gift of sight? Remember then the lifelong trial of those deprived of it. Remember the 40,000 people in England who can no longer behold the fair beauties of creation, or the countenances of those they love. Have you the gift of hearing and of speech? These two are continual inlets of enjoyment. Imagine the case of that afflicted one who awoke, after a severe illness, to the terrible consciousness that sight, and hearing, and speech were all gone — and that, during the remainder of her pilgrimage, she must therefore be almost excluded from the outer world.

Inquire again, as you look back over your past history, whether you cannot put your finger on other special causes for thankfulness. You may have traveled many hundreds or thousands of miles by rail or by road, by sea or by land — and yet no dangerous accident has ever laid you low. Or else, it may be, that you can recall some hair-breadth escape, when there was but a step between you and death. You may have long been kept in health — while in the wards of our hospitals, and in many a home, men and women have been worn with disease, or racked with pain. Or, instead of this, you may have been brought back from the very gates of the grave, and, as with Hezekiah, years have been added to your life.

Perhaps you have been brought out of some impending fear or trouble. You saw the cloud coming, you know how dark it looked, you said in your heart, "Anything but this, Lord!" And He has spared you — the threatening trial has been taken away. Or, it may be, a long desire of your heart has been granted — month after month, unseen by any human eye, there filled your heart the wish for some one of earth's joys. Now you have it. The longing has been satisfied. The gift has been bestowed. Your special mercy, however, may have come in another shape. You would gladly have chosen rest, and ease, and comfort — but instead, you have been chastened and sore tried. Yet ought you not equally to recognize here the loving-kindness of the Lord? "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your law." Not the brightest days of our pilgrimage ought to call forth more praise, than those sorrowful ones which tend to bring us nearer to God. The gardener has no less cause to bless God for the frost and snow, which pulverize and water the earth — than for the congenial sunshine in summer and harvest. A father brings a beautiful flower to his child. At another time, he brings delicious fruit. At another time, he brings a cup of bitter medicine. Is it not the same love which prompts him to give the one as the other? "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord — and shall we not receive evil?" Shall we not believe that both the bitter and the sweet, the painful and the pleasant, are alike the fruit of His Fatherly compassion? For all that He bestows — for all that He withholds — let us still praise Him. "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away — blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Add yet another sheaf. It is beyond all the most precious. Our spiritual mercies. It is these which sweeten and sanctify all the rest. What were all the temporal benefits we possess — if they but smoothed the way down to a hopeless Hell? How could the heart of a wise man rejoice in any earthly gift, if there were no Savior — no promise of life — no assurance of an eternal inheritance above? But here is discovered the abounding goodness of our God. "We bless You for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for Your inestimable love in our redemption." "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" A Bible, with almost every page

studded over with promises. A Father, who has sent His well-beloved into the world for our salvation. A Savior, who once gave life for us, and now pleads our cause at the right hand of the Majesty on High. A Comforter, who makes His dwelling-place within the heart of the contrite. An open Heaven, for all who will enter by the door. A throne of grace, where the weakest and the vilest may find mercy and help.

Sermons and ministers, Christian friends and books, to instruct us.

All these are given, because our Father would have us to be joyful in His salvation.

Let everlasting thanks be Thine,

For such a bright display,

As makes a world of darkness shine

With beams of heavenly day.

Reader, let not the mercies of God ever be forgotten by you. I have endeavored to recall a few of them. Search out those that have not been named. Then let them be the magnet to draw you near to God. If you have hitherto been a stranger to Him, let the goodness of God lead you to repentance. Say to yourself, "Such a merciful God shall be my Refuge and my Portion forever!"

If, unsought, He has hitherto given you so many benefits — then what will He deny you if you truly seek Him? Will He refuse you a share in His everlasting love? Will He not put you among His dear children, and at length make you a partaker of His glory? But if the mercies of God are not as the magnet — if they do not exercise an attractive power — be assured they will hereafter be as the millstone, involving you in a deeper condemnation. Not a gift, not a mercy, but will have a voice to reprove the ingratitude of him who received it, and yet loved not the bountiful Giver. "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him!" Isaiah 1:2-4

There may be other readers, however, who love the hand that feeds them, and which has been so constantly stretched out to bestow benefits upon them. Forget not, then, to pay the rent of praise. The tenant reaping bountiful crops from land belonging to another — will not grudge the return which, from year to year, he makes to the owner. Nor should the Christian forget cheerfully to offer praise — the praise of the lips — the praise of a holy, benevolent life — the praise of a large-hearted liberality on behalf of the temporal and spiritual necessities of a world full of sin and sorrow — to the great Landlord, from whom all his mercies come. When special mercies are granted, mark them also by a special gift, as a thank-offering to some benevolent or Christian object. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord." (Psalms 116:12-17.)

What thanks we owe You, and what love!

A boundless, endless store,

Shall echo through the realms above,
Until time shall be no more!

04.05. Daily Light

Daily Light The wisest men have ever recognized most their own ignorance. The story of Sir Isaac Newton has often been repeated, in which he compares himself to a little child gathering pebbles on the shore, while the great ocean still remains unexplored.

There is not a single natural object around us which we can fully comprehend — still less can we find out the ways of God. But God has not left us completely in the dark. He is truly called "the Father of lights." He gives sun, and moon, and stars, to give light upon the earth. He forms the spirit of man within him, with all that is wonderful in his powers of reason or imagination. He sets before us all the marvels of creation, in which are displayed so many tokens of His excellent wisdom, His mighty power, and His bountiful goodness. But the Great Father bestows upon man a far brighter light than any of these — it is His own Holy Word of Truth. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward!" Psalms 19:7-11. "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The perfections of this heavenly lamp first demand our attention.

We recognize a great beauty in the sublime mysteries of Scripture, side by side with its marvelous simplicity. We gaze upon the lofty mountains of Switzerland, their summits covered with perpetual snow, and often concealed behind a cloud, and there is a grandeur and majesty about them that strikes the beholder with awe, as if in the presence of the great Creator whose handiwork they are.

Even so is it with the devout mind, as it contemplates the mysteries of Scripture. As we dwell upon them we are gladly to confess, "My heart stands in awe of Your word!" The mysteries are its very glory! A Bible without mystery would be a Bible without comfort. What incomprehensible depths are to be found in . . .

the incarnation,

the atonement,

the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart,

the sovereign purpose of God in election,

the great plan of earth's history which is ever being carried forward to its completion, and in which even the wicked are the unconscious agents of the Most High in fulfilling His designs! Who can understand any one of these? And yet how closely are they bound up with every hope in which the Christian rejoices. As from those mountains there arise the mighty rivers which water the vast plains beneath — so do these mysteries minister to us streams of endless joy. No less does the marvelous simplicity of a large part of Holy Scripture commend itself to us. It is a letter from our

Father in Heaven, and it is addressed to the meanest as to the mightiest, to the most unlettered as to those of most cultivated minds. Surely the footprints of a God of love are seen in its thorough suitability to this end. Who may not come and drink here the water of life? Who, except those of a captious and unbelieving spirit, but will find words that shall come right home to their innermost soul? Who can fail to be touched by the parables of Christ, so full of allusions to objects seen almost every day? The sheep following their shepherd along the hill-side. The fisherman casting forth his net into the sea. The sower scattering precious seed. The hen with her brood nestling beneath her wings. The gardener seeking for fruit on the tree which he has planted.

Such references as these to common life abound in all the discourses of the Son of man.

What father, again, is there, however ignorant, but can enter into the touching comparison made in the hundred-and-third Psalm, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him"?

What mother is there, but will acknowledge the power of the argument which God employs to reassure His fearful ones, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget — yet will not I forget you."

What little child is there but may understand the lesson taught by the sparrows, or by the lilies of the field? "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows." "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

What, again, could possibly be plainer than those free invitations and assured promises, upon which all our peace with God depends? Here, then, have we another element of the excellence of the Word of God.

We remark also, that Scripture sets before man a perfect standard of moral virtue. It is not in the heart of fallen men, to imagine such an elevation of human character as here is made essential to our happiness. Integrity, benevolence, and philanthropy; faithful friendship, and pitiful kindness, have often been commended and sometimes practiced, by those who have been ignorant of Jehovah. But where else, except in holy writ, are we commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves? What natural heart would ever have given such prominence to the grace of humility, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Heaven and earth are promised as the heritage of the humble minded.

What, again, can be set beside the life of our great Exemplar, with all its wonderful blending together of the various graces that form the perfect man? Where can you find anything like the Apostolic Epistles — at one moment soaring aloft and telling of Christ on His eternal throne — and the next, descending to the minutest duties which belong to our different relationships in the world? What a bringing down of Heaven upon earth, would be the carrying out of but one single chapter — the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians! The very fact that the holier men have become, the more deeply have they ever confessed their falling short of the standard set before them in the Word, is one manifest proof that such teaching could only come from the Fountain-head of all holiness and truth. The exact fitness of Scripture to meet our acknowledged

condition on earth also claims our notice. The condition of man is very peculiar; there is a strange mingling together; there is something that reminds us of what once he was in Paradise; there is still more that reminds us how deeply he has fallen into sin. A traveler wanders over the ruins of an old abbey or castle, and is struck with the beauty that still lingers there. Its ivy-covered walls, the remains here and there of a gothic arch or window, recall the beauty that it possessed in years gone by — yet it is but a ruin — desolation reigns there — it is no longer inhabited by king or noble — gradually, more and more, is it falling to utter decay.

There is a sense in which this picture truly represents the soul of man. There are yet lingering rays of light; there are plain marks of better days; all the kindliness, the amiability that is abroad in the world among those who have not been renewed by Divine grace, is a proof of it. The religious element, perverted though it is, still survives. Few men can live without having some object of worship. There yet remains, also, natural conscience, and there are ever arising, from time to time, cravings and desires in the heart, which are not of the earth, earthy. In spite of all this, however, it is plain that "man is very far gone from original righteousness." He is a child of sin, of sorrow, and of death:

Sin reigns, instead of Jehovah, within the palace of the soul.

Sorrow, in a thousand shapes, clouds his path.

Death quickly succeeds the griefs and distresses of our pilgrimage, and this is but the precursor of a still heavier doom which remains for the ungodly. In this condition the Word of God finds us, and exactly meets our need.

It explains the mystery of our position.

It reveals the secret of those aspirations which arise within us.

It declares to us that we were created for communion with the Most High God, and that the soul cannot rest until it is enjoyed.

It tells us of His image once implanted there, and of its restoration by grace. Is man a child of sin? The sure Word unfolds the depth of his depravity, his enmity to God, his guilt and the curse which attaches to it — but it goes much further.

It reveals the all-sufficient remedy.

It points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

It promises a complete remission and justification to all who believe.

It brings to the door, even of the guiltiest, the offer of a present salvation.

It tells of the Holy Spirit, and His mighty power to enlighten and to sanctify.

It opens a ready way by which the sinner may be cleansed from all iniquity, and stand at length, without spot or blemish, in the presence of the Lord! Is man a child of sorrow? The Word again meets his case — it sets the matter before him in a new light, "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens!" Proverbs 3:12. The season of affliction is God's threshing time, not to destroy His wheat — but to separate it from the chaff. "Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not

despise the discipline of the Almighty!" Job 5:17 With this it testifies of Jesus as our Consolation, it brings Him to our side, whispering in our sharpest trials, "It is I, be not afraid!" It bids us remember Nain, and Bethany, and, above all, Gethsemane and Calvary. John 14:1-31, Romans 8:1-39, and many similar portions come home to us with fresh meaning. They dry our tears, and call upon us to wait but a little longer; and, if we are Christ's, sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever. Is man a child of death? Does an open grave await him at the close of the journey? The Word still has its message of hope. A tradition tells, that on opening a tomb in Italy a light was found burning, which had been fed by a stream of oil. This is but tradition — yet it may teach us that there is a light in the grave of believers. The body of Christ has hallowed it — the sting is gone. The corruptible body shall be raised incorruptible. He who is the Resurrection and the Life shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Even while awaiting the resurrection, the soul shall be with Christ. Death may be a gloomy avenue, but at the close of it, is the palace of the great King!

We have, then, another excellence of Holy Scripture:

It supplies every need.

It is the key which unlocks every ward of the human heart.

It binds up every wound.

It wipes away every tear.

It altogether changes the character of our earthly pilgrimage.

In the midst of surrounding trials, it gives birth to cheerful hopes and blessed anticipations. In addition to all that has been already stated, ever bear in mind that the Word of God is unchanging truth in a changing world. "The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever!" The Word of God is unchanging truth in a changing world!

Generation after generation has arisen and passed away.

Great kingdoms have had their day, and now are no more.

Men, reckoned wise in their day, have propounded their opinions, and these again have given place to new ones. But amidst all changes, century after century, the Holy Bible has been the Rock on which the heirs of the promise have been resting their every hope!

It has been the anchor of many a sorrowful, tempest-tossed believer.

It has been a pillow of rest to many a weary saint.

It has been a bright star to many a one passing through the dark valley of death.

While men everywhere are asking, "What may I believe?" "Where is truth to be found?" blessed are those who in faith can lay their hand on the old Bible, and, in spite of all specious objections, can heartily say, "Truth is here! I believe this. Here are promises that never fail. Here are hopes that never disappoint. Here is that upon which I may lean when friends are gone, when health fades, when the last milestone is passed, when death and judgment, in all their appalling reality, are close at hand!"

Unless you can calmly, joyfully take your stand on the unerring truthfulness of the written Word, it is impossible that ever you can find abiding peace, or one inch of solid ground upon which you can rest your foot.

How shall we best use this lamp which God has put into our hand? How shall we gain from it the light that is needful to guide us along one path?

It is very essential, carefully to avoid such reading as will unfit the mind for the perusal of Holy Scripture. The light we gain from Scripture depends mainly upon the tone of mind in which we approach it. If we read it in a skeptical, captious, or worldly spirit — it is next to impossible that we should find much profit. The books and magazines which are read during the week have great influence in directing our thoughts, and therefore we should give good heed what kind of works we choose.

Read no books for mere curiosity, which may insinuate doubts, or unsettle your faith in the authority of the Word. Unless the mind is well fortified in the evidences of Christianity, it is surely dangerous to take up the infidel writings that are now so freely circulated. Equally dangerous it is, to read books that would uproot our confidence in any one part of Scripture, while professing to reverence it as a whole. Never do so, without having time and opportunity patiently to investigate the objections that are urged in them. That a full solution will hereafter be made of all that now seems incomprehensible, the Christian need never doubt — but meanwhile it is perilous work to play with Infidelity. Our knowledge is very limited; the Great Enemy delights to suggest difficulties; so that faith may be clouded over, hope may grow faint, yes, the soul may be robbed of its inheritance of truth, to its eternal undoing. A caution is also required as to works of fiction. What is the evident tendency of a large proportion of them? Do they not put bitter for sweet — and sweet for bitter? Do they not call evil good — and good evil? Do they not palliate vice, and cast a fair cloak over the sin, which God has pronounced accursed? Do they not enlist the sympathies of the reader on behalf of those whose life is described to be such as is contrary to the plainest commands? The atmosphere of such reading must be injurious; it is as opposite as possible to that of Scripture. You cannot enter into it with pleasure, and then find any true delight in the Word of God. The Ephesians burned their books, though the price amounted to fifty thousand pieces of silver. It would be well for many to follow their example. A bad book is the worst thief! It steals time. It robs the reader of purity of heart, and of those holy joys that are found in the pages of a treasured Bible. In searching the Scriptures, single out special verses and passages for meditation. It can scarcely be imagined, that any true disciple will omit the regular daily study of these lively oracles. "Search the Scriptures" is a command as imperative as "Pray without ceasing." In doing this, however, it is well to fix the mind on some choice gem of promise, precept, or example — and carry it away as a germ of thought. One Christian may learn by heart some particular verse in his morning chapter; another may take some special truth that has been the keynote of the portion read, and turn over in his mind similar or contrasted passages; another may copy out a difficult verse, or one that has touched his conscience, and, during some quiet hour in the day, may take out the paper and ponder it. It is in proportion as Scripture is really made the subject of meditation, that it becomes food and nourishment to the soul. "O how I love Your law! it is my meditation all the day." Psalms 119:97. "My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises!" Psalms 119:148

Search out the precious veins of truth which Scripture contains. In working a mine, if the workmen discover a vein of silver, or of gold, or of iron — they follow it out; they explore in the direction to which it leads. It is well for those who search the record of God's will, to act in the same spirit.

Single words or expressions frequently open out a vast field for thought, and may be illustrated and explained from large portions of the Word. Take the idea contained in the word "WASHING." Trace it as it runs throughout almost every book.

There are the multitudinous purifyings of the priests. The ceremonial cleansings of those defiled by contact with anything unclean. The Syrian leper seven times washing in the Jordan.

There is the prayer of David, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

There is a promise given through the Prophet Isaiah, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

There is the assurance in Zechariah that, "a fountain shall be opened for sin and for impurity."

There is the saying of Christ to Peter, so deep in the meaning which it suggested, "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me." The Apostle speaks of the once depraved Corinthians as "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The beloved Apostle John also has penned that word, which often has shed its bright ray upon the heart of the contrite, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." The Church on earth gives forth its chief note of praise in the song of the Apocalypse, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The Church above is beheld as a great multitude "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," and the explanation is added, that "they came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!"

Surely these when brought together, set forth in its due prominence, the blessed truth of atonement through the blood-shedding of the Son of God.

Trace another vein running through one of the Gospels. Link together the "I AM'S" of Christ in John's gospel. Marvelously do they unfold the fullness that dwells in Him, and the suitableness of His grace to the peculiar need of each individual soul.

"I am the bread of life: he who comes to Me shall never hunger; and he who believes on Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.)

"I am the light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58.)

"I am the door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and shall find pasture." (John 10:9.) "I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." (John 10:11.)

"I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me, though he were dead — yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26.) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by Me." (John 14:6.)

"I am the vine, you are the branches: he who abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5.)

We might also include another passage from the Apocalypse: "Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am He who lives and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:17-18.) What a glorious galaxy of promises is here opened out before us!

Such subjects might be multiplied indefinitely. Trace the thought implied by the words "LIVING WATER" Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, John's Gospel, and the Revelation alike will illustrate it. Or, examine the "FEAR NOTS" throughout the Old and New Testaments. Or the expression, "YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU," in the Gospels, or the prayers of those who came to Christ. They will all afford inexhaustible treasures of instruction and consolation.

Above all things, never take the Bible into your hands except in a humble prayerful spirit. It is not human learning, so much as the teaching of the Holy Spirit, which is mainly necessary. All the appliances of scholarship can never take a man beyond the mere letter of the Word. Without the wisdom that comes from above, its inner spirit, its true beauty — will be hidden from you.

If we had in our hands a will which in parts was difficult to understand, to whom could we better go, if it were possible, than to the lawyer who prepared it? Just so, to whom can we better go, in the interpretation of the Sacred Record, than to that Divine Spirit by whom holy men of old were taught to write it?

It is by fervent prayer for the aid of the same Spirit, that the Word becomes effectual for our growth in holiness. Let the believer ever seek for a prepared heart, and a mind open to receive the truth. In Psalms 119:1-176 very many times, does the Psalmist breathe forth a petition for Divine instruction. "Teach me Your statutes." "Incline my heart to Your testimonies." "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law."

Then, again, when the chapter has been read, or the sermon has been heard — let the Christian upon his knees take the promise, or the precept, or the example, as it may be — let him name it before God and plead for grace that it may not be forgotten. It is then that the promises of the Word give forth their richest stores, and that its sanctifying lessons are most truly learned.

"O merciful God and heavenly Father, who has given unto us the rich and precious jewel of Your Holy Word — assist us with Your Spirit that it may be written in our hearts to our everlasting comfort — to renew us after Your own image, to build us up and edify us in Christ, to sanctify us, and to increase in us all heavenly virtues. Grant this, O Father, for Your Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace

Our path, as here we stray;

Stream from the fount of heavenly grace —

Brook by the traveler's way.

Childhood's instructor, manhood's trust,

Old age's firm ally;
Our hope, when we go down to dust,
Of immortality.
Word of the living God!
Will of His glorious Son!
Without You, how could earth be trod,
Or Heaven itself be won!

04.06. Daily Prayer

Daily Prayer

Everywhere may prayer be offered up. As men are to pray at all times — so may they pray in all places. "I will that men pray everywhere."

Isaac in the field,

Eliezer by the well's mouth,

Hezekiah on his sick bed,

Nathanael under the fig tree,

Peter on the housetop —

these prayed, and their voice was heard above. Could a pillar be erected in every spot where acceptable prayer had been offered, how many a place would be dotted over with these sacred memorials.

Far from his own native land, in the midst of a heathen city, a servant of Jehovah once bowed the knee before Him in devout supplication. Daniel was in Babylon; he was surrounded by enemies who were envious of his high position, and eagerly sought for some means of accomplishing his downfall. Yet for a while they seek in vain for some cause of accusation, "No error or fault was found in him, forasmuch as he was faithful." The only occasion they can hope to find against him, is the faithfulness with which he served his God. By their means a decree is made, that for the space of thirty days, no prayer shall be offered to God — except to the King. The penalty of disobedience is a cruel death. The servant of God, however, abides steadfast in his allegiance. No danger shall make him swerve from the path of duty. He fears not man, for he sees Him who is Invisible. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before!" Daniel 6:10 This incident may guide our thoughts to a few PROFITABLE REFLECTIONS with reference to daily prayer.

It is possible to combine a devout spirit with the utmost diligence in a secular calling. Daniel had upon his hands, the affairs of a whole kingdom. He was no idler. In the due ordering of the realm over which he was set, so diligent and conscientious was he, that for his prudence and success he was highly commended by Darius.

Yet for all this, he was a thoroughly devout man. He walked with God. He retired again and again from the din and hurry of the world, and spoke words in the ear of his Father in Heaven. With such an example before our eyes, it is in vain for any man to plead that in his particular station in life, to find time for prayer would be out of the question. Not a few similar instances might be given.

Havelock was not a man to neglect duty — yet it is told us that he never left the camp in the morning without first securing time for prayer. Stonewall Jackson, so renowned for his bravery in the Confederate army, was marked often in the midst of the fight, his horse standing still, his eyes closed, his hand lifted up to Heaven. It was discovered that he was redeeming a moment for communion with God. In the great Metropolis, a working man had to leave his home for the workshop every morning at six. He seldom failed to rise at four, that he might anticipate the trials and temptations of the day by a quiet season spent at the mercy-seat. It was the same with a Christian man, a gardener in a Suffolk village. Summer or winter, he would never commence his work, without an hour or two first given to the Word of God and prayer. Does a man profess, "I would pray if I were less occupied — but I have no time!" Interpret this aright. It means, "I have no desire to pray, I have no heart for prayer." Consider honestly, whether this must not be a vain excuse, a mere screen to conceal the real feelings of the heart. For indeed, what is the purpose for which life has been given? Why are days, and weeks, and months, and years allotted to us? Is it not that we may fear, and love, and serve, and worship Him who created, and then redeemed us? Has life any object worthy of it — if this is passed by? How then can men declare, that they have no time for that, on account of which God placed them in His vineyard? How can a man throw away these precious opportunities, and say, "I have no time to obey Him who gives me every moment I possess!" Have not men time to sleep, to eat, to converse one with another, to enjoy many of the pleasant recreations of life, to plan for their own comfort and the welfare of their families, to fulfill the duties of their calling — and have they not time for that which is more important than all — to keep near to their Father and to enjoy His love? Let the reader be assured that all such pleadings are but the plain marks of a self-deceived soul. They only prove but too clearly, that those who make them, have never tasted that the Lord is gracious.

We observe also that prayer is a matter of very deep and solemn importance. In the face of a great and immediate danger, Daniel would not give up his usual habit of prayer. No doubt the flesh would shrink from the prospect that lay before him. The fierce monarch of the forest would be no pleasant companion. The den of lions would be no enviable resting place. Yet he dared all things, rather than forfeit the privilege of calling upon God. "He preferred a night with lions, to a day without prayer."

It was no false estimate which the Prophet made of its importance. Whichever way we regard it, we cannot fail to see that it is no light matter.

It is a test of the new-born soul. Whatever differences exist in the family of God, in language, in temperament, in the means of their conversion, in their rank and position — nevertheless, they are alike in this — that, without exception, prayer is as needful to them as the air they breathe. Go north or south, east or west, and where will you find a single one, taught of the Spirit, who does not continually bend the knee at the throne of grace? Since the days that men began to call upon the name of the Lord — since the time that Enoch walked with God, "the bending of the knee" has ever been a distinguishing characteristic of the household of faith.

Prayer is a mighty preservative from surrounding evil. Compassing us around on every side, are evil influences at work which may inflict deadly injury on our souls. Our necessary interactions with those who are not guided by Christian principle — books and publications teeming from the press, which cannot fail to give a wrong bias to the mind unless grace counteracts it — these and many

similar perils are ever close at hand. A humble, prayerful heart is our best defense. One earnest cry for help, casting ourselves upon the guardianship of the Most High God, will avail more than the strongest resolutions made in our own strength. It was thus that Daniel was safe in so ungodly a city as Babylon. It is thus that we too can be preserved. A forcible illustration has been given of this. The steel workers in Sheffield are furnished with a mask, by which they are enabled to breathe, without taking in the particles of steel that are so dangerous to lungs. But where this needful precaution is neglected, the constitution is injured, and loss of life is frequently incurred. As necessary to a Christian, is the spirit of constant prayer! The neglect of it imperils the life of the soul.

Walking through the crowded thoroughfares of London, a young mechanic would often tremble at the snares and temptations which were around. As he passed along, there would frequently arise from his heart the cry for help, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in Your way!" He was kept from falling, he journeyed safely along his heavenly course, and in later years would thankfully recall the mercy that upheld him. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

Prayer is also the great balm of human woes. Go from house to house through a country village, or through a single street in a large town — and what a sad catalogue of sorrows may you reckon up! In one there is a dying parent, or a child fast sinking into the grave. In another there is distressing poverty or financial embarrassment. In a third, perhaps, there is a heart bleeding through some bitter disappointment, or the unfeeling conduct of one beloved. In a fourth there is some secret sorrow which may not be told. In every case, through prayer, relief may be found. By it the sorrowful, afflicted one comes near to a most pitiful Father, and His loving care becomes a sure rest to the weary spirit.

"Prayer is the unburdening of the soul,

The simple act whereby I roll

Each trial, trouble, cross, and care,

On shoulders able all to bear. The aching heart — the heart oppressed,

Prayer places on a Father's breast,

However heavy be the load,

By prayer I roll it all on God." The excellencies of prayer may be summed up in the words of Chrysostom: "Prayer, in a spiritual sense, is . . .

a haven to the shipwrecked man,

an anchor to those who are sinking in the waves,

a staff to the limbs that totter,

a mine of jewels to the poor,

a healer of diseases, and a guardian of health.

Prayer at once secures the continuance of our blessings, and dissipates the cloud of our calamities. O blessed prayer! You are . . .

the unwearied conqueror of human woes,

the firm foundation of human happiness,

the source of ever-enduring joy,

the mother of all comfort.

The man who can pray truly, though languishing in extreme indigence, is richer than all beside. While the wretch who never bowed the knee, though proudly seated as monarch of all nations, is of all men most destitute!" The CHARACTERISTICS of acceptable prayer are plainly manifested in the example before us. A genuine lowliness and humility of spirit was evident in Daniel. "He knelt upon his knees." The posture of his body, denoted the feeling of his heart. In his pleading for Jerusalem, in the ninth chapter, we find him seeking the Lord "with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." He presents his supplication "not for his own righteousness, but for the great mercies" of the Lord. He takes shame to himself for his own sin, as well as for the sin of his people Israel.

There can be no acceptable approach to the mercy-seat without this humble spirit. Pride of all things, is most hateful to the Most High, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." We must sink low in our own eyes, if we would rise high in the favor of God. Abraham accounted himself but "dust and ashes." Jacob regarded himself "as unworthy of the least of God's mercies." The Canaanite woman was willing to be reckoned as "a dog," if she might but receive the crumbs from the Master's table. Paul, the chief of the Apostles, esteemed himself "less than the least of all saints," and "the chief of sinners." The late Haldane Stewart, after more than fifty years of faithful service, was heard to say that of all the prayers in Scripture, none suited him so well as that of the contrite publican in the temple, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Coupled with humility, in Daniel there was also earnest and hearty importunity. This stands out on the face of the history. No better example of earnestness can be found, except in the case of our Lord. Read over the ninth chapter of Daniel. See the earnestness of the prophet also in the fact that, not once or twice, but thrice each day he called upon God. We must likewise be real and earnest. True heartiness in our petitions is like the hot coal to the incense, which makes the sweet fragrance arise. A languid, half-hearted prayer, petitions for its own denial. Can we expect that God should be earnest in giving — if we are not earnest in desiring and asking? And as we pray earnestly, so we must also pray constantly. "Pray without ceasing!" 1 Thessalonians 5:17. With Daniel it was thrice a day. With David it was so also, "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice."

Give special heed to secure time for the morning prayer. As the streets in hot and dusty weather are watered before the traffic of the day begins, so should our hearts by true prayer drink in the dew and rain of Divine grace, that worldly thoughts, murmuring thoughts, unholy thoughts may be kept down. The prayer of eventide is also to be watchfully remembered. During a single day how much is there that needs forgiveness. Whatever we have done, either in our calling or in the service of Christ, can profit nothing without the Divine blessing. Before the dawn of another day, our summons may come, or the voice of the archangel may announce that time shall be no more.

In all this we have reason to seek, evening by evening, the help and grace that are ready to be given to us.

It is also very greatly for our welfare, that the morning and evening prayer should be linked together by many short intervals of prayer during the day. At midday if we can secure but five minutes to be alone with our Father, they will not be lost. And if we have opportunity but for one sentence — for a look — for a thought of prayer — the arrow will not be shot in vain. Nehemiah in the presence of Artaxerxes lifted up his eye to the everlasting hills, and his petition was heard.

Many are the short prayers of Scripture which are very precious to use for such a purpose:

"Remember me, O my God, for good."

"Keep me as the apple of Your eye."

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!"

"Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me."

"Lord help me!" The firm confidence, and joyful expectation of Daniel in prayer, are also worthy of our imitation. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." He lifted up his eye toward Him who dwells in Zion. He believed the promises of Jehovah to those who should worship toward His holy temple. His trust and hope were in Him who had there recorded His name.

Christian, let your face in prayer be toward the heavenly Jerusalem. Let your eye be fixed on your merciful Father, who has said, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it!" Behold also your Advocate, the Righteous One, holding forth the golden censer, and placing therein the petition which you offer. Expect not to find in yourself or in your doings, one single plea on account of which your prayer can be received. Yet plead with sure confidence the Name, and Blood and Mediation of your Surety. He stands alone, as the one Great Priest of mankind. Depend on Him and you cannot fail. Expect confidently, for His sake, every possible spiritual blessing that you seek, and you shall not be disappointed. "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Mark 11:24 To offer prayer in a doubting, mistrustful spirit is to hinder its progress towards Heaven. If you cut the wings of a bird before you let it fly — it will be sure to fall back to the earth. Don't cut the wings of your prayer by unbelief; rather fledge it by holy reliance upon the faithfulness of the promise. "Let a man ask in faith, without wavering."

We notice also, that the prayer of Daniel was accompanied with thanksgiving. "He prayed and gave thanks before his God." The two are rightly joined together. They should ever go hand in hand. Whenever a new prayer is recorded in God's book, answers to former prayers, proofs of His past loving kindness, should be recalled to mind. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving — let your requests be made known unto God."

Praise is one of the most blessed parts of worship.

It is a joyful and a pleasant thing.

It unseals the lips.

It anticipates the joy of the redeemed above.

It banishes dark thoughts.

It puts the great enemy to flight.

It makes the Christian hopeful for the future.

It glorifies God. A very large proportion of the Psalms consist of devout adoration and giving of thanks. The last five Psalms all begin and close with the same note: "Praise the Lord!" "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

None other than the Holy Spirit can teach us to pray as God would have us. All true humility, all hearty fervor, all filial confidence, all joyful praise — is the sole fruit of the Divine Spirit. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." "The Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." This must be our reliance. The mouth of the well may be stopped by some stone of earthliness or unbelief, but the Spirit can roll it away, as easily as the angel rolled away the stone from the sepulcher of Christ. The inner man may be as a bird within a cage — it would fly upwards, but yet can only chafe itself against the bars of its prison-house. The Spirit, however, can unfasten the door, and the soul can then mount upward to the throne. Though our desires are faint, though our faith is but as a grain of mustard-seed, still let us wait for the anointing of the Holy One, and pray on.

Though I fail, I weep,

Though I halt in pace,

Yet I creep

To Your throne of grace.

We cannot close our consideration of this incident in the life of Daniel without observing, how surely the voice of believing prayer reaches the Father's ear.

Plain was the answer given. A marvelous deliverance was granted to the Prophet. The mouth of the lions was shut — they had no power to harm him. The word of David was true in his case. "You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent!" Psalms 91:13

Equally distinct and immediate, was the answer to the prayer of Daniel 9:1-27. Even "while speaking in prayer," the angel Gabriel was sent forth to him with a message of peace. Very beautifully was there thus fulfilled the promise uttered some two centuries and a half before: "And it shall be that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Isaiah 65:24 A marvelous invention is at work, by which, with great rapidity, messages can be conveyed from city to city, and from country to country. Even beneath the waves of the wide ocean, the cable is laid down by which one continent is linked to another, and by which words, in a few minutes, can be spoken to a friend on a distant shore.

Just so, true prayer links together earth and Heaven, and is more speedy than any telegraph. One moment it arises from a believer's heart — the very same moment it reaches the ears of the Lord

Almighty!

King Hezekiah receives from the lips of the prophet Isaiah, a warning that death is near. Immediately he turns his face to the wall, and prays that his life may yet be spared. Mark how quickly the petition has sped — how quickly the reply is dispatched. Before sufficient time has elapsed for the Prophet to leave the king's palace, "before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court," he was bidden to return to the king, and announce to him that his prayer was heard, and that fifteen years should be added to his life. (2 Kings 20:1-21)

It is true waiting times are often appointed to praying souls. It is not however because the prayer is unheard — but the due time for the blessing has not yet arrived. The longer the delay — often the larger is the gift. It has been said, "Ships that make the longest voyages bring home the most valuable cargoes. So prayers, long unanswered, come home freighted with the richest treasures."

Whether sooner or later, God has pledged His faithful word, that no petition offered in Christ's name, and according to His will, shall fall to the ground. As a dying saint once expressed it, he could see "all his prayers as a cloud of blessing before the throne, there waiting to greet him." Our part is faithfully, perseveringly to pray. It shall be God's part faithfully, abundantly to answer.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us — unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end! Amen." From every stormy wind that blows,

From every swelling tide of woes,

There is a calm, a sure retreat;

'Tis found beneath the mercy-seat!

There is a place where Jesus sheds

The oil of gladness on our heads —

A place than all beside more sweet;

It is the blood-bought mercy-seat.

Ah! where could we flee for aid,

When tempted, desolate, dismayed!

Or how each mighty foe defeat,

Had suffering saints no mercy-seat?

04.07. Daily Clothing

Daily Clothing

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." 1 Peter 3:3-4

Love of dress . . .

is a snare of the Devil;

is a fruitful source of evil;

fosters vanity and pride;

opens a door to flattery;

paves the way for the ruin and disgrace of many a young person;

and robs the Lord's treasury.

Professors of religion, who can find but a paltry dribble for Christian charity, will spend in a year many pounds in needless dress and show. In people of slender means, it often leads also to other mischief. Debts are contracted which remain long unpaid, or even fraud and actual dishonesty are resorted to, that the craving for dress may be satisfied. The counsel of Peter to the women of his day, needs to be often repeated in our own. "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." 1 Peter 3:3-4 The fable of the crane and the peacock is in point. When the peacock was priding itself upon its gaudy array of plumage, the crane suggested, that surely it were a nobler thing to be able to mount upwards to the clouds, than to strut about and to be gazed at by fools. The application is left to the reader.

Besides, also, be it remembered that beneath the coarsest clothing, there often beats a heart endued with heavenly love. While beneath mirthful attire, the eye that searches all things may discern it to be far otherwise. John the Baptist had his clothing of camel's hair — while Herod, within his palace, wore his royal robes. The beggar, beloved of God, sits at the gate in his rags — while within, the rich man is clothed in purple and fine linen.

There is better clothing, however, than what earth affords, and of this I would speak. Amidst every variety of condition and of climate, there is clothing common to the whole household of faith. It is worn alike by the poorest peasant, and the wealthiest noble. It suits equally well the polished European, and the hitherto degraded African. Harken to the joyful language of the Church, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a

priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels!" Isaiah 61:10

What is this glorious clothing in which the Church is attired? In one word, it is Christ; as the Apostle has written it, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:14) It is Christ in the spotless perfection of His righteousness, and in the beauty of His holy character. It is that righteousness wrought out for us in His life and death, and by which every blemish and defect in us is covered and hidden. It is the covering of His Spirit, transforming us into His image evermore, until we become like Him, when we see Him as He is. Here is "the fine linen" in which saints are clothed. Here is the beauty and the adorning, which God puts upon His chosen ones.

We must daily, by faith, put on the righteousness of Christ for our justification before God. In our pilgrimage to Zion, the ground of our acceptance ought never to be left out of sight. What single thing in us or from us is there, upon which we can build our hope? What plea can we draw from any feelings, purposes, efforts, or works of ours — by which we could expect, in any degree, to propitiate the favor of the Most High God? In strict justice, what is the value of any goodness we have to boast? In a few short words may we sum up all that belongs to us: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Our righteousnesses cannot clothe us for they are rags; they themselves need cleansing for they are filthy rags.

Beveridge has truly echoed these words of the old Prophet: "Our very repentance," he writes, "needs to be repented of; and our prayers and tears to be washed in the blood of Christ." In a similar spirit is the confession of one, whose touching strains of Christian psalmody waken many a response in the heart of the believer. My God, how perfect are Your ways,

But mine polluted are;

Sin twines itself about my praise,

And glides into my prayer.

I cannot tell what You have done

To save me from my sin;

I cannot make Your mercies known,

But self-applause creeps in. Where then can we turn? Only unto Him who is named Jehovah Tsidkenu, "The Lord our Righteousness." None otherwise can we hope to be accepted than that proud Pharisee Saul was, who aforetime had gloried in his own blamelessness and obedience to the law. Like him must we "count all things loss that we may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

We must also daily put on, through the grace of the Spirit, the holy character of the Son of man. Our justification in Christ must be manifested by our conformity to His likeness. If His righteousness is upon us — then the grace of His Spirit will be in us. All that is unlike Him, all that is contrary to the example which He left, must be cast aside. The grave-clothes of our sinful state must be put off — sloth, selfishness, strife, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, a restless ambition, an absorbing love of money, and a carnal mind — these must be

renounced. We must ever be looking upon Christ, that we may discern wherein we may walk as He did on earth. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Christ was clad with the garment of devout prayerfulness. It was "praying," Luke tells us, that He went down into the water at His baptism. It was "while He prayed" on the mount that He was transfigured, and His clothing became white and glistening. "Rising up a great while before it was yet day," did He, on one occasion, depart into a solitary place to pray. At another season, before setting apart the twelve, "He continued all night in prayer to God." From the garden where Christ often resorted with His disciples, did the agonizing prayer thrice ascend to His Father in Heaven. On that tree of life, the cross of our salvation, three times at least, did Jesus pray. Right through the earthly pilgrimage of the Man of Sorrows, His strength, His consolation, was to pour out His heart to Him, with whom from eternity He had ever been.

Christian pilgrim, follow Christ continually to the mount of prayer. Learn of Jesus Christ to pray. He has commanded you, He has invited you, He has promised to hear you, He has gone before you in the path.

Christ was clad with the cloak of zeal, coupled with a meek and humble spirit. "He was clad with zeal as a cloak." In His youth He could say, "Don't you know that I must be about My Father's business?" With a scourge of small cords in His hand, did He drive out the buyers and sellers from the temple, so that His disciples remembered the words, "Zeal for Your house has consumed Me!" When by His word spoken to the Samaritan woman He had recalled her to the fold, He could say, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

Yet, likewise, what marvelous meekness shone forth in all that He did! Willingly does He go down to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph, and remain subject to them. When the Samaritan villagers shut their doors against Him, tired and wearied as He was with His journey, He refuses to call down fire upon them, and quietly travels on to another village, declaring that the Son of man was not "come to destroy men's lives but to save them." He takes the lowest office of the lowest slave. Girt with a towel, He stoops down to wash the feet of those He loved. "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats." 1 Peter 2:23. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

Herein also let us follow the Master.

Boldness and zeal for the honor of God and His truth in the world are not to be despised. It is a grace to be earnestly coveted, especially in the days in which we live. Around the ark of God, perils not few nor small may plainly be discerned. Low views of the authority of Scripture, departures in various directions from the Divine simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, everywhere abound.

We need zeal and courage to stand alone, if it may be so, wisely and yet boldly to maintain the old landmarks. It was a noble saying of Athanasius, "Athanasius against the world — and the world against Athanasius." It was also a brave word of Luther, when summoned to stand as a witness for Scripture truth against the corruptions of Romanism: "Though there were as many devils at Worms as tiles upon the housetops, I would go through them all in the name of the Lord." But zeal must be tempered with meekness. "Be clothed with humility." No self-sufficiency, no self-wisdom, no

despising others who do not receive the truth as we receive it — ought to characterize a disciple of Christ.

Too often spiritual pride lurks beneath an apparent zeal for religion. Do we not find those, who seem to imagine that by some means they are wiser Christians than any who have gone before them? Hearken to the loud and confident tone in which they will run on for half-an-hour, without paying the least heed to anything that may be urged on the other side. Mark how they will propound some new interpretation, some new view of doctrine, or of a passage in Scripture, and then quietly put down any doubt or difficulty suggested, by saying, "If you are a child of God, you will be taught this."

Oh, for more of the spirit of a little child! Oh, for more of the meekness that will make men "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to become angry!" When shall we be willing to own, and to act upon it, that the most enlightened Christian in this world can obtain but very partial views of the truth, and that on every side he is apt to err? "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." 1 Corinthians 13:12

Learn here, also, to covet the spirit of quiet, effective power — rather than the noisy vociferation and excited manner, which by some is deemed necessary for success in dealing with souls. Look at the ministry of Christ. There was a power and reality about it which made the people marvel — but there was little noise. "His voice was not heard in the streets." But twice, I believe, are we told that Christ spoke "with a loud voice," and in neither case was it in preaching. At the tomb of Bethany, with a loud voice, He cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" Also, in His hour of bitter agony, Jesus "cried with a loud voice — My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me!"

It is true, doubtless, that in some cases the loud, noisy tongue may arrest attention to the things of God, for the Spirit can employ any means He chooses; but there is a mighty effect in a gentle, earnest address, spoken under an unction from the Holy One. It may produce less apparent response, but usually it tells more in the end. Of course in public speaking, animation and life are very necessary, and to this a fair amount of action will usually contribute. I speak not against this, but against the unnatural tone, and the boisterous style, by which an attempt is so often made to work upon the feelings of the hearers. In a dock-yard in the South of England, where ships are plated with iron, I have watched the working of various pieces of mechanism employed. It is interesting to notice the iron-cutter — the blade descending so quietly, that to a bystander it would seem that it could scarcely hurt an infant's finger, and yet so mighty is the hydraulic pressure, that thick plates of solid iron in a moment are cut in twain. So effectual may be "the still small voice" of the worker for God, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ was arrayed with unsullied purity, coupled with tender compassion toward the erring and the fallen. The spotless purity of His life, none can forget. At every turn was He meeting with sin and mingling with sinners. For thirty years He lived in a spot which was a very byword for evil. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He went in and out among Publicans, as well as Pharisees. Yet, who could lay a charge of sin at His door? No thought of iniquity ever lodged within His breast. No unrighteous action ever defiled those hands, which so constantly were stretched out to bless. Like as a ray of the glorious sun may enter the darkest abode of misery and vice, and still remain in itself as pure as before — so He, who was the very Sun of Righteousness, was holy,

harmless, and undefiled — though continually in contact with the iniquity that on all sides abounded.

Yet, Christ was reckoned the Friend of sinners, and He was so. He stood not aloof from any, if only He might win their souls. He touched the leper, to show that He abhors no sinner that comes to Him. In the house of Levi, He sat down amidst such as had sunk deepest in the mire. The taunt thrown out against Him, that "He received sinners, and ate with them!" was acknowledged to be true. He thereupon spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd, tracking the footsteps of the lost ones on the mountains. Over the city which rejected Him, He let fall burning tears of tender pity. Even in His last agony, does He rescue yet another perishing one from the grasp of the destroyer, and bears him along with Himself, safe to Paradise. The same spirit becomes the servant as the Master. The garment of holiness must cover us. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Rest not until each plague spot of sin is gone. Whensoever evil thoughts arise, be watchful at once to resist them — and, as soon as possible, to cast them off. On the Lake of Geneva, I once observed a servant on board the steamer frequently shaking the canvas over the deck, with a long rod which he held in his hand. I inquired the purpose of his doing so. In reply, he answered, that he was shaking off the sparks from the fire, before they settled and could do injury. Let the Christian act in a similar way. With the rod of a holy determination and of prayer for help, cast off as they arise, sinful thoughts and imaginations. Don't let them settle. Don't give them time to leave their mark behind. But while, after the example of Christ, sin in every shape is abhorred — be very compassionate towards those who have gone astray. Trample not upon the drunkard or the fallen one. Stretch out the hand to lift up any within your reach. Make it an important part of your business in life to win souls for Christ and His kingdom. Who can tell the good that may be effected, even where the instrument may be very feeble? The tear of a little girl fell upon her father's cheek, as he was carrying her with him to one of those haunts of evil which abound in the metropolis. It touched his heart, broke the spell of former habits, and saved a soul from death.

Harlan Page, the joiner, before his death, could count by hundreds, those to whom the Spirit had blessed his words. A deaf and dumb painter in Brussels longed for the welfare of those afflicted like himself. By his means, eight or nine such were led to Christ; and while the ordinary congregation were assembled in the Church, he would gather his converts in the school-room beneath, and there would instruct them, and lead them with him to the mercy-seat, in silent yet hearty worship.

It is written, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever!" Daniel 12:3 In Christ is a marvelous combination of all that is lovely and beautiful. It is written of the Most High, "He covered Himself with light, as with a garment." It is well known that in one single ray of light, there is the combination of rays of various hues. Christ, as the only begotten of the Father, was also clad with light, and in this was there such a wondrous variety of heavenly graces. Whatever virtue or grace was ever witnessed in another — was fully, preeminently in Him. The faith of Abraham,

the godly fear of Isaac,

the meekness of Moses,

the patience of Job,
the holiness of Isaiah,
the devout prayerfulness of David,
the integrity of Daniel,
the sincerity of Nathanael,
the fervency of Peter,
the zeal of Paul,
the tenderness of John —

all these, in their brightest colors, shone forth in Him, who was full of grace and truth. In our measure, let us follow Christ in this beautiful harmony of Christian graces. Let no part of His character be left out of sight. This coat of many colors, and yet these blending into one, which was worn by our Joseph — may be also upon us His brethren. The Spirit of God can reveal to us where we fall short, and then endue us with that which is lacking.

Mark how an Apostle calls upon us to put on, not one grace only, but all. "Make every effort to . . .

add to your faith goodness;
and to goodness, knowledge;
and to knowledge, self-control;
and to self-control, perseverance;
and to perseverance, godliness;
and to godliness, brotherly kindness;
and to brotherly kindness, love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!" 2 Peter 1:5-8 Without this putting on of Christ here on earth, there can be no abiding in His presence hereafter. A feast is provided. The guests are invited. Not a few are gathered together. Good and bad, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, are there assembled. At length, the King comes in. He regards not what may have been their condition or their character in bygone days, but He does regard what clothing is upon them now. "He saw there, a man that had not on a wedding garment." Upon that one His look is fixed. To him the question is put, "Friend, how did you get in here, not having on a wedding-garment?" "He was speechless." He cannot plead his ignorance; for he knew, as did the other guests, what clothing was befitting such a Presence. He cannot plead his poverty; for the fitting garment, as also the rich provisions of the feast, were granted freely through the royal bounty of the King. Then, shut out forever from that feast, was the man who thus cast contempt upon Him who spread it.

Within the professing Church of Christ are to be found those who shall stand in the same position. Apparently they have accepted the gracious call of the Gospel, but in truth they are despising and rejecting it. The solemn inquiry which must one day be met is this, "Is your soul clothed with Christ? Does the robe of His righteousness cover your unrighteousness? Do you stand evermore before God, relying solely upon His merits, His obedience, His finished work on Calvary? Together with this, do you daily, through His Spirit, strive after conformity to Him? Do you pray to be endued with His perfect character, His lowliness, His zeal, His tender love, His purity of heart and life?"

If otherwise, that day will reveal it. Each individual soul, who in this is found lacking, must answer for it to the King. It matters not what other clothing may be upon you. It may be the fair garment of a virtuous exterior, and a life of kindness and integrity among your fellow men. It may be the garment of a most devout religious ritualism — the unflinching observance of hours and seasons for worship; yet, if it is not Christ, it avails nothing. He alone is made of God to the sinner, "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." A CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER. My God, in me Your mighty power exert!

Enlighten, comfort, sanctify my heart;
Sweeten my temper, and subdue my will,
Make me like Jesus, with Your Spirit fill.
I want to live on earth a life of faith,
I want to credit all the Bible says;
I want to imitate my Savior's life,
Avoiding lightness, gloom, and sinful strife.
I want to bring poor sinners to Your throne,
I want to love and honor Christ alone;
I want to feel the Spirit's inward power,
And stand prepared for death's important hour.
I want a meek, a gentle, quiet frame,
A heart that glows with love to Jesus' name;
I want a living sacrifice to be,
o Him who died a sacrifice for me.
I want to do whatever God requires;
I want a heart to burn with pure desires;
I want to be what Christ my Lord commands,
And leave myself, my all, in His dear hands.

O Lord, pour out Your spirit on my soul!
My will, my temper, and my tongue control;
Lead me through life to glorify Your grace,
And after death to see You face to face!

04.08. Daily Work

Daily Work

There was work in Paradise. God formed man for labor. He took the man whom He had made, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

There is work in Heaven. Angels go forth on their errands of mercy. They execute the commands of their Creator. "Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word!" Psalms 103:20

We may believe that the rest provided for the people of God will be no state of inactivity — but joyful, grateful service, without weariness, and without cessation.

There is work on Earth. Man is not born to trifle, but to fulfill his measure of busy toil, according to the will of God. In the 104th Psalm we have described, in their wonderful harmony, the manifold works and ways of God. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the foundations of the earth. He sets a bound for the waters of the great deep. He waters the hills from above. He causes grass to grow for the cattle. He appoints the moon for seasons; and the sun knows his going down. Then after all these have been spoken of, it is added, that it is appointed for man to labor. "Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening."

It is one of the wheels in the great system and plan by which the world is ordered, that toil in some shape should be the portion of man while he lives. There ought to be no drones in the hive — no idlers on earth. See how the duty of man, in this respect, is embedded in the moral law. As much is it commanded, that for "six days man shall labor and do all that he has to do," as that the seventh day shall be to him a day of holy rest.

See, again, how Paul, writing to the Corinthians, exhorts "every man to abide in the same calling wherein he was called;" and gives it as a command to the Thessalonians, that they should "study to be quiet, and mind their own business, and work with their own hands." And, again, that "if any man would not work — neither should he eat!" Be assured that work, in any honest vocation, is worthy of all honor. It was a custom among the Jews, that however wealthy might be the family, each son should learn some trade or occupation. In accordance with this, Saul of Tarsus, brought up in all the learning of his age — yet worked as a tent-maker.

Neither let the Christian forget that the man after God's own heart, in his early life, tended his father's flock; or that David's greater Son worked as a carpenter at Nazareth. No fact so much as this will ennoble the humblest craft. A few plain words of counsel may assist those who would be faithful in their daily work.

Settle it in your mind as an undoubted truth, that an All-wise hand allots to each his appointed task. We do not fall into our various positions by any mere chance. It has not been merely the choice of parents, or a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances — but a divine hand is to be traced, permitting, controlling, changing human schemes and arrangements, as seems best to

Himself.

What certain confusion and disorder would be the result, if the employer of a large number of laborers on an estate were to leave to each one the choice of his work. He cannot possibly do so. He must allot to each his place. One is sent to plough, another to reap, another to go with the team to a neighboring town, or to clear a forest, or cut down trees. The work of every one is clearly marked out.

It is equally so with the great Master. He is spoken of as the householder, who left for a season his house in the care of servants. He commanded the porter to watch, and to all he assigned their respective duties in his absence. "He gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work." (Mark 13:34) The remembrance of this would still many a rising murmur, and calm many an unquiet thought. When disposed to repine at the lot in life assigned to us, when we imagine that we could better perform any other work than that which devolves upon us — let us speak to our own heart and say, "My Father is wiser than I. My Father knows far better than I do, what is most for my lasting welfare; I will therefore cheerfully run the course which He has marked out, and, in His strength, will endeavor to fill the niche in which He has placed me."

Settle it also in your mind, that special discomforts and inconveniences pertain to every walk of life. The working man returning home weary from the day's fatigue, may sometimes envy one whose work is chiefly among his books, in the study or the office; yet if he had tried both, perhaps he would prefer his own toil. He would find that "the sweat of the brain," is often more trying than "the sweat of the brow." The errand boy may envy the wealthy noble, as he rides past in his splendid equipage — but he sees not the cares that ever accompany such a position. "There is a cross in every lot," and not seldom the cross weighs heaviest, which is altogether concealed from bystanders. With some reader it may be, that the work which is absolutely necessary for you to perform seems almost beyond your strength. The distance you are compelled to walk, the long hours during which you are engaged, or the nature of the work itself — brings with it weariness which is almost insupportable. Or perhaps it is the confinement within doors, which makes it irksome and tedious. You are shut out from breathing the fresh air. You cannot leave the shop, or the work-room, or the sick chamber, for many hours together — and this tires out your patience. Or with some reader the greatest trial may be that you have no interest in your work. It is not too hard for you, nor is the confinement too close; but you feel it mere drudgery, you grow weary of the dull round of common-place duties. You would gladly exchange it for something more exciting, and for that which has more variety.

Whichever of these trials may be yours, look up and see if there is not sure consolation to be found in Holy Scripture, and in the hopes of the everlasting Gospel. Apply to your own heart the promise, that "as your days — so shall your strength be." When weary of long hours at work, enliven it if possible by repeating to yourself some passage of Scripture, or by humming a few verses of a cheerful hymn. A dressmaker in London was borne down by the fatigue she had endured, and by anxiety about provision for the future; her faith sank, unbelief gained for a while the upper hand, but her eye lighted on a passage of Scripture which met her case, "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks upon me." Her heart was lightened of her load, and she patiently continued her toil.

Let the reader aim also at doing all work in Christ's name, and for His glory. It will rise at once from mere toil and drudgery, to holy service, acceptable in the sight of God. Even the slaves were

exhorted by Paul to work as serving a Master in Heaven. From Him at least, they shall receive double wages — present peace while in the midst of their work, and the reward of the glorious inheritance hereafter.

We need not bid for cloistered cell

Our neighbor and our work farewell;

Nor strive to wind ourselves too high

For mortal man beneath the sky. The trivial round, the common task,

Will furnish all we ought to ask —

Room to deny ourselves, a road

To bring us daily nearer God. In every kind of work, and in all the business transactions of life, be thoroughly and strictly honest and conscientious. One of the greatest scandals of our day is the little regard that is paid to genuine honesty. If only it will secure a point, if only it will open a way of escape from a present difficulty, or if some financial advantage may be reaped, and at the same time a man can just keep within the bare letter of the law — no scruple is entertained about the course to be taken. And as to whether it is strictly honest or not, is reckoned a very secondary consideration. In almost every department of life the same blot may be discovered. On the Stock Exchange, the ungodly man can discern no difference between the professing Christian and himself, in a readiness to take an unfair advantage of another. In the shop how common it is to call things by wrong names — French, English; or English, French;

or to sell the same article at a different price to various customers;

or to put a price label on a superior article, while an inferior one is given to the customer;

or to hide blemishes or defects in that which is sold;

or to run down and depreciate that which one wishes to buy: "It's no good, it's no good! says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase!" Proverbs 20:14 With respect to debts, how much fraud is practiced. Goods are purchased without the least prospect of payment being made. Or when debts are contracted, men often take no pains or trouble to liquidate them. With respect to the Bankruptcy Court how much underhand work is carried on. Men knowingly live beyond their means with the intention, when necessary, of claiming bankruptcy. Property is secreted, to be used afterwards; or a legal deed is obtained, assigning over to one creditor what ought to be equally divided among all. In such cases, however, men often defeat their own purpose; and a straightforward, open course would usually be found, in the end, to answer far better. The same unfaithfulness is found too often in the officials of joint stock companies — in those who exercise control over the property of others, in clerks, and in servants left in charge of a household.

Let the Christian reader, whatever his position in life is, manifest a different spirit. Over the entrance to a market-place in Scotland are engraved the words of the Scriptural Proverb, "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is His delight." It were well if they were engraved upon the heart and memory of all engaged in business of any kind. These words have a

very wide scope. They prescribe fair and just dealing in all that we take in hand. In the Epistle to the Thessalonians we have a similar command. It was the will of God "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such." The Lord Himself will take upon Him the punishment of such as have wronged others, but have evaded the reward their evil deeds have deserved. Terrible will be the lot of the smooth-tongued professor, who has seemed in the Church every whit a Christian, when there is brought to light all the double-dealing and over-reaching which his hand has practiced.

Oh, consider not merely what is legal, but what is morally right. Much that is legally right, may be morally wrong. Many things that no human court could ever touch, will be deemed heinous offences in the court of Heaven.

Never swerve one hair's breadth from the most thorough integrity. Wherever you are, and however difficult — strive to be a Nathanael. Should your faithfulness bring with it temporal loss, take it as the cross laid upon you. Displease man, rather than God. No man, in the end, shall ever be a loser by too strict obedience to His command. Assuredly whatever may be given up for conscience sake, will be repaid a hundredfold.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things!" Php 4:8 Avoid indolence and sloth, on the one hand — and, if possible, overtaking body or mind on the other hand. Be diligent. Be laborious and painstaking. "Whatever your hand finds to do — do it with your might." Whatever has to be done — do it carefully and well. "One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys." Proverbs 18:9 Redeem the time by early rising, by watchfulness over the hours as they pass, that none be squandered away. A mason, in going to his daily work, had every morning to pass by the study of an eminent minister of Christ. It was winter, and again and again he noticed a light there as he passed. He discovered the minister was already at his books. "If he rises so early to study — he must have something to say worth hearing," the man said to himself, "I will go and see!" It was this which led the man to church, and afterwards to become a follower of Christ. With some few zealous Christians, however, the danger is on the opposite side. Life and health are talents bestowed upon us, and ought to be carefully husbanded. They are not lightly to be thrown away. Many a young Christian, by undue exertion, or by late hours spent in reading, or by neglecting to take necessary recreation — has worn out his strength, and been laid aside from any active exertion whatever; or perhaps has been lost to the Church and the world by premature death. Humanly speaking, such lives might often have been spared, if a little wise self-restraint had been exercised; and in the ripeness of a matured piety, they might have effected far more than they accomplished by their early zeal.

Let it be our maxim rather to do thoroughly well whatever we undertake, than to take up more work than we can fairly manage. Let not this, however, be any plea for folding our hands and doing little or nothing, when everywhere exertion is needed. Let an enlightened conscience, and a heart warm with love to Christ, show you on which side your danger lies.

It has been said, that if Satan sees a man asleep at his post and doing nothing for Christ, he is well content to have it so; but that if he sees him wearing out mind and body, he will whisper to him,

"Work, work, work!" because he will thus the sooner be rid of one who withstands him. Be ready helpers one of another. If only we have the mind to do so, greatly can we lighten each other's toil. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." When Simon and Andrew were themselves unable to secure the draught of fishes which they had taken, they beckoned to their partners in the other ship, that they should come and help them. So they did — and the work which was too great for those in the one boat, was easily accomplished by the aid of those in the other boat. Even so ought Christian people to lend a helping hand to those who need it. A neighbor may lighten the toil of a weary watcher, by taking her place occasionally in the sick chamber. A husband may lift a heavy burden from the wife, by helping her occasionally when domestic cares are pressing heavily upon her. Scarcely a day passes, but we might find some opportunity of rendering assistance to those among whom our lot is cast. A remark has been made that there are two heaps in the world — the larger heap, that of sorrow and care — the lesser heap, that of happiness. It is the part of a Christian, every day to strive to increase the one heap and to diminish the other. In few ways can we do this better, than by putting our own shoulder beneath the burden which others around us have to bear. In all your labors depend for success on help given from above. It is not our efforts, however well directed — but the blessing of our Father which ensures success. "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain." Psalms 127:1 In everything connected with your calling, continually ask for wisdom, and a prosperous outcome to your labors. Don't imagine for a moment that such matters are too commonplace to bring before God. In all that concerns the comfort and prosperity of His servants, we need not fear that our Father will turn away His ear.

Two men, the one a Jew and the other a professing Christian, sold the same wares in the same public thoroughfare. The former, like many of the seed of Abraham, had a very strong faith in the providential care of God. Both men bought their goods at the same wholesale stores, and agreed to sell them at the same price. The Jew, however, was far more successful than his neighbor. "I will tell you how it is," said the Jew to him one day, "I never unlock my door and begin my work but I say, 'O God of Jacob, You know that I need support for my family, send me a customer.' Then," he added, "when I have had one, I thank God, and ask Him to send me another; but you stand outside your stall, and all day long cry out to those who pass by, and ask them to come and purchase from you, and yet you never prosper." It is a secret worth remembering in business, as in other things, that "the blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." Whereas, the wealth obtained without the favor and blessing of the Most High, seldom brings much comfort to its possessor.

Remember, finally, that the every day work of which I have been chiefly speaking, is not the great end for which we were created. It is very needful in its right place, but there is something far higher and of more lasting importance. Lay to heart that a few short years or months will pass by, and things will assume very different proportions. Now, business, and work, and family affairs, and the ledger account, and the measure of our wealth stand out before us, as if they alone were worthy of our thoughts. Then, when the eye is glassy, and the pulse beats low, and heart and flesh fail — the present scene will no longer be our all. "What is before me in the world to which I am hastening?" will be the all-important inquiry.

Look at life in its two divisions — the short life that now is, the long life that then will follow; and the grave, the point at which we pass from one to the other. Be not like a thoughtless generation, who

regard the grave as a goal, and all beyond as a mere phantom. Rather regard life as stretching out far, far beyond the limits of threescore years and ten, and embracing eternal ages in its duration — and then deal with the present fleeting hour as the seed-time for the future.

Hearken to the words of the Great Teacher, "Labor not for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give you." Weigh your success in life, by other balances than those of the world. Is the great end of it being advanced? Are you dying to sin, and living to God? Are you cleaving fast to the Friend of sinners, and thus being created anew in His likeness? Compared with this, all other things will soon fade into insignificance. In Westminster Abbey there is a plain tablet to the memory of John Bacon, who was once of some eminence as a sculptor. Upon it is an inscription prepared by himself before his death: "What I was, as an artist, seemed of some importance to me while I lived. But what I was, as a believer in Jesus Christ, is the only thing of importance to me now."

Here let me exhort the reader most conscientiously to observe each returning Sunday. Without this, to maintain right views of our chief work on earth is clearly impossible. Worldly matters must necessarily occupy the attention of most people during a large part of the six days; and if the seventh is not esteemed sacred, if it is not hallowed by holy worship and separation from common pursuits — then how can spiritual life be nourished and quickened? It is not only a plain duty to obey a plain command, but it is an absolute necessity, if life eternal is reckoned by us of more importance than the affairs of this passing world — that we should employ the precious opportunities which the Sabbath affords to grow in grace and the knowledge of God. If a farmer considers well how he may best cultivate the plot of ground under his care — let the Christian consider how best he may use each holy day of rest, so as to reap the largest spiritual profit.

Strive beforehand to cast aside the cares of work or business. "I leave my business on London Bridge on Saturday evening, and do not take it up again until I cross the bridge on Monday morning." Such was the remark of a London tradesman.

Give the whole day to God. Be it your delight and joy to treasure up each hour and moment, that when evening comes you may know that something has been learned, something done for your own good, and that of those around you. Be a hearty worshiper in the house of God. Lift up voice and heart in the worship of God. Take part in the hymns of praise which are sung. Carry home from the Lessons and the Sermon some thought that reminds you of a besetting sin, or of present duty, or of the excellence of Christ; then, when next upon your knees, mention it before God, and ask that it may abide with you so as to influence your practice on the Monday.

Improve well the intervals between the times of public worship. Don't keep the world at your elbow; try to avoid unsuitable conversation. On such a day the less that is said about trade, or farming, or politics, the better. Leave the business letter to be written, and the newspaper to be read, until Sunday is past. There is no lack of Bibles and Christian books that will help us. With children, it is true, there is often great difficulty, and I would counsel parents to take care not to press upon them that which is beyond their years. Cultivate a cheerful spirit. In simple words tell them Bible narratives. Sing hymns with them at your own fireside. Give them pictures on Scriptural subjects. These together will make the day pass happily enough. With young or old, each Sabbath ought to be a step on the ladder that leads to an eternal rest; there is not one to be lost, not one more than we need. A young man was accustomed each Sunday morning to pass by a church, on his way to

join his companions in pleasure-taking. When he lay upon a sick bed, the thought of this came home to his conscience. "If I creep on my hands and knees," said he, "I will be there next Sunday." But the resolution was in vain; the time was past — the hand of death was upon him!

04.09. Daily Walking

Daily Walking

Most men have their daily walk. With the merchant or the clerk, it may be to the place of business in the crowded city. With the village pastor, it may be in visiting his flock. With those who have leisure, it may be for their own recreation. The child of God, whatever his position in life, has also his daily walk. It is named in Scripture more than once, "Enoch walked with God." "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." The idea comprehended in these words is a very marvelous one. In the present state of society, it is not common to see a man of rank walking in friendly fellowship with the laborer, as he goes to his daily work in the morning, or returns from it in the evening. Still more surprised should we be, to see a member of the Royal family conversing along the road with some ragged beggar. But what is the idea presented to us in the expression "walking with God"? It is the Creator of Heaven and earth — in company with one of the creatures that His hand has formed. It is the King of kings and Lord of lords — in close fellowship with a fallen child of Adam. It is the thrice Holy Jehovah — walking with one "shaped in iniquity," and stained by countless transgressions. "Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him, or the son of man that You make account of him?"

Consider more particularly the thought here expressed. In walking with God, there must be close intimate friendship. Between two people who would happily walk together, there must exist a thorough oneness. A cold indifference on the one side, or the least ill-feeling on the other — would destroy all its enjoyment. Should there be any cause of strife between them it must be removed — there must be a genuine, hearty reconciliation. "Can two walk together — unless they be agreed?" Learn, then, the first step in the daily walk of the Christian. It has been stated before, in a previous chapter, but it needs constant repetition — you must be reconciled to God — you must be at peace with your Maker.

Sin has raised a great barrier between earth and Heaven. A just God threatens the sin that man has wrought with righteous judgment. Man shrinks from the Judge, whose wrath he fears. Jesus, however, stands forth as the Daysman — the great Peacemaker. He receives in His own person the desert of our transgressions, that we may go free. As the lightning rod receives the current of fire, and thus it passes over the building harmlessly to the ground — so does Jesus receive in our stead the fiery wrath which would have fallen upon us, and we are saved.

Thus He brings the sinner near to God. In His name may be found immediate reconciliation. Five long years was David before he would again see the face of Absalom, after the offence which he had committed. Far otherwise is it with our Father in Heaven. Not a year, not a month, not a day, not a moment would he bid us wait — before we again return to Him, and rejoice in His Fatherly love. Though you are far away, separated from Him as the Poles one from the other — yet, renouncing your sins, through Jesus, you are welcome this very day to a place in His heart.

Only Remember your Peacemaker. The men of Tyre and Sidon, we are told, having made a friend of Blastus, the "King's chamberlain, desired peace from King Herod, because their prosperity wholly depended upon his favor. (Acts 12:20) Shall they not teach us a lesson? Having made a friend of Jesus, the well-beloved of the Father, let us, above all things, desire peace with the Great King; knowing that all our comfort in life, and our hope beyond, depends upon our acceptance before Him. In walking with God, there must be some degree of similarity in mind and disposition. In true companionship there must necessarily be this. In the friendship of David and Jonathan, there was doubtless some strong affinity of disposition, which so closely drew them together. What sympathy has the enthusiastic lover of art — with one who can discern no beauty in the choicest sculpture, or the most exquisite painting? What sympathy has the well-read student — with the man who scorns all books except the ledger? What is there in common between the earnest-hearted follower of the Lamb — and the mirthful trifler who lives but for the pleasures of the day? As an illustration of this, is it not often found that there is more true fellow-feeling between friends than relations? What is the cause of this? In many instances, is it not because in the one case there is the binding link of love to the Savior, which there is not in the other? Or consider what wretched lives are often passed through an uncongenial marriage. For years a Christian woman had no comfort in religion, no peace of mind, no happiness at her own fireside — and she traced it all to her having married, against her conscience, one who walked not in the way of godliness. To maintain happy fellowship with God there must, in the same way, be likeness to Him. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His image must afresh be stamped upon the soul. Our God is holy, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity — then, if you are His child, you must follow after holiness and abhor the thing which is evil. Our God is a fountain of love — then you also must dwell in love, and put on affections of mercies, kindness, and tender charity. Our God delights in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression — then you likewise must forgive your enemies, and do good to those who hate you. It is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." "Be followers (or imitators) of God, as dear children." "Be therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." To walk with God, is also to live ever as in his presence. To realize His presence, to abide continually under His eye, to recognize our Father as close by our side — is the secret of much peace. We must ever regard Him, not as if He were far away in some inaccessible abode — but nearer to us than our nearest friend. In our chamber, by the wayside, at our work, or in our recreation, when mingling with others, or all alone — we must see One whom the world sees not, we must hear a voice that the world hears not. A sorrowful woman sits desolate and alone by a fountain in the wilderness. Driven by the harsh treatment of her mistress from the home of years, she knows not where she can turn. In her distress an angel comes to her; he speaks to her words of hope and consolation. Then she learns how near is God; she calls the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You O God, see me!" In the life of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the same truth was ever the joy of his spirit. As he lay down to rest, it was his joy to know that the sleepless Guardian of His people was by him. "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for you O Lord only make me to dwell in safety." As he arose, he still rejoiced in the Friend who was near: "When I awake, I am still with you." Surrounded by malicious foes, it is still his confidence. "They draw near that follow after mischief," this was his fear. "You are near, O Lord." (Psalms 119:150-151.) This was the assurance that dispelled it. Under all the vicissitudes of his eventful life, the nearness of God was the rock on which he reposed. "I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand; I shall not be moved." To cherish this spirit, will aid us in cultivating thorough genuine

sincerity and transparency of character. A Nathanael in the Church of Christ is beyond all price, and to see Him who is invisible, will do much to make us even as he was, "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no deceit." In ancient times a sculptor in Greece was at work upon a beautiful statue to be placed within a heathen temple. An inquiry was made of him, why he took such pains in the back part that would be concealed by the wall; "The gods see it!" was the reply. Surely if a Pagan were so careful over his work, believing that the gods he worshiped would mark it — then he who serves the living and the true God should not be less so. Whether beneath the eye of man or not, let all things be done under the eye of Him "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden." A few plain rules have been given to assist us in carrying this out in daily practice:

Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Do nothing you would not like God to see.

Write nothing you would not like God to read.

Go to no place where you would not like God to find you.

Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me."

Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like God to say, "What are You doing?" To know that our Father is close at hand is also a source of the purest consolation. When Madame Guyon was passing her life in a solitary prison for Christ's sake, separated from all she loved, it was this that filled her heart with joy. Harken to her words:

"Could I be cast where God is not,

That were indeed a dreadful lot;

But regions none remote I call,

Secure of finding God in all!" A Christian lady was suffering extreme pain; she was unable, for more than a few moments together, to attend to any word of comfort that might be spoken. The word of David, already referred to, was repeated to her, "You are near, O Lord!" It was the very message she needed — in the nearness of her God and Savior she found strength to bear patiently her heavy cross. In walking with God, there is also mutual communion and fellowship. The two disciples walking together on the way to Emmaus, talked of all the things that had happened. When Jesus joined himself to them, He held converse with them on the Scriptures, until their hearts burned within them.

There was fellowship one with the other; it relieved, in some measure, the gloom which the disciples felt when they were able to converse of the Master whom they had lost. That gloom was entirely dispelled, when Jesus had revealed himself to them. On our way to the kingdom, there must be the same happy communion with the unseen Friend, and there will be the same result. Truly has it been said, "that a life spent in communion with God is the most comfortable life a man can live on earth!" Wherever Abraham journeyed, except in Egypt, it is recorded that he built an altar unto the Lord. Along his pilgrimage, from place to place, it was his joy that though "he changed his place, he did not change his company," for God was still with him. The exception that we find, perhaps arose from the fact that distrust of God's providence in leaving Canaan, and his deceit with respect to Sarah, for a time had closed his lips.

It is easy to perceive that such converse, if it is sincere and genuine, must be the inlet of joy, and the outlet of care and sorrow. A load of care is half gone, when we have told our tale of trouble to a sympathizing friend, and have received his counsel in return. In pouring out our hearts before the mercy-seat — far more is this the case. By the teaching of His Word, by the suggestions of His Spirit, does our Father repay our confidence and grant to us fresh peace.

"Do you pray much?" was a question once put to a young laborer. "I cannot pray much," was the answer, "but, as I follow the plough, I talk to God and I think He hears me." Was not this walking with God? In walking with God, there must also be perseverance in well-doing. To walk with God, is not the walking with a friend for a few hours, and then bidding him "good bye." But it is the calm, quiet, steadfast purpose to spend the whole life in the secret of His presence. It is abiding with Him the whole journey through, until its cares and sorrows are over, until the Jordan is crossed, and Canaan won.

Too many are found to be like Orpah, on her way from Moab to Judea. A few steps she was willing to take with her mother-in-law Naomi, but then with a Judas-kiss she bade her farewell, and went back to her people and her gods. But Ruth was of a very different mind. She clung to Naomi, and would not leave her. "But Ruth replied: Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." Ruth 1:16-17 The Christian needs the same fixed, determined spirit. The mind must be made up never to turn back. The character of such as shall inherit the blessing is described by the Apostle: "To those who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality — God will render eternal life."

"Patient continuance in well-doing" is the surest mark of grace in the soul. Through good report and ill report — through cloud and sunshine, going straight forward on our course — not turning aside, because the Hill Difficulty may lie before us — not turning out of the path, because it may lead through the den of lions or the fiery furnace — this is religion that approves itself to be of God. In this, the life of Enoch affords a noble example. Noah was faithful during one hundred and twenty years. Abraham walked before God more than a hundred years. Moses, at least eighty. But of Enoch we are expressly told that he walked with God three hundred years! So long did this righteous man hold on his way — not for a few months or years, but for three full centuries did he persevere. There was no turning back, no standing still; but still did he plod along his heavenward path. His children would mark his faithfulness. His grandchildren would grow up and witness the holiness of his life. To three or four generations at least, would he be a standing monument of the power of Divine grace.

Oh, for the same grace to keep us faithful even to the end! Oh, for the spirit of the aged martyr Polycarp, "Eighty-six years have I served Christ, and He has done me nothing but good — how can I then blaspheme my Lord and Master?" He closes a long life of faithful toil by welcoming the martyr's crown. There is a sure reward, for it is written, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

Reader, fix it in your heart, as a matter beyond all controversy, that the blessedness of such a life as I have endeavored to set before you, is great indeed.

If you walk with God, the converse will be true — God will walk with you. As your Guardian and your Guide, your Friend and Counselor — He will be near to you at all seasons. As a nursing father was accustomed to carry in his arms the helpless infant — so will He bear you through the rough places of your pilgrimage, and uphold you with His own right hand. When you have erred — He will be ready to forgive. When you have fallen — He will tenderly restore you and sprinkle afresh your soiled garments with the all-cleansing blood. At times of peculiar danger, when your foot slips — His mercy shall sustain you.

Once, climbing a mountain in Switzerland, I reached a spot so steep that I dared scarcely proceed. My guide stretched out his strong brawny arm, he grasped my hand, and I knew that I was safe. A precious promise was brought to my recollection. "I the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not, I will help you." This life of walking with God also brings with it a calm and holy peace. Away from God — this cannot be. Conscience will be at times uneasy. While unpacified through faith in the atonement, it will often be as a gnawing, aching tooth, which gives no rest until it be gone. Earth's losses and disappointments will also be doubly felt, where there is nothing higher to fill the void which they make. Of the votaries of earth it has been truly said:

"Too surely, every setting sun

Some lost delight we mourn;

The flowers all die along our path,

Until we too die, forlorn!" A homely comparison has often been suggested to my mind, as I have thought of those who live only for the present poor world. You may have seen an old horse, after dragging all day long the van of some traveling pedlar, turned off at night, to gather, where it can, a few mouthfuls of grass by the roadside. What is this but a picture of the votaries of this world? All their life long they toil hard in its service; then, at length, when the dark night is coming on, starving and wretched in heart, they are left where they may, to gather a little transitory comfort.

All the while, those who walk with God are being fed in the green pastures of the Good Shepherd; and even in the dark valley, they need fear no evil, for His rod and staff comfort them. This life is also one of usefulness. What the life of Enoch may have effected — how much evil it may have checked — how much good it may have called forth, it is impossible to say. But this we may know assuredly — that the holy walk of a consistent Christian can never pass away without leaving a mark, a stamp behind it. He may be a minister of the everlasting Gospel, or he may be one of the humblest of the flock — yet, in either case, his example will be sure to tell upon those among whom he has mingled. Perhaps long after his death, thousands may through him be receiving spiritual benefit. A wealthy tradesman in the metropolis was unwearied in doing good. As a benefactor of young men, few have equaled him. Seldom did he lose an opportunity of giving a tract, or speaking a word for Christ. In any great strait, the Committee of the London City Mission, a Society very dear to him, never appealed to him in vain. It has been estimated that he bestowed in various Christian and benevolent objects, considerably more than £100,000. Only within two or three years has George Hitchcock been called to rest from his abundant labors. What was one of the first steps in his Christian course? The consistent life and conduct of a banker's cleric in Exeter. When on the very brink of infidelity, it was this which persuaded him that Christianity was true.

Another similar instance may be added. A young man was speaking of his conversion. "I lived with a master for ten years," he said, "and I never knew him, but once, speak an untruth, and for this he deeply grieved. The sight of his thorough integrity was the great means to which I trace any religion I possess." So useful is the life of a godly man to others. This life ends in everlasting glory. If we walk with God now on earth — then we shall also walk with Him in His glorious kingdom. Of Enoch it is written, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away." Genesis 5:24

"He was no more" here, in a world where sin stains the fairest abode, where the tear of sorrow is ever falling, where the scythe of death is never laid by, "for God took him away" to the land of rest, to the heavenly Paradise, where is found fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Follow in the footsteps of this holy man, and so shall it be with you. Unless the Lord comes before your death, you may not expect to avoid the gloomy chamber of the tomb; but meanwhile, your spirit shall be with Christ. Your life now may be saddened by many an hour of bitter sorrow, but the end shall be unclouded glory!

Upon a tomb in a Scotch cemetery, a few touching lines describe the blessedness of sleeping in Jesus. IN MEMORY OF E.P., AGE SEVENTEEN.

"Oh, lay me there!" the maiden said,

In that sweet quiet spot;

And strew with flowers my grassy bed,

To prove I'm not forgot.

"Life's brightest home is not so fair

As death's dark, dull abode;

For while my flesh is slumbering here,

My soul shall be with God!

"Oh, prize the love of Christ," she cried,

Implore the Spirit's power;

These, these alone have satisfied,

And cheered my dying hour.

"I know that grief your hearts will touch,

While you my loss deplore;

Still, farewell! Though I love you much,

I love my Savior more!" Does the thought arise within the heart of any reader, "For me to walk with God would be impossible. Had I those around me who were so walking, I might do so — but, in my case, it would bring upon me only ridicule and opposition." But among whom did Enoch live? He lived in one of the most ungodly periods of the world's history — and among men becoming more

and more so terribly corrupt and depraved, that at length the Most High God was provoked to sweep the earth with a broom of destruction, and cut off man, whom He had created. Yet even then, possibly without a single soul as a sharer of his hopes and trials, Enoch stands forth as a devout worshiper of the living God.

If there were grace sufficient for him — then why not also for you?

It may be, however, that the cares of domestic life are your stumbling-block. Could you separate yourself from the anxieties which beset your position — could you gain more time for retirement — then you imagine that to walk with God would be less difficult.

Again would I point you to Enoch. He was no monk. He lived no solitary life. Even in that ungodly generation, he did not think it needful to shut himself up within some gloomy cavern. He did not go out of the world; but while in it, he was not of it. He was a family man. Doubtless, like yourself, he had a thousand petty cares connected with his household, weighing upon him.

"And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters." Genesis 5:22 Who shall say how much domestic anxiety, how many wearing trials, may have been wrapped up in this short epitome of his course below? Yet, for all this, he went on. He walked with God. Why may not you? The Spirit of God can effectually counteract the distracting influence of things around you. "Earthly care" may become "heavenly discipline."

Let the Christian reader strive daily to draw nearer to Him he loves, and more and more to walk with Him.

"Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16. Avoid the least occasion of offence. Wherever the line of duty is doubtful, keep on the safest side, rather than on that which suits your own inclination.

"Walk humbly with your God." Take the lowest place. Covet the place of Mary. Sit down at the feet of Christ.

"Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us." Let holy charity evermore dwell in your heart. The sunshine of sincere love is the atmosphere of Heaven.

"Walk in the Spirit." Through the Spirit pray without ceasing. It was a New Year's resolve of Hannah More, "never to pass an hour without lifting up her heart to God through Christ." Be led by the Spirit to meditate very frequently on the things of God.

Very profitable would it be for all Christians to follow the counsel once given by Dr. Marsh to a boatman:

"Make a journey every day to three mountains:

Go to Sinai, and see your sins.

Go to Calvary, and behold the Lamb of God.

Go to Zion, and view the Heavenly City."

Above all, lean your whole weight on Jesus. Depend wholly upon Him for the strength that is requisite. So shall "He keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy."

04.10. Daily Talk

Daily TALK The prominence given in Scripture to any subject, is usually a fair criterion of its importance. If it be seldom referred to, if little is said upon it directly or indirectly, we may infer that it is not a matter upon which great stress need be laid. If, however, we find it again and again touched upon by the sacred writers, if the Spirit directed the minds of Prophets and Evangelists frequently to dwell upon it — then be sure that it demands very careful consideration. The talk of the lips is a point in which we see the truth of this statement. Most people think that words are trifles, and as light as air. Judge the matter aright, weigh it in the balance of Holy Scripture, and you will see that men's words are of the most solemn importance. The Book of Proverbs, from the beginning to the close of it, abounds in counsels and cautions with respect to the tongue. The Book of Psalms has continual reference to the same subject. The most practical Epistle in the New Testament, that of James, has one chapter entirely directed against the dangers to be avoided, besides other passages to the same effect. The great Teacher Himself, in His Sermon on the Mount, and on other occasions, taught His disciples to take heed what words they uttered.

What reasons may be assigned why Scripture takes so high an estimate of the importance of words?

Words reveal a man's true character. What a man is, may usually be gathered from the general character of his ordinary conversation. If water from a spring is sweet — the fountain itself will be sweet also. If the stream is bitter — so also is the source whence it flows. "How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." An illustration from nature may bring this home to us. The bee and the wasp, the fly and the gnat, have each their own peculiar hum, by which, without difficulty, the one may be distinguished from the other.

Consider also how easily the soldier or the sailor is recognized by his talk. So likewise, a man who comes from another country, or even from another part of England, or Scotland, can scarcely avoid its being known, as soon as he opens his lips.

Apply this to higher matters. What is a man's inner character and disposition, whether or not he belongs to heavenly country, will come out before long in the free interchange of thought. The worldliness and vanity of one,

the frivolity and profligacy of another,

the ingrained covetousness of a third,

the genuine piety of a fourth —

cannot long be concealed. Some word or expression let fall, perhaps without reflection, will be sure to reveal the secret.

True it is, painfully true, men may put on a cloak of hypocrisy. Bunyan's "Talkative," alas, is still alive. A great deal of religious talk may be upon a man's lips, he may be able to quote or explain

Scripture for an hour together — yet all the while his heart may be dead as a stone! But even this will only be occasionally. It will be when he speaks to a Christian minister, or is thrown among godly people. Times there will be when his tongue will tell a true tale. By his words, he will make plain what manner of spirit he is of.

Equally true is it that few words may be spoken directly on religious subjects — yet at the same time there may be great depth and reality of piety in the heart. "Still waters run deep." "I cannot speak much for Christ," said a Scotchwoman, "but I think I could die for Him."

Such Christians are often foremost in every good work and labor of love, where self-denying zeal is required. It will still hold true, however, that the tone of conversation in such people bears witness that the heart lies in the right place. The words may be few, but there will be in them a savor at least of Him they love.

Words are not only an index of that which is within — but are also SEEDS OF ACTION.

They exercise a powerful influence on those who utter them. The leaves of a tree manifest the life that is at the root, but they also feed it. Without that sunlight which they take in from the atmosphere — the tree must wither and die. In the same way words manifest the character — and deepen it. An unchaste word spoken with the lips, feeds the flame of unhallowed lust within. The utterance of a passionate word, disturbs still more the ruffled spirit. A word spoken for Christ, quickens and cheers the soul of him who speaks it. "He who waters, shall he watered also himself."

Especially do words leave their mark on those who hear them. They prove to be means of untold evil or good to those around us. "The tongue has the power of life and death!" Proverbs 18:21 A single thistle-down, wafted by the wind, may in time cover a whole field with thistles. A single word, incautiously dropped, may spread evil until a whole village is the worse for it.

Trace the course of an ANGRY word. See what harm it may do. It may be lightly and heedlessly spoken — yet nevertheless it may awaken resentment in the breast of him to whom it is addressed. Thence arises mutual recrimination. The peace of a family is disturbed. Any rising spirit of thoughtfulness in serious things is checked, perhaps entirely driven away. Sometimes revenge is cherished, and violence follows. Who can tell from that one word how great the evil that has arisen? "Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by Hell." James 3:5-6

Or, trace a word of SLANDER or DETRACTION. A snowball consists at first of but a few handfuls, but it gathers as it proceeds — and at last it may be so large that a man can scarcely move it. An evil report is very like it. A neighbor suspects such a thing has happened,

someone else states it as a fact,

a third give some imaginary reason for it,

a fourth adds to it out of his own mind some additional aggravation

— until at length the mole-hill has grown into a mountain — and it all arose from a mere suspicion! Heart-burnings, strifes, family quarrels, and these forming a sad stumbling-block in the way of the Gospel, have repeatedly arisen exactly in this way. But look at words, as to the GOOD they may effect. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" A kind word may heal a wounded spirit. A soft answer turns away wrath. The men of Ephraim sharply chided with Gideon, because he did not call them to fight against the Midianites. Wisely, gently he answered them, "God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb — and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." (Judges 8:3) Often a few words spoken in love have arrested the sinner in his course, and saved a soul from death. A young person, once a professor, was leaving the church after service. "One thing is needful!" said the minister to her as he passed, and he added no more. It was the right word. By it, the Spirit recalled her to the fold. A woman had brought shame upon herself and those belonging to her. Friends and relations would no longer speak to her, and she was left to the wretchedness and despair that now brooded over her soul. She meditated suicide, and for this very purpose left her home to cast herself into a river. As she walked along she heard a kindly greeting. "Good morning, Mary," were the words addressed to her by a clergyman, who once had known her. "Someone, then, will speak to me," she said to herself; "I will not despair." Three words saved her life, and were a first step on the road that lead to her repentance and salvation. In Burmah, that devoted missionary, Dr. Judson, was passing up a river. The boat rested for a few minutes at a station on the river, where several natives were standing. Dr. Judson gave his hand to a noble looking woman that attracted his attention, and asked her if she were well. "Well, my lord," she replied. "Peace be unto you," he added. That short interview was a turning point in her history. That night she was asked to join in a heathen ceremony — the dead bone burial. She said, "No, these many years have I served Gandama, and he has never kept my husband from beating me. I have seen one of the Christians. The white man spoke kindly to me, and gave me his hand. Henceforth his God shall be my God." For five years she prayed for light. "Great Angel, mighty Judge, Father God, in the Heaven, in the earth, in the mountains, in the seas, in the North, in the South, whoever You are, pity me, I pray You. Show me Yourself, that I may know You." Such was the substance of her petition, nor was it disregarded. He who never leaves in darkness those who desire the light, sent to her village the light of His Gospel. She became a mother in Israel, and many through her were taught in the way of life. Rich indeed was the blessing that might be traced back to a stranger, in a strange place, seizing the opportunity of speaking a few words of kindly sympathy.

Words spoken through life, will form an important item of the strict account that must be rendered at the great day. "I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned!" Matthew 12:36-37 Shall it be even so? May we believe that words, so soon spoken and so soon forgotten, shall yet be brought back to our remembrance before the bar of judgment? Nay, we dare not doubt it. The Judge Himself has left it on record! What can be clearer, if men are willing to abide by the verdict of Christ?

Words of every description — lying words, cheating words, profane words, unchaste words, angry words, envious words, murmuring words, foolish words, words that do harm, and words that do no good — as also words of truth and love, the stammering word spoken by a young Christian for the Savior, the determined "no," when tempted to go astray — these all shall bear their witness for us

or against us.

It is well to have it engraved upon our memories, that our thoughts and words are alike marked by the All-seeing Eye. "O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely!" Psalms 139:1-4 This affords an amazing idea to us, of the Omniscience of the Most High God. Unnumbered thoughts pass through the mind, unknown even to those nearest to us — multitudes of words are ever being spoken, from morn to eve, from day to day, from year to year — and all are registered, photographed as it were, forever! And at the final tribunal they will reappear, to give in their evidence with respect to us.

One of our Reformers, Latimer, was being examined by Bonner, previous to his trial. At first he answered without much thought, but after a while he imagined that he heard the scratching of a pen behind a curtain. He hearkened again, and it was plain and distinct. At once he perceived that every word he uttered was being written down, that it might afterwards be brought up against him. From that moment he spoke not a single sentence without first thoughtfully weighing it.

Even so, invisible to us, is there a pen recording all that we speak, and even more — the word that is unspoken — the inner thoughts of the heart!

It is our wisdom, in remembrance of this, fervently to pray for grace both to think and speak aright.

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account!" Hebrews 4:13

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer." Psalms 19:14 A FEW PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS may be of use for our guidance in "daily talk."

Wear continually the bridle of a holy self-restraint. Plainly this is our first duty in the matter. "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth." Psalms 39:1

"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless!" James 1:26 "Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips." Psalms 141:3

These passages imply, that we must not only pray for heavenly assistance, but also ourselves diligently guard "the door of our lips." Nothing is more dangerous than speaking at random, giving utterance to the thoughts and feelings that may be uppermost in the mind. "I always speak my mind," a reader may say. It is often the very last thing you ought to speak. Consider how changeable is the human mind. What you may imagine to be right in a moment of passion, within half-an-hour you may see to have been thoroughly wrong; yet if the wrong word has been spoken, it goes on to do its deadly work.

Depend upon it, that random words, words spoken unadvisedly, are perilous in the extreme. What would you say of a man who should take up red hot coals from off the hearth, and scatter them hither and thither about his house? Or, what would you think of one who would go forth into the streets with a quiver full of poisoned arrows, and shoot them right and left around him?

Yet what are spiteful, malicious, angry words — but burning coals and poisoned arrows? It may greatly be doubted, whether such a man would do nearly the harm and mischief in the world, which is done by an ungovernable tongue.

Make it a custom inwardly to challenge your words, as a sentinel would challenge a stranger, before allowing him to pass through the gate of a fortress.

Ask a question or two. Is it true? Is it kind? Is it wise?

What is its aim and purpose?

Many a word so challenged would be forbidden a passage.

Guard against the least approach to deceit or untruthfulness. Though it may be against your interest, learn to say "yes," or "no," as truth demands. Let neither your speech nor your silence give a false impression. Be a follower of Him who "did no sin, neither was any deceit found in His mouth."

"Lie not; but let your heart be true to God,

Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod.

Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie.

A fault which needs it most, grows two thereby."

George Herbert.

Guard against unchaste allusions. There is many a remark that suggests evil, if it does not plainly express it. Such things stick like pitch, and when we would we cannot get rid of them.

Guard against spreading an evil report, or taking up a reproach against another. "You shall not go up and down as a tale-bearer among your people." "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."

Especially be careful how you speak with respect to others, in the presence of children or young people. Readily will they learn the habit of slander from those older than themselves, and this may tinge their character through life with a leaven of uncharitableness. In the conduct of a family, nothing is more important, in matters of detail, than checking, in ourselves or in them, the beginning of this malicious spirit. If it is necessary for parents or others to speak together with respect to the failings of a neighbor or a friend, let it be when they are alone, and not in the midst of the family circle.

Guard against putting a gloss on words you have heard. The least omission, or addition, or alteration, may give them an entirely new meaning. The difference between "will" and "shall" in a sentence may wholly turn the sense. The very tone of voice has much to do with what the speaker intends. In a joking way a clergyman said to one of his flock, "Oh no, I shall never forgive it." She understood it herself, but it was reported that some grave offence had been committed which the minister would not forgive.

Guard against profitless bitter disputes about religion. In these the Devil glories — under the guise of an angel of light they effectually do his work. The spirit of piety is lost in strifes about words —

true love waxes cold, and temper runs high, while men dispute about baptism, and election, and whether Christ died for all; and this minister is disparaged, and another praised, and faults are found with this service, and with that prayer, and all the while . . .

Christ Himself is forgotten,

and the Spirit grieved,

and weak souls wounded,

and the ungodly hardened,

and the Great Adversary rejoices in having turned the Gospel of peace and love, into a means of man's undoing.

I speak not against needful controversy. Truth is above all things precious, and is not to be sacrificed even to peace. But there are right times, and there is a right spirit in which to conduct it; and there is a spirit which is of self and party, and not of Christ. "Speaking the truth in love." The words of Richard Hooker deserve to be remembered: "There shall come a time when three words, uttered with charity and meekness, shall receive a far more blessed reward, than three thousand volumes, written with disdainful sharpness of wit."

Guard against jarrings and bickerings at your own fireside. It is astonishing, what disputing frequently arises over little matters of no consequence whatever. The clock is too fast or too slow — the wind is east or west — the day is cold or mild — rain is probable or otherwise — such a thing happened on Monday or Tuesday — a walk would be pleasanter in this direction or that. Who has not known little matters like these bring cross looks and ill tempers, and break into the quietness of the family circle?

I once knew a family where grace had won marvelous triumphs. They were many in number, but they were all one in Christ — father and mother, sons and daughters, were bound together in the love of Christ, as but seldom is witnessed even in Christian England. Yet, even there, strange disputes would arise about unimportant matters, sad contentions would mar the fair beauty of that little Paradise — a home that would otherwise have been the very picture of the heavenly world.

Reader, in all these points be watchful. "Let your speech at all times be gracious (pleasant and winsome), seasoned [as it were] with salt, [so that you may never be at a loss] to know how you ought to answer anyone." Colossians 4:6. It will save you from painful regrets hereafter. It will take away many a stumbling-block out of the path of others.

Another direction is important. Desire sincerity, coupled with tender charity from the God of all grace. A mind adorned with this twofold grace would prove a great preservative; it would necessarily overcome the chief dangers to which we are exposed.

Let a man aim at thorough, genuine integrity, both in word and deed. Let him pray that whatever else he lacks, he may be real and true. This grace would teach him how to speak; it would save him from petty deceits, and little falsehoods, and colorings of the truth, both in society and in business, which are too often excused as if unavoidable. It would make him willing to own that he has been mistaken; and he would not strive, at any cost, to make good his own opinion.

It would keep the master or mistress from ever desiring the servant to give a wrong impression to a caller, by saying "not at home," or "engaged," when it was otherwise. It would keep the servant from adding to a fault, or concealing an accident, by lying words.

Tender charity would also be a great safeguard. Would this not make men watchful, not to wound or hurt the feelings of another? Instead of fabricating or circulating evil reports — would not one in whom this grace dwelt, take the more hopeful view of what he heard, and be ready to cover with a mantle of love the failings he might see in those around him? Would not such a spirit fast bar the door of the lips against those harsh, bitter, stinging words that are often dropped against the fallen one — and suggest rather the word of prayer that the wandering sheep might be restored to the fold? Would it not arrest, before it was spoken, the sharp reply, and teach men to speak gently, kindly, forbearingly — even when most provoked? Would it not deal a death blow to the dissensions of Christian people about minor points, and rivet together, as one man, all those who hold fast the saving truths of our holy faith? Oh, that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, might work mightily within our hearts, these His precious fruits! The more these graces abound, the less likely will Christians be, by unseemly words to dishonor the name of Christ.

Store the heart and memory well from the treasury of Holy Writ.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs."

God's words are better than our words. God's thoughts are better than our thoughts. It is well when the former displaces the latter. When the Scripture has been carefully read and well pondered, this will be the case. A word of the Master's, will often be spoken instead of one of our own. Our thoughts also will be turned into new channels. The atmosphere of Scripture will leaven the whole tone of our conversation. It will impart a tenderness of conscience, that sees at once the wrong there may be in a word about to be spoken. It will give desires and motives, that will tell upon this, as upon every other part of duty. It will give the timid Christian words, at his own fireside or in visiting, that may edify those to whom he speaks.

Above all, speak ever under the recollection that God is near. It is said of Jephthah, that "he uttered all his words before the Lord." This refers probably to the special transaction in which he was then engaged. It suggests, however, a truth for us. Whatever words are truly "uttered before the Lord" will be right and good words.

Suppose someone stands nearby whose good opinion you value, and whom you desire to please. Would not this make you careful as to what you say? Often a man has checked himself, he has left unsaid the profane jest, or the passionate exclamation — because he saw close at hand his master or his friend.

Transfer this to God. There stands near to us — nearer than we can conceive — the Almighty Father. His eye rests upon us. His ear is open to all we speak. When we arise, He is there. When we hold converse with our friends, He is there. When we go forth into the world's highway, He is there. He is ever about our path — marking all that is amiss, registering in His solemn book, the word that ought never to have gone forth.

He is near also, most ready to accept, for Christ's sake, the words spoken before Him. He hearkens to the word of prayer: "Father, bless me." "Father! glorify your Name." He regards with approval fellow Christians strengthening each other's hands by mutual exhortation.

"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him." Malachi 3:16-17

04.11. Daily Warfare

Daily Warfare An old picture represents the Christian in three attitudes. He is represented as a . . .

1. little child, and upon his lips are the words "I learn."
2. laborer, with spade in hand, and upon his lips are the words "I work."
3. soldier, clad in armor, and his motto is, "I fight."

Such a life is to be that of each follower of Christ. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, he must seek Divine instruction in Holy Scripture. With all diligence he must work the works of Him that sent him. In His Church none may be idlers: "Son, go work today in my vineyard," is the call addressed to each.

He must likewise be a soldier, and fight a good warfare. It is written, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." "You therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3.) In these words we have a valiant soldier of the Cross, whose time of service was nearly expired, calling on another to carry on manfully the same warfare. The Apostle of the Gentiles was about to lay aside the sword, and receive the crown. Hear his words, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing!" 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Urged by such a plea as this, with what additional power would the appeal of Paul come home to the heart of Timothy.

Let us inquire what is needed in this warfare, and how we may approve ourselves good and faithful soldiers. A hearty decided choice is the first requisite. It is an individual matter between God and our own souls, which none other can decide for us.

It must be a choice well considered. Our King has no such lack of soldiers, that He will receive recruits decoyed in an unthinking moment, or persuaded by promises that cannot be fulfilled. A solemn deliberate choice is essential. And what must be the motive for it? When young men enlist into our English army, they are swayed by various considerations. One is tired of home life, another dislikes work on the land, a third longs for more society, a fourth desires the bounty offered, or seeks to gain distinction in the battlefield. But with every true soldier of Christ the chief motive is the same. One word expresses it — LOVE. The Spirit reveals to a man his great need; he beholds in Christ that need fully met; he finds here mercy, and grace, and life; he ponders the love which brought Jesus from His throne, and the price laid down for his salvation; then he cannot but feel a desire to show forth his gratitude. In his heart he says, "Christ has loved me, and given Himself for me — henceforth I will serve Him, and Him alone!"

Upon a soldier's tomb was the following epitaph. It sets before us the right motive for service.

"In early days, I freely shed my blood,

Both for my Queen and for my country's good:

In later days, I soldier came to be

To Him who freely shed His blood for me."

Reader, would you be a good soldier of the Cross? Begin with receiving the great salvation. Fall low at Christ's mercy-seat; own there your sin, and take hold of the free promise of life. Then, under a joyful sense of acceptance, cheerfully enroll yourself among His followers.

Another requisite for a good soldier is separation to Christ's service.

"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer." 2 Timothy 2:3-4 In our English army, when once a soldier has enlisted, he gives himself up to this one pursuit. No longer is he, like others, his own master. His choice is made, and he must abide by it. Though not at all times engaged in active warfare — yet he is ever in training for it. Beside this, he is a marked man. Wherever he goes, through a village or through the streets of a city, his bearing and his uniform alike give unmistakable evidence of his profession.

Even so must it be in the army of Christ. Each soldier is to be separate from the world around. He is peculiar in the privileges he enjoys, he must be peculiar also in the character he bears. It is written, "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 A Christian ought to be recognized wherever he may go, not by a loud profession — but by a clear one — by a life of marked holiness, by watchfulness against sin, and by abstinence from all questionable amusements. A willingness to bear reproach for Christ, is frequently one of the greatest acts of heroism. In a cathedral city, where a large battalion of our army was stationed, a public ball was held, attended by nearly all the officers, and many of the gentry, in the town and neighborhood. The same evening a meeting was held, to promote the circulation of the Word of God. The best speech of the evening was that of a gallant young officer, who thus boldly came out from his associates, and bore a noble testimony for the Master. Here was separation unto Christian service.

It is likewise needful daily to put on the whole armor of God. What can a soldier on the battle field do without sword, or rifle, or bayonet? "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

What can the Christian soldier do in the conflict which he has to wage, unless he girds on the armor provided for him? Great and formidable are the foes with whom he has to battle:

an enemy without — and an enemy within,

the destroyer of souls — and a treacherous heart,

deceitful lusts — and an ensnaring world. But clad in heaven-proof armor, he can resist and overcome them. Mighty is the strength imparted by the weapons of our spiritual warfare. See the description given in Ephesians 6:10-18.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." Let genuine truthfulness, let thorough hearty sincerity of purpose and character be your belt.

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness." By this it would seem we are to understand a holy, loving life. The Spirit of God enabling us, we must ever maintain a good conscience, and live godly, righteously, and soberly, in an evil world.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Shoes were needed, that the warrior might stand firm and not be moved, while contending hand to hand with his adversary. If in your Christian warfare you would be steadfast and immovable, let your foot be set firmly upon the sure promises and hopes of the everlasting Gospel. Wherever you go, let them accompany you. Let them evermore be the rejoicing of your own heart, and the theme upon which you love to dwell.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." In the fabled siege of Troy, great was the protection afforded to Achilles by the shield wrought for him by Vulcan. The sharp point of many a spear was turned by the shield. Thus powerful, is a strong reliance on the mighty aid of Jehovah. "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

"And take the helmet of salvation." Be joyful, knowing that all earthly loss is heavenly gain, and that within your Father's house shall you find a mansion prepared for you.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Of the sword of Goliath David said, "There is none like it." So say we of this sword — the Holy Bible. At the coronation of young King Edward, when two swords were presented to him, he bade them bring a third — the Word of God; which he declared that he valued far more than those emblems of royalty.

"Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit." The weapon of "all prayer" gives efficacy to the rest. It brings success to all efforts. The soldier about to fire his rifle, goes upon his knee. The Christian fights praying. "When I cry unto You, then shall my enemies turn back; this I know, for God is for me."

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight,

Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright.

And Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees.

Oh, Christian brother or sister, would you be strong, would you avoid bitter hours of vain regret, would you shrink from bringing reproach on the name of Him you love — then with all carefulness gird on this Heavenly Armor, and wear it at all seasons. Never lay it aside for a single waking hour, until your toil is over and your victory won!

Immediate, implicit obedience is another mark of a good soldier. The duty of a soldier is, not to reason — but to obey. Into what hopeless disorder would an army be thrown, if each one in the ranks were to question, before he obeyed, the orders of his superior officer. A ready ear for the word of command is essential to good discipline, and consequently to success. Our part, likewise,

is promptly, readily to obey the word of our Captain. Our inquiry must be, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" And when this is clear, we have simply to carry it out. The hardest and the easiest precepts have the same authority — and must have the same regard and obedience. It may be that the path marked out for you may bring with it great loss or inconvenience — yet swerve not from it. The rough road of thorough obedience is far better in the end — than the smooth, flowery path of self-pleasing.

Abraham found it so, when first he left his home, and afterwards, at God's bidding, was willing to sacrifice his beloved Isaac. The three Hebrew young men found it so, when, rather than bow down to the golden image, they braved the burning fiery furnace. A young Brahman, in Travancore, who was sorely tried when he embraced Christianity, found it so also. Among other trials, he had a young wife, whom he dearly loved, and who endeavored to dissuade him from it. Taking hold of his arm, he said, "I love her better than this flesh." Yet she, with her mother, threatened never to touch food again, if he became a Christian. Still he determined to obey God, and leave all consequences to Him. As he feared that he never should see her again, he bade her a last farewell, and was baptized. The result was, that within two or three months, both his wife and her mother followed in his footsteps, and gave themselves up to Christ.

Take heed not to excuse yourself from the performance of difficult or unpleasant duties. A still small voice within may remind some reader of such a duty. The dying charge of a relative or friend may have been neglected; the soul of a child or parent may not have been cared for as it ought; restitution may never yet have been made for some injury done to another; some evil thing may be cherished, which ought to be abandoned; whatever the matter be, search it out, and delay not. For the honor of Christ, for your own peace, it is well to do so.

Let the Christian, also, mark the least intimation of Christ's will. A little boy may sometimes be noticed on the Thames' steamers, looking out for orders from the captain. The motion of the hand is observed, the signal is understood, and at once obeyed. Thus let us mark what the will of the Lord is. A cheerful readiness for active warfare, and unflinching courage in the field, is also necessary. A good soldier is not content with an idle life at home. It is not his wish to remain long in the barracks; he prefers actual service. Rather would he be with his comrades in the battle, taking part in their struggles, and sharing the honors they may win.

Sufficient work may ever be found to try the courage of Christ's soldiers. There is ever work to be done in fighting against sin. A story is told of an old man, who lived long ago; forcible was the way in which he spoke of the struggles he had to carry on. A friend asked him the cause of his struggles, since in the evening he so often had great weariness and pain. "Alas," answered he, "I have every day so much to do; I have . . .

two falcons to tame,

two hares to keep from running away,

two hawks to manage,

a serpent to confine,

a lion to chain, and

a sick man to tend and wait upon."

"Why, this is only folly," said the friend, "no man has all these things to do at once."

"Yet indeed," he answered, "it is with me as I have said. The two falcons are my two eyes, which I must diligently guard, lest something should please them which may be hurtful to my salvation. The two hares are my feet, which I must hold back, lest they should run after evil objects, and walk in the ways of sin. The two hawks are my two hands, which I must train and keep to work, in order that I may be able to provide for myself and for my brethren who are in need. The serpent is my tongue, which I must always keep in with a bridle, lest it should speak anything unseemly. The lion is my heart, with which I have to maintain a continual fight, in order that vanity and pride may not fill it, but that the grace of God may dwell and work there. The sick man is my own body, which is ever needing my watchfulness and care. All this daily wears out my strength." The friend listened with wonder, and then said, "Dear brother, if all men labored and struggled after this manner, the times would be better, and more according to the will of God."

There is ever work to be done also in the struggle which is being carried on for setting up the kingdom of Christ on earth. Be valiant for the truth. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Do not trim your sails to the wind, and turn aside from the great verities of the Christian faith, because they happen to be unpopular. That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;

the death of Christ a true atonement for the believer's sins;

a free justification by faith alone;

regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit;

the everlasting condemnation of such as die in their sins

— these necessary truths must ever be held fast, and boldly proclaimed, by every faithful watchman in Zion. Be valiant in winning souls. Every soul saved by our means will hereafter be a source of endless rejoicing. Even now it brings a great reward. A Christian lad, in America, who himself had discovered the truth by the study of the New Testament, had an elder brother, who was still a Roman Catholic. After a while he brought him to the Pastor whom he loved. "We have had a hard fight in our house," he said, "but Jesus has won the day." Henceforth, like Andrew and Peter, the two brothers followed Christ. Be not cast down if the work seems unpromising. Volunteer for the forlorn hope, if anything can be called such when Christ is on our side. Though the class in the school may be inattentive or refractory, though the one you pray for may yet be as far off as possible from the kingdom — yet remember that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Go to the scoffer, go to the aged sinner, go to the thoughtless child of vanity, speak a word in faith and prayer, and be assured, for your consolation, that no effort thus made can wholly fail, and that the greatest blessing has often been granted in the most unlikely cases.

Cultivate steadfast patience in waiting. In a soldier, no qualification is more valuable than this. To most men, far easier is it to go forth courageously in the excitement of the battle — than to endure patiently where the danger may be less. The long weary march beneath the hot sun, the cold dark night passed while watching in the trenches — work like this is apt to wear out the bravest spirit. The Christian soldier finds that similar trials are to be met in his course. The lengthening out of

some season of deep anxiety, the gloomy imprisonment of the sick chamber, the petition so often presented, and yet the answer apparently as distant as ever — a cross like this is one of the very hardest to bear.

Yet put your shoulder beneath it, and carry it while it is laid upon you. Yield not to the suggestions of the Tempter. Distrust not Him who does all things well. Hurry not to and fro, hither and thither — to escape the dreariness of your waiting season. Under the smile of Jesus, tarry the Lord's leisure, and you shall see in the end "that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Do you ask, "When does His hour come?" When it shall be best for you!

Trust His faithfulness and power,

Trust in Him and quietly rest.

Suffer on, and hope, and wait,

Jesus never comes too late!

There is need also of each Christian patiently abiding in the position which the providence of God has allotted to him, until it be manifestly the Lord's will that he should leave it. An excellent illustration has been given of this. It is taken from the history of the Peninsular War. The Captain of a division was placed by Wellington at a point, remote from the field where a battle was about to be fought. He was expressly ordered to remain there, and on no account to leave his post. When the battle was raging fiercely, the Captain could no longer endure the inaction of his position, and so left it and joined in the fight. The enemy were driven from the field, and fled in the very direction that Wellington had anticipated, and where the Captain with his men had been posted. The General felt confident that their flight would be cut off; but great was his anger, when he found that his orders had been disobeyed, and the post vacated. It is said that he never again employed the Captain in any important affair, and that the latter died of a broken heart, through the loss of his reputation as an officer.

Let us take heed lest we act in the same spirit. We may not run, before we are sent. We may not leave a quieter sphere, for a more exciting one, until the Lord calls us. Never are we so safe and happy, as when, like little children, we leave ourselves wholly at the disposal of our loving Father in Heaven.

Lastly, the soldier of Christ must exercise unlimited dependence upon his great commander. A soldier can never fight bravely, unless he has full confidence in the plans of those who conduct the campaign. What perfect reliance may we place in the Captain of our Salvation! His plans are all wisely laid and successfully carried out. Nothing can defeat His gracious purposes. However dark the sky may seem to us, however depressing the aspect of affairs with reference to His Church — yet He can in a moment, if He desires, turn the scale, and make His people rejoice in the marvels of His power and grace. In the story of the Iliad, again and again is it told, how that when one of their deities — Jove, or Pallas, or Apollo — mingled in the fray, the tide of victory was turned, and those just before driven out of the field turned again and won the day. The fiction has a truth beneath it. There is One, and One only, to whom all power has been committed in Heaven and in earth. When He puts forth His mighty arm, then His people go forth and conquer, and their enemies turn and flee! Nor does the great Helper forget to aid each one of His redeemed people.

His eye is fixed on each one who fights in His cause, and He never fails to support them as they require. The grand old poem I have referred to may remind us also of this. When the chief heroes of the story were called forth into the conflict, frequently was it by the secret direction of some favoring god; and, beneath the same guardianship and care, were they fortified with fresh courage, shielded from imminent peril, or conveyed away in safety from the field. Is there not a parable here also, for those fighting beneath the banner of Christ? Does He not call them forth by a still small voice, unheard by others? Does He not strengthen them with inner might? Does He not keep them in the hour of danger? Does He not shelter them where none can harm?

Strong in the Lord of Hosts,

And in His mighty power;

Who in the strength of Jesus trusts

Is more than conqueror.

Christian soldier, commit yourself wholly to the care of Christ. He will ever be near you. When you have been cast down, He will lift you up. Trusting in Him you may exclaim, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall — I shall arise; when I sit in darkness — the Lord shall be a light unto me." Through every conflict, even the last, will He safely bring you, and then upon your head will He place the crown of victory. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." My God with me in every place!

Firmly does the promise stand,

On land or sea, with present grace

Still to aid us near at hand. No depth, nor prison, nor the grave,

Can exclude Him from His own;

His cheering presence still I have,

If in crowds or all alone. In whatever state I be,

Everywhere is God with me!

In life, in death, with God so near,

Every battle I shall win;

Shall boldly press through dangers here,

Triumph over every sin!

"What!" you say, "A victor be?"

No, not I, but God in me!

04.12. Daily Consolation

Daily Consolation

"For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." 2 Corinthians 1:5

If within a city but one fountain or well existed, from which its inhabitants could obtain a supply of water — how inestimably precious would it be! Within the Church of God, there is but one well-spring of true consolation. No solid comfort or peace can be found, except in Jesus Christ.

One chief reason for this is, that Christ alone changes not. Other sources of enjoyment may indeed be found — yet they cannot be depended upon. They do not last long. They are like broken cisterns, or a reservoir that leaks. They are like the brook Cherith, which for a time met the needs of the Prophet, but after a while dried up.

It is otherwise with Christ. Of Him is it written by the Psalmist, "Of old You have laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure; yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end." Of Him, again it is written by the Apostle, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Learn here that Jesus is truly Divine — One with the Eternal Father.

He is set before us as the Creator — as He who shall fold up earth and Heaven as a vesture. He is declared to be Eternal. He is "yesterday, and today, and forever." These words point backwards and forwards to eternal ages.

He is also spoken of as immutable, unchangeable: He is ever "the same." Of whom but Jehovah could these things be affirmed? Almighty power in creation, Eternity, and Immutability, are among the most glorious attributes of the Divine Being. When, therefore, it is revealed to us that the Son of Man is ever the same, a clear proof is given that He is also Divine. The same truth underlies all the teaching of Scripture. Especially may we gather it from the New Testament. Who but a Divine Savior could proclaim, in the hearing of earth's vast multitudes, "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"? Who but such a One could promise rest to all weary, toiling souls, saying, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Who but such a One could promise, even to the end of the world, that wherever "two or three met together in His Name, He would be in the midst of them"?

Great consolation comes to us hence. He upon whom our hope is fixed, is truly Eternal God. He upholds the pillars of the universe — and He can uphold the feeblest of His saints. He governs and directs all things — and can therefore make all things work together for good to those who love Him. His arm is All-powerful, therefore He can . . .

bruise Satan under our feet,

fulfill His gracious purposes,

and raise His people to a glorious throne. The Unchangeableness of Christ is, however, the special point to which the attention of the reader is directed. Nothing can well be more consolatory, especially if with it we contrast the changes around, to which we are exposed. As a man contemplates the angry waves, beating at the foot of the cliff, he prizes the more the security of the firm rock on which he stands. As the sailor marks the ships at a distance, contending with the violence of the storm, he realizes the more the safety of the harbor in which he rides peacefully at anchor. The Christian, likewise, rejoices the more in the changelessness of the Savior in whom he trusts, as he ponders the mutability of all earthly things.

Consider that the mortal frame of man is perpetually changing. From the cradle to the grave, he never remains for a moment the same. Take the case where the thread of life holds out to its full limit.

First of all comes the period of helpless infancy when almost unconscious of all that is passing around, he hangs upon a mother's breast.

Then close follows the season of childhood, with its little trials, weighing for the moment so heavily, and yet so soon forgotten; with its restlessness, with its eager curiosity and searching out of everything around. To this follows youth, with its mirthful visions, its bright promises, its openings for untold usefulness, its great and fearful perils.

Then again comes mature manhood, when youthful passions are sobered, when the common duties of life, and perhaps the care of a family, take up much of time and thought. This quickly passes into the shade of later years; and this again into old age, with its manifold infirmities — with failing sight or hearing, with increasing weakness, and many a sign that the time approaches when the tale of life will be told, and the night come when no man can work.

Then comes the last scene, when the pulse beats low, and life is ebbing fast, and at length "man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

Through all this perpetual change, the Great Friend abides evermore the same. Let this remind us of the double blessedness of those, who in early life have been taught to know the Savior. For a man right through his earthly pilgrimage to have Christ at his side — the same in the bright dawn of youth — the same when bearing the heat and burden of the day — the same when the shadows of evening close around him, is a treasure indeed. Gracious is the promise given to us in Isaiah, as to the continuous care which the Lord will manifest toward His people, even to the end. "I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!" Isaiah 46:4 The truth of this assurance has often been experienced. "I am old and poor," said one, "I have lost my sight and my hearing, I have lost every friend in the world, and all my relations are dead. But it matters not, Christ is with me, and He is ever the same." Be it the prayer of our hearts, that such a portion may be our own, as we journey along toward the end of our course.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,

Its joys grow dim, its glories pass away.

Change and decay in all around I see,

O Thou who changeth not, abide with me! The currents of human opinion are also ever varying. In science, of late years, there has been a complete revolution. In theology, also, as great a change is observable. Very different opinions have been broached of late to those previously held. To some extent, diversity of thought need not be regretted. Within certain limits, Christian people must ever in this world be content to differ. In a watchmaker's shop, the hands of the various clocks and watches tell a different tale; and though today they were set together, tomorrow would they be found to vary.

There is something here that may suggest to us that, in our present state, we shall seldom find many who in all points agree. Where true Christians find it so, let them regard it as a part of needful discipline, and let them cherish genuine charity towards those who may be unable to see as they do. With respect to the essentials of Christianity, we cannot but be deeply grieved to see the erroneous views that abound. It is very hard to say on which side danger is the greatest. Scylla and Charybdis — the rock on the one side, and the whirlpool on the other — seem to represent very much our present condition. On the one hand there are those who turn their back on good old Reformation truths — truths plainly laid down in Holy Scripture; and while calling themselves members of the Church of England, are using Romish words, copying Romish ceremonies, and preaching Romish doctrines. On the other hand, we find men apparently zealous to undermine the foundations, by destroying confidence in the perfect veracity of the Word of God, taking as it were Jehoiakim's penknife, and cutting out whatever may present difficulty to their minds, or may run contrary to certain opinions which they have formed.

These errors are fearfully perilous to men's souls. In Elisha's day, we are told, that a man cut shreds of wild gourd, and cast them into the pottage: and it was told Elisha, saying, "There is death in the pot." Equally dangerous, with respect to the life and health of the soul, is the false teaching that everywhere is so rife.

What is our consolation? As Jesus changes not — so neither does His truth; and in spite of all errors, He will stand by His servants who maintain it, and at length it shall certainly triumph.

Reader, never grow weary of old truths.

"I wonder you preachers are not ashamed to go on preaching the same things that were spoken a thousand years ago." Such was the scoff of a disciple of the new school. Why should we be ashamed? Who grows weary of the glorious sun, that has been shining on these six thousand years? Are not its beams as cheering and as fruitful as ever? Why should we be weary of the glorious Gospel, which is as full of heavenly joy and light as ever? Who complains that we have still to feed upon the same provision that was the staff of life when Joseph was in Egypt, even as it is now? Why then shall we not be satisfied with the same bread of everlasting life, which has nourished Christians from the beginning? The Israelites grew weary of the manna provided for them; and then other food was given, but in judgment. While the flesh was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them.

If English people grow weary of the Heavenly Manna — Christ — in all the freeness of His salvation, in all the preciousness of His blood, in all the tender love of His heart, in all the power of His Spirit — God may likewise send us other teaching, but not for our profit. Hear the warning:

"They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

Let those, however, who love the truth cleave to it, and they shall not be ashamed. It will surely overcome all that opposes. God has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away." The circumstances of our earthly pilgrimage also change. A true picture of the world, and all that belongs to it, is a dissolving view. While one scene is upon the canvas, and we gaze upon it, it fades away, and another takes its place.

HEALTH changes. Those for a while hearty and strong, who scarcely know the meaning of pain — have appointed for them long seasons of wearisome suffering.

FRIENDS change. Far away, beyond the bounds of earth, are some, whom in former days we have known; others are separated from us by thousands of miles distance; others by some painful estrangement.

RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES change. David, shut out from the sanctuary, and mourning over the loss of former privileges, represents the case of many a true Christian. He is unable, as formerly, to go up to the Lord's house. Or, the servant of Christ, from whose lips he first received the truth, or from whom he had often a season to strengthen him, is no longer within word in reach.

POSITION IN LIFE changes. Strange differences are often seen within a few years. Those heretofore unknown in the world — are lifted up to affluence and wealth. Those once ranked among the rich — are brought low. Those in early days brought up in the lap of luxury — before life is over, have been even in need of daily bread. Pleasant gourds are dried up and withered, one by one. Disappointment comes and dashes to the ground the cup of joy, which had scarcely been tasted. The fireside, once the scene of much domestic happiness — becomes bleak and desolate. Those who were its life are gone, to return no more. Seasons of calm quietness and temporal prosperity — give place to times of trial and adversity — just as "the south wind, which blew softly," was soon followed by the stormy north wind. In all this our thoughts should be directed to Him who changes not.

Scenes may vary, friends grow strange,

But the Changeless cannot change;

Friendship His that nothing can sever,

Loving once, He loves forever. The unchangeableness of Christ is the link that brings home to ourselves the consolation to be found in studying the narratives of His life.

Wherever we track the footsteps of the Man of Sorrow, we find everywhere the tenderest sympathy and the most thoughtful love.

He restores the sick,

He has compassion on the fainting multitude,

He weeps with the mourner,

He binds up the broken-hearted.

What a mark of His considerateness was it, that when three who had died were chosen by Him to experience His mighty power in raising the dead, there was in each case a special reason for it, in the relationship which they bore to those who mourned for them. The one was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." A second was the only daughter of Jairus. The third, Lazarus, was the only brother, the prop and stay of the two sisters, Martha and Mary.

Consider those two words, "Jesus wept." They form the shortest verse in Scripture — yet how many a tear have they dried! how many a ray of heavenly light have they shed over the wretched, sorrowful heart!

Why is it, that such rest and strength is found in that which took place so many centuries before we were born? It is because the Great Friend remains now, as He was then. Then He was a pilgrim, for our sakes journeying on toward His bitter cross; now He is exalted far above all principality and power — yet His heart is as pitiful, and tender, and loving as ever.

Take a single proof of it. Long after His ascension into Heaven, He appears to the future Apostle on the way to Damascus. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" are the words in which He addresses him. Still as ever, see how He regarded His people as one with Himself.

Christian Pilgrim, take hold of this and rejoice in it. Whatever may vary and alter, in Christ there is "no variableness nor shadow of turning."

True it is, health may fail, friends may die, the pastor whose voice you loved may no longer be near. On every side the prospect may be dark and cheerless; yet here is light, here is security, here is peace; the lord Jesus lives, and will never, never forsake you.

There is a Friend more tender, true,
Than brother e'er can be;
Who, when all others bid adieu,
Remains, and will not flee;
Who, be their pathway bright or dim,
Deserts not those who turn to Him.
He is the Friend that changes not,
In sickness, or in health;
Whether on earth our transient lot
Be poverty, or wealth,
In joy or grief, contempt or fame,
To all who seek Him still the same.

There are changes also, and that continually, in the spiritual life of the believer. In the child of this world, it is true there are changes of feeling with reference to religion. The pendulum vibrates between a thoughtful fear, and a most deadly indifference. Sea birds in stormy weather fly near the land and hover about it for a time; but when the storm is past and calm returns, soon do they fly far, far away. In the stormy seasons of life, when afflictions and trials abound, many a one seems to come near the kingdom. Conscience awakes, and a still small voice bids them prepare to meet their God. But no sooner has the storm gone over, than serious impressions vanish, they go back to their sins and the world, and no more seek after a Savior. But I speak of the spiritual life of believers. It has many phases. On the whole, we can scarcely believe the life to be real, unless there be growth. The acorn gradually expands until it becomes the oak. The infant grows up into the full grown man. Just so, the believer must make progress. Nevertheless there may be for a time, sad, grievous departures and backslidings. Who would have recognized in Abraham the same man, when offering up Isaac at God's command — and when reproved by Pharaoh, for calling Sarah his sister? Who could have believed that the man who longed for God, as the deer panting after the water brooks, would have fallen into the terrible crimes of adultery and murder? Who would have recognized in Elijah the same man, when facing alone the false prophets and the assembled Israelites on mount Carmel — and when fleeing for his life for fear of Jezebel? Who that had heard Peter's noble confession of Christ — would have looked for him to have denied the Master with oaths and cursing?

Yet, in all this, there is nothing that need surprise those who believe in the exceeding corruption of human nature. It is the old stock breaking out again, after grace has engrafted upon it a better principle. As when a good rose has been grafted upon the wild brier, the brier puts forth from time to time shoots from the root, or from below the graft, and these need to be cut off, or the tree will be injured. Just so, is there ever arising from the old nature something which must be watched against and cut off, or the soul will suffer great loss.

It is alike the case with every believer. Invariably bitter as the child of God finds the fruit of sin ever to be, still more or less there are in the course of a Christian, backslidings and departures from the narrow path, which he has to confess with shame and sorrow. Even where grace preserves him from any open transgression — yet the heart testifies of inner evils, which are not concealed from the Holy One. Through lack of taking heed to his way, a man has often felt a dark midnight settle down upon his soul; or a long, cold winter, that for a while has frozen up every spring of joy within.

Even when a Christian abides very near to Christ, there are at times painful seasons in the spiritual warfare. The remembrance of former iniquity comes back with fresh power,

physical infirmity clouds the mind,

faith grows weak and fears grow strong, and

we have to tread with faltering footsteps the valley of humiliation. In any such varying experiences as these — where may we look for consolation, but in the changeless Savior?

It is written, "I am the Lord, I change not — therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." Christ changes not, nor does the everlasting Gospel with all its manifold hopes and promises. Not to lull you into any false security, but to enable you to overcome the sin and unbelief you mourn — take firm hold of whatever encouragements it affords.

Rejoice that the free promise of Christ is today the same as in days past. Whatever you may feel or not feel, it is still true, and you may rest upon it, that He has said, "Him that comes unto Me, I will never cast out." Trust in Christ as a sinner, if you fear to do so as a believer. Your experience may seem to fail you, you hesitate to think that you can ever have belonged to the Savior — then repose here. If never before — yet now, even now, cast yourself on Christ and you are safe. His promise can never fail.

Rejoice that the cleansing fountain is still as efficacious as ever! It is still open to sinners and to saints. None are forbidden to go to it, and all who wash are made therein whiter than snow.

Rejoice that the glorious intercession of our great high priest is ever the same. Upon His heart He wears the breastplate, engraved with the names of all who entrust their cause into His hand. He pleads, and His plea cannot fail. Still upon the throne He waits to receive the prayers offered in His name. In all our straits, can we but lift our eye to Him, we shall not despair. A story is told of the inhabitants of Vienna, that when their city was besieged, they sent for support to King John of Poland; and that having done so, day and night their eyes were turned toward a certain hill, over which they looked for him to come and rescue them. In due time their hopes were fulfilled, and their deliverer with his army drove their enemy away. Let our eye be often turned in trustful expectation to the everlasting hills, even to the hill of Zion, where Jesus reigns. He will not fail those who wait for Him.

Rejoice also that the mighty power of the Holy Spirit is still the same. The flesh indeed may be weak, the power of sin may be strong, faith and love but as a little spark tossed hither and thither on a stormy sea — but the grace of the Holy Spirit is a sufficient remedy for every ill. The Spirit . . .

can strengthen you with might in the inner man,
can subdue your iniquities and quicken your graces,
and make you more than conqueror in Christ.

Rejoice that the love of Christ never fails. The tie that knits a soul to the Savior is firm and lasting. Do you renounce both your own righteousness, and your own will? Do you take hold of His covenant by thorough reliance upon His promised grace? Then you are one of His jewels, and as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. He has betrothed you unto Himself in faithfulness forever. He has loved you with an everlasting love. He loved you before ever you were born — He loves you now in the midst of the infirmities that beset you — He will love you when the Heaven and earth have passed away

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39

04.13. A Blessing in the Family

A Blessing in the Family

Mention is made in the Old Testament of three arks, and from what is recorded of each, may we gather a special lesson. The ark built by Noah has its lesson. It reminds us that security can only be found in the shelter appointed of God himself. In being true members of His Church — in other words, abiding in Christ alone — the sure hiding place — shall we be safe when the great waterfloods prevail. The ark of bulrushes tells of God's providential care. By the banks of the river, in this ark lay the infant Moses. The eye of Pharaoh's daughter is directed to it. In the good providence of God, her heart is touched with compassion, and she saves the life of the child. Tenderly our Father cares for the least and feeblest of His children. The sparrow is not forgotten by Him, much less are those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ. The ark of testimony may also be our teacher. It was a small chest, some five feet in length, and three feet in height and in breadth. Within it were placed the tables of the law, a golden pot of manna, and the rod of Aaron. To trace its history, as far as it is known, opens out much profitable instruction. Take but one lesson among many. The presence of Jehovah brings death to His enemies — but peace and blessing to those who fear Him. When the ark was placed in the temple of Dagon, the idol fell down and was broken. While it remained in the country of the Philistines, many of the people were smitten with tumors and died. The men of Beth-shemesh, through irreverently gazing into it, were slain. But Obed-edom welcomed it into his house, and gained in consequence a rich blessing.

It is written, "And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. And it was told king David, saying, The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertains unto him, because of the ark of God." (2 Samuel 6:11-12.)

It is not told us in what the blessing consisted, but it was manifest to all, that such there was. Perhaps from being a poor man, as Josephus states, he suddenly became rich. His health, his circumstances, his family, alike prospered — for God was with him. Far beyond this, the love and favor of God shone both upon him, and all belonging to him. Who would not covet such a portion? Who sees not what a priceless treasure it is, to have the blessing of the Most High God abiding in our dwelling? In olden times it was fabled that somewhere might be found a stone that changed into gold whatever it touched. This magic stone has been found. It is the blessing of our Father in Heaven. Whatever it touches, it gives to it a new value. It makes it tenfold as precious as otherwise it could be. "The blessing of the Lord, it makes rich; and He adds no sorrow with it." It makes a country prosperous and happy. It makes good husbands, good wives — good parents, good children — good masters, good servants. It touches a man's heart, and sheds there a heavenly peace. It mingles with his afflictions, and takes away the chief part of their bitterness, by showing the loving hand that brings them. It enters a man's home and transforms it into a little Eden. It makes it a hallowed spot. In some measure it becomes "Paradise re-gained." In spite of all opposing influences, in spite of the evils that will arise — yet is it felt to be true that "the voice of

rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous." A few thoughts may illustrate this point.

Consider the blessing belonging to a Christian family — in contrast with the curse that rests upon the home of the ungodly.

Side by side does Solomon place these two: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but He blesses the habitation of the just." The curse of the Lord in a house is no light matter. By the prophet Zechariah, it is described as a flying scroll — it is written within and without with judgments and threatenings. It enters into the house of the thief and the swearer. It remains in the midst of his house, and consumes it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. Such is the picture of the sad curse that flies swiftly, and shall abide in the house of the ungodly. The house indeed may be one worthy of a prince: it may be adorned with all that are can provide. The walls may be covered with rare and valuable paintings. Every luxury and comfort may abound. Gold and silver, and costly furniture may be there. The cellar may be replenished with the choicest wines. Yet is there also beneath that roof, something beside which may be little thought of. The curse of the Lord is there! It may work slowly, but it works surely. It is like a fretting leprosy in the walls of a house. The end will be that the house must fall!

Twenty-five centuries ago, a king dwelt in cedar, and was clothed in vermilion. Seated upon the throne of a great nation, he had at command a powerful army, and abundant resources. But one element of stability, and that the chief one, was lacking. Not one spark of the fear of God was to be found in the breast either of king or queen. "No king was like in iniquity unto Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." The grossest idolatry, together with the shedding of innocent blood, brought down a double curse from the Almighty. Nor was it without its terrible fruit. A few years pass by, and the result is seen. Ahab is slain in battle. Accursed Jezebel also miserably perishes. Her carcass is devoured by dogs; and their whole posterity is brought to an untimely end. As much now as then, does the curse of the Lord bring after it, fearful consequences. It may be manifested in a different way, but it is no less certain. A man is prospering in all outward circumstances. "His house for a season is safe from fear, and the rod of God rests not upon it. He sends forth his little ones like a flock, and his children dance for joy." But if the favor of God is unsought, if these gifts of His providence are thanklessly received, if no grateful incense of praise ascend from the family altar — we may be sure that a dark cloud is resting over that house, that will break one day, not in mercies but in judgments! The holy wrath of an offended Creator will one day mar all the happiness that for a season may be enjoyed.

Even now the bitter fruits of ungodliness are too often witnessed, in blighting the fair promise of happiness that may appear in the early days of family life. Could the secrets of home-life be divulged, it would be found that the profligacy of a husband, or the vanity and extravagance of a wife — have frequently proved utter destruction to all its comfort.

Only take as an example, the revelations of the Divorce Court. What a painful view comes out from time to time, of that which is passing within the homes of the middle and upper classes of society. What dark sin, and jealousy, and dissensions are there, as a cankerworm, ever at work, in some cases to issue in utter misery, and the complete breaking up of the family circle!

Other homes are there also, where to an occasional visitor there may seem nothing amiss. The wheels of home-life appear to run smoothly enough, there is much that is pleasant and agreeable. Yet notwithstanding, the lack of religious principle is here too, bearing its natural fruit. Beneath the surface, there is a root of evil working. Parents have neglected their plain duty, obedience has not been enforced — and now the children are unruly and will not be controlled. Or perhaps the violent temper of one in the house breaks forth like a hurricane, and drives away all quietness and peace. Or perhaps selfishness reigns there, and instead of congenial, kindly love — this deadly foe to human happiness exercises its hard and cruel sway.

True it is, that in many godly homes one or other of these evils is sorely felt, but then grace comes in. The temper is watched over. The adorning of a meek and quiet spirit is desired and prayed for. The conversion of one or more, who may yet be strangers to God — is the burden of many a fervent cry. Thus light bursts through the darkness. As years advance, the jarring notes become fewer. There becomes more and more of peaceful harmony in the domestic circle. In the house of the ungodly it is otherwise. That blessed Spirit, who alone can make men of one mind in a house, is no guest there. Evil remains unsubdued, and is as leaven, leavening the whole. In the future, still darker is the prospect. Let adversity approach, let sorrows come, let death knock at the door of that home, and summon one of its inhabitants — what can there be but gloom and sadness? Where is the needful consolation? Where is the balm of Gilead for wounded hearts? Even if there is then a willingness to receive the message of salvation and hope which the Gospel brings — yet amidst the distraction and anxiety of such a season, how seldom can those realize any true comfort, who only then begin to seek it! But there is something yet darker than this. It ought to be said — and yet very painful is it even to glance at it. That family, passing one by one behind the veil that hides from us the future state, will meet again. Where will it be? What is that eternal world to those who venture upon it unprepared? What will it be, should father and mother, brothers and sisters meet again unsaved! Does any reader shrink from the bare possibility that such may be the case? But are there no homes without the fear and love of God? Are there no homes, where genuine prayer is never heard — where the Bible is seldom read — where the name of Jesus is not loved? Are there not homes, of which not a single member is a follower of the Lamb?

What must be the end of this, unless a great change is made — unless the Spirit is poured forth upon such a household? In a future world alone, can be fully known, what is the depth of misery incurred by such a family.

Turn now to the brighter side. As the silver moon shines forth more beautifully from behind the dark cloud — so does the blessing on the godly home stand out more clearly from the contrast that has been drawn.

What a firm bond of union links together the members of such a home. Strong natural affection indeed binds closely together many families. It is a most precious gift, and ought not to be undervalued. It is an excellent handmaid to religion. But can we doubt that grace in the heart forms a still stronger tie? It holds out where natural affection would fail. Besides this, it purifies and deepens it.

There is one Father — one Savior — one Spirit — one Book, by which all are comforted and all are directed; one Mercy-seat, where all alike worship; one Home, to which all are tending. In ordinary seasons they have common ground for the most profitable fellowship. Any fresh light

upon Scripture, any accounts of the progress of the kingdom of Christ, any doors of usefulness opened around, these will touch the sympathies of the whole family. In the great sorrows which fall upon a home, there will be common ground for hope and consolation. A financial loss may come which greatly straitens their resources, a great disappointment threatens them, a sudden accident or sharp disease cuts down a beloved parent or child. These are no strange things, but, as God wills it, they visit every dwelling. The blessedness of the Lord's presence is then great indeed. The old promises shine forth with a brighter light. As the lamp in the railway carriage, though unperceived before, is at once seen and valued as soon as the dark tunnel is entered — so many a word of hope in Scripture seems for the first time to be really precious, when dark days are appointed to us. The blessing of the Lord may also be marked in the ever-widening influence of each member of the household. In the case of the irreligious family, the sins of parents are often reproduced in the lives of children, and of children's children. Where true piety has leavened a household, we may often see its members going forth into the world, in their various relationships, scattering far and wide the blessings they themselves have enjoyed. It may be as the Christian merchant — or the zealous young pastor — or the head of a new household — or the mother of a little flock of her own — each one filling up some position of usefulness in the Church of Christ. Are there not names known among us of men faithfully at work for the Master, their very names reminding us that they are descendants of godly men, who led the van of Christ's army fifty, or even a hundred years ago? Who shall tell the ultimate blessing, the direct and indirect benefits to the Church of Christ, arising from a single family trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? The full blessing is reserved for the period when the whole family is re-gathered in a better world.

If religion served only to promote the peace and usefulness of the family now, it would be invaluable — but draw aside the curtain. Look beyond this passing world. One brief moment may break up a family. The best happiness it affords is but as brief as the flash of summer lightning. But beyond this, the bliss is stable and lasting. What must be the unutterable joy, should all be found safe, not one dear face absent! An old house in Edinburgh, of several stories, was tottering to its downfall. It had long been in a dangerous state, but those who lived in it apprehended no immediate danger, and still remained beneath its roof. One Sunday, near midnight, the house gave signs of falling. A father hastily awoke his wife and children. He hastened them, even as they were, into an adjoining house. Scarcely had he left it, before the house sank, and many were buried in the ruins. He looked around him to see if all were safe. One was absent. Shortly after, the missing child, he found, had safely made her escape by another way. Who can tell the deep gladness of that father's heart, as he beheld his wife and nine children now gathered around him? This joy was great, but it may picture to us one still greater. Think of the members of a Christian home all meeting hereafter around the throne, all rescued from the doom of sinners, all drinking of the same cup of bliss, all sitting down at the marriage-supper, all within the walls of that heavenly city, where pain and sorrow, and death can never enter!

It was something of this joy which filled the breast of a dying saint. "Blessed be God that ever I was born," said Halyburton. "I have a father and mother, and ten brothers and sisters in Heaven, and I shall be the eleventh. Blessed be God that ever I was born." In whichever way we regard it, the blessing within a truly Christian home is absolutely without limit. Over such a house the pillar of cloud rests by day, and that of fire by night. The promises, like so many bright stars, shine in the

sight of young and old. Angels encamp around it. The eyes of God are upon it for good, from the beginning of the year to its close. A philosopher in Ancient Greece had an inscription over his little cottage, "The gods dwell here." Over the door of the Christian home still more truly may be written, "The Triune God dwells here — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit here make their abode." Through many a chink and crevice the wind and the cold may enter — yet the Sun of Righteousness shines upon that home all the year round. The face of a God of love is ever turned toward it. Does the heart of any reader suggest that such a picture as I have drawn is only a beautiful imagination — that it is something far too exalted for this "working-day world" — that we can never reasonably expect such a home as this?

I answer, that no doubt difficulties lie in the way, and very great ones. It is no easy matter to overcome them. But shall we limit the power of Almightyness? "With God all things are possible."

Such households have been. Imagine the tent, where so often Abraham and Sarah called upon the name of the Lord. Think of that home in the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the son of their old age, knelt together; or the favored home at Bethany, of which every member was near to the heart of Christ.

Such households are also to be found now. A working man, with his wife, gave himself in early life to the service of the Lord. A large family was given to them, and not a few trials were their lot. The blessing of Obed-edom, however, was theirs also. Three or four children were called away in early life, but they died rejoicing in the Lord. The rest went forth into the world, following in the steps of their parents. In various positions of usefulness, are they now adorning the Gospel of Christ. The parents themselves, as they approach the close of a useful and busy life, are able to bless a Father in Heaven, for all His care exercised over them, and to look forward, in cheerful confidence to the Canaan yet to be possessed. And if the full blessing is unspeakably precious — let no one despise a smaller measure of it. If there is not the shower — then there may be a few droppings. Is it no reward, if religion exercises a restraining influence, or if one and another learn to follow Christ? Though we may not see all we would — yet more than enough shall be granted, richly to repay our efforts and our prayers.

What are the CHOICE MEANS by which a household may hope to secure the blessing of the Lord?

Foremost of all would I place, The hearty piety of the heads of the family. The consistent piety of any single member — of a son or daughter, or even a servant, may ultimately be the salvation of the rest; but until the father and mother, if both are alive, are decided in their Christian course, we have no reason to expect the special presence of God in the midst of the house. It is in vain to look for a good crop from bad seed — or for clusters of grapes from a thorn bush. Just so, we seldom find, as a rule, genuine piety in the younger branches of the family — if it is otherwise with the parents. The father and mother are representatives of the household before God. Times without number, for their sake, a blessing has descended upon the children. The life of a godly parent also is a daily sermon. It has been said, "The children of godly parents go to church every day!" In fact, such a home is a temple, where children every day may see and hear that which tells them that God is there.

Here may be discovered the reason that sound faithful teaching in Sunday schools, has comparatively effected so little good. It is not the fault in the school teaching — but in the home's pernicious influence. The evil that is witnessed at home, more than counteracts the lessons learned at school. On the other hand, piety in the parent often is salvation to the child. The well known account of the conversion of Richard Cecil is in point. The sight of his mother, patiently and cheerfully enduring her heavy cross of suffering, was the sermon that awakened him to repentance. It is right that parents should test their own piety, as well for the sake of their children as of themselves. Of great importance would it be to a family, if the parent would often question his own heart:

"Am I walking in all good conscience before God?"

"Do I abide in fellowship with the Father and the Son?"

"Do I daily lean upon the grace and strength imparted by the Spirit?"

"Am I so living, that I declare with Joshua — As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?"

Never doubt for a moment, that genuine piety and eminent holiness are the first requisites for all spiritual work. Neither the pastor in the parish, the teacher in the school, or the parent in the family — can expect to influence others for good, without themselves walking wisely and worthily in the narrow path of holiness.

Erect the family altar, and take good heed that the worship offered there be a reality. To read together the Word of God, to bend the knee together at the throne of grace, may be a blessed preparation for the united worship of the whole family above. But beware of making it a mere formality. With too many it is practiced as only a part of the daily routine that is necessary to be gone through — but it brings with it no profit and no comfort. It is a cloud without water. It is time worse than wasted, for it is an affront to Him who searches the heart. If it has been thus with any reader, do not discontinue it because you feel this to have been the case — but strive to throw life into it. Ask for Divine assistance. Read the portion of Scripture very distinctly. If it is possible, let there be a few words of practical application, or of necessary explanation of a difficult verse. Avoid making the prayer too long; but let it be hearty and fervent. Whether it be extempore or written, let it be offered with all reverence and earnestness "in the Spirit." The reality and true profit of the family devotion should be, to every Christian, a matter for much painstaking and prayer.

Maintain family discipline.

It is the will of God that parents should exercise control over their children. They must command that which is right — and they must forbid that which is wrong. It was spoken to the praise of Abraham, that God knew that he would command his children after him to keep the way of the Lord. It was the overthrow of the house of Eli, that his sons made themselves vile — and he restrained them not. In Scripture children are compared to arrows — but all depends upon the direction given to the arrow by the hand that guides it. They are compared to vine branches — but a vine unpruned will bear no fruit worth gathering. So it is written, "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame!" A remark may be made here as to the grievous harm that is often inflicted on a family, by the mother neglecting home duties for other work. Usually the right place of a mother with young children is at home, in the midst of them. In agricultural villages, more is often lost than

gained by a poor mother going out into the fields for a few pence, while her children's clothes, for need of mending, are growing worse and worse, besides the fact, that her children are left to a neighbor's care, or even to run wild about the fields or streets.

Great is the mischief also, when Christian ladies neglect the training of their own children for spiritual work out of doors. If both can be fairly accomplished, a double benefit ensues; but for no other work is it right for a parent to put her children in the background. Irreparable evil has been wrought by the wife of the clergyman being busied in the parish, while her children are left in the care of others, and in consequence, it may be, instead of being helpers, grow up a scandal to the Church of Christ.

"I really scarcely ever see my children," was the remark of a Christian lady. "I have so many religious objects to look to in London; and then I have Scripture readings that I attend, and so large a circle of valued friends, that I seldom have an evening at home with my family." Was this right? Was it the best means of adorning the Gospel of Christ? In training their children, let parents begin early. Long before a child is two years old, it will know the meaning of an emphatic "no." Even at that tender age, some measure of discipline may begin.

Unite firmness and gentleness.

Yield not to the self-will or pettishness of a child. What you once say, let it be law. Without some special cause, turn not from it. Especially punish lying and disobedience; they are the root of all that is evil.

Yet with firmness be very gentle. It is written, "Your gentleness has made me great." Harshness is a cold wind, that nips in the bud the beginnings of better things in the heart. Byron's character was ruined by the cruelty of a harsh and unfeeling mother.

Win your children by love. Draw rather than drive. Make home to them the happiest place in the world. Make friends of them. Confide in them, and they will confide in you. Do not keep them at a distance. As soon as they are old enough, entrust them with the knowledge of family affairs. The spirit of confidence will effectually aid in knitting together the whole family.

Plead for the spirit's grace to rest upon each one within the house.

Let each believer in a house consider it a bounden duty, never to let a day pass by without his naming each one of the family before God in prayer.

Doubly does this privilege belong to parents. A father's prayers have not often been spoken of, but they avail much. A father took up into his arms his little boy, shortly after his birth, and taking him into his study, fell upon his knees, and there presented him to the Lord, and besought for him His grace. The solemn dedication of the child was ratified in Heaven. He grew up to be a most able and successful preacher of the everlasting Gospel. By many in the neighborhood of Brighton and elsewhere, the name of Sortain will long be had in honor.

Upon the mother, however, rests much of the responsibility connected with the children. She is more constantly with them, and it is most natural that her prayers should incessantly be offered in their behalf.

Great indeed is the difference between one who neglects the souls of her children, and one who labors and prays for their salvation. A young man was condemned to death, in Glasgow, for the perpetration of a most brutal murder. His mother entered his cell. The son fixed his eyes upon her, and said, "Mother, had it not been for you — I would never have been here."

"I am sure," she said "I never taught you any harm."

"I am sure," he answered, you never taught me any good." From that moment his lips were sealed, and to the fatal hour he never spoke another word. Here was the reward of the neglectful mother! The late Richard Knill, for many years a missionary in Russia, returned home to his native village. It so happened that he slept in the same chamber where he had been accustomed to sleep in early life. Early in the morning he looked out of the window, and saw a tree in the garden, under which his mother had taken him forty years before, and had said to him, "Richard, let us pray." He went out, and in the very same spot knelt down, and thanked God for a mother's prayers. Here was the reward of the praying mother.

Prayer is a mighty agent. It secures that which no unassisted efforts can obtain. Only thus will God grant His Spirit to quicken dead souls. Only thus may we confidently anticipate a sure blessing on our dwelling place.

O happy house! O home supremely blessed!

Where You, Lord Jesus Christ, are entertained,

As the most welcome and beloved Guest,

With true devotion and with love sincere;

Where all hearts beat in unison with Thine,

Where eyes grow brighter as they look on Thee,

Where all are ready, at the slightest sign,

To do Your will, and do it heartily.

O happy house! where man and wife are one,

Through love of You, in spirit, heart, and mind;

Together joined by holy bands, which none,

Not death itself, can sever or unbind.

Where both on You unfailingly depend,

In weal and woe, in good and evil days,

And hope with You eternity to spend,

In sweet communion and eternal praise.

O happy house! — where with the hands of prayer

Parents commit their children to the Friend,
Who, with more than mother's tender care,
Will watch and keep them safely to the end;
Where they are taught to sit at Jesus' feet,
And listen to the words of life and truth,
And learn to lisp His praise, in accents sweet,
From early childhood to advancing youth.
O happy house! — where You do share the weal,
Where none forget You, whatso'er befall;
O happy house! — where You the wounds do heal,
The Healer and the Comforter of all;
Until every one his stated task has done,
And all at length shall peacefully depart
To the bright realms, where You Yourself are gone,
The Father's house — where You already are!

04.14. Victory over the World

Victory over the World

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life!" Revelation 2:10 The promises in Scripture are made to conquerors. Grace in the heart conquers a believer's foes — and then grace places on his head the crown of life. In the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, the same note is repeated again and again. Each promise, that of a crown of life, of eating the hidden manna, of being a pillar in the temple of God, of sitting with Christ on His throne — is made "to him who overcomes."

Among other enemies, we must overcome the world. Victory over it is God's seal upon the heaven-born soul. "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world." (1 John 5:4) A question here needs to be considered: What is to be understood by "overcoming the world"?

1. To overcome the world, is to not direct our course by that of the multitude around us.

Ever since the fall, mankind have been going astray. The stream has been running in a wrong direction. Men have chosen the bitter instead of the sweet — and the evil instead of the good.

There is a highway, broad and flowery, and along it the multitudes are ever traveling. There is a narrow and holy path, leading through the world to an eternal glorious home — yet few can be persuaded to choose it.

There is a ship gaily decorated, flags flying, and the name written on its bow, "The glory of the world!" Within it embark crowds of passengers. There is another ship, less ostentatious but far safer, bound on a voyage to Heaven, her name "Emmanuel!" Yet within her, few are willing to sail. When has there been a time in the history of the Church, when its living members have been more than a little flock? In the days of Noah but eight souls were saved in the ark, and among them were some at least not born of God. In the days of Elijah, out of the ten thousands of Israel — but seven thousand men were there, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the days of the prophet Isaiah, there was but "a very small remnant." When the Son of man was upon earth, He reminded His disciples that those who would follow Him must be content to have but few companions: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction — and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life — and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13-14 Is it otherwise even now? Where is there a city, a town, a village, of which more than a small part are true Christians? Where the truth has been most clearly proclaimed, and the greatest efforts made for the good of souls — yet the disciples of the Crucified One are far more than outnumbered by the children of this world.

If this is so, shrink not from boldly confessing Christ because you stand almost alone. Be it your fixed purpose, that if those around you will not join you on your way Zionward — you will not stay with them in the City of Destruction. The company you shall meet with at the close, will more than recompense the loneliness of the road. Solitary at times you may be now, but there awaits you at

the end of your course, a joyful welcome from the whole family of the redeemed.

2. To overcome the world, is to rise above the allurements which it has to offer. A good lesson may be gathered from a fable of olden time. It is said that a king had a daughter who was very swift of foot. So confident was he of her speed in the race, that he engaged, if any could outrun her, he would take the kingdom of which she was the rightful heiress. The attempt was made by many, but in vain. At length came forward one who, by deceit, endeavored to succeed. In his hand he carried three golden balls, and when she was gaining ground upon him, he purposely let fall one of them near her. Staying for a moment to pick up the treasure, she lost the position she had gained. Thrice, at intervals, did he repeat the artifice, and with the same result. She had imagined that without difficulty she could regain lost ground, but it was beyond her power. Her adversary won the race, and took her crown.

Well may these golden balls represent to us, but the honors, the gains, the vanities, and pleasures by which many are drawn aside, and, through the craft of their wily foe, lose their kingdom and their crown! A word of counsel may here be given with reference to the pursuit of lawful objects. It is both natural and right that men should endeavor to succeed in whatever they undertake. To rise in life, to lay up for ourselves or our families, is not unlawful; in fact, life would lose half its interest were not such aims permitted to us — but the chief point is ever to keep them in their right place. Let them be secondary, and not the main object of our ambition. We have need to follow such directions as Christ laid down for our guidance in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21. That is, let the securing of earthly treasures be subservient to the obtaining of treasures in Heaven. Let your heart be on the latter and not on the former.

Again. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Parallel to this again is the lesson taught in the parable of the unjust steward. No commendation is given to his injustice, but to his wisdom. "The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely." He used the present, that he might secure the future. Thus we find the teaching summed up: "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings!" Luke 16:9. That is, so employ your wealth, which too often by others has been gained or spent in the service of sin — that when your stewardship is over, you may be rich toward God; and He, your everlasting Friend, shall welcome you to His kingdom. (Luke 16:8-9) To assist in estimating the true value of these things, so much coveted by man, lay to heart the instability which is stamped upon worldly riches.

After a stormy night, there lay beneath a high tree a branch which had been broken off by the force of the wind. Upon it was a rook's nest, and within the nest were the little ones cold and dead. It was found that the nest had been built upon a rotten bough, which consequently could not resist the violence of the wind.

Just so, all supreme affection for earthly things, all reliance upon them — is building the nest upon a rotten bough. By and by some fierce blast will rend it, and the hope fixed there will perish in a

moment. One Branch alone is there upon which we may securely build — the Branch of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, who abides evermore. A word here is also needful with reference to doubtful amusements. To speak of them is to tread upon delicate ground, but the Word of God gives the clue by which we are to be guided. It lays down certain principles which an enlightened conscience, and a heart touched with love to Christ, will not misinterpret. In many of these amusements there is nothing upon which we can lay our finger, and say, "This is forbidden" — but our great enemy knows full well that it is not in things positively unlawful, but in such as are doubtful, that he can gain most advantage.

Judge whether the atmosphere of the theater, the race-course, the ballroom, and such-like scenes are not very harmful to the life of God in the soul. When near the Tropics you must be influenced by the heat — and when near the Poles you must be sensible of the chilling cold.

Take another illustration. The ears of corn near the beaten path, are very likely to be trodden down, or plucked by those who pass by — while the wheat at a distance from it is safe. With our evil hearts it is well not to go to the brink of temptation, but to keep as far away as possible. "He who loves danger, shall perish in danger."

Judge of your duty in this matter, not by the opinion of those around you, but by a calm prayerful consideration of the mind of the Spirit in such passages as the following, "The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17:14-16) "Do not be conformed to this world." (Romans 12:2) "Do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world." (1 John 2:15) "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

Study also Luke 8:14; Luke 9:23; Php 3:13-14, Php 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:6; Titus 2:12-14; James 4:4; 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:11-12.

There is a way of turning aside the point of the plainest Scripture commands, by giving to them another meaning — but to most of those who desire in all things to follow Christ, the passages above quoted will afford no doubtful guidance.

Doubt not that our Father delights in the happiness of His children, and that He will not deny whatever really conduces to it.

Christ sat down at the marriage feast, and His mother and His disciples were with Him. This fact may give one plain rule: Wherever we can ask the Master to accompany us — there we are safe. Wherever His presence is shut out, is not, except in rare cases, the place for one of His people.

Both with respect to our aiming at earth's treasures, and partaking of the pleasures which it offers, we have an excellent example in the spirit of Moses. His choice was a wise one. Before him the prospect was as attractive as could well be imagined. Within his grasp was the best that Egypt could offer. Wealth, rank, and all they could purchase, were his own. Yet he refused them. He trampled them beneath his feet.

Under other circumstances, much he might have retained and consecrated to the service of God — but when it came into competition with a better portion, he cheerfully forsook all. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:24-27 3. If we would overcome the world, we must not be wholly engrossed by the daily routine of duty. That we ought most diligently to attend to the claims of a lawful calling, none can doubt; but it is the spirit in which we do so, that marks whether the world is our servant or our master. The laborer with his hand on the plough may cherish within, bright thoughts of the Paradise above. The merchant, through the day mingling in the busy throng, may yet find a vacant place within for the hallowed presence of Christ. The mother, with the cares and worries that belong to a family, may turn in her heart again and again to the Great Burden-bearer, and be lightened of her heavy load.

Take two men engaged in the same pursuit, fairly matched in the work to be done, and the concerns belonging to it, and not seldom will you find the greatest possible difference between them. Look within: read the heart of each, and what it says. The inner thought of one is, "Business, money labor, duty — you are my God! For you I live, I toil, I strive day by day." The heart of the other speaks far otherwise, "Oh, my Savior, keep me near You by Your grace! In life's conflict be ever at my right hand! In all my labors may I glorify You! If riches increase, teach me rightly to use them! May I so pass through things temporal, that finally I lose not the things eternal!"

4. To overcome the world, we must patiently and meekly bear the cross that may be laid upon us. No Christian is without a cross — and it is often a heavy one. In days gone by, His followers have found it no easy matter to endure the shame and persecution that have come upon them for His sake. Driven into exile or burned at the stake, exposed to wild beasts or cast into the sea — have His faithful martyrs suffered the loss of all things, even life itself, rather than deny Him they loved. Nor is this trial passed. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Especially at the outset of a Christian life, is this cross felt. Old associates turn away, unkind remarks are made, petty annoyances are placed in the path. In many positions it is a life-long struggle to make a good confession before the ungodly.

It may be the cross of . . .

a lengthened affliction,

the painful weariness of a sick chamber,

or the desolation of a bereaved heart. In a village not far from Cambridge a Christian woman lay under the chastening rod of God. A strange complication of disease daily wore out her strength. A fever had first laid her low, a spinal disease followed; she then lost her sight, and her heart became affected; to this was added cancer in the throat; and yet beneath it all she murmured not. In her lowly cottage with barely the necessities of life, for more than twenty long years Sarah Carter cheerfully bore her cross. The new song of praise to the Lamb was ever upon her lips — never was she weary of extolling, in the hearing of saints and of sinners, the Name of her adorable Redeemer. This was to overcome the world.

5. To overcome the world, we must not be guided by the maxims which the world follows.

Profession of religion abounds — few but wish, in some sense, to be reckoned good Christians. Yet what is the rule of life by which men are guided? With the utmost stretch of charity, can we believe that they are led by the precepts of Christ? Is it not painfully evident, that the principles which actuate them are not those of Holy Scripture? Are not such maxims as the following, the mainspring of daily conduct, even in a large proportion of those who are found each Sunday within the walls of a Christian sanctuary?

"A little religion is all very well."

"The world for health — serious things for days of sickness."

"Business first — Christ afterwards."

"It is impossible to be quite honest in trade."

"If I am not worse than others, why should I fear?"

"Obey God when it is convenient — when it is not, please yourself."

I do not mean that men always utter such words with their lips, but are they not the rule by which they live?

Yet go to the faithful Word. What are the maxims which are there laid down? Are they not as far removed from these, as the east is from the west? Find a man who has been born of the Spirit, and is daily taught out of the Sacred Oracles — and what are the principles which he now strives to follow?

"Religion is everything or nothing."

"There is no little sin."

"I must obey God, though I die for it."

"A little with Christ, is better than all the world without Him." To follow out such principles in daily practice, is victory over the world. In your own home, in your place of business, in society, in the street, and in the market-place — to carry them out to their legitimate conclusions, is to prove yourself a Christian in more than the name. As the converted Hindu would regard the idol which once he worshiped, but now has broken in pieces, or cast down beneath his feet — so look upon this present world. Yes, as more than once a man has brought the idol of stone, and made it one of the steps into the house of the living God — so use that which once may have been your idol, that by it you may advance the kingdom, and honor the Name of the Most High. Employ your wealth, and standing, and influence, for His glory and the good of His Church. Is it easy so to act through life? Far from it. It requires effort, and watchfulness, and prayer. Those who imagine there to be no difficulty, have never yet made the attempt. Is it possible so to act? Surely it is. In a great measure may each Christian be victorious in this conflict. God puts a weapon into our hands, so mighty that we need never despair, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith! Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5.) Why is this? Why does faith, instead of any other grace, bear away the palm of victory.?

6. To overcome the world, we must engage the power of Christ by faith.

Man is weak and strengthless to meet a single temptation. "Without me," Christ declares, "you can do nothing." But the strong Redeemer is pledged to put forth His mighty power to support those who rely upon Him. Faith does this. It has been beautifully defined to be "the Holy Spirit moving the soul to lean on Jesus!" Hence comes it that the believer can rise above all the opposing influences around.

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them (That is, false teachers), because greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world."

Faith triumphs, because it brings love.

"Faith works by love." Nothing is stronger than the power of love. For seven long years, twice over, did Jacob toil and labor, night and day, and yet they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he bore to Rachel. Not a little did Jonathan bear of his father's displeasure, because, out of love to David, he took his part and pleaded his cause. What toil and hardship will a mother endure, out of love to her child — what comforts, pleasures, even necessities, will she forego, that she may attend upon a sick babe. All night long have I seen a mother, on board a steamer, watch by her little one; weary and tired herself — yet she would not leave its side, but remained there, that she might anticipate its every need. The love of Christ, shed abroad within the heart by the Spirit, is in the same way, a powerful instrument to enable us either for toil, or the endurance of hardship, or of reproach in the world. Few ever labored so unceasingly, or more patiently endured all trials and crosses that were appointed to him, than the Apostle of the Gentiles, and his one motive was love: "The love of Christ constrains us," was the secret of his marvelous life. And love is ever the child of true faith. Everyone that believes in Christ, must love Him. "Unto you who believe, He is precious." The more also faith increases, the more also will love.

Faith triumphs, because it brings with it a present joy.

Faith brings joy. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Who can believe in a free and perfect forgiveness, in a Father's wise and tender care, in His exceeding readiness to hear our prayers — but it must in some measure bring a ray of gladness into the soul?

Joy brings strength. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." This joy outshines earthly pleasures, and counterbalances all earthly sorrows. "Sorrowful — yet always rejoicing" may sound as a paradox; but to those strong in faith, it has often been a reality.

Here is a lesson worth pondering. The joy of faith triumphs over the world.

He who has just tasted of the grapes of Eschol — will have no desire for the apples of Sodom. He who has slaked his thirst from the waters of the River of Life — will not stoop to drink of the earth's polluted streams.

"Why do you now abstain from what once was your delight?" was asked of a man. "I have found something better — I have found Jesus," was the reply. The more we can find satisfaction and rest in Christ, as the chief Portion of our souls — the more completely shall we be able to cast off the spirit of the world, that as yet may cleave to us. There are trees which retain many of their old leaves — until new ones are put forth. There are feelings and habits which can never be

displaced, until better feelings and habits arise. The comfort of the Spirit, the love of Christ, the peace which passes understanding — these form the surest antidote to the enticements, and the best support against the tribulations, of an evil world.

Faith also triumphs, because it is the telescope by which invisible things are brought to sight, and distant things are brought near!

Why is it that men are so thoroughly wrapped up in the worldly things that surround them? Is it not because to them a future state has no real existence? They rise in the morning and rest at night, they rejoice in prosperity and grieve under trial they pass day after day, month after month, year after year — without the least realization that, compared to that which shall yet be manifested, the things of the day are but as a passing shadow. But take the telescope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for — the evidence of things not seen." Believe in the promises of Christ, with reference to a world yet to come. Behold, in sure expectation, the land that is far off, the mansions in the Father's house, the glory of the everlasting city. The present scene then will lose much of its power. A new spring of action will be felt.

Take an illustration from the life of Christopher Columbus. A firm persuasion took possession of his mind, that beyond the wide Atlantic might be discovered a rich and beautiful land. To many, the grounds for this confidence seemed very slight, but to him they were sufficient. No doubt existed in his breast; and in this faith, he rose above obstacles, which were well near insuperable. For more than twenty years he endured all manner of hardships, rather than forego the purpose he had formed, of going forth as a discoverer. From court to court, from country to country, from town to town, he journeyed, mostly on foot, to secure friends for his great enterprise. At length, with a ship little fitted for such a voyage, he set forth with a few companions. For weeks and months he persevered, in spite of his own fears, in spite of the reproaches of his crew who now regarded him as leading them on to certain destruction. He remained steadfast, and faith conquered. The distant shore was gained. Ever since, Columbus has been honored as one of the great heroes of mankind.

Let us take home the lesson. Let us follow in his footsteps. There is a country far better than that discovered by Columbus. It is a land where the ills of this life cannot come. It is revealed to us on no doubtful authority. We believe in its existence, not because of any chance reports, or guesses and surmisings of our own — but on the testimony of Him who cannot lie. In our path, however, lie many and great perils. There rolls many a wave between us and the desired haven. But why shall we fear? When the shore is won at last,

Who will count the billows past!

Let us exercise faith.

Let us pray for its increase.

Let us hope to the end.

Let us lean on the promise.

Then danger shall not dismay, nor fears overwhelm us. The rest shall be gained, and to God shall be all the glory. The first act of Columbus was to take possession of the land, in the name of the

Lord — so also shall we. To His merciful guidance and mighty protection shall we ascribe all the praise.

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your Name give glory, for Your mercy and Your truth's sake."

04.15. The Great Account

The Great Account The longest day has its close. The longest life is but for a moment.

"Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth."

"We spend our years as a tale that is told."

"Man is like vanity and a breath; his days are as a shadow that passes away."

"What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Such is a true picture of the present life. It is "a handbreadth," "a shadow," "a tale that is told," "a passing vapor."

There are insects which are born at sunset, and before the sun arises, they are no more. There are flowers which open with the day, and before evening fade and die. So short an hour of existence is ours, if judged by the light of the eternity that follows.

"Every-day life" with its comforts and its cares, its joys and its sorrows, its evil and its good — does not long abide with us. Soon buried with us in the habitation appointed for all living — will be the schemes, and thoughts, and pursuits, that now engage the most of our time. But what then? Has life no further issues? Shall the work of our hands, the words of our lips, the thoughts of our hearts — be heard of no more? Not so. There is a great day approaching. A reckoning must then be made. The book of a man's life, closed for a season, will then be reopened. The past shall have a voice given to it, so that not to hearken will be impossible. In a quiet churchyard a few solemn words were inscribed over one who lay there: "What I was, the day of judgment will declare. Reader, what are you?"

It is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." It is written again, "Behold the Judge stands at the door!"

Behold the Judge Himself!

It is the Son of God. He it is, who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who searches the hearts and tries the thoughts of men.

It is the Son of man. He it is . . .

who took our nature and shared our heritage of woe;

who dwelt on earth, and wept in Bethany;

who felt the Tempter's power, and has known by experience what our condition really is.

He it is, who alone of the children of men, lived and died unblemished and undefiled. It is fit that the Judge should be guiltless of crimes upon which He must pass sentence in others. The Son of

man, though one with us in all beside, "did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth."

He it is, who was once judged and wrongfully condemned. The High Priest and Pilate sentenced Him to death — but then they shall change places. Christ shall be Judge. At His bar, both of them shall stand.

He it is, who is now the Savior. "He came into the world to save sinners." He came not to judge, but to redeem. He stretches forth His arm to rescue man from the deep abyss of guilt into which he has fallen. He calls lovingly to perishing ones, to come to Him for salvation. He delights freely to justify through His death and merits, all those who turn to Him. He will finally perfect in holiness, through His sanctifying Spirit, those who commit themselves to His care.

Oh, sinner! behold Jesus standing at the door of your heart as a most compassionate Savior — before He comes to you as a righteous Judge. Flee to His mercy-seat for pardon and acceptance — before you are summoned to stand before His judgment seat!

Behold the Judged!

Behold the vast multitude who shall stand beneath the solemn shadow of the great white throne. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad."

Amid that multitude shall be those now dead, lying around the village church, or in the crowded cemetery — those whose remains were buried on the battlefield, or who lie fathoms deep beneath the waves of the sea.

There shall be those now living in various parts of the wide world — those twelve hundred million, who are said to form at this time the population of the earth.

There shall be those yet unborn, who have yet their race to run, and their battle to fight. Our Criminal population shall be there — murderers, thieves, defrauders, and such like — those convicted, and those who have escaped. From a window in York Castle may be seen a narrow grass-plot, where for many a year have been laid the remains of those executed for various crimes. What a place of dread, on the resurrection morn, will be that enclosure, when those who lie there will arise to receive their sentence before a far higher tribunal than any that as yet they have known!

Those who have borne a character without a stain among their fellow-men will be there also. Tried by any human standard, they need not fear, but "God sees not as man sees." A captain was within a few weeks of death. A friend was speaking to him of a future state. "Were you to be tried by a Court Martial as to your conduct as an officer and a gentleman — would you be afraid?"

"I would not!" said he emphatically, rising up in his bed as he spoke it. "But you are not to be tried by a Court Martial, but at the bar of Christ, and what shall you answer when He asks: 'What have you done for Me?'"

"Nothing! I have never done anything for Christ" said the captain thoughtfully. The arrow had reached his conscience. He was now brought to deep conviction, and through it to find rest in Christ.

There will be the "blind guide" — the man solemnly pledged to feed the flock, yet who knew not himself "the unsearchable riches of Christ," nor unfolded them to others.

There will be the faithful under-shepherd, who himself followed the Master, and day by day, in public and in private, exalted Christ and Him alone.

There will be hearers of the Word, who vainly imagined that their duty was done, when for half-an-hour they had hearkened to the sermon.

There will be doers of the Word, who practiced as well as heard, and only grieved that they did it so little.

There will be those who believe not the Gospel of salvation. It has come to them, but has not been received. Through prejudice, or presuming upon their own endeavors, or a future repentance — they have put away from them the offered blessing.

There will be those who have believed and embraced it. When speaking of the judgment, Paul excludes not himself or other believers. Though sin be forgiven, though for them there can be no condemnation — yet for the glory of Christ and their justification before a world that has trampled upon them, shall they appear before the Judge. Of all earth's teeming myriads, **NOT ONE SHALL BE ABSENT!**

However difficult to form a conception of the manner in which it can be brought about — of the locality in which it may take place — of the lengthened period of "that Day" — yet of this be assured, not one solitary individual shall escape its awful solemnity.

Within a man's own breast, has God fixed a faithful witness to it. Why is it that within, there is that which chides or approves? Is there not a little judgment seat set up there — I mean conscience — which bears a clear testimony to the judgment to be administered hereafter? Nor in any way can the guilty one flee from the presence of his Judge. A young man, with marvelous rapidity, takes away the life of a respectable citizen, and carries off his gold watch. Before the crime has been brought home to him, he takes his passage for America, and sets sail upon the broad Atlantic. But a clue is found. A very small matter leads to just suspicion of the murderer. The officers of justice are upon his track, and in a swift steamer first reach the shore where he expects to land. There he is apprehended, and brought back for trial, and afterwards meets with the punishment he so justly merited.

God has likewise His swift messengers. On a distant shore, if not here, shall they arrest the sinner, and take him before the bar of Justice.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

"For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"

Behold the Character of the Judgment Which God Has Appointed. In every Court of Justice there must be a certain fixed rule or standard, by which people accused may be tried. In our own land, for example, every prisoner is acquitted or condemned according to the English code of laws. It is not according to the law of France, or Russia, or any other country — it is not in accordance with

any idea of justice in their own mind — or in that of the judge or jury — but by a clear definite code, known and recognized among us. So likewise will it be at the Great Day. Various are the standards by which men judge themselves now, so as to quiet conscience and build up themselves in a false security. They cherish certain views of their own, with respect to moral duty, and imagine that if they fairly come up to them, nothing more can be required. Or they judge themselves by the ordinary walk of those with whom they dwell. Or they compare themselves with those who seem greater transgressors than they are — and so they hope that they may not fall far short of the mark.

All such vain imaginations will vanish in a moment before the brightness of Christ's solemn throne. The only standard will be the Word of God. That word contains within it the great rule of duty — supreme love to God, and true genuine love to our neighbor. It reveals also the free promise of life, and eternal salvation to every one who believes in the name of Christ. It declares that true faith works by love, and that none truly believe in the Son of God, who are not led by the Spirit, and bring not forth the fruits of that Spirit in their lives. Such is to be the rule by which all those will be judged to whom the message of the Gospel has come. Hear the Word of Christ: "He who rejects Me and receives not My words, has one who judges him — the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him at the last day."

Bear in mind not only what is to be the one standard — but that the judgment has respect to the whole course of a man's life. A trial usually has respect to a single charge, or at most to some few isolated actions — but the final reckoning takes in all that a man has ever been or done.

Whether an outward obedience has been paid to the letter of the law,
what duties have been neglected,
what has been left undone, which ought to have been done,
what has been the employment of the talents bestowed,
what use has been made . . .
of the years we have lived,
of the influence we have possessed,
of the wealth committed to us,
of the opportunities for receiving or doing good which may have been placed in our way,
what words have fallen from our lips and what thoughts and desires cherished in our hearts,
what has been the chief motive and principle by which we have been actuated
— nothing of all this can avoid the eye of our omniscient Judge!

Above all things solemn in the coming Day, will be the laying bare of that which is now altogether hidden and secret. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel." "Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will

bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Take an illustration of this truth from the pages of modern history.

Some eighteen centuries ago, a terrible calamity befell the flourishing city of Pompeii. While busied with the excitement of an election, there issued from the summit of a neighboring mountain, a huge column of smoke which soon overspread the sky, and turned midday into pitchy night!

Quickly there followed a thick rain of ashes, and after this, a shower of small hot stones, together with heavier masses of earth. After a short interval, is heard the sound of an approaching torrent. Down Mount Vesuvius' side flow rivers of dense black lava, which soon reach the town and crept into every hole and corner.

There is now no shelter or escape. Those who did not flee at first, now find the attempt to be in vain. Some are fast blocked up within their homes; others are entangled by the lava; others are overthrown by the heaps of loose stones. Within three days the town had disappeared! It lay covered up beneath a vast mass of ashes and of lava. Above it from year to year, there accumulated fresh soil, in which grew again the vine and the olive. For seventeen hundred years the town, wrapped in its earthy shroud, remained almost undisturbed.

Now in part, it has been disintombed. Though so long in darkness, it has been brought out into the light. The Roman sentinel was discovered, still at his post near the gates of the city. The baker's oven, with its eighty-three loaves, black and charred, was discovered, and these still retaining their shape, as placed there in the days of Paul. There was found also the skeleton of a prisoner in chains, and the supposed cause of his punishment in the bones of a little infant in a stone jar close by. The remains of a house of ill-fame, with its obscene paintings and the names upon the wall of some of the gladiators who frequented it, was still standing.

Strange does it seem that, hidden beneath the ground for so long a period — all this should now be brought forth into the light of day. Is there not a voice that comes to us from the remains of ancient Pompeii? Does it not remind us that "The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all!" Does it not set before our eyes, as in a picture, the fact that our present life, with all that belongs to it, shall yet have a resurrection? Do we not see here that centuries may pass by after the grave has become our resting place — and yet that all we have been and done, our names, our dwellings, and their testimony for good or for evil, may stand out as fresh as while we were alive?

Oh what secrets will then, for the first time, be disclosed! In many a home, in many a little knot of companions, evil has been concocted and accomplished almost passing belief! Schemes of fraud have been planned and carried out; foul iniquities, deeds of darkness, have been committed in secret, which it might well make us shudder even to contemplate. The authors of these may be undetected, they may never here reap their just reward, but they are known of God, and the deeds they have done; and to the everlasting shame of the men and women who have thus acted, shall their crimes be made manifest before the universe.

Yet not only iniquities done in secret, but the innermost feelings of the heart shall be laid bare. Where there has been no commission or thought of such acts as have been named — yet within the heart there may still be lurking the most deadly evils. In the sight of the Most High, how

revolting must be those heart-sins which are often unthought of and unchecked, even among those who pay an external deference to His commands, and are found continually as worshipers in His sanctuary. A determined selfishness, a secret aversion to His service, a willful forgetfulness of all His daily benefits, a cherished dislike of spiritual religion, and a thorough cleaving to the things of earth — may exist side by side with a life upon which, it would be difficult to cast a shadow of reproach. Is it not our wisdom to be willing before "that Day" to know the utmost of the evil in us, at present it may be, unknown by others or even by ourselves?

Gently, tenderly, will the good Physician handle, and probe the depths of that wound — which of our own choice we reveal to Him. No needless pain will He inflict; and where pain must be given, where the conscience must be touched, He will yet add the healing balm. Far better is it in our day of grace, thus to learn our plague and sore — than to delay until a rougher hand exposes it, until the avenging law and an endless eternity make that manifest which will then be beyond a cure!

Behold the two-fold issue of the judgment.

There can be, in any case, but one or other of two sentences. In Scotland a third verdict is sometimes given — the prisoner is neither acquitted or condemned, but the crime is declared "not proven." Though the jury are persuaded of the guilt of the person tried — yet the evidence itself is scarcely clear enough to warrant an infallible verdict. This can never take place at the bar of the Most High God. There is the One who saw it. The omniscient eye of the Judge Himself beheld all that has taken place! To those who have died in their sins, the outcome must be a sentence of "eternal damnation." No language could have been used stronger than that employed by Christ to declare this. He speaks of "the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched." He employs, with reference to it, the same word "eternal" that is employed as to the happiness of the righteous. "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." "These shall go away into eternal punishment — but the righteous into eternal life."

Throughout the whole of Scripture there is not the least intimation of a second judgment, or of a reversal of the sentence to be passed by Christ at His coming. If on that solemn day, therefore, the sentence is "eternal punishment" — how, or when, shall it ever be changed? But to those found in Christ the verdict shall be everlasting life and felicity. The debt has been paid by their Surety — who then shall demand it of them? Their sins and offences have already been punished when their Substitute died, the Just for the unjust — who then shall require a second reparation to the Holy law which had been broken? The everlasting merits and righteousness of the Son of God is theirs — who then shall object to their entrance upon the glory prepared for them? "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us!" Romans 8:33-34 The glory to be the portion of the true Christian is not yet manifest — what it shall be surpasses comprehension. The rest of a felt security in the Father's house; every holy desire fulfilled; every labor, and gift, and prayer, receiving its recompense through the same grace that first prompted it; this shall be much — yet still more shall there be. The death-blow will have been given to the evil that yet abides in us; the perfect likeness of the glorified Redeemer will be upon us, body and soul alike being transformed into His image. The tenderest ties will then be re-knit — Christians parted for many a long year will then see each other face to face. The open vision of Christ will then shed eternal sunshine upon His saints. Now His

people see Him, but it is as through the lattice or the colored glass. It is by means of ordinances, prayer, and in the inspired Word; but then it will be in and immediate sight, "We know that when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is!" 1 John 3:2

What joyful hope should this raise in our hearts. The miner working in the dark mine, far below the surface of the earth, feels his arm strengthened for toil, and his heart throb quicker in anticipation of the evening hour — as he remembers that above ground there is the little cottage, and a dear wife and beloved children longing for His return. So may it be with Christian people, now toiling below in this dark world, as we remember that far above this present scene there is the Father's house, and there we shall see One whom long we have known and loved, and with whom we shall then forever dwell.

It was a touching word of one who lately had become blind. When assured that he never would regain his sight he answered, "Then the next person I shall see will be my Savior!"

Behold the speedy approach of "that day!" "Surely I am coming quickly!" "Behold, the Judge stands at the door." It is a strong expression. It reminds us how near at hand He may be. The thief is sleeping within, dreaming of some midnight revel, but the officer of justice who has tracked his steps is at the door, about to knock, and then to convey him away to prison. The wife is mourning an absent husband, who in a foreign land has been toiling for her welfare, and she fears lest she may never again see him — when, behold! he stands by the door, and her long waiting is at end. So for judgment or for mercy, the Bridegroom will quickly come. It is not for us to fix the times and the seasons, but many are the signs that tell of His approach. Long has He tarried beyond the expectation of His Church, but it cannot be forever. In great likelihood the outburst of error and infidelity in our day, may be that foretold before His appearing. But this is certain — Christ will come, and every eye shall see Him. Whether it be to us in the flesh, or after our summons by death, will be of little importance. Strive then, Christian, ever to be looking for that blessed hope. Realize, as if present now, the Advent of the Redeemer. Arising in the morning, consider that before the glorious sun, now shedding its early beams, shall sink in the West — the day of the world's history may be over. As you retire to rest, speak to your own heart, that before another day shall dawn the trumpet may sound, and the sign of the Son of man appear in Heaven. As the Sabbath-bell calls you forth to meet with the assembled congregation — remember that from the earthly sanctuary you may be called to commence the Jubilee of the everlasting Sabbath.

05.00. Help and Consolation from the Sanctuary

Help and Consolation from the Sanctuary George Everard, 1868 To walk with God, to please Him more and more, to abide in fellowship with His Son, and to abound in the fruits of righteousness — must be the daily aim of every true-hearted Christian. But to do this requires continual, painstaking effort, the use of all available means of grace, and waiting perpetually on the Lord for the promised help of His free Spirit.

If you would thus live and walk, remember . . .

that every moment you need help from Christ,

that Christ has just the help suited to your necessity, and

that He exceedingly delights to bestow it upon you.

Remember to take care that the heart is right. The heart is the mainspring of all worship and all obedience. Out of it are the outcomes of life and death. Let the heart be warm with love to the Savior, and desirous of greater likeness to Him — and there cannot fail to be seen in the life something of His holiness, something of His meek and lowly spirit.

Remember to bring religion into everything you do. Not one single word or action of the day ought to be considered outside the sphere of its influence. It has been my aim to set this forth in a previous work, "Day by Day," and it cannot be too much pressed upon the consciences of those who profess to be the Lord's followers. To practice daily self-denial in little things, to aim at improving the least opportunities of benefitting the weakest of the flock, never to reckon there is a moment when we are free from the solemn responsibility of glorifying God — this is a blessed privilege no less than our bounden duty.

Remember that in all your failures in doing this, in all the discouragements you meet with from a backsliding spirit, from the power of sin within and of the Tempter and the world without — it is your strength to fall back on foundation principles. You may ever look for a fresh grant of pardon through the death of your Surety. You may ever look for a fresh measure of the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit.

Remember to trace the hand of God in trials of every description. Whatever the instrument is — be quite sure that God Himself has appointed the trial, and that it is in kindness and faithfulness to draw you nearer to Himself.

Remember that the least of Christ gives more true and abiding happiness than the most of the world; and when the choice lies between them choose Christ in preference to all beside.

Remember to make the most of each returning Sunday. The Lord's day is our Father's gift of love, to fill our souls with the breath of His Spirit, and thus to speed us on our voyage across the waves of this troublesome world. For this purpose should we rejoice to frequent the courts of the Lord, and join in hearty worship with His people. Never ought there to be a "Home Sunday" except in

cases of real necessity. But there are many who have no option. However much they might desire it, they cannot possibly take their place with the assembled congregation. For such especially the following pages have been written.

They are suited for invalids, for those watching by the sick, and for those detained at home by family duties. There are others too in delicate health, who are unable, when the weather is rough or the distance is long, to be present in the House of God, and who may welcome some assistance in the study of God's Word. The voyager across the wide ocean, and possibly some of our fellow countrymen sojourning in other lands, and who possess not the same Christian privileges which we enjoy at home, may here find words of guidance and consolation. The subjects chosen are plain and practical, and dwell chiefly on the leading truths of our most holy faith. The more these are understood and received into the heart, the more will people find peace in days of trial and be fruitful in every good work.

If subjects of controversy have here and there been slightly touched, it is because the writer feels deeply the perils to which men's souls are exposed through the errors that now unhappily so widely prevail. In a practical work like the present, he would have preferred altogether to omit such topics — but at the present day he dare not do so; he trusts however that whatever has been written has been in charity and love, and that not one word will be found needlessly to wound those that may hold opinions differing from his own. The various seasons of the Christian year have not been forgotten, and without difficulty the chapter may be found which is suitable to each one of them.

Let me add a needful caution. Never let this or any other book take the place of that Word which is "given by inspiration of God," and is all of it, from cover to cover, "as silver purified seven times in the fire." There is doubtless a danger in the multiplication of religious books, for they become positively injurious if they stand in the way of a diligent, prayerful study of the pure Word. The best that a work like this can hope to accomplish is to lead its readers more to value and better to understand the precious truths of that Word, and to apply more in detail its precepts, promises, doctrines, and narratives, to their own present necessities.

I would commend to the blessing of our gracious Father this attempt to minister to the spiritual welfare of Christ's flock; and may I earnestly request each reader, while perusing any portion of this work, to add much fervent prayer for the effectual teaching of the Holy Spirit, and also to join with the writer in asking the same grace from above on behalf of every one into whose hands a copy of it may fall.

"O Almighty God, who has built Your Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head Cornerstone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

05.01. The Piercing of Jesus' Side!

The Piercing of Jesus' Side!

"One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water!"
John 19:34 One tree has been the channel of all the evil that is to be found in the world.

Another tree has been the channel of all the good that is to be found in the world. From the fruit of the tree of which Eve partook, has arisen . . .

all the sin,

all the care,

all the sorrow,

all the disease, and

all the death that are to be seen on every side. From the fruit of another tree, that on which Jesus bore our sins, has arisen . . .

all the grace,

all the holiness,

all the hope,

all the consolation,

which the redeemed have received from above.

Oh, that we might gaze upon that cross, and in faith behold Him who hung there! O blessed Redeemer, grant us the Spirit of grace and supplication . . .

that we may look upon You whom our sins have pierced, and mourn;

that we may again look upon You, and rejoice in such a loving Savior, in such a blood-bought salvation!

Reader, go near to that cross! As John and the faithful women stood beneath its shadow — so you likewise go and behold the Lamb of God slain for sinners!

Behold that head, lately anointed with fragrant spikenard — now encircled with a chaplet of sharp thorns!

Behold that face, fairer than the children of men, upon which angels delighted to gaze — covered with mingled blood and spittle!

Behold that eye, which beheld the city with such compassion, which shed tears over it, as at the tomb of Bethany — now growing dim in death!

Behold those ears, which never in vain heard the cry of sorrow or distress — now greeted with bitter mockings and reproaches!

Behold those lips, which spoke as never man spoke, which said to the widow, "Weep not," and to the waves, "Peace, be still" — now swollen with blows and parched with thirst!

Behold those hands, which healed the leper by their touch, which lifted up the daughter of Jairus and restored her to life — now torn by nails!

Behold those feet, which ever went about doing good, which trod the waves of Gennesaret — now sore wounded, and painfully transfixed to the cruel wood!

Behold that body, so holy, so chaste, so pure — suffering unknown agonies! And now behold the heart of Jesus, so tender and true, so kind and loving — pierced with the soldier's spear!

Ah, it was a savage, cruel hand that inflicted this last wound on the body of our Lord! There was no need for it. The spirit of the Redeemer had fled. His enemies had done their worst. He could no longer suffer pain or grief. But that spear-wound was, as it were, a mark of the hatred which still existed against the Crucified. Deeply too must that wide gash from which flowed forth blood and water, have reached to the heart of John and the godly women who yet stood by.

What does that spear, that pierced side, tell of man's sin in all periods of the world's history?

Let every Christian look at his own sin, and see how it has wounded his Lord. Surely it has been as the scourge, the nail, the spear. It has increased the burden of guilt which He bore; it has added to the sufferings which He endured. How utterly should we loathe and forsake the sin that wrought the sufferings and death of our best Friend! An American Indian was persuaded, sorely against his will, to murder a dear friend. After he had done the deed, a terrible remorse seized him. He took the knife which he had used, and having dug a deep hole on the north side of a tree, he threw it in that he might never more see it, and that it might lie beneath a spot upon which the sun would never shine.

Let me ever thus regard my sin! My sin is that which has wounded the One who bore me nothing but good will, and who ever sought my peace. My sin is that which has slain my Friend, my Savior, my Redeemer! May I ever regard it as an accursed thing! May I never more look upon it with favor, but with the utmost abhorrence. May I keep far away, shrinking from its very touch, as the deadliest pollution!

How utterly we should loathe and forsake the sin that wrought the sufferings and death of our best Friend!

Ah, give me, Lord, the tender heart

That trembles at the approach of sin:

A godly fear of sin impart,

Implant and root it deep within;

That I may fear Your gracious power,

And never dare to offend You more. But what does that spear-wound tell of divine mercy, grace, and salvation?

Here in the riven side of Christ, is the cleft of the rock, the safe hiding place, where the sinner may flee and find rest and safety. In every accusation of conscience abide here, for "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." In every season of doubt or anxiety, you may repose here, for Christ has said, "In Me you shall have peace." In all the storms of affliction that may fall upon you, in the burning heat of noon, in the wearing toil and hurry of life's work — you may in a moment find consolation by turning to the Savior; for it is written, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Whenever the Adversary tempts or affrights you, whenever you experience unkindness or injurious treatment at the hands of others — flee again and again to Christ as the refuge of your soul. A story is told of a dove pursued by a hawk that flew into the bosom of one who was walking over a field. He looked tenderly upon the bird fluttering with terror, and said to it, "I will not give you up to your enemy, since you come to me for sanctuary." Even so may the soul, terrified by the assaults of the Evil One, or harassed by the persecutions of the world — flee straight to the Friend of sinners with the prayer, "O deliver not the soul of Your dove unto the multitude of the enemies." But John tells us that from the side of Christ, there flowed water and blood. It affords a testimony to the accuracy of the narrative, for we are told that long-continued agony such as Jesus had suffered has a tendency to produce a quantity of water around the heart.

It affords also an illustration of those streams of salvation that come to us through the Savior's crucifixion. It shadows forth the blessings that follow from His death.

It tells of the blood that cleanses from all sin. It tells of the fountain open, and open for you. Are you just waking from the sleep of sin, from a life-time of indifference to the service of God? The message is for you: "Wash, and be clean!" Are you a backslider? Have you turned away from Christ? Do you feel as if such sin could never be forgiven? Yet despair not. True you have brought dishonor upon His name; you have said in fact to those around you, "I have tried the world, and I have tried Christ — and the world is the best master." Yet once again turn back to Him. He will pardon. "Wash, and be clean." Are you a believer clinging only to Jesus — and yet distressed on account of your manifold sins and infirmities? Here is your safety, here is your comfort — a continual resort to the open fountain. By it is the only place on earth where every sin withers and dies — and where grace and holiness and love thrive and grow. For with the efficacy of His blood to cleanse, does Jesus ever join the power of the Spirit, the living water — to renew and sanctify. You cannot separate them. "The water and the blood" will ever flow on together. Both are given through Christ's meritorious suffering and death on the cross. And He gives not one without the other. Grace to forgive, and grace to sanctify — both or neither will Jesus bestow. As you look to Him daily to wash you from your sins in His own blood — so likewise look to Him every hour for fresh supplies of His quickening, sanctifying Spirit.

Flow, my tears, flow still faster,

Thus my guilt and sin bemoan;

Mourn, my heart, in deeper anguish,

Over sorrows not your own!
See a spotless Lamb draw nigh,
To Jerusalem, to die
For your sins, the sinless One.
Think! ah, think! what you have done! Can we view the Savior given
To the smiter's hands for us?
Can we all unmoved, unhumbled,
See Him mocked and slighted thus?
View the thorny chaplet made
For His meek and silent head,
Hear the loud and angry din,
And not tremble for our sin?
Must I, Jesus, thus behold Thee
In Your toil and sorrow here?
Can I nothing better yield Thee
Than my unavailing tear?
Lamb of God! I weep for Thee!
Weep, Your cruel cross to see —
Weep, for death that death destroys!
Weep, for grief that brings me joys!
Poor is all that I can offer:
Soul and body while I live;
Take it, O my Savior, take it —
I have nothing more to give.
Come, and in this heart remain,
Let each enemy be slain —
Let me live and die with Thee;
To Your kingdom, welcome me.

05.02 Bread from Heaven

Bread from Heaven

"Jesus said unto them: I am the Bread of life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger; and he who believes on Me shall never thirst." John 6:35

Jesus was ever as faithful in His rebukes — as He was gracious and tender in His consolations. A crowd flock around Him. They do not come with a desire to hear His words, or to follow Him as their Master. They come only in hopes of temporal advantage. Nor does this escape His observation: "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:26-27 He then, in answer to their inquiry, bids them believe on Him, as that which above all things the Father requires. In their unbelief, they ask a sign. Forgetful of that marvelous exhibition of Divine power which they had of late witnessed in the feeding of the five thousand, they speak of Moses giving them manna in the desert, and would have Christ manifest some similar proof of His power. Jesus does not grant their request, but reminds them of that other bread which the Father was now giving, and that of which all other was but the type and shadow: "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." John 6:32-33

Taking the words in a mere natural sense, they ask that they may receive this: "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Then Jesus points to Himself: "Earthly bread I have already given you; but for the nourishing of your souls you must feed on Me. I am the Bread of life; I am the living Bread that came down from Heaven — if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

It is evident that human hearts are tormented by unsatisfied longings, and cravings after a good which they never find. If the most excellent creatures that God has made were all combined, they could never make the boast, "I have satisfied one soul." One height gained, is but to open out the vision to one still higher. One blessing granted, only makes it plain that something still better must be given before Paradise be regained. Hence the confession of the one who above all had made the experiment: "Vanity of vanities, says the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Hence the sorrowful complaint of the Prophet: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

Wisdom's children have discovered the secret: there is satisfaction, but it is only in God.

"As the deer pants after the water-brooks — so pants my soul after You, O God."

"My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water."

"O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

"He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips; when I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches."

It has pleased the Father that in Jesus should be laid up the fullness which can meet all our desires. For this reason does He speak of Himself as the Bread of life, and gives the assurance that whoever comes to Him shall never hunger; and he who believes on Him shall never thirst. In His atoning death, is the satisfaction of the sin-defiled conscience. The conscience enlightened to discern anything of the true character of sin is evermore oppressed by a sense of wrong doing, and this before God. It accuses the soul perpetually of transgression against a holy law, and wearies itself to find means of pacifying the just displeasure of the Almighty. But when the Spirit reveals Christ, the conscience finds rest. The one sacrifice perfected by Him on Calvary becomes the ground of hope. The self-condemned transgressor, owning his exceeding guiltiness, ceasing any longer to seek for peace in his worthiness, his best doings, his most religious feelings or dispositions — draws near to the Mercy-seat with this alone as his all-sufficient plea: "I merit everlasting exclusion from the presence of Jehovah; my iniquities have shut the door of the kingdom against me — but Jesus, by His crucified body, by His riven side, by His most precious blood, has made for me a new and living way, by which with boldness I can approach the throne." My sins deserve eternal damnation — but Jesus died for me. The fearful spirit now receives a joyful liberty; the trembling soul comes back, like Noah's dove, to the ark of rest — a Father's bosom, and a Father's love.

Thus does the soul by faith eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. The crucified body of the Redeemer becomes the nourishment and satisfaction of the inner man.

Christ is also the satisfaction of the human intellect. "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Is not the knowledge of the High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity — the very highest that can be attained? It may be interesting to find history in the earth's strata, or in the changes that take place in a language, or to discover the laws that regulate mind or matter — but is it not something far beyond this to learn, though it can be but a little, of the ways and works of the Creator, of the mind of Him in whom we live and move and have our being? And where can we gain this but in Christ, in His Person as the Incarnate Son, in His holy and loving character, in the salvation which He accomplished and in which all the Divine perfections were so marvelously exhibited? Where can we gain it but in that revelation made through Him, as the Great Prophet of His Church, and which points to Him as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all! All this cannot fail to impart, the more it is studied, the truest satisfaction to the believing soul.

"This is what the LORD says: Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD!" Jeremiah 9:23-24

Jesus Christ is the truest satisfaction of the deepest affection of which the heart of man is capable. Every person needs a heart on which he can repose. Yet where on earth can be found one upon which it is wise or safe to lean all our weight? The warmest human love has its limit, however sweet the consolation it may afford. It may fail us through the instability that is inherent in man, or it

may fail through the separation that one day must take place. Even on the morning when the dream of years may be fulfilled, one sentence, "until death us do part," comes in to tell of a parting at last. But who can trust too implicitly to the love and faithfulness of Christ? Where is the limit to that love which many waters cannot quench, which has a height and depth and breadth and length that none can scan or comprehend? What circumstances shall arise that will lead Him to forsake His own redeemed people? Infinite in its measure, eternal in its duration, the love of Christ never fails!

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Romans 8:38-39

I need You, precious Jesus! I need a Friend like Thee;

A Friend to soothe and sympathize, a Friend to care for me:

I need the heart of Jesus, to feel each anxious care,

To tell my every need, and all my sorrow share! Is any reader looking hither and thither for that which will still the restless desires of the soul? If you will . . .

seek it in a round of gaiety and dissipation;

seek it in the accumulation of wealth;

seek it in anything that is of earth —

then soul-famine, soul-starvation will be the sure result. There will be within a fearful void, a deep of wretchedness that no words will be able to express. But on the other hand there is that peace, that hidden manna of heavenly consolation in the Friend of sinners, that can satisfy to the very utmost. Only ponder that which is revealed of Him, only by faith take hold of His promise, and cleave fast to Him — and your confidence will not be disappointed. A young Brahman, a teacher of English in a school at Santipore in India, became very restless and uneasy in mind. He scarcely knew why it was, but he felt something was lacking, and something was wrong. For many months he wandered from shrine to shrine, seeking peace but finding it not. He came back to Santipore, but soon again left it on the same errand. To him it was not Santipore, the city of peace, as the word expresses, but the city of untold distress.

He came one day upon a strange missionary, who was preaching Christ to a crowd of hearers. Rammoy longed for peace, but he hated the Prince of peace, so he stood up and opposed the missionary. The servant of Christ bore with him with all meekness, reasoned with him, and finally lent him a copy of the New Testament. The entrance of the Word gave light. He read, pondered, wondered, believed. Thus he expressed the consolation that it brought to him: "I gazed upon the cross of Christ, and as I gazed, the ponderous load fell off my heart!" At Calcutta a few months afterward, together with his young wife, he was admitted into the Church of Christ.

Such is the peace, the heart-satisfying rest, which the anxious soul may find in Jesus. And it is the Holy Spirit working faith in Christ, leading the inquirer to take His promises and confide in them, by which the blessing is brought near.

It has been already implied, but it needs to be plainly stated, that only by faith can anyone feed on the Bread of life. Again and again does our Lord repeat it, that to come to Him and believe in Him is the means whereby the soul is satisfied, and whereby eternal life is obtained. Since then He tells us in another verse that unless we eat His flesh, and drink His blood, we have no life in us, He must still refer to faith in Himself as the means of doing this.

Hence the great importance of the Holy Communion. Christ has appointed it for this very purpose, that by the remembrance of His dying love our faith in Him may be quickened. It is a time when we may look for the Holy Spirit to draw our thoughts and desires heavenward, and kindle a flame of hope and love.

Look down in love, and from above

With Your Spirit satisfy

You have sought me, You have bought me,

And Your purchase, Lord, am I.

Let me find Thee — let me find Thee

Here on earth, and there on high.

No other prayer to You I bear,

O my Lord, but only this,

To show Your grace, to see Your face,

And to know Your people's bliss.

Let me find Thee — let me find Thee,

Thee to find is blessedness!

05.03. Submission in Trial

Submission in Trial "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given Me?" John 18:11

It is very instructive to compare these words of our Lord with those spoken by Him in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. There, bowed down beneath the weight of our transgressions, His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. There He prayed fervently, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me — nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

Twice again does He pray the same words — yet not altogether the same. There is a shade of difference, though still the human will of our Lord shrinks from that which lies before Him. Now it is, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, may Your will be done." But now after the thrice-offered prayer, after the strength imparted by the angel, the victory is fully won. There is no more shrinking. The human will of the Son is lost in the Divine will of the Father.

Then come the crowd of soldiers and servants, with swords and staves, lanterns and torches. Jesus rebukes the rashness of Peter in drawing the sword, and declares His perfect willingness to suffer and to die: "Put up your sword into the sheath! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?"

O let us consider the CONTENTS of that cup of which Jesus drank.

Every bitter ingredient was there, none was lacking. What bodily suffering and extreme weariness through pain did He endure! No limb of His sacred body, but had a share in the agony He bore.

Beyond this, what soul grief did He endure in the base ingratitude of a people whose every need and sorrow He had been ready to relieve!

What desolation of heart did He experience through . . .

the treachery of Judas,

the denial of Peter,

the desertion of the rest of His disciples!

What pangs must have rent His spirit when upon the cross He heard the reproaches that were cast upon Him!

What darkness of soul did He pass through when He uttered the cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Who can express, who can fathom one of these depths of untold woe?

Let us consider also, the OBJECT of our Lord in drinking this cup. The object of our Lord in drinking this cup, was that He might empty at one draught that cup of wrath, which His people must forever have been drinking — and yet never have exhausted!

O blessed Jesus, in Your wondrous love You have taken the poison — that You may give to me the cup of salvation. You have drained to the very dregs that cup in which was the curse due to my sin — that You may give to me the cup of blessing, of peace, of everlasting life. To my lips, You now hold the cup which is full to the brim of everlasting consolation! You give me Your Word so rich in promise and in hope. You grant to me in overflowing abundance pardoning mercy which can cover all my iniquity. You hold out to me the assurance that my strength shall be equal to my day, and that Your Spirit shall prepare me for Your presence in glory. Oh, how can I thank You enough for all this love of Yours! And now what is my cup of sorrow or suffering compared to Yours? You, the sinless one — for me did drink the cup which was all bitterness. I, the sinful one, have my cup of trial mingled with so many mercies, so many alleviations. If I have pain and weariness to bear — have I not seasons of rest? have I not the aid of medicine, and skillful advice to promote my recovery or to lessen my sufferings? Have I not those about me who love to minister to my needs? Have I not kind affection to be as a gleam of sunshine in the darkness? Or at least have I not His presence with me, who has promised that He will be my Eternal refuge, and underneath shall be His everlasting arms? And is it not a Father's hand that gives the cup? And may I not thus know that love has prepared it? "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." And surely I need it, as the draught of healing — to cure the deep-rooted maladies of my soul. Is there no pride in me that needs to be subdued — that I may be as a little child, content to be led by a Father's hand? Is there not too much readiness to hearken to the siren voice of man's praise, that needs to be cast out — that I may seek only the praise that comes from above? Is there not too much carefulness as to this world's business and duties, that requires so to be brought under control, that I may realize continually that one thing is needful — to walk with God and to seek first His kingdom and righteousness? Is there not too frequent forgetfulness of the Best Friend that must be so overcome that Jesus must be all my salvation and all my desire? And what will teach me these precious lessons — if it is not the days of adversity and trial? These cheerless and desolate days, these hours of bitter tears come not by chance — but are sent us in divine faithfulness and love.

They come to lay us lowly, and humbled in the dust,
All self-deception swept away, all creature-hope and trust;
Our helplessness, our vileness, our guiltiness to own,
And flee for hope and refuge to Christ, and Christ alone!
They come to draw us nearer to our Father and our Lord,
More earnestly to seek His face, to listen to His Word,
And to feel, if now around us a desert land we see,
Without the star of promise, what would its darkness be!

We might take a very homely illustration of God's purpose in chastening His people. In agricultural districts it is very common after harvest to hear the burring sound of the threshing machine, and in passing by the allotment or cottage garden, to see the corn spread out and the laborer beating out the grain.

Remember that affliction is God's flail — it is God's threshing season. The very word "tribulation" has this meaning. It is taken from a Latin word signifying the wagon or roller with which the ancients beat out their corn. But does the gardener hate his corn, or wish to destroy it — because he violently inflicts upon it blow after blow, or cast it into the machine where the beaters act upon it with like effect? Nothing of the kind. It is very precious in his eyes. It is that for which he has toiled many an hour. Then why does he thus act? It is to separate the precious from the vile; it is to cleanse the grain from all that encumbers it. And is it not thus in God's dealings with His precious wheat? He will not by chastening inflict injury, but benefit. He does not hate His people because He chastises them — for they are very dear to Him. He declares that those whom He loves, He rebukes and chastens. And all the fruit of His work upon them is . . .

to take away their sin,

to purify them from all that is evil, and

to make them fit for the heavenly garner. And it is well for us to bear in mind that in no way is God more glorified, and the souls of others benefitted — than by the patient endurance of His people in trial.

Perhaps you may be ready to repine at a period of apparent uselessness being allotted to you. Were you able actively to labor in the vineyard, you may imagine that you might do far more good than it is possible for you to do now. You may say to yourself, "The cup of suffering which Christ drank brought great blessings to the world — but what good to any one can come about through my affliction?" Now it is certain that we can judge very little indeed about a matter like this. God's ways are not our ways. By the most likely means, a very small amount of good may be effected — while by means we have never thought of, He may bring great glory to Himself and good to man. An aged clergyman was accustomed for many years to visit a long confirmed invalid, who patiently bore up under great suffering. "I wonder why God keeps me here," she would say. "I can do no good to anyone."

"Yes, God has a work for you to do."

"Impossible! I never see any one."

"Yes, God uses the weakest instrument, and you may be able to teach me."

"Well, then," she replied, "I am willing to suffer as long as God pleases." And so it happened as her pastor had said. During the long illness which preceded his death, he remarked that he knew not how he could have borne the pain, had it not been for the remembrance of the meekness and submission which that Christian woman had displayed. A similar example might be found in the account that has been given of the farewell counsels of an eminent French pastor. During his last illness he assembled a few Christian people in his chamber from Sunday to Sunday, and, in the midst of extreme weakness and suffering, gave them the fruits of his own ripened experience. Perhaps never during his whole ministry did his words make so deep an impression, and "The Farewells of Adolphe Monod" have likewise brought a message of consolation to many a one in our own land.

Besides, however, the way in which God often employs the weakness and suffering of His servants to effect a work for His name — it is to be remembered also that He often uses it as a

preparation, that when the season of affliction has passed His servant may be able the better to teach and comfort others.

Lessons practically learned for the first time in the day of sorrow may be intended for the benefit not only of the sufferer himself, but also for very many besides in future years. It is not too much to say that the ministry which has often been most richly blessed, has received its tone and character from trials which seemed at the time almost unbearable.

Hence, reader, in every trying hour strive in the strength of Jesus, in the might of His Spirit; meekly to bow beneath your Father's hand, yes, even to kiss the hand that presents the bitter cup.

Even if bending over the grave that contains the earthly tabernacle of the one dearest to you in the world, even though mourning the loss of all that makes life pleasant or desirable to you, even though passing through weeks or months of agonizing pain, even though all your plans have failed, all your prospects blighted, all you once possessed lost beyond recovery

— yet even then, think of Calvary;

think of the merciful love of your Father;

think of the gracious purpose of these afflictions;

think of that pearl of great price, of which none can rob you;

think of that Home where an hour with your God will make up for it all.

Then try, try again and again, from your heart to utter the words, "May Your will be done!" The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

Whatever Your sovereign will denies,

I calmly would resign;

For You are good, and just, and wise:

O bend my will to Thine.

Whatever Your sacred will ordains,

O give me strength to bear;

Still let me know my Father reigns,

And trust a Father's care.

05.04. God's Love Manifested in the Law

God's Love Manifested in the Law

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:4-5

It is a pleasant thing for a child to discover in some way which he had not anticipated, a fresh evidence of a parent's deep affection. To the prayerful student of Holy Scripture, often will there be revealed therein, from time to time — fresh glimpses of the love of our heavenly Father, and that often in an unlooked-for way.

We shall find it so in the law revealed from Sinai. For what is the substance of that law, and its chief command? Is it not love — love to our God, our Creator, our Benefactor? And is not love the highest happiness of man? Where the object is worthy of our affection, is it not the spring of the highest, truest, purest joy that lingers in our sorrow-stricken world? What consolation is found in the kindness, in the tenderness of kindred, in the bond that links friend to friend, parent with child, husband with wife! If in family relationships, God multiplies our sorrows — He also multiplies our joys. If a man has no heart to love — then he is a wretched, miserable being, though he might call a world his own.

Yet in creature-love there lacks at least one element of rest; it cannot always abide. He who loves the most will probably one day be the most deeply wounded. When Abraham went forth to sacrifice Isaac, the fearful blow must have fallen tenfold heavier because of the deep love that he bore to him. So we need to set our highest love on One of whom not even death itself can rob us. And it is to this we are invited in the command given.

God proposes as the object of our supreme affection . . .

Himself, the fountain of bliss,

Himself, the source of all the love that is found on earth,

Himself, the faithful God that lives and abides forever.

Thus does He manifest His love in bidding us do that which tends to our highest happiness, for he who has learned to love God — has begun to taste on earth the joy of Heaven. But in another respect we see God's love in this command. Only love seeks love. Only one who loves you — cares to have your love in return. Yes, and in proportion as anyone loves you — the more of your affection does he desire. A father that cares but little for his children would not much regard it though a stranger were to come in and eclipse their love to him. But if a parent's tenderest thoughts and affections center around one of his offspring — then how deeply will he be hurt by the very least indifference or coldness of feeling.

Now it seems indeed surprising that the Creator, the Fountain of light and love, should ask for the feeble taper of human love — yet what does it tell of His feeling toward us? It is written, "the Lord

your God is a jealous God." So again: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." What a revelation of love is here! What says it but this: "I am jealous of your affection! I would have you love Me preeminently, with all your heart and soul and might — because it is thus that I feel towards you, because with all my heart and soul and might, do I love you!"

Consider also that only love merits love. Only a God of love could reasonably ask our love. Were Jehovah such as some have imagined — a mighty Being who once created mankind, but now so distant, so far from this earth of ours, that He neither thinks of us or cares for us — He might justly demand obedience and service — for this by our creation we should owe to Him. But how could He ask our love? Surely He requires nothing beyond that which is right; therefore, in demanding our love — does He not proclaim His own love to us? And while He thus reminded Israel of old of their duty towards Him, He gave them evident proofs of the justice of the claim. He set before them what He had wrought, and what He would yet work on their behalf. He had delivered them from a cruel bondage, and He would yet bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. And by what He has performed already, and by what He has promised to us — may we also perceive the exceeding greatness of His love to us. How much has He wrought in the perfected atonement and the glorious resurrection of Christ, as likewise in all His gracious dealings with His Church from the beginning! How exceeding great and precious are those promises of mercy, grace, help, peace, sanctification, and glory, which are given to us in the Word of truth.

Oh, doubting one, bathe your soul in the ocean-depths of God's love! Read it in the law, read it in the Gospel. Read it in every precept, and in every promise. Be afraid to grieve, by your unbelief, Him whose loving kindness so far surpasses all your thoughts! But while we delight to find in this command fresh evidences of God's love, let us not fail to mark how high and comprehensive is the standard of duty which it sets before us.

It shows clearly that a religion of mere outward service will not be accepted. Whatever value it may possess as beneficial to others in the example which it affords, it lacks the chief element which God regards. "This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips — but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men." "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter into the kingdom of Heaven." "My son, give Me your heart." "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."

Within the compass of the second commandment do we find clearly laid down the principle — that of love — by which alone obedience to any command can be pleasing in the sight of God: "Showing mercy unto thousands of those who love Me, and keep my commandments." Without the heart given to God, without true love and zeal, without an earnest following after His precepts, you possess no saving religion. And learn too that God will have the first place in our hearts. When Christ taught His disciples that if any man hated not father or mother, husband or wife or child for His sake — he could not be one of His flock; in a very forcible way He was putting this truth before them. Of course He never meant that natural affection was to be quenched, to do this is to sin both against the law and the Gospel. But Christ would have men know that He would be King; that if another, though the dearest on earth, would draw them away from their allegiance to Him — they must act toward them even as though they hated them; yes, even if need be, they must part with

them forever. A lad was brought before a native magistrate in India on account of his desiring to embrace Christianity. He was asked why he desired this. He replied that he longed for salvation which he could not find in his old religion — and that Sudras and Brahmans alike would perish unless they believed in Christ. His mother then appealed to him by all that she had done for him, not to bring disgrace upon his family, or to grieve her by being baptized. He made a short and beautiful answer, exactly illustrating the meaning of our Lord's command: "God first," said he, "mother second." It must be so. God Himself must be first, all else must stand second. Kindred, ease, comfort, worldly interests, our favorite pursuits, yes, even our plans for doing good, and our work in the Lord's vineyard — must not be permitted to be our chief delight. We must rise above all to find our joy, our satisfaction in God Himself.

Hence we see our need for the perpetual aid of the Holy Spirit. Men naturally have no love to a just and holy God — still less do they love Him with all their heart. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." This enmity takes various shapes.

Sometimes it is manifested in . . .

trying to discover contradictions in God's Word;

a course of open disobedience to His commands;

a life of utter disregard of all religious duties;

striving to put the Creator out of sight;

living as if there were no God;

holding a form of godliness, while the inner spirit of it is wholly ignored. But in every case there needs the mighty power of the Holy Spirit at first to kindle, and then to nourish, the sacred flame of Divine love. Oh, plead for this! In the light of this command, let us learn also our need of a better righteousness than our own. Surely it makes plain the impossibility of any self-justification before God. It cuts away the ground beneath every self-righteous hope. Tor tell me, reader, what moment in what hour of your life did you ever love God perfectly, "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might"? Where then do you stand? In spite of any partial fulfillment of duty in other respects — you have been every moment a transgressor of God's holy law — yes, and of the chief command of that law — you have every moment come short of the glory of God. How then can you regard anything that you may have been or done as your confidence before your omniscient Judge?

Suppose we grant for a moment that you have perfectly fulfilled your duty to your fellow man, that you have never injured anyone, that you have loved your neighbor as yourself, that you have incessantly been striving to promote the welfare of others, though in this also you must acknowledge that you have greatly failed. Yet will obedience to the second great command atone for the breach of the first? Will love to the creature, make amends for lack of love to the Creator? You cannot believe it for a moment. Yes, rather, in that you have a heart capable of loving your fellow man — do you not condemn yourself the more for not loving the Great and the Good One? Hesitate not then to take your right position — a bankrupt in Heaven's court, with a debt beyond all power of calculation — and no assets, nothing whatever to lessen the fearful debt. When thus you come before God — He reveals to you at once the righteousness which He has provided. What

you have not in yourself — you have abundantly in Christ. Unloving though you have been — He freely forgives and accepts you through the merits of the Redeemer. He perfectly justifies you, and clothes you with the best robe — and then by His Holy Spirit, He disposes your heart to love Him and walk in His ways.

Ever remember the difference between God's way and man's way of justification. Man says, "I must love God — and then He will forgive and love me." God says, "I am willing to forgive you now, though you have not loved Me — then by my Spirit I will pour out my love into your heart."

First we have justification by faith in Christ, then follows a chain of blessed consequences — peace with God, access into His favor, rejoicing in hope, glorying in tribulations; and one of the most precious — the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit!

Blessed are those who know by experience the truth here taught. Blessed are those who know what it is, in the midst of all unworthiness — to be justified in Christ, and henceforth to love Him who has first loved them.

"O God, who has prepared for those who love You such good things as surpass man's understanding — pour into our hearts such love toward You, that we, loving You above all things, may obtain Your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

05.05. Loving Service

Loving Service

"While He was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper — a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His head." Mark 14:3 "She has done what she could." Mark 14:8 Not what custom demanded — she went far beyond this.

Not what she would have done — she would gladly have done far more than she did.

But "she has done what she could" — that to which love prompted her, that which her means enabled her to accomplish. But what did this woman do to draw forth such a commendation from the lips of Christ? It was Mary the sister of Lazarus, and in truest devotion she comes to honor the Master. In days past she has heard from His lips words that have reached her very heart. He has bestowed upon her the one thing needful — He has taught her to choose the good part that should never be taken from her — He has given back to her from the grave the brother four days dead. How can she manifest as she would, all her deep gratitude towards Him? But if she cannot do all she would, she will do something. She brings a valuable and very precious alabaster box of ointment. She then breaks the box, and pours the ointment upon His head — and with it she anoints His feet. Then she stoops down, and begins to wipe His feet with her hair. Her money, her hands, her hair — all shall be employed to honor the Savior to whom she had given the warmest affections of her heart.

Ah! but she would never thus have anointed Christ — unless first He had anointed her. In His mercy and goodness He had bestowed upon her the oil of His heavenly grace; He had endued her with the unction of the Holy Spirit; He had thus drawn her with the cords of His love, and now she does not hesitate to bring the very best that she possesses as her offering.

Reader, would you, like this woman, bring to Christ a gift that He will accept — then ask of Him the anointing which He gladly bestows; ask of Him the manifold grace of His blessed Spirit, to quicken, to sanctify, and to teach you. And it was a delightful service in which Mary was engaged. It was a delight to the Savior to receive her service. It was a delight to herself to perform it. Perhaps never before in her life, had she felt her whole soul so enraptured with love, joy, and peace, as at that blessed season. Years afterwards she would doubtless often remember it. When the Master was no longer seen on earth, when she no more knew Him after the flesh, but as her exalted Redeemer, her great Intercessor at the Father's right hand — how she must have looked back to that favored hour in the house of Simon, and felt thankful that it had been put into her heart thus to honor Him. And a three-fold benefit arose from this work of love:

1. It anointed Christ for His burial. It was a step in preparation of that precious blood-shedding and descent into the grave, by which He overcame death and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

2. It likewise filled the house of Simon with its fragrance. Not one was there within that house, but reaped something of the benefit.

3. And then a blessing came back to Mary herself. She carried away on her own hands and hair, somewhat of that which she had bestowed on Jesus. And it is ever so. None can do service for Him, but the blessing spreads wide. It honors Christ, it honors the Father. It has an effect on those around. It brings a reflex benefit into the bosom of the one who performs it.

Never forget that Holy Scripture tells of two means by which we may look to receive. They may seem very different, but they perfectly harmonize one with the other. The first way to receive, is by earnest, believing prayer: "Ask, and it shall be given you." But there is another way — free, cheerful, liberal giving. Side by side with the promise just quoted, we ought to place another word of our Lord's: "Give — and it shall be given unto you." Those who give, whatever it is, out of love to Christ shall never lose, but gain an infinite recompense from that which they impart. It may be here — or it may be hereafter; it may be in temporal things — or it may be in spiritual; but in whatever shape it come, the reward will far exceed that which has been laid out. It shall be "good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over," which shall be given into the bosom of the bountiful soul. But how shall we follow Mary's example? Let us speak often to our hearts, with respect to our individual responsibility. Mary had her talent, and she used it well. Let us do likewise. Five talents, two talents, or one, may have been committed to our charge. This has God Himself determined in infinite wisdom. Our part is to employ well what we have — be it more or less. The unprofitable servant was not condemned because he had not five talents, but because having one, he hid it in the ground. Be it your prayer continually, "Lord, show me what gifts, what talents You have granted to me — and then give me grace always to occupy and trade with them diligently until You shall come."

Let us also remind ourselves often of the mighty power of individual effort, whether put forth for good or for ill. Proofs of this meet us continually on every side, and should stimulate us to a life of pains-taking and exertion in the cause of Christ. A few forcible words may set this before us, and the position which individuals occupy in subordination to the purposes of the Most High God: "Truly one stands in awe at the might of single men, and at the world-shaping influence which they have exercised. It is a solemn, it would be a terrible thing to contemplate, if we did not believe that a mightier than man ruled over all — that these mightiest, no less than the least, were in His hand; whether helpers or hinderers of His kingdom, were alike raised up by Him to work out His plans — to bring about in the end, by strangest ways and such as to us seem often most unlikely, that kingdom which shall rule over all." But if God makes so great a use of a single person, though it be an ungodly man, as for example He did of Sennacherib — then what an encouragement may this be to such as put themselves into His hands as instruments to fulfill His will!

"The noblest lot of man," said Christopher Columbus, "is to be a conscious instrument in the hand of the Almighty for the fulfillment of His designs." It is certain also that when God is pleased to make use of anyone, or any effort, as His agency for extending His kingdom and doing good to man — the vastness of the blessing is altogether disproportionate to the means employed. Who shall say what Mary wrought for the Church of Christ, by the example of her zeal and love in bringing her box of precious ointment? Who shall say what liberality has been called forth in every section of the Church, by the example of the widow bringing her two mites and casting them into

the Lord's treasury? Who shall say how often a single sentence or expression dropped from the lips of some humble follower of Christ, has been caught up, and has been re-echoed through many a congregation, and through many a town and village, awakening the careless or cheering the hearts of believers? Who shall say what fruit may spring from a little seed — a letter written to one in trouble, or a few minutes conversation on the one thing needful? A sister is just about to set sail for a distant land. She passes through a town where a brother is at school. She has only time in a few hurried moments to press upon him the importance of decision in religion, and to urge him to read the Scriptures daily, and pray for her and the heathen to whom she is going.

Behold, how great a harvest from one grain of seed! Through that interview, in years to come, the brother becomes the laborious and successful Christian schoolmaster; and through his pupils, the influence of Robert Noble will long be felt far and wide throughout India. But if we would follow Mary, let us remember that she anointed both the head and feet of Christ. So should we do with His mystical body. Let us honor with our prayers and praises, with our love and adoration, our glorious and exalted Head. Neither let us forget the humblest members of His body. We may feed the poor, instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful and downcast, gather together the little children, and send the Gospel to those sitting in heathen darkness. And the fragrance that filled the house of Simon, may also suggest its lesson. Why may not Christians, in the homes where they dwell, diffuse more of the fragrance of holy peace and heavenly love? Why not exercise more of that love which is patient, and kind, and does not envy, and does not boast, and is not proud, and is not rude, and is not self-seeking, and is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs, and does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, and always protects, and always trusts, and always hopes, and always perseveres.

Instead of the coldness, indifference, jealousies, envies, estrangements, and the like, which so often mar the comfort of home-life, and brings such a reproach upon the name of Christ — might we not thus bring down into our dwellings something of the pure atmosphere of a holier world? Christian reader, be careful that those who live beneath the same roof may not discern in you that unsubdued temper, that unchecked sin, that inconsistent walk — which will neutralize all your influence for good.

"As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor."
Ecclesiastes 10:1

Why not cast out these "dead flies"? Selfish ways, angry feelings, thoughtless words, cross looks, peevishness, sullenness, ill judgments, refusals to be pleased or to accept acts of kindness, the neglect of little duties, attentions, and courtesies; a querulous, unhappy, dissatisfied way of speaking, putting questions in an unpleasant tone, or giving an answer that makes it plain that you took a question in a wrong light, a looking awry at whatever is done by another; keeping near the truth and yet giving a wrong impression, bribing conscience by not going very far astray — and yet going far enough to make any one see that you are not striving to be perfect before God — these are the "dead flies" that spoil the precious ointment, and place numberless stumbling blocks in the way of those dearest to us. As you value your own peace of mind, yes, your own salvation and that of those about you — be done with these things forever. In the might of the Spirit so watch and pray against them, so cultivate the graces of a loving charity and genuine sincerity — that men may discern in you the very opposite of all this, and may thus through you glorify your Father who

is in Heaven. And it is quite possible that even from the sick chamber to which some reader may be confined, there may outcome the sweet savor of Divine grace. When the rising murmur is stilled by some thought of Christ's suffering, when impatience and selfish brooding over personal trials are checked by the cheerful hopes that grace inspires — there comes forth a hallowing influence that cannot fail to be felt throughout the dwelling. But there may be more than this. Let but the invalid have

"A heart at leisure from itself,

To soothe and sympathize,"

and opportunities will occur and ways be opened out for deeds of beneficence and Christian love, that will be all the more valued as coming from such a quarter.

There are many ways which we can spread the fragrance of the gospel: words of kindly counsel may be spoken,

books lent and perhaps read to those who come in,

clothes made for the children of relations, or for the poor around,

Christ's cause among the heathen not forgotten,

a letter written to the sick one,

gifts to the needy, and

Christian tracts and publications scattered around

— something of this might be done by any Christian, and together with intercessory prayer might prove a means of incalculable good. And be not hindered in your service of Christ, whatever it is by the unkind remarks that sometimes may reach your ear. Even in the very presence of Christ, envy assails Mary. The traitor Judas has an objection ready, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." Mark 14:4-5

It sounded fair and plausible so that the other disciples seem to have taken it up, but the root of Judas' complaint was secret enmity to Christ. The very man who objects to Mary thus honoring Christ, is the one who immediately afterwards sells Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Be not surprised therefore if you meet with the same opposition. The real origin of ten thousand fair-sounding objections to missions at home and missions abroad, to this and the other scheme for advancing the kingdom of Christ — is a heart that is glued fast to the world, and that secretly hates all spiritual religion. There is a Judas-spirit lurking beneath, which cherishes no love to the Savior, and for a very little gain or pleasure would say "good-bye" to Him forever.

Never therefore give up a single good work, never turn aside from a single path of usefulness, because of the reproach that may be cast upon you. For remember, if man blames — Christ approves. Christ in this instance, as He ever does, takes the part of those who desire to serve Him. He puts down with one hand those that rebuke the woman — and with the other lifts her up by words of gracious commendation. "Let her alone. Leave her to accomplish her desire. What she does shall never be forgotten. Throughout the wide world it shall be made known as the proof

of the love she bears Me." "Truly I say unto you, wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world — what she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Christian, never forget that Christ is the merciful Advocate and Rewarder of His people. Let the world shoot out its poisoned arrows, its sharp words, its hard sayings — yet never heed them. You have Christ on your side — and that is enough. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper. He pleads your cause now on His mediatorial throne — He will plead it in the presence of all when He shall appear. Think of that great day. How blessed shall you be then, if now, day by day, you are sowing the heavenly seed.

What a glorious harvest shall you reap! What a harvest of answered prayers, of accepted labors, of efforts blessed! Not a sin, not a failing remembered, for the great Cross covers all! Not the least act of service forgotten, for even "the cup of cold water shall never lose its reward."

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace — comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

Teach me to live! 'Tis easier far to die —

Gently and silently to pass away —

On earth's long night to close the heavy eye,

And waken in the realms of glorious day!

Teach me to live! — Your purpose to fulfill:

Bright for Your glory let my candle shine!

Each day renew, re-mold this stubborn will,

Closer round You, my heart's affections twine.

Teach me to live for self and sin no more;

But use the time remaining to me yet,

Not my own pleasure seeking, as before —

Wasting no precious hours in vain regret.

Teach me to live! No idler let me be,

But in Your service, hand and heart employ;

Prepared to do Your bidding cheerfully —

Be this my highest and my holiest joy.

Teach me to live! — my daily cross to bear;

Nor murmur though I bend beneath its load.

Only be with me. Let me feel You near,

Your smile sheds gladness on the darkest road.

Teach me to live! — with kindly words for all,

Wearing no cold, repulsive brow of gloom;

Waiting, with cheerful patience, until Your call

Summons my spirit to her heavenly home.

05.06. Heavenly Guidance!

Heavenly Guidance!

"He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7 A General ordered a division of his army to a certain spot. Without giving his reasons, he advised them as to the route they should take. The direct route was much shorter than the circuitous one pointed out, and the captain of the division ventured to take it, contrary to the advice given him. After a while he discovered his mistake. The General had been wiser than himself. When last they had passed by that way, the little stream in the way had been easily forded, but now the mountain torrents had so swollen its waters that it had become impassable, and the soldiers had consequently to retrace their steps and take the road originally pointed out to them.

Too often the Christian has something of the same experience. He has preferred to take his own course, rather than that pointed out to him by the Great Leader whom he professes to follow — and then disappointment follows, and at length he discovers how far wiser he would have been had he more implicitly relied upon the counsel which Christ by His Word had given.

We have an example, and a very forcible one, of the danger of neglecting to seek guidance from above, in the case of Joshua and the Gibeonites. When the latter sought peace with Israel, professing to come from afar, the men hearkened to them, and asked not counsel of the Lord. Hence they were deceived. And in the reign of David, a famine came upon Israel for three years, in consequence of this league with Gibeon, and Saul's treatment of them; nor did the famine cease until seven of the sons of Saul were slain. Had but Joshua inquired of the Lord, all this evil, and much beside, would have been prevented. And how many mistakes does the Christian make, and what a harvest of sorrow does he often reap — because he neglects to bring a matter before the Lord before he enter upon it. Perhaps he yields himself to a growing attachment for one who is not of the same mind with him in the highest matters. Or he enters upon a new position without considering first its responsibilities. Or he answers an important letter without spreading it, like Hezekiah, before the Lord. And then he finds that he cannot recede from the false step once taken, but must take the consequences as they come. Thus does the Christian often choose his own path, and finds, as an old writer has expressed it, that "children who carve for themselves are sure to cut their fingers." But there is another way, and a yet more sinful one, of doing the same thing. If it is wrong to act without seeking direction from above — it is still worse to despise or ignore the counsel that has been graciously given. The remnant of Israel in the days of Jeremiah besought him to make supplication to the Lord his God, that He would show them the way wherein they should walk, and the thing that they should do. They promise likewise that whatever the command is, whether it is good or whether it is difficult — that they will obey the voice of the Lord their God. After ten days Jeremiah brings back to them a message, that they shall abide in the land, and then the Lord will be with them, and save them from the hand of the King of Babylon. The guidance given was not according to the will of those who sought it; hence they refuse to believe the message, and determine to go down into Egypt. So the anger of the Lord is kindled

against them, and He declares that those who go down thither shall die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. (See Jeremiah 42:1-22; Jeremiah 43:1-13.) And is there not a parallel to this spirit, in the conduct of many professed followers of Christ? They express a desire to be guided by the will of God. They ask that their way may be made plain before them, and in the reading of God's Word they find rules of conduct which they may apply to their own case. But then comes the difficulty. An enlightened conscience points in one direction — and self-interest or self-pleasing points in another. In the choice of a new home, in sending children to school or into the world, in visiting friends or receiving visitors, in drawing the line as to the recreation which we judge right — in all this there is room for the exercise of Christian principle; and it is to be feared that too often it is sacrificed to mere expediency, or to that which is most in accordance with our natural tastes. But in denying self and walking in the path marked out in God's Word, you may be assured that He who knows the end from the beginning will guide you aright, giving you a quiet peace that far outweighs any present advantage that might be found in a different course, and at length making all that is painful work together for good. Your way, not mine, O Lord,

However dark it be!

Lead me by Your own hand,

Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough,

It will be still the best;

Winding or straight, it matters not,

It leads me to Your rest.

I dare not choose my lot;

I would not, if I might:

O choose for me, my God,

So shall I walk aright. The kingdom that I seek

Is Yours, so let the way

That leads to it be Yours,

Else surely I shall stray. In Psalms 107:1-43 we have a picture of such as are exposed to the utmost peril and distress. They are in an enemy's country. They are wandering hither and thither without guide or compass. They are lonely and desolate. They are fainting for lack of food and water. They are homeless, shelterless, having no city to dwell in. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. He hears their cry and delivers them from their distress. He finds for them a path through the wilderness. He satisfies their hunger and thirst. He leads them step by step in His own way, and that the very best way. He brings them at last to a city where they may find a rest and a dwelling place. "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."

Take this assurance, dear reader, as a prevailing argument with you to commit your way into the Lord's hand. You may at times be in the utmost distress and perplexity. Your way may seem hedged up on every side. Your difficulties may increase instead of becoming less, and your future may appear likely to be even darker than the present. Yet give not way to gloomy and despairing thoughts.

Jesus rejects none who in faith cast themselves upon His mercy and love; and if you truly come to Him, then, from that very moment, He undertakes to order your footsteps and direct your path. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

Possibly the difficulties of your position may have arisen through your own mistake, or thoughtlessness, or even sin. Yet when this is confessed, it does not the very least prevent our gracious God overruling it all for good, and bringing you safely through it. The solitary path that Jacob had to take when he left his father's tent, arose from his own grievous sin of lying and deception; and yet along that path God met him and assured him of His presence and care. And when along your path you meet with trials little anticipated; when a turn in the road brings you away from the pleasant shade — to the hot scorching plain, where you are exposed to the vehement heat of the sun; when sudden calamity comes upon you — yet doubt not that it is the right way. It is not the way you would have chosen for yourself — but it is the way God has chosen for you, and the Lord gently whispers in your hearing, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7 A civilian with his young wife and three little children had just moved to a station in India far away from all other Europeans. The husband and wife had of late begun together to seek the Lord, when a sudden illness attacked the wife and in a few hours she breathed her last. Thus the sorrowing husband was left with the care of three young children, and none near to comfort or assist him in the charge of them. His faith was shaken, and his footsteps well-near slipped. Can this be the doing of a God of love? was the agonizing thought of his bereaved heart. But for the deepest wound, the Spirit can discover in the Word some healing balm. It was so in this case. The mourner turned to the book of Job. He found the passage where the patriarch spoke of his bitter complaint and his heavy stroke and then added, "Will He plead against me with His great power? No, but He would put strength in me." (Job 23:6)

It was enough. The message reached his heart. "God will not slay me," he thought; "He will not crush His afflicted servant, but He will console and support me by His mighty power." He looked for grace and help, and he was not disappointed. And along your path, however rough it is — consider the end to which it leads. Far better the most rugged path, if only it leads to the Heavenly City — than the easiest path that leads downward to eternal darkness and endless despair. "We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." Yes, and there is rest, after weariness — the companionship of the glorified, after days of solitariness — the unveiled presence of Christ, after hours when perhaps it seemed to us as if we were well-near forsaken. Be then content with the Lord's own leading. Follow where He guides, and fear not. "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." Isaiah 42:16 "Is this the way, my Father?" "Tis, my child;

You must pass through this tangled, dreary wild, If you would reach the city undefiled —

Your peaceful home above."

"But enemies are around!" "Yes, child, I know
That where you least expect, you will find a foe;
But victor you shall prove o'er all below —
Only seek strength above."

"My father, it is dark!" "Child, take my hand:
Cling close to me: I'll lead you through the land.
Trust My all-seeing care — so shall you stand
'Midst glory bright above."

"My footsteps seem to slide!" "Child, only raise
Your eye to Me; then in those slippery ways
I will uphold your goings — you shall praise
Me for each step above."

"O Father, I am weary!" "Child, lean your head
Upon My breast — it was My love that spread
Your rugged path; hope on, until I have said
'Rest! Rest for you above.'"

05.07. The True Worshipers

The True Worshipers

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth — for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." John 4:23 The world is full of worshipers. Mammon, esteem, wealth, intellect, pleasure, the fashion of the day — all these have their myriads of devotees. But there are vast multitudes who worship Jehovah. Every Sunday we find in our own land large numbers who think it to be their bounden duty, as doubtless it is, to be found within the walls of some sanctuary set apart to the honor of God. But who among all these are acceptable in the sight of the Most High God? Who are the true worshipers? Let us endeavor to answer this inquiry.

1. First, I would reply that true worshipers are heart-worshipers. The Samaritan woman asks of Christ the question where worship ought to be offered. Shall it be in Jerusalem? Shall it be on Mount Gerizim? Christ would answer, "Erect the temple, and set up the altar within your own heart; neither because worship is offered here in this mountain or in Jerusalem shall it henceforth be accepted. God is a Spirit. He looks on the inner frame and disposition of the heart — and only such as draw near to Him with earnest spiritual longings and desires, will He regard with favor and acceptance."

Let the reader beware of making too much account of the circumstantial of Divine worship. It is very needful indeed that all things should be done decently and in order, and that nothing should hinder its due solemnity. Yet under every variety of outward form, may there be offered up those holy prayers and praises, those humble confessions, and that joyful adoration which may reach the ears of the Lord Almighty.

There is no limit as to place. It may be within one of those magnificent cathedrals which still abide as monuments of the liberality of past ages. It may be within some battered cottage. It may be within the narrow confines of a chamber where some sufferer has been long bearing a heavy cross of affliction and pain. It may be within the room where a little handful of believers meet together in the Master's name.

There is no limit as to the form which the worship may take, so long as it is hearty and real. It may be in the beautiful Liturgy of our Church, so expressive of every need that the soul can feel. It may be the simple utterance of a few broken sentences. It may be a short prayer from holy Scripture. It may be a sigh, a groan, a tear, a desire, a heart-look toward Heaven. "Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." "O people, pour out your heart before Him." "Who is this who has engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the Lord." To be content with any worship short of this, is to substitute base coin — for real; the shell and the husk — for the kernel and the grain. It is moreover grievously to provoke and sin against the great Searcher of hearts. And very painfully sometimes has this sin been brought to remembrance, when the conscience has been touched by

the finger of the Spirit. A few years ago, a man in middle life drew near to his end, after an illness of several months duration. He passed not to his last account, without a good hope through grace. Yet there was one sin that weighed heavily upon the conscience of the dying man, and seemed at times almost to shut out the hope of mercy and salvation.

What do you think, reader, this sin was? It was formal worship in the house of God. "I would sit there in church," he would say, "as if I were worshiping God, while all the while my thoughts were full of business and the world. Oh, what a hypocrite, what a mocker of God have I been!"

2. But I would remark again, that the true worshiper is one that is penetrated through and through with a deep sense of his own demerits. It is to such the promise belongs: "The Lord is near unto those who are of a broken heart, and saves such as are of a contrite spirit." "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." In whatever stage of the world's history he may have lived, do you not ever find this a marked characteristic of the child of God in his approach to the mercy seat? Do you not find Abraham confessing that was but "dust and ashes"? Do you not find Jacob acknowledging that he was not "worthy of the least of all the mercies and the truth" that God had shown him? Do you not find David confessing that he had "gone astray like a lost sheep"? Do you not find Daniel, the man noted for his uprightness, refusing to plead his own righteousness, and confessing his own sin as well as that of his people? Do you not find the publican in the parable, the very type of the true worshiper, with deep self-loathing "smiting upon his breast, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner!" Be assured that if you would know the joy of true worship, you must cultivate the same spirit. The repentance that brings you back to God, must be followed all your life through by an ever deepening contrition of soul. The more you know of your own heart, the more you know of the holiness of the law,

the nearer you approach to the thrice holy Jehovah —

the clearer will be your view of the evil and magnitude of your sin, and the deeper your humiliation in the remembrance of it.

Charles Simeon once stated that while for forty years he had never lost the assurance of forgiveness — yet that no tongue could describe how strongly he felt for himself the truth of the words in the Confession, "We have left undone the things that we ought to have done — and have done the things we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us."

3. Again, the true worshiper is one who reckons worship a very important part of the business of life. It is that which in his sight stands very high in the position which it occupies. It is not that which may lightly be put aside or neglected for some temporal matter. It is that which merits all the pains and effort that he can bestow upon it. The mere occasional worshiper — the man who will now and then pays formal visits to the house of God — the man who will give his hour or two on Sunday to join with the congregation assembled together — but lives as a stranger to God the rest of the week — such a one can expect no blessing from above. To walk with God, like Enoch;

to call upon God morning and evening and noon-day;

yes, seven times a day to praise Him, like David;

to continue in supplications and prayers night and day, like Anna in the temple;

to pray to God always, like the Centurion;

to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, as Paul bids the Ephesians do

— this is a very different matter.

I do not forget that in this day especially, men have great calls on their time and attention; that those in charge of little ones at home have incessant occupation. Yet nevertheless, it is possible, I say not easy — in such cases and in every other, to keep the fire ever burning upon the altar. It is possible that a holy thread of worship may run through each day's labors and cares. It is possible that there may be . . .

prayer on every day of the week;

prayer in the family circle and in the secret chamber;

prayer in the midst of work and in the hour of recreation.

Let the Christian reader strive to watch for occasions that may draw forth some short petition or aspiration. If you pass by a church, let it remind you of God's presence, and let a prayer ascend for the pastor and people who worship there. If you pass by a hospital, think of all the sufferers beneath its roof, and let a petition arise on their behalf. If you pass by a house where it is evident that death has lately entered, let it remind you that in the midst of life we are in death, and pray both for yourself and those bereaved. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

4. The true worshiper, again, must worship God in the way that He Himself has appointed. We may not choose our own way of approach, but must simply take the path which He has marked out. There is need of remembering this. A new system of worship is arising among us. A deadly upas tree is springing up in our land, beneath whose pestilential shadow, as I truly believe, unless its growth be checked, all pure spiritual religion, all delight in Holy Scripture, all the joys and heavenly fruits of the free and glorious Gospel of the grace of God, will wither and fade and die. The priestly system to which I refer, raises artificial barriers between the soul and God. It turns the eye of the soul from the great High Priest, ready to receive our confessions and prayers — to the earthly priest who professes himself able to absolve in Christ's name, those who unburden their conscience to him. It turns away the eye from Him who is ever presenting His perfect sacrifice to the Father as the atoning sacrifice for our guilt — to the one who stands by an altar which man has made, and there professes to represent that which Christ is doing above.

Away with such a system as God never appointed, and which He will never bless! Away with all that stands between the sinner and the Savior! Away with confessional and sacrifice and priest and altar here below — that all our thoughts may be centered on the true Confessional, the true Sacrifice, the true Priest, the true Altar. The way of worship that God has appointed, is by one everlasting Priest through the one quickening Spirit. It is to go straight to the throne of grace, knowing that we have there a most loving Father who welcomes to His presence, the most unworthy who pleads the name and blood and merit of His well-beloved Son.

5. Nor let it be forgotten that he alone is a true worshiper, whose daily life is an echo, a reflection of the prayers which he offers. Holy obedience and devout worship must ever go side by side. You cannot separate them. They are twin sisters, and so closely linked together that if one dies — the other cannot survive. A holy, watchful life proves the reality of our worship. Worship is the strength, the main-spring of godly living.

Believe me, nothing is more dangerous, nothing is more dishonoring to Him who calls us to holiness — than making religious services, or a form of prayer, a kind of sop to conscience for worldliness or self-indulgence, or disobedience even to the least precept. Such worship is not pleasing to God, nay, it is branded with His curse, "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight!" Your cherished sin, your willful disregard of His commands — cries louder for judgment and for punishment, than your prayers for mercy. The evil thing kept back, will assuredly neutralize your utmost endeavors to draw near to God — and you will find neither comfort nor blessing in such a course. Hence, strive in the Lord's strength to cast away whatever impedes you. In all things, small or great, be honest with God. Practice diligently those virtues and graces which you have sought on your knees. Maintain a constant warfare, even to death, with sin, sloth, and selfishness!

Lord, teach us this and every day,

To live more nearly as we pray. But a question may naturally arise in many minds — How is it possible that men can thus worship God? Have we not by nature a carnal mind, very ready to cleave to earth, very slow to rise above it? Does not the inner spirit, fallen in Adam, turn from such spiritual worship of God, as the diseased eye turns from the light? It is perfectly true. Corrupt human nature never did and never will desire a life such as this. We must rise above nature, and seek for the aid of Divine grace. And have we not just the promise that we need, within the compass of this fourth chapter of John? Go back to our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. What a precious blessing does He offer to her, and the very one that we need if we would be true, spiritual worshipers. He promises to her living water, the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be within her as a springing well, ever gushing forth in the life that is from above.

" Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14

Here is the source of all true worship. It needs continual repetition that the grace of the Spirit alone, can teach us rightly to pray. He alone can take away the carnal mind. He alone can reveal to us the blessedness of communion with the Father and the Son. He alone can make intercession within our hearts with groanings which cannot be uttered. And it is well to be assured for our encouragement, that the Father delights in those that worship Him thus. "The Father seeks such to worship Him." The more earnest the search — the greater the joy of finding. The pearl merchant going from shore to shore in search of goodly pearls, rejoices greatly when he discovers the pearl of great price. The good Shepherd long seeking after the wanderer, brings it home on his shoulders rejoicing. So the Father, ever seeking in city and town and village for such as truly worship Him, delights greatly when He finds them.

He delights in their least utterances; He fulfills beyond all expectation their prayers and desires. At length He sets them among the worshipers before His throne in glory, among angels and archangels, among the spirits of just men made perfect, where with fuller joy than ever before, they shall join in the chorus of the universal Church: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." The prayers and praises of the saints,

Like precious odors sweet,

Ascend, and spread a rich perfume

Around the mercy-seat. When God inclines the heart to pray,

He has an ear to hear;

To Him there's music in a groan,

And beauty in a tear. The humble suppliant cannot fail

To have his needs supplied,

Since He for sinners intercedes,

Who once for sinners died.

05.08. Preparedness for the Lord's Coming

Preparedness for the Lord's Coming

"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." 1 John 2:28

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." 1 John 3:2-3

It is the part of true wisdom to look ahead, and, as far as possible, to prepare for that which may happen. The traveler setting out on a long journey makes provision for its emergencies. The mariner, marking in the Heaven the first signs of a threatening storm, takes in the sails and has the ship in readiness to meet it. The wise builder digs deep and lays the foundation of his house upon the rock — for he thinks of the day when the floods shall arise and the winds shall beat against it. The king before he goes forth to the battle sits down first and considers whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand.

It is thus plainly our wisdom to anticipate and rightly to prepare for the great crisis in the world's history, toward which all things are rapidly hastening. For it is impossible to conceive that the present state shall continue beyond the limit which has been set to it by Him who as yet bears with the world for the sake of those whom He is calling out of it for Himself. Is there not a righteous Judge in Heaven — and yet does iniquity prosper and oppression bear rule. Is not this world fashioned to manifest the glory of its Creator — and yet it is groaning beneath the evils that are perpetrated every day. Are not those who strive patiently and faithfully to serve the Lord, too often despised and neglected — while those who live in open contempt of His authority are among the world's foremost heroes? Hence does not even human reason assure us that all this is only permitted for awhile — and then shall come the day when the Lord will openly manifest His glory and take away the reproach of His people? And it is worth our notice that all the work which has been carried on by Apostles, Evangelists, pastors, teachers — yes, by the instrumentality of the least of His servants, is in anticipation of His second coming. As when He first came, He sent John the Baptist to prepare the way before Him; so now, and ever since He ascended to the Father, has He been sending forth His messengers, that when He shall next appear, there may be found gathered out of all lands, a glorious Church made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Every sermon that is preached,

every lesson that is given to a flock of little ones,

every word of spiritual counsel spoken to the sick,

every book or tract sent forth to warn the sinner, or for the instruction and nourishment of the Lord's people

— looks onward to the time when the great Shepherd shall appear, and when he who sows and He who reaps shall rejoice together. And it was the remembrance of this which led the Apostle John so tenderly to exhort those to whom he wrote his Epistle steadfastly to cleave to Christ. He would have them abide in Him, so that both he who had ministered to them, and those who had received his words — might together have confidence when the Lord appeared. "And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Believers are addressed as "little children." It is a term of endearment. It was often in the lips of Christ, and showed how tenderly He loved those who followed Him. And the Apostle shared his Master's spirit. Those dear to Christ, were also very dear to him. It marks also the simplicity, the trustfulness, the humility — which ought to characterize Christ's disciple. "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

It tells also of their helplessness. A little child needs perpetual care: even so does the Christian need continually to rely upon the watchful care and the upholding hand of a faithful Savior.

Hence comes the call, "Abide in Him." No other means of safety, no other hope of victory, no other source of strength — can be discovered than this. To abide in Christ is everlasting life — it is assured blessedness when He comes.

"Come to Me!" "Abide in Me!" "Follow Me!" The substance of all duty and all safe walking is contained in these three directions — and they must not be separated one from the other.

Come to Christ! With all your weariness, with all your sin, with all your fear come to Him. This is the first step.

Come unto Me: O precious word!

Jesus, I come to Thee;

To You, my Savior, Friend, and Lord,

I come, I run, I flee.

Follow Christ! Walk ever as He walked! Walk after Him in holiness, in self-denial, in love, in communion with the Father! Without following Christ your religion is but an empty name. He has said, "If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be." Do not forget the intermediate step — Abide in Christ! It is as needful as coming to Him at first. Without it also there can be no possibility of your following in His footsteps.

Abide in Him as the only ground of your acceptance. Never attempt to add any merits, any worthiness, any graces of your own, to the perfect satisfaction He has made for your sin, and to that glorious righteousness in which class you can appear before God. You stand perfectly justified in Christ the very moment you truly believe in Him; and you must hold fast the same confidence steadfast unto the end.

Abide in Him as the Fountain of all grace and holiness. Cut off the branch from the stem of the vine, and what can it do but wither and die? What fruit, what clusters can it possibly bear? Even so, without continual faith in Christ, without leaning upon His grace perpetually — it is impossible

to grow in holiness, and to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in your life.

Abide in Him as your strength in every labor of love. If you keep close to Him in the fellowship of the Spirit, He will make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work. He will open your heart that you shall love the souls He died to save. He will open your lips to speak to others a word in season. He will open your hand bountifully to give of your substance for His cause.

What is meant by abiding in Jesus, may be illustrated by the example of one who lately has been called to his rest, and who for a period of some sixty-four years endeavored faithfully to serve Him. Early in life James Rock was much impressed by a sermon on the cleansing efficacy "of the precious blood of Christ;" and beneath the shelter of that blood, he lived and died. About the same period of his early life, one morning on his way to school he picked up a gold ring. Taking it home, he noticed engraved on the inside the motto, "God's providence is our inheritance." These words also, like the words of the text above referred to, became to him a guiding star. And thus he learned to rely both on the blood that cleanses from sin — and on a Father's providential care.

Amidst the many temptations and perils which beset him when a young man in London, he was kept from making shipwreck of his faith. A spirit of prayer was to him a great safeguard. For the last fifteen years of his pilgrimage, he was totally blind. One morning he rose with great pain in the forehead and heat in the eyes. The Scripture portion for that morning was, "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go." "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." Sweet and precious promises! They were the last he was ever to read. From that time his sight failed and he could no more peruse the book he loved, but its cheering hopes never forsook him.

Often have I felt deeply moved at the way in which he would speak to the young of his own experience, while striving to persuade them to follow Christ. With a countenance lighted up with congenial benevolence, he would say, "I cannot look upward as you can to the heavens, and behold the light of the sun by day or the moon and stars by night; but," said he, striking his breast, "there shines here a still brighter light — even the light of God's love in the face of Jesus Christ."

I will add a few words written by him in the year 1858: "It is now fifty-five or fifty-six years ago that I heard the first sermon that made a deep impression on my mind: 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ.' This seems to be laid at the foundation of all my spiritual experience, unto this present day. Blessed be God, it never left me, but is at this day even sweeter than when first I heard it, and will, I trust, be ever the crown of my rejoicing throughout eternity. May the Spirit of God enable me to bear a brighter evidence that the power of Christ rests on me, for it is that alone which has preserved me all my life long.

"And here is my confidence for the time to come. Through this it is my privilege to say that God is my heavenly Father, who has provided for my spiritual as well as my temporal needs, in giving His dear Son to die for my soul's salvation, who thus became my Savior and Redeemer; and He has given me His Holy Spirit to reveal both the Father and Son to me, who with Himself is one Jehovah, who together in the eternal covenant of love engaged to save my immortal soul. For by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the free gift of God — unmerited, undeserved. I feel at this time as much, yes more, dependent on God's providence and grace than

I did when I heard the sermon of which I have spoken, or any time since. The more I can exercise simple faith in Him, the more comfort I enjoy in my soul; taking the plain promises of God just as they stand, and believing them to mean what they say. This I find is the only way of quenching the fiery darts of the Wicked One; and suppressing unbelieving or unhallowed thoughts, corrupt desires, or angry feelings. These precious promises used in faith and prayer, are the weapons of my Christian warfare and will I trust continue to be, through Divine aid, to the end of my days; when, if it be His holy will. Though I am a poor sinner and nothing at all — I hope to sing: Victory! Victory through the blood of the Lamb!"

Like this faithful servant of Christ, evermore abide in Him, and then you will await joyfully the day of His return. What a blessed hope shall it be to you! He comes as the Bridegroom of His Church, to perfect her bliss in His own presence forever. Does not the wife eagerly anticipate the return of her husband after a long voyage; pacing hither and thither along the seashore, to catch the first glimpse of the vessel which shall bring him back to her? And why shall not the faithful Christian, who day by day has worked for Christ, and prayed for His Church, and withstood the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil — why shall he not gladly welcome the Lord when He returns?

He shall have confidence and not be ashamed. True, he has often failed in his service, he can detect unnumbered sins in his every-day walk, but there is no condemnation, for all has been confessed and forgiven.

He shall not be ashamed, for Jesus will not be ashamed to confess His name before the Father. Neither shall he be ashamed of that which he has attempted to do in behalf of souls, for he shall see that his work has not been in vain in the Lord. But shall none be ashamed at that day? Yes, truly, for then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and many that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

How shall the man be ashamed, who has despised the Word of God, and by his infidel objections has caused many to fall!

How shall he be ashamed, who has often been exhorted to flee to Christ, and who yet has chosen the path of the sinner!

How shall he be ashamed, who has trusted in his own righteousness and has never put on the wedding garment!

How shall he be ashamed, who has professed the name of Christ — and yet all the while has been a very Balaam or Judas — a white-washed sepulcher full of dead men's bones!

Reader, be faithful, be honest with yourself. What you are, what you have been, what your course has been from the beginning and what it is now — will assuredly be made manifest hereafter. Dare you contemplate it? What would be your feelings if, in the presence of a large congregation, the minister were to stand up and read out the whole story of your life as it is known to God and your own conscience — hiding nothing, extenuating nothing, revealing your most secret thoughts and motives? Could you fearlessly pass through such an ordeal?

If not, what will it be when your life is laid bare at the solemn tribunal of the Great Day? Is it not wiser to let that story be told to your Judge now, while He waits to be your Advocate — that He

may take your part when He shall appear, and declare that He has nailed your sins to His cross and taken them all away?

Let the Christian pilgrim patiently tarry a while, trusting still, watching still, working still, suffering still — and the shadows of night shall flee away, and the King shall come in His beauty! "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes!" Luke 12:35-37 Be patient! Life is very brief,

It passes quickly by;

And if it prove a troubled scene

Beneath a starry sky,

It is but like the shaded night,

That brings a morn of radiance bright. Be hopeful! Cheerful faith will bring

A living joy to thee,

And make your life a hymn of praise,

From doubt and murmur free;

While like a sunbeam you will bless

And bring to others happiness. Be earnest! An immortal soul

Should be a worker true;

Employ your talents for your God,

And ever keep in view

The judgment scene — the last great day,

When Heaven and earth shall pass away. Be prayerful! Ask, and you will have

Strength equal to your day,

Prayer clasps the Hand that guides the world;

O make it then your stay;

Ask largely, and your God will be

A kindly giver unto thee. Be ready! Many fall around:

Our loved ones disappear,

We know not when our call may come,

Nor should we wait in fear.

If ready, we can calmly rest,
Living or dying, we are blessed.

05.09. The True Light

The True Light

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."
John 8:12

It is not an uncommon thing in changeable weather, to notice the sky overcast with black clouds — but as we have looked upon it, the glorious sun bursts forth in his might, and within a little while, all around is once more basking in his beams, while scarcely a trace remains of the dark shadows which but lately had covered the earth with gloom. Even thus is it with our world as we now behold it, and as it shall be by and by. Meanwhile there is light shining through the darkness, and in the case of all who welcome it, the light shines more and more unto the perfect day. But what are these dark clouds that cast such deep shadows over our earth?

There is the most appalling ignorance. The god of this world has blinded men's eyes, that they see nothing aright. In far off lands men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man and to four-footed beasts. The 'great spirit' that is dimly seen, is not a God of love but one whom the worshiper regards only with an awful dread. And even in lands favored like our own — what fearful ignorance exists as to the most necessary truths. How few have the least conception of . . .

the fallen state of man,

the demands of the law,

the impossibility of an entrance into Heaven without a thorough renewal of heart,

the way by which sin can be forgiven,

the solemn importance of an eternal state,

the true character of the God we worship!

There is again sin, sin everywhere.

It defiles the mansions of the great — and it is found producing its bitter fruits within the homes of the poorest.

It breaks up the peace of families.

It brings poverty, where there might be plenty.

It creates jealousies, heart afflictions, strifes, secret sorrows and anxieties that no tongue can describe.

It weighs upon the conscience until the burden is often felt to be intolerable.

It produces a dark night within the soul, that no human means can remove. In parts of our country the smoke arising from the furnaces or factories near will often, through the state of the atmosphere, descend again and bring a partial midnight even at noon-day. Just so, sooner or later sin comes back, troubling the heart, driving away all true peace, and making within a darkness that may be felt.

There are likewise sorrows, griefs, distresses of various kinds, to which all are exposed. Sometimes the cloud of sorrow rests on one home, sometimes on another — but in turn it visits all. And where trouble has been the longest absent — it often comes with the more sudden and terrible force.

Very touchingly did an African woman express her deep woe on hearing of the death of her husband in battle. She cast down on the ground the infant that she carried at her breast, she tore her garments from the upper part of her body, and looking upwards to Heaven she exclaimed, "Cease you winds, that my sighs may be heard. Cease you raindrops, let my tears water the earth!" And even where there is no manifest cause for it, where a bystander might imagine that all was well — yet there is many a one that goes forth to meet the calls of the day with a thick cloud oppressing the spirit. Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear, earthly comforts have lost their attraction, a black pall overspreads the soul, and it seems to the tried one as if no ray of hope or joy could ever penetrate. This may arise through some physical infirmity — the mind sympathizing with a feeble constitution. Or it may arise through perplexing difficulties in providence, or through great temptations. Or possibly there may be a secret grief or fear of which others know nothing. But whatever the cause is, none but such as have experienced it, can tell how great is that darkness. To all this must be added yet one thing more. DEATH is ever standing by the door. All generations of mankind are traveling along the same road, and at the end of their course, an open grave waits to receive them! On every forehead, whether that of the little child all blithe and mirthful, or that of one wrinkled by age — may be seen as it were inscribed the words, "Dust you are — and unto dust you shall return!" At every turn we are reminded that in the midst of life, we are in death — and that even now the swift arrow may be on its way that shall bid us cease from all earthly toil. And is there not a shrinking, and dread, a drawing back from the blow of the destroyer? The most sensitive natures ever feel it the most — yet with all, there is a fear of the last enemy that it is hard to overcome. And where sin has been indulged, where the world has been set up as an idol within the temple of the heart — doubly fearful must be the thought of that summons which forever robs a man of the world, and calls him to a strict account for his sins. May I ask the reader to pause here for a moment. Especially if your course is not far advanced, would I press upon you this one point, that you would not hide from yourself your own true condition, and the realities of the world in which you live. Put not away from you, the thought of sin, and sorrow, and death — until they force themselves upon you.

It is the character of English people to look the greatest difficulties in the face, and thus to learn how to overcome them. And be assured that true peace is not to be found in building castles in the air, in regarding life as a bright midsummer holiday — but in recognizing the evils that pertain to it and learning how best to meet them. And where shall we turn but to One, even Jesus? Surveying in all its reality, the moral darkness of our world — His eye piercing to the very depths of human consciousness and of the gloom and evil that lurks there — in sight of it all, the Incarnate Redeemer proclaims, "I am the light of the world!"

Yes, He is the only true light; He is indeed the very Sun of righteousness that would arise with healing on His wings. He is the day-spring (or sun-rising) from on high that has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Jesus, the Sun of our souls! Oh, what rich grace is unfolded in this thought! The sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit into the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. It rises upon the climates where a long, cold winter of many months has held the earth in its icy bands, and brings there untold joy. It shines the same hour over far remote regions, and scatters its bright beams over vast islands and continents. It shines alike within the palace of the monarch and the cottage of the lowliest. It makes the earth burst forth with vegetation and fruitfulness. It calls forth the laborer to his daily toil, and awakens each morning myriads of songsters who fill the air with their joyous strains. With its rising, there comes into being a sportive crowd of insect life which spend their little day in its warmth.

O blessed Savior, Your grace is inexhaustible. You have enriched all who have looked to You, with grace and mercy — and yet You are none the poorer, but as rich as ever for those that come to drink in Your light and life. With You is the light of forgiveness for the dark and guilty conscience. With You is the light of love for the desolate, the bereaved, the cheerless. With You is the light of hope, when it would seem to the eye of sense as if everlasting despair would settle down upon the soul. With You is the light that brings fruitfulness, making the barren soul put forth all heavenly graces and virtues. With You is the light that makes men joyful, even in the dark valley of the shadow of death, and can fill the soul with gladness when every earthly light is extinguished forever. With You is the light which in that better world shall shine upon Your saints and make them joyful forever in Your presence!

Reader, come to this light and welcome the life and comfort and hope its cheering beams impart. Let a man go and hide himself in some underground cavern, or in some dark, damp cellar — then the glorious sun may be shining without — and yet no benefit can he receive from its light and warmth. And if you refuse Christ, if you go into some dark cave of unbelief or earthly-mindedness or cherished sin, and there abide — do not blame the Savior of mankind if you taste not the joy of His salvation; it is not His fault, but your own. It is not He who refuses to bless you — but you who turn away from the grace He bestows. And let it not be forgotten, that it is only for a while this light is offered to sinners. Harken to the words of Jesus: "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going." John 12:35

One Sunday afternoon some years ago, I took these words as the subject of exhortation to my flock. In the church was a man of the world, who yet seemed to give great attention to the message. Little did I then think how suitable to him was this word of the Master. It was his last sermon. The next Friday he set off on his way, but he never reached his destination. He sank down by the way-side, and was taken home dead! Who shall say how long, dear reader, the light may shine for you? If you still prefer the dazzling lights of earth, and shut out the light that comes from Heaven — then how soon may everlasting darkness come upon you! Oh, delay not to receive Christ while He is near to shed the beams of His heavenly light upon your path through this dark

world.

There is a good old proverb worth remembering: "By the street of By-and-by we arrive at last at the house of Never." There are few who have not purposed one day to turn to God — yet the day of grace has closed, and they have died without repentance or faith. But let me say to the Christian reader: Not only come to the light, but abide in the light, and walk in the light. I have noticed old men bring out a seat on a bright spring morning, and sit down in the warm beams of the morning sun. Oh, that Christian people would more frequently bask in the cheering beams of the Sun of righteousness. Oh, that by meditation and prayer and faith — we could more delight ourselves in Him we love. Great would be the benefit. Not only would we more abound in joy and consolation, but sin would lose its power. As the rays of the sun have a tendency to put out the fire on the hearth, so would this Divine light extinguish the fire of evil desires, and unholy passions and tempers.

"O that God would awaken me out of the sleep of indolence, and so kindle that fire of Divine love that this flame may always burn within me. O that I had the wood with which that fire might be continually nourished, that it might never more be quenched but always increase within me. O Lord, give me, I beseech you, that love which can never cease, which will kindle my lamp and not extinguish it — that it may burn in me and enlighten others. O Christ, our dearest Savior, kindle our lamps, that they may evermore shine in Your temple, that they may receive unquenchable light from You — the Light that will enlighten our darkness, and lessen by us the darkness of the world. My Jesus, I beg You, give Your light to my lamp, that in its light the most holy place may be revealed to me in which You dwell as the eternal Priest, that I may always behold You, desire You, look upon You in love, and long after You. It belongs to You to show Yourself to us Your suppliants, O Savior, full of love — that we may know You, love You alone, think of You day and night — that Your love may fill our souls, and that this love so great may never more be quenched by the many waters of this earth, as it is written, Many waters cannot quench love."

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

"I am this dark world's light;

Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,

And all your day be bright."

I looked to Jesus, and I found

In Him my Star, my Sun;

And in this light of life I'll walk

Until traveling days be done.

05.10. The Well of Bethlehem

The Well of Bethlehem

"David longed for water and said: Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" 1 Chronicles 11:17

David, like his Divine Son, knew by experience painful weariness, hunger, thirst, and lack of some place where he might lay down his head in peace. On one occasion, hiding in the cave of Adullam for fear of Saul, he craved that which would quench his burning thirst. He thought of the well from which as a shepherd lad he had often drunk, and longed for a draught of its sweet and refreshing waters. Then was it that he expressed his desire, probably never thinking for a moment of any one attempting to gratify it, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!"

David however had staunch and brave friends, who were willing to risk even life in the service of their chief. Three of his mighty men determined, if possible, to obtain the water that he longed for. So they break through the host of the Philistines, whose garrison was at Bethlehem, and bring it to him. And now that the precious draught is obtained, David shrinks from tasting it. At such peril has it been obtained, that he regards it as the blood of his captains. So he pours it out as an offering to the Lord. "God forbid that I should do this! Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives?" 1 Chronicles 11:19 The well of which David would gladly have drunk, was doubtless sweet and refreshing — but there is another well of Bethlehem sweeter still. Its waters are free to all comers. There need no armed men to force the way to it. And what is that well? An incarnate Savior, a Redeemer born in Bethlehem to undo the ruin that sin had wrought, and to bring life and immortality to light. The very name of the Savior's birth-place, Bethlehem Ephratah, suggests the mercy that He brings. Bethlehem — the house of bread; Ephratah — fruitful. Thus pointing to Christ, the fruit of the tree of life, the bread that is given for the nourishment of our souls. And so again the well at Bethlehem's gate may speak to us of Him. It may remind us that . . .

He is come to be to mankind a well-spring of joy, hope, consolation, and peace;

He is that very Fountain of Living Water, of which whoever drinks shall live forever. And who shall fathom this deep well? What a depth of marvels in the Word made flesh and tabernacling among us! What depths in that name "Emmanuel" — "God with us! The mighty God" — and yet needing a mother's tender care! His goings forth from everlasting — and yet an infant of days! The Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him — and yet He is wrapped in swaddling clothes! The everlasting Jehovah His Father — yet a poor Galilean maiden His mother! Many mansions in the Father's house are at His disposal — and yet He is denied a lodging in a village inn. Worshiped by angels — and yet under the same roof with the beasts of the field. Oh, what a mystery of humility, what a mystery of condescension and love! In the sight of Bethlehem — who shall make much account of lands and houses and goods? In the sight of the baseness of Christ's birthplace — who but must

be ashamed of all self-glorying and pride?

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwells on high — who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in earth!" But how much more may we say of Christ, even than this! Has He not humbled himself not only to behold our earth — but to dwell among us? Nor only so, but he takes the lowliest place — born of a lowly virgin, working afterwards at a lowly craft, and walking through life a companion of the lowly, a friend of publicans and sinners.

If Peter the Great of Russia was accounted worthy of double honor because for a season he forsook the throne, and for the benefit of his subjects submitted to toilsome labor and a humble position among men — then how much more shall we glory in our Immanuel who thought it not too much for our sake to descend from His glory, to take upon Him our nature, and in that nature to endure toil — yes more, to be despised, to suffer and to die! And if in this well of Bethlehem there be a depth of mystery and condescension — so likewise is there an inexhaustible spring of joy and consolation. What tidings of good ever equaled those tidings of great joy which the angel brought to the shepherds when he announced the birth of the Savior of mankind? Is it news worth hearing by those that are perishing with hunger — to know that a plentiful supply of food is within reach? Christ has come to be our living bread, to nourish our souls to everlasting life. Is it news worth hearing by those fainting in a desert for lack of water — that a fountain is near? Christ has come to be to man as the rock to Israel, that we may come to Him and drink evermore of the river of life. Is it news worth hearing by those stricken with a sore disease — that a sure remedy is found, and one near at hand who can apply it? Christ has come to be the good Physician, and with Him is there a healing balm for every sin and every sorrow. Is it news worth hearing by a criminal — that a perfect acquittal may be obtained? Christ comes freely to absolve all who believe in Him. Is it news worth hearing by one who is in the deepest poverty — that a large accession of wealth may be his? Christ comes to give the true riches to those that have nothing, to give treasures which can never waste or destroy. Is it news worth hearing by one who has fallen under the displeasure of a superior upon whom he is wholly dependent — that a way is open by which he may regain his friendship? Christ comes to be the great Peacemaker between God and man, and by Him all that will may be restored to His favor.

Yes, innumerable are the benefits which Christ comes to bestow. He comes . . .

to bind up the broken-hearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives,

to give recovery of sight to the blind,

to comfort all that mourn,

to seek and to save those who are lost,

to give His life a ransom for many,

to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,

to save sinners, even the chief,

to save to the uttermost from guilt, wrath, and everlasting woe — such as come to God by Him,

to set them at His own right hand in the heavenly places, where they shall shine forever in the likeness of God! Who shall tell the blessedness that comes to man, through the mission and incarnation of the Son of God? Had it not been for Christ's birth, our birth would but have opened the door to a short and troubled pilgrimage, and no bright light to dispel its gloom. But now the way of life is clear — man is redeemed, salvation is brought near, peace in Christ may be our portion on earth, glory with Christ our portion beyond. But will you not drink of these waters? Will you not partake of the grace which Jesus has brought to our world? Be not content to slake your thirst at broken cisterns. Of these to which Jeremiah refers as an emblem of vanities which cannot profit, an Eastern traveler thus writes: "There are thousands of these ancient cisterns in Upper Galilee. No comparison could more keenly rebuke the madness of the people than the expostulation of the Prophet, 'My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.' The best cisterns, even those in solid rock, are strangely liable to crack, and are a most unreliable source of supply of that absolutely indispensable article, water. And if by constant care they are made to hold — yet the water, collected from clay roofs or from murky soil, has the taste of earth, is full of worms, and in the hour of greatest need, it utterly fails. Who but one gone mad would exchange the sweet, wholesome stream of a living fountain for such an uncertain compound as this?"

Reader, will you learn the lesson? Strangely does our adversary beguile us; craftily does he ever strive to substitute something else for the one abiding source of peace. It may be something that just suits the taste at a particular time; it may be something in itself both lawful and desirable; but if it is put in the place of Jesus — if the heart strongly lean upon it and trust to it — it becomes a broken cistern, which will most assuredly one day utterly fail! But if you would drink of this well, you must force your way to it in spite of any difficulties that may meet you. David's captains were not deterred by the host of the Philistines. You must not turn back though discouragement, and doubt, and hindrance bar your way. The Eastern Magi, when they would drink of this well, had to encounter the perils of a long journey. Yet they came and drank thereof, and "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Only persevere like them, continue in the prayerful study of Holy Scripture and in earnest supplication for Divine grace — and you too shall succeed, and your success shall prove an infinite recompense for all your toil.

Last of all, let down the pitcher of faith for a draught. Believe, and you shall rejoice. Heartily welcome the glad-tidings. Receive them as for yourself, as sent to you by your Father in Heaven — to comfort you, and to guide you through your course. Receive as for yourself the message, that in Christ, God is reconciled to you; that in Christ, you have a Brother-man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, who can sympathize and support in the darkest day of adversity; that He will completely remove the curse that attaches to your sin; that He will destroy in you the works of the destroyer by subduing all your infirmities; that He will guide your feet into the way of peace; that since He has become the Son of Man, He will make you a son of God, and a joint-heir with Himself in the everlasting kingdom.

05.11. The First Miracle!

The First Miracle!

"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding." John 2:1-2 In a wild and desolate region of Galilee, the traveler comes upon a deserted village. Around about it the hunter follows the wild boar that finds a home in the neighboring thickets; within the village silence and desolation reign. There still remain indeed the ruins of its limestone dwellings, and some half-century ago a few inhabitants might have been found there — but relentless war and the inroads of Arab marauders have swept over it, and now Cana lies waste without a single living inhabitant.

Yet here is a spot, more sacred, more dear to Christians than the mightiest cities of antiquity. Here is a place to which myriads of hearts will ever turn in their day of hope and gladness. Here is Kana-el-Jelil — Cana of Galilee as it was called in days past, where our Lord first manifested His Divine power at a happy bridal feast. The mother of Jesus at this time was living at a distance of some seven or eight miles, and from the interest she took in providing for the necessities of the guests, we may infer that she was either a relation or an intimate acquaintance of one of the families. Something in connection with Nathanael, His new disciple, may have brought Jesus to Cana, since the former belonged to this place, and only three days previously Jesus was near the Jordan, some fifty miles distant from this village. But whatever may have brought Him into the neighborhood, we find Jesus and His disciples invited to the marriage feast. Nor does He refuse. That scene of cheerful festivity shall be hallowed by His presence. He who sheds unnumbered joys over the angelic intelligences in heavenly places, will now show forth His grace and love within a humble dwelling in a Galilean village. He who, as Creator in Paradise, instituted the holy ordinance of marriage — now comes near, as the Son of Man, to bless the ordinance which He had appointed.

Wine is lacking, possibly through the additional guests, and now there is fear lest the enjoyment of the day should be disturbed. The mother of Jesus names to Him the problem which has arisen. It may be that she looked to Him for counsel as to what had best be done, but it is more likely that He had given to her some previous intimation of what He purposed to do; so she places the matter before Him, saying, "They have no wine."

Bear in mind that Jesus cares not only for our greater needs, but also for our lesser needs. He can pity alike those that have a conscience sorely distressed by sin, and those that have been pained by some very small matter. So that in all cases we cannot do better than follow Mary's example. "Whether we need bread or water or wine, necessities or comforts — where should we run, O Savior, but to that infinite munificence of Your which neither denies nor upbraids anything? Give us what You will — only give us contentment with what You give."

Yet there was in Mary's words something not altogether pleasing to Christ. There was something of command, of dictation which He would not permit to pass unreprieved. She had not that due

reverence for Him which she ought, and therefore, while He purposes abundantly to grant her desire, He gently chides her: "What have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come."

He would thus remind her, that though she were His mother — yet they stood altogether on a different footing. From natural feelings she may be anxious about the needs of those present, but His chief work is to do the will of God. It was very much the counterpart of that question which eighteen years before He had put to her, when she found Him in the temple: "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" And if there is not here any act or word that we could declare positively sinful — yet is there not enough to show that in many there remained at least the taint of our fallen humanity? Is there enough to manifest the folly of such a dogma as that of the Immaculate Conception? (that is, that Mary was born without sin.)

Very strange likewise is the error which places Mary so high in honor; which exalts her to the position of co-mediator with Christ, yes, which often confides more in her mercy, than in Jesus. Does He not place on a level with her, all those that do the will of God? "Whoever shall do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Does He not go even beyond this, and tell us that in His sight to hear the Word of God and do it, is a far higher honor, a far more blessed thing than to be His mother after the flesh? When one spoke to Him, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," He answered, "Yes, rather, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and do it." Hence, Mary herself is far more to be honored, because by faith and love she enshrined her Divine Son within her heart — than because God had chosen her to be the instrument through whom Christ should become incarnate. But while Jesus gently reproves His mother, He lets fall an expression which may encourage her to look for a fulfillment of her request in due season: "My hour is not yet come." Delays are not denials. He who hears every prayer, and supplies every need — does so not always as we will, nor always when we will. He has all means and all time at His disposal, so that He chooses the best means and the best time of fulfilling the desires of those who fear Him.

Christian, remember this word of Christ. Let it be your answer to every impatient murmur, to every unbelieving thought that may arise during a period of prolonged suspense: "Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay." Habakkuk 2:3

Every creature—hope and trust,

Every earthly prop or stay,

May lie prostrate in the dust,

May have failed or passed away;

Then, when darkest falls the night,

Jesus comes, and all is light.

Mary gives good counsel to the servants. She looks for Christ to manifest His gracious power, though she might not fully know in what manner and how soon He would do so. So she bids the servants mark His commands, and readily obey them. She says to them, "Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Learn here that whoever would receive blessings from Christ, must cheerfully perform whatever He requires. The path of unreserved obedience is the only one in which we can look for proofs of His love and power. Precepts and promises are knit together, and none may attempt to separate them. Every precept implies a promise; every promise calls for the fulfillment of some precept. Happy are those who strive and pray that they may carefully regard the very least command, and who rejoice in all the promises which Christ has given! "He who has my commandments and keeps them — he it is that loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." The command which Christ gives to the servants is a very simple one. There are set there six waterpots of stone containing altogether about a hundred and twenty gallons. Too much store, it may be, did that household place in these outward purifying which cannot cleanse the soul. A deeper work did they need, and one that none other could perform for them but that Guest who then stood in their midst. Not the water in those waterpots, but that precious blood which He would shed — could remove those guilty stains which defile the inner man.

Jesus bids the servants fill the water-pots with water, and not doubting the wisdom of the command, they fill them up to the brim. In a moment the change is effected. He who in His ordinary providence makes the vine to give her clusters, and thus bestows the wine that makes glad the heart of man — now dispenses with the intermediate steps, and bestows by His miraculous power, the wine that was requisite. The servants are first conscious of what Christ has wrought, and bring of the new-made wine to the ruler of the feast. The ruler of the feast was one who presided for the purpose of maintaining order, and of relieving the bridegroom from unnecessary anxiety as to the due entertainment of those present. He tastes the fresh wine, and knowing not whence it is, bears a testimony to its excellence. In a tone of pleasant raillery he calls the bridegroom aside, and says, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." John 2:10

Deferring to another chapter some thoughts that arise with reference to the glory of Christ as manifested in this miracle, let us from these last words lay to heart a lesson that has been drawn from them.

Christ and the world give in very different fashion. The latter gives at first its very best — but afterwards that which is worse. But Christ gives to his disciples first of all tribulation, and the bitter wine of a sorrow that works repentance — and afterward everlasting peace and glory. The lesson cannot better be taught than in the words of Jeremy Taylor: "The world presents us with fair language, promising hopes, convenient fortunes, pompous honors, and these are the outside of the bowl; but when it is swallowed, these dissolve in an instant, and there remains bitterness and malignity. Every sin smiles in the first address, and carries light in the face, and honey in the lips; but when we have well drunk, then 'that which is worse' — a whip with six strings, fears and terrors of conscience, and shame and displeasure, and hopelessness in the day of death. But when, after the manner of the purifying of the Christians, we fill our waterpots with water, watering our couch with tears and moistening our cheeks with the perpetual distillations of repentance — then Christ turns our water into wine. First penitents, and then believers — first waters of sorrow, and then the wine of the chalice. For Jesus keeps the best wine to the last, not only because of the direct reservations of the highest joys until the nearer approaches of glory, but also because our relishes are higher after a long fruition than at the first essays, such being the nature of grace, that it

increases in relish as it does in fruition, every part of grace being new duty and new reward."

"This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him." John 2:11

We see in our Lord changing the water into wine, His glory as the Creator of all things. In the first chapter of this Gospel it is written that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is plainly evident from this miracle, and also from that of the loaves and fish given in the sixth chapter, that the claim was a just one. It was no less a power than that which could create a world — which could thus change or multiply the elements. But look deeper into the purpose of this miracle. It manifests Christ not only as Creator, but Redeemer. It foreshadows something of the glory of His character and work as the Savior and the Friend of sinners.

We may learn that Christ is the Friend who alone can sanctify and bless all home relationships. Within the family circle, there are wheels within wheels — various feelings, dispositions, desires. There are members of the household of peculiar tempers and organizations. And there are ever apt to occur trials and difficulties, little misunderstandings, petty annoyances, and the like, so that the various wheels are apt to clash or become entangled one with the other. Hence the oil of heavenly love is ever needed to make all things work smoothly together. And this Jesus imparts by His presence. He can knit and bind together husband and wife, brother and sister, parent and child. He can make men to be of one mind in a house. He can remove the causes of domestic disquietude and irritation. He can fill our dwellings with such a spirit of blessed and holy peace as testifies of the source whence it arises. But Cana also teaches that Christ is the One whom we should desire to abide with us in our day of earthly gladness. Would you imprison religion within the walls of a sick chamber? Would you forbid it access in season of life's bright sunshine? Would you bid Christ to stand waiting at the door of your heart until some sore calamity fall upon you — or until the sands of life are nearly run out? Tell me, why should this be? Will you esteem Christ, as did the unprofitable servant — a hard man, an austere man, one who can have no sympathy with your joys? Will you in your inmost heart look upon Him as a thief who would rob you of your chief bliss? Would you reckon that some day it may be needful to make Him your Friend, but that now, while everything looks pleasant and hopeful — it is wiser to keep Him at a distance?

Ah, how you wrong Him, yes too, wrong your own soul! Surely you forget Cana, surely you forget that bridal feast, surely you forget that He who would not for His own necessity change stones into bread — changes water into wine to promote the enjoyment of the guests! Surely you forget that He delights in nothing more than in the true happiness and prosperity of His servants! Surely you forget, moreover, that you need His gracious keeping in the day of your gladness — as much as ever you need His heavenly consolations in the day of your sorrow. "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us!" And how instructive is it to place the eleventh chapter of this Gospel in close comparison with the narrative of the first miracle given to us in the second! It is the same lesson of the Savior's sympathy, but under very opposite circumstances. In the one we have a wedding — in the other a funeral. In the one we have a company of cheerful guests — in the other a band of mourners. But Jesus is alike present at both! He increases the joy of Cana — and He lightens the grief of Bethany. He rejoices with those who do rejoice — and weeps with those who weep.

I would bid you, dear reader, ever think of Cana in your joys — and so likewise think of Bethany in your troubles. Think how wisely, how mightily He wrought to remove in due season, the bitter trial which His own love had appointed. Think how tender was His sympathy with the sorrowing ones while the trial lasted. Think of that agonizing groan! Think of that falling tear!

"Jesus wept!" these tears are over,

But His heart is still the same;

Kinsman, Friend, and Elder Brother,

Is His everlasting name.

Savior, who can love like Thee,

Gracious One of Bethany?

"Jesus wept!" that tear of sorrow

Is a legacy of love.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow,

He the same does ever prove.

You are all in all to me,

Living One of Bethany! But we may gain a further light from this miracle. We may discover something of a parable in those water-pots filled to the brim with wine of Christ's providing. For does it not set Him before us as the bountiful Giver of heavenly grace? Very frequently is wine employed in Scripture as the emblem of spiritual blessings. We have Wisdom's invitation in the book of Proverbs: "Come eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mixed." We have the voice of mercy in the Prophet Isaiah crying aloud to men to "buy wine and milk, without money and without price." So again have we the promise of Gospel days, that "the Lord Almighty will make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of wines on the lees well refined." Yes!

the grace and mercy of Jesus,

the pure joys that He gives,

the consolations of His love,

the fellowship of His Spirit,

are like this wine of Cana — the very best that can be found! Where beside can you obtain such true heart-gladness, where else can you find hopes, promises, satisfactions, that are untouched by earth's woes, that abide when all else shall pass away? And there is no fear that the supply will ever fail. It was possibly to teach us this, that so abundant a provision was made of wine at the feast. Nor can we imagine for a moment, that one there would take too freely of Christ's bounty, when the Master Himself was by. None could teach more plainly than He, the peril of that terrible sin which proves a downfall to multitudes, that is such a dark blot on our favored land. It was the

very purpose of His advent to teach men "to live soberly, righteously, and godly." He warned His disciples lest at any time their hearts should be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness. It was through His Spirit, that the Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians that they should not be filled with wine wherein is excess, and declared to the Corinthian Church that no drunkard should inherit the kingdom of God. Will the reader permit me here to utter a kindly caution, which to many may be altogether needless, but which to others may be of the deepest importance? If there should be the very least danger of your falling into this deadly sin of drunkenness — beware before it is too late! The growth of such habits is very stealthy, and may become an iron chain around you before you are aware of it! Far better abstain altogether, if an enlightened conscience tell you that it is not easy for you to keep within the most careful limits. "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." But there is no danger of partaking too freely of the new wine which Jesus bestows. "Drink abundantly, O beloved!" is His call. Myriads in days past, myriads in our time, have tasted its precious draughts — yet there is still an ample sufficiency for all.

Come, you who have believed, but are yet feeble in grace and feeble in service, come yet again and again; take larger and larger supplies. Is Jesus tired of giving? Is the Spirit of God straightened? Nay, you have been remiss in desiring, and slow in asking — hence you receive less than you might. Bring yet more vessels, expect yet more than you have done heretofore; open your mouth wide, and He will fill it.

Come, you who are wretched and undone, tired of earth's joys — and yet ignorant of that which is better. You who know the sting of an accusing conscience, and the aching of a weary or fearful heart — come, try the Savior's love! Come, taste and see that the Lord is good! Come, receive the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

Ah, sinner, if you drink not here, remember there is another cup, there is other wine of which you must drink. "For the LORD holds a cup in his hand that is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours out the wine in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs!"
Psalms 75:8

Yes, the man who refuses the gift of life and salvation, "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God!" Oh, choose the better part! Take the cup of love, the cup of blessing, the cup in which is found every element of everlasting peace and joy. In another respect we may behold in this miracle, the glory of the Redeemer. Since the fall, everything has been marred and corrupted by sin. With its deadly touch, sin has pervaded the whole creation. In the beginning all things were made very good — but now they have become very evil. Everywhere may we trace the slime of the old serpent. But Christ is here manifested as the mighty Alchemist, transforming, changing, restoring all things. By His power the water — comparatively but little worth, is changed into the wine — exceedingly precious and costly. Thus does Christ ever work. He changes the vile into that which is of highest value. "He makes all things new."

Into every "Marah" fountain, into every affliction and trial — He is ever ready to cast a branch of the tree of life, thus making the bitter waters sweet. In other words, He waits to turn that which in itself is grievous and painful — into a means of increased holiness and heightened joy. In place of this old world, groaning beneath the burden of woe that lies upon it — He will make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." In place of Jerusalem that once was — He will create the New Jerusalem which shall come down from above, as a bride prepared for the

bridegroom. In place of this corruptible body — He shall give a body glorious and immortal, fashioned like unto His own. Yes, He changes the heart and spirit of man — turning the vile sinner, into the holy saint. He changes the fallen one, into the holy child of God, according as it is written, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature — old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." The fierce demoniac, a terror to all around — He changes into the meek and obedient disciple, "sitting at his feet, clothed and in his right mind."

"The woman who had lived a very sinful life" — He so changes, that she becomes an example to all for the great love which she bestows upon Him. The dying malefactor — He changes into an heir of paradise.

Saul, the persecuting Pharisee — He changes into Paul, the very chief of Apostles. The jailer, hardened in his sin — He changes into the rejoicing believer. The Corinthians, aforesaid drunkards, thieves, adulterers, prostitutes, homosexuals, and the like — He changes into holy Christians — washed, sanctified, and justified in His name, and by the Spirit of our God. The Ephesians, dead in trespasses and sins, having no hope and without God in the world — He changes into "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And ever since His exaltation to the right hand of the Father, He has ever been carrying out the same gracious design:

destroying in men, the works of the devil,

lifting them up from the degradation and bondage of sin,

adorning them with all heavenly graces and virtues,

making them partakers of the Divine holiness!

Reader, has this work in any measure been wrought in you? Search and see; for without it, there can be no sitting down with Christ at the marriage feast above, where Jesus is the Bridegroom and His Church the Bride. If it has not been hitherto — then plead with Christ in fervent prayer that it may be so now. Plead with Him . . .

that all which is dark — He would illuminate with His heavenly light;

that all that is hard and unfeeling — He would soften and subdue;

that all that is defiling — He would purify;

that all that is weak — He would strengthen;

that all that is base and of earth — He would elevate;

that all that is crooked — He would make straight;

that all that is of vanity and self and the flesh — He would cast out;

that your heart, once by nature full to the brim of evil, as those water-pots of water — may henceforth by His grace be full to overflowing of the new wine of peace, holiness, and love!

05.12. Nicodemus

Nicodemus "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

There are but three incidents given us with reference to Nicodemus, and these are all found in the Gospel of John. But they throw great light upon his course. They set him before us as an example of growth in grace, and of increase in the knowledge and love of the Savior. In John 3:1-36, we have his first lesson in the school of the great Teacher. We may suppose that as one of the Pharisees, he would be a moral man, a learned man, in a sense a religious man. Like Saul of Tarsus, he would be zealous for the law, and blameless in all its ordinances. For instruction he comes to Christ, being persuaded by the miracles that had been wrought, that Christ could be none other than a messenger sent of God. He comes, however, fearful of the reproach that he might incur. That he came by night was not merely because there might then be a better opportunity for converse, but because he dreaded being known as a follower of Jesus. "The one that came to Jesus by night," is the remark that the Evangelist always attaches to his name. But who has despised the day of small things? Jesus at least never does. He does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. The least of good, does He ever nourish — lifting up the hands that hang down, and strengthening the feeble knees.

He receives Nicodemus, and teaches him the way of life. He puts before him the absolute necessity of a new birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again." Our evil hearts, our corrupt natures, must by the Spirit's grace be cleansed and renewed. There is so much of deadly sin concealed within the heart, even of the most amiable and gentle, that nothing less than the Holy Spirit — first regenerating and then perpetually renewing the soul — can fit us for the pure joys of the eternal world. "Sin is like the poison in a serpent's fang, or a wasp's sting — constantly reproducing itself. You may remove the deadly juice from the cup of a noxious flower — but if you go back next day the cup has gathered its poison again. Our hearts are such cups. Day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, they are seeking to refill themselves with what God hates. Only the Holy Spirit's unceasing influence is sufficient to empty them of sin, and fill them with holiness." George Wilson But Jesus sets before the inquirer another truth. He has spoken words of solemn warning — now He speaks to him words of hope and promise. He tells him of the Father's love. He declares that He Himself has come to be lifted up, as the brazen serpent of old, the remedy for the spiritual sicknesses of men. He opens wide the door to all who will confide in His salvation. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The seed is cast into the ground, how will it grow? Will the convictions that have begun to work in the heart of Nicodemus pass away — or will he retain the truth and cleave to it? Will he be as the wayside or rocky ground hearers — or as the good ground hearer who bears fruit a hundredfold?

Let us see? Turn to John 7:50-52. Two years have passed away since that eventful night; and it is clear that the seed has been taking root, and is now appearing: first the blade — as it shall afterward the ear and the full corn in the ear. The officers sent by the chief priests refuse to lay hands on Christ, so greatly had His words taken hold upon them. Then the Pharisees say to them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knows not the law are cursed." No longer Nicodemus can be silent. He ventures a remark. True, it was not a very strong one — yet it required no small amount of courage to make it. He showed them that there was at least one ruler, one Pharisee who would not condemn Christ. He was not afraid to bring down suspicion and envy upon himself. "Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them: 'Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?'" John 7:50-52

Blessed are they who, like this Jewish ruler, hear the Word of God and keep it. With too many, every trace of it, even where for a moment interest has been excited, soon fades from the memory. Christ has said, "If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples indeed — and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Another year passes by. Again Nicodemus is brought before us. And now very marked is the advance that he has made. He is no more the timid inquirer, no more the one who ventures with trembling a word on behalf of the Master, but the bold and devoted disciple. It was at the time when all looked the darkest. The enemy has triumphed — Christ is crucified — the disciples have fled — Judas has betrayed Him, and Peter denied Him — yet even then Nicodemus proves his faith and love. He unites with Joseph of Arimathea in going in boldly and asking for the body of Jesus. He brings a costly gift, a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. He assists Joseph in carrying the precious body of our Lord, and laying it in the new sepulcher.

What a glorious triumph of faith!

How truly in him were the words fulfilled that "the last should be first." When we might have looked for Peter or John or James to come forward — we hear nothing of them; but these two men, Joseph and Nicodemus, hitherto secret disciples, now stand out fearlessly that they may honor Him whom their associates have despised and rejected. When least we expect it, does God raise up those who confess the name of His Son.

Amidst all the mockery that greets His ear on the cross, there is but one voice heard to declare His innocence and His kingly majesty — it is that of a criminal — the thief that hung beside Him. And when the spirit has fled and all is over, when all others have fallen back — those to our thoughts are most unlikely, claim the privilege of carrying Jesus to the tomb.

Nicodemus thus affords a bright example to those that are setting their face Zionward. Nothing is impossible with God. Grace can uphold the weakest, and give boldness to the most fearful. Thus the righteous holds on his way, and he who has clean hands becomes stronger and stronger. Doubtless Nicodemus must have been much in prayer, he must have hidden the Word of Christ deep within his heart; thus the Spirit was given, and from a little child in the Divine life, he grew into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Sometimes we see the very reverse of this — those promising much at an early stage of the Christian life, yet after a while growing cold and faithless, leaving their first love, grieving the Spirit,

and thus losing much of the peace and joy which once they possessed. In his valuable work on Ancient History, Sir Henry Rawlinson tells of the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. He speaks of the latter losing much of its waters in the marshy lands through which it flows, and reaching the point of junction with the Tigris far less in bulk than during many parts of its previous course. The sister stream, however, increases the bulk of its waters as it proceeds. Receiving tributaries on either side, and losing comparatively little, it flows with deeper current as it reaches the mouth.

Often do we find the lives of two people in Christ's Church, differing as much as the course of these two rivers. In the one there is a painful DECREASE in zeal, spirituality, and usefulness. The strength is drawn off into other channels. Worldly interests, the allurements and gratifications which earth affords, family cares and the like — steal away the best of the heart's affections. Watch such a one after the interval of a year or two has passed, and it is not difficult to perceive there is less of Christ, less of a heavenly mind, less of a tender concern for the soul's of others, and for the welfare of Christ's Church.

What a mournful history is that of King Solomon! In his infancy called Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord; upon his entrance to the kingdom, the Lord giving to him so gracious a promise of wisdom, as also of temporal blessings — yet leaving behind, as the chief lesson of his life, his witness to the utter vanity of those things on account of which he had forsaken the God of his father. But take the other picture. There may be by God's grace, a deepening of the Divine life in the soul, there may be an ADVANCE as years go on. As with Nicodemus, experience of God's love may expand the heart. There may be an ever-deepening humility through the increase of self-knowledge. There may be an ever-deepening faith and love through the increase of the knowledge of Christ. Through watchfulness and prayer, grace already received may be held fast. Tributary springs may bring in fresh supplies of the water of life. Watering others — a blessing returns to themselves. Praying for others, others likewise pray for them.

Careful, painstaking study of Holy Scripture,
meditation upon its truths,
the reading of sound practical Christian books,
incessant supplication for the Holy Spirit,
a believing use of Divine ordinances,
the faithful reception of the Lord's Supper —

are so many branch streams that bring in from time to time fresh measures of heavenly grace. Thus the Divine life in the soul prospers, and when all on earth is over, an abundant entrance is ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let me here press the inquiry upon each of those into whose hands these pages may fall — Which river does your course most resemble? What says your own conscience? Is there indeed a growth in grace? Do the things of the present life appear less to you — and the things beyond as all-important? Does Holy Scripture open out to you, even in its simplest portions, precious views of Divine truth? Is there a growing sensitiveness at the approach of sin? Is there more submission to

the will of God? Is there a closer cleaving to the Friend of sinners? To be content without this is most perilous. It implies that the pulse is very low, even if life yet remains. It calls for an immediate return to the Fountain of living waters. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die — for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you."

Come nearer — nearer still!

Let not Your light depart;

Bend, break this stubborn will,

Dissolve this iron heart!

Less wayward let me be,

More pliable and mild;

In glad simplicity,

More like a truthful child.

Riper and riper now

Each hour let me become,

Less fond of things below,

More fit for such a home.

Leave nothing that is unfit;

Of all that is my own

Strip me; and so complete

My training for Your throne!

05.13. I Have Sinned!

I Have Sinned!

"Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before You!" Psalms 143:2

Some years ago I saw a remarkable document. It was a catalogue of the crimes committed by a man who had been at last executed in Norfolk Island, with the punishment recorded which he received for each offence. This terrible, awful list, was nearly three yards in length, and had I not known it for a certainty — I Would have doubted whether it were possible that so much evil could have been crowded into a single lifetime! The thought of this catalogue may suggest to us a profitable, though a humbling lesson. It may lead us to inquire as to the record of our iniquities made with unerring justice by the pen of the Omniscient.

Take the life of one who is yet a stranger to God, and who is walking in the way of his own heart — who shall tell how countless are the transgressions of such a one?

Begin with acts of positive disobedience — the sins of your youth, the dishonor done to parents, lies, dishonest gains, such things as even natural conscience reproves — and does not a still small voice whisper that there is something greatly amiss in these things?

Add to these, sins of the tongue — angry words, murmuring words, backbiting words, words that have a tendency to deceive or to suggest unholy imaginations. Look at these in the light of that saying of Christ, "Truly I say unto you, that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment!"

Add to these, multitudes of unhallowed thoughts and desires, crowds of vain and foolish thoughts as many as the motes in the sunbeam, and remember again the word of God, "The thought of foolishness is sin."

Think of the years you have lived; go back to your school days, and to the years that have passed since then. Go back to days of special trial and of special mercy — think what your feelings and motives were, what was the bent of your mind at such times. Think how many evil things in word, thought, or deed, may be found in every one of the many thousand days that you have already lived — and if you are honest with yourself, you will surely confess that the record of your sin, written out by the hand of the Most High God, would reach almost from earth to Heaven! According to that confession of Ezra, "O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to You. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens!" Ezra 9:6

Perhaps, however, we gain a more impressive view of this truth, if we regard the life of a man without God as one long sin. What was the life of the younger son, spoken of by our Lord in the parable, while he remained in the far country? Was not every moment one of rebellion and ingratitude — and therefore one continuous sin? No doubt there were hours of deeper excess than others, hours when he plunged deeper into the mire of vice and pollution — yet was not his whole

life, and every moment of it, until he returned home, sinful and rebellious?

Now it is just so with every sinner, until he yields to the merciful call of God — until he comes home as a penitent to the Father's house. Each moment is he living a life of practical atheism! Each moment is he nourished and preserved by a Father's goodness — and yet all the while spurning the hand that feeds and guards him.

O careless, thoughtless sinner! Be assured of this — your life is one long-continued sin, one continued act of provocation in the eyes of your Creator! Wherever you may be, in the house of God or in the house of business, in the field or by the way-side, in some scene of worldly dissipation, or sitting with your family by your own fireside — whatever you may be doing, eating or drinking, talking or sleeping, rising in the morning or going to rest at night — yet, until you return to God with hearty and sincere repentance, you are every moment sinning against Him!

Hence we see how unscriptural is the view that represents the majority of men as vacillating between sin and holiness — neither worthy to be accounted saints, nor so bad as to be reckoned altogether sinners.

Only take the right view of sin — that which represents it as the transgression of a holy law — and you will see at once that until men are renewed in the spirit of their minds, they are altogether sinful and guilty in the sight of the Most High. The Apostle Paul lays it down as the groundwork on which he sets forth the way of God's righteousness, that man has broken the law, that every one without exception is exposed to the curse and just displeasure of God. He looks at the whole race of mankind in one light, and as being in one position. He places them on the same level, on the same platform of guilt and condemnation. He declares that "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and that the law has so spoken "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

True, in one respect there is a difference, and a very serious one. There is a difference as to the amount of debt which a man owes, as to the amount of guilt for which he is liable to punishment. The man who has reaped twenty acres, will receive a larger payment than the man who has reaped but ten; the man who has done a week's work, will receive more wages than the man who has worked only a day. So doubtless shall it be with those who are dealt with for their sins. The more sin, the longer in sin — the more guilt and consequently the greater punishment.

Yet let not any reader think that here at least is a point in your favor, because you have been kept from some very glaring iniquities into which others have fallen. Remember that God's view of sin is very different from your's. If you were to point out one whom you considered the greatest offender, you might go to some dark prison and point to one about to suffer for his crimes. But if God were to put His finger on one whom He reckoned the worst, He might go to some favored congregation, and find one there in the midst of Christian privileges, who was steeling his heart against a Savior's love, who was persistently rejecting the offers of salvation, who hated spiritual religion, who was living in unbelief, and thus making God a liar! And thus knowing his Lord's will and doing it not — he might be ranked in His sight as one of the very greatest transgressors.

What have been our privileges and opportunities,

what knowledge we have had of His Word and of those who have loved it,

what warnings and invitations to repentance we have heard,

what life we have lived in the inner world of our own hearts

— all this must be taken into account before we can determine whose sin is most heinous in the sight of our Judge. But in another sense there is no difference. Every soul of man, until forgiven, is liable to everlasting damnation. The most moral gentleman, as well as the most degraded monster — stands alike in this position. A conqueror passing through a country which he has subdued bids the inhabitants of a certain town not to cross a boundary line which he has marked out, and threatens death against all who shall go beyond it. If one of them cross it, though it be but a yard's space — he is equally exposed to the penalty as one who might go several miles. The holy law of God is like that boundary line. Whoever transgresses it, is guilty. He may go but comparatively a little way — or he may go very far indeed — yet in either case he comes within the curse. "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Believe it, reader, and ponder it, that were it possible that through your whole life you had committed but one sin, and that one but a vain thought cherished within — you are as truly brought within the iron grasp of a strict and holy law as if you were the most notorious offender! Would you therefore stand on a firm foundation that neither death nor judgment can ever shake — begin here. Be sure that the law fastens a charge of deadly guilt on every single member of the human family. Hence put aside all thought of your own personal merit. Lean not so much as the weight of a single grain on your own doings or feelings. Try not to lessen your danger or blunt the edge of the law by any excuses, or extenuating circumstances — or the greater evils that others may have wrought. Have you broken God's holy law, or have you not? If you have, confess it plainly; regard yourself as wholly undone; take your right place — a lost sinner in the dust before God. Make the prayer of David your own: "Do not bring Your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before You!" But why insist so much on the necessity of this? Why does Paul so urge men to self-condemnation? Is it to shut them up to despair? Is it to make them doubt the possibility of their salvation? Nay, it is the very reverse.

It is to show men the suitableness and the all-sufficiency of the righteousness which God has provided. It is to show men that the same glorious Gospel of the grace of God, can meet the needs of every living soul. Were the one man partly condemned, and another, further fallen into sin, wholly condemned — there would be a need for two systems, two gospels — a little gospel for the one sinner, a great gospel for the great sinner. But now the same message comes to all. What says it but this: "I cannot receive you while you rest in any measure on your own merits. Only come to Me only a sinner, and here is a glorious righteousness wrought out for you by the obedience and death of My Son. Consent to be clothed with His glorious righteousness, and you shall never be condemned, but shall inherit everlasting life! Do you accept the offered gift? It is bestowed freely. It is without money and without price. By faith embrace it, and it is your own forever. What reply does your heart make? The careless heart says, "Why should I seek for it? What profit will it bring to me? Give me health, give me success in my plans, give me prosperity in my affairs — and it will be time enough by and by to think of the world to come." The self-righteous heart says, "I thank You, Lord, that I am not as other men. I have much that will stand me in good stead when judgment approaches. Many have sinned more deeply than I. Let me have some part at least in the merit of my salvation." So it puts away the gift and perishes. The doubting heart

says, "It cannot be for me, I am too unworthy, I am too great a sinner. I must first pray more, and repent more — and perhaps at length God may be willing to bestow so great a blessing upon me." So here again the consolation and the hope is cast aside. But the believing heart, taught of the Holy Spirit, answers far otherwise: "Gladly, O Lord, do I welcome Your offered mercy. Sin is the only thing that I can call my own. My own righteousness is but a garment spotted by the flesh. But I thank You from the very bottom of my heart for a righteousness in which I can stand guiltless before You. May I never cease to abhor myself for all that is mine, and to bless You for all that is Yours."

Thus does peace with God arise in the soul. Thus does true humility abound side by side with hope, and joy, and love. Thus does the justified one desire evermore to keep low before God under a sense of his own deficiencies. And the goodness which has been shown towards him, becomes the strongest ground for life-long contrition of soul. He fears not to call God his Father, for the righteousness in which he trusts is the righteousness of the righteous One. He fears not to search out and to confess the very utmost of his iniquity, for it cannot go beyond the reach of Christ's atoning blood.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who forgives the sins of all them that are penitent — create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness — may obtain from You, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Jesus, we rest in Thee,

In You, ourselves we hide:

Laden with guilt and misery,

Where could we rest beside?

'Tis on Your meek and lowly breast

Our weary souls alone can rest.

O Holy One of God!

The Father rests in Thee,

And in the savor of that blood

Once shed on Calvary.

The curse is gone — through You we're blest,

God rests in You — in You we rest.

05.14. The Best Cheer!

The Best Cheer!

"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!" Matthew 9:2

There is something that sounds strange in these words when we remember the circumstances under which they were spoken. A palsied man is brought by his friends to Christ for healing. A crowd around the Savior prevent their coming to Him, but if one way is closed, they will seek another. So they carry the man up on the house-top, and then, after removing the slight awning over the inner court where Jesus was preaching, let him down in the midst. Then Jesus beholding their faith, beholding their perseverance and determination to bring the sick man near to Him, uttered this word of kindly greeting, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"

They are surely not words we would have looked for; they seem at first sight unsuitable to the occasion. What would we think, if in taking to an eminent physician, of one whom we dearly loved and about whose health we were very anxious, he were to pass by the subject on which we sought his aid, and were to give words of spiritual counsel? Doubtless most people would feel as many did at Capernaum, when Jesus thus addressed the palsied man. But after all it was the right word. Those who stood around could see only the paralyzed frame. Jesus looked deeper and beheld a conscience wounded by sin. Affliction had been doing its work. It had led the man to reflection, to remembrance of former evil, to repentance and a desire for pardoning mercy. And Jesus knew it — He knew what was in man. Very often, as in this case, did He answer the thoughts of the heart — rather than any words that fell from the lips. He knew that to this penitent, no gift would appear so desirable as the forgiveness which He so freely granted.

Reader will you learn hence, one great purpose that God has in sending affliction, either now or at any other time, to darken your home. It is to awaken your conscience to a vivid apprehension of sin. It is to unlock the storehouse of memory, that you may set before your eyes ways and words and deeds that may almost have passed from your recollection. It is to remind you that there is a peril connected with sin, that the law demands its punishment, that surely there is a judgment yet to come, most severe and terrible to those not sheltered in the riven side of the Redeemer. At such seasons God would have you humble yourself under His mighty hand; yes, even though you may long have known His love. He would have you make use of your time of retirement to inquire diligently as to your soul's welfare, remembering your latter end, and that the night quickly comes, when no man can work.

Such lessons as these, through the grace of the Spirit, have often been learned in the day of affliction. The widow of Zarephath, so happy for a while in the presence of Elijah and the marvelous provision given her from day to day, is bereaved of her only child. The loss is unspeakably great, but she hears the voice of Him who appoints it. The iniquity of former days, perhaps someone sin in particular, is brought home to her. She says to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Are you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my

son?" A young woman in Kent for many a long month, wasted away under a disease that at length wrought her death. Very patiently did she bear her cross, and very thankfully did she receive the instruction that was given to her. From her sick bed, arose the first true prayer that ever she had offered. She was reading Psalms 25:1-22; when she reached the 18th verse, she could read no more. It seemed to her to be all she needed. Again and again did she lift up her heart in the petition which the Psalmist breathed, "Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins." It was the dawn of her spiritual life, the first beam of that light which shines more and more unto the perfect day. From these words of Christ, we learn that He delights exceedingly to forgive men their sins. It is sometimes imagined that after long waiting, after many prayers and many tears — He may be moved to bestow mercy on the sinner. The very reverse of this is the truth. It is He who waits long, with many entreaties knocking at the door, beseeching men to accept His salvation. In His tender love, He ever rejoices to bestow that fruit of His work which they are so unwilling to receive. As an evidence of this, we need not go beyond this narrative. Before a word is uttered, before a prayer is offered, or a confession of sin made — the Lord, who knew his heart, grants the man a frank, immediate, unconditional forgiveness. The Lord knew that which he longed for. He recognized the faith which he had in common with those who brought him, and crowned it with a promise that must have filled his soul with gladness.

If any reader is in a like frame of mind, it is most needful for you to remember the readiness of Christ to forgive sin.

There are two ways in which sin may be regarded — as a breach of law, and as a perilous and deadly disease. It is a breach of the Divine law — and as such needs pardon. It is a disease, a leprosy that cleaves to the nature of a man — and as such needs a sovereign remedy by which it may be overcome and rooted out. And Jesus undertakes to provide both for those who turn to Him, and in faith commit their case into His hands. But mark the order: first He forgives — then He purifies and cleanses the soul. First He justifies the ungodly — then He sanctifies them, and makes them fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Laden with the guilt of a life-time, sins known to the world, or sins secret to all but God — bend low before the cross of Christ, acknowledging your iniquity, and believe, yes believe assuredly, that from His meditorial throne Jesus does at once pardon all, and make it, as regards the punishment due to it, as though it had never been. But be not deceived. Where this is the case — your sin will be loathed, hated, and forsaken. He who has pardoned you will so instruct you by His Spirit — that you shall renounce the evil and follow the good; hungering and thirsting after righteousness, until you shall stand perfect in His own image before the throne. In the case of the paralytic, Jesus gave a proof that His word of forgiving mercy was a reality. By that which they could see, might the men of Capernaum be led to believe in that which they could not see. That they might know that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins — he bids the palsied man arise and walk. So before them all, he took up his bed and went forth — a plain witness to the might and authority of Him who had healed him. In like manner does Jesus now give men evidence of the reality of His forgiveness. He bids the forgiven arise and walk with God, and ever gives them strength so to do. From old habits of evil, from a paralysis of deadly indifference — does He deliver and save. So that by a newness of life, by a walking in holiness and love — do they manifest the grace which Jesus has bestowed.

Reader, I beseech you honor Christ by laying aside all pre-conceived ideas, and entering readily into the way which He has chosen for bringing you out into the full enjoyment of His great

salvation. Accept forgiveness as the blessing of His free love. Accept it at the very beginning of your Christian course.

I have known a Christian lady who for years was in bondage, because she regarded forgiveness as the goal rather than as the starting place of the Christian life. She wished to be holy — that she might be forgiven; instead of seeking forgiveness — that she might be made holy. Do not fall into the same error.

Whatever lack there be in your repentance, your love, your obedience, bring it to Christ's footstool — confessing its guilt, and be assured that He will at once forgive. Then take the joy of forgiveness, to aid you in your conflict with evil. Arise from all sloth, self-indulgence, and the like — and walk closely and humbly with your God. Be harmless and blameless as a child of God in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. Tamper not with the least evil, for it will grieve the Spirit, and bring a cloud between God and your soul. Perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Be zealous to excel in every Christian grace and virtue. Let no reproach be cast upon the name of Christ through your inconsistency. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

There is yet another lesson which we may gather from the words of Christ. The forgiven man has ever ground for rejoicing. Look at this paralytic. While as yet unable to walk a single step, while still lying helpless on his couch, Jesus bids him rejoice, for his sin is blotted out. "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!" And it must be so. Whoever is forgiven of God, has received a gift that is the pledge and foretaste of the greatest bliss which man can know!

"Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

"Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him."

Whatever your present lot is, whatever tribulations await you in the future, if your sin is forgiven, why should you not evermore rejoice and be glad?

Look upward, and you may rejoice that you have there . . .

a Father who loves you,

a Savior who pleads for you,

angels to watch over you, and

a mansion being prepared for you!

Look downward, and as you think of the grave where you are hastening, rejoice that the sting of death is gone; that the grave shall be a quiet resting place for the body until the morning of the resurrection.

Look around you, and as you reflect on the changes of this passing scene, rejoice that all things shall work together for your good; that whatever of earthly comforts you may have to part with, God will by and by give you much more than these; that whenever you bid farewell to the companions of your pilgrimage, you may yet look forward to a blessed reunion, for all who are one with you in Christ here, shall be one with you in glory hereafter.

Look backward, and can you not trace divine forbearance and loving kindness following your every step?

Look forward, and be assured that your best Friend will never leave you nor forsake you, and that in the ages to come you shall experience ever more and more of His everlasting mercy. But if you know nothing of forgiveness through the blood of Christ — then what right have you to rejoice? Rejoice — and still unpardoned? Rejoice — and the wrath of God abiding on you every moment? Rejoice — and death swiftly pursuing you, and the Son of God soon to appear as your Judge, and you know not how it may be with you! Rejoice, and the sentence of eternal damnation recorded against you! Who ever heard of feasting and merry-making in the condemned cell on the eve of an execution? And what have you, my brother or sister who are still in your sins — what have you to do with joy, since every breath you draw and every pulse that beats, you approach nearer to a terrible damnation. And before another day shall dawn, you know not but the great bell may toll that makes angels mourn — which tells of another soul hopelessly, irretrievably lost. What will the world's good cheer, its glittering toys, its enticing gratifications, its highest ambitions, its richest possessions — avail then? What solace will they give when the trumpet sounds, when the Judge appears, when eternity is revealed? Oh, hear the voice that calls you to repentance. Forsake your sin and live! Have faith in Christ — and He will save you.

There is life for a look at the crucified One,

There is life at this moment for thee.

Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved —

Unto Him who was nailed on the tree.

It is not your tears of repentance or prayers,

But the blood that atones for the soul;

On Him then, who shed it, you may at once

Your weight of iniquities roll. His anguish of soul on the cross have you seen?

His cry of distress have you heard?

Then why, if the terrors of wrath He endured,

Should pardon to you be deferred?

Then doubt not your pardon, since God has declared

There remains no more to be done;

That once in the end of the world He appeared,

And completed the work He begun. But take with rejoicing from Jesus at once

The life everlasting He gives;

And know with assurance you never can die,

Since Jesus your righteousness lives!

05.15. The Nobleman at Capernaum

The Nobleman at Capernaum

"Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal nobleman whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed." John 4:46-53 "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." Matthew 12:20 Three schoolmasters are engaged in the instruction of the Lord's family:

1. Moses, the law-giver, teaches them the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the guilt of breaking the least of the commandments.
2. Christ, the great Prophet, teaches them by His faithful sayings, by His holy example, by His ever blessed Spirit, the way of life.
3. Affliction also is our teacher. The rod is the voice of the Lord. It speaks, as God appoints — sometimes in the abode of the lowly, and sometimes in the mansion of the great. It brings home the teaching both of Moses and of Christ. It brings down high thoughts; it makes men to know how vain is all earthly grandeur, that the glory of man is but as the flower of grass; that here we have no continuing city; that it is our wisdom to seek above all things, a kingdom that cannot be moved; and during our pilgrimage, to lean only on Him who never fails to support those who trust in His grace.

It was thus with the nobleman whose coming to Christ is given in John 4:46-53. This man was one of the courtiers of Herod Antipas, and dwelt at Capernaum, between twenty and thirty miles from Cana, where we find our Lord on the occasion of this miracle. The nobleman's son is laid low with an attack of fever, and of so severe a character, that it appears well-near impossible that he can recover. For any lesser cause the nobleman would probably have hesitated to apply to Christ, for it was no slight matter for one in such a position to seek help from Jesus of Nazareth. But love to his child triumphs over every scruple — so he comes to Cana, earnestly beseeching Christ to come down and heal his son.

O blessed affliction, which brings the sorrowing one to the feet of Jesus! The cloud may be dark and threatening — yet behind it is the brightness of heavenly consolation — if only it leads you to go strait to the Friend of sinners. But for this, it is little likely that the nobleman would have come within the sphere of a Savior's love. High station, the praise of man, the lust of the eyes and the

pride of life — might still have reigned supreme within. But now that he comes near, now that an errand of sore necessity has removed the veil that hid Jesus from his view — who shall say what everlasting joy may arise from his first approach to the Lord of life and glory?

Never, never reckon that an evil, which takes you with an errand to your Savior! Whether it is for yourself, or for one beloved; whether it is pain, or sorrow, or anxiety; whether it is the loss of your dearest friend or the unkindness of those around you — reckon it alike to be most blessed gain, if it draws you for the first time or for the thousandth time, to the Savior's footstool. But Jesus does not at once grant the father's request. Beneath the surface He detects much in the nobleman's faith that was very imperfect, much that needed raising to a higher level. It was a faith that needed the support of signs and wonders, and that sought a temporal blessing with too little regard to the grace and love of Him that should grant it. So Christ answers the thoughts of the inner man, rather than the spoken word. To save a soul was more to Him even than to save a life. So, as the good Physician, He still more deeply wounds that bleeding heart — that afterward He may bind it up and pour in the oil of heavenly consolation. Jesus meets the nobleman with a solemn reproof, including within its range those that stood around: "Then said Jesus unto him: Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe."

Already had abundant ground been given for faith, had not the hearts of the Jews been hardened in unbelief. Had not Christ been born in Bethlehem according to the Prophet? Had not angels borne witness to Him, and Simeon and Anna spoken of Him as the promised Messiah? Had not a voice been heard at His baptism, testifying to His being the Son of God? Might not His words of heavenly wisdom have been enough to convince them that He was more than man? Yet, for all this, without miraculous signs and wonders they will not believe. And when signs and wonders are granted, very soon the impression is altogether lost.

What a contrast is presented in the very same chapter. Look at the Samaritans. Without the aid of a single miracle, only by the report of the woman, and afterward by hearing the words that fell from His own lips — do they believe on His name. Not only do they believe in Him as some great One, as Elijah or that Prophet — but they rise at once to the very highest degree of faith, they confess Him to be "the Christ, the Savior of the world!" Who does not see here, what is most needed if we would become partakers of Christ?

It is not signs or miracles;

it is not greater privileges or fresh opportunities;

it is not a more favorable position in life;

it is not better sermons or a clearer Bible —

but it is a simplicity of mind, a desire for spiritual blessings, a heart taught by the Holy Spirit. Are you yet without faith? For what are you waiting? Do you imagine that some sign, some solemn event happening under your eye, some fresh means of grace will bring you to faith and repentance? O hearken not to this siren's voice — it will only deceive you. Come and believe now. Cast aside your old prejudices. Cast aside that world-loving spirit. In dependence upon the Spirit's aid, draw near to Jesus; come to Him with confession of former neglect: "Lord, I believe — help my unbelief!" The reproof doubtless touches him to the quick, but does not drive him away from the

only Helper. He is evidently a most loving father, and his deep anxiety for his son again comes out. While he speaks, we may almost hear a groan and see a hot tear in every word: "Sir, come down, before my child dies!" As if he would say, "Ah, Lord, truly my faith is nothing, but my child is dying, he will soon be gone! Oh, deny me not my request, come down speedily to my help!" The mingling together of faith and unbelief in this appeal, is worthy of notice.

We mark a reliance on the Savior's power to heal, a faith not only beseeching at first, but persevering; a faith overleaping a repulse and still looking to the Lord; a faith resembling in some measure, though in a far less degree, that of the Syrophenician woman: "True, Lord — yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table."

Yet with this there is no less evident imperfection. There is a limiting of the power of Christ in two directions. Christ must be present — or it would avail nothing. "Sir, come down." Very different was the spirit of the Centurion: "Only speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." Then too, it must be, "Before my child dies." The nobleman believed Christ to possess the power to heal, but he could scarcely expect more. That Christ could also raise the dead, was altogether beyond the grasp of his faith. But we cannot be surprised at this, nor would we blame him. To him, as yet, had little comparatively been given — and therefore but little was required. It was his first approach to Christ; he had as yet but little knowledge of Him. Probably he had not hitherto seen one of His miracles. But is it not otherwise with yourself, believer? Is not the knowledge of Christ fully revealed to you in Holy Scripture? Is not the whole story of His wondrous life spread before you? His sojourn here, His atoning death, His glorious resurrection — all are given; and moreover invitations and promises that meet every case.

Yield not then to the sin of Israel in the wilderness. Limit not the Holy of Israel. Narrow not the sphere of His power to help. Let not time, or place, or circumstance prove an obstacle to your faith.

Say not in a distrustful spirit, "Would that I could see some proof that Jesus has received me, that my prayer is heard, that I shall be delivered from this trial." Remember that sight-faith is no faith at all. Believe first — you shall see afterward. Take as a little child every word that the Master has spoken, and rely upon it as infallibly true. Raise to the very highest degree your conception of . . .

the all-sufficiency,

the resistless might,

the unchanging faithfulness,

the boundless love of the Savior!

Raise to the highest pitch your thoughts of the prevailing character of Christ's mediation, both with reference to your present acceptance, the answer to your prayers, and your preservation unto life eternal. And then rest assured that as far as the Heaven is above the earth — so far does the grace of our Lord immeasurably exceed the utmost bound of your feeble imaginings.

Jesus again replies to the nobleman. Now it is to grant his request — yet in granting it, to try once more, and thus to increase his faith. The father asks for Christ's presence: He vouchsafes him but His word. "Go your way, your son lives." Yet was it not a still better gift? Had Christ gone with him according to his wish, the son must have had some hours more of suffering; he might meanwhile

have died, thus causing fresh sorrow to the household. Besides, the fresh trial of faith brought also lasting benefit to the father. "With one word," writes Hall, "does Christ heal two patients — the son of the fever — and the father of his unbelief."

How like to this are Christ's dealings with His people at all times. He gives not exactly as we ask, or what we ask — but what we should ask, which is better than all we have sought for. He is the good Physician, the great Healer, who uses the bodily infirmities of ourselves and others, that He may heal all our spiritual diseases. He banishes every fever of the mind: eager haste to be rich, unruly lusts, fiery tempers, angry passions, impatient murmurings against the Divine will. The message is received in the assurance of faith. The discipline of Christ has not been lost. Though He has never seen the son, or touched his hand — yet the nobleman believes that a single act of His will, a single word of His power is enough to restore his son. Nor does he go hastily back in mingled fear and hope. So confident is he that all is well, that he tarries awhile. Leisurely he returns by the way that he had trodden in such haste. It was only a short time after mid-day that Christ speaks. Without difficulty might he have reached Capernaum that evening, but not until the next day does he reach home. There need be no hurrying hither and thither, where there is faith. Steady reliance on the Lord's promise ever brings with it quietness of spirit: "He who believes, shall not make haste." As he returns the servants meet him. And it is observable that they use as the relation of a fact the very words that Christ had used as a promise to the father. "Your son lives," says Christ, and the fever took its flight as He spoke it. "Your son lives," say the servants in bringing the welcome news. Nor was it, as the father inquired, that "he began to amend;" but "the fever left him." As in the case of Peter's wife's mother, it was not a gradual recovery, but immediate restoration to health.

Learn ever from this to receive the promise of Christ as facts. That which He speaks with His mouth — does He ever fulfill with His hand. That which is matter of promise today — will be simple history tomorrow. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." The healing of the son becomes a means of spiritual blessing to the whole family. The father yields up himself to Christ. Nor need we be surprised that the mother's heart is touched, or that the young man feels bound to render up the life restored to him. We know not how many belonged to that household, but this we know, that Christ became the center of every heart. Even in Capernaum, doomed through its unbelief to a worse condemnation than that of Sodom — one family is found saved in Christ forever.

Happy is that home where Christ dwells, where all delight to love and follow Him. "With Your blessing, O Lord, let the house of Your servant be blessed forever!"

It may be profitable to review Christ's dealings with this suppliant. Tenderly does He fulfill the word prophesied: that He would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He rebukes, but He does not reject him. He raises a faith which was very defective to that which could triumph in His salvation. He leads one, who as a loving father seeks a child's restoration, to become a true, steadfast believer, to the everlasting peace of himself and his family.

Let those who have as yet but little faith, learn to hope in Him and wait upon Him for its increase. He will not cast away the few grains of gold, because of the dross mingled with it. He blows not upon the glimmering candle, but guards it with His own hand. He tramples not upon the tender plant, but supports it with His rod and staff. "He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no

might, He increases strength." An example may afford encouragement to some readers. A man well known for his Christian principle had many doubts as to the reality of his saving interest in Christ. He loved the Sanctuary; he loved the people of God; he walked consistently in the ways of the Lord — yet could seldom rise to the joy of faith. During his last illness his doubts increased, so that at length he exclaimed, "I have lost my Savior." For two days and a night this anguish of mind continued. At length the Lord rebuked the Tempter, and comforted His servant who longed for His salvation. While alone the day previous to his death, his wife in an adjoining room heard him exclaim, "O, my Savior! He has come again, He has come again!" Nor was this impression transitory. This tranquility and joy lasted until his spirit took its happy flight to the land where all darkness is extinguished forever in the light of the Savior's countenance.

05.16. Christ Has Risen!

Christ Has Risen!

"The angel said to the women: Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said!" Matthew 28:5-6

Many a day has dawned in joy and prosperity, that has set in darkness and despair. The unexpected letter, the untimely accident, the unlooked for disappointment — has darkened the sky, and changed in a moment the whole aspect of life. But there is sometimes the reverse of this; the day that has opened in gloom and fear, has closed in gladness and hope. It was thus on the day when Christ arose. When it dawned love and piety were awake and busy, but faith and hope and joy seemed well near dead. The godly women come to the grave. They had gazed on the Cross, they had watched by the sepulcher, they had gone to their homes with hearts still set upon honoring their Lord; and now, awake before sunrise, they come to anoint the body of Him they loved with the spices which they had prepared.

Chief among them came she whom Christ had so marvelously delivered from the tyranny of the powers of darkness. Ah, Mary Magdalene, I admire and would copy, if I might, that holy flame of love which burnt so brightly in your bosom! Your heart is fast bound to your Savior! Whether He is on the cross or in the grave — still you will be there. Like Rizpah so faithfully watching by the bodies of her slain sons — so will you watch by the grave of your Lord.

Yet would I chide you for your unbelief. The very enemies of your Lord remember His words, that He has promised to rise again the third day — and have you forgotten them? Have you forgotten the triumphs of Nain and Bethany? Have you forgotten that thrice at His bidding, death has loosened his iron grasp — and shall it now retain its hold of the Prince of Life?

Truly there was unbelief in Mary — yet what Christian sees not in her, his own photograph? When the crisis of danger approaches, when the clouds hang the heaviest — who remembers as he ought the words of Christ? Who relies as he ought, on His faithfulness and power?

Those godly women hasten to the sepulcher, though they fear whether their journey be not in vain. They remember the large stone, and ask who shall roll it away from the mouth of the sepulcher. Yet they turn not back because of the difficulty that lies in their path. They hold on their way in seeking their Lord. But now a fresh sorrow, a fresh perplexity befalls them. The stone is gone, but the grave is empty! While unbelief reigns, it will always be thus. Fresh impediments will continually arise, and how shall we overcome them unless we can rely upon the word of the Lord? But now the light begins to burst. The Lord does not despise those that are weak in faith — but will surely strengthen and encourage them. Now He sends two messengers from the upper world. They speak to the sorrowing women and bid them not be afraid. Why shall they fear, for their crucified Lord is not there, for He has risen from the dead! And you, seekers after Jesus, why should you fear? You may seek for a while in sorrow, you may find the stone still left to try your faith, you may have to mourn your great temptations or your cold and stubborn heart — yet wait on the Lord and

He will guide and comfort you. Some bright angel of mercy, some gracious providence or some sweet promise shall remove the stone; the joy and peace which to your eyes has seemed forever buried and lost beyond all recovery, shall yet live again, and cheer you with its gladness. And while we watch, the light grows brighter. Those angels have been as the morning star, or the first beams of day — but the sun itself now appears. Jesus Himself, that very Jesus whom the women had beheld with their own eyes nailed, pierced, groaning, dying, breathing forth His last breath in prayer — is indeed alive again!

Ah, Christian, think of it! It tells of life, victory, immortality. Without question the happiness of every believer and the salvation of the whole Church is bound up in this glorious fact of our Lord's resurrection. But who shall first recognize the Lord? To Mary is this honor granted. She knows the voice of the good Shepherd. Its tender, loving tone calling her by name, "Mary" thrills through her inmost soul. Almost unbearable must have been the joy of that moment. I wonder that she did not faint of its intensity. To see again that beloved One, to feel a persuasion that she would never more lose Him as the portion of her soul — what but the joy of the glorified could equal it? May it not have been, among other reasons, to calm her spirit, that Jesus forbade her to touch Him — but sent her forth to tell the disciples of His resurrection, and to foretell His ascension to the Father? The other women also see His face and hear His voice. Faithful above all others when He bore the cross — they are honored in being the first who are permitted to worship Him after His resurrection. Often has woman been pre-eminent in evil or in good. Was not Eve the first who disobeyed the command of God, and from a sinner, became a tempter? Did not the wife of the patriarch of Uz bid him curse God and die? Is there a name in Scripture from which we shrink with greater abhorrence than Jezebel, the woman that stirred up Ahab, her husband, to the commission of such terrible crimes?

And, on the other hand, are there any whose names are more worthy of honor than Ruth and Hannah and Deborah, and the three Marys — each of whom so truly loved the Lord?

Ah, why should not those by nature endowed with tenderest affection, with gentlest feeling, with warmest love — pour it out upon the Savior who best deserves it? But others also behold their risen Lord. He is seen by Simon and the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and the ten in the upper chamber. Beside this, we hear of His appearing to James, and to the disciples on the Sea of Tiberias, and on one occasion to more than five hundred brethren at once.

There should be no room left for doubt, as to the great fact upon which the eternal peace of the whole Church depended. The unbelief of the disciples, the message of the angels, the efforts of His enemies, His many appearances, and that to so many people during a period of forty days — the chain of consequences reaching down to the present hour and which cannot in any reasonable way be separated from the Lord's resurrection — all these bear a united testimony, than which it is hard to conceive any that could possibly be stronger. And what PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION may we gain from the resurrection of Christ?

It tells us that the words of Jesus are sure and faithful and true. Whether He were a "deceiver," as His enemies affirmed — or whether He were indeed the truth, was the point at outcome. And God plainly declared the latter. He set His seal to every word that Christ had taught when He raised Him from the dead on the third day.

Reader, believe it, Jesus is true. Hearken not to the unbelief that spreads far and wide, denying one by one every precious truth upon which our salvation depends. Hearken not to the suggestions of doubt and uncertainty which would rob you of all solid peace. Read the sayings of Jesus, receive them with all meekness and confidence, and rejoice that while Heaven and earth shall pass away, not one word of His can possibly fail.

It tells also of the complete satisfaction made to the law of God by the death of our Surety. When Jesus undertook to bear our guilt and to pay our ransom, the hand of Divine Justice laid hold upon Him, nailing Him to the cross, and then bringing Him to the silent grave. But now we see Him rising superior to the power of death and the grave! No more is He seen the bleeding, suffering, dying victim, but the glorious Redeemer, who has burst the bonds of the grave and lives to die no more.

What a joyful message does this bring to the self-accusing conscience! In deep self-abasement, do you own and confess your sin? Do you venture into the Lord's presence with the plea that whatever be your sin — the death of Christ may answer for it, that His wounds may be your healing, His precious blood your cleansing? Then the resurrection of Christ tells you that you stand clear before God. The Father bore witness that the debt was paid, the guilt expiated, the satisfaction made ample and sufficient. Hence you are free. It would be unjust that the same offence should twice receive the punishment allotted. Your sin has once been punished in your Surety — hence it can never be exacted of you. Jesus had no more to suffer, so neither have you. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The resurrection of Christ tells also of a final victory over death and the grave. As yet death reigns over mankind. It reigns over the bodies of all living. No sooner do men begin to live, than they begin to die. The seeds of corruption and dissolution abide within us and will one day bring us to the dust. It reigns at ten thousand death-scenes. Could we go the wide world over, what myriads should we continually find passing into the power of the grim foe. It reigns within numberless cities of the dead. Our churchyards and cemeteries still bear witness to its terrible might. It reigns over many a plain where battles have been fought, and beneath which lie the bones of those who fell there. It reigns over the ocean, for within its capacious bosom still remain those that for generations have found a watery grave.

Death reigns, but not forever. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the spoil from the strong. If we hearken to the voice of those that know not the story of the resurrection, the lament over the grave is cheerless and painful indeed. A heathen poet could write thus:

The sun that sets again will rise,

And give the day and gild the skies:

But when we lose our little light,

We sleep in everlasting night.

And another in the same strain:

But we, or great, or wise, or brave,

Once dead and silent in the grave,

Senseless remain. One rest we keep;

One long, eternal, unawakened sleep. But not so are we taught in the Gospel of Christ. Blessed be God for the hope of life and immortality! If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. And then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory!" And what glory awaits the righteous in the risen body. Dark and terrible indeed is the future before those who have died in their sins; no more fearful words are to be found within the compass of Scripture than those of our Lord, "The resurrection of damnation." But very blessed and very glorious will be "the resurrection of life." Two images are given of it — the stars by night and the sun by day. What an idea of calm rest, of fixity and permanence, of distance from all the turmoil and trouble of the present scene, is connected with the former. What surpassing brilliancy do we behold in the latter. And both are employed to set forth, the excellencies of Christ. (See Malachi 4:2, Revelation 22:16.) In the future life of the believer, all this will be combined. It will be a rest, a shining forth in glory, a likeness in body and soul to the glorified Redeemer, and all this abiding as Eternity. (See Daniel 12:3, and Matthew 13:43.)

Reader, may it be your own! And if you would have it so, live now a risen life in Christ. Many dig their own grave and are content to lie in it. They bury themselves in a spirit of worldly carefulness, or in earthly lusts and passions, or in a golden coffin of hoarded wealth, or in a life-long indifference to spiritual religion. And so they live, and so they die, and discover too late that they are forever undone. Oh, be not like such. Be in earnest for the world to come. Come forth from your hiding-place. Seek in Christ the power to live a new life, even the power of His quickening Spirit. "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

05.17. Joy in Christ's Ascension

Joy in Christ's Ascension

"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into Heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God." Luke 24:50-53

There was great difference in the two partings between Christ and His little flock. At the first parting, when the Savior was crucified, there was nothing but grief and bitter lamentation: "We shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." Even so it was. "As they mourned and wept," Mary Magdalene brought to them the first tidings of the resurrection. At the second parting however, when Jesus was taken up into Heaven, there was joy, deep joy, abiding joy! The disciples went back from Bethany with hearts uplifted with gladness and praise. It was tidings of "great joy" that the angel brought when Jesus had descended from above and had become incarnate; it was likewise with "great joy" that those who had been with Christ returned to Jerusalem after they had seen Him go back into Heaven. And this joy abides until now. The thought of our Lord's ascension ministers everlasting consolation to His people. Especially may it cheer the hearts of those who are deprived of the joy of meeting in the Sanctuary with the Lord's people, and of those who are passing through seasons of anxiety or suffering.

There is a joy in the thought that all the days of our Lord's conflict are over, and that He has already entered upon His glorious reward.

Much did it cost Him whom we love to purchase our salvation. Hard toil, deep humiliation, unexampled suffering in body, soul and spirit — did He endure that He might save fallen man. But now it is over. No longer does He bear the shame and the curse, but having won the victory He has taken His place at the Father's right hand, and receives the homage and the worship that are justly His due. If we truly love the Savior, shall we not rejoice in this?

If one very dear to you had been passing through deep waters, could you fail to rejoice when the season of trial was over, and the friend you loved was again in peace and prosperity? How then can we enough lift up our hearts in praise that our Friend, the Friend of sinners, is now in His glory in the highest Heaven? But there is joy in this also, that the ascension of Christ gives a clearness, a stronger reality to the believer's hopes of a better home.

There is ever in the heart of man, a tendency to cleave to that which is seen and temporal — and cast aside all thought of a higher and nobler state. Not a few in our day openly discard all consideration of another world, as that of which nothing for a certainty can be known — and boast that they care only to make the best of the present. But our Father in Heaven would have it far otherwise. Therefore has He given the world proof from time to time, that there is a better country after which we should seek. In the days before the flood, He took away Enoch from an ungodly generation, and translated him without death; thus giving to the men of that age a testimony that

there was indeed a reward for the righteous. In the degenerate days of the kings of Israel, when true piety was well-near extinct, God again repeats this testimony. Elijah, the man of God, the fearless confessor of Jehovah's name on Mount Carmel, is taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire.

Then at last, in the days of the Gospel, one far greater than Enoch or Elijah, God's Well-beloved Son, having accomplished the work for which He came down among men — returns to receive again the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Ever since has the Church confessed it in her creed: "He ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." Have we not in these three ascensions, more especially in that of Christ, God's own witness in ad to the declaration of His Word, "that there remains a rest for the people of God"? But in the ascension of Christ, to believers there is much more than this. If you are Christ's — it is a pledge that you shall enter that rest. He enters not Heaven simply as the glorified Son of God — but as the Head, the representative of His redeemed people — opening as it were the door, by which the very least of His saints shall surely follow: "When You overcame the sharpness of death, You opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." He has entered within the veil as our "forerunner."

Mark the expression. It is a very suggestive one. A valuable property (including house and lands) in a distant country has been left to a family. The father goes at once to take possession, to prepare their home — and then promises to come back for his wife and children. Such a one is a forerunner.

Even so has Jesus gone before. He has taken possession on behalf of His people. He has gone to prepare a place for them. And He will return and take them to Himself, that where He is there may they be also.

Christian, rejoice. Jesus cannot forget you. Though in His glory, He thinks of you continually and anticipates the time when you shall be with Him. Do you think that the loving husband would be satisfied to enjoy by himself alone, the home which his care and affection had provided for his wife and little ones? Surely he would not. Nor will Jesus forget His spouse, the Church, now tarrying in this evil world — but will in due time take her to share His glory and His kingdom. Yes, and every desire in your heart towards Him, every pulse of love, every act of affiance in Him, may testify that by and by you shall be with Him. And be it remembered for our consolation also, that Jesus has ascended to bestow those gifts which prepare His people for their future glory.

"You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

"Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

"It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

O then, poor and needy one, who can discern in yourself nothing but your sin, who to your own eye are lacking in all that would fit you for the Father's house — behold your Savior exalted to the throne, stretching out both hands full of precious gifts for all who wait upon Him! Do you need a tender conscience, a heart that will grieve for sin? He gives repentance. Do you need the blotting

out of sins and iniquities beyond all reckoning? He bestows a frank, complete, everlasting forgiveness through His perfected atonement. Do you need grace to pray, and grace to love, grace to be diligent in work and patient in suffering, grace to watch against sin — and yet after a fall never to despair, but to arise again with fresh purpose of heart? For all this Jesus will send to you the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and in His might you shall go from strength to strength until you appear in Zion before God. Oh, what a gracious benefactor, how rich in every needful gift, is our exalted Redeemer!

There is one special duty that arises from the consideration of our Lord's ascension. If Jesus is in Heaven — then where should the hearts of His servants be? "If you then are risen with Christ — seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth."

O shame upon every one of us, that our thoughts are so buried in the perishing things of the world! Why are we so taken up with our little cares, or even our heavier crosses, or our daily duties — that we so seldom lift up our eye heavenward and behold our Friend, so ready to aid us by His counsel and strength? Why does the prospect of a little present gratification, so soon draw the heart away from Him who is the source of endless joy?

How many who have known something of the blessedness of following Christ, or at least have been led to desire His salvation — have been thus turned aside to their everlasting destruction! A story is told of an eagle passing over one of the Irish lakes. It was soaring upward toward the sun, but its eye fell upon the body of some dead animal floating on the water. It was arrested in its course, and lighted upon the body. What was the result? It was in the depth of winter, the water froze upon its wing, it could no longer fly upward, so that it was caught and destroyed. The lesson is not far to seek. "Demas has forsaken Me, having loved this present world." "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

Reader, watch against this dangerous snare! Give not your heart even to lawful enjoyments, but reserve it for Christ. Thankfully use in their right measure, the blessings that God confers — but strive evermore to rise above them and hold communion with your Lord.

Neither let anxiety about health or friends or circumstances keep you from frequent meditation on Him who sits above the water-floods and permits every trial that it may speed you on your heavenward way.

Grant, we beseech You, Almighty God, that like as we believe Your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind ascend thither, and with Him continually dwell, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

05.18. Our Exalted King!

Our Exalted King!

"The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!" Psalms 110:1

Jesus is King. All power is given to Him, both in Heaven and earth. At His ascension He was exalted to the Father's right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come! The angels greet Him with a joyful welcome: "Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Then was fulfilled the prophecy uttered by the Psalmist: "The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!" A deep importance attaches to this passage. It is no less than four times referred to in the New Testament. It manifests clearly the Divine nature of our Lord. He who was to be David's son, was also David's Lord. It manifests also the kingly majesty of Christ, and the victory ensured to Him. Calmly He sits above the water-floods, there abiding near the Father until the promised dominion shall be all His own.

Behold Christ by the power of His grace bringing those aforetime rebels and opposers in willing submission to His footstool! His people become willing in the day of His power. Those who would once despise His authority and reject His commands, learn to delight themselves in doing His will. Nor is there to be found anywhere a greater manifestation of Divine power than in this. An earthly sovereign may send forth his armies — he may defeat and scatter to the winds all that opposes his progress, he may raze to the ground the strong fortress, he may conquer and lay waste cities and provinces. But Jesus can do that which is mightier far. For what is the strongest thing on earth? Leaving out of sight what grace can effect, I would answer, assuredly the strongest thing is a rebellious human will. How fortified is it by all the craft and malice of the invisible foe, how strong is it to resist . . .

mercies, and judgments,

the terrors of the law,

the warnings of conscience,

the invitations of the Gospel!

Yet there is One stronger. Jesus can subdue this rebel will. His Spirit can wrest the captive out of the power of the Evil One. He can change the daring rebel into the loyal devoted subject of the King of kings.

See the thief on the cross confessing his sin, and owning the Kingly power of Jesus when all else seemed to have doubted it. See the many thousands who shortly afterwards cast away their deep-rooted prejudice and submit to the sway of the Nazarene. See the very ringleader of the

persecuting Jews, while his heart was full of rage against Christ and His people — arrested and brought low, so that Saul the Pharisee, becomes Paul the chief of apostles.

Take also an instance of later times. An old Hindu, formerly almost worshiped by his disciples, though his life was stained by unnumbered crimes, was by the Spirit convinced of sin, and became so truthful, so honest, so full of love and kindness — that he became an honor to the Church of Christ in India. After ten years of faithful service, he was called to his rest. A few weeks before his death he said to those around "I have two requests to make to you: first, that you will pray for me that the Lord may soon receive me into His kingdom; and secondly, that next Sunday before the whole congregation, that you will offer up thanksgivings and praises to the Lord Jesus, that in His boundless mercy He has taken me, the vilest of the vile and the most abandoned sinner, out of the world, uniting me with His Church, making me one of His own. What boundless grace and mercy! Yes, yes, Jesus, You are my Savior, my all in all!"

Let the Christian away with the thought that any on earth are beyond the reach of Christ's arm. Only bring to the feet of our King, those for whose souls you care. There plead for them. Slacken not faith and prayer. Rely upon the omnipotence of His grace, and His declared goodwill towards the guilty and the lost. Then tarry the Lord's leisure, and, it may be, far beyond your expectation will He put forth His saving power. But we are also to look up and behold our King in His own time putting beneath His feet all that opposes His rule. If you are one of His, it shall be so with the enemies that disturb your peace.

Because you are knit to Him, He reckons your enemies to be His enemies, and as such, He will deal with them. Joshua brought the kings out of the cave, and bade his men of war put their feet on their necks — for thus would the Lord do to all those against whom they fought. Thus does Jesus with you. Does the wily foe harass and disturb you? Does much evil still dwell within you? Do you find impatience arise under suffering, wandering imaginations in the hour of prayer, inward corruptions resisting the law of the Spirit, distrust and unbelief at times prevailing against you? These are Christ's enemies, as they are yours, and He will surely give you the dominion over them.

Likewise shall He remove whatever else mars your peace and comfort. All the works of the devil, all the fruits of sin — pain, sorrow, disease and death — these too shall He put beneath His feet. But look the wide world round, and see how full it is as yet of the enemies of Christ. Consider the false religions which overspread the earth's surface. What a company would it form if you could gather together all the priests and teachers of the various systems that oppose Christianity. What myriads would there be of Brahmans, Buddhist priests, Devil priests and the like. Consider likewise the infidelity that abounds, denying at one time the truth of the Pentateuch, at another the inspiration of John's Gospel or the reality of our Lord's miracles. Add moreover the fearful errors of professing Christendom. What gross iniquities also prevail, and every abominable thing that the Lord hates! And yet in the survey of all this, there is infinite consolation in the thought that the Lord reigns, and that every evil we deplore shall at length be made to pay tribute to Him. "The Lord has made all things for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of evil."

It is worth remembering that the greatest error in religion was combined with the greatest sin that the world ever witnessed — and yet both combined, wrought out, through God's mercy, the greatest blessing the world has ever received. Of course I refer to the death of Christ. His enemies

thought of Him as a blasphemer, so greatly did they err; with wicked hands they crucified the Lord of glory, so greatly did they sin. And yet through that death which Jesus thus accomplished, does He save the souls of all His believing people.

Only wait then until Jesus our King returns openly to take the kingdom. The Captain of our salvation will then give to His Church a glorious triumph. He will bring good out of every evil that now burdens our world.

Every idol shall then fall,
every false religion shall be forsaken,
every persecutor of the Church shall be ashamed,
every skeptic shall believe,
every error and sin shall be cast down.

Yes, Satan and all his emissaries shall be confounded and overthrown forever, and the reign of Immanuel shall be the more glorious for the evils that have preceded it. Is Jesus exalted to reign forever? Then let us ask, Who is on the Lord's side? Reader, have you yielded yourself to Him? Do you so desire to be His alone, that you would have every thought, every action brought in subjection to His will?

Bear in mind, Christ has two rods, and by one or the other of them, everyone, without exception, will be brought to bow before Him. The one is the rod of His loving grace, His Word, His Spirit, by which He brings down high thoughts, and leads the sinner to choose His service. Often for this purpose He sends, together with His Word, the rod of affliction; as it is written, "Hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it." The other is "the rod of iron," the rod of His mighty power, shown not in mercy but in wrath: "You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel!"

Why not yield now to Christ, if you have not hitherto done so, that cheerful, glad obedience which His love so justly demands? Why not ask of Him both the will and strength faithfully to serve Him all the days of your life? Why not go to Him with the humble acknowledgment of former disobedience, and purposing hereafter to be His alone, "O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us — but by You only will we make mention of Your name!" But let there be no attempt at a divided service. Christ hates above all things half-heartedness and indecision. Steadfastness, boldness, determination to confess His name, to honor His truth before men, is most essential. A few striking words of a great and godly man may illustrate its necessity. Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, crossed over into Germany that he might assist the Protestant princes in casting off the tyranny of the Catholic League. He was however sorely hindered by the lukewarmness of the Duke of Saxony and the Elector of Brandenburg. Hear his bold words to the ambassador of the latter: "This I say to you plainly beforehand, I will hear and know nothing of neutrality. His highness must be friend or foe. When I come to his borders he must declare himself hot or cold. The battle is one between God and the devil. Will his highness hold with God, let him stand on my side; if he prefer to hold with the devil, then he must fight against me. A third position will not be granted to him."

Thus spoke an earthly prince. And what says our King to those that steer a middle course, that play fast and loose with Him, that halt between two opinions? Harken to the word of Him who shall hereafter decide our everlasting destiny: "He who is not with Me is against Me — and he who gathers not with Me scatters." "No man can serve two masters — you cannot serve both God and mammon."

Strive then to take your place as a decided, fearless, out-spoken follower of the Lamb. For this purpose rise up to enjoy closer fellowship with your exalted King. Look for more of the strengthening might of the Holy Spirit. Realize more the power of Christ's resurrection. Depend without faltering on His faithful promise. Then stand forth boldly as His witness in the world. Whether in the sick chamber or in society — shrink not from the reproach of the cross; but ever manifest your unwavering allegiance to the King of Zion.

Very gracious is the Lord's promise to those that own His name, and very solemn His warning to those that deny Him. "I say unto you, whoever shall confess Me before men — him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God." "Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation — of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

05.19. Our Melchizedek Priest

Our Melchizedek Priest

"The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Psalms 110:4

Jesus centers in His own person, the office both of King and Priest. Thus was He foreshadowed by Joshua the High Priest. Crowns were placed upon his head, and thus he stood as a type of Messiah. "Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two." (Zechariah 6:11-13.) In earlier days was Jesus also thus set forth in type by Melchizedek. The word Melchizedek signifies, king of righteousness; he was also king of Salem, or king of peace. He was also a priest of the the most high God.

It is in this latter character that I would now endeavor to set him before you as an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is thus that the Holy Spirit by the pen of David foretells the work of our Lord: "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." The idea of a priest is that of one who stands as a mediator between God and man, one who by sacrifice and intercession, can bring near those whom sin has separated. Under the law we have Aaron, in the fulfillment of his office by sacrifice, by sprinkling of the blood, by pleading in the most holy place, obtaining pardon and acceptance for Israel. Thus was Aaron, as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a type of Christ in His priestly office. But from the same Epistle we discover that in Melchizedek, there was a still more remarkable setting forth of His work. In several respects was there a pre-eminency in Melchizedek that affords a most instructive view of the glorious priesthood of Christ.

Christ as a High Priest stands alone. Melchizedek was not one of a line or order, but a solitary priest, as far as we can learn, without predecessor, without successor. This affords the explanation of a difficult passage in Hebrews 7:1-28. He is there said to be "without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." It is likely that the simplest interpretation is the true one. The Jewish priests had their genealogy most carefully traced. The name of the father and mother must be given, that their descent from Aaron might be clearly ascertained. Their birth and death likewise was exactly noted down. But with Melchizedek it was otherwise. Nothing of all this is recorded. The short history given of him in Genesis 14:1-24, is all that is left us: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine — and he was the priest of the most high God." We are told neither of his father or his mother, of his birth or his death. He was one alone by himself.

Thus is it with Christ. He has a priesthood perfectly distinct from all others. None share with Him in carrying it forward. None succeed Him in it on earth, now that He has passed into the heavens.

We dare not for one moment couple with Him in His work of intercession, either Mary, or Joseph, or saints or angels; neither dare we suppose that His ministering servants on earth perform a like office to that which He performs above. "He has an unchangeable priesthood." (Hebrews 7:24.) The word used is remarkable. It signifies "that passes not from one to another." Therefore in the highest sense of the word — no priest is to be found on earth. Not one single instance is there in the New Testament of the word priest being applied to those who are now ambassadors for Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Remember that in this, Christ abides alone. He alone searches the heart, therefore none but He can receive our confessions, or can absolve the penitent. To Jesus alone must the eye of the sinner be directed. Consider His dignity as well beloved of the Father. Consider His all-prevailing plea, His own precious blood, His all-sufficient merit. Consider His infinite tenderness and compassion. Consider that He is One who can sympathize in every pang that rends the heart, One who has passed through every dark chamber of trial that can be appointed for us, One who has been tempted in all things even as we are, and therefore can support in every hour of need.

Jesus stands alone in Heaven as the one great High Priest of mankind. Take care, my fellow sinner, that He stands alone in your heart. No word or work, no prayer or tear, no thought or deed of yours must share with Him the glory of your salvation. Look not to self, rely not upon the absolution pronounced by man — but from all, turn to Him who is at the Father's right hand. When the weight of a life-time's transgression lies heavy on your conscience, behold Him as your Advocate, bearing still the marks of that death which atones for your guilt. When you bend low in fervent supplication before the mercy seat, lift your eye to Him who by His gracious mediation shall secure the success of every petition. When the end draws near, when your trembling spirit takes its flight from its earthly tabernacle — let Jesus alone be the one trust, the one stay, the one resting-place of your soul.

Jesus as our High Priest comes forth to bless His people. Read the account given of Melchizedek in Genesis. As God's High Priest he pronounced a solemn blessing on the father of the faithful. Thus does Jesus bless those that follow in Abraham's footsteps. He ever loves to bless. On the Mount of Olives he opened His mouth, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "blessed are the meek," etc. When they brought young children to Him, He laid His hands on them and blessed them. When going back to His glory, His last act was to bless His disciples. When He had ascended, Peter declared that God still sent him to bless them in turning away every one of them from their iniquities. When He shall return again it will be still the same: "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And who shall say how rich, how precious is the blessing that Jesus gives? It is not mere words. A friend may say, "God bless you," but it may mean but little. But the blessing of Jesus is a reality . . .

it goes with a man through life,

it abides with him when the heart is desolate through the loss of life's companions,

it forsakes him not in the chamber of suffering or in the hour of death,

it disannuls the curse due to his sin,

it lifts off the whole guilt of a broken law,

it ensures the favor of a Father in Heaven,
it brings with it the grace and presence of the sanctifying Spirit,
it stamps upon the soul the image of God,
it opens wide to a man the gate of the everlasting city.

Reader, fail not earnestly to seek this blessing from your great High Priest. Ask it in faith, and it is yours. The Priesthood of Christ is perpetual and abiding. "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." "He ever lives to make intercession." What a sorrow must it have been to a godly Israelite, when Aaron, or Eleazar, or some priest to whom he had often unburdened his sin or his grief was cut off by death and some stranger took his place. But our Priest abides continually. Life's companions say good-by. Those who have journeyed on with us for thirty, forty, or fifty years, leave us behind. But here is our consolation: Christ lived and was dead — and behold he is alive for evermore. While we cleave to Him, we can never lack a counselor, or one who will cease to pray for us. Upon no single thing can we lay our hand and say, "This shall be mine tomorrow." Some rough storm may come and sweep away in an hour that which most we prize. But Jesus Christ abides. The Rock of ages stands forever.

Jesus abides a Priest by the solemn oath of God: "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Jewish priests were consecrated without an oath, but Christ with one, to manifest that He was the Surety of a better covenant. (See Hebrews 7:20; Hebrews 7:22.) And how much security has the believer here! It is not only the promise, but the oath of God. It is His sure guarantee that Christ will execute His office on behalf of all who commit their souls into His hand. Here is certainty. Here is a solid resting place for the anxious soul. Do you tremble as you remember former iniquities? Do many doubting, fearful thoughts arise in your mind? Does your heart suggest reasons why you will be cast off? Does the Evil One harass you, whispering in your ear that you are not a child of God, and can never be saved? Yet whom will you believe? Your own deceitful heart? Him who was a liar from the beginning? Or the word of a faithful God? Can the oath of God be broken? Not until then, can your confidence be disappointed — if only you honestly confess your sin and rely on the mediation of Christ. But we add here a word of solemn warning to those that pass by the offer of salvation in Christ — and yet hope to find mercy. The oath of God is light to those who believe — but it is as darkness to others. What does the oath of God say to those that reject Christ? What does God say of the unbelieving Israelites? "I swore in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest!" This was true of Israel of old. The testimony of the Apostle shows that it is true now of those that believe not.

You neglect God's own appointed way of peace, you value not the blood that has been shed, you draw not near to the mercy-seat in the name of the one Priest — yet you hope that perchance after all you may find a place in the kingdom of Heaven. Yet God must forfeit His own eternal truth, He must deny Himself, He must make void His own oath — if without faith in Christ you partake of His promised rest. Take heed in time. Venture not your soul's salvation on such a hope as this. Turn to Him who is yet willing to plead your cause: "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."

O You, the contrite sinner's Friend,

Who loving, lovest them to the end,
On this alone my hopes depend,
That You will plead for Me.
When, weary in the Christian race,
Far off appears my resting place,
And fainting I mistrust Your grace,
Then, Savior, plead for me. When I have err'd and gone astray,
Afar from You and wisdom's way,
And see no glimmering, guiding ray,
Still, Savior, plead for me. When Satan, by my sins made bold,
Strives from Your cross to loose my hold,
Then with Your pitying arms enfold
And plead, O plead for me. And when my dying hour draws near,
Darkened with anguish, pain, and fear,
Then to my fainting sight appear,
Pleading in Heaven for me. When the full light of heavenly day
Reveals my sins in dread array,
Say You have washed them all away,
O say You plead'st for me.

05.20. The Promise of the Comforter

The Promise of the Comforter

"I have told you these things while I am still with you. But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you." John 14:25-26 (Amplified Bible)

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." John 14:25-26. (Compare John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26; also John 15:26, John 16:7-15) The consolation of His people is one chief purpose for which God has given to us the revelation of His Word. He has inspired His servants to write them, that we "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." He has confirmed His promise by an oath, that "we might have strong consolation." Hence the Father is spoken of as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." The Son is sent "to comfort all who mourn," and He bears the name of "the Consolation of Israel." And so likewise the Holy Spirit is named the Comforter, and in a part of Scripture to which the Christian almost invariably turns in the day of trouble. No less than five times is the promise made that the Comforter shall abide with the Lord's people. In the 14th and following chapters of this Gospel our Lord repeatedly bids His people wait for the aid of His Spirit. And why is this? Is it not because all the promises here made to us — the abiding presence of the Father and the Son, the manifestation of Christ, the peace which the world gives not — all these can only be enjoyed as the Spirit dwells within the heart. Without His special help . . .

not one throb of spiritual life,

not one holy desire,

not one joyful hope,

not one drawing of love —

can exist within the soul. May He Himself assist our meditations, and reveal to us the fullness of His own grace and love! The consolations of the Spirit depend much upon the fact that He is a living, personal Friend and Helper of Christ's flock. He was to take Christ's place, to be His Substitute on earth. Because Christ had gone away, He would come to abide with those who would otherwise have been left comfortless. Far greater is the benefit we thus derive from Him as our Almighty, Personal Comforter and Helper, than it would be possible to obtain from any mere gift, however precious it might be.

We might imagine a man living all alone by himself with very insufficient means for his support in some remote and solitary part of the country. Very acceptable might be a present of money, or

food, or clothes, or an interesting book. But how much more would it promote his happiness, if you could send one to live with him — a congenial companion, a kindly counselor, a ready helper, a friend in need — one who had both the desire and the ability to supply all that was lacking. The parallel will hold in the case of the believer. He is often solitary, for his home is above, and He finds but little sympathy from many around. He is poor and needy, without any goodness or merit of his own, without wisdom and without strength. But the Spirit makes His abode with Him, imparting all that is needful, and by His presence bringing sunshine into the sad and sorrowful heart. For such a Friend, how gladly should we prepare a guest-chamber and invite Him to enter. The Shunammite prepared for Elisha a little chamber, doubting not that if he would turn in thither — the presence of so holy a man would bring a blessing to her household. Nor was she disappointed. Doubtless he gave her much profitable instruction; and when the joy of her home was gone, Elisha prayed, and her son was restored to life. And never, never will you regret opening the door of your heart to welcome the Spirit. Joys never before known will He bestow — everlasting peace shall be the fruit of His indwelling. The term "Comforter" — includes the idea of help and strength afforded. A man is faint from loss of blood through some accident, a friend comes up and lends him an arm upon which he leans and thus reaches his home. Or a man is carrying a heavy load, another comes and takes hold of it with him, so that the weight, before intolerable, becomes now comparatively easy to be borne. Or a little child is trying to open a door; the tears are just ready to flow because the attempt has been made again and again in vain — but a strong hand is put forth to help the feeble one, and the door flies open in a moment. In like manner does the Spirit afford His help. He gives power to the faint, strengthening with might in the inner man, upholding the soul along the homeward path; He helps our infirmities, placing, as it were, His own shoulder beneath the load of our cares and sorrows. He takes away that which hinders.

Many a door is too hard for Christian too open, his own corruptions block the way to the mercy-seat, so that prayer becomes a duty more than a pleasure. Plans of usefulness seem unavailing through the perverseness or indifference of those for whom they are made — hence he is often cast down and ready to give up, but the Spirit is near to help, and in some way the difficulty is met and overcome. But the Comforter is also the Instructor of Christ's disciples: "He shall teach you all things." "He shall guide them unto all truth." Very wonderful was the fulfillment of this promise at Pentecost. Only read the address of Peter — how clearly from Psalm and Prophecy could he tell of Christ; and then compare it with his counsel to our Lord a short while before, when he would have had him turn from that cross which was to be the means of salvation to the world. Nor is the teaching of the Spirit confined to inspired Apostles, or to those engaged in the public ministry of the Word of life. All believers need it, and all may look for it. "They shall be all taught of God." Do you desire to enter more into the full understanding of Holy Scripture? The Spirit will shine upon the sacred page, and bring the truth to light. It is no less than a perpetual miracle to see the change in this respect, when for the first time the Spirit is earnestly sought. A new meaning seems to start up in every part of the Word, almost in every verse, and those to whom the Bible had hitherto been little better than a dictionary find in it a fountain of heavenly joy! Would you know more of your own true character? The Spirit will be your Teacher. He will reveal, gradually as you are able to bear it, the evil that lurks within. He will reveal to you the selfishness, the pride, the unbelief, or the impatience that may be your chief snare — and while revealing, He will also enable you to resist and overcome it. Would you know more of Jesus? The Spirit will take of the things of

Christ and show them unto you. He will testify of His grace as the Savior of the lost. He will manifest to you His invitations and promises as reaching yourself and all the peculiarities of your own sin or temptation. He will enable you to see in Christ the good Physician exactly suited to your necessities. He will set Christ before you . . .

as your Counselor in difficulty,

as your Intercessor in the hour of prayer,

as your everlasting Refuge and Strength in the days of feebleness and decaying health. But the Holy Spirit is also a Remembrancer. He recalls to the memory that which would otherwise be forgotten. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you." Hence were the Apostles kept from error in recording the discourses of our Lord, and giving precisely those gracious promises, upon a single word of which so much of our comfort depends. Very interesting examples of this office of the Spirit may be found in two passages of this Gospel: namely, John 11:22; John 12:14-16. But all believers need the work of the Spirit in recalling the truth to mind. For all that is evil our memories are very retentive; for all that is good they are very treacherous — justly compared to "leaking vessels." (See Hebrews 2:1) But the Spirit in this grants His aid. He gives an increasing relish for heavenly things that makes it so much the easier to remember them. He brings back at the right moment a particular prayer, or promise, or precept — some act of Christ, or some feature of His holy character that may just then be requisite to counteract a temptation, or to support the heart through some pressing emergency. And even when the memory fails as to the very words of a passage, not seldom through the Spirit a savor of the truth abides which effects the very same result. For this blessed Spirit to be your Comforter, your Helper, your Teacher, your Remembrancer, let me entreat each reader of these pages continually to pray. Our Father knows well that there is no gift which so honors Himself or brings such blessedness to His people, as His Spirit abiding in them. Hence there is no petition which He delights more to answer than for this. The old promise of Luke 11:1-54 is not yet worn out, and never shall be while a sinner remains to be saved or a saint to be made fit for the inheritance of the saints in light: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Hence to ask for this gift in the name of our exalted High Priest, and believingly to anticipate its bestowal, becomes one of the greatest possible means of grace. Ask it for the glory of God; ask it for the honor of Christ; ask it because of your own deep necessities. And while you ask for yourself, ask for the whole Church of the Redeemed that the Spirit may come down in power, that the Temple of the Lord may be filled with His light and truth. And take heed lest in any way you grieve the Divine Spirit to depart from you. In the case I supposed in a former part of this chapter, it might be possible in many ways for the man to grieve his guest to forsake his roof. If the house were not properly ordered, if other guests were introduced whose company were distasteful to him, if a word of kindly counsel were disregarded, if he were in any way slighted or his presence undervalued, he would be most likely to leave the dwelling of one who thus requited his benefactor. And thus the loving Spirit may also be vexed and provoked to leave the heart where He has taken up His abode.

If impurity or ill-will defiles the temple,

if pride or envy or selfishness or unbelief are permitted to gain a footing,
if wrath or malice or unchristian tempers are allowed to lodge within,
if the still small voice of reproof or counsel is unheeded,
if prayer, or the Word, or the Holy Communion be reckoned of small importance
— then you will drive your Friend away; you will be left wretched, desolate, and comfortless. And though in pity He may yet return again, great will be your loss, great will be the advantage the enemy of souls will gain.

Christian, be watchful, be circumspect. If you live in the Spirit — then walk in the Spirit. Cherish His presence as the chief joy of your soul. As the deer pants after the water-brooks, so you should long for His refreshing grace. Do this, and the Holy Spirit will ever abide with you; thus your peace shall be as a river, the foretaste of that joy which is laid up for you in Heaven. Our blessed Redeemer, before He breathed

His tender last farewell,

A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed,

With us to dwell.

He came sweet influence to impart;

A gracious, willing guest,

While He can find one humble heart

Wherein to rest. And His that gentle voice we hear,

Soft as the breath of even,

That checks each thought, that calms each fear,

And speaks of Heaven. And every virtue we possess,

And every victory won,

And every thought of holiness,

Are His alone.

Spirit of purity and grace,

Our weakness, pitying, see;

O make our hearts Your dwelling place,

And meet for Thee.

05.21. The Way of Access

The Way of Access "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18 To know God in all the mystery of His Being is altogether beyond the power of finite man. "Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what can you do? deeper than Hell, what can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Who can fathom the deep things connected with the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity? In what sense can Three be yet One? How can the Infinite Jehovah and finite man be one person in Christ? How does the Holy Spirit come forth from the Father and the Son? Such inquiries may perplex, but they cannot profit the believer. They are among the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God. But to know God as a reconciled Father in Christ, and to hold communion with Him through the Spirit — this may be attained, and when it is, becomes the very gate of Heaven.

It is for this purpose that it is needful to hold fast, and in a practical way, the Scripture revelation of the Triune God. In this way is it brought out in the third chapter of the Gospel of John. By the Father's love is salvation provided. By the lifting up of the Son on the cross, is salvation wrought out. By the Divine Spirit, is salvation brought near in the regeneration and renewal of the soul. The fourteenth chapter of the same Gospel, and the eighth of the Epistle to the Romans, beside many other chapters, are full of the same mystery, and in the same practical form. In a very short compass we have it also in the words of the Apostle, quoted above, addressed to the Ephesian Church. Would you draw near to God? Would you cross the gulf that separates the sinner from the presence and favor of his Creator — or having crossed, draw nearer and yet nearer to Him? Then hide in your heart this comprehensive saying. It is within itself a little Gospel. It contains, as the acorn the oak, the germ of all that is revealed for our everlasting peace.

"Through Him (that is Christ our Savior) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." It is as "a Father" that God is here set before us. It is not as the Almighty, the Glorious Jehovah, the Great Judge — but as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in Him. Within our lips are put the words, "Our Father, who is in Heaven." We are taught that "Our Father knows what things we need before we ask Him;" and that with more love than human parents know, "will our Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him." And let none shrink from the use of this endearing name, even on their first approach to the Mercy-seat. The son in the parable, though long an exile, disobedient and rebellious — yet on his returning home takes this as his ground of hope: "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father," etc. None so far off, none so unworthy, that our God will chide them for approaching Him thus and relying upon His Fatherly love. But thus to draw near, we must come in the way appointed. It is "through Him," through that Savior that has made reconciliation by His cross. "I am the door," He has said; "by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved." And again: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by Me." No other door ever has been opened, no other way ever has been or can be discovered but the One Mediator, Jesus Christ — by which sinful man can hold communion with a Holy God. Would you then, amidst conscious guilt and

unworthiness, put in your claim for an audience with the Eternal King? Behold Christ as set forth to be your Advocate with Him. Behold Him that yet bears in His body the marks of the death that He endured on your behalf, and let not the sense of present infirmity or past sin rob you of the privilege of access to the Mercy-seat through Him.

Father, God, who see in me

Only sin and misery,

Turn to Your Anointed One —

Look on Your beloved Son;

Him for sinners bruised see,

Look through Jesus' wounds on me! The confidence which this may impart in the hour of prayer, is set before us in Hebrews 10:19-22 : "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God — let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Sprinkled with the atoning blood, as loosing the conscience from guilt, we may draw near unto the very inner presence-chamber of the Divine Majesty. That blood in which we trust removes every barrier. That human Body, once rent upon the cross, forms for us a way that in days past was unknown. That ever-living High Priest fails not to forward our suit and to present our petition.

It is needful for an advocate in a court of justice to be able to put himself exactly in the place of his client, and it is an exceeding consolation for us to know that Jesus can do this. As man He once placed Himself by our side; and now as man He is glorified, and forgets not those temptations which for our sake He once endured in the flesh. Very much of the efficacy of prayer in calming the troubled spirit, and imparting strength in the day of suffering — depends upon our realizing the humanity of our Lord.

Hear with respect to this the testimony of a Christian physician, the late George Wilson, of Edinburgh: "When I was recovering from the loss of my foot, you can well believe that there were many weary, wretched, sleepless hours, particularly during darkness. Especially dreary was the first waking in the dull, grey morning. Despair seemed ready to overwhelm me. It was then I fully realized the unspeakable preciousness of prayer, and that not to a mysterious agency, but to a Person, possessing as I possess a human nature, though unlike mine His nature is sinless. Here was the precious thought, 'We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are — yet without sin.' There was no kind of trial I had which Christ had not; He could understand it from a fellow-feeling as Man, apart from discerning it as omniscient God. He heard my prayers; He loved me with His great love, and His Spirit reminded me that the Savior said: Lo, I am with you always!"

Yet in spite of the encouragement afforded by the intercession of Christ, it is not easy to pray. To no duty is the heart more averse. Heavenly desires do not naturally arise — and without desire, prayer is but a form. Distractions of various kinds likewise make it almost impossible to fix the

thoughts. And to speak to One out of sight, pouring all our hearts and woes — needs much faith in the presence and mercy of our God. All this our Father knows full well, and accordingly promises to aid us by His Spirit. It is not only "through Christ," but also "by one Spirit," that we have access to Him. "The Spirit also helps our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Let none despise a groan, a look, a sigh, a tear Godward. When through the weakness of the flesh, or the manifold sorrows and distresses of this troublesome world, you are borne down and oppressed in heart and mind — yet, relying upon the Spirit's grace, let the inner spirit turn toward the Great Intercessor, and though not a word is uttered, that silent petition will surely reach the mark. Yes, whatever form it may take, the Spirit must suggest and prepare those suits which the Father hears. This thought has been illustrated by the procedure in the Court of Queen's Bench. Whoever would bring a matter before the Court, needs the barrister to urge the plea, but he needs also the attorney to prepare the pleading. So also do we need Jesus, our Advocate, to take our part before the great Judge, and also the Holy Spirit to frame our petitions for us, that they may be acceptable to God.

It is the Spirit who breaks down the proud reluctance of the natural heart. It is the Spirit who opens out to our view the root of sin, that by all means must be mortified and at length eradicated. It is the Spirit who gives a realizing apprehension of the nearness of God, and of the advocacy of Christ. It is the Spirit who quickens all that is dead, and strengthens all that is weak in this blessed privilege.

Though the throne of grace is free and open to all who draw near in humility, though Jesus stands by ready to plead the cause of all who confide in His mediation — but for the Spirit it would be all in vain. But for His mighty working, all through the wide world not a true worshiper would be found; not one utterance of believing prayer would reach the ear of the great heavenly Father.

Reader, do you value this merciful provision which has been thus made by the Triune God? Do you pray, and do you pray in the name of Christ? Do you "pray in the Spirit," knowing that it is from Him comes every holy desire, and every good thought?

Look back over the hours of the past week, the past month, the past year, and suppose that all such petitions were inscribed on the walls of your chamber — how many would be recorded there? How many confessions of sin, how many prayers for pardon, for the grace of the Spirit, for the spiritual well-being of others, could be read there? Look and see, for all is known to Him who shall be our Judge. If there is no prayer — then there is no spiritual life; and if you abide without prayer, you are undone forever. But if you value prayer, often speak to your own heart, both as to the certainty of its success, and also as to the large measure of blessing which our Father is accustomed to give to those who earnestly seek Him. That its success is certain, Jesus very plainly sets before us in many passages. One argument which He employs to assure us of it, is especially worthy of our attention. Perhaps it is the strongest to be found in Holy Scripture. We find it written in the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, "Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

See how the case stands. Suppose for a moment that it were possible that anyone were to kneel down, and for the sake of Jesus humbly to ask somewhat needful for himself, for a fellow-Christian, or for Christ's Church; and suppose the Father were to turn a deaf ear to such a

cry, and to refuse to give the best answer, which of course He in His wisdom alone could determine — what would be the result? Would He not dishonor His well-beloved Son, whose name had been the petitioner's only plea? Still more, in dishonoring His Son, would He not bring dishonor upon His own Holy Name? Assuredly therefore for His own glory, for the honor of Jesus, He will never do this. He will never disregard the feeblest cry of the weakest Christian that is breathed forth in the name of Jesus. But when He hears the prayer that is offered, when in answer to it He manifests afresh His power and His grace — then in the sight of His Church, in the sight of the Holy angels does He declare the worthiness of His Son's mediation; that Christ's merits far more than counter-balance all our demerits — and His righteousness more than counter-balances our unrighteousness. Thus does He place the crown on the head of our Great High Priest — the Son is glorified and the Father is glorified in Him.

Then consider also the measure as well as the certainty of the blessing. If we look to anything in ourselves as that by which He will proportion His gifts, well might we expect but little. But this is not the rule or the measure of His bestowing. It is not our earnestness or the grace we have already received — but His own glorious fullness, the riches of His glory, the infinite supply of grace which is in Him, His own incomprehensible and boundless love — this is that to which we should look.

Mark the measure of blessing to be looked for in answer to believing prayer, as set before us by Paul in Ephesians 3:1-21. The Apostle had been asking for the Ephesian Church the greatest possible spiritual gifts . . . the strengthening might of the Holy Spirit,

the indwelling of Christ within the heart,

the knowledge of the love that surpasses knowledge,

the fruition of all the fullness of God.

Then he adds an ascription of praise, in which he sets forth how much of all this believers may hope to attain. Step by step he raises our expectations to the very utmost pitch. "Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us — unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

We inquire, Can He give us what we ask? Yes, "He is able to do what we ask." But I have much that I know not how to ask? "He is able to do what we ask or think." But shall it be but a little of this? No! "ALL that we ask or think." More than this? Yes: "Above all we ask or think." More still? Yes, "Abundantly above all we ask or think!" Is more than even this possible? Yes: "Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." And all this according to the almighty working of the Eternal Spirit, who works in the hearts of all God's children.

Now stand at the top of this ladder of grace. See how God's thoughts are far above our thoughts, and His givings beyond our askings. So able is He to bestow, and as willing as He is able, altogether beyond the limits that we, in our stunted faith are ready to assign Him. In remembrance of this let us, like the Apostle, give glory to Him. Let us believe, and praise, and rejoice. Let us make the motto of Dr. Carey our own: "Expect great things from God — and attempt great things for God." Let us strive more to honor and exalt the Everlasting Father, who invites us to His mercy seat; the Eternal Son, who ever stands forth to plead our cause; and likewise the ever blessed

Spirit, whose is the glory of every fervent prayer which we offer.

Sweetly, in a better home, shall ascend that song of praise to the Triune Jehovah which we have learned, though feebly, to utter here: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" Revelation 7:12

05.22. Individual Faith

Individual Faith

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me!" Galatians 2:20

Whatever be the instrumentality which God may employ in restoring to Himself one that has been hitherto a stranger to His grace — it is of the utmost importance for the enquirer to be assured, that with reference to his acceptance with the Most High, he has to do with One, and One only. Not many mediators, not many priests, but one Mediator and one Priest. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Personal dealings with a personal Savior is the one all-essential requisite to everlasting salvation.

Very plainly does this stand out in the words of Paul above quoted. He presents to us within a short compass, the source of all his strength, peace, and usefulness: "I am crucified with Christ." In the death of Jesus Paul died to the law. Its curse could no longer touch him. Once punished for sin in his Surety, there was henceforth to him no condemnation. He was moreover crucified to sin and the world. He was no longer their slave. The sight of the Redeemer nailed to the cross for his transgression, destroyed their power over him.

"Nevertheless I live." The truest life, the noblest life, begins in death, even in the death of the old man, the carnal nature. All other life, apart from Divine grace, is but spiritual death. "She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."

"Yet not I." Grace ever casts off all confidence in self. "I labored more abundantly than they all — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." So here again: "I live — yet not I, but Christ lives in me" This latter expression is remarkable. Christ lives at the right hand of God — yet He also lives within the heart of the believer. By the Holy Spirit, He dwells within that sacred temple, enlightening it with the rays of His heavenly light, and purifying it from all evil. And this life of Christ within the soul, can only be experienced in the exercise of faith in Him. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Mark here the singular number employed, and not the plural. It is not "we" and "us," but "I" and "me." It is the individual faith taking hold of the promise.

Mark also the one single object of faith. It is the crucified Son of God. It is looking to Him, the true brazen serpent, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. As an exact parallel to this passage, I would ask the reader's careful attention to the individuality of those to whom the promises, of life are made in the fourth Gospel. The third person singular, and not the third person plural, is that most commonly employed. It is not usually "they" and "them," but "he" and "him." It is not "all that believe," so much as "every one that believes," "Whoever believes." Read the Gospel of John thoughtfully, and you cannot fail to be struck with this. Take only a few instances out of many: "He who hears My word and believes on Him who sent Me has everlasting life." "Him that

comes unto Me I will never cast out." "I am the door: by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved." "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me, though he were dead — yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Now was there not a purpose in the Spirit employing this mode of expression? Was it not to show that men do not become partakers of salvation in the mass, by belonging to one great corporate body, through participation in certain ordinances; but by personal, individual faith, by each man or woman coming to the Savior through the guiding of the Holy Spirit, drawing near in heart-felt prayer, relying upon the promise of life which is in Christ. And there is in John's Gospel also the same prominent setting forth of the one great object of faith, that we find to be the case with the Apostle Paul. It is ever Christ Himself — not merely certain truths which He has taught, these are deeply important, but only so as they lead on to Him; nor the Church which He has founded, nor the sacraments which He has ordained — but Himself — the light of the world — the Door — the Way — the resurrection and the life — the spring of all the grace that the soul requires. It is "comes to Me" "believes on Me." "By Me if any man enter in." And what is this faith, this believing, this coming to Christ? It is no mere empty word — it is no mere utterance, "I believe." It is no product of corrupt human nature — but it is a faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is the faith . . .

that beholds Christ as set forth in Holy Scripture,
that looks to Him as the very Son of God,
that turns to His cross as the all-sufficient atonement for sin,
that regards His promise as firmer than the everlasting hills.

It is the faith that brings a man face to face with the Savior. It is as the woman touching Him and deriving virtue from the touch. It is as Bartimaeus crying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" It is as the leper beseeching Christ: "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean!"

It is the faith that has a servant going before — namely conviction of sin; and a goodly train of fair daughters that follow after — namely, hope, love, obedience, patience, submission to the will of God, a life of prayer and praise, all holy works, and all heavenly desires.

It is the faith that parts with all else rather than part with Christ; that says to Him, "Lord, to whom shall I go, You have the words of eternal life!" "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!"

What know you, reader, of a faith like this? Without a faith that brings with it something of this spirit, be persuaded that all else will be in vain.

You may be very estimable in the eye of man,
you may be a very pattern of moral excellence in the various relationships of life,
you may be a member of Christ's visible Church,
you may have a right creed, and a zeal for the truth,

you may be a visitor of the poor, a teacher of the young, a liberal contributor to benevolent and religious societies,

you may partake often of the Holy Communion —

yet in spite of all, you will be rejected at the great day — unless deep, deep down in your very heart of hearts, there Christ is enshrined — Christ your joy — Christ your trust — Christ your only hope and salvation. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: he who believes not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." But that faith in which the Divine life begins, is that also by which it is carried on to perfection. Faith in Christ was to the Apostle the means by which he obtained acceptance and justification — but it was more than this, it was the strength in which he vanquished every obstacle, and by which he wrought such abundant labors. The Christian, like the Apostle, can only live by faith in the Son of God. He must live upon the treasury of grace which is laid up in Him. From Him as the storehouse of heavenly riches, must all his supplies be drawn. An illustration may make this clearer. A widowed mother has an only son. She is left without means, but the son has risen to a position of affluence. He writes to her a letter full of warm, tender affection, expressing his desire to do all within his power to provide for her comfort during the latter days of her life. Thus she lives without anxiety for the future. For the rent of her cottage, for food, for clothing, for all else, she lives upon her son. In every strait and necessity she has but to apply to him, and she knows that he will permit her to lack nothing. Would any one attempt to disturb her confidence, she would say, "I know that he has abundance, and will never let me lack." "But may he not grow weary of helping you?" "Nay, he loves me, and has already given such proofs of his love, that I can never, never doubt, that he will care for me to the end of my days."

Christian, thus are you permitted, nay, commanded to live on Christ for all you need. It has pleased the Father, that in Him should all fullness dwell, and you cannot honor the Father or the Son more, than by constantly resorting thither for every possible need. For pardon and for peace, for strength and for sanctification, for repose and refreshing, for wisdom, for guidance, for assurance of life eternal — rely evermore on Jesus alone. And why should you doubt His power or readiness to supply whatever you may require? Has He not an abundant store? Are not all things in His hand, and at His disposal for the benefit of His redeemed people? Is He not full of grace and truth? Is He not rich to all that call upon Him? And has He given no proof of His love? Can you not say with Paul, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" Has He not manifested toward you perpetually His faithfulness and loving kindness? Has he not given you many and many a token, many a gift unsought, and many a gift you have desired in prayer, to show that He cares for you? Therefore be of good cheer. Consider what Christ is; consider how free and gracious are His promises; consider what He has already done for you — and let nothing disturb your confidence in Him. In every sorrowful hour, in every season of sore trial or fear, make it your ground of steadfast hope that you have One who cannot and will not fail you. "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not lack." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The voice of our Lord and Creator

Our inmost spirit thrills,

As with gentle, loving accents,

Each fear it stills,
Saying, "Fear not, I am with you!
Always will I abide,
In pity and love unfailing,
Close by your side."
Dear Savior, we gladly would feel You,
Ever quite near to us;
Oh! come in Your loving-kindness,
And bless us thus.
So shall we through all life's changes
Your work and will pursue,
Until in scenes of eternal glory
Your face we view!

Individual Faith

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me!" Galatians 2:20

Whatever be the instrumentality which God may employ in restoring to Himself one that has been hitherto a stranger to His grace — it is of the utmost importance for the enquirer to be assured, that with reference to his acceptance with the Most High, he has to do with One, and One only. Not many mediators, not many priests, but one Mediator and one Priest. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Personal dealings with a personal Savior is the one all-essential requisite to everlasting salvation.

Very plainly does this stand out in the words of Paul above quoted. He presents to us within a short compass, the source of all his strength, peace, and usefulness: "I am crucified with Christ." In the death of Jesus Paul died to the law. Its curse could no longer touch him. Once punished for sin in his Surety, there was henceforth to him no condemnation. He was moreover crucified to sin and the world. He was no longer their slave. The sight of the Redeemer nailed to the cross for his transgression, destroyed their power over him.

"Nevertheless I live." The truest life, the noblest life, begins in death, even in the death of the old man, the carnal nature. All other life, apart from Divine grace, is but spiritual death. "She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."

"Yet not I." Grace ever casts off all confidence in self. "I labored more abundantly than they all — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." So here again: "I live — yet not I, but Christ lives in me" This latter expression is remarkable. Christ lives at the right hand of God — yet He also

lives within the heart of the believer. By the Holy Spirit, He dwells within that sacred temple, enlightening it with the rays of His heavenly light, and purifying it from all evil. And this life of Christ within the soul, can only be experienced in the exercise of faith in Him. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Mark here the singular number employed, and not the plural. It is not "we" and "us," but "I" and "me." It is the individual faith taking hold of the promise.

Mark also the one single object of faith. It is the crucified Son of God. It is looking to Him, the true brazen serpent, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. As an exact parallel to this passage, I would ask the reader's careful attention to the individuality of those to whom the promises, of life are made in the fourth Gospel. The third person singular, and not the third person plural, is that most commonly employed. It is not usually "they" and "them," but "he" and "him." It is not "all that believe," so much as "every one that believes," "Whoever believes." Read the Gospel of John thoughtfully, and you cannot fail to be struck with this. Take only a few instances out of many: "He who hears My word and believes on Him who sent Me has everlasting life." "Him that comes unto Me I will never cast out." "I am the door: by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved." "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me, though he were dead — yet shall he live: and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Now was there not a purpose in the Spirit employing this mode of expression? Was it not to show that men do not become partakers of salvation in the mass, by belonging to one great corporate body, through participation in certain ordinances; but by personal, individual faith, by each man or woman coming to the Savior through the guiding of the Holy Spirit, drawing near in heart-felt prayer, relying upon the promise of life which is in Christ. And there is in John's Gospel also the same prominent setting forth of the one great object of faith, that we find to be the case with the Apostle Paul. It is ever Christ Himself — not merely certain truths which He has taught, these are deeply important, but only so as they lead on to Him; nor the Church which He has founded, nor the sacraments which He has ordained — but Himself — the light of the world — the Door — the Way — the resurrection and the life — the spring of all the grace that the soul requires. It is "comes to Me" "believes on Me." "By Me if any man enter in." And what is this faith, this believing, this coming to Christ? It is no mere empty word — it is no mere utterance, "I believe." It is no product of corrupt human nature — but it is a faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is the faith . . .

that beholds Christ as set forth in Holy Scripture,
that looks to Him as the very Son of God,
that turns to His cross as the all-sufficient atonement for sin,
that regards His promise as firmer than the everlasting hills.

It is the faith that brings a man face to face with the Savior. It is as the woman touching Him and deriving virtue from the touch. It is as Bartimaeus crying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" It is as the leper beseeching Christ: "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean!"

It is the faith that has a servant going before — namely conviction of sin; and a goodly train of fair daughters that follow after — namely, hope, love, obedience, patience, submission to the will of

God, a life of prayer and praise, all holy works, and all heavenly desires.

It is the faith that parts with all else rather than part with Christ; that says to Him, "Lord, to whom shall I go, You have the words of eternal life!" "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!"

What know you, reader, of a faith like this? Without a faith that brings with it something of this spirit, be persuaded that all else will be in vain.

You may be very estimable in the eye of man,

you may be a very pattern of moral excellence in the various relationships of life,

you may be a member of Christ's visible Church,

you may have a right creed, and a zeal for the truth,

you may be a visitor of the poor, a teacher of the young, a liberal contributor to benevolent and religious societies,

you may partake often of the Holy Communion —

yet in spite of all, you will be rejected at the great day — unless deep, deep down in your very heart of hearts, there Christ is enshrined — Christ your joy — Christ your trust — Christ your only hope and salvation. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: he who believes not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." But that faith in which the Divine life begins, is that also by which it is carried on to perfection. Faith in Christ was to the Apostle the means by which he obtained acceptance and justification — but it was more than this, it was the strength in which he vanquished every obstacle, and by which he wrought such abundant labors. The Christian, like the Apostle, can only live by faith in the Son of God. He must live upon the treasury of grace which is laid up in Him. From Him as the storehouse of heavenly riches, must all his supplies be drawn. An illustration may make this clearer. A widowed mother has an only son. She is left without means, but the son has risen to a position of affluence. He writes to her a letter full of warm, tender affection, expressing his desire to do all within his power to provide for her comfort during the latter days of her life. Thus she lives without anxiety for the future. For the rent of her cottage, for food, for clothing, for all else, she lives upon her son. In every strait and necessity she has but to apply to him, and she knows that he will permit her to lack nothing. Would any one attempt to disturb her confidence, she would say, "I know that he has abundance, and will never let me lack." "But may he not grow weary of helping you?" "Nay, he loves me, and has already given such proofs of his love, that I can never, never doubt, that he will care for me to the end of my days."

Christian, thus are you permitted, nay, commanded to live on Christ for all you need. It has pleased the Father, that in Him should all fullness dwell, and you cannot honor the Father or the Son more, than by constantly resorting thither for every possible need. For pardon and for peace, for strength and for sanctification, for repose and refreshing, for wisdom, for guidance, for assurance of life eternal — rely evermore on Jesus alone. And why should you doubt His power or readiness to supply whatever you may require? Has He not an abundant store? Are not all things in His hand, and at His disposal for the benefit of His redeemed people? Is He not full of grace and

truth? Is He not rich to all that call upon Him? And has He given no proof of His love? Can you not say with Paul, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" Has He not manifested toward you perpetually His faithfulness and loving kindness? Has he not given you many and many a token, many a gift unsought, and many a gift you have desired in prayer, to show that He cares for you? Therefore be of good cheer. Consider what Christ is; consider how free and gracious are His promises; consider what He has already done for you — and let nothing disturb your confidence in Him. In every sorrowful hour, in every season of sore trial or fear, make it your ground of steadfast hope that you have One who cannot and will not fail you. "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not lack." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The voice of our Lord and Creator

Our inmost spirit thrills,

As with gentle, loving accents,

Each fear it stills,

Saying, "Fear not, I am with you!

Always will I abide,

In pity and love unailing,

Close by your side."

Dear Savior, we gladly would feel You,

Ever quite near to us;

Oh! come in Your loving-kindness,

And bless us thus.

So shall we through all life's changes

Your work and will pursue,

Until in scenes of eternal glory

Your face we view!

05.23. Not One Forgotten!

Not One Forgotten!

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Luke 12:6-7

"No traveler in the middle east will need a long introduction to the sparrow. There are countless numbers of them about you. They are a tame, troublesome and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you don't want them. They stop up your stove and water pipes, build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble if they found it hanging in a place to suit them. They are extremely pertinacious in asserting their right of possession, and have not the least reverence for any place or thing. David alludes to these characteristics of the sparrow in Psalms 84:1-12, when he complains that they had appropriated even the altars of God for their nests.

Concerning himself he says, "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop." When one of them has lost its mate, a matter of every day occurrence, he will sit on the housetop alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement. These birds are snared and caught in great numbers, but as they are small and not much relished for food, five sparrows may still be sold for two pennies. And when we see their countless numbers, and the eagerness with which they are destroyed as a worthless nuisance, we can better appreciate the assurance that our Heavenly Father who takes care of them, so that not one can fall to the ground without His notice — will surely take care of us, who are of more value than many sparrows." ("The Land and the Book," by Dr. Thomson)

These words of one long resident in the middle east give us a vivid conception of the illustration which our Lord employs. The individuality of God's care, and His special providence with regard to every event that concerns us — is the point to which I would direct the attention of the reader. Take it in all its breadth and fullness, and it gives a marvelous view of the Omniscience, the Omnipresence, the infinite goodness and wisdom of our God.

It is no doubt in a special sense true, with respect to the household of faith. They are the friends of Jesus — the children of God's adoption. It was to them especially, that Jesus spoke, when he uttered the tender assurance of the Father's care.

Yet what is the whole Scripture from Genesis to the Revelation, but one continuous testimony to the truth of this doctrine? To deny God's special supervision of man's affairs, and at the same time to hold the authority and inspiration of the Word, is plainly impossible.

Take but one single Psalm, Psalms 139:1-24, and we cannot but observe the marked particularity with which the Spirit sets forth the great truth which we are considering. It is the individual soul that engages the mind of God. When he arises, when he rests within his house, when he walks by the wayside, when he lies down, what are his thoughts, words, and ways — nothing of all this escapes

the searching eye of Him with whom we have to do. "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in — behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."

Parallel to this Psalm place such a narrative as that of Ahab. See how true it is with reference to the wicked. While we read the history of this man and Jezebel, the conviction is perpetually forced upon us, that every step in a course of iniquity is before the eyes of the Lord.

Parallel to this Psalm, again, might we place the recorded histories of God's children. What a silver thread of Divine superintendence and direction may be traced running throughout them! Who but must see the eye and the hand of the All-wise Sustainer guiding Joseph every step of his course?

Why did his brethren spare his life?

Why did the Ishmaelites pass by at the critical moment?

Why was he thrown into the very prison where the king's prisoners were?

Why did the butler remember him after two years forgetfulness?

Surely we must discern in all this, that "the way of man is not in himself: that it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." And if this were so in the life of Joseph — then why not in the case of all God's children? Then why not, reader, in your case and mine? The same truth is seen as plainly in the New Testament as in the old. It is taught us in the care which God exercises over every sparrow. It is taught us when our Lord tells us that the good Shepherd goes after the one sheep in the wilderness, and that He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. It is taught by the fact that He called His disciples one by one into fellowship with Himself, and trained each one by a special discipline.

Now if this be so, as we cannot doubt, if there be this specific regard fixed on every one — it shows clearly that we must come and stand out in our individuality before Him who judges us. We cannot lose ourselves in a crowd. We cannot escape His eye amidst ten thousand others. We cannot get rid of our personal responsibility, or by any means shift it upon another's shoulder. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Hear the experience of one who had been brought near to death, and then had learned to realize this more than ever before: "I believe from what I have felt when brought very near to the grave, is that the prevailing feeling is that of the great Judge waiting for our soul as if there were no other soul in existence, and we in our naked spirituality, without one relative, earthly friend or well-wisher, about to pass into the darkness and stand before God."

Let then each reader look at religion as a personal matter. Place yourself alone beneath the eye of God. Think of that page in the book of remembrance in which your own particular sins are recorded, and bring the sins written therein to the fountain which has been opened. In the power of the Holy Spirit, you yourself must repent, confess, believe, and love. Behold the uplifted Savior, the true brazen serpent, that all the wounds of your soul may be healed. If hitherto living in the far country, in willful disobedience, in heedless unconcern, or in a whirl of vanity and dissipation,

return back to your Father's house, assured that He has a welcome ready, and that angels wait to rejoice over "one sinner that repents." To remember this truth will also be an exceeding encouragement in secret prayer. Go into your secret chamber, and there all alone with your God, pour out your heart before Him. Keep Him not at a distance, deal not with Him as you would with a stranger — but make Him your confidant. Unfold to Him each sorrow and anxiety, each present trouble, each fear that haunts you as to the future. Your very least concerns, the smallest trifle that disturbs your peace, bring unto Him, even as a child would come to a parent for sympathy and help. Should you feel lonely and desolate, far away from Christian friends in some retired corner of the world, or on board a ship thousands of miles from land, or shut up month after month, unable from ill health to cross the threshold of your door — cast this burden also upon your Father's heart, and know assuredly that He hears your prayer, even yours; that He is watching you every moment to uphold you and keep you from all harm.

I remember well in visiting a parishioner on one occasion how difficult I found it to gain her attention. She had a little infant just able to creep about the room, and instead of listening to me I saw that her eyes were following the little one along its way, and her thoughts no less occupied with it. I told her that she reminded me of a passage of Scripture, and requested her to take her Bible and open it at 2 Chronicles 16:1-14. I then read to her part of the ninth verse: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him," then I added: "Just as your eyes run to and fro through this room, that you may help your little one the moment it requires your aid — so our Father in Heaven is ever on the lookout to support those who walk uprightly in His fear." And if this be so at all times, how much more when in prayer your eyes are upon Him — when perhaps all that you can do in your distress, is to turn your suppliant gaze upward, and wait for His promised help. Think not for a moment that He could or would forget to hear and answer your petition. An answer of peace will surely come in due season, and meanwhile there is ever a joy in thus unburdening our griefs before the mercy-seat.

Pray, the Lord is ever near,

Ready still with open ear;

Wait, and He will yet supply

Hope and strength for every fear.

Pilgrim, weeping at the gate,

Hear His message, "Pray and wait."

Remember also this truth of God's particular providence to strengthen your faith when painful events occur whose meaning you cannot fathom. Many a dispensation is now shrouded in darkness — and we cannot even guess at the purpose for which God has permitted it. A sudden accident takes away the prop of a family — or perhaps the main-stay of the Lord's cause in a particular neighborhood — or it may be many hundred people are suddenly killed. And unbelief is then apt to creep in, and question the wisdom, or equity, or goodness of the Lord's dealings. With one whom I knew years ago was this the case. She truly loved her Savior, but her confidence was often sorely tried. Did she hear the report of any great calamity, a shipwreck, a fire in which life

was lost, a colliery accident, or the like, the Tempter would suggest to her that there was no over-ruling Providence, or that the God in whom she trusted could not be one whose name was Love.

Still she turned not back, but waited on the Lord; she still leaned on her Savior, and at length through His grace was more than conqueror. As her latter end drew near, all these distressing doubts fled away. Passing through the dark valley of death, she found it illumined with the light of Heaven. In peace she entered into that rest, where we shall learn the secret of all which has most perplexed us on earth.

If any reader be harassed by these fiery darts of the Wicked One, stay not to reason, but fall back on the faithful Word of Christ. In spite of all appearances, doubt not that our Father tenderly, pitifully compassionates His people. Not one is forgotten, not one is uncared for. And if you would have still further assurance of this, you may find it in the death of the Well-beloved. In this have we a conclusive answer to every fear and every doubt. Whatever has happened, whatever may happen, through the love of God Jesus has died to redeem our souls, and to open for us the gates of paradise; hence have we a pledge of His good-will to us, that none can gainsay.

We cannot always trace the way

Where You, our gracious Lord, do move,

But we can always surely say,

That You are love. When mystery shrouds our darkened path,

We'll check our dread, our doubts reprove:

In this our soul sweet comfort has,

That You are love.

Yes! You are love — a truth like this

Can every gloomy thought remove,

And turn all tears, all woes to bliss:

Our God is love.

05.24. One in Christ

One in Christ "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." John 10:16

There has arisen of late years a yearning for more unity in the body of Christ. Nor can we be surprised at this. When Christ came into the world He found it split up into a variety of sects and religions, and His very aim in redemption was to gather together these scattered fragments of the human family, binding them in one holy bond to Himself, and thus knitting them one to the other, and to the Father in Him. And truly it were a glorious thing if in these days, when commerce and swift ships and railways and electric wires are bringing men far nearer together than in days past, a still stronger, holier bond, even of Christian faith and love, were to knit in one all professedly Christian Churches; if communities, once arrayed in arms against each other, were now to be banded together in a holy crusade against all the vice and worldliness and unbelief that defile our earth. But if ever this unity is in any measure to be attained, we may be assured that it can only be in the exercise of Divine power, so great are the obstacles that stand in the way; and we may be certain, likewise, that this power will only be put forth to accomplish that which God Himself has purposed.

Let us inquire, therefore, from the Word of God, what is intended by the unity of the body of Christ. In meeting this inquiry I would especially direct the attention of the reader to three passages in John's Gospel. The first passage, in John 10:16, presents the subject in its very simplest form. We have Christ speaking of Himself as the good Shepherd: "I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd." There is doubtless an allusion to Ezekiel 34:22-23; "Therefore will I save my flock and I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David."

Thus the unity of the Church is here set forth, not as consisting in one fold, one external communion, but in the flock being shepherded by one great Shepherd. By His tender care is each straying one brought back,

by Him are all alike guided and guarded,

to Him are all equally known and indebted for the same gift of eternal life.

All alike hear the voice, and follow the footsteps of their Shepherd, and thus are they one flock, however for a season separated one from the other.

Turn to a second passage, John 11:49-52 :Caiaphas had been counseling to put Christ to death, and in doing so had used language teaching God's object in permitting it. The same spirit which spoke by the lips of wicked Balaam, spoke also by the Jewish High Priest. John quotes the words, and adds His own inspired comment, "You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one."

Here we find the death of the Shepherd is the great bond of unity. The cross of Christ is the great magnet by which men are drawn to Him, and thus to each other. It is the great meeting place of all true Christians. In one sense it makes all other differences to vanish. It binds together Jew and Gentile, the peer and the peasant, the learned and the ignorant, the bond and the free. At the cross they learn their common ruin, they rejoice in one common salvation, and the same love is kindled in every bosom. As the sin of the first Adam wrought separation and strife, soon manifested in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain — so the cross of the second Adam afresh binds men together in a bond never to be loosed.

Truly it was a marvelous triumph of science and of human effort which could fetch up the severed cable from the depths of the Atlantic, and thus unite by another link the old and the new worlds. A far more glorious triumph has Christ won, by His most precious death restoring to the family of man that bond of unity which seemed forever lost, and thus knitting together the redeemed in one holy fellowship of eternal love.

Turn now to a third passage. It is a part of that great prayer of intercession offered by our Lord on the dark night of His agony and shame. Deeply important is its bearing on this subject, since no less than five times did He pray for His people, that they might be one. (John 17:20-23.) "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (Compare also John 17:11) This passage and the prayer from which it is taken distinctly define those to be included in this bond of unity. It is those "given to Christ by the Father;" it is those who "are not of the world," those "kept from the evil" and "sanctified by the truth;" it is those "that believe on Christ through the word" delivered by the Apostles.

Especially bear in mind, as so frequently set before us in this Gospel, that it is only through believing, that we receive the inestimable privileges that belong to the Church of Christ. The promise of eternal life and of deliverance from condemnation is made repeatedly by our Lord to all those that come to Him and believe in His name. For this very purpose does the Evangelist narrate the miracles which Christ wrought: "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through His name."

Never, never let go your hold of this truth, that the very hinge upon which your salvation turns, the very key that unlocks to you all its treasures, is this direct, personal coming for yourself to Him, who is the one Mediator and Savior of sinners. Let no human priest ever usurp His place. Let none rob you of this inestimable benefit, that with all your sin, with all your need, with all your sorrow and care — you may flee straight to Him, and find eternal rest in His love. For such as do this our Lord prays: these are those who are united together in Him. In this passage we learn also the spiritual character of the unity for which we are to seek. It arises from the fellowship of believers with the Father and the Son. It resembles the unity that exists between the latter: "that they may be one, as we are." It springs from the close fellowship in which all believers are knit to Christ and the Father: "One in us." "I in them, and You in Me." The believer is one with Christ in closest bonds. Christ bestows on him His glory, that is, His Spirit, His grace, His image, His presence, His love, as the

dawn of that perfect bliss He shall bestow hereafter. Thus Christ dwells in him by the Spirit, and he dwells in Christ by faith. Thus, as we find also in John 14:1-31, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, make their abode with him. Hence the unity of the whole body. One with the Father and the Son through the Spirit — they cannot but be knit one to the other.

Compare with this view 1 John 1:1-10. Confessing sin, cleansed in the blood, walking in the light, believers enjoy "fellowship with the Father and the Son," and then also "one with another."

Thus on God's side the unity arises from His beholding His people one in Christ, and from the one Spirit who He has imparted; on our side the manifestation of this unity is in the exercise of a common faith, and of a common love, to the same great Redeemer.

Here is the unity foretold by the prophet Jeremiah: "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever." Here is the unity seen in Apostolic days: "The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and of one soul."

Here is the unity that still exists. Beneath all the strife that sin has introduced into Christian Churches, beneath all the dissensions that the enemy stirs up, is there not to be found among all true followers of the Lamb, an underlying principle of real, genuine love one to the other; a love that has overleaped all barriers of rank, education, variety of opinion; and so bound men together in the firmest ligaments of a heaven-taught charity?

We have heard of two men, perfect strangers to each other, knowing not a word of each other's language, becoming firm friends, because each in evident sincerity could utter the word, "Abba."

Very interesting is it to notice the six links by which Paul declares the body of Christ to be united. He is urging the Ephesian Church to keep and manifest the unity of the Spirit in love. (Ephesians 4:1-6.) He declares that there is "one body." "One Spirit" dwelling in each — convincing, teaching, sanctifying, comforting. "One hope of your calling" in every breast — the same glorious hope of eternal life. "One Lord," even Jesus our Savior, Master, King. "One faith," each soul justified by the same act of affiance, or one revelation of Divine truth in which all are instructed. "One God and Father of all," on Him the whole family depend; His glory is the end they must ever keep in view.

Thus are all God's children firmly, indissolubly linked together. Here is Church which has its members in every part of the world, and in every age of the world's history — that Church which rests immovably on the Rock of Ages, which is compassed about on every side by the might, mercy, and faithfulness of Jehovah; against which the gates of Hell, the powers of darkness, shall never, never prevail!

Let saints below in concert sing

With those to glory gone;

For all the servants of our King

In Heaven and earth are one.

One family we dwell in Him;

One Church above, beneath,

Though now divided by the stream —

The narrow stream of death.

Let Christians learn from this subject, never for the sake of peace or unity to compromise essential truth. The honor of Christ is bound up in the integrity of the truth taught by Himself and His Apostles. We may neither diminish from it, nor add to it. Unity in the truth is most precious — unity in error is worse than profitless. Who would not prefer to sail in a frigate with a small crew, if only she were sound and tight, rather than in a ship ten times the size with a far larger crew, if she were leaky and her timbers rotten? And shall we not prefer to maintain our beloved Church in her independence, with her simplicity of worship, with her heritage of primitive truth, proclaiming as she does in her articles the supremacy of Holy Scripture and the blessed doctrine of a free justification by faith alone — rather than join in the efforts made for her union with the Greek and Romish Churches — Churches where the truth as to the way of salvation has well-near perished, and which are weighted with most grievous and deadly errors.

"Let them return to you, but return not you to them." Gladly hold out the right hand of fellowship to all such as will turn again to the pure faith as taught in Holy Scripture — but make no truce with error! Stand fast in the liberty of the Gospel, and amidst all the false teaching that abounds on every side, be a faithful witness to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Learn also from this subject to manifest a spirit of true sincere love towards all who bear the Savior's name. "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Shameful are the bitter dissensions that are so rife, the harsh stinging words so often uttered by one Christian against those who cannot agree with them in all points. Especially should we grieve that there is so much of this spirit at the present day among those who love the same Savior and hold fast the same necessary truths.

Before the battle of Salamis, when Greece was threatened by hordes of barbarous savages, it was a sore disgrace that the commanders of the fleet should have permitted envies and jealousies to divide their counsels; and when they ought to have been fighting the Persians, that they should have been quarreling among themselves. No less disgraceful is it that at this time, when the enemies of the truth are all one, that they may do away with Evangelical teaching from our land — there should be room left for such painful bickerings among those that value it.

Reader, do your part in showing the world that Christians love one another now as in days of yore. Ever remember that truth is many-sided, and therefore how likely it is that you may leave out of sight, that which another may see. Be persuaded that the good Shepherd has many more ways of bringing back His wanderers than you might imagine. While you contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints — yet be filled with charity. Love those who err the most, and pray that the Spirit may guide them into all truth.

Let those that know and love the Savior, find also in this subject a word of consolation. Many of those who read these pages may be much alone. You may have to pass many a solitary hour. Yet believe it, and rejoice in it, that you are one with all the people of God. You share in all their privileges, and in all the blessings obtained by their prayers. Think of this when shut out from the sanctuary. You may not be able to join with others in their songs of praise or in their united supplications, but your Father beholds you as one with them; and the grace they seek shall

descend on you. Regard yourself also at such seasons as set apart by God to intercede on behalf of His ministering servants and the congregations meeting in Christ's name. Who can tell the showers of blessing, the hearts that may be touched, the backsliders that may be reclaimed, the faithful ones that may be comforted and strengthened — through your believing prayers. And wait but a little longer. There shall be complete unity, external as well as spiritual, when Christ returns. As yet indeed we see it not. Christ's visible Church is very imperfect. There are wheat and tares in the same field — sheep and goats in the same fold. Even in Christ's own people, there is much that mars the unity of the body — failings of judgment, failings in temper, a falling short in faith and love. While sin abides in us, these things will be found, and lead to much that we deplore. But all this will be changed one day. The yearnings of men's hearts will be satisfied. There will be perfect unity, both outwardly, and also the unity of knowledge, faith and love. Then indeed will there be one Church, its members brought from every climate — yet having now but one language, but one song, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" Alike will they acknowledge that sin was all they could call their own, and that in one fountain had they washed their robes, even in the all-cleansing blood of Christ.

Reader, shall you be found among them? You may be of those "who profess and call themselves Christians" — you may have been admitted into the visible Church, you may have been a regular frequenter of the Lord's House, and frequent at His table — yet take it as most assuredly true, without heart-fellowship with the Son of God, you have neither part nor lot in the blessedness of the true Church. Be sure, whoever may strive to gainsay it, this nearness of spirit, this drawing near through the atoning blood into the Holiest of all, is the very pith and marrow of all true godliness.

It is the heart that cleaves fast to Christ, it is the faith that works by love — that constitutes the true Christian.

"We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

"O Almighty God, who has knit together Your elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Your Son, Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which You have prepared for those who sincerely love You; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

05.25. Sanctification Through the Truth

Sanctification Through the Truth "Sanctify them through Your truth. Your Word is truth." John 17:17 A more solemn declaration of the veracity of Holy Scripture it is impossible to conceive, than that here given by Christ, "Your Word is truth." In the hour preceding His agony and death, speaking not to His disciples, but in the ear of His Father in Heaven, does He thus appeal to the Omniscient Jehovah: "Your Word is truth." Who shall doubt that which He who is the Truth thus asserts? Who that professes faith in Christ shall hesitate, in spite of ten thousand specious objections, to rely upon that pure Word, which is "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times?"

Thus does Christ in one short sentence put His broad seal upon the inspired volume. For within scope of this saying He includes the whole Scriptures. Evidently does He include Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, but He includes more. He includes the words that He Himself had spoken, and those which by the Spirit of truth the Apostles should hereafter utter or write. "I have given them Your Word." He prays for those who should believe on Him "through their word." He promises to them the Spirit of truth, that all which they should deliver, should be the truth as that which He had delivered to them. But what shall be the purpose of that Word which is truth? It is their sanctification, their entire consecration, their being set apart in holiness for His service.

Jesus had yielded up Himself as their Redeemer to suffer and to die for this purpose, that through the truth which He had delivered, they might dedicate themselves, all they were and all they possessed, to be holy unto the Lord.

"Sanctify them through Your truth." "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Through the Word, is wrought the great change of renewal into life. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls."

Suggested by the expression, "the engrafted Word," we may illustrate the great change that is wrought through the Word by a process in gardening. You take a wild brier from the hedge-row, you plant it in your garden, and somewhere about July in the following summer you bud it. You take some two or three of the little germs that are bursting from a rose-bush which you value, you insert them one by one with care in the brier; then, if they take, the whole character of the tree is changed. Instead of the worthless brier you have that which adorns and beautifies your garden.

It is thus with God's Word received into the heart. It may be but a short passage, such as "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" but if it lies close enough, if it cleaves to a man and become one with him, it is forthwith the germ of a new life. The sinner becomes the saint, the worldling becomes the devout and obedient child of God, in some measure he resembles the rose of Sharon, the beauty of the Lord rests upon him, and he is made an ornament in the Church of

Christ. But that Word, which by the Spirit is made the instrument of renewal and conversion, is equally necessary for the sanctifying of believers in holiness.

Christ had just before said to the disciples, "Now you are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) Yet He also prays that they may be "sanctified through" or rather "in the truth." It was the atmosphere in which they must live, if they would abide and grow in holiness. And indeed what a holy atmosphere is that of the inspired oracles! They are well called by Paul "the Holy Scriptures." They are given to prepare for the Lord "a holy nation, a peculiar people." They tell of Him whom the angels sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." They set before us the example of Him who lived on earth, "Holy, harmless and undefiled." They reveal "the Holy Spirit," the Sanctifier. They give it as the purpose of our redemption, that we should walk "before God in holiness and righteousness all our days." They call men to be "holy, as God is holy," and declare that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Then if we look at the matter more in detail, what numberless illustrations might be given of the sanctifying effects of the Word.

What backsliders have been reclaimed by such chapters as Jeremiah 3:1-25 and Hosea 14:1-9.

What anxious, doubting souls have been confirmed by such chapters as John 3:1-36; John 6:1-71. What sorrowful, suffering believers have been consoled by such chapters as John 14:1-31 or Hebrews 12:1-29.

How many a thought of repentance has been awakened by the example of the publican, smiting upon his breast and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" In how many faith has been brought into exercise by the petitions, "Lord, I believe — help my unbelief." "Lord increase our faith." In how many has there been a kindling of love to the Savior by that touching word, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." In how many hope has been quickened by the remembrance that "there remains a rest for the people of God." In how many evil tempers and passions have been restrained by the saying, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Many a wrong word has been left unspoken through the assurance that "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Many an unholy thought has been crushed by the Psalmist's declaration, "You understand my thoughts afar off." Many a murmuring and impatient thought has been subdued by the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not My will, but may Your will be done."

Prayers without end have been called forth by the record that Christ "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God," and by the promise that "every one that asks receives, and he who seeks finds." Numberless praises have been offered through that song of joyful thankfulness, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." In truth there is no sin but which been overcome, there is no grace which has been wrought or increased within the heart — but by some precept, some promise, or some narrative of Holy Scripture. And if at all times it is needful to be well acquainted with the whole truth as revealed in Holy Scripture — it is doubly so when we find on all sides false doctrine leading many astray from the simplicity of the faith of Christ. Be assured there is no safety for the soul, none whatever, in these days of controversy, but for each one humbly to search, and deeply to ponder the written Word, and moreover to be fervent in perpetual prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let us hear from the Homilies, which ought carefully to be studied by every member of our reformed Church, a just commendation of the blessed effects of the study of Scripture:

"Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by men's imagination, for our justification and salvation. For in Holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to shun, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands at length."

John Chrysostom says, "Whatever is required for salvation is fully contained in the Scripture. There is whatever is fit for all ages and for all degrees and sorts of men. These books therefore ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all, in our hearts. For the Scripture is the heavenly food of our souls; the hearing and keeping of it makes us blessed, sanctifies us, and makes us holy. Scripture it is a bright lantern to our feet; it is a sure, steadfast and everlasting instrument of salvation; it gives wisdom to humble and lowly hearts; it comforts, makes glad, cheers, and nourishes our conscience; it is a more excellent jewel or treasure than any gold or precious stone; it is more sweet than honey or honey-comb; it is called the best part, for it has in it everlasting comfort. This Word, whoever is diligent to read, and in his heart to print what he reads — the great affection to the transitory things of this world shall be diminished in him — and the great desire of heavenly things that are therein promised of God, shall increase in him. And there is nothing that so much strengthens our faith and trust in God, that so much keeps up innocence and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and meditation of God's Word." But if you would profit in this blessed duty, take heed above all things of mere surface reading, a superficial glancing over the page of Scripture, being content with knowing just the letter of the Word — most deadly is the peril of this. It makes a person regard the Bible as the least interesting of books. It covers the eye of the soul with scales that shut out all the joy and light that God would have us receive.

If you would avoid this, dig deep, break up ground, look beneath and within. Illustrate the precepts, by the histories of God's servants. Illustrate the warnings, by the lives of the ungodly. Search out comparisons and contrasts. What is difficult, try to explain by what is simple and clear. Make a commentary on the parables, by getting hold of the truths they contain, and then putting side by side with them passages from the Epistles and elsewhere that have the same purpose. Strive to discover the principles that underlie the Levitical ordinances and God's dealings with the Jewish people, and then see how they may be applied to your own case, or to the circumstances of the present day.

Never be in a hurry when you take your Bible in hand. Do not imagine it is necessary to get through a long chapter when your time is limited. Calmly, quietly ponder what you have read. "If you read once, twice, or thrice and understand not, cease not so, but still continue reading, praying, asking of others, and so still knocking, and at last the door shall be opened."

Thus will God send forth to you His light and His truth; thus will the Spirit discover to you mysteries only revealed to the humble seeker; thus will you find the pearl of great price, Jesus and His full salvation, to enrich and sanctify you forever.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord."

Oh, may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light!
Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Oh be forever near!
Teach me to love Your sacred Word,
And view my Savior there.

06.00. Help on the Way to the Better Land

Help on the Way to the Better Land By George Everard, 1873

It is a Christian's privilege to be now, by virtue of his union with Christ, a citizen of no mean city, even the heavenly Jerusalem. In his Surety and Representative, he has taken his seat in the heavenly places. He has "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel!"

It is well to realize the present position of honor, dignity and security, which belongs to all who have fled for refuge to Jesus, and have trusted in His atoning sacrifice. Such a one is no longer an exile, a stranger, a foreigner. He is a pardoned and accepted child, a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.

Nevertheless, a Christian has to journey for a while through a world abounding in evil. Peril is on every side. It is like the wilderness to Israel on their way to Canaan. There is oftentimes the dry and barren land, and wells of water are but few; foes are hovering near, and the way is difficult to find — so that a Christian needs help along the way.

It is this which I desire to give in the following pages. They have been written at various times during the last few years, but have all had somewhat of the same object — to guide and strengthen and comfort believers on their pilgrimage to Zion.

They tell of the ladder of mercy which our Father has set up, as the one way of access to Himself.

They tell of that word of truth, and those purposes of grace there revealed, which are as sure and steadfast as the Rock which stands immovable through a thousand storms.

They tell of that Fountain of atoning blood to which pilgrims must resort for daily cleansing.

They tell of that Door into the presence-chamber of Jehovah, which stands open for all who will enter thereby. We need evermore the spirit of prayer, the eye looking upward for grace and help. Nor must the hand be idle, for we must be workers in our Lord's vineyard.

And, however weak the Christian may be in himself — yet there is strength for the strengthless in all times, of toil, dreariness, or suffering. And we learn too that the Christian life should progress. The well of grace within the soul must evermore be deepened; and we must strive after a closer walk, and a nearer fellowship with God. The faithful, eternal God, shall be the believer's unchanging support. His everlasting arms shall uphold you even in the dark valley and in the swellings of Jordan, and shall convey you safely to the City of habitation — the Home of God's beloved ones. May the Spirit of God make use of these pages to comfort and edify some of the weak and tried ones of the flock of Christ!

06.01. The Heavenly Ladder — and How to Climb it'

The Heavenly Ladder — and How to Climb it

Frequently does God give to His people their sweetest comforts in their saddest hours. Look at Jacob as he left Beersheba and went on his way toward Haran. When wearied with his journey he lay down to sleep, the cold sod was his couch — a stone his pillow — the sky above his curtain. Sorrowful indeed that night must have been the heart of the patriarch. He had just parted from the father and mother whom he dearly loved. He had just left behind him the home of his childhood. He was setting out on a long and dangerous journey, with no companion but the staff he carried in his hand. Yet how gracious is God! "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him." This — the darkest, the most cheerless night in Jacob's life, became the brightest. Never before had he been so bereft of human comfort. Never before had God so graciously revealed Himself to His servant. He saw a vision of a ladder reaching from earth to Heaven. Upon it he saw the angels ascending and descending. Above it, stood the Lord God, who spoke to him words of blessed encouragement. He had thought he was alone; but he was not, for angels were there to minister to him. He had thought his journey was about to be a solitary one; but the Lord promised that He Himself would accompany him, and preserve him from the dangers of the way. And God promised him still more — that land upon which he was lying as a stranger should be given to him and to his seed. He who was now a lonely pilgrim — would become a great people, and through him should come the long-promised Messiah — that seed of Abraham in whom all families of the earth should be blessed.

Here is the account: "Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Genesis 28:10-15

I shall now leave the history of the patriarch, and consider only the ladder which he saw in his vision. Christ often used similitudes — and so may we. Let that ladder teach us precious lessons as to the way of life. It plainly points to Christ and His salvation. It tells us of Him who is the only Mediator between God and man. It tells us how, lost and fallen though we are, we may yet climb the skies, and enter "that city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Let me first give you a few thoughts with respect to the ladder itself, and then consider how we may climb it.

I. A few thoughts with respect to the ladder itself.

1. This ladder is the only communication between earth and heaven — between a holy God and sinful men. Sin has made a vast chasm — a vast separation between the creature and the Creator. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." (Isaiah 59:2.) There is a two-fold reason for this. On the one hand, our sins have brought against us the sword of Divine justice: the degree has gone forth from the council-chamber of Heaven, "The wages of sin is death!" "The soul that sins it shall die!" On the other hand, our guilty hearts shrink from the presence of our righteous Judge. We fear to approach One whom our sins have so grievously offended. The accusing conscience cries out with Simon Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Here is the separation — how can it be overcome? How can the breach be made up? How can God and man again walk together as friends? No efforts of our own — no self-made ladders can ever affect it. Our doings — our prayers — our repentance — cannot bring us near to God. They cannot atone for past guilt; they cannot remove the penalty of a broken law; they cannot pacify a fearful conscience. The best we can do is in itself sinful and polluted, and therefore needs forgiveness before it can be accepted; still less then can it be to us any ground of hope. Now God knows this: He has said, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help." So in His great mercy He has provided a means whereby we may return to Him. With His own hand He has let down a ladder of grace from above. He has given Jesus to be our Savior — to live and die for us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10.)

Never be it forgotten that this is the only way by which the sinner can return to God. Nothing else can possibly avail: "There is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) Has not Jesus said Himself, "I am the way — no man comes unto the Father but by Me?"

2. This ladder is firmly fixed and perfectly safe. Before climbing a ladder, you need to know whether it will bear you — and whether you can safely trust yourself to it. This ladder of which I speak is so firm, so safe — you never need fear for a single moment to venture your weight upon it. It has been fixed by God's own hand. Whatever man does often falls to the ground, often fails of its purpose — whatever God does stands fast forever: "He works all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11.) The erecting of this ladder is the fulfillment of the everlasting purpose of the Most High. Before ever man had fallen — before ever the world was made, was the plan of salvation determined upon. Then, in the fullness of time, Jesus came to carry out this plan — to seek and to save those who were lost. Safely, then, may we trust ourselves to this ladder, for it is God's own appointed way by which sinners may be saved.

Again, you may be sure it is firm and safe, for none have ever been able to move it. How often have wicked men tried to throw it down! See all the persecutions which have raged against Christ's Church! See the myriads who have been led to the scaffold or the stake for their faithfulness to Christ's name! See how often the skeptic or the infidel has tried to prove the Bible to be false, and Christianity a lie — but it has ever been in vain. Still is the religion of Jesus known and loved as the sinner's only hope, and the mourner's only comfort. And how Satan has tried to throw down this ladder! When Christ was upon earth, did not Satan thrice tempt Him in the

wilderness? And when he could not tempt Him to turn aside a single hair's breadth from the path of duty, did he not compass His death? Did he not stir up the covetousness of Judas and the malice of the chief priests? Yet, what was his success? The cross which was the very masterpiece of the devil's wickedness — became the chief means of the overthrow of his kingdom of darkness! The cross became the very ladder of salvation to the sinner!

It became the resting-place of every heavy-laden conscience.

There we see mercy and truth meet together — righteousness and peace kiss each other.

There we see God glorified — yet the sinner saved; the law honored — and yet man forgiven.

"God forbid that I should glory," says the great Apostle, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14.)

Again, you may know that this ladder is firm and safe, for it has been tried by believers ever since the world began. All who have ever been saved, have been saved by Christ: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — prophets, apostles, martyrs — all the people of God in each age have reached Heaven by this ladder. And who has ever found it to fail? Who has ever been able to say, "I went to Christ, but it was in vain — He could not, or He would not save me." Never one! Multitudes have refused to come to Him; multitudes have professed to come, who yet in heart turned away — but never one truly went to Jesus in humble faith, in earnest prayer, but found the word of promise true: "Him that comes unto Me, I will never cast out." (John 6:37.) With one voice they all declare that He has done for them far more than ever they could have expected.

Oh, anxious, trembling sinner — cast away your dark, distrustful thoughts; venture your soul on Christ! He is a tried Savior — He cannot, He will not disappoint you!

Come sinner, with your load of woe,

And to your gracious Savior go;

He turns no beggar from His door —

He saves and blesses evermore.

3. Every step, every rung of this ladder is some spiritual blessing.

All that the sinner needs from first to last is found in Christ, and in Him alone. From the first sigh of a broken heart, from the first longing after salvation, from the first breathing of prayer in the soul, to the first note of praise in glory — all grace must come from Christ. Do not imagine you are to come to Christ at the beginning of your Christian course, but that the rest of it you must accomplish by your own energy or perseverance. Far, far otherwise. Of yourself you can neither retain the grace you have, nor take one single step forward. "Without Christ you can do nothing" — but through Christ strengthening you, you may do all things. Mark the four rungs of this ladder, described by Paul: "It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us . . .

Wisdom,

Righteousness,

Sanctification, and

Redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30 Are you very blind, knowing but little of yourself, little of your own heart, still less of God and the way to Zion? Jesus says, "I will be Your Wisdom: I will teach you out of My Word; I will open your understanding, that you may learn all things needful for your salvation." Are you very sinful — very unworthy? Jesus says, "I will be your Righteousness: My Blood shall cleanse you from every spot of guilt; My Robe of Righteousness shall cover you, and make you perfect in the eye of God." Do you feel depraved and corrupt within — very unfit for the fellowship of the saints around the throne? Jesus says, "I will be your Sanctification: I will put my Spirit within you, I will write my Law upon your heart, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols, I will renew you in my own image, I will make you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light." Are you compassed about by manifold evils, painful infirmities, distressing doubts, trials, temptations, cares, and sorrows? Jesus says, "I will be your Redemption: I will deliver you from them all; in My own good time I will set you free; every fear shall prove a false prophet; from death itself will I redeem you at the day of My appearing!"

Yes, in Jesus is every need met. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3.) "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." (Php 1:19.) "It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19.) When you look at yourself, you may indeed say —

"What without You can I be?

What without You can I do?" But when you look at Christ, you may add —

"I lay my wants on Jesus —

All fullness dwells in Him;

He heals all my diseases,

He does my soul redeem!"

4. This ladder reaches the very lowest spot on earth's surface. It reaches to the guiltiest, the most degraded sinner to be found on earth. It reaches not lower than this — not to Hell — for there is no ladder of salvation there, no gracious invitation, no promise of pardon, no voice of a merciful Savior heard there. But it does reach to the blackest sinner — the most hardened sinner to be found on this side the grave: "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him."

See that malefactor hanging by the side of Jesus — as near as he was to Hell, yet this ladder reached to him. He owned his guilt. He called upon Christ: "Lord, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom." And his prayer was heard — Jesus said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

See those wicked Corinthians — what were they once? "Sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) — yet this ladder reached to them! They were "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

It is even so now — there is still mercy for the chief of sinners. Go to the lowest dens of iniquity — go to the worst haunts of vice — go to the cottage or the room where the voice of prayer has never been heard, where the Bible has never been read, where the walls could bear witness to scenes of vileness and profligacy of which it is a shame even to speak — go there, and find out the very vilest, and tell such an one, "There is mercy for you!" "There is a welcome in the heart of God for you!" "There is cleansing in the open fountain for you!" Only acknowledge your iniquity, only confess it and forsake it, and Jesus is ready to save you — even you. Though your heart is as hard as the nether millstone — yet He will soften it. Though your sins are for multitude as the sand upon the seashore, though they be for magnitude as the great mountains of the earth — yet all shall be forgiven." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18.) "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin."

Oh, what comfort is here for the despairing sinner! There is no depth of misery or sin upon earth to which this ladder reaches not.

5. The uppermost step of this ladder reaches to the Father's house. If the lowest step reaches very low, the highest reaches very high. We read in the vision of Jacob, "Behold a ladder set upon the earth — and the top of it reached unto Heaven." Oh, what a contrast between the lowest and highest steps of the ladder! The lowest step is here on earth, in the midst of sin, sorrow, temptation, disease, and death. The highest step reaches to that place where these things can never enter, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes — and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4.)

Then shall the rejoicing spirit bid an everlasting "Good-bye," to all that now weighs heavy upon his heart. Then shall he say, "Farewell all my sad and sorrowful hours! Farewell doubts and fears! Farewell cares and anxieties! Farewell crosses and disappointments! Farewell sickness, suffering, and death!"

Then shall he breathe the pure and peaceful atmosphere of the heavenly Canaan. Then shall he drink of those unspeakable joys which are at God's right hand. Then shall he be forever in the presence of the Lamb! "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water." (Revelation 7:16-17.)

Oh, how thankful should we then be for this heavenly ladder! Justly might we have been left to reap the bitter fruits of our sins — justly might we have been left in our lost and fallen state. But God has looked upon us in pity and compassion. "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." He has opened to us a door of mercy. He has devised means by which His banished ones may not be expelled from Him. He has given us this ladder — so firm, so safe, so all-sufficient — reaching down to us in our deepest wretchedness and woe — reaching upward to His own blessed abode. Oh, that our hearts might continually echo those words of Paul, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

II. But now let us inquire how may we climb this heavenly ladder? How may we so tread it as safely to reach the Father's house?

1. Do not shrink from pain-taking effort — from real exertion. If you wished to reach some lofty eminence, it would not be enough for a ladder to be set up which would bring you to it. If you were to sit down at the foot of this ladder — if you were merely to look at it or speak of it, or wish you were at the top, what would it avail? All would be in vain, unless you put your foot upon it, unless you took the pains and trouble to climb it for yourselves. So it is in the religion of Jesus Christ; it is all in vain to indulge in empty idle wishes. Sitting down at the foot of the ladder — hearing of Christ, speaking of Christ, thinking of Christ, wishing to be a Christian — will never save you. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you must come to Christ for yourself, you must seek Christ for yourself. Whatever efforts it may cost you, whatever pains or trouble it may require, relying on the help of the same Almighty Spirit — you must be willing to give it.

Say not because there is this ladder, because there is a Savior, that all is well. To many a one in a future state the saddest thought of all will be this, "There was a ladder — but I would not use it!

There was a Savior — but I would not go to Him!

There was mercy, but I would not seek it!

There was an open Heaven set before me, but I refused to enter in!"

Beware too of a religion that requires no pains, no trouble, no self-denial, no crucifying the flesh, no time to be specially set apart for it — a religion that leaves you much as it finds you. Such a religion may be enough to blind the conscience, but it is not the religion of the Bible — it is not the religion which Christ will own as the work of His Spirit in the heart. Listen to the words of our Divine Master: "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force!" (Matthew 11:12.) "Strive to enter in at the strait gate!" (Luke 13:24.) "Labor not for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." (John 6:27.)

2. Place your foot upon the lowest step. Don't imagine you must raise yourself a few inches, or a few feet from the ground — before you step upon this ladder. Don't imagine you must make yourself a little better, or your sins a little less, or your heart a little more penitent — before you come to Christ: in this way you will never, never succeed. Rather come to Him just as you are — exactly as you are at this moment — and He will make you all you need to be. Come to Him as a thoroughly vile, good-for-nothing sinner! Tell Him you have not a single good thing which you can bring to recommend you to His favor. Tell Him you have nothing of your own but misery, need, and sin; but that you come depending upon His own free promise, and His all-atoning blood.

Jesus will receive you just as you are! Though your sins are many, though your heart is hard — yet will He receive you; and receiving you, will supply every possible need. Oh, go to Jesus with those words, so precious to many a troubled soul:

Just as I am — without one plea,

But that Your blood was shed for me,

And that you bid me come to Thee —

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am — and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot —

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am — poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yes, all I need, in You to find —

O Lamb of God, I come!

III. Strive after continual progress. Do not be satisfied with low attainments. A man has not reached the top of a ladder when he has stepped upon the lowest round, but he ascends it step by step. So it is in the course of the Christian: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:16.)

We have a beautiful illustration of this in the life of Paul. Though so far above most all others, both in Christian experience and devotedness of life, still he was not content — he aimed at a yet higher standard. He writes, "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus!" Php 3:13-14

Let it be your aim to follow in the Apostle's footsteps. Strive every day to get a step higher on the heavenly ladder. Strive to become more humble, more holy, more faithful, more useful, more prayerful — in short more Christ-like! "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!" 2 Peter 1:5-8

Nearer my God, to Thee —

Nearer to Thee!

E'en though it be a cross

That raises me;

Still all my song shall be

Nearer, my God, to Thee —

Nearer to Thee!

4. Carry with you no needless burden. If a man were to attempt to climb a high ladder, carrying with him a heavy load, he would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to reach the top. So, if the Christian carries with him unnecessary burdens, it will greatly impede and hinder him. Oh, cast every weight aside! Leave it at the foot of the ladder. Whatever it is that proves a hindrance and a

snare to you — by God's help cast it away.

We are told that when Jesus called Bartimeus, "He cast away his garment, and arose and came to Him." So, do you cast away that which keeps you back. Is it the love of the world in any of its various shapes? Is it the love of money? Is it the love of pleasure? Is it the desire for display? Is it the concern to win the praise of man?

Remember it is written, "The world passes away, and the lust thereof: if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15-17.) Is it some secret sin known only to God and yourself? Is it some injurious habit, that often breaks your peace and wounds your soul? Is it some cherished resentment? Is it an angry or passionate temper that you will not curb? Is it an oppressive weight of earthly care, which unfits you for communion with God and meditation upon His Word?

Oh, forsake that sin! Watch against that unruly temper! Cast that care "upon Him who cares for you." "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us!" (Hebrews 12:1.)

5. Mind where you place your foot. In climbing a ladder, a man must be careful about his footing — a false step, and he may fall. It may be the breaking of a limb — it may be his death! So let the Christian be very watchful where his foot is found. Keep as far as possible out of the reach of danger. Let not your foot be found in scenes where the Tempter is accustomed to come. Mingle not in scenes of worldly gaiety or reveling. You carry with you a wicked and deceitful heart, so that a very small temptation may turn you aside. An hour spent in bad company has often been the prelude to a life of wretchedness and sin. A visit to a public-house, or a dancing-room, has often been the first step on the road to ruin. On the other hand, let your foot be often treading the courts of the Lord's house. Let no grass grow on the path that leads you to the throne of grace. Frequent the society of those who will help you, and converse with you on spiritual subjects. I repeat it — be very careful as to your footing!

Remember that to the true believer many dark hours, much loss of inward peace, may follow a single false step, a single turning aside out of the narrow path. Very little while had Christian and Hopeful turned into By-path Meadow before they were in Doubting Castle. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left — remove your foot from evil." (Proverbs 4:14; Proverbs 15:26-27.)

6. Keep fast hold. It will not do to take hold of a ladder loosely, with one finger or with one hand — it needs a tight firm grasp with both hands to ensure safety. So do you by strong faith, take a firm grasp on Christ. Relying upon the help of His Spirit . . .

cling to Him with all your heart and with all your soul!

Cling to His great and precious promises!

Cling to His cross as all your hope and salvation!

Cling to Him as your ever-living, ever-loving, ever-faithful Friend and Savior!

Cling to Him in your days of joy!

Cling to Him in your days of sadness and sorrow!

Cling to Him in life and in death — never let Him go!

He says to you, "I will never leave you nor forsake you!" Return back to Him His own promise, and say, "Lord, by Your grace assisting me, I will never leave You nor forsake You!"

7. Lastly. Let your eye ever be upward. If a man looks down a ladder when he is climbing it, he may perhaps grow dizzy and fall. While he looks upward he is safe. So here again is a lesson for the Christian. You must not look downwards — you must not look back to this perishing world. The description given of a faithful minister, in Bunyan's great allegory, may teach a lesson to every believer: He saw hanging up against the wall, a picture of a very serious person: "He had eyes lifted up to Heaven. The best of books in his hand. The law of truth was written upon his lips. The world was behind his back."

Oh, let it be so with you!

Keep the Word of God your constant companion. This world, with all it has to offer — cast behind your back.

Let your eyes be lifted up to Heaven.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

See Him standing on your behalf at God's right hand, ready to help you in every time of need.

See Him waiting to receive your every petition and to give you fresh supplies of His quickening Spirit.

See Him holding in His hand for you, a crown of glory.

See Him waiting to greet you with a joyful welcome when your course is finished. So shall you be kept from falling — so shall you leave behind you doubts and fears that once distressed you — so shall you taste more and more the fruits of that land of promise to which you are hastening — so shall the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine more and more into your heart, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

Reader, I have spoken of this heavenly ladder — let me now plainly put it to your conscience: Is your foot yet upon it? Have you ever yet realized that through sin, you yourself are lost and perishing? Do you feel that none but Jesus can save you? Have you come to Him? Have you taken hold of Him by heart-faith? Have you entrusted your soul to His care, as an almighty and all-merciful Savior? Do you love Him? Do you serve Him? Do you follow Him?

These are solemn questions: for, bear in mind, there is another ladder. It is true there is God's ladder — Christ and His salvation, which leads to Heaven — but there is the devil's ladder, which leads down to Hell.

Upon the former you may see here and there one and another, with much difficulty, with many discouragements, striving to ascend.

Upon the latter you may see multitudes — multitudes, going down quick into Hell. Step by step — lower and lower. Alas, there are very many hastening to the pit of everlasting destruction! But what are the steps of this ladder? I will tell you. Open sins — such as lying, swearing, drinking, profligacy, and such like. Neglect of religion, an unread Bible, days spent without prayer, formal services, warnings unheeded, faithful sermons disregarded, hardness of heart, putting off repentance until a future day. Such are some of the steps on the downward ladder. You never know when the last step on either ladder may be taken! You do not know but that last step may be taken this very day. If your soul is safe — if you are indeed trusting in Jesus, before tomorrow's dawn your pilgrimage may be over — your crown may be won. But if not — if you still are unpardoned and unsaved — before another sun shall rise you may be a castaway — the door of hope may be shut — your soul may be eternally lost!

What then ought you to do? Without one moment's delay step off the one ladder and upon the other. Cast away every sin — every false hope; kneel at the feet of Jesus, confess to Him your past guilt, and commit your eternal interests into His hands.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." (Acts 16:31.) "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 11:2.)

06.02. Firm as a Rock!

Firm as a Rock! A few miles from the southern shores of England, and not far from many a sunken rock, stands the Seamen's Friend. For more than a century, in spite of stormy wind and tempest, the Eddystone lighthouse has stood firm and unmovable, giving light and saving life, warning the mariner away from hidden perils, and guiding into the friendly harbor many a gallant ship that might otherwise have been wrecked. Its construction is remarkable. A predecessor, built of less durable materials, had been swept away during a storm, and all within perished. Hence it was that special care was taken in securing its stability. Fourteen courses of huge blocks of granite and Portland stone, each from one to two tons, were dovetailed into the solid rock and into each other; then upon this building, almost as solid as the rock beneath it, was placed the lantern with its various lights, directing the sailor along his course, and pointing out the way to the port a few leagues distant. The Word of God is somewhat like this lighthouse. The comparison has often been made, and it is a true one. The Word bears a light. It is a bright lamp for those that are voyaging over the dark and stormy waves of this troublesome world. It bids men away from those perilous rocks of error, of licentiousness, of love of gold or pleasure — on which too many souls founder and perish. It reveals Christ, the true Harbor of Refuge, and manifests to men how, amidst the roaring of the tempest — they may yet find their true and only rest in Him.

Especially would I ask the attention of the reader to the consideration of the stability of God's Word — it is the very thought we most need.

There are continually fresh changes and sorrows in many homes. Families once unbroken — mourn the loss of a parent, a child, a brother or sister. Those in affluence are brought low, and means fail them. Those beforetime strong and healthy — know the painfulness of disease and infirmity. Even those most desolate may find a relief from their heavy burden of sorrow and anxiety. God's mighty providence, His tender, fatherly compassions, His faithfulness, His own blessed revelation of Himself in His Word — these abide, and we doubt not at such seasons become to many a soul, a light more bright and cheering than ever before.

Wide as the world is Your command,

Vast as eternity Your love,

Firm as a rock Your truth shall stand

When rolling years shall cease to move.

Firm as a rock God's truth has stood, and shall stand forever. Let us go back to the illustration that has been employed. The lighthouse has stood firm amidst the storms of a century, because it is securely fixed upon the solid rock; in fact, it is one with it — each stone is so closely connected with the rest and with the rock beneath, that all the violence of the tempest has been in vain.

Even so God's Word, and every part of it, rests upon the rock of His truth. It is one Book, though written at various times and by different writers. Each part is connected with every other part, and

the whole permeated by the teaching of the ever blessed Spirit. So that it cannot be destroyed; it cannot fall, whatever assaults may be made upon it. It is true, and that which is true shall abide as long as the God of truth Himself.

Old objections may appear in new forms — unfriendly criticism may suggest its doubts, theories in science may conflict with received interpretations. Yet be not afraid — forget not the confirmation God's Word has been receiving from the very beginning. Difficulties that seemed once almost insuperable, have been removed by the discovery of some historical monument of early times. Again and again has true science proved the handmaid of Scriptural revelation. The secret places of the earth have given up some witness to God's truth — and all tend to establish our confidence. They teach us that our old Bible is no cunningly-devised fable, but that it speaks truth and only truth. The moral proofs of the inspiration of Holy Writ are likewise irrefutable. It suits men in every nation alike. It brings blessing and peace wherever it comes. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, it becomes the instrument of a new and better life to men who have been aforetime sunken in every kind of evil. It gives rest to wearied and burdened consciences, and calms the troubled and sorrowing spirit.

Therefore, amidst increasing unbelief on all sides, let us still be steadfast and hopeful. All flesh fades like the grass, and the glory of man like the withering flower; yes, the very rocks shall be moved out of their place, and Heaven and earth shall pass away, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and things temporal shall give place to the things that are eternal — but know for a surety that the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Firm as a rock are those exceeding great and precious promises which the Word sets before us. The promises of earthly friends may greatly comfort us in times of deep necessity: the promise of their sympathy, of their readiness to assist us in bearing some heavy weight of anxiety, of their presence in some dark hour to which we look forward — these may cheer and help us, yet but a little way can such help go. We may be looking forward to a promised visit — but our expected friend may be compelled to travel many a mile in an opposite direction. We may anxiously be on the look-out for a special letter — but the hand that should write it may be lying cold and motionless. We may wait for a few pounds to meet a pressing debt — but heavy losses may have overtaken one who would otherwise gladly have kept his word to us.

Many a promise fails, because the promiser is unable to keep it. Many a one is left unfulfilled, because of human infirmity, forgetfulness, change of feeling, or the like. So that it is never wise to lean too much on the arm of flesh, or to expect too much even from the kindest or most faithful among men. But with Divine promises it is otherwise:

they have a height and depth, a length and breadth that surpass our highest conceptions,

they reach the whole circumference of human necessity,

they extend through all time,

they anticipate all difficulties,

they satisfy all holy desires,

they open out a field for bright and glorious anticipations that would never otherwise have entered into the heart of man.

They meet us in our felt sinfulness — by the declaration of free and perfect forgiveness; yes more, by the bestowment of a righteousness in which the eye of God can discern no blemish.

They meet us in our consciousness of deadness and pollution and weakness — by the offered gift of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to renew the heart in holiness and in love, to quicken and strengthen every good desire, and to mortify all that is evil.

They meet us in our manifold distresses and perplexities — by holding out to us the assurance of Fatherly love and all-sufficient grace.

They meet us on the threshold of the grave — by reminding us of One who, in the furnace and in the flood alike, will not fail to stand by those who trust in Him.

They meet us in our anticipations of the great and glorious future — by pointing us upward to the mansions of the Father's house, and forward to the day of the Lord, when the King will take His people to live and reign with Him forever and ever.

Reader, place your foot firmly here! Rest your soul on the promises — they cannot fail you. "I may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock will not tremble under me," was the saying of an Irish lad when asked of his hope for the future. Tremble though you may as you remember your sins, or look out into the years yet to come, with all the sorrow and care they may bring you — yet look beyond all this. Hear the voice of Him that speaks to you of pardon for all your offences, and of upholding strength through your pilgrimage, and rejoice in Him.

Very precious is the prayer of David when he reminds God of His promise, relies upon it, and looks forward to its fulfillment: "Now, O Lord God, You are that God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness unto Your servant. Therefore now let it please You to bless the house of Your servant; for You, O Lord God, have spoken it." Hence it is that, firm on the sure rock of God's promises, you may leave calmly the past, the present, and the future to Him who will never leave you nor forsake you. He will . . .

guard you in all danger,

support you in all tribulation, and

bring you by the right way to the haven of everlasting rest.

It was thus that Asaph reposed in God after the struggle with unbelief, recorded in Psalms 73:1-28. (See Psalms 73:16-28) Does he think of the past? It is the record of God's faithful dealings with him: "You have held me by my right hand." Does he think of the present? God is near: "I am continually with you." Does he survey the future of his earthly existence? There shall be safe guiding all the way: "You shall guide me with Your counsel." Does he survey the future after life is passed? Then shall be the Lord's presence: "You shall afterward receive me to glory."

Firm as a rock is the counsel and purpose of God with reference to the salvation and glory of His Church. Great is the difference between the designs, the intentions, the purposes of men, even the wisest and most powerful — and those of God. The former very frequently fail, break down, and

come to an utter end — while the latter are invariably fulfilled. The Book of Proverbs is full of this truth:

"A man's heart devises his way — but the Lord directs his steps."

"The lot is cast into the lot — but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

"There are many devices in a man's heart — nevertheless the counsel of the Lord shall stand."

Even so elsewhere:

"He is of one mind, and who can turn Him?"

"What His soul desires, even that He does."

"The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing."

"He makes the devices of the people of no effect."

"The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations."

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing! He does according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say unto Him: What are You doing?" That the purposes and schemes of man perpetually fail, however carefully or skillfully devised, is plain to us all. A mighty tower is to be reared: it shall bring a great name to its builders; it shall unite them together in one city; it shall spread their fame far and wide. So the workmen begin their task: brick upon brick, little by little, it soon reaches a great height. But shall it be finished? Nay, the tower of pride becomes Babel — the tower of confusion and shame. For God ever brings low the proud and haughty, so He confounds their language, and instead of the builders being knit together, they are scattered abroad on the face of the earth! In all ages does God work in the same way:

you see it in the highest places,

you see it in the lowest places,

you see it in private families,

you see it in the affairs of nations.

Schemes are devised . . .

for the gratification of ambition,

for the increase of wealth,

for the indulgence of some evil passion —

yes, and for far better objects — to assist some friend to provide against the day of adversity, or the like.

Yet in the providence of God it does not succeed, but the object is rather hindered than furthered by the effort. In the same way is it with plans that effect whole communities. For months or years plans are nurtured for the advancement of some secular or ecclesiastical power, to place on a firm

basis some doubtful title, or to raise to a higher pitch of earthly glory some king or kingdom, some Church or Empire. But when the attempt is made, there is a total failure — matters have been miscalculated; things do not take the course expected; new elements come in that were not looked for; everything goes wrong — defeat comes instead of victory. This is aggravated by some fresh calamity, and the fruit of labor, and of efforts almost incalculable — is a harvest of ruin and desolation and woe.

Never perhaps has this been more evident than in the war between France and Germany. An Empire of late holding in its hands the destinies of Europe, going forth to a struggle with a neighboring power, in spite of the remonstrances of other nations — then in one single month losing almost everything — one vast army made captive, another army shut up so that it could never escape — the capital threatened, towns and villages burnt down or otherwise destroyed, the provision laid up for the winter season carried away for the use of hostile troops. Then have we been taught more clearly that man proposes, but God disposes, that neither king nor kingdom is saved by the multitude of an army, nor by all the power that man can summon to his aid! But while human counsels frequently fail — the great I AM rules on high, and that which is in His heart and mind, moves on steadily to its glorious fulfillment. When the great book is fully written which shall contain the whole history of our globe and God's dealings with mankind — when we see revealed one man's prayer and another man's pride, and then trace how the hand of the Almighty has ever been uppermost, lifting up the humble and breaking down the high thoughts of the proud — sometimes working by His providence to fulfill what man has attempted, sometimes as plainly bringing it to nothing; at the same time by means of all completing in the very best way His own designs — then how greatly will it exalt and glorify His own infinite wisdom, faithfulness, and power!

We read much, during the war to which I referred, of that strange mysterious man working out in his quiet room the plan of the campaign; sending here and there, by telegraphic wires, or by ready servants, by footmen, or by horsemen — messages to guide the generals under him; by a stroke of his pen, by a movement of his hand, directing armies at his will, moving as one man several hundreds of thousands of fighting men — and thus, beyond all expectation, bringing about a measure of success and victory seldom if ever before seen. But look beyond him, and see Him who is the Only Wise God. Behold Him over His wide dominion controlling all things! His dominion extends not over a single portion of the earth — but over all lands, and over the wide domain of the universe. It reaches not the army of one nation, but every living man. It is exercised not for a few months, but from everlasting to everlasting. His object is not to maintain the power or prestige of one kingdom, or to consolidate its various parts — but to set up His kingdom everywhere, to beat down the power of the great enemy, and to gather into one all things both in Heaven and earth, and to bind them fast together in Christ our Head.

Every view of this glorious design enhances our wonder and admiration.

Consider the mountains of difficulty that lay in the way of the accomplishment of God's plan of salvation — the mighty strength of evil, the craft of the Prince of Darkness, the enmity of human hearts, a world in rebellion against its Creator and ready to despise both His mercy and His justice.

Consider the central figure in whom and through whom the design is carried out: He is very God and very man — without sin and yet bearing in Himself the sin of the world — once dying yet

evermore living — once counted the Nazarene, the Man of Sorrows, enduring the shame of a malefactor's death, and yet made higher than the angels, lifted up to the very throne of God, the Mediator, the High Priest, the Forerunner, the King, the Everlasting Savior of His people.

Consider the complex machinery employed — all the revolutions of kingdoms, all the events of private life, the preaching of the Word, and the prayers of the saints, the labors of God's workers, the evil deeds of the ungodly neutralized and overruled for good, the deaths of martyrs, the lives of those who walk in God's ways, the grace of the Divine Spirit, and the Providence of God working through all — so various are the agencies which He employs for fulfilling His counsels.

Consider also the everlasting felicity which this design will bring to countless souls. Two passages are closely allied: "He works all things after the counsel of His own will." And this will be the highest good of his chosen ones: "All things work together for good to those who love God." By and by shall we see fully manifested the everlasting good which He has wrought for His redeemed people. The purified spirit, the glorified body, the unfading inheritance, and the presence of the Lamb, with visions of Eternal Love as yet far beyond us — these will bring a joy that has neither limit nor end. And this design cannot be frustrated — it is like the covenant, ordered in all things and sure. It is not dependent on the changing will of man, but on Him with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. It is firm and steadfast, and nothing can overturn it. Yes, more, it is advancing towards its completion.

Ages of preparation have passed away;

the Son of God has been manifested in the flesh;

the Gospel has been preached in almost every nation;

the oracles of Divine Wisdom have been made known in two hundred languages;

myriads of souls have been turned from Satan unto God. On every side there is much to tell us that we may look for the time when the mystery of God, spoken of through bygone ages by patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, will be finished, and when the Son of God shall reign with His saints forever.

Let the consideration of the steadfastness of God's truth leave with us one or two lessons for our guidance.

1. Let the Christian be firm as a rock in the hope and rejoicing of the Gospel. True, in us there is everything to throw us back — we mourn our unfaithfulness, we confess with shame how little we rise to the height of our privileges, how little we have done to honor Him who has done all for us; our sins testify against us, our backslidings are increased; yet is it still true, and true for us, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that He will never reject any who truly turn to Him, that His arm is long enough and His heart is loving enough to rescue us from the mire of evil!

It is still true that the Good Shepherd will never lose one of His sheep, but will give them life eternal, and none shall pluck them out of His hand!

It is still true that He will sanctify and cleanse His Church and every member of it, and present it spotless and unblamable before the throne!

It is still true that He regards our humble confessions and accepts the breathing of contrite spirits, and that the sorrowful sighing of His prisoners enters into His ear and touches His heart.

Why then need we cast away our hope, or look downward in despondency and fear? Nay, rather let us afresh throw more wholly upon Him the burden of our salvation! Let us commit ourselves to Him, and believe that He will honor our confidence and fulfill our desires. When Ruth learned by experience the kindness and good-will of Boaz — she came and laid herself down at his feet as he rested in the threshing-floor; and thus, by an act, very expressive in those days, manifested her desire to yield herself up to his care and affection. Nor did he refuse the charge, but undertook her cause and made her his own. Even thus may we by hearty reliance throw ourselves upon Him who is our near kinsman, and who will not let the matter drop, but will manifest in the gates of His Church that He claims us as His portion forever.

Neither let us fear for the changes that may come. We know not what is before us — but God knows, and that is enough. He knows, He will care, He will provide, He will protect.

If the world changes — He changes not. If health gives way, if a child or parent or a spouse dies, if losses in business come upon us — yet Jesus Christ is the same, the promises are the same, the purposes of heavenly love are the same, God Himself is the same.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble!" Psalms 46:1

God, and . . .

not blind fate,

not chance or luck,

not a kind of indefinite Providence,

not our good fortune,

not our courage,

not our determination.

No! God Himself is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble! The God of Jacob — so watchfully leading us, and preserving us from all evil; the Lord Almighty — He who has all the armies of Heaven and earth at His command — He is . . .

our refuge,

the hiding-place to which we can ever flee,

the stronghold from storm or foe, from fire or flood!

Yes, more, He is our strength, the Rock on which the heart may lean — the Holy Spirit strengthening the frailty of our nature by enabling us to lean wholly on our Father and our God.

Yes, more, He is our help. His hand stretched out to assist us whenever we turn to Him with the cry, "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man."

Yes, more, an ever-present help! There is help always at hand. Many of those poor wounded soldiers in the war had dear ones at home who would gladly have run to their help; but they were far, far away. But God is nigh — so present, that but a sigh, a prayer — and He is by our very side.

Yes, more, help now — present in time as well as in space, when tomorrow may be too late. Yes, an hour lost, may lose all. But He gives immediate support, He is very close at hand, and very quick to support. Jesus never comes too late!

Why then be afraid? Why be too much disturbed though all things on earth are shaken? Rather let us add, with the Psalmist: "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us — the God of Jacob is our fortress!"

It was thus with a standard-bearer in Christ's Church, lately called away from us. In a letter addressed to the congregation from his dying bed, the late Rev. W.B. Mackenzie said: "They tell me that you want to hear some testimony to the sufficiency of my faith in Christ. I have preached to you for thirty-two years the Atonement of Christ, His perfect righteousness, and salvation through His blood. These truths are now my hope, my comfort, my stay. I believe that God's righteousness is mine, and that Christ's atonement is my perfect satisfaction for sin; and God's holy indwelling Spirit is my support and my life now. In this faith I have lived — and in this faith I die. I have nothing else, and I want no more. My faith is firm as a rock! I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing!"

Let the Christian be firm as a rock in the defense and maintenance of God's truth.

Boldly to resist the soul-destroying errors that are abroad, and manfully to stand up for old truths is a matter most urgent at the present day. Hezekiah gives us a noble example: Men took the brazen serpent, and made an idol of it and worshiped it; but Hezekiah broke the idol in pieces, and called it Nehushtan — a piece of brass; and God blessed him in whatever he did. On such foundational points, we must not be afraid to speak out plainly; we must not hesitate because many who teach error are kind and earnest, or even men of very holy and exemplary lives. Take heed not to be led away by the skeptical teaching that would cut out of Holy Scripture everything that makes it precious as a direct revelation from God of the way of salvation, and that would cast overboard that certainty of truth without which we can never rest our souls in peace upon its promises. But while resisting error, we must also most diligently labor for the propagation of the truth. In all our Sunday schools we need vigorous efforts to make the religious teaching more definite and heart searching, as well as to gather in the outcasts. We must second the efforts now made to increase very largely the sale or free distribution of good gospel literature. We must enter in by the open doors which are set before us — to preach Christ in the workshop, in the street, or in the home. There ought to be no drones in the hive, and no idlers in the vineyard — but all should be workers, laborers, helpers, soldiers — laboring, praying, toiling, fighting to make their influence felt on all sides, and to leave their mark on the world and the Church when they have left it. The great motive must ever be Christ's love. A few words of a hymn set forth the right principle we should ever strive

to maintain:

Am I a soldier of the cross,

A follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause,

Or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies

On flowery beds of ease,

While others fought to win the prize,

And sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face?

Must I not stem the flood?

Is this vile world a friend to grace,

To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;

Increase my courage, Lord;

I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,

Supported by Your Word. Your saints in all this glorious war

Shall conquer, though they die;

They see the triumph from afar,

By faith's discerning eye. When that illustrious day shall rise,

And all Your armies shine

In robes of victory through the skies,

The glory shall be Thine!

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord!" 1 Corinthians 15:58

06.03. Christ's Blood More Precious than Gold!

Christ's Blood More Precious than Gold!

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect!" 1 Peter 1:18-19

How great is the price which has been paid for man's redemption! If a prisoner of war, shut up within the walls of some gloomy fortress, were to see a bag of gold sent for his ransom, by the Sovereign whom he had faithfully served — what thankfulness would fill his breast! But much more than this has been given for us. In tender compassion for our souls, no less a price has been paid by Christ than His own precious blood.

He saw us perishing in our sins;

He saw us in captivity to the Prince of Darkness;

He saw us tied fast by chains that we ourselves could never break

— and then He came to redeem us! He poured out upon the cross, the blood that was to be the means of our everlasting salvation.

Reader, how infinitely precious is this blood. Ever since the fall has God been reminding man of this truth.

Look at the blood of Abel's offering, which God accepted — while the offering of Cain was rejected.

Look at the blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled upon the door posts of the Israelites, and which saved their firstborn from death.

Look at the streams of blood continually flowing from Jewish altars.

Look at the blood which the High Priest, once every year, on the great day of atonement, sprinkled before the mercy-seat.

Look at the blood with which Moses sprinkled both the book and all the people.

What were these, but so many voices by which God was telling men, in Old Testament times, of the value and the preciousness of the blood, which should hereafter be shed?

Look at that commemorative rite — that holy ordinance — which Christ instituted before His death, and which has ever since been so distinguishing a mark of Christ's Church. Consider how, throughout the last eighteen centuries, Christians have continually been meeting together to partake of that cup, of which Jesus said, "This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sin." Surely in this way God has ever been teaching His people the

preciousness of the blood which was shed for our salvation.

It may be a profitable inquiry for us to make: "Why is this blood so infinitely precious?" I answer: This blood is infinitely precious, because it is Divine. It is the blood of one who is man's Creator, "Perfect God — and perfect man." "Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood." The prophet Zechariah speaks of the fountain of this blood which was hereafter to be opened: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity." (Zechariah 13:1.) But how shall that fountain be opened? Whose blood must be shed? Read Zechariah 13:7. It is the fellow of the Lord Almighty — He who is one in essence, one in glory with the Eternal Father: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord Almighty."

Oh, ponder well this deep and mysterious truth. Little can we fathom it! Yet was it God Incarnate — God in our nature — the Eternal Word made flesh — who died for man's salvation How marvelous it was! His own hand had fashioned the very wood upon which He was nailed!

He Himself gave breath to the very men who cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"

It was His power which gave strength and nerve to the arm which pierced His side with the cruel spear!

Yes! the Creator and Preserver of man — the King of kings and Lord of lords, He before whom angels worshiped, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" — He it was who suffered a shameful and cruel death at the hands of His own creatures!

What a mystery of love!

It is written in Psalms 116:1-19, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." How infinitely precious then must be the blood-shedding of His own dear Son! What infinite efficacy must that blood possess as the ransom for our souls!

Again, this blood is also precious because it is pure and holy.

Christ was "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." (Hebrews 7:26.) As it was needful that the lamb offered as the daily sacrifice in the temple must be without blemish — so it was necessary that Jesus should be free from the least taint of evil — and so He was. He mingled with sinners at every turn — He mingled with them in the temple and in the synagogue, in their streets and in their homes. It was thrown in His teeth that He was "the friend of publicans and sinners." On another occasion it was brought as a charge against Him: "This man receives sinners, and eats with them!" (Luke 15:2.) The charge was true — He loved to go among sinners that He might save and help them — yet all the while not the shadow of pollution ever defiled His pure and holy character. He could appeal to His foes, and say, "Which of you convinces Me of sin?"

Listen also to the various testimonies given to His perfect sinlessness:

Hear the witness of those who were His most intimate companions, who had been with Him at all seasons: Peter declares that He was a "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:20);

and again, "He did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." John, who lay on His bosom, declares, "You know that He was manifested to take away our sins — and in Him was no sin." (1 John 3:5.)

Hear the witness of His enemies — those who shared in the guilt of His crucifixion: Pilate declares, "I find in Him no fault at all!" And again, "I am innocent of the blood of this innocent man!" Judas, the traitor, declares, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." The Centurion at the cross declares, "Certainly this was a righteous man!" The Devils too confessed the innocence of the Savior, for they cried, "We know You who You are — the Holy One of God." And the Father Himself bore witness to it, when He declared, at His Baptism, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Here we have friends and enemies, devils and God Himself — all uniting their witness to the perfect holiness of Christ. Surely then this blood must be precious.

Here is another element of its unfailing efficacy: it is the blood of One who, as man's substitute, as man's representative, offered a perfect and sinless obedience to the Law which man had broken.

Again this blood is precious because it is the pledge and expression of infinite compassion and love. The very least gift is valued if it comes as the fruit of genuine love; and surely nothing was ever such a proof of love — a love so incomprehensible, so amazing — as the blood of Christ. By three steps we may learn to know a little of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge:

1. His words. Oh, what bright glimpses of the love which dwelt in Christ's heart may we gain — if we listen to the words which fell from His lips! Hear but a few.

"Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28.)

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore — you are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6-7.) "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) "Him that comes to Me I will never cast out." (John 6:37.) "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." (John 7:37.) "I am the good Shepherd — the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11.) "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." (John 15:9.)

Oh, what beams from the Sun of Righteousness are these gracious words! Well may they dispel every doubt and fear from the soul that seeks Him.

2. Rise a step higher. Look at Christ's tears. Christ had but one day of triumph during His thirty-three years' sojourn upon earth. It was the day when He entered Jerusalem, shortly before His death, amidst the Hosannas of the multitude: "The multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." (Matthew 21:9.) On that day did Jesus weep. "He beheld the city and wept over it." (Luke 19:41.)

Oh, what a deep well of compassion in the Savior's heart do those tears reveal! If you saw a father weeping before he took the rod to punish a rebellious child — would you not say the father had a deep love for the child, whom he felt compelled to punish? So when we see Christ weeping before

He sent the scourge of the Roman army to destroy the city which He loved — must we not own the greatness of His pity and compassion?

Yes, those tears tell us how Jesus pitied the souls of those who were perishing in their sins — and He is still the same. Every tear He shed assures us that He still yearns over the guilty and the lost. Oh, how should the tears of Christ melt and subdue our proud and stony hearts! How ought they to quicken us to a true and hearty repentance!

3. Rise a step higher. His precious blood. Christ's words reveal His love, still more His tears — but most of all, the blood which He shed. When the Jews saw the tears which Jesus shed at the tomb of Lazarus His friend, they rightly judged when they said, "Behold how He loved him!" When we see the drops of precious blood falling on Calvary, when we see the blood flowing from His pierced temples, from His wounded hands and feet and side, well may we say, "Behold, how He loved us!"

Bear in mind that the suffering in body, the shame and the scoffing, were but the least part of that which He endured for our sake. His holy soul was burdened with the weight of man's transgression. How agonizing was the conflict, when thrice He prayed in the garden, that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him! How great was the inner darkness of His soul, when on the cross there arose that exceeding great and bitter cry, "My God, my God! Why have You forsaken Me!"

It has been said, "Christ received into His own bosom every arrow of God's quiver, and every one dipped in the poison of the curse!" Here then is love. In the blood of the cross, we find the proof of such love as man never before could conceive: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13.)

Again: the blood of Christ is precious because it has power to cleanse from all guilt. How great is man's need of cleansing and forgiveness! Consider the vast amount of guilt that lies at the door of every unpardoned sinner. Take the life of any one who is yet a stranger to God; judge his life in the light of God's holy law, and who can tell how great the debt — how countless the iniquities of such a one?

Begin with acts of positive disobedience — dishonest gains, deceits, secret sins which the world knows nothing of — such things as even natural conscience will reprove. Add to these, sins of the tongue — lying words, profane words, angry words, murmuring words, vain and foolish words, remembering the solemn declaration of Christ, "Truly I say unto you, that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36.) Add to these, multitudes of unhallowed thoughts and imaginations, unchaste and unholy desires, crowds of sinful and vain thoughts, as many as the motes in the sunbeam, remembering again the Word of God: "The thought of foolishness is sin." (Proverbs 24:9.) Add all these together, and who can count their number?

I have seen a strange list, the catalogue of the crimes of a man who was executed at Norfolk Island, with the punishment he received for each offence, and this list was between two and three yards in length — but what was this compared to the catalogue of each man's transgressions against the Most High? We might almost say that this catalogue, written out by the hand of God, would reach from earth to Heaven, applying the words of Ezra: "Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens."

Perhaps, however, we gain a more impressive view of this truth if we regard the life of an unconverted man as one continuous sin. What was the life of the younger son, in the parable given in Luke 15:1-32, while he remained in the far country? Was not every moment a moment of rebellion and ingratitude, and therefore one continuous sin? No doubt there were hours of grosser iniquity — hours when he plunged deeper into excess — yet was not his whole life, and every moment of it, sinful and rebellious?

Now it is just so with every sinner, until he has yielded to the merciful call of God — until he has come home as a penitent to the Father's house. Each moment of his life he is plainly disregarding the first and great commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might." What moment, therefore, is he not disobeying God and therefore sinning against Him?

Oh, careless, thoughtless sinner! Be assured of this — your life is one long continued sin, extending from your birth to this very moment. Wherever you may be — in the house of God, or in the house of business, in the field, or walking by the way-side, in some scene of worldly dissipation, or by your own fireside; whatever you may be doing — eating or drinking, talking or sleeping, rising in the morning or going to rest at night, yes, even going through a routine of worship, reading your accustomed chapter of Scripture, or repeating certain forms of prayer — yet until you return to God, with hearty and sincere repentance, still, every moment you are sinning against Him. But take the life of the child of God, and see even here how much sin there is that needs the constant exercise of pardoning mercy.

Look at it in this light: put the cleanest linen beside the freshly driven snow — how soiled, how discolored does it appear! So compare the life of the holiest child of God with the life of Christ. Consider . . .

His meekness,

His purity and holiness,

His prayerfulness,

His self-denial,

His constant zeal in His Father's work,

His tender compassion both for the bodies and the souls of men

— and then side by side with this put the life of the believer. How great is the contrast! In the life of the believer —

how much evil is mingled with the good!

How much is of the earth, earthy!

How much deadness and coldness of heart!

How much selfishness and sloth!

How much regard to present appearances, rather than the will of God!

How many backslidings!

How many wanderings in prayer!

How many neglects of duty!

How many lost opportunities of usefulness!

Truly, the believer has need to echo the lament of Isaiah the prophet: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags! All of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away!" (Isaiah 64:6.)

Now in sight of all this amount of guilt, both on the part of the unconverted man and on that of the child of God — God offers, in every case, a perfect, everlasting forgiveness, through the blood of His Son. The promise of Isaiah is full and free: "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson — I will make them as white as wool!" (Isaiah 1:18.) But the anxious soul, beholding the justice and strictness of God's law, is ready to ask: What can remove guilt so great as mine? What can take away these ark blots that have defiled my life?

John gives us the answer, in that oft quoted declaration: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin!"

Paul again has said: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7.)

Reader, be assured of this — there is a power and efficacy in the blood of the Cross that can enable the guiltiest and vilest sinner to stand spotless in the sight of a holy God — a power that can pacify the most distressed and burdened conscience. But perhaps there may be in your case, some peculiarity, some special aggravations of your guilt — so that you may imagine pardon to be next to impossible for you. There may be the remembrance of some dark hour of iniquity that rises up, oftentimes like a thick cloud, to hide from you the light of God's countenance. Your constant failures, your broken resolutions, your sad lack of repentance and faith and love — may sorely pain and grieve you. Do not yield to the voice of the Tempter, who would persuade you to cast away your confidence in the blood of sprinkling. Is your sin a grief and a burden to you? Do you wish to forsake it and walk before God in newness of life? Do you endeavor to watch and pray against it?

Then doubt not for a single moment there is pardon for you. Remember Luther's dream: It seemed to him, that the Tempter brought before him the sins with which he was chargeable in a single day. One by one he wrote them all out before him, and then asked him how such a one as he could be saved? Luther owned them all — but wrote at the close of the long, dark catalogue, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." The blood of Christ is also precious, because it brings the sinner near to God. It is written, "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13.)

Through the blood of Christ, not only is sin forever removed — but the sinner is received and welcomed as a dear child! Not now is he the pardoned rebel — not the hired servant, but the child

very near to the Father's heart. Once the sinner stood afar off; once he was ready to cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Once he shrank with fear from the presence of One whose holiness condemned his sin! But now, how changed are his feelings! The blood of Jesus has won the heart for God.

Fear of God is gone — love to God has taken its place.

Now he delights to draw near to the throne of grace.

Now he loves to ponder the gracious promises which his Father has given him.

Now he desires to walk closely with God, and to obey His commandments. As a dear child can he now cry, "Abba, Father!" He can rest all his cares and sorrows upon a Father's heart. Whatever may befall him during his earthly pilgrimage, he can still rejoice that God is near to him as a reconciled Father.

"So near, so very near to God!

I cannot nearer be,

For in the person of His Son,

I am as near as He.

"So dear, so very dear to God!

I cannot dearer be,

For the love with which He loves His son,

Such is His love to me."

Lastly, the blood is precious because it brings the sinner safely to glory. Here is the final blessing, here is the full joy purchased for the sinner by the blood of Christ — it brings him safe to the shores of the heavenly Canaan.

What that world will be, remains as yet unrevealed to us. What the brightness and glory of that city of the living God, where there is no need of the sun or moon to lighten it; what the joyful rest of that home, where the door is forever shut against sin, and fear, and care, and temptation, and suffering, and death — no heart can conceive or tongue describe!

Reader, picture to yourself that great assembly and Church of the first-born. See the whole family gathered together around the throne. See the many who come from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West — of every kindred and nation and people and tongue. See the perfect holiness in which they shine. See the unclouded glory which belongs to them. See the Lamb Himself in the midst, leading them to living fountains of waters, still opening to them fresh streams of everlasting bliss. Hear the anthem of redeeming love, which arises from every tongue: "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

Then inquire, "Why are they here? Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" An angel shall give the answer. "These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore are they

before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple!" (Revelation 7:14-15.)

Notice the word "therefore." Here is the one single reason that the glorious company of the redeemed could stand before the throne: they had washed away their sins in the Savior's blood. Every one will rejoice to confess it — "All this glory, my mansion, my inheritance, my crown, my kingdom — all has been won for me by Jesus! It is the gift of His wondrous love — it is the purchase of His precious blood!"

I ask, therefore, is not this blood precious? Remember whose blood it is: that of the Eternal Son of God. Remember how pure and holy was the character of Him who shed it. Remember it is the gift of a love far beyond all our thoughts. Think . . .

how many a guilty conscience it has relieved,

how many a weary heart it has comforted,

how many a bright hope of glory it has given.

Think what multitudes who once were perishing in the mire of sin — near to Hell, near to eternal ruin — it has cleansed, purified, and brought to everlasting salvation.

Oh, may the eternal Spirit reveal these things to us! It is His work alone to do it. May He convince us of our manifold and great iniquities! May He lead us truly, deeply, solemnly, to feel the mighty power of that blood, by which they can be completely and forever removed!

Let me close with a few words of counsel suggested by this subject.

Beware of the guilt and danger of neglecting this precious blood! This is the greatest act of disobedience. The first and great commandment of the law was, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." The great commandment of the Gospel is that we should believe in Christ: "This is His commandment — That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 3:23.) Without obedience to this, no duty can be acceptable to God. Our very first act of acceptable obedience, must be believing in Christ — washing away our sins in His most precious blood.

Again, is it not the deepest ingratitude to neglect this blood? Has the Son of God come down from Heaven? Has He taken our nature that He might bear the curse which belonged to us? Has He died in suffering, in shame, upon the cross? Has He, at such a cost, opened a fountain for the cleansing of our souls? And is it no ingratitude to refuse to go to it? Is it no ingratitude to turn from His cross, and to refuse His offered mercy? Be sure of this — no love was ever so great as that of Christ, in the blood which He shed for sinners — and no ingratitude can be so great as making light of His salvation.

Beware too of the danger of neglecting this blood. What safety is there for a single moment, except beneath its shelter? If the Israelite had neglected to sprinkle the lintel and door-posts of his dwelling with the blood of the paschal lamb, the destroying angel would have entered and smitten his first-born. And if the sinner neglects to have his heart and conscience sprinkled by faith with the blood of Christ, assuredly the angel of justice will not spare him. There can be no salvation — none whatever — for those who will not take it through the blood of Christ.

Let every one who desires salvation, take up his dwelling-place near to this Fountain opened for sin and impurity. To every one who asks the way to Zion — who longs for a full and everlasting forgiveness — I would give a short and plain direction. It is that given by Elisha to the Syrian leper: "Wash, and be clean!" Are you just waking from the sleep of sin — just discovering for the first time how great is your guilt before a just and holy God? The message is for you. Jesus has died — the fountain is open — the promise is free. "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved!" Go in faith, with the prayer, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!" The answer shall come: "Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven!" Are you a backslider? Have you turned away from Christ? Do you feel as if such sin could never be pardoned? Yet despair not. It is true you have brought dishonor upon the name of Christ; you have brought up an evil report of the good land; you have in fact said to those around you, "I have tried the world, and I have tried Christ — and the world is the best master." Still, once again, turn to Christ — like Peter, return to Him in true penitence and faith. His blood shall cleanse your sin — even your's. Only try it, and the promise shall be fulfilled to you: "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for my anger is turned away from them." (Hosea 14:4.) Are you a believer, clinging only to Jesus, and yet often distressed on account of your manifold sins and infirmities? Here is your safety, here is your comfort — a continual resort to this Open Fountain. Like Naaman, in Jordan, wash seven times — yes, seventy times seven. This fountain is the only place on earth where sin and doubt and fear die — and where grace and holiness and love thrive and grow. When the remembrance of sin comes over you like a dark shadow, then go to the fountain — wash and be clean! When you kneel down at the mercy-seat and desire with confidence to draw near to God — then wash and be clean! (Hebrews 10:19-22.) When you feel how imperfect and defiled have been your prayers, how every Sabbath service has been mingled with sin; when you feel that such worship cannot be accepted — again go to the fountain: wash and be clean! When the closing hour draws near, and face to face you meet the King of terrors; when your last chapter has been read, when you have borne your last testimony for the Savior whom you love — still abide by the fountain. Bathed in its precious waters, let your spirit ascend to your Father in Heaven. Entering your eternal rest, you shall join more fully in the song of the redeemed, which you have learned to sing here on earth: "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father — to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6.) Let the believer live in constant remembrance of the price which has been paid for his redemption.

Believer, did Jesus give His precious blood for you, to save you from Hell and damnation, to give you peace of conscience, to make you a child of God and an heir of eternal glory — then what will you withhold from Him? Oh, surrender yourself wholly, unreservedly to His service! "You are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20.)

Oh, think of the debt of love you owe, and endeavor to make some return for it, by laying yourself and all you have at His feet. Time, talents, influence, wealth — freely yield to the Savior who has bought you! Employ every member of your body as an instrument of righteousness for Him. The hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the tongue, all may be used for His glory, and to promote the extension of His kingdom. Above all things, live daily, hourly, as in the sight of God; adorn your profession by a very loving, holy, prayerful, Christ-like life. Abide in Christ by faith. Rely upon him

every hour for fresh supplies of grace, for fresh anointings of his quickening, sanctifying spirit. Look forward to his appearing: "Yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:37.)

06.04. The Upward Glance!

The Upward Glance!

Yeas by year the Jewish pilgrims were accustomed to go up to Jerusalem from the various towns and villages of Judea and Galilee. As their annual feasts came around, they went up in bands and companies to the city of Zion, which they loved; and many a cheerful song did they chant along their way: the fifteen Psalms, Psalms 120:1-7, Psalms 121:1-8, Psalms 122:1-9, Psalms 123:1-4, Psalms 124:1-8, Psalms 125:1-5, Psalms 126:1-6, Psalms 127:1-5, Psalms 128:1-6, Psalms 129:1-8, Psalms 130:1-8, Psalms 131:1-3, Psalms 132:1-18, Psalms 133:1-3, Psalms 134:1-3, which are called songs of degrees or ascents, were especially used on these occasions. Thus they sang together: "Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem! Pray for the peace of Jerusalem — they still prosper that love you. Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. Those who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. Unto You lift I up my eyes, O You that dwell in the heavens."

We, like them, are on a journey Zionward. We have our pilgrimage to make to the dwelling place of our God. And we too need to go forth along our way with a song of confidence and hope and gladness. And where shall we find one more suited for us than the words of Psalms 123:1-4, which tell us where we must turn for all strength and consolation? Let coming years bring to us what they may, let their days be bright with almost unmingled prosperity, or darkened by clouds of sorrow and bitter anguish — yet these words tell of One who will never fail us — of a Friend and Helper who from His high and lofty throne regards with tenderest affection all those who make Him their Refuge and their Trust.

"Unto You will I lift up my eyes, O You that dwell in the heavens."

We may take these words as expressing the dawning of hope in the awakened soul. The Spirit awakens the sinner to see his true position. He is aroused to discover his imminent peril. Various are the means which that mighty Worker employs in this most needful work. Sometimes it is by a solemn appeal from the Sanctuary, sometimes by the death of a friend, or through a season of sickness; sometimes it is by means of some trivial incident. The late Lord Haddo cast a glance at the clothes which he had just taken off. The Spirit suggested the thought: "How soon must I lay aside this garment of mortality! How soon must I be unclothed of this frail body, and enter the presence of my Judge! Eternity comes on apace, and I am yet unprepared to meet it!" Thus began that blessed change which was soon manifested in his whole life and conduct. But whatever be the instrument employed to touch the conscience and arrest the sinner, usually there follows for a time exceeding sorrow on account of his sin. What but sin — sin — sin everywhere in the past life? What but hardness and impenitence and unbelief is felt within the heart?

How was it with the one who went up into the temple to pray? He stands afar off, afar from the holy place, afar from the other worshipers, for he knows full well how far his life has been spent from God. Yes, more than this, he dares not look upward: "He would not lift up so much as his eyes to

Heaven." The proud Pharisee fearlessly lifted up eyes and hands and face toward God, trusting in all the good deeds of which he boasts — but not so the humbled publican. It was as if he would say, "How dare I look up to that holy Being whom I have so long provoked to anger? How dare I look upward to that holy Heaven, where nothing impure can enter, which is the home of saints, and of the holy angels? And what is my plea? I dare say nothing, like this Pharisee, of that I have not done — for all evil have I wrought. I dare say nothing of that I have done. I dare not say that I have fasted, or prayed, or given tithes, for I have done neither the one nor the other. One thing I am — a sinner. One thing alone can meet my case — free and undeserved mercy. God be merciful to me, a sinner!" But the Spirit can comfort as well as convict. He comes and darts a ray of hope into the dark and cheerless soul. He brings right home to the heart some gracious invitation or promise.

Then the soul bowed down with sin, with fear, with distress — ventures to look up. The eye hitherto downcast and moistened with many a tear — is turned heaven-ward. There is a looking upward, though with trembling. And what does the sinner now behold? A God of vengeance — a God ready to cast upon him the hot thunderbolts of His fiery wrath? Nay, far otherwise.

He beholds a pitiful Father ready to forgive, bending over him in love and compassion.

He beholds a tender Shepherd waiting to restore him to the fold.

He beholds an all-wise Physician, ready to pour in the balm of Gilead for every wound.

He beholds a great High Priest, the one who once bore his sin on the cross of Calvary, now pleading for him before the throne.

He beholds a great and glorious Savior, ready to lift him up from all the guilt and dominion and degradation of sin — to a mansion of never-ending bliss!

Most earnestly would I beseech you, dear reader, if by grace you have been led to know something of your sin and danger — to look upwards to that faithful and mighty Redeemer, who is near to save and bless you. Tarry no longer — wait not until a more convenient season. Let nothing hinder you. Hide not yourself in the dark gloomy cellar of unbelief. Look not with too absorbing thought on the evil you have done — so that you cannot look to Him who will deliver you from it. The bitten Israelite might have looked long at his wound before he would have found a cure — but an upward glance at the brazen serpent brought to him healing and life. Remember the old saying of the godly McCheyne: "For one look at yourself — take ten looks at Christ!" And do you need a sure plea to carry with you to the mercy-seat?

Let it be this: "For Your Name's sake." Perhaps you cannot find any reason why God should save one so vile or so unworthy as yourself. You look within and without, and you say, "I can see no good thing that I can bring to God." Well, that is true. Yet is there hope. Plead the grace that there is in God — and not anything in yourself. "For Your Name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity — for it is great."

I ask it for Your mercy's sake — O Lord, magnify that full ocean of mercy and love which is in Your breast.

I ask it for Your truth's sake — Your word, Your promise, Your oath, is passed that none shall seek Your face in vain. You can not deceive nor disappoint me.

I ask it for Your work's sake. I plead with You, that great work You have accomplished in the death of Your Son; that full atoning sacrifice and satisfaction which He has wrought in accordance with Your will.

Thus plead, and your plea cannot but succeed.

Ah, wherefore do I ever doubt?

You will never cast me out:

A helpless soul that comes to Thee,

With only sin and misery. But we learn also in this passage to rise above the fear of man. It has been supposed that Nehemiah was the writer of Psalms 123:1-4. Scornful foes were about him, and strove to impede the work he had in hand. Sanballat and Tobiah mocked him. They said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? That which they build, even a fox shall break down their stone wall." Thus he was cast down and troubled. "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." But what is this faithful man's resource? He turns away from man. He looks away from the region of earth altogether. He remembers that One dwells on high who is mightier than all the children of men. He knows that if Jehovah is on his side — it matters not though ten thousands of the people set themselves against him round about. What though the Ammonite and Arabian conspire against us — we will work, we will watch, and we will pray. "Unto you lift I up my eyes, O You that dwell in the heavens."

It is well to take hold of this precious thought, that we be not turned aside by the frown or the reproach of our fellow-men. Be not daunted by anything that may be said or done against you for the Master's sake. Hold not back from an open confession of your allegiance, from reproving sin, from fighting the Lord's battles. If you are Christ's, those who are with you are more than those who are against you. If you have man's frown — you have God's favor. If you have the world's rebuke — you have Christ's approbation.

Yes, and may not these very trials be the very discipline you need? May they not lead you the closer to the great Friend? "None but God can tell how much good, unkind looks have done me; for times without number they have led me to the footstool of Him who is all kindness and love." Such was the experience of a devoted Christian lady. And why may it not be your own?

Man may trouble or distress me,

'Twill but drive me to Your breast;

Life with trials hard may press me,

Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.

We have here again the attitude of genuine, fervent, expectant prayer.

True spiritual prayer is often accompanied by the lifting up of the bodily eye, and is frequently spoken of as the lifting up of the eye of the soul. Jesus, when He prayed, "lifted up His eyes to

Heaven, and said, Father, the hour has come — glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." And in the Psalms we have perpetually the same idea. "My eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth." In Psalms 141:1-10, we have a picture of the most hopeless condition possible, looking at it merely from a human point of view. It is as if a man were not only sick, but dead; not only dead, but buried; not only buried, but his bones dry and cast out of the grave — or as a tree hewn in pieces by the axe. Yet with prayer comes hope. "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth. But my eyes are unto You, O God the Lord! In You is my trust, leave not my soul destitute."

Such is true prayer: the inner look of the soul upward —

The upward glancing of the eye,

When none but God is near.

Reader, do you know anything of this? There may be the kneeling posture in church, or in the closet — there may be the utmost gravity and seriousness of manner — there may be all the outward form of devotion — there may be many words, and suitable words uttered by the lip — but what do you know of the looking of the soul heavenward? It is this which constitutes true prayer; it is this which God reckons as worshiping Him in Spirit and in truth. And wherever this is found, it is the fruit of God's Spirit working within the heart. It is the fountain of living water, springing upwards towards its source in holy desires and heavenly aspirations. It is the Holy Spirit lifting up the soul above its own natural earthliness to the God of the Spirits of all flesh.

Too many, alas, seldom have a desire or a thought heavenward. Their eye is fixed on earth. Their heart is wholly absorbed in the things of time. They dig their own grave — and then go and live in it all their days. They are so busied in the cares and pursuits of the moment, that they strive not to seek for an eternal portion above. But if this is the case with any reader, what must needs be the outcome? If your heart is not above — can you expect your treasure there? If you send no messenger beforehand — no prayer, no earnest desire — can you look for an eternal and glorious home prepared for you? Nay, it cannot be. The final scene will usher you into an eternity where for you all will be dark indeed; the loss of all in which once you gloried — the midnight blackness of everlasting despair. But with many readers it may be otherwise. You have known the value of prayer. You have learned the way to the mercy-seat. Amidst all the evil that still cleaves to you, your spirit from time to time can wing its way upward, and hold communion with the skies. Oh, then, I beseech you, stir up the grace which has thus been given to you! Trade diligently with this talent committed to your charge. Cultivate the habit of instant and believing prayer. Let your daily round of work and duty be hallowed by frequent aspirations wafted heavenward. As you walk to and fro along the oft trodden path that leads to your place of business, as you take your accustomed stroll after the day's toil, or as you go to visit a friend, or to purchase some necessary article for the needs of your household — why not dart upward, the arrow of earnest desire? Why not turn into prayer, some promise of Holy Scripture, some message from the pulpit, some sorrow or anxiety that may be weighing upon you? Why need there be an hour in the day in which you do not thus experience the lightening of some grief, or the bestowal of some spiritual blessing from above? It needs but a moment for a petition to ascend from the altar of your heart, to the ear of

your Father in Heaven! "Pray without ceasing!" 1 Thessalonians 5:17. And be assured that such prayer is never lost. It is communion and merchandise of the most enriching character.

Many a merchant of late has sent across the ocean a message by the electric wires, that has involved very considerable expense, and yet the return has far outweighed the cost of its transmission. But here is a means of communication between us and the upper world, which is perfectly free and accessible to all such as will humbly and earnestly use it. And who can say how great may be the return?

Only let there be a close walk with God: only let prayer be a reality, your objects of petition distinctly defined, your reliance placed sincerely in the mediation of the Well-beloved, and your hearts kept in tune by the Spirit of prayer — and who shall count the gains which you may anticipate? May you not look for a more satisfying enjoyment of the things of God? If the well of living water within the heart is deepened; if grace works mightily in casting out the old soil which hinders the up-springing of the Divine life; if there is a greater relish for the Word of truth, and the ordinances of the Lord's house — surely the gain will not be slight. May you not also look for fresh doors of usefulness to be opened, and a richer blessing to rest on your effort for the welfare of others? If you would have wisdom to guide you in your plans for doing good, if you would have those plans crowned with success, if you would see one here and another there, benefitted by the words that you speak to them in the Master's name — you must move in an atmosphere of prayer, you must look upward for a zealous and child-like spirit, you must ask for a prepared heart in those to whom you minister, you must follow with fervent supplication whatever you have attempted to do. May you not thus also meet in quiet resignation to the will of God, the inevitable changes and trials that may come upon you as time goes on? Temptations must be overcome, trials must be manfully borne, labors must be undertaken from which sometimes the flesh shrinks back; you must stand fast in positions of danger, and not fail in the duties that may then be incumbent upon you — and how can all this be? A midshipman was climbing the mast for the first time: he grew dizzy, and ready to fall he cried out, "What shall I do?" "Keep looking up and you can do anything!" was the answer the captain gave.

Reader, take home the lesson: "Keep looking up, and you can do anything." You can stand fast in peril, you can endure toil and difficulty, you can meet with cheerful submission the sorrows that await you in the future, you can triumph even in the hour of your last agony — if only your eye is fixed on Jesus, your heavenly Intercessor, your everlasting Friend.

Thus also may we discern a door of hope amidst the thickening strife of these latter days. What fresh assaults, in various quarters have been made on the Church of Christ! What fresh advances have been made by the enemies of pure Scriptural truth! And within her gates, what a sad lack of zeal and energy! What a crying need for more plain preaching of the Word of God — the only food that can nourish the souls of her children. And in this our necessity, we must not despair: we must not give way to unavailing regrets. We must use all pains-taking diligence to counteract the evil, and promote that which is good. We must be quickened in our zeal by the remembrance of those that have gone before us, and having fought the good fight, have entered into their rest.

Oh, let us be ready to fill up the gap made by the loss of faithful men as one by one they are taken from the midst of us! Yet having done all that is in the power of our hand, we must look upwards to Him who alone can effectually support us, and who can do that we cannot do. We must look above

all human power, to Him who reigns supreme over all things, both in Heaven and earth. He has means at His disposal, whereby He can easily frustrate every evil design, and bring near His salvation to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. And for this we must daily pray. It is thus that the eye uplifted to Heaven brings near the blessing and the deliverance. The Eternal Spirit of the living God, is that required above all things. By His power whatever foes beset us can easily be scattered. By the same power, the bread of Heaven can be brought near to multitudes of famishing souls, that they may be strong and joyful in the Lord's salvation. And for this we will plead.

"Arise, O Lord, let Your enemies be scattered, and let them that hate You flee before You! Except the Lord keep the city the watchman wakes but in vain. Turn us then, O Lord God Almighty, cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved.

It is well distinctly to set before us the encouraging truth, that "the upward glance" can never be in vain. For remember if man's eye be upward, God's eye is downward. The eye of Jehovah meets the eye of the humble trustful believer.

Side by side ought we to place the two thoughts: man's eye upward to God — God's eye turned toward man. On the one side: "Unto You I lift up my eyes." "Our eyes are unto You." and similar passages. On the other: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open toward their prayer." "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy." Here we have the eye of the child looking for help to a compassionate Father, and the Father beholding His child with the tenderest love, and with an ear open to every petition.

Even if an earthly parent saw his child casting an imploring look toward him for some necessary aid, would he despise that glance? Would he not run in a moment to support him? And shall our Father in Heaven behold unmoved the eye of earnest longing and expectation fixed upon Him?

Remember also the mighty power of Him with whom we have to do. He dwells in Heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has made Heaven and earth, and preserves all things by His ever-present care. To Him all the inhabitants of earth are reputed as nothing. He does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth. And as He has power, so will He surely fulfill all His gracious purposes and counsels. Calmly He sits above the water floods, surveying all that is passing here below — all the shaking of Nations and of Churches and of Systems, all the noise and strife of political agitation — and through all, and by means of all carrying out His own great designs, and perfecting the living temple which He is building for His own glory. He will never forget His own Church. He will never permit the unruly wills of sinful men to overturn His plan, or to delay for a moment its accomplishment. Whatever He permits, He keeps the reins in His own hand.

He were a foolish or a careless driver that would let fall the reins as a coach was going down a steep descent — not such a one is God. Whatever perils may surround His Church, it is our exceeding consolation that the reins of government are in the hand of One who orders all things after the counsel of His will, who can bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion! Yes, He shall make all the calamities of nations, the troubles of His Church, and the doings of His fiercest enemies pay their tribute unto Him. For the day hastens on apace when the Savior shall come back and take His kingdom for Himself. True it is that now we lift up our eyes to Him,

dwelling in the heavens at the Father's right hand — but it shall not be always thus. "You men of Galilee," said the angel, "Why stand you gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." Jesus shall return in glory, and then shall the evils that beset us flee away forever. All the false glare of the present scene shall fade away. All the attractions of a superstitious and sensuous worship shall be seen to be but vanity. All that has been of faith and love, all that has been the fruit of the Spirit of God, shall abide; and all who have been faithful to the Master shall receive an open reward.

It must have been no small source of gratification to the Highland servants of our Queen, who had been faithful and trusty in their service, when their Sovereign mentioned their names in a work read by so many of her subjects. Just so, what will be the deep, heartfelt gladness of those who shall hear from the lips of One exalted far above an earthly throne, their names confessed and approved by Him, in the presence of His Father and the holy angels! No more shall they then have need to lift up their eyes to the heavens, for they shall dwell there in the mansions of the Father's house. And He to whom when on earth they so often turned, shall dwell among them, and shall be their everlasting Portion!

06.05. The Door Open — and the Door Shut!

The Door Open — and the Door Shut!

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut!" Matthew 25:10

"The door was shut!" What words are these! How solemnly do they fall upon the ear! They remind us of the passing death-bell. They sound as the death knell of precious souls. Yet are they not also words of mercy, of tender pity, of compassionate love? Were they not the words of Him who was Love Incarnate — the God of love clothed in our flesh? And why did Christ speak them? What feeling prompted their utterance? Was it not love — love to the guilty, love to those as yet far from His kingdom? It was as if He would say, "The door is open now, but it is only for a while before it is closed, and forever, enter in and be saved." The door was not shut then, to those who heard Christ speak these words. It is not shut now, to us who read them. Side by side with them may be placed the declaration made to the Church of Philadelphia: "These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens. I know Your works: behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it." (Revelation 3:7-8.) The door open. This is now our blessed privilege. Past years have fled, but the hand of Our God has been over us for good, guarding us in safety through their many dangers. His watchful eye has ever been upon His children, and His everlasting arm beneath them. His patience, His forbearance and long-suffering, have as yet been exercised toward the rebellious: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." (Lamentations 3:22.) The door shut. Even so is it with many who were with us in years past. So will it be with many others before a few months or years more shall have passed away. So will it be with all, for weal or for woe, when the Lord appears as the Judge of the living and the dead.

Look on both sides. May the Spirit of God write upon our inmost souls the twofold message.

I. The Door OPEN.

(1) The door is open to the HOUSE OF GOD. Here, in our Christian land, churches are multiplied, the means of grace increased, special services frequently held, the invitation given continually: "Come and let us go up to the house of the Lord." The door is open — why not enter in? Why are there so many who trample upon Christian ordinances? It was said by one of old, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalms 84:10.)

Here is the meeting-place of God's dear children, high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Here the voice of united prayer arises as a cloud of incense before the throne. Here we begin to lisp the new song of praise to our God, and to the Lamb. Here we hearken to the voice of apostles, prophets, martyrs — yes, to the voice of the Son of God Himself. Here the promise is fulfilled, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Here, in answer to believing prayer, the Spirit is poured forth — a living power rests upon Christ's

ambassador — dead souls are quickened to new life — the soul searching after God, finds rest in Christ — the believer, sore and hindered through temptation, is strengthened and comforted on his way to Zion. Who can number the blessings that may be found in the regular, devout attendance at the house of God?

Oh, do not shut against yourself, by refusing, or neglecting, to enter into this open door! A very wicked woman, in middle life, was warned by the writer not to neglect the means of grace. "I dare say I may come some day," was the reply. The answer was made to her: "Life is uncertain; our time may not be God's time." It proved but too true in her case. Within a few weeks she was carried as a corpse into that church which she refused to enter when alive. The opportunity was past — the door was shut!

(2) The door is open to an eternal FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. Oh, what a high and lofty privilege is this! Who can tell the bliss of being on peaceful terms of friendship with the Most High God? In the friendship of God, what safe guardianship, what sure provision, what wise direction, what loving chastisement, what peace, such as the world gives not! If God is one with me — if He is on my side — if He is indeed my Friend, my reconciled Father — why need I fear? What harm can ever reach me? The great enemy shall not prevail against my soul, fears and sorrows shall not overwhelm me, death shall not terrify me. Oh, what quiet rest of spirit is there in walking through this troublesome world, having by my side an Almighty, an ever-faithful, an ever-loving Friend! But can it be — a sinful man in friendship with the thrice holy Jehovah? Yes. "Enoch walked with God." "Abraham was called the friend of God." The call of mercy is still heard: "Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him." God still waits to be gracious. As the widow left her door unlatched, by day and by night, ever longing for the return of her erring child — so is it with our Father in Heaven. He longs for the return of His wanderers, and is ever ready to welcome them to His bosom. But how can it be? Is not wrath gone out from the Lord? Is it not written, that "the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men"?

How then can God become the Friend of the sinner? Only by virtue of the mediatorial work of Christ. Christ has become our Ransom, our Substitute. Our guilt has been charged to Him, that we, through Him, might be brought near to God. An illustration will bring this home to us. Years ago a ship was wrecked on the shore of one of the Coral Islands. The sailors were cruelly butchered, and the spoil of the ship appropriated by the Islanders. Eighteen months passed away, and an English man-of-war approaches the Island, to demand reparation for the crime. During those eighteen months, the Word of God, for the first time, has been proclaimed there; and now the Islanders feel grieved and ashamed for their former crimes. But what is to be done? They cannot undo the past. They cannot deny the crime which they committed. How can they escape the punishment that is due? They hold a council. One of the tribe addresses them: "Tomorrow the great English captain will come on shore: we cannot deny what we have done; we have no compensation that he will accept. Now, my proposition is this: "Who is there of you that is willing to give up himself to save the rest? Who of you is willing to be sold as a slave, to be put in irons on the ship, or to suffer death, as the captain may choose, so that he may spare our island?" The appeal was not in vain. Four brave men stood forward. They offered to give themselves up to save their nation. The captain was satisfied. The proof of their contrition was so evident, that he freely forgave them, and traded with them. This incident reminds us, in some measure, of the love of

Christ. Our lives were justly forfeited. Our iniquities have brought upon us the righteous displeasure of the great God. But Christ stands forth. He offers Himself as our Ransom. He undertakes to suffer all that may be needful to make atonement for our sins, and to honor God's holy law. He dies an accursed death on our behalf. So God freely forgives us. He receives us back into friendship with Himself. Once strangers, enemies, and rebels to God — we are freely reconciled through the death of His Son. The door is now open: the heart of God is toward us: the great barrier of human guilt is taken out of the way.

Let those who stand without, now enter in. Harken to the call of Christ: "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9.) Do you feel in your heart that you are not happy with God? You regard Him rather as One to be feared, than loved. You have nothing of the spirit and mind of a dear child with a beloved parent. You shrink from His presence, rather than delight in it. But why should this continue? Why should there be this estrangement between you and your merciful Creator? Only be willing to yield up the sin which grieves Him; only acknowledge, with genuine contrition, that you have gone astray, like a lost sheep; only come back with filial confidence through the reconciling blood.

Then believe in your Father's love. Put far away every gloomy suspicion that God may possibly reject you. Rejoice in that blessed exchange which is made whenever the soul relies for acceptance only on Jesus and His salvation. You make over to Him your sins; He makes over to you His glorious righteousness. Oh, what eternal glory does this exchange bring to the Son of God! What eternal gladness and peace to the heart of the sinner!

Then is God evermore your Father and your Friend. Then may you sing along your pilgrimage your cheerful hymn of praise and hope: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2.)

(3) The door is open to the THRONE OF GRACE. Where is the meeting-place between God and His children? Not on a throne of solemn majesty, not on the high throne of universal dominion, not on a throne of strict judgment — but on a throne of grace: "Let us therefore" — that is, having a great and merciful High Priest, "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Well may the assurance of such a means of access embolden us with confidence to draw near!

Imagine for a moment, that on a set day in each year, our beloved Queen were to take her seat upon her throne. She has caused it to be proclaimed far and wide, that on such a day she will be ready to grant all the petitions that may be made to her. What crowds would flock around her! How many would anticipate the hour when they might hope to obtain some long-sought blessing!

Now this sets before us a great reality. What would be impossible in any earthly sovereign, is actually the case with the great and glorious King who reigns in Heaven! His throne of grace is open to the poor and the wretched, to those who feel burdened with ten thousand sins, and troubled by ten thousand needs and sorrows. It is open, not once a year, but every day, every hour, every moment! It is open for the heinous sinner who comes weighed down by the remembrance of a life's transgressions. It is open for the child of God, who comes again and again for the supply of grace which he needs! The way to this throne is all paved with golden promises.

Take but one or two: "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalms 81:10) "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24.) Over that throne, the eye of faith can discern, in letters glittering like the bright stars in Heaven, some such invitations as these:

"Ask, and it shall be given you!

Seek, and you shall find!

Knock, and it shall be opened unto you!"

We have also a merciful and gracious Intercessor. His person as the very and eternal Son of God, His tender sympathy, His all-sufficient merits, His atoning blood — ever the perfect plea of those who trust in it — all assure us that we never can ask in vain. Who can describe the preciousness of the gifts to be obtained at this throne!

Years ago an Indian prince was greatly indebted to one high in authority for the aid and support he had rendered to him. History tells us that the prince desired to give the Englishman some strong proof of the gratitude he bore towards him. He took him into a vast underground chamber, where were collected the most costly and precious jewels — gold and silver almost without limit — treasures such as before the Englishman had never seen. When all these had been displayed before him, the Indian prince bade him to choose whatever he desired — nothing would be denied him. Whatever he named, he might call his own.

There is likewise a rich storehouse of costly treasures which is open to us. Jesus, our great Mediator, holds the key, and opens it to all who ask in His name, and according to His Word.

Even the lukewarm Church of Laodicea, does He invite to partake of these treasures: "I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18.)

Every precious gift is within the reach of the earnest seeker: "We might beg ourselves rich, if only we would stretch out our withered hands to the Friend of sinners."

There are gifts for us concerning this present life. Every solid blessing, every earthly comfort that our hearts can desire, shall be granted in answer to our prayers — if only it is consistent with our highest interests.

There are gifts for us concerning the peace and salvation of our souls. Daily pardon for daily sin, more light to understand the Word of Truth, more strength in the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and to walk with God, more joy and peace in believing, the enduring gold of faith and love, the white clothing of a perfect justification in Christ, the eye salve of Divine wisdom in the knowledge of ourselves and of God — all these are in the hand of Jesus for those who call upon Him.

Gifts for ourselves, gifts for those nearest and dearest to us, gifts for the Church of Christ throughout the world — all are bestowed in answer to fervent believing prayer.

Oh, for grace to enter more frequently, more heartily, by the open door to the mercy seat! "I thank God He has given me a praying heart," were the words often on the lips of a dying Christian girl.

Surely a praying heart is a gift beyond all price, for it opens wide the door to the reception of every other blessing.

Leaning on the Spirit's aid, endeavor to carry out, in daily practice, the four extensions of prayer given by Paul:

1. Pray under all circumstances. (Php 4:6) 2. Pray for all men. (1 Timothy 2:1) 3. Pray in all places. (1 Timothy 2:8) 4. Pray at all times. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Then wait for the answer, and be sure it will come. Praying breath is never lost.

Hannah at Shiloh,

Jehoshaphat in his chariot,

Hezekiah on his sick bed,

Elijah on Mount Carmel,

Nehemiah in the king's palace,

Daniel in Babylon,

Cornelius in Caesarea,

Paul and Silas in the dungeon —

these, and the whole company of redeemed and sanctified souls, bear witness to the faithfulness of God in hearkening to the prayers of His children.

(4) The door is open for SERVICE in Christ's vineyard. The message comes to one and all: "Son, daughter — go work today in My vineyard." The apostle, writing of the opportunity for Christian effort at Ephesus, declares, "A great and effectual door is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Such a great and effectual door is set open before the Church of Christ in our day, and it is true also that the adversaries are many. Great are the efforts of a refined skepticism to uproot the foundations of the Christian faith — denying all that is supernatural — casting aside, as the tradition of a bygone age, such blessed truths as the inspiration of Scripture, and the perfect atonement made for sin in the precious blood of Christ.

Great are the difficulties we must contend with, both in our own sinful hearts and in the world around, if we would faithfully and successfully labor for Christ. Yet in Him is laid up for us all-sufficient grace and strength. First entering in by the open door to the mercy-seat, and thence obtaining from above wisdom and strength — we may enter in at the door of Christ's vineyard, and our work shall not be in vain. Doors of service open around us on every side. There is work for the believer in his own home, to endeavor to gather his own kindred and household into the fold of Christ. There is work in our cities, our towns, our villages, and our retired hamlets, to instruct the ignorant, to convince the gainsayer, to arouse the sinner, to restore the wanderer. There is work in our schools, our workhouses, our jails, our hospitals. There is work among our soldiers and our sailors. There is work in the various mission-fields, now so marvelously opened to us in the providence of God.

Bear in mind that there is no position in life which need hinder us, if only Christ's love is in our hearts, from doing work for Him

"Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoever estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts
To keep and cultivate,
And a work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom I wait."

It may be the faithful pastor, who in public and in private, by the Word of Truth and by a holy life, is ever preaching Christ. Or the patient teacher, who in the school or the family leads a little flock to the Savior's footstool.

It may be the Christian of ample means, who watches narrowly his own expenditure, that he may cast the more into the Lord's treasury.

Or, on the other hand, the servant of Christ in humble life, who quietly, prayerfully, pursues his lowly path, bearing a marked witness for his Master by his consistent conduct, and here and there speaking a word in season, "Content to fill a little space,

If God is glorified."

It may be the traveler who sows beside all waters, dropping by the wayside some word of Christ, or some little printed messenger of peace.

It may be one of the Lord's prisoners — the captive of a sick chamber — who glorifies God by patient submission to His will.

It may be the true sister of mercy, who fills all the house where she dwells with the fragrance of kindness and love, and then goes out into the world's highway by word and deed, to comfort and support the poor and afflicted. Or the mother, who finds her sphere of work chiefly among her children, training up a godly seed, watching and praying anxiously for their soul's welfare, and walking before them in the narrow path.

Oh, Christian, go work for Christ while you may! By word or by letter, by your cheerful gifts, by your prayers, by your influence with others — in some way or other do good service in Christ's vineyard.

It is a service full of blessing. There is a reward now, in the joy of the service itself. There is a still higher reward hereafter, in souls saved, and in the Master's approval. It is written, "He who waters shall be watered also himself." (Proverbs 11:25.) "If any man serve Me let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve Me — him will my Father honor." (John 12:26.)

"Make haste, O man, to do

Whatever must be done;

You have no time to lose in sloth —

Your day will soon be gone.

"The seed whose leaf and flower,

Though poor in human sight,

Bring forth at last the eternal fruit —

So sow both day and night."

(5) The door is open to the EVERLASTING KINGDOM. When Jesus had overcome the sharpness of death — He opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. None are shut out who seek for admittance now in the name of the great Mediator. The door is open to the least, and to the greatest — to the little child who has learned to lisp the Savior's name, and to the aged believer who falls asleep after long service in the vineyard. The dying thief, who in deep contrition sought mercy in his last hour, and the Apostle of the Gentiles, who spent years in toils and sufferings for Christ — both knocked and were admitted. Here is the final blessing, the perfect enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and the Son, the full answer to every faithful prayer, the full recompense for every toil and gift. Here the voice of the Beloved shall greet us with a joyful welcome: "Well done, good and faithful servant — enter into the joy of your Lord!"

II. The Door SHUT. The glorious privilege of an open door remains not with us forever. Now the means of grace abound; a voice of tender compassion entreats the sinner to lay down his arms and be at peace with God; repeated invitations allure us to the mercy-seat; doors of usefulness are every day set before us, Heaven's gate stands open. Whoever will, may enter in. But the time is short. With each of us, the sands of life are quickly running out. Friends, neighbors, relations are gone to their long home — and we are treading fast upon their heels. A man spoke once of the means of his conversion to God: "I looked into my wife's grave," he said, "and I thought 'That is the way I too am going.'" Let us speak thus to our hearts: as we look into the graves of those called away, let us remember we must soon follow along the same path. The coming of the Son of man is also hastening on. How many years may roll round, or how few, before that great crisis arrives — who can foretell? At the longest we can scarcely imagine it to be very far distant. Then at least, with all mankind, will the day of grace be past — the door will be shut.

How was it in the days of Noah? They ate, they drank, they married — the preacher of righteousness sounded in vain a loud call to repentance, the hundred and twenty years of God's patient longsuffering passed by, the family of the patriarch are safely gathered within the enclosure of the prepared refuge; then "the Lord shut him in" — "the door was shut." So shall it be when the Lord's chosen ones have been gathered within the true ark: when every one of His elect, by the mighty power of the Spirit, have found eternal safety in Christ. Then the once despised Nazarene shall appear in His glory, and the door will be shut. Hearken to Christ's own words in the parable of the ten virgins: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him." The foolish virgins discover too late how unprepared they are. Their lamps are gone out, and they have no oil in the vessel. They go to buy, if perchance even now they may be in time; but what happens?

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour!" Matthew 25:10-13

"The door was shut." Here again do we see mercy and judgment mingled together. What a thought of exceeding consolation is suggested by the shut door! Look within that shut door. Oh, what joy unspeakable, what security, what fellowship with the Father and the Son! "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The shut door has forever excluded every possible evil. There shall be . . .

no more temptation,
no more wanderings from God,
no more racking pains,
no more heart-aches,
no more sighing and sadness because of iniquity around,
no more distressing anxieties or bitter disappointments,
no more partings,
no more death!

"God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:4

Within that shut door, is found every member of the household of faith. The whole family of God, once separated by a thousand barriers of earth, by seas and continents, by diversity of opinion, by rank and position in life — are now gathered together within the many mansions of the Father's house.

Abel the first martyr,
Enoch who for three hundred years and more walked with God,
Abraham the father of the faithful,
Moses the lawgiver of Israel,
the three righteous ones, Noah, Daniel, and Job,
David the man after God's own heart,
the glorious company of the apostles,
the goodly fellowship of the prophets,
the noble army of martyrs and missionaries,
the pastor and his flock,

the diligent worker,

the patient sufferer,

the busy Marthas and the devout Marys who have both truly loved the Savior — all shall sit down together in the kingdom of God. And Jesus Himself, the chief among ten thousand, is there in the midst! Who can tell the joy that the immediate presence of the Redeemer will bring to myriads of happy spirits? Have you never felt what a ray of sunshine entered your home when some loving disciple of Christ sat down and conversed with you of the things of God? What then will it be when the very Sun of Righteousness — He who is the Fountain-head of all those excellencies which shine forth in His people — shall Himself be visibly present with you?

Here, too, in "the shut door," have we the assurance of the abiding, unchangeable security of the redeemed. "The shut door" forever forbids the possibility that any shall fall away, as the angels once fell from their high estate. It is written, "Him that overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." (Revelation 3:12.) With saints and angels — yes, with the Lamb Himself — shall the saved be eternally shut in. But look for a moment on the OUTER side of the shut door: "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood!" Revelation 22:15

What a strangely mingled company are gathered together there! The unjust — and the unholy! The criminal whose course on earth was cut short by the hand of the executioner — and the man who blameless before his fellow-man, had yet trampled on the holy Law of God! The open despiser of Christ and His people — and the clever hypocrite who deceived all but God! The wicked, the profane, the profligate, the dishonest — side by side with the respectable worldling, the amiable trifler, the slave of fashion, the lover of pleasure, the secret worshiper of Mammon! The kind neighbor who knew not and loved not Christ, nor trusted in His salvation. Oh, how fearful to many of the unsaved will be that mingling together, in one awful company, of those who have never been one with Christ; and who, with many differences, have alike never experienced the regenerating power of the Spirit of God! And where shall their lot be cast? Outside the marriage feast — and within the prison house of God's everlasting wrath! Within that dark abode of wretchedness and woe and despair, where no ray of hope can ever come! Where the lips that cannot lie have told us, that there "the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched." The door was shut — never to be re-opened. Many are asking, "Shall there not be an end? Shall the punishment of the sinner indeed be for evermore? When years, centuries, and ages have rolled by, may we not hope that the mercy of God may discover some way of escape, so that all at length may find repose in the bosom of the great Parent?" We would hope it — but we may not — we dare not! That Word, upon which hangs our every hope, has declared it otherwise. He has said, "The door was shut!" He has told us of the cry of those unprepared: "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the shut door cannot be re-opened. The answer is decisive: "Truly I say unto you, I know you not." In the very same sentence has He proclaimed the bliss of those on the right hand, and the doom of those on the left, to be of equal duration, and that forever: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment — but the righteous unto everlasting life!" (Matthew 25:46.)

"The door was shut." "What door?" asks one. "That door now open to those who come from the east and the west, the north and the south — that door which says, "Him that comes unto Me, I will never cast out." Behold how now that door is open — which shall then be closed evermore.

Murderers come, and are admitted. Profligate sinners come, and they are received. The wicked, the sexually immoral, the idolaters, the adulterers, the homosexual offenders, the thieves, the drunkards come — and the open door does not deny itself to them! For Christ Himself is the door — infinite to pardon, almighty to save.

What says Christ now? "I am the door! By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." What says He then? 'The door is shut.' No one's penitence, no one's prayers, no one's groanings shall any more be admitted. The door is shut which received . . .

Aaron after idolatry,

David after adultery,

Manasseh after murder,

Peter after his three-fold denial!

"Once the owner of the house gets up and shuts the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God — but you yourselves thrown out!" Luke 13:25-28

It is the voice of a merciful Redeemer that calls forth His people to work in His vineyard. When in Egypt the taskmasters bade the Israelites go forth to their hard toil, it was but in hopeless despair that they betook themselves to their work. But it is the voice of love which we hear. He who says, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven," says also to each of His forgiven ones, "Son, go work today in my vineyard."

Hence is it as a privilege, rather than as a duty, we hear and obey the call. Let us picture to ourselves the prodigal son in the parable, who had been so lovingly welcomed home. Let us imagine, on the day following his return, his father pointing out to him some needful work in the field, and desiring him to perform it. With what gladsome heart, with what willing feet, would he have fulfilled his father's bidding! He would not have said, "I will go, sir," while yet he went not. Neither would he have refused, even for a time, the command given to him. Rather would he with the utmost alacrity at once have accepted, and immediately have gone forth to accomplish the work. In such a spirit let us hear God's message to us. Forgetting the things which are behind — let us reach forth unto those which are before. Let us heartily and cheerfully labor in the Lord's vineyard. The Master has given to every man his work. The time for doing it is but short. If it is left undone, how shall we meet the Master at His appearing, and give account of the talents He has committed to us? The subject is a very practical one, and of immense importance to Christ's Church, and the welfare of His people. Sloth, idleness, indifference to the cause of truth and the good of others — is a canker, a rust that greatly injures the gold and silver vessels of the Lord's house. While active, laborious, self-denying work for Christ brings its reward, even now, in an increased measure of spiritual life.

How may Christian people labor happily, effectively, successfully in the Lord's vineyard? The utmost I can hope to do is to offer a few suggestions in answer to this inquiry, which by God's

grace may afford some direction to those who are seeking it.

1. Christ's work for us, and not our work for Him — must be the sole ground of all our hope and confidence. Not the labor of our hands, not our gifts or prayers or tears, not our zeal or self-denial — but Christ's great work of redemption is the sure resting-place for the soul of each sinful child of Adam. For what could be our merit? What do we have, that we have not received? What are we but stewards — whether of life, ability, talents, wealth, influence, or anything else that we can employ for God. Could we do all commanded to us, as we never can — yet what are we then but unprofitable servants. What reparation can we make for the neglects and misdeeds of days and years gone by? How can we undo the evil already wrought? Shall I tell those who have been wasting their substance, and forgetting the claims of their Savior and their God, that by double diligence in the future they may atone for the past, and weave for themselves a garment that will shield them from the divine justice which they have provoked? Nay, what were this but to set at naught the very purpose of the Redeemer's death?

If you ask, "By what work may former sin be blotted out, and my conscience be clear from guilt?" I would answer plainly and simply, "The work completed long ago, when Jesus died and rose again. That work is perfect and all-sufficient, and you cannot add to it.

He bore your sin;

He endured your penalty;

He paid your ransom;

He wrought out for you a glorious righteousness — in this alone you must stand. To know and realize this will be your joy and strength. Strongly lean on the promise of life through Christ crucified; firmly believe that the penitent sinner, taking hold of Christ's blood, will never be cast away. With all humility, trusting thus in the death and obedience of your Surety, you will have a freeness of heart, and a motive for labor, which nothing else can possibly supply.

2. Christ's Spirit working in us is our great qualification in working for Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-22, the Apostle Paul very clearly sets forth the position which good works occupy in a Christian's life. He bids the Ephesian Church remember that they are saved by grace through faith. This salvation is bestowed gratuitously. It is not the purchase of their doings, but the gift of God to be received by the hand of faith: "not of works, lest any man should boast." But is there no place left for works? Is it possible to be saved without such? Nay, for it is the very object for which men are created anew in Christ Jesus: it is the very path which God has marked out for men to tread. It is not the instrument of salvation, but the end of it. It is not the way to obtain life, but the sure result wherever God works within the soul: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." As the potter takes the clay and molds it according to his will to form a vessel for himself, so does God by His own Spirit take hold of a sinful child of Adam. He . . .

reveals to him sin in its true character, brings home to him in power the knowledge of His own marvelous love, manifests to him the exceeding great and precious promises of the Word, opens out before him the glorious prospect of the everlasting kingdom. And thus God creates within him new desires, new dispositions, filial confidence, grateful love, fervent zeal and humble charity —

the marks of His own image formed within the soul.

Hence the Spirit's presence must be our chief qualification in Christ's work. For whatever we do, our Father's eye rests not on the outward deed, but on the spirit in which it is performed, and on the motive that prompts it. With a bright light placed before the eye, the physician can discern, by means of the ophthalmoscope, that which is amiss on the innermost retina. Just so, does our God search out the most secret feelings that lurk within the breast. And only as He sees our works done out of true love to Him, does He accept them at our hands. Moreover, it is the Spirit who stirs up and quickens the heart to self-denying effort, who suggests plans of usefulness, and gives the needful wisdom and grace to carry them out. From first to last He is the great Worker, and we work in Him and with Him and for Him. As in machinery there is a central force which moves all the various wheels and rods, and then each in its place performs its proper part, even so does the grace of Christ's Spirit inspire and move Christian hearts, working in us both to will and to do after God's good pleasure. Be this, Christian, your strength and your dependence. Lean on the Spirit's aid — cast yourself wholly upon His ready help. For wisdom and for boldness,

for love to the Master and compassion for the souls,

for perseverance in work already in hand,

or for grace to attempt fresh labors —

do all in the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord."

3. We must each one be workers:

not idlers,

not talkers,

not merely framers of plans and theories,

not murmurers because others do so little —

but busy, active, diligent workers in the vineyard.

Far too much time is wasted in surmising what we might effect in some other position, or under other circumstances, if we had the means possessed by someone else, or the leisure or influence possessed by another; or perhaps questioning whether it were possible to do some necessary work. Be sure there is some work you can do, and the best way to learn how to do it is to go and try. The practical experience of half an hour will probably do more than weeks of previous consideration. I am not speaking against due forethought in work, for we are told to prepare our work before-hand, and afterwards to build our house. But I do speak against weeks and months being thrown away because persons are hesitating and considering so long that the time for the effort is past. The point I urge is this: you have a work to do, a great work, and you must strive to discover what it is, and then labor hard in the doing of it.

There are nearly five hundred joints, small or great, in the human body. If each joint does not perform its due function, the whole body suffers. Just so is it in the body of Christ. Each member has his place, and if he neglects his work, it will be left undone, to his loss, the dishonor of Christ,

and the great injury of His Church. An earnest Church must be a thoroughly working Church, with all its members animated by one spirit; like the bees in a hive — all busy each in his own department, and all adding to the common stock of devoted labor for Christ, His Church and the world. Over the portals of every church should be inscribed, "Let no man enter here who is not determined to be holy and useful."

4. We must not hold back from the work to which God is calling us, because of our own insufficiency.

Perhaps the reason why Christians so often shrink back from working for Christ, is because they are not content to be simply instruments in God's hand for doing whatever He will by them. They wish to do something themselves, instead of being willing that God should take them and use them in any way that He sees fit. To be an earthen cup, which the owner may fill with water and pass round to the guests and then lay aside on the shelf; or to be a pen which must be first made, then filled with ink, often cut and sharpened, held by the hand, and only employed to write the thoughts of him who holds it — to be willing to be something like this in God's hand may not be very flattering to our pride, but it is the only way in which we can expect to be useful.

It is only thus God will make use of us to give to others the living water, or to write His epistles, and to inscribe His thoughts on the tablet of human hearts. And for our consolation, let us remember that when in felt weakness and insufficiency we go at the Master's bidding to do something in His service, we shall probably reap much blessing on our own souls, while also He prospers the effort we make for Him.

5. We must take a wide view of the field of labor. If only the eye be open to survey it, it stretches out before us in every direction. Nowhere can we turn, but there is a call to work.

There is work for Christ at our own fireside. We have to commend Christ to our own kindred, and to any who may dwell under the same roof with us. We must watch for opportunities of speaking a word in due season — a wise word, a kind word, and at the right moment.

Yet I am persuaded it is here that consistent, holy living counts far more than words. A holy life preaches every hour, and scatters a sweet savor of Christ to influence those we love. If our words for Christ are but few, yet our holy example should give them a meaning and weight that leaves a deep impression. It were well if every hour and every moment we could let others perceive in us something of Christ.

There is a simple Persian fable that may teach us the value of this. A man takes within his hand a piece of scented clay. "You smell very sweetly — what are you?" he asks. "I am only a piece of clay," is the reply; "but I have been near a rose, and the rose has given me its own sweet scent." Would that we could keep near the Rose of Sharon, and then so live in spirit, in temper, in charity, in self-denial, in gentleness — that others might take knowledge of us that we have been with Christ!

We have work to do in the congregation to which we belong. I know of no more important duty for each Christian than striving to be a real strength in the church where he may worship. Too many, alas, are our weakness and our sorrow. They hear the Word and that is all. In vain do we look to them for hearty worship within God's house, or for ready sympathy and aid in the work of the

parish. The various institutions that need willing hands and helpers, are left without the assistance they so urgently require. Let it not be thus with any reader of these pages. Let your pastor know and feel that to the utmost of your ability, you will take your place by his side and strengthen his hand in God's work. Let him feel that he can thoroughly depend upon your influence being exerted for good, and your willingness to fill up a niche where you may be of use. There are funds to be collected, school children to be gathered in and instructed, the sick to be cared for, church functions to be arranged perhaps, and numberless other things which will impede the work of the pastorate, and prevent his being at liberty for spiritual duties — unless you are willing to do your part in assisting him.

We have work to do in the dwellings of the rich and the poor. Never forget that your friends who have large means and live in much comfort, have equal need to know Christ and His salvation — as those that have the least of this world's good. And sometimes they have still more need of a word of faithful and friendly counsel, because their position stands in the way of the plain-speaking they require. Much may be done in such a case, though it demands special wisdom. By a letter or by a book lent or given, you may often make some impression. And as death and sickness and trial visit the homes of all alike — there will occur the opportunity you desire of speaking personally a word in season. A clergyman more than once is refused admittance to the house of an officer who had lately lost a beloved child. Still he repeats the call, and finds an open door for speaking to him of Him who alone can give true consolation. By the grace of God the message is made of lasting benefit, and in the end great spiritual blessings result, both to the family and the parish of him who so faithfully witnessed for Christ. And is there not a crying need for fresh work to be done among our working population? In any parish, town or country, in any part of the land, is there not enough to awaken our deepest compassion, as we behold such numbers living without the least regard to His word? In spite of all past efforts, very small is the proportion of those who ever enter the walls of God's house, while intemperance and kindred evils abound and increase.

What can be done? Could not more work be done by means of special services for working people in churches or in school-rooms? Could there not be found visitors who would take an interest in a few families — say six or eight — and search out thoroughly that which in each case is the hindrance, and strive by personal kindness and influence to lift some at least of these a step higher? Might there not be more general efforts to save the young, and perseveringly to sow the good seed in their hearts, that in spite of all hindrances, might in many cases bring a harvest of blessing? These little ones have hitherto known nothing but either foolish indulgence or harsh words and hasty blows — who shall say what might be effected by the omnipotence of kindness? No doubt great difficulties stand in the way, yet by earnest zeal and faith in God's power, the mountain might be leveled, and trophies won for Christ.

There is work to be done in resisting to the very utmost of our power the perilous errors which on all sides beset us. The law of love never bids us shut our eyes, or close our lips when false teaching is rife. Nay, to oppose it is the truest charity. For if truth is the soul's food, and ignorance is the soul's starvation — it is equally true that error in things essential to salvation, is the soul's poison. Hence, where is the charity of leaving men to drink in those unscriptural views which are so widely taught, without pointing out the danger to which they are exposed? The doctrine of the Presence of Christ in the sacramental elements, and a sacrificial offering, leading on to an adoration which we fear in God's sight is nothing better than worshiping an idol within His temple

— hymns sung to Mary, leading on most surely to all the creature-worship of the Romish Church — the authority of Holy Scripture either set at nothing and rejected openly, or with more specious subtlety its power to control the conscience undermined — such evils as these demand the perpetual vigilance of all faithful men, lest in judgment, God permits our light to go out and the candlestick be removed from the midst of us.

There is work to be done for the lands far off from us. The wild wastes of heathendom still need to be reclaimed. But a fringe of light at best, or a little ray of Gospel truth illumines vast Islands and Continents. Think of Asia. Out of some eight hundred million, as they have been computed, at the utmost there are but ten million who bear the name of Christ; leaving seventy million as followers of the false prophet, and more than seven hundred million as pagan idolaters.

"But they are far away, and I have work nearer home." True: but let me ask you, if you are an honest man — would you refuse to pay a debt because the one to whom it was due lived on the other side of the globe? Would it not as much be your duty faithfully to pay it, as if he lived within a few doors of your own home? And has not God laid it as a debt on all who have received His Gospel, to send the knowledge of it to the uttermost parts of the earth?

Oh, think of the heathen in Africa, in China, in India and elsewhere; they have sins oftentimes troubling the conscience, as you have; they have their cares and heart-rending sorrows, they have death to face and a judgment seat before which they must appear, but they know not that which God has taught you; they know not of the all-cleansing fountain, and the all-sufficient grace and the all-consoling love which support and comfort you. Think of them. Pray for them. Send to them the light that shines into your heart. He who has this world's good — and still more, he who has that which is good for both worlds — and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his affections of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? In laboring in any of these portions of Christ's vineyard, joyfully accept the least and humblest task which the Master may assign to you. Wait not for great opportunities, but be on the look-out perpetually to do some little where you may. It is not lost labor . . .

to wipe away the tear of a child,

to carry a burden for a weary one,

to remove a stray weed,

to drop in a single grain of good seed,

to strengthen some tendril of the true vine which may have been loosened by some wind of temptation,

to be a hewer of wood or a drawer of water,

to shine like a glow-worm if not like a star,

to remove a stone which might make a little one to stumble,

to give a cup of cold water to one that is thirsty,

or by a kind word to comfort a cheerless heart.

Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, was found on his death-bed instructing a little child to read, and when asked why he would not now be content to rest, he said that he desired God would make him useful, and though he had no longer strength to preach, he had strength to teach a child, and therefore he gladly did it. "Mind not high things — but condescend to men of low estate."

Together with this let there be a holy ingenuity in discovering means of doing good. What you cannot effect in one way, see if you cannot in another. It may be that for six days your necessary business prevents your doing much direct work in Christ's vineyard, but can you not give an hour or two on Sunday? You may feel great difficulty in speaking to others, but can you not write a letter that might be useful to a friend or relation, or might you not scatter hither and there Christian publications, or carefully selected tracts, or even at times a book that might do real good? There are Christian men who give each Christmas, a large number of very valuable works to their workmen and others, and it might bring much blessing if many more followed their example.

I throw out these suggestions for your consideration. Let the love of Christ constrain you, and then in some way, and in the best way, you will do His work.

Then let there be quiet, steady perseverance in all you undertake. Let not your zeal be damped by difficulties or apparent failure at first. Never turn back. Never give up. Some seed is long under-ground and the gardener has to exercise long patience before the precious harvest is gathered in. "He who believes, shall not make haste." "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." To crown all, let your work be carried on in a spirit of expectant, believing prayer.

There may be much toil in the garden — seed may be sown, the soil broken up, weeds removed, and much beside. But if there be no life-giving showers and no genial sunshine, what will be the profit? And what will be the result of any work we may attempt for Christ, unless in answer to the prayers of His servants He sends down the rain of His grace, the dews of His Spirit, and the warm, cheering beams of His love? Whatever be left undone, let the work of prayer never be neglected. For our congregations at home,

for those gathered from among the heathen abroad,

for the children and servants in the family,

for the young collected together in our National and Sunday schools,

for the Spirit of God to rest on those in high positions in our land,

for the same Spirit to awaken the masses who are living without God and without hope

— for all this let us fervently and unceasingly supplicate Him who is the Author and Giver of all good, and who delights in the prayers of His believing people.

It may be well for Christ's workers to call to mind the sure consolation which He affords them in His service. On all sides there is much to depress and discourage. Our own insufficiency, the little fruit we may have seen from that which we have already attempted, the threatening aspect of the future, and the exceeding uncertainty as to the course which events may take both in the Church, in our country and in the world; these things may well tempt us to look on the darker side — yet

there is a bright light in the clouds if only we have an eye to see it. Is it not our exceeding consolation in all work for Christ — that He Himself takes a far deeper interest in its success than we can? It is His work, not ours; and therefore we may leave results confidently in His hands. We may also be well assured that while we act at His bidding, and in reliance upon His aid — He will stand by His servants and afford them a cheering sense of His tender sympathy.

We are told that two parallel nerves pass from each part of the body to the head: by one, the head perceives that which affects the particular member — by the other the head directs the action of that member. Just so, let the Christian remember that in our Exalted Head, Christ Jesus, there is both a similar sympathy and a similar power of direction. He feels for the very least of His people. That which touches them, touches Him — yes, touches, as it were, the apple of His eye. You may be tempted, or opposed and hindered, or by infirmity prevented from doing the work you would otherwise love to do. Yet Jesus understands it all — He accepts the will for the deed. He reckons as faithful service your feeble efforts to do something for His name, yes, and your patient endurance of pain or sorrow, if such is your appointed lot — is as truly work for Him as the active labor of the young missionary who journeys thousands of miles to preach His Gospel.

Then, too, He grants direction. He guides and disposes those who are at work for Him — ordering their path, opening out, as He will, opportunity for good, and then showing them in what way they may employ the opportunity He presents. May we not also regard it as a most cheering consideration, amidst all our trials and perplexities from the present condition of Christ's Church, that the Lord will carry out to their full completion His own bright designs, and manifest by and by, how surely all His counsels are wisdom and truth and faithfulness.

Never shall I forget an evening spent on the Riffelberg, in the southern part of Switzerland. The rolling masses of dark cloud came up from beneath, and hid from sight the magnificent peak of the Matterhorn. I felt for the moment as if I had lost a friend. But as I watched to discover if possible any traces of its form, gradually the clouds passed by, its glorious head stood out as if touching the sky above, the outline of the right side became visible, and at length the whole prospect was clear, and the grand old mountain was seen if possible more beautiful than before, for the clouds which for a time had concealed it from view.

Even thus, I thought, shall it be with the truth and faithfulness of our God. The unbelief, the doubt, the multiplied errors of the present day — whence come they? Is it not from beneath — from the ignorance and infirmity of man, and the cunning devices of our subtle adversary? And though they seem to obscure for a short season the bright and blessed hopes which are the heritage of Christ's Church, though they bring darkness and sorrow of heart, and greatly distress the minds of God's people — yet by and by they shall pass away. "Our God is the Rock; His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment. A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." The trials of the present shall prepare the way for the coming of the Son of Man. When darkest falls the night, when most gloomy is the horizon — He will come, and all shall be changed. Then shall it be seen that more firm and stable than that mountain peak, is His fidelity to His Word and people. And more glorious shall be the kingdom which He shall introduce for all that has before hindered and opposed its progress.

Let us therefore learn "to labor and to wait." Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Let our prayer arise

perpetually, that He whom we desire to serve would manifest His power and grace in us and by us. "Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish You the work of our hands upon us — yes, the work of our hands establish it."

06.06. Strength for the Strengthless

Strength for the Strengthless

It is a peculiar excellence of the Gospel of Christ, that it describes man exactly as he is, and brings near to him, exactly as it finds him, the gift of a free and complete salvation.

Imagine a man fallen into a deep pit. It were in vain to tell him that if he had taken heed to his steps, he would never have fallen therein. It were in vain to warn him against falling again, if he once escapes alive. It were equally in vain to promise him that if he would endeavor by his own efforts to climb its precipitous sides, you would assist him as he neared the top. But it would not be in vain if you let down a ladder or a strong rope reaching to the very spot where he was, and then bade him avail himself of the means provided for his rescue.

It was most suitable help that Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, and the thirty men with him, afforded to Jeremiah, when they let down into the cistern where he was sinking in the mire, the cords with which they drew him out, and thus preserved his life. (Jeremiah 38:1-28)

Let us apply the illustration to our own condition. Man has fallen — deeply, terribly. He has fallen . .

from holiness — to sin,

from fellowship with God — to a state of alienation and enmity,

from a home in paradise — to the peril of being cast forever into the bottomless pit. And whence can our help come? There are systems that can give excellent rules of moral conduct, that can promote a partial reformation of life and manners, that can do something for those who might be able first to raise themselves; but all this is of little avail to those who, like ourselves, are by nature altogether unholy and condemned. This is but to give counsel to the man in the pit, or at least to promise him aid which is very insufficient. But Christ is mighty to help and deliver. Who can tell the length of His saving arm? It reaches the very spot where we are. He not merely counsels us to walk in the right way, or promises to assist those who first help themselves — but He comes near with grace and help to the sinner at the time of his utmost misery and need. He calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He receives sinners, even the chief; forgiving all their iniquities, and healing all their infirmities. He cries to the children of men, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help."

He tells them that they are lost, guilty, and polluted; blind, wretched, poor, and naked; helpless and undone, without strength to rise above the evil; yes, captives of the prince of darkness, and dead in trespasses and sins! And then He offers to raise them from this condition to glory, honor and immortality! He bids them yield themselves up into His hand, to be saved and sanctified by Him; and He undertakes to do the whole work from first to last. He will give all they need:

eye-salve for the recovering of sight,

white clothing for their nakedness,
the finest gold for their poverty,
pardon for all their guilt,
cleansing for all their pollution,
freedom for bondage, and
life spiritual and eternal to those dead in sin.

Hence it is our part in all sincerity to welcome this great salvation, to give full credit to the word of promise and invitation, not to put it aside because of personal demerit, failure, inability, or the like — but on all these accounts the more gladly to accept it; to rest upon it as most sure and stable, and to expect its fulfillment in due season. This is to enter in by the door that God has opened, and to take hold of the covenant which He has made with us in Christ.

Among the precious benefits of the covenant of grace, there is nothing that more demands our thankfulness than the strength promised to the strengthless. "As your days — so shall your strength be." "The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people." "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the Lord." In the fortieth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, we have a very gracious promise of strength to the feeble and the fearful, and a promise, too, peculiarly applicable to the commencement of a new year. "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:28-31 The utter insufficiency of man stands out very prominently in this passage. A man, through loss of blood, or for some other cause, is ready to faint; who can be weaker than he is at that moment? Yet to such a one is the promise made: "He gives power to the faint." It is not those who have a fair amount of strength for ordinary circumstances — it is not for those who boast a little strength which needs to be supplemented, but it is "to those who have no might, He increases strength."

Never forget that man has no inherent strength whatever. "When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." "We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." There is nothing in man's nature to prevent a lapse into the grossest iniquities. A rod will stand so long as your hand is upon it; but remove the hand, and it falls in a moment. Adam, created in holiness, yet fell when left to himself. Hezekiah, when God left him to try him, yielded to the very first temptation. Peter, glorying in his superior faithfulness and zeal, yet brings dishonor upon the Master, and denies Him with oaths and curses.

"Fear not, worm, Jacob." Isaiah 41:14 A very striking emblem of the feebleness of man, is given by the Prophet Isaiah. He is likened to a worm that creeps on the ground. The idea is very suggestive.

It reminds us that man is defiled. "How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure? If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes — how much less man, who is but a worm!" Job 25:4-6

It reminds us that man is earth-bound. His soul cleaves to the dust. His treasure and his heart is below. I have heard of one in India who found a large clod of earth in a field, and who took it home, saying that it would be his God; and who from that day to his old age, spent his time and money in adorning a temple where he worshiped it. That man stood not alone in his folly. Until the heart is quickened by divine grace, every man makes an idol of a lump of clay.

It may be in the shape of gold,

it may be earthly comforts,

it may be a child,

it may be self.

Whatever it is, it is of the earth, earthy. The emblem reminds us that man is akin to dust. "He says to corruption, You are my father; to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." The sentence abides unrepealed: "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." And what so feeble as the worm? What power has it of defense or attack? What power has it to resist one who would trample upon it? And where is man's strength? Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail — how can we resist or overcome a single foe?

Very wholesome may be the remembrance of this. Strange is it that man should glory in anything that he possesses. What has he to glory in, that he has not first received? What has he who belongs to earth, from which he must not soon part? O that we might learn deeper humility! O that we might cast away those inner reliances, those inner confidences in our own powers that keep us from leaning all our weight on an Almighty arm, that keep us from looking out of self to Him who is the Lord of all power and might!

Here is the reason that many sink lower and lower, from one depth of iniquity to another, into hopeless miseries and sorrows, into divers temptations, at length, it may be, into utter despair, into irretrievable ruin, and finally into the deep ocean of God's wrath and fiery indignation! "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." Such live without prayer, without God, without any dependence on the only strength that can uphold them, for they trust in human resources; they are secretly propped up by an idea of something in self that can support — so they fall at length, and fall to rise no more.

Man's wisdom is to seek

His strength in God alone;

For e'en an angel would be weak,

Who trusted in his own. And now let us mark how the Almighty Jehovah links Himself to His weak and faltering creature — links His unfailing strength to our feebleness — takes this worm into His hand, as it were, so that in His might we conquer and triumph. He is . . .

the God of all comfort, (Isaiah 40:1)

the God who freely pardons iniquity (Isaiah 40:2);

the God who tenderly cares for His flock (Isaiah 40:11);

the God in whose sight all nations are as nothing (Isaiah 40:15);

the God who creates all the host of Heaven, and calls them by their names by the greatness of His might, because He is strong in power (Isaiah 40:26);

He is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faints not, neither is weary;

He is the God of unerring wisdom, of whose understanding there is no searching. (Isaiah 40:28)
And He brings all this unfailing, everlasting grace, wisdom, and might, to support . . .

those who are cast down,

those who have neither wisdom nor strength,

those who are ready to stumble, and unable to resist a single foe, or advance a single step.

He says, "I am near you, yes, I am with you, to hold you by your right hand. I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you. I will give you power, I will increase your strength, I will make you stronger than all your foes, so that you shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

It is important to remember that this grace and strength is laid up in Christ, and imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Through Christ alone, does the Father send help from above. His death has purchased it. His intercession ensures it. He beholds His people in all their straits and dangers, and sends down each moment the strength they need — and this is actually imparted by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Believers are strengthened "with might by the Spirit in the inner man."

He brings near to them the promises of the Word;

He makes the presence of Christ to be a felt reality;

He nerves the soul with patient endurance in suffering;

He strengthens faith, hope, and love —

and so enables them to stand fast in the Lord, and to be more than conquerors through Him.

We must remember also that a single-hearted dependence on the Lord, and continual waiting upon Him in believing prayer, is the never-failing means of securing the aid that is promised. "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Quietly, perseveringly to wait on the Lord with a confiding assurance that none shall seek in vain — this is to be our perpetual resource.

It is said that the creditor in India will sometimes remain at the door of the man who owes him a debt, and will sit there for hours, and refuse to leave until he obtains that which he seeks. Just so, it were well for us to go thus and sit at God's door, with continual importunity waiting upon Him, beseeching Him to endue us mightily with grace and strength. He would not be angry with us, He

would not reckon us troublesome suitors — but though all the debt be on our side, He would amply reward our perseverance, and give us — not the crumbs that fall from His table — but the richest provision that His house contains. And how marvelous is the change that is wrought when a man is endued with strength and power from on high! In himself is he as the worm. In the might of God he is as the eagle soaring upward to the skies, or as the giant rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Mark how the promise speaks: "those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

Wonderful is the transformation from the worm — to the eagle and the giant! Those once debased, cleaving only to the things of earth — have strength given to rise upward to hold converse with the Father, and to sit in heavenly places with Christ. Those once paralyzed by sin, having neither the power nor the desire to tread the path of life — now . . .

walk unweariedly in the Lord's ways,
run with patience and zeal the heavenly race,
and win the crown of glory and immortality!

We might illustrate by the story of David's conflict with Goliath, the promise that God makes of imparting strength to the strengthless. The hosts of Israel and Philistia are ready to go forth to the battle. Then comes forth the threatening Philistine with vaunting air and vain-glorious boastings, to defy the armies of the Lord. "Who will fight with me?" says he. "Give me a man, that we may fight together." Is there one bold enough, brave enough to accept the challenge? Is there one to be found who will venture to stand up against the champion of the enemy?

Yes, a shepherd lad — one who has just come from feeding his father's sheep. While all the men of war flee away in fear and terror — the youthful son of Jesse enters the lists. His spirit is stirred within him, his courage is awakened as he hears the dishonor which an uncircumcised Philistine casts upon the living God. With no boasting words, but with steadfast reliance upon an Almighty arm, he goes forth into the valley to meet the giant. He is girt with no sword, he carries no spear or shield, he wears no coat of armor — but he goes forth clad in the whole armor of God, and has for his defense the shield of faith. Was ever nobler word uttered by man than that which David addressed to his adversary? What immovable confidence has he in the name of the Lord! He says to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield — but I come to you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day will the Lord deliver you into my hand — and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands!"

We wait for the outcome. Not long need we delay. Goliath thinks to crush his youthful foe in a moment, as a man treads a worm beneath his feet — but never was he more deceived. The worm becomes the giant! David was weak — yet was he strong. His own arm was feeble, but he was strengthened by the arm of Omnipotence. So he slays the Gittite with the sling and the stone which he had despised, and cuts off the giant's head with the very sword in which he had trusted. So Israel triumphs, and Philistia is discomfited; and women come out of all the cities of Israel, singing the praises of the one who had thus saved their country from the enemy they feared. (1 Samuel 17:1-58) The narrative shows the strength which the Christian may look for in the conflict

which he has to maintain. The servant of the Lord has ever a battle to fight. To no life of quiet ease, to no course of self-indulgent rest — is the Christian called. David warring with the giant is a true picture of the struggle for which each Christian must prepare. When a man is awakened by the Spirit to feel his exceeding sinfulness, he is invited at once to draw near to Christ. He is freely received, welcomed, loved, forgiven, the very moment that he thus in faith commits himself to the grace and mercy of the Savior. But as Christ sprinkles upon him His blood, He gives to him a uniform, and says to him: "Henceforth you are Mine! You are to serve Me, and fight my battles. Until death shall make your victory complete, you are to stand on my side, to witness for Me; and whatever opposes, to hold fast the banner of my cross in the midst of a hostile world!"

Then, like David, the Christian throws down the gauntlet. He withstands manfully the foes of Christ — the world, the flesh, and the devil. He finds the battlefield everywhere. In his own heart and life has he to resist sins, evil passions, a rebellious will, pride, temper, sloth, selfishness, and all that is born of his own corrupt nature. In the Church and in the world has he to stand firm in resisting error, in confessing his Master, and in endeavoring to bring over into the Lord's camp captives made willing in the day of His power. But the story of David's conquest with Goliath, may also remind us of the utter disproportion between the strength of the Christian and that of his adversaries. What could be more striking than the contrast between the two combatants in the valley of Elah? The one was but a youth, and ruddy — the other in the full strength of mature manhood. The one was but a shepherd lad — the other a man of war. The one was but of small stature — the other a giant whose height was six cubits and a span. The one had no experience of the arts of warfare — the other had been accustomed to the battlefield for years. The one carried but a sling and a stone — the other was armed with a coat of armor. To have judged according to appearances, it must have seemed certain that the outcome of the conflict must have been disastrous to Israel. We would have said that but one result was possible — that the champion of Philistia must have gained the day, and that David must have been defeated and slain. So great is the contrast also between the soldier of the Cross and the foes with whom he has to contend. On the one side is our adversary, the Devil, strong in his invisibility, striking a blow in the dark, when we look not for his approach — strong in the experience of past ages — strong in the legion of evil spirits who do his bidding — strong in the aid which is rendered by wicked men — strong in the power which the world exercises over us in its snares, in its example, in its reproach and persecutions — strong through the giant sins and passions of the flesh. And on the other side, how strengthless is the Christian in himself to overcome. How weak is the heart, how weak in purposing or in performing. Nor only is the Christian weak in other respects, but especially in this, that there is a warring party within the very citadel of his being. If by grace there is a better self that hates the evil and choose the good, that hungers after righteousness and longs to draw nearer to God, there is also another self — the old man that loves sin, cleaves to it, and holds out even to the end.

Let us endeavor to realize all this. It may teach us humility. It may teach us that we need moment by moment to look out of ourselves. It may teach us to be thoroughly in earnest, to watch always, and to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might; for it is thus that in spite of all we may defeat our foes, and be faithful unto death.

Once more look at David, and consider the secret of his confidence and strength. Look at the weapon he employed, and the spirit in which he used it. The sling and the stone seemed but a

feeble means of resistance, yet was it mightier than the spear, the helmet, the shield, and the sword of Goliath; for David looked away from self, to the mighty power of God. He employed means, but he trusted not in them, but in the Rock of Israel. His eye was fixed on this one thing: "There is help in God, and there is help for me!" Thus he went forth to meet the foe, and thus he trampled him beneath his feet. Our weapons are simple as David's, yet are they sufficient when we handle them in the name of the Lord. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds." Prayer and the Word are two of the chief weapons with which the Christian fights. They are as the sling and stone — but feeble to the eye of sense, yet through God their power is invincible. They were the secret spring of that noble valor which David displayed before the eyes of all Israel. Only read the utterances of his heart in the Psalms; see how perpetually he sought help from above; how he cried unto the Lord with his whole heart. See how in God's Word he comforted himself, and made His testimonies his meditation day and night, and then without wavering trusted only in the Lord — and we are at no loss to understand why he was fearless — when all beside were in terror, and why he conquered — when not an Israelite in all the army dare accept the challenge of Goliath. In this confidence likewise may the Christian prove more than a match for all that opposes.

True, the adversary is strong;

true, the temptations of the world are strong;

true, there are giant sins, lusts, passions to be overcome;

true, your own strength is nothing. But hide God's Word in your heart, rejoice in its promises, and cheerfully follow the leading of its precepts — and inner strength will thus be imparted.

Moreover, keep near the throne of grace; let your feet often tread the slopes of Olivet; pray in the morning, and pray in the evening; pray in your own secret chamber, and pray in spirit even when in the throng of business or society. Pray without ceasing, ever looking unto Jesus as your Righteousness, your Mediator, and your faithful High Priest — and then you will be secure. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, but you shall abide in safe-guard with your King. "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength!"

There is another narrative of Holy Scripture that illustrates in another direction, the subject which engages our attention. We find it given in 2 Corinthians 12:1-21. The Apostle of the Gentiles had been permitted to behold such a glory, and to hear such unspeakable words, that he might have been exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations which he had received. So a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, comes to buffet him, to try him, to keep him low in self-abasement before God. Whatever it may have been, whether weakness of sight, feebleness of utterance, or some other distressing infirmity — it was a sore trial, and most earnestly does he entreat God that it may be removed.

Perhaps in remembrance of the thrice offered petition in Gethsemane, three times does he beseech the Lord that it may depart from him. But as the bitter cup of death was not taken away from the Savior, but fresh grace and strength were bestowed — so was it also with Paul. The affliction, remained, but a most gracious promise was given: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Then the Apostle no more prays for the removal of the trial, but joyfully, gladly bears the cross laid upon him. "Most gladly," he declares, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake — for when I am weak, then am I strong."

We see here the strength promised and given for the endurance of trial and affliction. It is lawful and right, yes, it is commanded, that in the day of trouble we should call upon the Lord, and seek the lightening or removal of our grief of Him. But we must leave it to His infinite wisdom to answer the petition in the best way. He may give us, and give us speedily, exactly what we seek; if not, the prayer shall be no less answered; for if He takes not the burden away — He will impart of His own strength, that we may be able to bear it.

Very rich and full is the promise, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It has been spoken of as an elastic promise. The word "sufficient" may not sound very great, but it stretches according to a man's necessity. A man's need may be great today — and the Word reaches it. It may be ten times as great tomorrow — but the Word reaches it still. The grace is still sufficient for the greater need — as for the lesser. The promise shows also that not until we are weak, does the Lord bestow His strength. We may be too strong for the Lord to help us. Gideon's army must be brought almost to nothing before the Lord will use it to overthrow the Midianites. And until we are brought low in our own thoughts, until the discipline employed has thoroughly emptied us of all high imaginings as to what we can do, or we can effect, or we can bear — we cannot be strong in the Lord.

"Though I am nothing." 2 Corinthians 12:11

Wonderful was the grace that taught the once proud Pharisee thus to speak!

To be "the least of the apostles," was much to say. (1 Corinthians 15:9)

To be "less than the least of all all God's people," was still more. (Ephesians 3:8)

To be "chief of sinners," was yet more. (1 Timothy 1:15)

But "to be nothing," this is the very acme of humility!

"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6 "When I am weak," and not before, "then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10.) When I have learned experimentally that I am a bruised reed, that I have in myself no power to endure affliction, that left to myself I shall assuredly rebel against the rod and murmur against the gracious Hand that holds it — then the Lord draws near by the Spirit, and gives a joy, a peace that nothing can destroy.

Perhaps nowhere do we see more the strength of Jesus manifested in weakness, than in the steadfastness of our Protestant martyrs, when called on to suffer for the truth's sake.

We have a touching account of the last days of Anne Askew, a lady of high position, who endured the flames of martyrdom in the year 1546. She wrote before her death: "Written by me, Anne Askew, who neither desires death, nor fears its might, and am as merry as one bound to Heaven. She was placed on the rack for two long hours, while the Lord Chancellor persuaded her in vain to renounce the truth.

Unable to walk or stand from the tortures she had suffered, she was carried in a chair to Smithfield and fastened to the stake. One who saw her there declared that she had "an angel's countenance and a smiling face." At the very last, a written pardon was offered to her if she would recant, but she turned away her eyes and would not look at it. "She did not come there," she said, "to deny her Lord and Master." Thus compassed in the flames, as a blessed sacrifice to God, she slept in the Lord, leaving behind her a singular example of Christian steadfastness for all men to follow. The following beautiful prayer she has left behind: "O Lord, I have more enemies now than there be hairs on my head! Yet Lord, let them never overcome me with vain words — for on You I cast my care! With all the spite they can imagine, they fall upon me, who am Your poor creature. Yet, sweet Lord, let me not regard those who are against me — for in You is my whole delight. And, Lord, I heartily desire of You that in Your most merciful goodness, will forgive them that violence which they do and have done unto me. Open their blind hearts, that they may hereafter do that thing in Your sight which is only acceptable before You, and to set forth Your verity aright without all vain fantasies of sinful men. So be it, O Lord, so be it."

"She kept her faith in God, enduring shame and agony with meek, unshaken constancy. None but Christ, none but Christ could have made the weakness of a delicate woman so strong — the feebleness of a mortal creature so triumphant!"

Let the Christian take hold of the strength promised, let him lean only upon it without faltering, remembering that otherwise he is unable so much as to purpose or perform one single action, or to cherish one single thought that is pleasing to God. And then let him strive to the very uttermost to glorify God both in body and spirit, let him go forth into the world's highway as the servant of Christ to win souls, to maintain the truth, to bear witness for His Master. Shall we not in this crisis of our Church's history, arise to take a higher view of our duties and responsibilities? Shall we not cast aside . . .

our self-pleasing,

our love of ease,

our resting in home comforts,

our expensive tastes and habits,

our conformity to the standard of the world

— and go forth with self-denying effort,

praying more frequently,

working even to weariness,

giving that which costs us something,

enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ?

Until there is more of this among us, there is little hope of making an effectual stand on behalf of Christ's truth. Were Christian people to do it, assuredly God would put forth His power, and the Gospel would again triumph as in days of old. Not long ago I asked a missionary lately returned

from Africa, what means they had found most effectual to win over the heathen to the cause of Christ. He answered that the greatest success was obtained when the heathen saw our missionaries working miracles — that is, as he explained, performing acts of kindness and love altogether unlike anything to which they have been accustomed, and which their own principles could never enable them to do. Would that we had more such miracle-workers among ourselves! Such self-denying kindness, such sincere charity must tell powerfully wherever it is found. But I would speak to those who have not as yet peace with God. Be sure there can be no strength in God, unless first you have peace with God. While sin lies heavy on the spirit, while there is a conscience ill at ease, while an alienated heart remains, and the thought of meeting God in judgment is terrible — how can you possibly be strong to overcome temptation or to meet the sorrows that may befall you? The thought of God's presence in this case must be a source of fear and disquietude rather than of strength and consolation.

Reader, seek above all things, as you go forth to meet the unknown future, to know assuredly that the great account is settled, that sin is forgiven through the blood of the Cross, and that whatever happens, God is on your side.

Only hearken to the message of the PAST. Is there not many a blank in your parish, in your neighborhood, and perhaps a vacant place at your own fireside? Have you not lost someone whom you knew, perhaps one very dear to you — a parent, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend? And if you have, does not a voice from their grave seem to chide you, and that in no uncertain tone, for your delay in seeking the Lord? And can you not look back on a gracious Hand stretched out to preserve and deliver you? Many others have died — and why not you? Fatal accidents have come — but you have escaped. Dangerous diseases have spread their snares around — but you have escaped. Must you not say, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not"? And what is the voice of each merciful deliverance — but a call to return back at once to God?

Then look forward to the FUTURE. Think of its probabilities. If you are at all in the habit of looking at things as they really are, and not as your own fancies or wishes would paint them — there are few readers but must see many things highly probable which would yet be very hard to meet if they really happened. There may be a dark and gloomy cloud hanging over your own immediate circle of interest — and you cannot possibly tell how it may break. It may be with respect to your own health, symptoms may appear which tell you plainly that it is declining. Or it may be the health of another which causes you much anxiety. Or it may be difficulties in your calling, or circumstances connected with your business or your little store of capital, that look threatening. Something of this, you may be obliged to confess: something you fear very probably, or at least very possibly, may occur within a short period. And if it should be so, how can you meet it unless you are resting on the Rock, so that the waves and storms of affliction and trial shall beat against you in vain?

Reader, why will you not now, even now, return home to your Father's house? Why not now accept the free salvation which is so graciously offered to you in Christ? Is not the time past long enough to have lived in the far country? Have you not trespassed long enough on the patience and forbearance of the Most High God? Have you not long enough rejected the Savior and grieved the Spirit? Have you not long enough been treading the road that leads to destruction?

Think of all the evil that has stained the years that are passed, and let the sight of it impel you to go at once to the only Fountain opened for sin! Think of the present blessedness of those that are in Christ, and make it all your own by earnest and believing supplication to Him. Think of the glories of the future kingdom, and the everlasting security of His people! You shall partake of it all — if only you now come back as a wandering sheep to His fold, and henceforth follow in the footsteps of the good Shepherd.

Oh, hear the solemn voice of the Son of Man now calling to you as if by name: "Child of this world, who lingers so near the brink of everlasting woe, awake! awake, before the shadows of night fall upon you. The night is hastening on apace when no man can work, when your feet will stumble on the dark mountains. The past cannot be undone — but its guilt may now be forgiven you. The future lies before you — use it for God, employ well the talents that He has given you. Make haste to live — before it is the time to die. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Let the goodness of the Lord lead you to repentance. Let your soul rest on Christ for righteousness and strength. Evermore abide in the love and fear of God."

O God, the strength of all those who put their trust in You, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without You — grant us the help of Your grace, that in keeping of Your commandments we may please You both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

06.07. Deepen the Well!

Deepen the Well! By all means deepen the well! The water is earthy and brackish — the supply is scanty — therefore, go deeper! Take spade and pick-axe — remove the soil — and by and by the water will spring up more fresh, more pure, more abundant. But what is this well? There is a deep, unfathomable Well-spring of grace and mercy in Christ. He is the Well of Life — He is the very Fountain of Living Waters. This Well needs no deepening. Yesterday, today, and forever, it is full to overflowing, for all who resort to it. But there is another well. Those who receive of Christ this living water become themselves little wells, little fountains, having in their hearts this grace, and thence becoming sources of blessing to others; by their words and prayers and Christian example, passing on to those around them the good they themselves have received.

We have the promise of the Old Testament, (Isaiah 58:11): "You shall be like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." And this promise is confirmed and explained by Christ Himself (John 4:14): "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." So again in John 7:37-38 : "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Here is true spiritual life. The living water, the grace of the blessed Spirit of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit revealing . . .

sin in all its terrible deformity;

God in His holiness, justice, mercy, and truth;

Christ as all-sufficient to meet every need of the soul — the only Savior, able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him — by means of the truth permeating the whole spiritual man — the mind, the memory, the will, the affections, the imagination; and thus quickening, sanctifying, elevating man, and making him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is well to distinguish true spiritual life from its COUNTERFEITS.

There may be the gift of utterance — and no spiritual life. Balaam, and Judas, and multitudes beside have had this — and yet have been dead in trespasses and sins. "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love" (one of the blessed graces of the Spirit), "I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Men may offer fine prayers before others, men may preach eloquent sermons — and yet be far from God. The most wicked man, the most consummate hypocrite I ever knew — was one of the most gifted preachers, and could electrify an audience by his persuasive oratory.

There may be participation in outward ordinances — and yet no spiritual life. The principle of Romans 2:28-29, applies to all ages of the Church's history: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such

a man's praise is not from men, but from God."

Ever remember that it is only when sacraments are rightly received, that they bring a blessing from God. Who can tell the numbers who frequent the table of the Lord — and yet never feed on Him in their hearts by faith?

There may be emotion, the manifestation of deep feeling — and yet no spiritual life. There is often . . .

a devout frame of mind under a fervent sermon,

or the stirring of the heart under the sound of sweet music,

or convictions of danger at some solemn season. And yet this may prove a temporary breath of religiousness, which has no root, and no lasting effect.

There may be outward separation from the world — and yet no spiritual life. There may be an ascetic life — years passed in a nunnery or monastery — and this may be the working of a self-righteous spirit, striving to obtain by mortification of the flesh, the pardon which God loves to bestow as the free gift of His unspeakable love. Or there may be in Evangelical circles, an abstinence from all that the world calls pleasure — and yet the love of the Father perchance is not reigning supreme within the heart.

There may be great activity in the Lord's vineyard — and yet no spiritual life. It is much easier to be active workers — than to be constant in prayer, and living a life of faith before God. The Church of Sardis by her labors had a name to live, but she was dead. And may there not sometimes be a forced activity to silence conscience, and this just because there is no life — a cloak to cover your dead soul festering in its corruption?

It seems to me that the one chief feature of the spiritual life is this — Christ is a great reality to the living soul. Once He was but a name — but One at a very far distance — One perhaps feared as a Judge, or regarded as One we might fall back upon by-and-by, when the world had lost its attraction. But now how changed is all this!

Perhaps, dear reader, this was your view a short time ago; but God has been of late teaching you precious lessons, and now old things have passed away — and all things have become new.

Christ is now to you a Friend dearer than those you love best on earth. His friends are your friends. His name fills your heart with unspeakable joy.

You look to Him for all grace and help and strength.

You love to think of His promises. His presence is your resource in solitude or in trial.

You love to work for Him, and to lay at His feet all you possess, to be employed in His happy service. His Word has become to you a new book. It speaks to your very heart, and reminds you continually of His love.

You can say in a measure with Paul, "Christ lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me! To me to live is Christ — to die is gain." A dying Christian in India was telling of her hope.

She put her hand on her Bible, and she said, "I have Christ here!"

And then she put her hand near her heart, and she said, "I have Christ here!"

And then she pointed up to Heaven, and said, "I have Christ there!"

Such is the spiritual life of which I speak. "This is life eternal, to know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Reader, is this life yours? Dead men cannot abide long in the house of the living. "Give me a burying-place," said Abraham, "that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Thus dead souls cannot dwell in glory with living saints. There must be a separation. Are you dead in sins? Christ's voice calls you: Awake and live! Come forth from the grave of your sins this very hour, and Christ is near to give you light and life!

Perhaps in the heart of some reader of this little book there may of late have been awakened a desire for this spiritual life — and yet you feel uncertain how to obtain it. Take it as a certain truth, that the way is very simple, and the blessing very near. Look at it in this light: Christ stands at your door; His heart full of love and compassion, His hands are full of gifts, having for you the gift of repentance, pardon, and the grace of His Spirit, and longing to bestow them upon you. Some go on for years, asking and praying in an unbelieving sort of spirit — and then wonder that they do not find comfort. Why, friend, it is not so much your prayer to Christ, as for you to see that Jesus is entreating you to accept His love and mercy and salvation, entreating you to let Him enter the sanctuary of your heart, and there to dwell; bestowing on you all the blessings of His friendship, of reconciliation with God, and of the new life of holiness and love.

Hearken to those words of the Apostle, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God."

You must take His outstretched hand; you must, in a believing spirit, look to Him for that which He delights to bestow. Your prayer is not to be the difficult task of obtaining from One unwilling to give — but the blessed, happy, joyful one, of heartily receiving the unspeakable benefit which your best Friend loves to grant to you.

If you want this spiritual life, don't fix your eye on Self in any shape — neither your prayer, nor your sense of need, nor your repentance, nor your faith; all this is utterly deficient, and will make you ready to despair. But look up to Him who delights to give all — grace to pray, grace to repent, grace to trust; and He will honor your confidence, and exceed all your thoughts in the richness and abundance of His bounty. But if you are already in possession of true spiritual life in Christ, there is need of its evermore being deepened. There needs a greater realization of divine things, a fuller life, a more abundant influx of grace from the Fountainhead. You may be sure that the deeper the life . . .

the more full will be the joy,

the more will you be able to glorify God, and

the greater your usefulness in His service.

It is not so much increase of gifts that we need, as increase of grace to make us vessels fit for the Master's use and prepared for every good work.

Very certain it is likewise, that the best way to prevent a relapse into worldly habits, and a return to a cold and lukewarm spirit — is to make continual progress in the Divine life, to strive after higher attainments, and to drink deeper into the ocean of Divine love.

Very strongly would I urge upon any who have lately set out in the Christian life, never to relax their efforts to obtain more and more grace and life in Christ. I know of nothing more sorrowful than to see a young Christian, at first very zealous and prayerful, slipping back little by little into habits of worldliness or inconsistency — instead of going from strength to strength, and each year and each month manifesting more evidently the blessed fruits of the indwelling Spirit. But how may you deepen your Christian life?

(1) Keep clear and distinct the blessed truth that your acceptance and justification before God, are not dependent upon the measure of spiritual life which you possess.

If you wish to have a deepening spiritual life, take care not to confound your justification with the sanctifying grace which dwells in you. For the growth of the inner life as well as for our peace, the eye must rest on Christ alone. He alone is your Ransom, your Substitute, your Righteousness before the throne of God. You never can enjoy the least assurance of pardon, or sense of fellowship with God — unless the ground of it is altogether independent of yourself.

Only consider how great is your guiltiness; what utter unworthiness, what sins, deficiencies, failings in everything, would bar all approach to a just and holy God, were it not that you have a plea which cannot be gainsaid. A bride was passing out of the Church where she had just been married, and a friend threw down a few flowers at the feet of the newly married couple. A few drops of the water in which the flowers had been kept, touched the bride's dress, and shortly after a tiny speck was noticed upon it. "A spot of sin as small as this, would shut either of us out of Heaven," was the remark made. But as seen by the eye of a heart-searching God, what numberless foul blots and stains defile the robe of each of us! and how could we then appear before Him unless clothed in the immaculate Righteousness which He has provided through the merits and death of His well-beloved Son? But when casting off all trust in self — in converted self as well as unconverted self — we repose all our confidence in Christ our Righteousness, we can then enjoy peace with God, and seek at His footstool increase of all spiritual blessings. In St. Stephen's Church, Carlisle, I noticed a memorial erected to the late Rev. Waldegrave, having engraved upon it an extract from his will, executed shortly before his death, and which testifies the blessed consolation this hope affords. "I desire in the first place to testify that I die in the faith of Christ crucified, and as a sinner saved by grace alone, humbly trusting in the alone blood and righteousness of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in the full assurance of that eternal and unchangeable love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one Triune God, which it has been my joy and delight to have been permitted to proclaim throughout my beloved diocese, and which doctrines, as they have been my comfort in life are now my stay and support in the prospect of death and eternity; and I commend all those over whom I have had the oversight, both pastors and flocks, to God and to the Word of His grace."

(2) We may deepen spiritual life by gaining clearer views of our own depravity in the light of God's holiness and majesty.

JOB was a true man. He was accepted by God. He walked before Him in sincerity and uprightness. But in his earlier life there was but a partial knowledge of himself and his sin. But the well was deepened. His sore afflictions brought him much nearer to God. He learned to regard sin in a far different light. He learned to see his own life under the piercing ray of the Divine glory. Then he was humbled in the dust. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear — but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!"

It was thus with the Prophet ISAIAH. He had a vision of Jehovah sitting on His throne. He heard the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Then came the overwhelming conviction of His own defilement: "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!" There was a deepening of the well, more experience of the reality and evil of sin, and afterward a fuller joy in the sense of its forgiveness.

Oh, Christians, let us strive to get into God's light! Let us more realize His solemn Presence, His Holiness, His Majesty. Let us enter into the experience of Psalms 139:1-24. In God's presence let us seek to lay bare our inmost thoughts and ways. Let us cast away all covering and excuse, and desire above everything to know ourselves as He sees us to be: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there is any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

(3) Deepen the spiritual life by avoiding all that checks and impedes its flow, and by diligent use of all the means of grace which God has appointed for its increase. A recent historian has described the course of the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. He tells how the one loses much of its waters in the marshy lands through which it flows, and reaches the mouth with far less body and depth of water than it possessed in an earlier part of its course. But the Tigris presents a great contrast to this. It retains the water it possessed in its earlier course; while receiving tributaries on both sides, it grows deeper and fuller as it empties its waters into the sea.

Thus it is with two Christians. The one loses much life and comfort and grace in the marshy lands of uncertain doctrine, of unscriptural views, of worldly conformity. Ah, the river grows very shallow .

. .

when luxury and ease and self-pleasing bear sway;

when the tongue is full of every name but the One Name;

when the claims of business supersede the claims of God's kingdom;

when doubtful maxims are followed instead of the plain precepts of the Word;

when eagerness to obtain more wealth shuts up the hand that once was liberal;

when the safe rule of avoiding scenes of temptation relaxes little by little. Nor less is the danger to the spiritual life when unscriptural expedients are made use of to promote it. The Holy Spirit is the bestower of all real spiritual life. He also is the Author of the Holy Scriptures, which He has given

that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And we may be sure that He will never work by means opposed to the spirit of that Word. When men resort to habitual confession to a priest, instead of laying bare the heart to Him who searches the thoughts; or when men go out of the world and take monastic vows; or when a multitude of ceremonies and self-imposed ordinances distract the thoughts and burden the conscience — these things in the end will rather hinder than forward the life of the soul, because they lead away from the close spiritual fellowship with the Father and the Son, which above all things is essential. With another Christian it is very different. The stream of spiritual life deepens day by day, and week by week. Like the river Tigris, he gets help from tributary streams. He gains assistance from all those precious means of grace which Christ has appointed to refresh us in our pilgrimage.

Oh, Christian, be zealous to improve these merciful provisions of our gracious Father!

Take deeper draughts of the river of Divine truth. Go to Holy Scripture with a prayer and determination to understand more of its revelations of Christ, of your eternal inheritance, of your own position of privilege and responsibility. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Take the old promises and encouragements with which you have been familiar for years, and by devout meditation upon them, by placing them close beside your own sins, and fears, and necessities — see if they do not stand out in fresh life and power.

Take, again, other portions, such as the Book of the Chronicles, or the minor Prophets, with which perhaps you have been less familiar, and carefully examine them until you find food for thought which perhaps you little expected.

Let there be more of the spirit of prayer. Let there be more reality in the assurance that God is very near at hand, that each prayer-word in Jesus' name is a power-word, that sooner shall the throne of God be shaken than that a single believing petition offered by the weakest or most unworthy suppliant miss the mark, or fail of securing the best answer.

Let there be more fellowship and communion with God's people. Greatly do most Christians lose the profit they might gain from this. Oh, that we could get rid of the stiffness and formality and cold civilities that too often take the place of the hearty, loving fellowship on the things of God, that ought to exist. Dear reader, try to break down this stone wall that separates one Christian heart from another, and hinders many a word of help, many a prayer, many a suggestion for some new labor of love in the Lord's Vineyard.

Let there be a frequent drawing near to the holy table. There renew your covenant with God; there gain fresh views of Christ's dying love; there feed in faith on that body broken, and that blood shed on the cross for you.

Let there be a constant effort to give back in blessing to others the grace and consolation which God has given you. In giving to others — we receive more from God. "He who waters — shall be watered." We ought not to be like the Dead Sea, which receives unto itself the flow of the Jordan, but gives nothing in return. Rather should we be like the Sea of Galilee, which receives at its northern extremity, and then gives forth at its southern. I am sure there is a blessing in striving to impart to others the knowledge of salvation. A few years ago, a young man went out to India in the civil service, because he felt scarcely prepared for the solemn responsibility of entering the

ministry of the Church. At an outstation in India where he was stationed, a dying soldier spent a few weeks before his course was run. The young man felt it his duty to go and read to him, and teach him as far as he knew of the Word of God. His hours spent by that sick bed were the happiest of his life. He learned to see the love of Christ as he had never seen it before. To use his own language — in trying to convert the soldier, God converted him, as well as fulfilled his desire to be useful to the dying man.

Let Christians remember, too, how guilty will they be in holding back the knowledge from others by which alone they can be saved. I have heard that a member of the medical profession, in commencing practice, has to take a solemn oath that if ever he should discover any medicine likely to be largely beneficial to mankind — he will not withhold the discovery, but declare it openly for the general benefit. And if we have been taught the value of that blessed remedy for human guilt, the precious blood of the cross — shall we hesitate to do our best everywhere to make it known among others?

DEEPEN THE WELL! Yes — why should we not? Why be content with a scanty measure of blessing — when the fountain is so full? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And if the purpose of Christ's coming is thus to give more abundantly — will He refuse a large supply of Divine grace to a soul that thirsts after it?

We have an example of such longings in the Book of Psalms. "As the deer pants after the water-brooks — so pants my soul after You, O God." "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God — when shall I come and appear before God?" "O God, You are my God — early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water." "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!"

It would prove of great help to Christians if they would endeavor often, amidst the busy duties of life, to stir up their hearts in such desires and meditations as these. They bring a rich reward. God satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But very especially would I ask the attention of the reader to the prayers of the Apostle Paul as presenting to us, in a most instructive form, the longing of Christian hearts for more of this spiritual life. Look at Paul's prayer for the Roman Christians: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit."

We look up to God Himself. He, the God of hope, the God of peace, the God of all grace — delights to send the power of His Spirit to fill the souls of His poor needy children with a heavenly joy, an abiding peace, an aspiring hope. And it is in the way of believing that we can enjoy this. Trusting in Him who is the Root and Offspring of David, as in the previous verse, the Holy Spirit bestows a joy which is unspeakable. But look also at the prayer of the Apostle for the Ephesians. (Ephesians 3:14-21.) I know no description like it of a deep spiritual life within the soul. And now just glance at this exquisite prayer, one we should do well often to use on our knees before God when asking for more depth in our religion: "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (what sweet confidence is here — the Father of Christ — hence my Father in Him).

"That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory." Here is the treasury from which comes our supply. His own glorious riches — His all-sufficient grace. His own hand full of all

goodness and bounty.

"To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Or, as in Colossians 1:10, "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." The Holy Spirit raising the soul above its own native feebleness, conferring an energy, a secret force enabling it to resist temptation, to bear sorrow, to toil and labor in the vineyard.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The shrine, the sanctuary filled with a vivid realization of the Lord's presence with His child, and this in the exercise of continual reliance upon Him.

"That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." Here the idea is the tree with the roots going deep into the ground of God's love, or the building resting on the immovable basis of that love — and then the soul learning out little by little that which will ever surpass all possibility of comprehension. High is the Heaven, deep is Hell, broad is the sea, long is eternity — but higher, and deeper, and broader, and longer, is Christ's love — and blessed is it to reach after the knowledge of it, though we must ever fall short.

"That you might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ah, what an abounding fullness here! Compare Colossians 1:19 : "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell;" and Colossians 2:9-10 : "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority!" which seems the right rendering of the passage.

Here is a supply out of which to draw. Deepen the well! Yes, you may indeed. You are not straitened in the Lord, but in yourself — in your low desires, in your unbelief, in your lack of prayer. For it is prayer which gains all — the prayer which springs from faith. Unspeakably great as is the measure of blessing referred to in this passage — yet mark how the Apostle closes it. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages world without end. Amen."

06.08. Nearer to Thee

Nearer to Thee

Communion with God is the greatest reality of the Christian life. It is the soul of all true religion. "That which we have heard and seen, we declare unto you — and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Such words as these are not the words of an enthusiast — they are the calm and sober statement of a great and blessed fact. They tell of the abiding peace and consolation of the aged Apostle who penned them. He had known much of persecution. He had tasted the weariness and solitude of exile in Patmos. He had experienced sorrowful partings from friends beloved. But in the midst of all he had peace. He had the joy of close, intimate, felt fellowship and fellowship with Him who is the fountain of all true blessedness. It is as if he would say, "I have friends of which none can rob me; I have society from which no exile can debar me; I have companionship which fills my soul with truest gladness. Would that all you to whom I write might share with me the sweetness of this heavenly fellowship!" The echo of these words of John is heard in many a heart. There are multitudes of men and women engaged in lowly toil and the commonest avocations, who yet know what is meant by fellowship with God. They see One whom others see not. They hear One whom others hear not. They walk along earth's highway, delighting in God, calling upon His name, and strengthened by the joy of His covenant presence in Christ. And when we begin to look onwards into the future, what is the desire that should be awakened, and the wish that we most should cherish? There is much we might desire as to the work we have to do, or as to the evils that we deplore. There is much ploughing, and sowing, and weeding, and reaping, to be carried on in the Lord's vineyard, and all this we would gladly do better than we have before. But the Christian desires more than this. He would reach after greater nearness to the Source of all holiness and peace. The language of the inner spirit is this: "It is good for me to draw near to God; yes, I would draw nearer and nearer, until I see Your unveiled glory, and be forever with You where You are!"

Nearer, my God, to Thee — nearer to Thee,

E'en though it be a cross that raises me!

Yet all my song shall be,

Nearer, my God, to Thee — nearer to Thee.

There are two special reasons from the character of the times in which our lot is cast, why each Christian should more than ever cultivate communion with God. The intense activity of the day is a reason for it. Many run to and fro. The world is all alive. There is little time for quietness and thought. There is a constant rushing hither and thither. Men crowd double the amount of work into the same time of labor. Men's brains are on the rack to discover new inventions or new ways of making gain, to keep pace with the times in which they live. But is there no danger here? Is there no reason for special watchfulness? You may be too busy. You may have too many engagements. You may be keeping the vineyard of others — when you ought to be tending your own. Oh, take

heed not to push piety into a corner! At all hazards make time for meditation, for Bible reading, and for prayer!

There can be no true communion with God, without setting carefully apart a definite time for it. Needs there not be a calmness and stillness of soul — the closing of the door, the retirement into self, the half-hour alone? And is not this too often forgotten? Do not the claims of work and business and outdoor duties infringe too much upon the quiet retreat of the prayer closet? Reader, be sure that you give time to God. Deny yourself, if it be necessary, and rise an hour earlier in the morning. What, if perchance the nursling of Divine grace in your soul should fade and wither and die for lack of the still hour, when the dew of Heaven might revive and renew it? The other reason for special watchfulness I would name, is the painful amount of error, division, and controversy in the Christian Church. This becomes a sad stumbling-block to those who are on the outside, and who make it an excuse for their neglect. But it is a great stumbling-block also to Christians. Instead of living upon the essential truths of the faith, men are compelled to spend their time in endeavoring to uphold and defend them. More than this — Christian men often mistake bitterness and wrath, for zeal. They forget that the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. In this way, communion with God is hindered. Troubled waters cannot reflect the bright stars above — even so the mind full of controversy finds it very difficult to grow calm in the presence of its God, and thus gain something of His mind and Spirit. The arena of disputation is not favorable for promoting spirituality of mind. It is easier to contend for a favorite opinion, yes, even for God's truth — than to bend the knee in fervent prayer. Many a zealous controversialist, on the right side and on the wrong, may be shut out from God's kingdom at last. God forbid that I should hinder one faithful witness for God's truth, or one clear denunciation of soul-destroying error. Yet watch over your own spirit. Be bold as the lion — as wise as the serpent — and withal, as gentle and harmless as the dove. Above all, keep close to God. Watch and pray, lest communion with God should grow cold and languid, while controversy waxes hotter and hotter.

He who lives in the atmosphere of continual prayer, like Stephen of old, will best know how to speak forth God's truth with a wisdom and power that the adversary cannot gainsay or resist. In urging Christian people to a closer communion with God, it is needful to bear in mind several foundation principles.

1. Communion with God rests upon the affinity between the Divine and human natures. All possibility of this fellowship rests upon the fact that God created man in His own image. There is a power of going beyond that which is present and visible. There is a power of knowing and understanding something of the glory of the great Creator. There is a wonderful faculty of prayer, of holding converse with One unseen.

Strange theories are abroad with reference to man's origin, that would regard him as but little raised above the lower creation — but there is an infinite gulf of difference. The reproofs of conscience, the knowledge of good and evil, above all, man's religiousness, his need under all conditions of an object of worship, and when rightly directed, the power of rising in heart and mind to a true fellowship with Jehovah — all this testifies whence he comes.

Surely, then, if God has granted us this high prerogative, we ought diligently to use it. Let us not neglect our talent — let us not forget our noblest distinction. No plainer command has God given us, or one which it is a greater privilege to obey, than this: "You shall worship the Lord your God."

The man who lives without prayer and buries his thoughts in present things, like Esau — sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. He voluntarily comes down from his high elevation, and reckons himself on a level with the beasts that perish.

2. There can be no communion except by means of a revelation given by God Himself. When man first was made, Jehovah condescended to hold communion with him. He delighted in the work of His own hands; and He drew near to those who were a reflection of His own spirituality, holiness, and love. But the breach came — the terrible catastrophe that snapped asunder this close tie of fellowship. Man shrinks now from the presence of his Maker; the attribute of an inflexible Justice frowns upon the rebel. Adam is immediately driven from Eden — a separation is made — the dark cloud of sin has raised a barrier between the frail child of dust and the great Creator.

What can be done? There, far away out of sight, is the great, glorious, all-holy Jehovah. Here is a sinner whose whole life is but a defiled garment, whose whole heart and nature are averse to His holiness, and fearful of His judgment.

How can they meet? All mere natural religion leaves an infinite chasm between the Creator and the creature, and leaves me but an atom in a vast universe — God far away — the great, the awful Judge, the Almighty.

All mere human theories, philosophies, wise teachings of learned men, can do nothing for me. They can speak of conforming to the law and order of the universe, but they cannot help me to get near to God. They can scarce tell me if there be a God; still less if He hears prayer; still less if He can forgive the sinner. But Scripture revelation speaks with authority;

it bridges over that vast chasm between me and my Creator;

it brings near the promise of mercy and reconciliation;

it bids me draw near to God, with the assurance that He will draw near to me;

it tells me that a guilty monarch in his prison cell (King Manasseh) found the ear of Mercy open, and that an outcast woman was freely welcomed by a Redeemer's love.

Men speak of holding communion with God in nature. Go and behold the snow-capped mountains, the rich valleys, the flowing streams — but where is there a sentence written upon one of them that tells of salvation, of reconciliation to God, of access to a Father in Heaven?

I have heard exquisite echoes from the thunder rolling amidst Alpine heights, caught up and re-echoed from point to point. I have heard the dashing of the waterfall, the roar of the avalanche, the rushing of those torrents which form the vast rivers of Europe. I have heard the note of the nightingale, so touchingly pathetic on the summer night. But never from them all have I heard so sweet a note as this, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" "Enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret Himself shall reward you openly."

Yes — here is our hope. Scripture revelation presents to man a door of access — it opens to the sinner a way by which he can draw near — it tells that even One, so just and holy, is accessible in

the path which He has pointed out. This leads me to a third principle.

3. There can be no approach to the Father, except through the One Mediator. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me." "You who once were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (John 14:6; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 10:19-22.)

I direct the attention of the reader more especially to this last passage — it is one that can never fail to afford the Christian most precious help.

It tells plainly the ground of all confidence. The eye is fixed on the one great Sacrifice, the one all-sufficient Offering, the Blood of atonement, which removes every obstacle. It is not any laborious efforts, any strivings and strugglings, by which we have to force a way into God's presence. But the highway has been raised up, the door has been opened, there is no longer the least barrier or impediment to stay the course of the anxious seeking soul.

Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings, according to the law, the blood of bulls and goats, could never take away sin. But now Christ has been once offered to bear the sins of many. He has offered one sacrifice for sin forever. His one sacrifice is enough to remove the guilt of all mankind — it is so fragrant before God, that whatever person or gift or spiritual sacrifice it touches, that becomes also fragrant and precious before the most High.

Him for sinners bruised see,

Look through Jesus' wounds on me! But we have more than this. We have not only the rent veil of our Savior's crucified body — but we have the living, interceding High Priest before the throne. When I fall low on my knees before His footstool, I can point to the blood and its efficacy to give me a right of access. That rich atoning blood,

Which sprinkled round I see,

Provides for those that come to God

An all-prevailing plea.

Still more: I can point to Him who pleads my cause before the mercy-seat.

I am unworthy — but He is worthy.

I am a frail child of dust — but He is the very Son of God.

I am at best but a sinner, in thought, in word, in deed — but He is the Holy One, the true Aaron, ever wearing the mitre, "Holiness unto the Lord." In His pleading, in His constant intercession, in His abiding advocacy in the presence of God — I have an unfailing ground of hope.

I learn, too, that I have a joyful liberty in my approach to God. I am invited to come with boldness! I am invited to draw near with a full assurance of faith. And the image employed sets this before me still more clearly. I may come unto the Holiest of all.

There was the court of the Gentiles; then next, the court of Israel; then next, the holy place, the court of the priests; and then, lastly, we come to the sacred enclosure of the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest, and he but once a year, was permitted to enter. And now I learn here how very near I am permitted to come to God. Past the first court, past the second court, past the court of the priests — I may go as a priest, under the shadow of my great High Priest, within the veil — into the Holy of Holies, right up to the throne of the Most High — crying, Abba, Father!

Oh, what a privilege is this boldness of access! We are invited — yes, exhorted — to the enjoyment of it. The atmosphere of gloom and uncertainty, is not the atmosphere of true fellowship with God. The region of asceticism, of legal fears, is not the land where God would have His people dwell. We must worship God with reverence and godly fear, for He is holy. But we must also come to Him with confidence, with joy, with freedom — unlocking to Him each secret chamber of the heart, unfolding to Him our secrets of sin and sorrow and care, for He is our most loving Father in Christ Jesus.

I can but remind the reader here how great a barrier to this confidence is raised up by the perilous and enslaving doctrine of Priestly Confession.

God has cast down the high wall of separation between Himself and His sinful creatures by the precious blood-shedding of His dear Son, and calls them on the strength of it to come straight to Him in fullest confidence.

Man immediately builds up a new wall, by stopping men on their way to God's mercy-seat — calling them aside to confess their sins to a human priest. If it be needful in any case that I should go to the footstool of a fellow-sinner, and receive through him Christ's absolution, then farewell all boldness! farewell all joyful access to God's presence! There is a barrier as high as Heaven between me and my God. May God keep Christian people from this dangerous pitfall! May He manifest to them all that grace and mercy which may lead them close to Himself through His well-beloved!

There is yet one other foundation principle.

4. All true communion with God is the upspringing in the soul of the life imparted by the Divine Spirit. We have the Advocate with the Father pleading for us above — we have the Advocate in the heart, the Comforter pleading within. True communion is the fellowship of the Spirit — it is the Holy Spirit making intercession for us. The Savior speaks to the woman of Sychar of the only worship acceptable to the Father: "God is a Spirit — and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." But whence can such worship arise? How possibly, in our carnal, earthly hearts, can anything arise so heavenly, so spiritual? May we not find the solution in the promise which the Savior had just before given to the woman: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give Him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

What is all spiritual worship — but the gushing forth, the springing up of this living water?

Whence comes the first drawing, the first fervent desire for God?

Whence comes all true knowledge of Him whom we approach?

Whence comes the grace that overcomes the reluctance of our dead, cold hearts, to spiritual duties?

Whence comes it that we have an eye to discern the path into the holiest?

Whence comes all contrition, humility, perseverance, filial confidence in prayer?

Whence comes all this — but from the Spirit, the Author and Giver of life?

We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.

Here is a practical matter that much concerns the spirit of devotion in the Christian. Never forget your dependence upon the mighty aid of the Holy Spirit. Without Him you cannot think a right thought or offer a single acceptable prayer. This spirit of Communion with God in the power of the Spirit is all-essential to our salvation. It is quite possible for people to live and die as members of Christian Churches, and yet never to possess it, and so to pass into the great future altogether unprepared. You may be a communicant, you may be a Sunday-school teacher, or a district visitor, or a collector for societies, or even one engaged in some way in God's house — yet, after all, the great question is, how far you are abiding in close fellowship with God. The most sorrowful feature of the present day, in my judgment, is the low tone of spirituality in professing Christian people.

Too often family prayer is either neglected, or hurried over as a mere form.

Sunday morning is an excuse for late rising. The souls of the children are little thought of.

Levity, and excessive dress, and show, and glitter, are plain and unmistakable proof how much power the world retains over them.

Books of fiction are the ordinary reading, while . . .

God's Word is neglected,

and the prayer chamber deserted,

and the name of Jesus forgotten,

and holiness never cultivated,

and God put as far away, as if the fool's creed, "No God," were universally accepted. And all this not in those who know nothing of religion, but who would think themselves greatly slandered if anyone imagined they were not Christians indeed.

Yet let the truth be spoken. If God be true, if the Word is sure and steadfast — such religion as this is a delusion and a sham! It is bad coin, and will ring false and hollow on God's counter. Yes, and it will bring a tenfold condemnation. To have the light — and walk in darkness;

to know God's will — and not to do it;

to say, Lord, Lord — and yet not to strive after holiness;

to draw near to God with the lip — while the heart is far from Him

— what is this but to deceive yourself and to dishonor the Master, and at last to gain the sad rebuke, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Matthew 7:23

Dear reader, above all things cultivate reality and depth in your religion. If at last you would not prove a barren fig tree — keep up secret fellowship with God. Whatever you leave undone — never, never lose sight of the fact that secret communion with God is the most necessary part of your whole life. Let there be real, true, honest confession of sin. Let there be fervent, earnest petitions for the grace and help of the Holy Spirit. Let there be a few minutes given each day to a thoughtful meditation upon His Word. Ever hold it fast as assuredly true, that fellowship with the Father and the Son is the most sanctifying, the most strengthening, the most comforting thing in all the world; and that no man is a Christian in the sight of God who knows not the joy of a life of prayer.

Before I leave the subject, let me give a few HINTS to assist those who desire to keep near to God.

Take in the full consolation of the Fatherliness of God. Twelve times does Christ remind us in Matthew 6:1-34 of God being a Father to those who call upon Him. As a Father He is . . .

ready to forgive,

ready to hear,

ready to help,

ready to bless. As a Father He pities and chastens and bears us in His arms. Yes, He is infinitely more than a father can be to his children. When reminding us that a father will give bread and fish, and all good and necessary things, to His children — our Lord adds, "How much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him." Our God is so good, so faithful, so true, so bountiful, so different from poor, fallen man — this, together with the thought that He is our Father in Christ, may lead us to lean confidently on His care, and trust wholly to His merciful provision. The sympathy of Christ for us under all possible circumstances is a great help to a life of fellowship. We must believe that Christ has a sympathy towards every believer, and there is no position in which we can be placed in which we may not look for Him to undertake for us.

I have read of a bridge in Austria, and in twelve niches upon it there are figures of Christ under various representations. He is the King, the Priest, the Prophet, the Physician, the Shepherd, the Sower, the Pilot, the Carpenter, etc. And we are told that as men pass by they kneel by one of these figures. The countryman will kneel by Christ the Shepherd, the mechanic by Christ the Carpenter, the sailor by Christ the Pilot, the sick man by Christ the Physician, and so on. Each one selects the Christ that suits his own special need.

There is a blessed truth here. Whatever superstition may mingle with the thoughts of these men about the Savior, at least we may learn that no man can come to Christ without finding a special place in His heart for himself. We may learn that Christ has a grace to meet every condition in life — every sin, every sorrow, every temptation. To bear this in mind is a link that binds us closer to our God.

We must have a wide area of prayer. We should take every circumstance that occurs, pleasant or painful, as giving us an errand to the throne of grace. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we must make known our requests unto God. And we must cultivate a large spirit of intercession. It may begin with the necessities of our homes and families. It pleads for our congregations and parishes; for our schools and universities; for our villages, our towns, our cities; for our rulers and our ministers; for our brethren afar off and their flocks, either in our colonies or in heathen lands; for our home heathen, and the heathen who have not yet heard the Savior's name.

Make use of all the help you can find in maintaining communion with God. The services of God's house, the regular and believing participation in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the careful observance of times for private devotion — all these are very needful and helpful if used in a spirit of faith. They are golden pitchers — empty, indeed, and profitless, if only used in a formal way; but very blessed when filled with living water — the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Equally helpful is the daily searching into, and pondering the oracles of Divine truth. To listen to the voice of a friend to whom we are speaking, suggests fresh matter for interesting converse. In the Word, our Father speaks to us, and hence gives us new thoughts and desires toward Him, and enables us with more freedom to pour out our hearts before Him. Especially do Christian people find help in studying the Psalms. They greatly kindle our longings for God's favor and grace. "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so longs my soul after You, O God. Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You. Keep me as the apple of Your eye, hide me under the shadow of Your wings."

Then we may find help in each portion of the Lord's Prayer, in His example, in His promises to disciples, and His parables bearing upon this subject. So also may we be quickened and strengthened by the prayers given to us in Paul's Epistles. (See Romans 15:13; Ephesians 1:15-23; Ephesians 3:14-21; Php 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.) Nor would I omit, in close connection with the help given from Scripture, the exceeding profit we may gain from the remembrance of Christian hymns.

Perhaps no one has ever left a richer legacy to the Christian Church than the late Miss Elliott, in the two hymns which are so greatly valued: the one for the penitent, the seeker, the soul that feels oppressed by the weight of sin —

Just as I am: without one plea,

But that Your blood was shed for me,

And that You bid'st me come to Thee:

O Lamb of God, I come! This hymn was greatly valued by the late Rev. MacIlvaine. He left it as his wish that no address should be made at his grave, but this hymn sung. "It is my hymn," he writes: "expressing so sweetly the essence of the Gospel. It contains my religion, my hope, my theology. It has been my ministry to preach just what it contains. In health — it expresses all my refuge. In death — I desire that I may know nothing else for support than what it contains. When I am gone, I wish to be remembered in association with this hymn. I have no other plea — I can come in no other way." The other hymn is for the child of sorrow and disappointment, for the careworn and the suffering Christian:

My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home, in life's rough way,
O teach me from my heart to say,
May Thy will be done.

Such hymns as these are most precious helps to those who are seeking nearer communion with God.

Lastly, I would say, if we would maintain communion with God, we must watch over our own heart and spirit. There must be a weaned heart, a heart separated from sin, from earthliness, from covetousness, from self-will, and all low aims. "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth." 1 John 1:6 We must have a heart to rest in the will of God. He is the Only-Wise, the Only-Mighty, the Only-Good.

Rest on this anchor and be still;
For peace around your course shall flow.

When only wishing here below

What pleases God. On every side the child of God is guarded by the watchful care of a loving Father. He may be tried, harassed, nearly overwhelmed by the waves of this troublesome world — yet the Most High is ever beside him. A remarkable expression is made use of in Psalms 32:11 : "Whoever puts his trust in the Lord, mercy embraces him on every side."

It is even so: on every side he is shielded by Omnipotence.

Over him Jehovah stretches His sheltering wing: "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust."

Around him likewise there is sure protection: "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even forever." "I, says the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." So also beneath him: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

These words are rich in heavenly consolation. Spoken by Moses before he left the flock whom he had so faithfully led through the wilderness, they are written in Holy Scripture, bequeathed as the heritage of the whole Church. Sound their depths — upon your knees strive to realize the fullness of blessing they contain. If I can the very least assist any reader in doing this, my earnest desire in writing these words will be fulfilled.

"The eternal God is your refuge." He is your castle, your fortress, your dwelling-place: for provision, for shelter, for clothing, for defense, for rest, for the warm affection of home — repair there in your need. "Lord, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower — the righteous man runs into it, and is safe."

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." That we may fully grasp the meaning of this assurance, there is a parallel expression that deserves our attention. Very frequent mention is made of "the

arm of the Lord." It usually denotes the putting forth of Divine power, the active energy of the Most High God in the accomplishment of His purpose — either in the destruction of His enemies, or the preservation of His people.

It was by "a mighty hand and stretched-out arm" that He broke in sunder the bonds of the Israelites in Egypt. It was by the same glorious arm that He overthrew Pharaoh and his chariots in the Red Sea. It was thus, too, that He cast out the Canaanites, and gave Israel possession of the promised land; "for they got not the land in possession through their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Your right hand and Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You had a favor unto them."

It is of the triumphs of this arm, David sings: "You have a mighty arm, strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand." And again: "His right hand and His Holy arm has gotten Him the victory."

It is this arm that has wrought our redemption. Isaiah prophecies thus: "The Lord has made bare His Holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." And thus the mother of our Lord rejoices in the anticipation of Him who shall be her Son, and yet her Savior: "He who is mighty has done to me great things, and Holy is His name. He has showed strength with His arm — He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts."

Learn here, by contrast, the feebleness of the arm of man. "Have you an arm like God?" was the question put to Job. It is written again, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." Without God, the arm of man is utterly strengthless, utterly powerless.

Very impressive is the way in which this truth is brought out in many of our readings. In a very marked manner do they set forth the inability of man to effect anything by his own unaided strength. "By reason of the frailty of our nature, we cannot always stand upright." "Almighty God, who sees that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." "Through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without You." "O God, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy." "The frailty of man without You cannot but fail." "Without You we are not able to please You."

Yet do not mistake here. Truly the arm of man of itself can effect nothing — but nerved and strengthened by the arm of God, it can effect marvels. Notice the words of Jacob in the blessing which he pronounced on Joseph, "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Was it not thus that Gideon overcame the Midianites? It was not the Lord without human instrumentality, but it was "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Was it not thus that David slew the giant? It was his own arm that slung the stone, and cut off the giant's head — yet it was in the name of the Lord Almighty that victory was given unto him. Therefore, Christian, neglect not to use your own arm, feeble though it be in itself. You cannot dispense with vigorous, active effort. In the working out of your own salvation, labor and strive and fight. Resist sin to the very uttermost; aim at the highest mark; watch continually, that you be not led astray into error of doctrine, or laxity of practice. Yet ever remember where your strength lies — lean not on yourself, but on the power of Christ; He alone can make you more than conqueror. From the very gates of Babylon, from amidst crafty and determined foes, through countless perils, and in a country full of rivers and mountains, did Xenophon lead safely the ten thousand Greeks home to their fatherland. Just so, from the very gates of the city of destruction,

from amidst mighty foes, through mountains of difficulty — does Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, by His own mighty arm, safely lead His chosen people to their everlasting home in the better country. In the great conflict of these latter days, be courageous in fighting manfully on the Lord's side. Hold not back your arm. In the might of Jesus, you know not how much you may effect.

If you believe that Holy Scripture is indeed the very Word of God — if you believe that the pure Gospel, revealing a free and full salvation by reliance on the Crucified, is indeed the wisdom of God and the power of God — confess it boldly before men. Never think of taking neutral ground. If ever Christ required brave, fearless confessors, it is now.

Solon made it a law in Greece, that a man was dishonored and disfranchised who, in a civil sedition, stood aloof and took no part in quelling it. Another Lawgiver, wiser and greater than he, has said, "He who is not with Me, is against Me; and he who gathers not with Me, scatters abroad."

Yet here, again, while you are zealous on behalf of God's truth, rely only on the arm of the Mighty One. Jesus reigns supreme in Heaven and in earth. He sits above the waterfloods. He sits on the right hand of the Father until His enemies are made His footstool. All power is given to Him, who is the Head over all things for the defense of His Church. He can dispose the hearts of our rulers in Church and State to act wisely and boldly on God's behalf. He can pour forth His Spirit, and raise up standard-bearers for His truth. He can make His Word mighty as in the days of old. He can cast down error wherever it may be found — and build up in our day His Church, by fixing on the sure foundation many a living stone. For all this let us fervently, continually pray. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

Oh, that Christians alone with God, in little groups of two or three, at the family altar, as well as in more public gatherings for prayer, would thus plead with God on behalf of our Zion. He would surely show Himself strong to save and help.

Read Acts 12:1-25. What could be more gloomy than the prospects of the Church as described in the commencement of that chapter? The King, a persecutor of the Church, one apostle slain, another in prison and threatened with the same fate. But though in fear of their lives, the little flock meet for prayer — and what follows? The whole aspect of affairs is changed. Peter is set free; the proud persecutor is brought low (he is eaten by worms,) "but the Word of God grew and multiplied." And is not the arm of the Lord still as mighty as ever? "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear." But turn now to the passage in Deuteronomy 33:1-29. The power of the Lord is here set forth as sustaining, supporting, upholding His Church and people.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms." It is not now the "arm outstretched" — but the "arms beneath," to keep and protect. And is there not a thought underlying these words that may render them still more precious than otherwise they would be? What is the figure employed here, but the little infant safely upborne in the arms of a nursing mother?

They are best explained by the words of Moses himself, as he complained to God that the burden laid upon him was almost more than he could bear. (Numbers 11:12.) "Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them that You should say unto me: Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing-mother bears the slobbering child, into the land that You swore unto their fathers?"

Even so does Jehovah. carry His people through this earthly wilderness. "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth!" Isaiah 46:3 Or we may take the words as having a reference to the mother carrying her babe in her bosom. They apply in this case with equal force; and we know that this too is a figure which Jehovah has condescended to employ. "Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." In whichever way you take it, what a view does it present of the wondrous tenderness of the Divine compassion. Stay here and ponder for a moment the love of God toward His own redeemed people. It is the very joy of all joy, the very sweetness of all consolation, the very sun of our firmament, a river of endless pleasure — yes, our Heaven on earth and our Heaven above — to know assuredly that our Father loves and cares for us! And it is in this parental character — this fatherly-motherly character of God (if we may use the expression) — that we most clearly discern how great His love is. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Behold the depth of misery, need, and danger from which He has raised us! We read of Pharaoh's daughter finding the infant Moses, and making the child her own. What was her motive? Pure compassion. She saw the infant weeping; she knew he was the child of an enslaved race, and doomed to death. So out of mere compassion, she saved his life, provided for his necessities, brought him up in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and purposed that he should have all the honor that would appertain to him as her son. Even so our Father beheld us in our lost condition, out of tender pity saved our souls from death, put us into His own family, and has provided all things to fit us for our position as the heirs of His kingdom.

Yes, far more do we discern His love, when we remember the means by which He has adopted us. He spared not His own Son from humiliation, from shame, from suffering, from death — that we rebels, outcasts, enemies, being made one with Christ, might rise to all the glorious privileges of his dear children. Oh, that the Holy Spirit, the revealer of all truth, might remove every veil from our minds, and display to us, in all its fullness, the love of our Father in Heaven!

Within the everlasting arms, is there a welcome for every returning penitent. Ever bear in mind the ready welcome which greets the sinner when he turns his foot homeward. The history of the younger son in the parable of Luke 15 places this beyond all doubt. It was a saying of Augustine, "Are you afraid of God? Then run into His arms!"

What an illustration of this saying is found in the parable I refer to. The son was naturally afraid of his father's displeasure. The best he could expect was to be permitted to work as a hired servant. Yet he came back, trembling though it was. But what a meeting! "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Matthew Henry remarks here that the father had . . .

eyes of mercy — for he saw him;

affections of mercy — for he had compassion on him;

feet of mercy — for he ran;

lips of mercy — for he kissed him;

arms of mercy — for he embraced him.

Think likewise of the open arms of your compassionate Redeemer. He receives sinners, the very weakest and the very worst. When on earth, He cried to those about Him, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He embraced in His arms the little children that were brought to Him. He refused none who sought His mercy and His aid. And at last, upon the cross, His arms were spread wide, as He endured all its agony and woe. Thus do we learn how earnestly He longs that the lost and perishing should flee to Him!

Reader, think of this. Past years have come and gone, and your life is yet spared. You have still the door of hope, the sure promises and invitations of the Gospel offered for your acceptance. If never yet you have known the Savior's love, if never yet in faith and prayer you have betaken yourself to Him as your High Priest, your Advocate — is it not time so to do?

What do you know of the changes that may come to you? What do you know, but this — that you cannot ensure the continuance of one single earthly gift, that long before another year or another month has run its course, you may be side by side with your fathers in the grave! Is it not wise to be on the safe side? To know that, come what will, you have . . .

a portion you can never lose,

a hope that will never disappoint,

a rock under your feet that will never shake,

everlasting arms that will never let you fall?

Very earnestly would I plead with any in failing health, that without a moment's delay they would turn to the Sure Refuge. As I have noticed the feeble step, the wasted form, the distressing cough — the evident marks that the best part of life is over — I have often longed to commend to such the Savior who so tenderly feels for them. Should these pages be read by any who are thus suffering, may I beseech you, in Christ's name, no longer to shut your eyes to your own condition — no longer to buoy yourself up with the idea that you will before long recover — but to go in faith to Him in whom you shall have a life that will never end.

Wait not, tarry not — lest soon you should have no strength left for thought or prayer. The last attack may come very suddenly; and if you are not saved then — where are you? Why not now, even this very moment, lift up your eye to Jesus? While you read this, why not speak to Him thus: "O Savior, look upon my affliction, and forgive all my sin! Give me life through Your death. Visit not upon me misspent years, but even now receive me. Cleanse me in Your precious blood. Breathe Your Spirit upon my cold, dark heart. Draw me close to Yourself, and make me Yours forever. Amen."

These everlasting arms uphold forever every true believer! The ark is floating on the waters of the deluge. It is borne hither and thither by the violence of the waves; yet it never sinks, for these everlasting arms are beneath. At length it rests on mount Ararat, and Noah and his family go forth upon dry land. A little boat is upon the lake of Galilee. A storm comes down upon the lake; danger appears to be imminent; the disciples cry out, "Master, master, we are perishing!" Yet were the terrified disciples reproved for their unbelief. That frail bark could never sink, for the everlasting

arms are beneath. That ark, that boat, represent the Church of Christ, upheld forever by Divine power and faithfulness. Amidst the surging tide of doubt, false doctrine, irreligion, and open infidelity — we might be ready to fear for its safety. But we can discern One Presence in the storm, and He is Almighty. He says, "It is I! Do not be afraid." And as Christ is near for the support of the whole Church, so likewise for that of each believing soul.

Christian reader, we would bid you take courage! We would bid you look forward with cheerful hope, as you journey heavenward. Have not the everlasting arms upheld you in days that are past? Has not the Lord brought you through many a sorrow, and many a sore temptation? Why then fear for the future? Can everlasting arms ever grow feeble, ever grow weary, through the lapse of years? Is not Jesus "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"? Have you not the assurance, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed — but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you!" "I will never leave you, nor forsake you!"

True it is you may have to pass through great depths — yet these arms shall be lower still, they shall still be underneath you. As Jonah sank beneath the wave, it seemed that he would rise no more — but these arms were there, and at length brought him safe to land.

David could cry, "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls — all Your waves and billows are gone over me!" Yet he felt these arms were there; for he adds, "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God!"

Jeremiah too could exclaim, "Waters flowed over my head; then I said, I am cut off." But not so, for the arms were there. He adds, "You drew near in the day that I called upon You. You said, Fear not." Nor shall it be otherwise with you, than with these servants of God in old time — if only you trust in the name of the Lord.

You need not hide from yourself the probability, that some time or other during life's voyage you may have deeper trials than perhaps hitherto you have known. There may be deep, distressing anxiety about your temporal concerns — it need not be the fear of actual want, but that of being unable to meet your liabilities, and this may bring you many an unhappy day, and many a restless night. There may be pain — real, agonizing pain — that at times may almost terrify your spirit, that you know not how to endure it any longer.

There may be times of spiritual darkness and doubt; buffetings of the Tempter; hard thoughts of God that will force themselves upon you; evils that you abhor, and yet that cluster like bees around you. There may be heart-rending sorrows through the loss of life's companions; when the spirit, now for the moment utterly desolate, longs above all things for one more sight of the dear one that the Lord has taken.

There may be a depth of misery in connection with your home that may be utterly beyond all words to express.

It may be through some terrible disease which has touched one of its members.

It may be through the unfeeling conduct of a near relative.

It may be the wilfulness and waywardness of a child.

It may be that one whose soul is the burden of many prayers, determinately perseveres in a course of open ungodliness. And perhaps, in addition to this, the great sorrow of your life, some other trial may be added, which seems to be the last feather of the burden that is ready to crush you to the earth.

Yet amidst any one or more of these depths, amidst all sinkings of heart — if you lean on Jesus, you may be sure the everlasting arms are beneath. Be sure there is no woe altogether inconsolable, no sorrow altogether hopeless — since there is a Savior, a strong Redeemer, who knows how to comfort those that are cast down, and can open out a way of escape that you could never have imagined. To any tried believer I would commend a few words out of the 10th Psalm. Mark the expression: "That You may take the matter into Your hand; the poor commits himself unto You — for You are the helper of the friendless."

There is quiet rest here — a light arises in the deepest darkness, when in all our conscious helplessness we commit both ourselves, and that which weighs sorely upon the spirit, into the hand of Him who is mighty to help and save. And is it not a matter of experience, that God does mercifully sustain the heart of His people, when otherwise they must utterly sink? They can feel, though they scarcely know how to describe — the gracious support afforded by the everlasting arms which uphold them. The man who knows not Christ as His Savior, may indeed fall deeper and deeper, and find no strength, no peace. He may fall . . .

from one degree of sin to another;

from sins against the law — to sins against the Gospel;

from sins of ignorance — to sins against light and knowledge;

from lesser neglects — to a casting off all the restraints of religion;

from lighter offences — to daring rebellion against God.

He may fall into sorrows, where he is uncheered by a single ray of hope. He may fall, like Saul and Judas, into a state of terrible remorse. He may fall into soul-destroying errors, no less ruinous than open ungodliness. He may fall at length into that gulf of dark despair, that deep abyss of unfathomable woe, that wrath to come, which is the everlasting inheritance of Christless sinners! But with yourself, kept and guarded by the power of Him you love — oh how different shall it ever be! The infant, nestling within its mother's arms, feels the warmth of those arms and of that bosom on which it lies. So shall you, reposing on Christ, sheltered in the bosom of Divine love, experience a heavenly peace, a holy joy, a calm rest and satisfaction, that surpasses knowledge. The very Comforter Himself shall dwell within you, enabling you to rejoice even in tribulation, strengthening your faith to hold fast the sure promises of the Word; yes, to lean confidently upon the care and the faithfulness of the Divine Promiser.

We have an illustration of the supporting grace of God, and the comfort of the everlasting arms, in the spirit manifested by the Rev. H. Budd, a native pastor of the Northwest American Mission. He writes home of the losses which he had experienced. His once large and thriving family is made quite a wreck. Within about six weeks he buries his son (who was also his fellow-helper in the ministry), his wife, and a loving and affectionate daughter nearly seventeen. Now, how does he speak of these heartrending afflictions?

"I do not for one moment doubt my Father's love. In all that has, in all that ever shall, befall me or mine — I own a Father's hand and a Father's love. My fond affection for those who have gone before me, would gladly have retained them in the world, that they might be a comfort to me in my declining years — but God has taken them out of my hands, to bring them into His own presence. I give way in thankful, adoring, weeping silence; and say: Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight!" And be assured, though all the powers of earth and Hell were to combine, they should never wrest you from the embrace of the everlasting arms.

You may remember a touching incident with respect to Luther, in the wilderness of Wartburg. It is said that a rabbit, pursued by the hunter's dogs, crouched at his feet. He took it up, and hid it in his sleeve — but it was all in vain. The fierce dogs came up; and, scenting it in its hiding-place, violently tore it away from him. Then he thought of One stronger than he — His arm none could resist, and those in safeguard with Him no power should be able to pluck thence.

Oh, Christian, lie calmly, trustfully, securely, in the arms of your God. Fear not the reproach of man; fear not the storm that may rage about you — it shall only do His bidding, who in one moment can say, "Peace! Be still." Fear nothing but unbelief and sin. Fear only to grieve or wound the heart upon which you lie. Remember it is that of the Holy One — Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Oh, dishonor not His holy name by the very least willful sin, by careless living, by a lukewarm spirit, or by any questionable compliances with the evil maxims or habits of a world that hates Him.

It was a warning, left by a very eminent minister of Christ, to such as had assembled around his death-bed: "Beware of such a religion as takes the doctrines of grace, without holiness in the daily walk! All such religion is a delusion!"

It is a true witness; therefore, take heed so to abide in the love of God, so to live by the faith of His dear Son — that every grace of the Spirit may dwell and grow in you — that your light may so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. And if you yourself are upheld by the everlasting arms of your covenant God — ought you not to strive by all means to uphold your weaker brethren? "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." "Receive him that is weak in the faith."

Tenderly, hopefully regard any who appear to be arising to a new life, and to be seeking after God. Look not coldly upon them, but cherish the very first desire for good, and aid them by your sympathy and counsel.

Endeavor, if possible, to restore any who have fallen. A few gentle words may awaken the sleeping conscience. A letter kindly written may bring back the wanderer to the feet of Christ. Bear up in the arms of faith and prayer, the young of the flock — those that are yet weak in faith and knowledge, the needy, the suffering, the sorrowful.

Thus may you walk in the footsteps of Him who never broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax — depending only upon His grace and strength.

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal." Isaiah 26:3-4

07.00. The Home of Bethany

The Home of Bethany, Or,

Christ Revealed as the Teacher and Comforter of His People By George Everard, 1873 The Sisters The Dark Cloud Love's Delay The Master has Come!

Around The Tomb The Mighty Voice The Family Re-united

07.01. The Sisters

1. The Sisters

Holy Scripture is a tree of life, and every part of it, every branch, every twig, yes, every leaf — is full of healing virtue.

How true is this of the story of Bethany! In itself it is a very Gospel of grace and love. To Christian hearts it has a peculiar charm. It tells of a family, every member of which was dear to Jesus. It tells of a home where was found true, deep, genuine piety. We see the sisters when all was well with them. We see them again when a heavy burden of grief was crushing them to the ground. We see the tender, loving Savior with them as a willing Guest, sharing their hospitality, and speaking to them in words of heavenly wisdom. We see Him again with them as a Divine Comforter, fulfilling His office to heal the mourner and to bind up the broken-hearted.

If ever there was a home where the ark of God dwelt, it was in this home. Here Christ was honored, and His word was received into meek and obedient hearts. A deep well-spring of love toward the Savior dwelt in each breast, and in Christ's heart there was a well of love for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

Let us go in spirit and visit that home. Let us go and learn its precious lessons. Let us go and listen to the words of the sisters and the words of the Savior. Let us discover, if we can, the secret of true peace in our ordinary every-day life — and the secret of hope and strength and consolation when sorrow befalls us. Would that in every household to which this book may come, there might be felt something of the spirit that dwelt in the home of Bethany!

It has been remarked that the beloved Apostle gives a description of Bethany which is worthy of notice. If another writer had described it, he would probably have told something of its position — of its being a suburb of Jerusalem where some of its wealthy inhabitants had their abode; but John speaks of it, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as "the town of Mary and her sister Martha." John 11:1

Ah, God does not value a town or village for its beauty, for its nobility, for its wealth — but for those who dwell there in His fear and love. Doubtless many a spot, little esteemed among men, is dear to God — because His eye beholds humble loving souls there, to whom the name of the Redeemer is precious. It may be the quiet hamlet, far removed from busy city and town; it may be the street or the court where noise and smoke, yes, and perhaps much poverty is found; but our Father discerns there hearts touched by His Spirit, and amidst all their trials, the everlasting chimes of faith and prayer and thanksgiving are ever ascending thence to Him who never forgets His needy and sorrowful ones. Our first introduction to the sisters is at a simple entertainment to which Martha had invited Christ (Luke 10:38-42): "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house." When Jesus came to a village in Samaria, we read in a previous chapter, they did not receive Him because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. So these villagers refused Christ a lodging for a night, and lost all the blessing He would have brought to them. Had

He abode with them, He would have spoken to them the words of life; and, perhaps, as at Sychar, many might have heard and believed. But now the opportunity is lost, for He departs to another village.

It is otherwise with Zacchaeus: when Christ calls to him, he opens his door and receives Him joyfully. No less joyfully did this godly woman welcome Christ into her home.

Dear reader, how do you act towards Jesus? Is it like the Samaritan villagers — or like Zacchaeus and Martha? Do you shut the door against Christ, or do you gladly open it and ask Christ to enter in and dwell with you?

Too often the world knocks, and we say "Come in."

Friends knock, and we admit them. The claims of business and of self-interest knock — and we readily hearken to them. The call of pleasure is heard and regarded.

Sin comes in some deceitful guise, and we forbid her not. But Christ comes to bless, to help, to save — to fill our poor aching hearts with such joy as earth knows not, and we say, "Stand aside! What have I to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth?" And so, with the bars and bolts of our sins and self-will and prejudice — we turn from our door the best Friend. Shame on us for our ingratitude! This is He who gave His lifeblood to redeem us! This is He who stooped from Heaven to earth to lift us up to His Father's throne! Woe be to us if ever He departs from us! But great shall be our gain if only we will receive Him. With Him enters peace, pardon, sonship, glory. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

O Jesus, You are standing

Outside the fast-closed door,

In lowly patience waiting

To pass the threshold o'er!

Shame on us, Christian brothers,

His name and sign who bear;

O shame, thrice shame upon us,

To keep Him standing there!

O Jesus, You are knocking!

And lo, that hand is scarred,

And thorns Your brow encircle,

And tears Your face have marred!

O love that passes knowledge,

So patiently to wait;

O sin that has no equal,

So fast to bar the gate!

O Jesus, You are pleading

In accents meek and low —

"I died for you my children,

And will you treat Me so?"

O Lord, with shame and sorrow

We open now the door:

Dear Savior, enter — enter —

And leave us never more! When Jesus has entered the house, Mary chooses His footstool. She sits at His feet and hears His word. We read of two other of Christ's followers who chose a similar position. The woman who was a sinner stood at Christ's feet weeping for her sin, and waiting upon Him for the hope of pardoning mercy. The demoniac that was healed sat at Christ's feet, clothed and in his right mind, praying Him that he might be with Him — and yet willing at His bidding to go home to his friends and tell them of the mercy Christ had shown him.

Mary chooses the footstool as a learner,

the sinful woman chooses the footstool as a penitent,

the demoniac chooses the footstool as a grateful and obedient disciple.

Lord Jesus, may we ever thus abide near to You! May we learn of You! May we confess to You our sins! May we long to abide with You — and yet, at Your command, be ready to go out into the world that knows You not, and tell others of all You have done for us! But especially should we here look at MARY. What a calm, holy, deep joy she felt as she drank in the life-giving words of the Son of Man! The eyes of her understanding were enlightened, and her whole soul was illuminated with the knowledge of Christ's love to her. She would gladly learn more and more. The murmurings of her sister for her lack of service, cannot disturb her. She would stay near her Lord until the instruction He would give her is ended.

It is our wisdom also thus to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. We need to sit directly under His own teaching. Many in our day call us to receive the teaching of man as if it were the infallible Word of the living God. We are to regard the voice of the Roman Pontiff as if it were Divine. We are to give up the right of private judgment. We are to believe the interpretation of Scripture given by an earthly priest, as if it were impossible for him to err. If only we be told "the Church teaches so and so," we are not to question it for a moment, but do as we are commanded. Let us beware of this danger.

Let us read and search into the meaning of Holy Scripture, praying perpetually for the teaching of the only Infallible Interpreter, the Holy Spirit. Only take your Bible and read in a spirit of childlike faith and obedience; only lift up your eyes to Heaven, and ask the great Teacher to send you His

good Spirit to instruct you; and you as truly sit at Jesus' feet and learn His word as did Mary in the home of Bethany. But we must turn for a while to MARTHA. We can almost see her, so busy and active in preparing the meal for the Master. Nothing shall be left undone to add to His comfort. Such an opportunity of showing honor to her guest must not be lost. Then, in her anxious zeal, her eye glances at her sister. Why is this? Why should she do all the work? Why not Mary assist in lightening the necessary toil? Then her heart grows fretful. She complains of her sister; yes, and of Christ too. By thus talking to Mary, He keeps her from sharing the labor. She would have Him bid Mary to come and help.

How much dross is mingled with the gold! How much that is sadly imperfect, mars the faith and love of God's people! We see Martha's weak point. She was true and genuine in her affection for the Savior, but she misjudged the way in which best to show it. She thought chiefly at the moment of that which concerned His temporal comfort. She forgot that Christ delighted more in giving than in receiving. She little thought of the joy that it was to Him, to pour into the heart of Mary that living water of Divine truth which she was so eagerly thirsting after.

Truly, Martha, you did well in receiving Christ beneath your roof, and in desiring to pay due honor to your Redeemer. Very different were you from Simon, of whom Christ complained that he gave Him not the water to wash His feet. Yet, Mary, you did far better in sitting down so humbly at His feet, in so gladly opening your ear to hear and your heart to receive His instruction and the abundant dew of His grace, which He thus bestowed upon you. No joy can sinner give to the Savior greater than this — the joy of filling the empty vessel with the fullness of His mercy and love. And yet again we ask, Why should Martha be distracted? Why so over-anxious and disturbed in mind? Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart; and if there is the willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has, and not according to that he has not.

It is a fault with some Christians to be too anxious even in their work for the Lord. The spirit is burdened and depressed with the weight of the responsibility laid upon them. Far better this indeed, than neglect and indifference and half-heartedness; but would it not still more honor Him to trust Him more, to do our utmost — and leave results in His hands; to expect great things — and yet be willing to wait hopefully on Him until He grants to send them? But still more do we dishonor Christ, and destroy our own peace, when we allow the various little trials of every-day life to fill our hearts and occupy our thoughts. No one can tell the injury which a clouded, burdened, anxious disposition works on a Christian and to those around him. It prevents all happiness and comfort in prayer. It leads to many little disputes and quarrels which might otherwise be avoided. It gives to others a false view of religion, and thus places a stumbling-block in the path of inquirers.

Dear reader, do you ask, How can you avoid it? I have no doubt you may have numberless thorns and briars along your path. You have difficulties that others know nothing of. Yet God has revealed a sure remedy. He has told us with child-like confidence, to put every matter, small and great, into His hands. He has bidden us roll upon Him, our pitiful Father, our cares, our fears, our needs, our manifold distresses — and He will undertake for us. A widow with several children was remarked by a lady to be always humming some cheerful hymn; and the inquiry was made, "how it was that, with so many little ones to provide for, she seemed always happy? Had she not many cares and anxieties with them?" The answer she gave was a very instructive one. "Yes," she said: "I have many, many anxious thoughts; but I seldom keep them more than a few minutes; for as fast as

they come, I cast them on the Lord."

Oh, that we could act in this spirit, and thus obey the precept, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God."

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things!" Very earnestly does Christ warn Martha against this spirit of over-carefulness. It is interesting to mark how He doubles her name. When He desired to impress some great lesson, He often did this. That He might forever fix in men's hearts the remembrance of His forbearance and compassion toward the perishing, He speaks thus to Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not." When He would solemnly warn Peter of his danger, He speaks to him in a similar way. "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Even so does He address Martha. He would awaken her to see her mistake. He would lead her to blame herself instead of Mary. He would show her the evil of being burdened and distracted by needless care: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42

"One thing is needful." Not many things, but one. Not the provision for the table, the food that perishes — but the bread of life, the word of salvation; for, "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

Dear reader, one thing is needful for you — that your soul should be saved, your sin forgiven, your peace assured, your title to life eternal made secure. One thing is needful — to live in friendship with God, to die in joyful hope, to awake in glory. One thing is needful . . .

the wedding garment to cover you,
the pearl of great price to enrich you,
the water of life to refresh you,
the balm of Gilead to heal you,
the Rock of Ages to shelter you,
the Everlasting arms to uphold you,
the wing of your Redeemer to cover you.

Yes, "one thing is needful;" in a word, Christ! His love, His presence, His grace, His image, His glory! With this, you are rich and happy through eternal ages!

"Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known,
Yet how rich is my condition,

God and Heaven are still my own." And this was Mary's portion. This was her rich inheritance. This was the good part which she had chosen, and which would never be taken from her. Her choice was without wavering or hesitation. She could say in truth, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I have one desire, one aim, one deep longing — to know You, to love You, to cleave to You more and more." Had she been placed in the position of the young man who had great possessions, and Christ had bidden her relinquish them — she would at once have joyfully done so. Had she been tempted by some fair promise of high rank, or of an advantageous union where she must have forsaken Christ — we know what her decision would have been. Had she been threatened with exile, slavery, or death — we know full well she would rather have suffered all than renounce Christ.

Blessed are you, my reader, if such is your choice also. You may be setting out on life's journey, and many pleasant pictures of future happiness may present themselves to your imagination. But these may prove only as the mirage in the desert. But if Christ is your choice, you have joys in store that shall not fail you. You may have sorrows, as Mary had afterwards; you may be troubled and tempted, and have to bear the scorn of the ungodly — but I can promise you that you will never repent of the choice you have made. A young Jewess in Amsterdam embraced the Gospel, and had to make great sacrifices for Christ. She had to leave mother, brother, and sisters, that she might win Him — yet she did not repent. Hear her own words: "All besides lost — but Christ chosen; and I have found in Him more than all that I have lost."

07.02. The Dark Cloud

2. The Dark Cloud

There are lights and shadows in the fairest landscape. Thus are there days of sorrow — as of gladness in the happiest home.

Seldom, perhaps, has there been more true, solid happiness, than in the home of Bethany. The bond of Divine grace knit all together in genuine Christian affection.

Each eye was fixed on the same blessed hope,
each ear hearkened to the voice of the Good Shepherd,
each heart beat with love to the same gracious Friend.

Yes, and with unchangeable, everlasting love, did that merciful Savior regard every member of the household. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Oh, that there were among us more of this union in Christ, more family religion, more love to the Savior, and love to each other in Him! But how shall it be? I know but one way. If there is one in a home to whom the Redeemer's name is dear, let that one feel a deep responsibility for the souls of the rest. You, perhaps, dear reader, may be that one. If you are, take heed that you leave no stone unturned to bring all who live with you to Jesus' feet. Offer daily prayer on their behalf, that your Father would bestow on them His quickening Spirit. Manifest toward them perpetually, true, self-denying kindness. Never lose an opportunity of doing anything, small or great, that may show how you desire their welfare. Be gentle, forbearing, forgiving. Let there be a quiet consistency of life that speaks louder than many words. And then watch for occasions to speak a word in season that may win them to Christ. Let parents deal tenderly with the young ones; not only praying for them, but praying with them, and especially when some fault or sin has been yielded to. In this way you may hope and expect true piety to increase in your home; and that such as are still wanderers from the path of life, may be brought into the household of faith. But even in the brightest, happiest home — a home where Christ is sincerely loved — dark days come. Thus was it at Bethany. Sickness comes, and with it distress and anxiety and fear. Lazarus is laid low, and the sisters watch by his sick-bed with sorrowful, trembling hearts. He is the stay of their home, their guardian, their protector, perhaps their provider also. And so they send a message to the Savior. They tell Him of their trouble. They think it enough to leave it in His hands. Doubtless He will come to support them in their hour of sorrow, as He has cheered and instructed them in happier seasons. The message brings no surprise to Christ. He has known it all long before. He calmly replies that all would be well. It shall not be unto death, but for His glory, and that of the Father: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

There seems something strange, at first sight, in this close bringing together of grace and love and sickness, in these few verses of John 11:1-57. Here is Mary loving Christ — and Christ loving

Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. And yet side by side with it we read of the brother being sick, and great sorrow coming to the home, in spite of Christ's love.

Yet, after all, is it not Love's accustomed way? Divine love works, not so much for the present comfort of its object — as for the joy that lasts eternally. It strikes heavy blows, sends trials of various kinds, commands the storm and tempest, kindles the furnace, brings down the flail of threshing, cuts to the quick with the sharp pruning-knife — and all because it is love, and because the purposes of love must be fulfilled.

True, sickness has a side of judgment. Looking at it in one aspect, we see that it comes as a part of the curse, as one of the bitter fruits of sin. It comes as a reminder that if God is Love, He is also Righteous. It comes as a forerunner of eternal woe to those who refuse to listen to its teachings. But I would rather look at it on its side of mercy and love. Since we are sinners living in a world of evil, I cannot but reckon it a wise and merciful ordinance of Him who knows what is in man — to send us pain, suffering, disease. It is a visitor we never like to see enter our homes — yet not seldom does she leave behind blessings for which we are thankful to our latest day. "The Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." "Whom the Lord loves, He corrects — even as a father the son in whom he delights."

Sickness often shows to men, the realities of life. With too many life passes by as in a dream. For the present everything, is pleasant and fairly comfortable. Business prospers, and there is an average amount of comfort. So days and weeks and months roll on. Life speeds away like the express train. One milestone on life's journey after another is left behind. And all the while, the great object of life is left out of sight.

There is a long, long life that follows when this short life is over. This present life is our sowing time — and that the reaping.

Every day the soul is receiving a stamp, an impression, that will never be lost.

All around there are elements of untold evil or good to us, according as we use them.

All this is hardly thought of, or forgotten perhaps altogether — when times are good. But God sends a sickness, a fever, an attack of some painful disorder, a broken limb, a severe accident of some kind. "Go, sickness, smite that man, lay him low on a bed of languishing, of suffering, of pain! Show him . . .

how frail he is,

how uncertain is life,

how soon he may be carried to his long home!

Bid him recall . . .

the days that are past,

the sins he has committed,

the mercies he has received,

the ingratitude he has shown to One who has watched over him and blessed him from his youth!"

Then, it is, by the grace of the Spirit, a man begins oftentimes to turn to God.

His sins stand out clear before him;

he thinks of the judgment to come;

he looks into the grave and sees how utterly unprepared he is;

he brings to mind messages he has heard from the lips of Christ's ministers;

he talks with himself,

"What have I been doing?

Where am I going?

Where is my hope and confidence?"

Then, perhaps, the light tale or novel is laid aside, the newspaper is less cared for, the dusty Bible is brought out. The cry arises, "What must I do to be saved?" A few years ago, a young man was laid low with a dangerous illness. He had hitherto neglected the Savior, and felt wholly unfit for eternity. As he lay upon that sick-bed, the Scripture lessons he had learned at grade school seemed written up before him on the walls of his room. He remembered the earnest words of counsel spoken to him by the clergyman in the Bible lessons he had given in the school, and he determined that if he recovered he would endeavor to practice them. His resolution was not in vain; but for years to come, he walked in the way of life and holiness. In this way, sickness leads many to the feet of Jesus. Pride and self-confidence are cast down. As a man turns over and over on his couch, he sees how completely he is in the hand of God.

He has wounded — will He heal?

He has smitten — will He restore?

He sees, too, how unable he is by any goodness or righteousness of his own to reconcile himself to God. Thus is he humbled and brought low, and ready to accept the helping hand and the forgiving mercy of the Friend of sinners. When Jesus was on earth, many by sickness were brought to His footstool. The palsied man had been led to feel his sinfulness, and joyfully heard the word of mercy, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!" The nobleman of Capernaum was led to Jesus by the fever which threatened the life of his son; and thus, we are told, the whole family were taught to believe in Him.

Yes, at such times as these men need solid ground beneath their feet, and it is well if they seek for it and find it. Some, even then, are content with uncertain and delusive hopes. Bunyan tells us that Ignorance was ferried over the river of death by Vain Hope. Many a guilty, unpardoned soul dies with a lie in his right hand!

Dear reader, it is not unlikely you have had such seasons of sickness; and if you have, will you ask yourself, "What fruit have they borne?" What blessing have they left behind? Have they brought you near to God? Have they taught you to cast your sins on your Savior, and to choose Him as

your Refuge and Portion forever? Or, has it been just the reverse? Have you been hardened in sin when the danger was past? Has the world regained its old power? Has the voice of the rod been disregarded?

Another thought here. A sick-bed without Christ is an awful thing, and not seldom leads to a hopeless grave — but health spent without Christ is the road to both. Remember, you may never have a sick-bed. The thread of life may be snapped asunder in a moment. We know not what a day may bring forth. There may be but "a step between us and death."

Oh, the perilous snare of delay! It is a crafty foe — it is a serpent by the way that bites the heel, and a man falls into the pit which the enemy has prepared! But sickness also often becomes a means of much spiritual profit to the children of God. The sickness of Lazarus had a very blessed outcome. It brought glory to Christ. It led the way to one of His very greatest works. It manifested His Divine power. It gave the sisters a deeper view into the tender love of His heart. It tried, and thereby strengthened, their own faith. It was no doubt also of profit to Lazarus himself. He would hereafter be drawn still nearer to the Savior.

It is ever thus, that God sanctifies His people in the school of affliction. The quiet graces of the Christian character are especially drawn forth at such times. Patience and experience and simple trust in God's love, a firmer reliance on the promises of Holy Scripture — all these are often the direct and evident fruits of suffering and pain.

Never have I seen a more lovely Christian character than in a lowly cottage in a village near Cambridge. Truly, her face "shone like that of an angel," so full was she of faith and hope and heavenly light and love. And it was the result of the Spirit's work wrought in her through twenty-seven years of disease. She had, when I knew her, a strange complication of suffering. She was totally blind, she had an affliction of the spine and of the heart, a cancer in the throat, and other maladies beside — and yet never was there a Christian more abounding in joy and peace in believing.

Let not the Christian, then, be weary of this trial of sickness, or of others which the Father may appoint. Despair not if trials seem almost beyond endurance. At the end you will see that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Some years ago I heard an allegory which I have never forgotten. It often comes back to me when I think of the way in which the Lord leads His people. The fable runs — that a few ears of wheat were growing in the corner of a field, and it was promised to this wheat that it would one day be brought before the Queen. But by-and-by the mower came with his sharp scythe and cut the wheat, and feeling the sharpness of the scythe, it said, "I shall never stand before the Queen!" Presently it was laid in the wagon, and pressed and borne down by the other sheaves, and again arose the cry of distress and despair. But, more than this, it was laid on the threshing-floor, and the heavy flail came down upon it. It was taken to the mill, and cut and cut and cut; then it was kneaded into bread; and at last it was placed in the hot burning oven. Again and again was heard the cry of utter, hopeless despair. But at length the promise was fulfilled, and the bread was placed on the Queen's table!

There is a great truth beneath the fable. Christians are God's wheat, sprung from the incorruptible seed of His Word, and from the precious seed of the crucified, buried body of our Lord — and He

purposes that one day they shall stand before Him! But there needs much preparation. There comes the sharp scythe of bereavement — the loss of child or parent or spouse. There comes the oppressive burden of care. There comes the severe tribulation (the very word signifies threshing), seasons of adversity and disappointment. There comes the mill, the trial that utterly breaks us down, and fills the whole spirit with distress; there comes the hot furnace of agonizing pain or fear; and all these are doing their appointed work, stirring up faith and prayer, humbling to the very dust — and yet lifting up the Christian, by leading him nearer to God, and enabling him at length to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Christian, take courage, keep hold of the promise, wait on God, and all shall end well.

"In patience, you the path of duty run;

God never does, nor suffers to be done,

But that which you would do, if you could see

The end of all events, as well as He."

We must add a few words as to the Christian's resource in days of sorrow and anxiety. The sisters turned at once to Christ. In one brief sentence they reveal to Him the story of their present distress: "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

Thus must we ever act. Faith casts itself upon Incarnate Love. Faith rolls its burden on One who alone is able to remove it. Faith tells its sorrow into the ear of the Savior — and with Him leaves the result.

Learn, here, that the repose of the Christian must ever be Christ's love to him — and not his love to Christ. We read not, "Behold, Lazarus, who loves You, is sick;" but "Behold, he whom You love is sick." True, there was in the heart of the sick brother real true love to the Savior — and yet but a feeble spark compared to the love of Christ toward him.

Ah, do not measure Christ's love to you — by your love to Christ! I know full well that the constant questioning of the heart is, Do I love Christ as I ought? And the answer invariably is the same. There is too much coldness, too much forgetfulness toward Him whom yet we desire to love above all things. What is to be done? Go to Him as a sinner, though you feel you have never loved Him at all, and trust His mercy and grace. Then lay your heart before Him, and beseech Him to warm that cold, dead heart with the bright beams of His love. Sure I am, the more you believe Christ's love and trust in Him, the more will there be a response within, and the reflection of His love will be felt in your own heart.

Learn, moreover, to unfold to Christ all your sorrows, and leave them confidently in His hand. Let neither the insignificance of any matter, nor its overwhelming pressure, prevent you from taking it to Him. He sees the end from the beginning. He may not respond as you desire, but He will act wisely and kindly.

He is your Shepherd — therefore will He lead you in the right way.

He is your Physician — therefore will He appoint the best medicine.

He is your High Priest — therefore will He never forget you, but will bear your name on His breastplate of love perpetually.

"It is enough, my gracious Lord,

Your tender sympathy;

That sorrow cannot be too deep,

Which I may bring to Thee."

07.03. Love's Delay

3. Love's Delay, and the Journey to Judea The ways of God are very unlike the ways of man. His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. When we might expect Him to act in one way — we find Him acting in the very reverse.

We see this clearly in the story of Bethany. The sick brother is tended carefully, anxiously, by the two loving sisters. They have sent a messenger to Jesus with the news of their brother's illness, and each moment they anticipate his return, and doubt not that Jesus will come with him. Surely their Friend, their Savior, cannot and will not refuse their urgent desire. Surely He will come and stand by the sick-bed of Lazarus, and bid health and strength return. But, lo, it is far otherwise! They are sorely disappointed. The messenger returned — and no Savior. Not even is there a message to tell them that He will come shortly. Hour by hour, moment by moment, they watch and wait and hearken for a sign of His coming, but in vain. They wait for the Lord as those that watch for the morning, but He comes not to relieve their distress.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and now it is evident that the last scene is near. Lazarus must die — and Christ still absent! Yes, and now all is over. The silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the dust returns to the earth as it was. The speedy burial takes place, and the mourners come, and sorrow bewails the sleeping one — but no Savior! One, two, three days still pass, days of heaviness and anguish, and still no sign of the Master's approach. "Strange, very strange, all this," might they say one to another. "Very strange that He should seem so to forget us. But there is some reason for it. We dare not, we will not believe that He loves us one whit less than we thought!"

Love's delay! How frequent do we find it in God's dealings with His people! For five-and-twenty long years and more does Abraham wait before God gives the son He has promised. For more than four hundred years does the promise of Canaan remain before its fulfillment. For more than four thousand years do men expect the Messiah, first promised in Eden.

Why is this? Why does prayer often arise — and yet so long a period pass before the answer comes? Why does the faithful Jehovah give promises so sure and certain — and yet permit many a year to pass before they are fulfilled?

Ever remember that with God there is an infinity of power, and an eternity in which to display it. If we have an important work to do, we must make haste and do it at once, or the opportunity is gone; our time will be over, or we may no longer have the power to accomplish it. Not so with God. His arm never grows weary; His years never fail. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. So that we must not doubt or faint when He keeps us waiting a while. Though the vision tarries — wait for it — it will surely come.

Sometimes God keeps His people waiting, because great works are long in maturing. The gourd springs up in a night, and perishes in a night. But the giant oak grows more slowly — yet abides for a century. So God's works are great and glorious, and last forever. This very story of Bethany,

through more than eighteen centuries, has been a rock of strength to all God's sorrowful ones. The work of redemption, so long delayed, is to be the theme of endless praise by saints on earth and in Heaven.

God keeps His people waiting oftentimes, that He may deepen spiritual feeling, that He may quicken their souls to more earnest prayer. Our spiritual life is far too shallow — our prayers are far too formal. We want the Divine Teacher by any means to change this. And He does it in this way — He calls forth more earnest desires, more fervent petitions, by the season of delay which He appoints. Oh, what days of spiritual experience, what days of growth in faith and patience and knowledge of the Savior, were those spent by the sisters! How thankfully would they ever look back to those dark, dark hours! And so is it always in such seasons with God's people. Who teaches like God?

God keeps His people waiting, that He may the more manifest His own exceeding grace and power. He writes a sentence of death on all human means of accomplishing our desires, and then in His own marvelous way steps in and does far more than ever we have looked for. If Lazarus had never died, if he had not lain four days in the grave, we would never have had the story of Christ's greatest miracle, or such a proof of His resurrection power. The delay enhanced beyond all conception the glory of the miracle, and manifested His own majesty and might.

Joseph had to wait very long, before he could see the purpose of God's dealings with him; but at last he saw the reason for it all. The betrayal, the exile, the false accusation, the dungeon, the thirteen years of trial and suffering — all these manifested the more fully the wonder-working providence of the great Disposer of all things. For nine years did Monica, the mother of Augustine, pray on in vigorous and persistent hope for her son, while he was rolling in the filth of sin, attempting sometimes to rise — and then sinking deeper than before. But at the end, the grace and mercy of God were the more evident for the long delay. For a whole lifetime did a Christian woman bear with a cruel and intemperate husband — ever returning good for evil, and continuing fervent in prayer for his salvation; and in old age did the man go out into the woods and confess his former sins, and find there the Savior whom his wife so long had loved.

Ah, sorrowing Christian, watch and wait and pray at mercy's gate — and for all your waiting shall there be a double recompense! What are a few days of weeping — compared with the joys of eternity? But if Christ delays, He does not deny help to those who seek Him. After a while, Christ purposes to go again into Judea and console the sisters.

What a calm quiet dignity is there about the movements of Christ! Like the sun and moon moving on in their orbits — like the pillar of the cloud guiding Israel in the wilderness — so was it with Christ. He was never in a hurry, but when the due season came, He rose up and went on His way. For two days did He abide still in the same place where He was, and then He bade His disciples prepare to follow Him into Judea.

Yes, and as we see there was no haste — no hurrying, for He had all power in His hand, and had it been His good pleasure, He could have healed Lazarus by His word, without going to Bethany at all — so neither was there any shrinking back from the fear of man. The disciples fear the persecution of the Jews. They have lately sought to stone Christ, and they may do so again; but what matters this? Christ holds the reins of the universe. Man cannot touch one hair of His head or

that of His disciples, except as He shall permit it.

Believer, when the Lord calls you forth to go on His errands, to speak for Him, to witness for Him among the ungodly — do not shrink back. Do not refuse to obey His call. In days like our own, when the powers of evil are so mighty, no Christian ought to hold back his testimony, but go forth manfully and strive to rescue souls from the kingdom of darkness.

"Ah, but my natural disposition is retiring — I am not fitted for speaking to others." But are you to follow your disposition — or the guiding of God's Word and Spirit? Was not God angry with Moses, because he pleaded that he was slow of speech? Did not Christ bid the demoniac go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him?

"Ah, but I am afraid of what others will say or do."

Nay, my friend, be not afraid of those who kill the body. Take Christ with you; believe that He is by your side; lift up your eyes to Him for wisdom and strength, and then you need not fear though all the world were against you. A Christian in Tinnevely was cruelly beaten and half-killed by the heathen whom he strove to win for Christ; but after his recovery, he was asked in what part of the country he would prefer to labor. "Send me again to the very place where I have been ill-treated," he said; and there he went and continued his work for Christ. The words of Christ, in which He reproved the timidity of the disciples, are full of wise teaching for ourselves. The disciples say to Christ, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone You — and do you want to go You thither again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walks in the day, he stumbles not, because he sees the light of this world. But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him." As if Jesus would say, "Be not afraid for my sake — there is no cause for fear. I have my twelve hours, of which none can deprive me. True, foes may be on my right hand, and on my left. True, scribes and Pharisees and chief-priests may be filled with envy and wrath. Nevertheless, all is well. If need be, legions of angels shall defend and guard Me until my appointed work is done." But in these words, Christ looks beyond Himself, to His disciples and to men in all time. The lesson is for the world. Man has his time, his opportunity, his day of grace and mercy — but it is short and limited: twelve hours, and no more. They may be very short hours, or they may be longer, but they will soon pass.

Dear reader, such is your life. One short day, and then its great and blessed opportunities have fled, and forever. Yes, and now there is light for you! The glorious lamp of God's Word is ready to give you light needful for every footstep. Every one of its ten thousand precious promises has its bright ray of light to guide and cheer you if you will receive it. Yes, Christ Himself will be your light. In His Gospel He offers you the light of knowledge, of pardon, and of hope.

"Hail, glorious Gospel — heavenly light, whereby

We live with comfort and with comfort die;

And view beyond this gloomy scene — the tomb —

A life of endless happiness to come." Is any reader of these pages earnestly desiring to find peace and salvation? Then be assured you shall not be left in the dark. The Ethiopian eunuch was seeking the way, and the Lord sent Philip to instruct him. Cornelius was longing for God's favor, and the Lord sent Peter to his house. But is there no danger to those who delay? Ah, there is the

crafty serpent whispering in your ear, "Wait a while. No need of being so hasty. Months and years are yet before you. These things are very good in their place; but first enjoy the world and your sins and your pleasures a while longer — and by-and-by repent and believe."

Nay, nay, do not hearken to this specious deceit. While the day is fresh, while the sun is in the east — then set out on your journey. To wait until the sun is setting, is dangerous work for one who has such a journey to take. What if your light goes out, and you should stumble and fall and perish! Your foot may stumble on the dark mountains, and then you shall never reach the heavenly Jerusalem.

It is a solemn thought. Each moment of delay — the light to guide you is being withdrawn.

God gives light. He offers it to you, but if rejected, the darkness grows deeper. The shutters are put up; a thick mist gathers over you; spiritual things become more and more unreal and distant; the conscience is dulled; the Spirit is withdrawn; the spirit of the world gains stronger power; and perchance the eye of the soul is fixed in spiritual death forever. Is there no peril in this? But life itself will soon be over, and then your lot is cast for weal or woe. Some years ago I was preaching one Sunday afternoon, on the words, "Yet a little while is the light with you." I was urging those present at once to turn from sin and to believe in Christ. One man whom I had reason to know had long been living a profane and wicked life, was listening to the message. It was the last he heard. Whether he received the truth or not I cannot say; but the following Friday he was walking through the fields, and suddenly he was taken ill, and never reached his home alive.

Blessed are those who, while they have the light, believe in the light, walk in the light, and reach in safety the glorious city which has no need of the sun or moon, for the Lord Himself is its everlasting light!

07.04. The Master has Come!

4. The Master Has Come!

Christ often spoke in parables. A single word was often in His mouth, an earthly veil of some heavenly truth. "Our friend Lazarus sleeps," said Christ; "but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples mistake His meaning. They lose the beauty of our Lord's word. They think but of natural rest — and if he thus rest, what need of awaking him? For he shall do well and recover. But Christ explains Himself: "Lazarus is dead." For their sakes this had been permitted. It should strengthen their faith to see the mighty work which their Master should thus perform.

"Our friend Lazarus sleeps." What a cheering thought is here for those who belong to Christ! You are the friends of Jesus. You are the friends of Him who lives and was dead, and is now alive for evermore. You are the friends of Him who holds in His hand the keys of death, the grave, and the great world beyond — of Him who reigns supreme. And for you and those who are one with you in Christ, death is a peaceful sleep. The word sleeps looks backward and forward. It tells of rest from present toil and struggle and care. It tells of an awaking to a new day of blissful life. Even the sleep is one of blessedness — for the soul lives in the consciousness of a Savior's presence, and tastes more of sweet fellowship with Him than is possible on earth.

Ah, Christian, fear not death! Tremble not at the grave! It may indeed appear to you in a dark and gloomy mask; you may fear the suffering and the sorrow and the parting scene; but there is a friendly face behind, there is a joyful greeting on the other shore. A young sailor was dying on board ship in the Chinese seas, far away from all whom he loved. But he saw the joy awaiting him. He had been awakened and converted to God some time previously, by borrowing from the captain's chest an old book, "Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted," and now after a few days' illness he was called away. But he died rejoicing: "Farewell, mother; farewell, England. Welcome, Jesus! Welcome, Heaven! Welcome, eternity."

It is interesting in this story of Bethany to remember the saying of Thomas which followed this conversation of Christ with His disciples. We often think only of Thomas as the picture of a doubting, unbelieving disciple. Let us not forget that there was in him the spirit of true self-denying love. Christ purposed to go into Judea. Thomas thought the Jews would kill Him; but if so, he was ready to share the danger. "Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with Him!" John 11:16

We may learn a lesson here. Let us look at the best side of a Christian's character. "A diamond with a flaw — is better than a pebble without one." A Christian may have some grave infirmity; he may fail very grievously at some crisis of his Christian career — yet for all that he may be one of Christ's jewels, and may shine brightly hereafter in His crown. At length Jesus sets out on His way to Judea, and reaches Bethany. The sisters had a weary, sorrowful season of waiting, but it had an appointed limit. Christ tarries not a moment too long. "Why do the wheels of His chariot tarry?" might be the oft-repeated inquiry. "You do not understand now what I am doing — but you will

understand later on." was the spirit of our Lord's reply.

Holy Scripture forbids despair to any who wait on the Lord. A Jewish proverb declares, "When the tale of bricks is doubled — Moses comes." So when darkest falls the night to Christian hearts — the morning of joy is approaching.

"Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already." What could have looked more hopeless than this? And yet all ended well. When the sisters saw the outcome of it all, they could trace abundant loving-kindness in every moment's delay.

Dear reader, never despair! In the darkest hour, hope in God.

What is it that now distresses you? Is it the most terrible blow that could possibly have fallen upon you? Is it a season of pain almost beyond endurance? Is it a loss that takes all heart, all pleasure out of life? Is it a darkness of soul that seems to block out all comfort, that seems to shut against you the door of mercy?

Still yield not to despair. Whether a better remedy can be found you may be disposed to doubt, but certainly a worse cannot be. Ah, when hope is dead — buried — four days in the grave — then Jesus comes, and with Him light and joy and deliverance! When Jesus comes to Bethany, the two sisters react differently. Methinks Martha is now rather to be commended than Mary. Mary nurses her sorrow, and can scarcely look up or think of anything but her lost brother. But Martha rises up and goes forth to meet Jesus.

How is it with Christians now in their days of sorrow? Some by faith and expectation are ready to welcome the first bright gleams of hope. Some sit down in a gloomy half-despair, their eyes blinded by unbelief and fears, and think that never again shall they see comfort and joy on earth. So was it with Israel of old in their bondage. They hearkened not to Moses, because of anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage.

Ah, Mary! why did you not rise up to meet your Savior? Might He not lighten your burden? Might He not speak some word that would cheer your desolate heart?

Let Christians avoid this spirit. Hope against hope, and believe in darkest hours, that help may be near. Such unbelief makes the heavy burden heavier; it lengthens out the time of trial; it shuts out the consolation that God sends you. Instead of this, watch for the light. Go forth to meet your Lord. He may come to you by a promise, by a providence, by a whispered thought; but whichever way it is, welcome His presence.

One of the most instructive features in the narrative is the gentle reproach of the two sisters. We hear the same words from both Martha and Mary — first from the one, and then later on from the other. This tells a tale. It shows that what they spoke to Jesus, they had again and again spoken in their hearts and to each other: "Ah, if only Christ were here — it would be otherwise! We would soon see our sick one recover. Strange is it He comes not to relieve our anxiety." And now they say this to Christ Himself: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." Was it the right word to speak? There was faith in it, for it recognized a certain measure of power and help in Christ; but there was unbelief, too, for it limited Christ's power. Could He not have healed by a word, as He healed the nobleman's son? Did it not likewise cast a doubt upon His wisdom and goodness? Did it not imply that there was something unkind, something they could not reconcile

with His love, in thus leaving their brother to die?

Unbelief often lurks in second causes. If only such and such had been the case — if only matters had been so ordered — if such a person had come in — if we had gone to such a place, or done such a thing. Or, if someone else had acted differently, then all would have been well! Ah, poor foolish heart, do not torment yourself thus! If God had willed it, might not such have been the case? Can you not see His hand in all that pertains to this bitter sorrow of yours? Never so forget your responsibility, as to neglect the use of the means that God has put into your hand. Never so forget the overruling providence of God, as to fix your eye on second causes, and doubt that the Lord reigns.

"The lot is cast into the lap, the disposing thereof is of the Lord." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "All things work together for good to those who love God." But faith shines out again in the words of Martha: "But I know, that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will grant You." Scarcely dare Martha permit the rising hope to take any definite shape. She might be looking for too much; and yet in the presence of that Mighty One she could not but entertain some glimmering hope that even yet help might be granted, and her brother given back. But in these words of Martha, we are brought face to face with a great truth! Christ is our prevailing Intercessor: "Whatever You will ask of God, He will grant You!" Thus spoke Martha, and thus may we say also.

What courage and boldness should this impart to us in prayer! O Lord, I have no right to expect anything, for my sin is ever bearing witness against me; but Christ is worthy. He asks for me, all that I need, and therefore with confidence do I look for all I need.

Then comes the first word of hope and promise. As if Christ would say to Martha — I know what you hint at; I know that secret suggestion, and it shall be even so. Your desire shall be accomplished: "Your brother shall rise again!" But Martha puts away from her the comfort which Christ would give. She ought at once to have embraced the hope; but she imagines that Christ speaks of that which is too far distant to console in her present distress. "Yes, true, there is another life; but far, far away is that glorious rising again; years must roll by before the trumpet-call shall summon my brother from the grave." But why not use the telescope of faith? It brings very near the things which may be yet in the distant future. It gives reality and present possession to that which may be removed from us by the interval of many centuries: "Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad." Such a faith enables the soul to discern a Savior coming in glory; the saint arising from the dead in a body made like unto that of Christ; all those in Christ now separated — then meeting together to spend a glad eternity in the presence of their Lord. But the Lord turns the thought of Martha to Himself. Away from the last day, away from her brother, He would fix and center every thought on Himself, the source of all resurrection life: "You speak of that which shall happen when time shall be no more. I bid you think of Him who has all power now and hereafter. In Me dwells the power of resurrection life. As I will, when I will, I can manifest it. I can manifest it now, in raising up your brother these four days lying in the grave. I can manifest it in the great day, by bidding every soul who believes in Me come forth to a new and glorious life." "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he who believes in Me, though he were dead — yet shall he live — and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Christian reader, lay firm hold of the eight great "I Am's" of this Gospel, exactly meeting the need and misery of the sinner. Do you confess — I am but frail, the child of a day, and I need a mighty, everlasting Friend?

Christ meets this: "Before Abraham was I AM." Thus proclaiming Himself the Great Jehovah. Do you confess — I am famished and hungry in soul; I long for solid, substantial joy?

Christ meets this: "I am the Bread of Life — he who comes to Me shall never hunger." Do you confess — I am an exile, a prodigal far from home, far from safety?

Christ meets this: "I am the Door — by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." Do you confess — I am a wanderer from the fold; straying far away over the mountains of vanity and sin?

Christ meets this: "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known by mine." Do you confess — I am in darkness, and know not how to find my way?

Christ meets this: "I am the Light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Do you confess — I am out of the way; yes, ignorant, and my soul is dead?

Christ meets this: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Do you confess — I am strengthless and fruitless?

Christ meets this: "I am the Vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." Do you confess — I am a dying sinner in a dying world?

Christ meets this: "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Ah, reader, lay hold by faith of these exceeding great and precious promises. They will assure you of complete acceptance, in spite of all unworthiness and sin. They will pierce every dark cloud. They will assure you of the presence and help of an ever-living Redeemer, who is able to save to the uttermost. They will give an answer to every unbelieving doubt and fear. They will give you courage and grace to make as your own the noble confession of Martha: "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

Yes, and when in cemetery or churchyard, over your body these mighty words of the Savior are read — when in the ears of those who have loved you, the minister speaks, "I am the Resurrection and the Life — he who believes in Me, though he were dead — yet shall he live," then shall your earthly tabernacle rest in its quiet dwelling-place, beneath the care of Death's Destroyer, until He shall return, and in a glorified body you shall forever be with the Lord.

"A few more years shall roll,

A few more seasons come:

And we shall lie with those who rest

Asleep within the tomb.

"Then, O my Lord, prepare

My soul for that great day:

Oh, wash me in Your precious blood,
And take my sins away!"

07.05. Around The Tomb

5. Around the Tomb

He mingle with the company of mourners. The Master has come, and Martha has called her sister, and somewhere in the outskirts of the little town, Mary pours out her sorrowful complaint into the ear of the merciful Redeemer. The Jews follow her, and imagine that she goes again to weep at her brother's tomb. To that mournful spot, Christ bids them come. So, gathered together in that sorrowing group, we see the two sisters, and with them the friends, who in truest kindness, would do their best to comfort them — and, above all, death's Conqueror, the Prince of Life, the great Burden-bearer, the one Friend and Helper of all who flee to Him for support. He comes there to fulfill His own office, "to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn, to give oil of joy for sadness, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." With tears and groans He goes to the tomb. Scarce a word is spoken; but in silent grief they walk along with Him who mingles His tears with theirs — and yet is able effectually to wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Thrice we read in Holy Scripture Jesus wept, and it is hard to say on which occasion we learn most from the tears of the Son of Man.

1. On Olivet's slope, while the multitudes were rejoicing, crying aloud, "Hosanna," and casting their garments at His feet — the Savior was weeping over the beloved city. He foresaw the coming doom; He foresaw the cruelty of the Roman soldiers that would soon come and lay waste that fair city, and miserably destroy her sons and daughters. Yes, and He saw, moreover, the fearful woe beyond, to which sin and unbelief would bring them. Yes, Jesus wept over perishing sinners — and we too should weep.

2. Then, too, in Gethsemane's lonely garden did Jesus weep. As He was entering the dark cloud — as He began to taste the exceeding bitterness of the cup of wrath, which for us He drained even to the dregs. We read of His thrice-repeated prayer, of His agony, of His sore wrestling, yes, of His strong crying and tears. (Hebrews 5:7.) How these tears tell of sin's bitterness, of sin's curse, of the sure condemnation of those who bear their own sin and refuse the full atonement which Jesus has brought! Yes, how they tell of the madness of a life of hollow mirth, while God is angry, and judgment is following swiftly at men's heels!

3. But in this narrative we have Christ's tears at Bethany. "Jesus wept."

Perhaps we might have thought that since the brother was so soon to be restored, there was little need that Christ should weep. Yet surely there was. For their sakes who saw Him, for our sakes still more, and for His Church in all ages; for we read in those tears, as we could scarcely do elsewhere — the true character of Him in whom we trust and love.

We may learn to know Christ as we listen to His gracious words. What a revelation of His heart is given in that short sentence spoken to the sons of Zebedee, when He refused to call down fire on the Samaritan village: "The Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

We may learn to know Christ as we behold His works of mercy. As we see Him going about doing good, healing the lepers, feeding the hungry, and scattering on all sides the blessing of health and gladness — we trace in it all His marvelous bounty and kindness.

We may learn to know Christ as we look upon the wounds in hands and feet and side. "He loved me and gave Himself for me!" is the message that each seems to speak. But those tears of Christ seem also, in a most touching way, to show His compassion and sympathy. Very evidently did they subdue for the moment the hearts of those who saw them. "Behold how He loved him!" was the spontaneous feeling of the mourners around.

If we seek to discover more particularly the cause of the tears which Jesus shed, we would probably be right in regarding it as of a very mingled character.

1. There were tears for the death of a friend.

"When sorrowing, o'er some stone I bend

Which covers what was once a friend,

And from his voice, his hand, his smile,

Divides me for a little while,

You, Savior, marks the tears I shed,

For You did weep o'er Lazarus dead."

2. There were tears of sympathy for the bereaved sisters. By reason of His Divine knowledge He could tell, as none other could, the terrible void in those loving hearts which their brother's death had made — and therefore He wept. "In all their affliction, He was afflicted."

3. And was there not also a look stretching far beyond that particular case of sorrow, and embracing in one field of vision all the havoc and misery and woe that the king of terrors has ever brought into this world of ours? Yes, and beyond this, a look into the very root and fountain of it all — that accursed thing Sin — the parent of all evil! The great lesson of this part of the story of Bethany, seems to be the sympathy of Christ — and to this I desire to direct the attention of those who read these pages. Dear reader, the religion of the Gospel has many consolations; but none greater, none sweeter than this: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:15

Remember, the sympathy of Christ is within the reach of those who are yet strangers to God. It is the sympathy of One without sin — and yet not without sin — for He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that He might bring the blessing of His salvation near to the guilty.

I have no doubt that very many who read this book have not yet found a home and a refuge in God. But are you shut out from the grace and love of Christ? Only if you shut the door of mercy against yourself. A few months ago, I had an opportunity of visiting a poor murderer in his cell. Had I been able to offer him a free pardon signed by the Queen's own hand, how eagerly would he have grasped it! But suppose, under such circumstances, instead of doing so, he had rejected it,

shut to the door, and sullenly preferred death — what could be said but that the fault was his own? Even thus, dear reader, does Jesus stand by your door, offering to you full remission and a sure salvation. It is within reach. It is very near. You have but to accept it, and it is your own.

It is a very common error for people to imagine that we must first of all raise ourselves a certain distance of holiness — and then Jesus will come down to meet us.

Nay, this would be no good news to those so helpless, so fallen, so guilty as we are! What could the lost sheep, exhausted and weary and footsore, do for its restoration, were not the Shepherd to come and carry it home to the fold? What could the soldier lying on the field of battle, faint from loss of blood, wounded, and near to death — what could he do unless a friendly hand bring support, and carry him to a place of safety? What could the man who fell among thieves and was lying half-dead on the way to Jericho — what could he do, except the good Samaritan had come to his help? And what can the lost sinner do without Christ? But He comes near to you. He bends over you, even as you are. Lost, strengthless, wounded, perishing in your blood — Jesus waits to lift you up, to heal your wounds, to bear you in His arms, to save you forever. Oh, that the tears of Christ might show what a compassionate Savior is yours — if only you will yield yourself to Him!

Ah, poor wanderer, you are not happy! Perhaps the chain of some sin is around you — you can not break away from the snare of drink or some other perilous vice. But your Redeemer is merciful, and your Redeemer is strong, and by His cleansing blood and His all-powerful Spirit He can make you a happy, holy Christian. "He who despises Him, wrongs his own soul. All those who hate, Him love death."

Again, remember the sympathy of Christ reaches all the depths and peculiarities of human sorrow.

Strange and appalling is the variety of wretchedness and woe that burdens our earth. Go to that beautiful valley where the stream glides peacefully along, and all is lovely and fair; or go to the spot where the smoke of the factory or the furnace makes all around look dark and dreary — and in both you find aching hearts and weary troubled souls. Go to the mansion of the rich man, or the poor cottage of the laborer, or the confined room of the mechanic — and in some shape, the enemy comes to each. But in Christ there is a rich fullness of sympathy that reaches every case.

"Yes, and as if You would be God

Even in misery,

You have left no sorrow but Your own

Unreached by sympathy!"

I can imagine, among the readers of these pages, one who is laboring for souls in a large town, sorely discouraged and depressed by the evil around. You have but scanty help, and those who are willing to help have neither large means nor much ability — and as you plod on, you see but a small number gathered in for Christ. And yet you go on. You often sigh over the sin you witness, but cannot prevent. You often lift up your heart in some such prayer as that of the Psalmist, "Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but guide the just!" Or, perhaps, in the beautiful words of Bonar:

"Come, Lord, and take away

The curse, the sin, the stain;

And make this blighted world of ours,

Your own fair world again!" But is there no loving eye that sees you — no loving heart that feels for you? Surely there is. He knew the very grief you feel. He labored on for His day of toil, preaching and teaching everywhere, speaking as never man spoke — yet at the end but few cleave to Him, and many of those who had heard Him, joined in the sin of crucifying the Lord of Glory!

He knows your desire, and He accepts it. Your work is not lost. Your words for Him shall be a sweet savor unto God. He will be glorified, and some, at least, brought home to God, who shall be your crown in the day of His appearing.

Or, I picture to myself a very different case. You are not a worker, but a sufferer. The tide of busy life rolls on around you — but you the while are scarcely able to move from room to room. A terrible disease has laid its hand upon you, and neither day nor night brings rest or relief. Sleepless nights and agonizing pain are your constant portion. More than this, your faith is weak, and you are not sure of your acceptance with God; but you know your sins, and you flee to the Savior, and have no hope but in His precious blood. Ah, how the Savior feels for you! He counts each tear, and marks each sigh, and tells each groan, and would cheer your heart by His own word, "It is I — do not be afraid. I will surely forgive, and save, and comfort. I will hold you by your right hand. I will bring you through the waters; yes, in the furnace you shall not be burned. You shall see the end, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Or I take another case. You have a lifelong trial in your own home. You might be very happy and comfortable, you have means that might easily suffice, if rightly used, but — but — all goes one way. The one who ought most to help you — the one who promised years ago in God's presence to love and to cherish until death should part between you — is now your greatest fear and sorrow. You are worse than a widow. Your burden grows heavier day by day; and yet you pray and try patiently to bear up, and return kindness for cruel wrong. But you see no prospect of any change. Hopeless misery seems to lie before you. Nay, but remember Christ thinks upon the oppressed. Read Psalms 37:1-40, Psalms 40:1-17, Psalms 46:1-11, Psalms 57:1-11, and Psalms 62:1-12 — and see whether there may not yet be a door of hope. Have Christ on your side, and be sure that He will be a husband to you, and your prayers shall come back to your own bosom.

How they shall be answered I know not; whether in the salvation of the one for whom you plead, or in some other way; but this I know — they shall so return in blessing that your heart shall sing for joy, and the voice of sighing and weeping shall give place to the sound of joy and thanksgiving. Very possibly it may be here in this world — but if not, it shall surely be hereafter. Or I imagine another case. You have lost an only child. Around him all your thoughts had centered. You had watched over him in his infancy, you had loved to listen to his first lisplings, and marked his growth from year to year, and did your best for his schooling — and after all, he was taken from you. It was but a short illness and you were obliged to part, and now life is a blank and its interest is gone, and you feel scarcely able to do your work. Again and again the remembrance of your loss comes back to you afresh, and perhaps a flood of tears comes to relieve your distress.

Oh, remember Jesus in your grief! In very faithfulness He has caused you to be troubled. He took your child, that He might give you Himself. Perhaps, but for this, you would have had no room for Him. Your child would have been your idol, and would have occupied the temple where the Savior Himself should dwell. But now Christ comes; you have learned your need of Him, and He comes to supply it. In deepest, in truest sympathy, He is by your very side. Think how He cared for the sisters when their one brother was taken. Think how He cared for the widow of Nain when her only son was called away. Think how He cared for Jairus when his only daughter was lying dead. And He is still the same. His compassions are ever new. He thinks on your sorrow, and will heal your wounded spirit by the exceeding consolations of His love. And yet, there is one other testing trial — the Christian pilgrim passing through the river of death. Think of the dying Christian. There he lies; all has been done for him that man can do, but in vain. Hope is over. Those around him can only wait until the solemn moment comes, and he follows the path that leads to an eternal state. What thoughts may be crowding in while the lips refuse to speak! It may be, the willing spirit happy in Christ, anticipates and enjoys a sweet foretaste of the Lord's presence in glory. But "heart and flesh are failing," and "the flesh is weak." Christ's sympathy is needed, and it is near. In that hour of final conflict, what more fitted to dispel fear and strengthen hope, than the thought of Bethany and the Savior standing by the tomb?

"Jesus wept! That tear of sorrow

Is a legacy of love.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow,

He the same does ever prove.

Lord, when I am called to die,

Let me think of Bethany."

07.06. The Mighty Voice

6. The Mighty Voice

There is a strange mingling of the human and Divine, in the story of Bethany. Each manifests itself in harmony — yet in contrast. Christ was truly and indeed the Son of man. He was a brother, and had a brother's heart. Those tears of His, how deeply do they penetrate? Surely they tell of an experience of woe that to the uttermost limits of time shall never fail to console the mourner. But with these tears, what a consciousness of Divine power do we recognize! To some of those present the tears He shed were an evidence of sympathy, but moreover, of weakness: "Could not this man," said they, "which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" He will soon give a glorious answer to this. How far His power surpasses their doubting inquiries, shall presently be manifest to all. So He comes nearer to the grave of His friend. And he comes still groaning. Was that groan the expression of sorrow at the unbelief He witnessed? Was it the prayer the Father heard? Ah, remember a sigh, a look, a desire, a groan God-ward, is a prayer — and one never despised! The unspoken prayer often is most powerful in the ear of Him that searches the heart. And now we stand close to the spot. There is the cave — the silent home of the beloved One. We hearken, and the Savior speaks: "Take away the stone!" The command tells us that we must obey Christ's bidding, if we would look for His help. He calls man to do that which is in his power — while He will do that which man cannot do. "Take away the stone!" Remove stumbling-blocks. Cast aside that which hinders.

It is the part of every Christian to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of others. Parents might do far more for their children, and mistresses for their servants, giving them more knowledge of God's Word, and bringing them within the sound of the Gospel of Christ. But in the case of Martha, instead of obeying Christ's command, it would seem that she put a fresh stone in the way! Unbelief breaks out, and there is no such hindrance in Christ's way as this. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." Faith draws down the power and grace of Jesus — but unbelief bars the door against it.

Poor Martha! why do you doubt your Savior's wisdom or your Savior's power? Why speak of the corruption of the grave? Truly, if mere earthly affection had said, "Take away the stone," you might well have replied, "Leave him alone, for by this time there is a bad odor." It is a humbling thought. Look at man in his pride, his self-elation. See him glorying in his attainments or his possessions. Then look at that grave! "Let me bury my dead out of my sight!" said Abraham of Sarah, whom he had so loved. "By this time there is a bad odor," said Martha of the beloved brother.

We say to corruption, "You are my father; and to the worm, You are my mother and sister." Look forward awhile, and what remains of the fairest or the strongest — but a few bones, a handful of dust. Ah, vain man, wherefore would you be proud?" Man is like unto vanity: his time passes away like a shadow." But Martha was forgetting whose voice had given the command. What are four days, or forty days, or forty years — to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, who holds in His hands the keys of death and the grave?

Jesus gently reproves her. He reminds her of the promise that her brother would rise again, and how He had told her of the blessing to those that believe: "Said I not unto you, that, if you would believe you should see the glory of God?"

Let the Christian remember this. Christ throws upon Martha a great responsibility. She must believe, before she could see. She must trust His power, before she could behold the mighty work He was willing to perform. Thus must we honor Christ also. We must believe in His help, before we can find it. Where did Martha err? She could only think of that dead body — of those sad four days — of the gloom and corruption of the grave. Hence her faith was weak and dim, because her eye was not fixed on the mighty Redeemer who stood by her side.

We often fail in the same way. We look at the dead body of our guilt, of our corruption; we feel ourselves so utterly bad and vile and unworthy, that we scarcely think that salvation can be possible. We look at the utter ungodliness or worldliness of another, until we fail to recognize the face of Him that can quicken the dead soul. We look at that black cloud, so gloomy and so threatening, or that deep distress and sorrow — until we shut out from ourselves all else, and cannot see a ray of hope beyond.

Surely the voice of Christ to Martha chides our unbelief. Turn away your eyes from your sin, your fear, your sorrow — and behold the love and might of Him who stands near to help you.

What a contrast we have in the faith of Abraham — to the unbelief of Martha! God promised him a son, and through that son a seed like the stars of Heaven and the sand on the sea-shore. And he fully believed it. "Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." He looked not at the difficulties in the way, but regarded only the promise and the power and the faithfulness of God.

Believe, and you shall see the glory of God! You shall see the glory of His free salvation, of His full and complete justification, and of your sure acceptance in the Beloved!

Believe, and you shall see the glory and grace of a present and merciful Redeemer, cheering your heart and filling you with joy unspeakable!

Believe, and you shall see glorious displays of His power on your behalf, turning your sorrows into joys, and your trials into blessings!

Believe, and you shall see souls, once dead and corrupt, changed and transformed, rejoicing in the new life which the Spirit imparts!

Believe, and you shall see life triumphing over death, grace over sin, strength over weakness.

Believe, and you shall see the glory of the everlasting kingdom, a mansion in the skies, a throne with Christ, and a crown that fades not away! The words of Christ were enough. They do His bidding. They roll away the stone, and thus by the very act they become witnesses of the power of Christ.

Then Christ gives thanks to the Father. He who lifted up his eyes in prayer, now lifts them up in praise and thankfulness. He needed not prayer, indeed, to enable Him to work this mighty work;

for by His own word, without prayer, He for the most part performed his mightiest miracles. He said to the waves, "Peace, be still!" He said to the widow's son, "Young man, arise!" But He would show that He was working in all things with His Father, and in accordance with His will. He would show us, moreover, that in all we do, we must look for help from above; nor must we forget to thank our Father for the help He gives. Before we speak to souls dead in their sins, let us first remember to plead on their behalf with Him who alone can give life.

Christ had spoken to the Father — now He speaks to Lazarus. And He speaks with "a loud voice." The voice of Christ, for the most part, was quiet and gentle. He did not lift up nor cry nor make His voice heard in the street. His words were like the gentle dew, falling softly — and yet refreshing so many weary hearts. But sometimes, as now, for a special purpose, He speaks aloud. He gives one solemn command — simple, plain, majestic: "LAZARUS, COME FORTH!" And now within that silent grave, Divine power is felt. Had all the voices of earth combined to say, "Come Forth!" death and the grave would have laughed at their puny efforts to deliver man from their dread embrace. But not so with the voice of Jesus. The still grave hears that voice, and at once obeys. The flesh, just now corrupt and decaying, suddenly regains its former freshness. Every power and faculty is restored. The emancipated spirit, which had fled to other scenes, returns for a while to its tenement of clay. Lazarus lives! That strange thing that we call life, so precious, so incomprehensible, so easy to destroy — and yet so impossible for human power to restore — this is given back. Yet no vain curiosity has been satisfied by the resurrection of Lazarus. Whether he had revelations of the invisible state which his lips might have uttered — whether he did tell something in the secret converse of the family with the beloved sisters — this we know not. But this we know — that for us the message of the risen Lazarus is of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. His one message to us is of the might and majesty and grace of our glorious Redeemer.

Lazarus comes forth — but he comes forth bearing about with him the witness of His previous death. When Christ left the tomb, the napkin and grave-clothes were left behind; but Lazarus comes forth, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin." So we have a further command: "Loose him, and let him go." And thus again we learn how Jesus takes man into partnership with Himself, even in His mightiest works. That which man can do, whether it be the rolling away the stone, or the loosing of the grave-clothes — this He bids him to do. But another lesson we may learn. Take off the grave-clothes of a death in sin! Let not old habits, the world's maxims, the besetting sin of former days — impede and keep in bondage the soul which Christ has quickened by His Spirit. Take off all that tells of the unconverted life. Put on all that befits one raised to so high a position. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth." "Set your affections on things above."

Watch over the rebellious will.

Guard well the unruly tongue.

Curb the rash or sullen temper.

Lay aside all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and "perfect holiness in the fear of God."

Let the closing thought on this part of the narrative be to remind us of that all-powerful voice which in a moment could thus summon the dead to life.

I hear the voice of the Son of man thus reviving dead and buried hopes.

You may have had a hope, a longing, in days that are past — but, in the providence of God, it would seem as if the desire were denied you. Perhaps it may be. We must bend our will to God's will. We must bring our requests to God, and then leave Him to do what seems best.

"Have you a hope for which your heart

Would almost count it death to part?

O ask your God that hope to crown,

Or give you strength to lay it down."

But, perhaps, after all, in some shape, the blessing may be granted. You may have lived and died without any apparent sign of your prayer being heard; and then, on another shore, those for whom you have long prayed may greet you as the appointed means of their salvation. Or it may be that some gift, which you have sought and prayed for in vain on earth, may then in a far higher degree be conferred upon you. But I hear also the voice of Jesus summoning from the grave, those long sleeping in the dust.

It was a "loud" voice in which Jesus spoke to Lazarus; but what a voice will that be that shall sound in every grave, yes, in the depths of the sea, and shall call forth the dead. "The hour is coming in the which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who have done good unto the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

Great the joy of the risen saints, when, at the day of Christ's coming, they awake to receive in the body the recompense for toil and suffering. Pardoned through the atoning blood, accepted through the perfect righteousness of Christ; nevertheless, every prayer and labor and effort shall be rewarded through the same mercy and grace which has wrought all their works in them.

Great, too, is the woe of those who shall then stand before the throne unsaved, and whose evil deeds shall then be brought to light.

Never have I read any incident that reminds me so forcibly of this, as the story of Macaba, the African chief, who was notorious for his wars and cruelties, and who was present on one occasion when Mr. Moffatt was preaching on the Resurrection.

"What?" said he, starting with surprise; "what are those words about the dead? The dead arise?"

"Yes, all the dead will arise."

"Will my father arise?"

"Yes."

"Will all the slain in battle arise?"

"Yes."

"Will all that have been killed and eaten by lions, tigers, and crocodiles, arise?"

"Yes — and they will all come to judgment."

"Hark!" shouted the chief, turning to the warriors; "you wise men, did your ears ever hear such strange and unheard-of news? Did you," turning to an old man, the wise man of his tribe; "did you ever hear such news as this?"

"Never," answered the old man. The chief then turned to the missionary, and said, "Sir, I love you much; but the words of the Resurrection are too great for me. I do not wish to hear about the dead rising again. The dead cannot rise — the dead shall not rise."

"Tell me, my friend, why not?" said the missionary.

"I have slain my thousands — shall they arise?" The thought completely overwhelmed him. How dare he meet those whom he had injured or slain?

Oh, that on that great day every reader of these pages may arise in the likeness of Christ, to share His kingdom and glory.

07.07. The Family Re-united

7. The Family Re-united

It is scarcely possible to realize the joy of the sisters, in the restoration of Lazarus. The bond of Christian love which before had linked them together, had been drawn far tighter. Their new joy was the gift of their Savior, and endeared them the more to each other and to Him. How clearly could they now trace His dealings with them — the long delay, the painful separation, the days of bitter grief and sorrow. How truly would they praise Him for His faithful love, and wonder that they could ever have distrusted Him even for a moment.

It is well for us to remember that many such glad surprises will greet Christians hereafter. Perhaps to the very close of life's pilgrimage, the path may be dark and gloomy; but when the river has been crossed, and Christ's glory revealed, hopes long crushed will revive, one and another once dead in sin will be found to have been quickened in answer to believing prayer; families all one in Christ's everlasting kingdom, where on earth there had been a stray sheep, plucked perchance by the Good Shepherd from the very brink of destruction!

Before leaving our subject, we will trace the immediate results that followed the raising of Lazarus. The glory of God was manifested through this miracle, in that it was the means of bringing salvation to some who were perishing. "Many of the Jews that came to visit Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him."

It is very probable that with some of these Jews, their faith was only of a very imperfect and temporary character. They saw this mighty work, and were led for a season to number themselves among His disciples. But with some it was more lasting. Even when some time had passed, we read that by reason of Lazarus, many of the Jews believed on Jesus. No doubt this miracle was the mirror in which many saw, as they had not seen before, the glory of Christ. They beheld in Him something of the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, and trusted in His great salvation. But side by side with this, the glory of Christ in this miracle manifested the utter callousness, the hardness, and the unbelief of others among the bystanders, and of the chief priests and Pharisees. In the Parable of the the Rich Man and Lazarus, Christ has declared that "if men believe not Moses and the prophets — neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." In the narrative we are considering, we see the truth of this saying. For some of those present, in their determined hostility to Christ, went and told the Pharisees of the miracle, and this excited their anger against Him.

More than this; we read of the Pharisees holding a council together, and purposing to put to death the One who had just shown Himself to be the Prince and Giver of life!

More than this; a plot is made also to put Lazarus to death, because men saw in him the proof of Christ's Divine power! Is it possible for unbelief to go beyond this? Had they reflected but a moment, they might have seen clearly that they were fighting against God, and must bring down His sore judgments upon their heads.

Thus we find that the work of Christ brought salvation to some, but became a stumbling block and rock of offence to others. It took from them all excuse. It made them tenfold more guilty in their rejection of Him. And thus also is it with the Gospel itself, and the knowledge of Christ revealed in the Word. It is the savor of life unto life — or of death unto death. Everything is a two-edged sword. All Christian privileges, all means of grace, Scriptures, Sermons, are, according as they are used, either blessings or banes, either physic or poison; they are either for weal or woe, either a fragrance of life unto life eternal, or of death unto death eternal, to the souls of all to whom they come.

Dear reader, I would very earnestly and affectionately entreat you to consider the effect upon yourself of the blessed Gospel of the grace of God. You did not indeed stand by the grave of Bethany; but in reading these pages you have been dwelling in thought upon the Savior's grace and power as there displayed.

You have known, moreover, of the glorious Resurrection of Christ Himself. No event can be more sure when you consider the number and fidelity of the witnesses, and the result that followed in the growth of the Christian Church. You have also the gracious promises and free invitations of the Savior. You have the offered grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and the example of multitudes who have found in Christ the resting-place and salvation of their souls. You have the message declared to you by the ambassadors of Christ, that there is for you an immediate reconciliation with God, through the perfect sacrifice of Calvary — if you but humble yourself for your sin and rely solely on the blood of the Cross. Do you heartily embrace the offer of salvation? Do you accept the gift of life eternal? Do you recognize your own lost condition, and turn in confiding hope to Him who can restore and save you? What is the answer of your heart, to the voice of a pleading Savior? Is it something of this kind, "No! I care neither for Christ nor His gifts. Give me more of the world's treasures, or comforts — and I will thank you. Give me rest, and ease, and pleasure, and health — but as for the mercy and grace of Christ I need it not — I ask it not!" Or is your reply the very reverse of this, "Yes, Lord, with all my heart I embrace the hope Your Word affords! Give me Yourself, Your peace, Your love, Your salvation! Without You I perish and am undone, but I cast myself on Your free and unmerited bounty. I look to You to cleanse me and renew me — to save and bless me evermore!" Which is the answer that your heart gives? Christ's hand is stretched out. Do you accept it by faith — or reject it by your unbelief?

None can fully describe the solemn importance of the question: Do you believe in the Son of God? It is a matter of life and death. A ship is in a fearful storm. The timbers are creaking, the mast is gone, the waves are dashing over the bulwarks. A passenger with wife and children and all that he has, is on board. "Can she live through the storm?" is the anxious question he puts to the pilot. How solemn is the outcome which hangs upon the answer! A prisoner is being tried for his life. The jury are consulting together. The question is put to the foreman: Guilty — or not guilty? How solemn is the outcome which hangs upon the answer! But neither of these questions is so important to those concerned in them as is the answer to the question I have proposed to yourself. Unless you have true faith in Christ — how can you meet the storms that will arise? What will you do in the swelling of Jordan? What will you do when the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth, and when His judgments overtake His enemies? What will you do before the great white throne, when every vain excuse will be exposed, and every sin laid bare before the eye of your Judge? Ah, hasten to your Savior, delay not a moment! How shall we escape, if we neglect so great

salvation? But another result that followed this mighty work, was the quickened zeal and devotion of Mary. The last glimpse we have of the family of Bethany is in the house of Simon the leper. Once more we see Mary at the Savior's footstool, for she brings a box of precious ointment and anoints both the head and feet of Jesus. Though Judas and others blamed her — yet Jesus commends her, and leaves her as a pattern to His people wherever His Gospel is preached.

Dear reader, if Christ has done a great work for you, if He has quickened your soul from a death of sin, if He has heard your prayer and made you to know His great love to you — then follow in the footsteps of this godly woman.

Give to Him your best. Give to Him yourself, your heart, your life, your all. Give that which you would naturally like to expend on yourself. Give money, time, labor, in His service. Give ungrudgingly. It is a very easy thing to find excellent reasons against giving for any object whatever. There are always defects in what man does — so that if we wait to find perfection in any scheme or society or work, we shall fold our hands and never give or do, anything. But the heart that loves Christ is skillful in discovering reasons why money should be given and help rendered, where His work may be advanced and forwarded.

Give too your prayers and praises. Anoint thus the exalted Head of the Church. Let many petitions be presented for the purity and increase of His Church on earth. And look forward to His own acceptance and approval of your work. He will soon be here, and you shall rejoice in His word of welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

08.00. In the Secret Place

In the Secret Place Private Prayers for Two Weeks George Everard, 1880 "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." 1 Peter 4:7

08.000. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Faithful, sincere, believing prayer is the secret of strength to every Christian. It is the power by which he overcomes the Tempter. It is the channel by which he receives daily help, wisdom, grace, and consolation from above. Few promises in Holy Scripture are more encouraging than that spoken by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount: "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:6

Hence the Adversary seeks by every means to hinder the Christian in this duty and privilege. Many are the devices which he uses for the purpose. Just as the commander of a besieging army might endeavor to cut off the water-supply, blocking up or destroying the conduit-pipes or otherwise, thus hoping to take the city — so the enemy of God and man strives to hinder a Christian's prayers. If only he can prevent the child of God seeking peace and help from above, he knows that, sooner or later, he shall be able to take the citadel of the heart. It is for this reason I write these introductory remarks. In putting forth a manual of private prayer, it may be well to name a few of the more common hindrances that are found to lie in the Christian's path. I will add also a few words as to the best means by which they may be overcome. I will briefly mention eight points on which it is of the utmost importance you should be on your guard.

1. Any breach of the law of love, anything of strife, envy, ill-feeling, or separation in the home — is a great disturber of communion with God. For this reason Peter urges the husband and wife to live together "as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). It is only in the spirit of mutual forbearance, love, and unity — that prayer can thrive and grow. Only the still water can reflect the bright stars in the sky above. Only the heart at peace with others, can look up to Heaven and receive back the light which God is ever ready to bestow.

2. Worry is another enemy to be avoided. If you yield to perpetual anxieties and distractions about family matters, or business, or daily duties, or if you dwell continually upon troubles that you imagine are coming — you will seldom be able to pray with comfort. These burdens must be laid down at Christ's feet. Entrust them all to Him. Leave Him to undertake and manage for you, and He will do it far better than you can for yourself. If He laid down His life for you, if He has all power in Heaven and in earth, and if nothing be too small or unimportant for His eye to notice — then exercise more simple confidence in Him, and cast all your care on Him who cares for you.

3. The spirit of hurry is another of these dangers. Prayer need not be long, and in many cases it cannot be; but some time must be given to it in which you can quietly speak to your Father in Heaven. Had you to go into the presence of our Queen, it would be very unsuitable that you should rush in with a hurried step, and, after a moment's conversation with Her Majesty, hastily leave the royal throne. But is it not far more so when you go into the presence of the Great King? Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place is holy ground. Wait a few moments before the lip

is opened, that you may consider the glory and holiness of Jehovah. God is in Heaven and you on earth, therefore let your words be few and real. Do not be content with muttering a short prayer after you have crept into bed. Lay aside all hasty speech, all thoughtless, hurried petitions, and worship Him "with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire."

4. A worldly spirit must be avoided if prayer is to be true and effectual. If the harp is out of tune, if the strings are loose or broken — then how can it give forth a delightful strain of pleasant melody? And if you come to the throne of grace with a mind preoccupied with a thousand eager, feverish worldly desires — then how can you offer such hearty spiritual worship as will be music in the ear of our Father in Heaven? If you would pray and praise aright — then watch continually that you are not conformed to the world.

Ever seek grace and power from above, that you be renewed in heart and mind to desire above all things an increase of spiritual life. Cherish heavenly thoughts throughout the day. Cultivate short prayers throughout the day. If possible, at noonday get a few minutes alone with God; and from morning to evening, again and again, let some short petition arise to your Father in Heaven. Even in your busiest hours you may steal a moment for silent prayer; and it will oil the wheels of everyday work, and form a link of connection between your morning and evening prayer. In this way you will find prayer more profitable and helpful to yourself, and more acceptable to your Father in Heaven.

5. Permitted sin is another deadly foe to effectual prayer.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

"Dead flies spoil the precious ointment."

"He who turns away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination."

If you allow yourself in any sin, or inconsistency, or neglect of duty — if you give the rein to the tongue or the temper — if worldly thoughts are allowed to lodge in the heart — if you set up any idol, money or pleasure or human praise or anything else, in the sanctuary which belongs to God — if you indulge yourself in that which is your own besetting snare — be sure that you will lose all comfort in prayer. Either prayer will conquer sin, or sin will take away all power in prayer.

6. Mere lip-service in prayer is no less fatal than any of the other evils I have named. It is the shell without the kernel. It is the husk without the wheat. It is the body without the soul. It is the form without the power or reality. You may repeat the most beautiful words by rote, you may utter the Lord's Prayer hundreds of times over — but if there is no earnest desire for the things you ask, "What does it profit?" God looks at the heart, and He sees the emptiness and worthlessness of all such seeming devotion. Beware of it as one of the greatest perils. It is in vain that you worship God and draw near to Him with your lips — while your heart is far from Him. He will never accept it at your hands. "In Spirit and in truth" is the one great requisite. On this account, it is needful to exercise much caution in the use of a manual like this. It may prove a hindrance instead of a help. Never be content with using a prayer, however Scriptural and helpful in its way, unless your heart goes along with each petition. Only take this book to guide and assist you in coming to God, but do not rest in it as if you needed nothing further. When you pray, think what you need, and what God has promised — and then plead both with your Father in Heaven. Think of your own special sins

and temptations, and spread them out before the mercy-seat.

If you use the prayers of this book, speak also to God in your own words. A crutch is useful for one who is weak, but a strong man is able to walk without one. Therefore go forward, and seek to grow in the spiritual life. Ask of God a praying heart, and then His grace within you will stir you up to pray in words and desires which will be acceptable to Him. Never forget it. A sigh, a groan, a look, an inward longing of the soul has in it more of real, true prayer, than any number of words merely repeated from the memory, or read from a book, without the deep feeling of an humble, believing heart.

7. A wandering of the mind in prayer is another evil to be carefully avoided. I imagine there is no child of God but has continually to lament wandering thoughts — something coming in to divert the attention, and often carrying you miles away from the presence of the Lord. Even those who most grieve and regret this evil find that it often comes and disturbs them. It meets them in the sanctuary, it meets them in family worship, it meets them in their private devotions. It is a weed that is ever growing, and no remedy has yet been found that can completely root it out of the garden of the heart.

Yet some guidance may be given in the matter. Strive to be very definite in your prayers. Think of what you most need, and then put it very distinctly before the Lord. Endeavor always to speak as to a living person. If you could more fully realize and always recollect that when you pray, a living Redeemer and Friend bows down the ear to hear, that He is close by you, that you are not speaking into the air, or to the walls and ceiling of the room where you are — but that you speak your words to one who as truly sees you and hears you as if you saw Him with your very eyes before you, this would help you more than anything.

Believe, also, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and freely forgives these your infirmities. When conscience tells you that you have been wandering in thought, at once turn again to the Lord, trusting in the precious blood, and looking afresh for the present help and quickening of the Holy Spirit.

8. Unbelief is the last hindrance I will name. You must believe that God is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Many doubts are abroad in the world. Many question whether God hears prayer. But there is a living God, our Creator, our Father, and He does hear the cry of all who truly call upon Him. He makes use of the laws of nature, which He has appointed, to fulfill His own purposes of mercy in answering the prayers of His people. In the course of His wise providence, He disposes men's hearts, and turns about trials and sorrows, and all events, to work out His own wise designs. Give no heed to unbelieving fears. Unbelief dishonors God, keeps back the blessing you might receive, and robs you of all joy and comfort in prayer. On one occasion we are told that Christ "could do no mighty works because of the unbelief" of the people. On the other hand He said, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Therefore in prayer believe much, expect much, and hope against all delay and discouragement. Sooner or later, in the very best way, God will abundantly reward the prayers of all humble, true worshipers.

Look up to Heaven and behold a gracious Father standing "with both hands full of precious gifts, and delighting to shower them down on such as wait upon Him.

Behold a merciful High Priest and Advocate pleading at the mercy-seat, full of sympathy and loving-kindness, presenting His own merits on your behalf, and thus securing every spiritual and temporal blessing for those who trust in His name.

Behold the Eternal, Ever-blessed Spirit, the Comforter, ready to aid you, ready to quicken you in prayer, and to make intercession within you in longings which no words can utter.

Behold unnumbered promises, like so many bright angels, beckoning you forward, and encouraging you to pray without ceasing.

Behold the example of God's saints in all ages, who witness to you of the faithfulness of God in hearing prayer.

Behold the joyful eternal rest that awaits all who love to pray, where weeping prayers shall be exchanged for joyful praises, and where your eyes shall see the King in His beauty.

Consider all this, and then rejoice to make use of this privilege of prayer.

Morning and evening and at noonday, in the glare and heat of the world, in the silent watches of the night, in joy and in sorrow, in youth and in old age, in health and on a sick-bed, in the full strength of life and in the solemn hour of death

— still pray on, pray always, pray hopefully, pray joyfully. And then through eternity you shall bless God for His everlasting mercy, and the countless and untold benefits He has granted in answer to your prayers.

"Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."
Matthew 6:9-13

O short text of Scripture precedes the prayers for each morning and evening; and it is suggested that a few moments' thought should be given to it before the prayer is offered. This may enable you to pray more earnestly and in stronger faith.

08.01. First Week

FIRST WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING.

"With joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah 12:3

O Merciful and Gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I draw near to You in His name. Look not upon my manifold sins — but look upon Him, my righteous Advocate. For His sake turn away Your anger from me, and behold me in loving-kindness. Lift up the light of Your countenance upon me. Teach me evermore to rejoice before You, and to praise You with my whole heart.

O Heavenly Father, I praise and bless You for this Your holy day. It is a token of Your great love toward me. I bless You for the help You afford me by these days of rest and worship. O may I use them faithfully! Give me a delight in Your house of prayer. Give me grace to call upon You in spirit and in truth. Holy Father, quicken me that I may give earnest heed to Your Holy Word, and write its precious lessons on my heart. Stir up my soul that I may sing Your praise with joy, and may I find by experience that a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. O give me in rich measure the grace of Your Spirit, and let me draw water with joy out of these wells of salvation.

O loving Savior, this day draw me closer to Yourself, and make me love You more and more. Show Yourself unto me, that I may increase in the knowledge of You and of Your salvation. I thank You that You have died in my stead. I thank You that You have risen again to save me by Your life. I thank You that You are ever pleading my cause at the Father's right hand. Teach me to trust You utterly. You will save me even to the uttermost. O Lord, perfect that which concerns me, and forsake not the work of Your own hands.

O Almighty God, who alone does great marvels, send forth upon Your Church the healthful Spirit of Your grace. Bless abundantly the congregations of Your people. Give unto Your ministering servants spiritual wisdom, reality, and power. Endue them with boldness and love, and enable them to exalt and glorify Your Son Jesus Christ. Let the dew of Your Spirit rest on the congregation with whom I worship.

O Father, build up and strengthen Your people in Your fear and love. Guide the anxious ones to the Savior's footstool. Make Your arrows sharp in the hearts of Your enemies, and awaken every sleeping conscience. And now, Lord, be with me all through this day. Make it a resting-place where I may gain strength for the coming week. Make it a step upward toward Your rest above. Hear me, O Lord God Almighty, and grant me all my petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SUNDAY EVENING.

"He fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks." Luke 17:16

O Heavenly Father, receive me once more to Your favor this night. Another holy Sabbath has quickly passed. Accept the worship I have this day offered in the name of Jesus. Bless me, even

me, before I go to rest, and lift up the light of Your countenance upon me.

O Lord Jesus, my gracious Master, I would now come to Your footstool. I thank You for all Your love, and I cast myself entirely on Your mercy. O Savior, I come to You, as I would ever come, poor and needy, and with nothing in myself but sin and evil. Take me as I am, and make me all You would have me to be.

Blessed Lord, at Your feet I would confess the many sins of this day. You have given me great privileges — but I have not used them as I ought. You have given me Your house of prayer — but I have often come before You with a wandering heart.

O forgive my lip-service. Forgive my dullness and forgetfulness in hearing Your word. Forgive the coldness of my heart when singing Your praise. O pardon every sinful thought that has defiled my soul this day. Freely cleanse me from every evil thing in the fountain of Your precious blood. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow! Give me true and godly sorrow for all that is past. Then, Lord, speak peace to my soul. Say to me this night, "Go in peace; your sins are forgiven!"

O Lord, be my Teacher. By Your Holy Spirit write upon my heart the lessons I have this day heard outwardly with my ears. Recall to my memory what may have been forgotten. Fix as a nail in a sure place, whatever truth I need for my soul's profit. Teach me the importance of eternal things. Show me more of my exceeding sinfulness. Open the eyes of my understanding that I may know You more perfectly, as all my salvation and all my desire.

O Lord, I beseech You, let Your continual pity cleanse and defend Your Church. Draw forth the graces of Your people. Fill them with faith, love, hope, and zeal. Free them from all worldliness and unbelief, and make them active and diligent in doing Your work. Breathe Your quickening Spirit upon those dead in sin, that they may arise to love and serve You. Build up Your true servants in the knowledge and faith of Your Son. Look in mercy on all I love, and lead every one of them to the Savior's footstool. O hasten the day of His appearing, and may Your children ever be looking forward to that blessed hope.

O Savior, keep me henceforth very near to You. All through the coming week may I see You ever by my side. Let no cloud come between. May I strive to please You in all things. May I practice what I have learned in Your courts, and may I shine as a light in an evil world. O help me still to praise and glorify Your name, and to give You thanks forever. Hear me, and grant me exceeding abundantly above all I ask or think, for Your name's sake.

MONDAY MORNING.

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Psalms 23:1

O God, my Creator, my Preserver, my Father in Christ Jesus, I bless You for Your loving care of me during the past night. I bless You for another day in which to serve You. Your mercies are new every morning. You never fail to guard and keep those who trust in You.

O give me the spirit of true thankfulness. I praise You, O my Father, for every day of health and comfort which You have given me. I praise You for relations and friends, and whatever kindness I have received from them. But I praise You most for Your love in the gift of Jesus. May I prize Him above all things, and may I love Him with my whole heart.

O Good Shepherd, who came to seek and to save the lost, be my Shepherd, Redeemer, and Friend. Seek Your servant, whenever I go astray from You. Fetch me back, whenever I turn away from following You.

O Savior, lead and guide me all through the coming week! Make Your way plain before my face. Deliver me from every snare and danger. Chasten and correct me, if it is needful. Only leave me not to follow the sinful devices of my own heart. Show me what I ought to do, and every hour give me grace and strength to do it. Help me continually to trust in You for all I need, and may I ever love You and keep Your commandments.

I thank You, O Lord, that You have laid down Your life for Your sheep. Bestow on me all the benefits of Your death. Let Your cleansing blood remove each guilty stain. Break the bonds of every sin, and set me free to serve You with gladness. Send to me Your Spirit to abide always in my heart. As You have given Yourself for me, may I give up all to You and follow You faithfully all the days of my life.

O Lord Jesus, have mercy upon those who are wandering far from Your fold. You know how many are living without You and without hope in the world. O turn their hearts back again, and bring them to Yourself. Give them true repentance, and make them to hate the sins they have loved. O bring the lost and perishing to Your footstool, and make them know the blessedness of Your believing people. O God, hear these my humble petitions. Grant to me whatever You know I need that I have failed to ask. Grant unto me pardon and peace. Cleanse me from all my sins, and may I serve You with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

MONDAY EVENING.

"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." Genesis 5:24

Almighty and Everlasting God, whose name is Holy, I would humbly come to Your footstool this night. I am frail and feeble, but You are great and glorious. I am vile and sinful in Your sight, but You are of purer eyes than to behold evil. O give me true humility! Give me a broken and a contrite heart! Make me to know my iniquity and my sin! O Father, I have sinned against You, and am no more worthy to be called Your child. But receive me graciously and love me freely, for Jesus' sake. Through Him may I ever rejoice in You as my Father and my God.

O my Father, I bless You that You invite me to walk with You! Teach me the greatness of this privilege! May I ever see You close at hand, and believe that You are ever with me. Keep me near to You all the day long. Stir up my heart often to speak to You in prayer, and speak to me by Your Word and Your Spirit. May I taste and see how good You are! Continue Your favor and loving-kindness to me. Fill me with all joy and peace in believing. May I abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

O Almighty God, renew me day by day by Your Spirit. Change me into Your own image. Sweeten my temper, and may I never grieve Your Holy Spirit by bitter and angry words. Cleanse and sanctify my thoughts, and purify me from everything that is evil. Give me a single eye to Your glory. May I ever please You in will and deed. May it be my delight to do Your will, and to finish the work You have put into my hands.

O blessed Savior, keep me from all doubt and unbelief. Keep me firm on the Rock of Ages. You know, O Lord, that I am often cast down and discouraged. My sins are too strong for me. My heart is cold and prone to wander. I fail to make progress as I desire. But teach me, Lord, still to cleave to You. Without You I can do nothing. You are the Savior of sinners, and as a sinner I come to You. O cast me not away from Your presence. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. As a branch in the Vine, may I abide in You.

O Lord Jesus, I would trust You without wavering. I leave myself in Your hands. Let Your grace be sufficient for me, and make Your strength perfect in my weakness. O Savior, keep me to the end. Where You are, Lord, may Your servant be! While here below, show me Your salvation, and enable me to live for You. When my days on earth are passed, may I see Your face and be with You where You are in Your glory. Fulfill, O Lord, these my petitions, and keep me and all I love through this night and evermore, for Your name's sake.

TUESDAY MORNING.

"Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified In the Son."
John 14:13.

O Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto You do I lift up my eyes. May I seek You this morning with my whole heart. Quicken me, and I shall call upon Your name!

I bless You, O my Father, for each gracious promise You have given me. I bless You that whatever I ask in Your Son's name and according to Your will — You will give it. Stir me up to desire spiritual blessings. Help me to pray in faith, and then open wide Your good treasure and give me beyond all I ask or think. Fill me with Your fullness in Christ Jesus. Bless me and make me a blessing in Your Church.

O Heavenly Father, give me a deep sense of my own sinfulness, and teach me to place all my hope in the death of Your Son. I thank You that You have given Him to be both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life. Grant, O Lord, that I may trust only in His finished work, and evermore walk in His footsteps.

O Holy Savior, fill me with Your Spirit, and teach me to follow You. O form in me the same mind which shone so brightly in You! Renew me in Your own image! Make me meek and lowly in heart. May I ever be ready to take the lowest place, if only I can glorify You or comfort Your sorrowing ones. O Man of prayer, give me the spirit of prayer, and make me constant in this blessed duty. Forgive my frequent weariness and wanderings in drawing near to You. Whenever I fail, O let Your Spirit help my infirmities, and enable me to pray and not to faint.

Merciful Father, who has made all men, and hates nothing that You have made — have compassion upon all the creatures of Your hand. Remember in mercy Your ancient people, the Jews. Take from them all hardness of heart, and bring them in faith to the Savior's footstool. Pour out Your Holy Spirit on the nations who know You not. Send to them the light of Your Gospel, and dispose them to receive it in faith and obedience.

O Lord, be with me through this day, and every day of my life. Hold me up — and I shall be safe. Stretch out Your hand, and lift me up whenever I fall. O Father, may I see You at my right hand, and ever walk before You with a good conscience. Keep me and uphold me unto the end, for

Jesus Christ's sake.

TUESDAY EVENING.

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says unto you, 'Give me a drink' — you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water!" John 4:10.

O Almighty God, You never fail to help and govern those who trust in You. I bless You for Your care and love through another day. I thank You that You have given me food and clothing and all I need. O Father, in Your good providence, You care for all Your creatures. Not a sparrow is forgotten before You. But I thank You for Your special care for those redeemed by the blood of Your Son. Come very near to me this night. Place beneath me Your everlasting arms. Guard me from all evil, and let no harm come near my dwelling place.

O merciful Father, I need continually Your forgiving mercy. Pardon whatever You have seen in me which is contrary to Your will. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity in the atoning blood of Jesus. May His death answer for all my guilt. May I lie down this night at peace with You and with all the world.

O Lord Jesus, may I know You as the only Savior of sinners. You are the Fountain of grace and salvation. Give me the living water which You have promised to those who ask You. I want to love You more, and serve You better, day by day. O merciful Redeemer, bestow on me Your Spirit in larger measure. Let Your grace be with me as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. Make me to hunger and thirst after You, and then abundantly satisfy every desire. O fill me with Your fullness, Lord, and put gladness in my heart, even the joy of Your salvation.

O Lord, grant that I may become a blessing to others. May I glorify You, by doing Your will and walking in Your footsteps. Give me boldness to confess Your name, and may I never be ashamed of Your Word.

Out of the abundance of my heart, may I tell others of Your love. Bless me with Your favor, and make me a blessing in Your Church. Gracious Father, this night I commend to You myself and all I love. Remember in Your mercy, all those who dear to me. Be near to all beneath this roof. Make us wholly Yours. Deal tenderly with those in any sorrow or adversity. Make their trials work together for their good. Teach them by these earthly troubles, to make You their continual Refuge. O Father, hear these my humble supplications, and when You hear, forgive, and save me, for Jesus Christ's sake.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

"I will be careful to live a blameless life — when will you come to help me? I will lead a life of integrity in my own home." Psalms 101:2

O my God, my Father, draw near to me this morning, for I need Your help. I have nothing of my own but misery and sin, but in Jesus is my hope. Ever look upon Him, my righteous Advocate, and for His sake behold me in Your favor and loving-kindness. As Your forgiven and accepted child, make Your face to shine upon me. Keep me, O Father, from all evil, and help me to walk before You all the day long.

O merciful Redeemer, the Friend of sinners, come to me and abide with me continually. Come to me in the morning, and enlighten me with the bright beams of Your love. Come to me at noon, and keep me calm and quiet in the midst of life's duties. Come to me at evening, and enable me to rest in peace beneath the shadow of Your wing. O Savior, be near to me at all times, wherever my lot is cast. Ever take up Your abode in my home. Sanctify it by Your presence. Give unto us the peace that surpasses understanding. Drive away all strife and disputing, and make us all to be of one heart and mind in Your fear.

O Lord Jesus, my gracious Master, forgive me wherever I have failed in my duty. Save me from evil tempers and from everything that would injure those about me. Keep me from a sullen or murmuring spirit. Make me ready to forgive when others speak hastily or unkindly. May I not be easily provoked, but patient and gentle towards all men. O make me in everything like Yourself, and let Your Spirit ever dwell within me. Subdue within me whatever is amiss, and fill me with unselfish love to every one beneath this roof.

O Father, bless all my relations and friends. If any are yet far from You, O bring them near through the blood of Your Son. If any are in sorrow and trouble, cheer and comfort them. If any are near to death, prepare them for their latter end, and bring them safely to the land of everlasting life, there to dwell with You forever and ever.

I thank You, O merciful God, for all Your mercy and loving-kindness toward me. I bless You for all the benefits I have received at Your hands. O continue to me Your goodness and favor, and teach me evermore to praise You, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me — and I give unto them eternal life." John 10:27-28.

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, and hear my prayer this night. You never slumber nor sleep; O be my Keeper through the hours of darkness. Preserve me from all evil. Whether I wake or sleep, be ever near me as my Helper and my Friend.

I beg You, precious Savior, feed and nourish me in the green pastures of Your truth. Make me to love Your word and to search continually for the treasures it contains. May I ponder Your promises, and practice all Your precepts.

O Blessed Jesus, may I know You as my Shepherd, and hear Your voice, and follow You. Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening. Make me ready to hearken to the faintest whisper of Your Spirit, or to the least warning of conscience. Manifest Yourself to me as I read Your Word, and draw me closer to You by the cords of Your love.

O Holy Savior, teach me evermore to follow You, and to walk day by day in Your footsteps. Clothe me with humility, and make me meek and lowly in spirit. Fill me with holy charity, and dispose me ever to be forbearing and forgiving toward all. Destroy in me all selfishness, and make me thoughtful for the happiness of others. In every trial, make me patient and submissive. In the darkest hour, teach me to hope in God. Give me strength according to my day, and let no temptation come to me which I am not able to bear.

O Lord, teach me to remember the blessedness of Your fold above. You will give eternal life to those who follow You. You will lead them to living fountains of waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. O bring me safe to that blessed rest!

O God, keep me from the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Lead me onward day by day, and fit me for Your Presence. Guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

O Father, let Your choicest blessings be poured on those I love. Make them Yours, and keep them Yours forever. Comfort them in sorrow, and bring them through every trouble to Your everlasting kingdom, for Jesus Christ's sake.

THURSDAY MORNING.

"The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to Him." Ezra 8:22

O Lord God of Heaven, I come to seek Your face this morning. I bless You for Your watchful care through another night. I bless you that You have raised me up in health and strength to serve You today. O may I serve You with a willing mind. May it be my food to do Your will.

Most loving and merciful Father, forgive me all my sins, negligences, and ignorances. Cleanse me from all guilt in the precious blood of Christ. Give me a quiet conscience through the assurance of Your pardoning mercy. Though I have often strayed from You, receive me back to Your favor. Cover me with the robe of Your Son's righteousness. Satisfy my soul with good things. Lift up the light of Your countenance upon me, and keep me henceforth in the paths of holy obedience.

O merciful God, let Your hand ever be upon me for good. Defend me from all the assaults of the enemy. You know the cunning wiles of the devil. You know how prone I am to depart from You. preserve me, O Lord, day by day, from every temptation and snare. Keep me from all appearance of evil. Make me sincere and truthful in all I say. Keep my tongue from uttering any word which will injure another. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by Your Holy Spirit. Sweeten my temper, and subdue my will. Do not allow me to follow the pomps and vanities of this present world. Teach me, O Lord, to lay up treasures in Heaven, and to seek those pleasures which are at Your right hand for evermore.

Heavenly Father, look down in mercy on Your Church in this land. Make us to be a nation fearing You and working righteousness. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but guide the just. Raise up faithful witnesses for Your truth, and may such as preach Your Gospel be filled with Your Spirit. Turn the hearts of those who reject Your Word, and make them truly to believe in Your Son Jesus Christ.

I beg You, O merciful Father, to support, help, and comfort all who are in danger or in trouble. Defend, and provide for, the fatherless children, and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed.

O God, accept these my prayers and supplications, and guide me this day and always in Your faith and fear, for Jesus Christ's sake.

THURSDAY EVENING.

"I am the Lord your God — open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Psalms 81:10

O Merciful God and Father, receive me to Your care this night. I have too often forgotten You. I have lived too much for this present world. But I beg You, O my Father, forgive me all that is past, and give me a holier mind. Sprinkle me this night with the blood of Christ, and breathe into my heart Your quickening Spirit! Lift up my thoughts to Yourself. Draw me — and I will run after You. Keep me henceforth in Your fear and love, and make me wholly Yours.

O God, who is plenteous in mercy and truth, give me, I beg a larger measure of Your grace of You. You give to all men liberally and upbraid not. O deal bountifully with Your servant! O Lord, You are my God, and You have bidden me open my mouth wide. I ask of You great things. Fulfill me with Your grace and blessing. Give me stronger faith. Help me to trust You always and in everything. Whatever cares or sorrows oppress me, O teach me to rely upon You! Give me a more fervent love to You. May the love of Christ constrain me, and may His name ever be precious to my soul. O give me large-hearted charity. Rid me of all selfishness, and make me ever ready to do good to others. Cheer me with brighter views of my heavenly Home, and quicken in me a lively hope of Christ's appearing.

O Heavenly Father, show me my own poverty and emptiness, and evermore fill me out of the fullness which is in Christ. Let Your Spirit work in me mightily. Humble me in the sense of my own sins and shortcomings, but teach me to rejoice always in Christ and in His perfect righteousness. Sanctify me through Your Word, and cleanse me from every secret sin.

O gracious Redeemer, keep me through another night in peace and safety. Be my hiding-place and my shield, and let Your mercy embrace me on every side. Even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, protect and shelter all I love. Bless all my relations and friends.

O Lord, be near to me evermore. I thank and praise You for all Your love to me in past days. Abide with me still. Save me from every snare and temptation, and when You come again, may I be made like unto You in Your eternal and glorious kingdom. O fulfill these my hearty desires, for Your name's sake.

FRIDAY MORNING.

"There is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

O God of love and peace, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I come again to You this morning. Uphold me this day with Your righteous right hand. Strengthen me according to Your Word. Leave me not, neither forsake me, but keep me from falling, and lead me in the paths of righteousness for Your name's sake.

O Lord, I beseech You, let Your Holy Spirit ever rest upon me. Take from me the heart of stone, and give me the heart of flesh. Give me a clearer view of my past sins, and make me grieve that I have so often dishonored You. Enter not into judgment with Your servant, but for Jesus' sake cast all my sins into the depths of the sea!

Gracious Savior, teach me to trust wholly in Your precious name. Without You I am undone. I have no merit but Yours. I have no righteousness but Yours alone. I have sinned — but You have died. I am altogether without excuse, but You plead for me. In You, the Father is ever well pleased.

I flee to You, O merciful Redeemer, as my only Refuge. You are able to save to the uttermost, and will never cast out any who come to You. Receive me, and make me wholly Yours. When the burden of sin oppresses me — give me peace through Your blood. When life's troubles weigh upon me — give me rest in Your care. When I am tempted to do wrong — aid and support me. Bring me safely through every danger to the Home prepared for those who love You.

I now commend myself to Your care through the coming day. Merciful Father, go forth with me to the duties which lie before me. Whatever I do, may I do all to Your glory. Give me good success in whatever I undertake, and may I cast all my care on You, for You care for me. Hear me, O Lord, I humbly beg You, for Jesus Christ's sake.

FRIDAY EVENING.

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." John 4:23

O God the Father of Heaven, mercifully receive me this night. I praise and bless You for Your goodness and Your grace. Still let Your mercy follow me. Regard me in Your tender love, for I do not trust in my own righteousness, but in the name of Jesus. For His sake, welcome me to Your favor, and grant me all that I need. O Father, give me a praying heart. Grant me the spirit of grace and supplication. Those who worship You must worship You in spirit and in truth. O help me thus to draw near to You. Quicken me, that I may seek You earnestly. Increase my faith, that I may come to You with confidence and hope. Whenever I kneel down to pray, keep me from wandering thoughts. May I behold You near at hand to hear my prayers. Whatever I ask of You according to Your will, may I receive through Him who ever lives to intercede for me.

O God, the God of all grace, may I fervently desire more of Your love! As the deer pants after the water brooks — so may I thirst after You, my God! O give me to drink abundantly of You, the Fountain of living waters! May I ever trust Your promises, and delight myself in Your salvation! Day by day may I know You better, and cleave to You with my whole heart!

O God, another day is past — and all my days and years will soon be gone. Teach me to remember that my time is short. I know not what a day may bring forth. O teach me to live for eternity! Whatever my hand finds to do, may I do it with my might! May I use every gift in Your service. May I please You at all times both in will and deed. Like the Savior, may I go about doing good. Trample selfishness and sloth under my feet, and make me diligent and active in Your service.

Heavenly Father, You have bidden us make prayers and supplications for all men. Have mercy upon all who are set in authority over us. Endue them with Your Holy Spirit, and enrich them with Your heavenly grace. Guide the rulers of Your Church, and make them wise in ordering all its affairs. Rid our land of all error and unbelief. O God of love, may the pure light of Your Gospel shine brighter and brighter, and may multitudes be brought into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Increase among us true religion, and pour down upon our country showers of blessing. Grant this, O merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SATURDAY MORNING.

"Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him." Matthew 6:8.

O Lord God of Israel, there is none like You in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath. You are the true and living God. You are the High and Holy One who inhabits Eternity. Help me this morning to worship You with reverence and godly fear. Fill me with holy awe as I approach Your Divine Majesty. Bring me very near to You, O God, as my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. In His name may I come to You as Your child, crying, Abba, Father. May I believe Your promises, and rest in Your care. You know what things I have need of before I ask — and You are able and willing to give me every good thing.

Give me, O Father, health, and comfort, and success — as far as You see best for me. Remove each trial and burden which is too heavy for me to bear. Grant me above all things, the continual aid of Your Spirit. Let the fruits of the Spirit be more and more manifest in me. Grant me love, joy, peace, and longsuffering in increasing measure. Strengthen my faith exceedingly, and keep me from ever doubting Your goodness or Your grace.

O Lord Jesus, set up Your kingdom in my heart. Cast down every idol from Your throne. Subdue every sin and evil passion, and rule in righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Your faithful soldier and servant, may I fight under Your banner, and do what lies in me to turn sinners from their evil way. I beg You, O Lord, put forth Your mighty power, and hasten Your kingdom. Send out Your Spirit, and let Your Word have free course and run and be glorified. Raise up faithful and devoted messengers of Your truth, and let the name of Jesus be everywhere spread abroad. Breathe upon dead souls, that they may live. Direct and guide those who are seeking You. Strengthen and build up Your own people, and may they glorify You by holy and consistent lives.

Almighty God, my Heavenly Father, I heartily thank You for the knowledge of Your grace, and for all the manifold blessings You have given me. May I live this day in remembrance of Your love. May I praise You, not only with my lips — but with my life. Make me zealous in good works, keep me from all sin and evil, and fill me with Your grace and blessing, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SATURDAY EVENING.

"He who covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall find mercy." Proverbs 28:13.

O Almighty God, who searches the hearts of men, I would draw near to You this night in sincerity and truth. O Lord, You know what I am and what I have done. May I hide nothing from You! Search and prove me, and what I do not see — teach me.

O Father, I confess with shame the many sins of the past week. I have been an unprofitable servant. I have loved the world far too much, and have not sought Your glory in all things. I have left undone the things I ought to have done, and have done the things I ought not to have done, and there is no soundness in me. Most merciful God, I beseech You, do not deal with me after my sins, nor reward me according to my iniquities. Give me true repentance. Create in me a new and contrite heart. Forgive all my sins, negligences, and ignorances through the Savior's blood. Endue me with the grace of Your Holy Spirit, that I may amend my life according to Your Holy Word.

O Lord Jesus Christ, my only Hope and Savior, I look to You this night, and cast myself entirely upon Your mercy. You died that I might live. You are even living at the Father's right hand to plead

my cause. I would fix my eye on You alone! To whom but to You can I go, for You have the words of eternal life! Be my Refuge and my Hiding place, in life and in death.

O Lord, prepare me for the Great Day of Your coming. Teach me to follow You in all holiness of living. Give me victory over the temptations of the world, and enable me to mortify the deeds of the body. Free me from all sloth and self-indulgence, and make me zealous in every good word and work.

O Heavenly Father, give me quiet rest this night, and may I awake in the morning to praise You with joyful lips. Prepare the hearts of all Your children to worship You in Your house. Bestow upon them an abundant measure of Your Spirit. May Your courts be filled on the morrow with true worshipers, and may the word of Your salvation lead many to Yourself. Look mercifully on all whom I love, especially. Turn their footsteps into the narrow path, and lead them in the way everlasting. O God, hear these my humble petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake.

08.02. Second Week

SECOND WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING.

"I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." Isaiah 44:3

O Merciful Father, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, I praise You for another day of rest and gladness. This is the day that You have made. May we rejoice and be glad in it! O may I call this day a delight, the holy and honorable day of the Lord. May I strive to honor You, not doing my own ways, nor finding my own pleasure! When I go into Your courts, quicken me that I may call upon Your name. O You that search the hearts, banish far from me all vain and wandering thoughts. Fix my soul on You, that I may offer unto You true worship. As the deer pants after the water brooks — so may I pant after Your grace and mercy. Prepare my heart to receive the good seed of Your Word. Put away from me all levity and thoughtlessness, and teach me to hearken to Your voice in meekness and obedience. Draw me, blessed Savior, nearer to Yourself. Show me more of the evil of sin, and more of Your free salvation. Deepen Your work in my soul, and fill me with Your light and love.

O glorified Redeemer, I look to You for Your Holy Spirit. Send down upon Your Church the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. May He work mightily in every heart! Enlighten the ministers of Your Word with the knowledge of Your truth. Go forth with them, and enable them to preach Your Gospel with power from on high. Give light to those in darkness. Touch the hearts of those who profess and call themselves Christians, and make them Christians indeed. May all who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity and be zealous in all good works.

O Father, may all Your children be taught by You this day. May they drink deeper into the saving truths of Your Word! Fill them with an earnest desire to save precious souls, and prepare Your people for the Great Day of account.

Gracious God, fulfill Your own promise, I beseech You, and make Your Church a praise in the earth. Pour water upon him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. Increase the number of such as fear You. O bless the young in our families and in our Sunday-schools! Turn their hearts to Yourself in their early days. Make them as young plants growing by the river of life. Show them that Your ways are ways of pleasantness and peace. Comfort this day all that mourn. Cheer with Your presence those who are unable to go to Your house. Be to them as a little Sanctuary in the chamber of sickness or affliction.

O Heavenly Father, hear these my humble petitions. Be with me through this day and every day of my earthly pilgrimage — until I reach Your kingdom and glory. Grant this, I beg You, for the Redeemer's sake.

SUNDAY EVENING.

"He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Hebrews 11:10.

O Eternal God, the Refuge and Strength of all who trust in You, may I close this sacred day in Your presence. It has quickly gone, but may the remembrance of it remain with me through the coming week. Hasten my footsteps towards the rest that awaits Your people. O give me the spirit of Your servant of old! May I ever look for a city which has foundations, of which You are the Maker and the King!

O Father, teach me that I am a stranger and sojourner on earth. My years are spent as a tale that is told. Teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. May I so pass through temporal things, that I do not lose the eternal things. O gracious and merciful Father, while here below, may I know Your excellent loving-kindness. May I put my trust under the shadow of Your wings. And when my time on earth is passed, may I find a place in that home where neither sin nor sorrow can ever come!

I beg You, O God, enable me to live as a citizen of Zion. Give me a heavenly mind, and help me to set my affections on things above. Adorn me with every grace of Your Spirit. Renew me in the likeness of Christ, and make me holy, harmless, and undefiled. Clothe me in the fair clothing of His righteousness, and may I rejoice only in Him.

O Lord, make me very useful in Your service. Keep me from all inconsistency, and make me a true follower of Christ in every area of life. Make me considerate for the welfare of those around me. Deliver me from all selfishness and self-will. Give me genuine sympathy for those in trouble, and make me wise in relieving their sorrows.

Heavenly Father, who is rich in mercy, and gives liberally to all who ask — bless all those who are near and dear to me. Lead them in the paths of righteousness, and teach them by Your Spirit to trust only in Jesus. May they know Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Be near to them in days of trial, and in the hour of death, let Your rod and Your staff comfort them.

Finally, O Lord, my Savior and my God, accept my hearty praises for all Your goodness to me. I thank You for Your dying love. I thank You that You have forgiven all my sin. I thank You for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. Help me evermore to praise You. In sorrow and in joy, may I bless Your name continually. And when my work is finished here below, may I praise You, O loving Savior, in Your everlasting kingdom, for Your name's sake.

MONDAY MORNING.

"What nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" Deuteronomy 4:7

O Merciful Lord God, my Father in Christ, I bless You that You are near to all who call upon You. Be very near unto me this morning. Make me to ask such things as shall please You, and grant me abundantly according to Your bounty and loving-kindness.

O Lord, teach me to know the joy of Your presence. When I wake and when I sleep — be continually with me. Be near in Your good providence to order all things for my true welfare. Be near to uphold me with Your hand, and to shield me from all evil. Be near to pardon, to help, and to comfort me in every time of need.

O Great High Priest of Your Church, plead my cause, and support me in the hour of temptation. Keep me from every evil thing. May I hate every thought of vanity and sin. Increase in me true religion. Fill me with Your Spirit. Make me sincere and truthful in all that I say. Teach me to care for the poor and needy, and may I keep myself unspotted from the world.

O gracious Savior, support and comfort me whenever I am in trouble. You are touched with the feeling of my infirmities. You know my every secret want and woe. To whom but to You can I go, when the deep waters of sorrow overwhelm me? O help me to bring every burden to You. Cheer me with Your love while trials lasts. Humble me, and prove me, and do me good in my latter end. Draw my affections from all beside, and fix them on Yourself. Be the Resting-place and Portion of my soul.

Most merciful Father, You have commanded us to pray one for another. Bless and give wisdom and grace to all in authority. Let Your favor rest on our country. Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. Pour out Your Spirit on all ranks and degrees of men. Turn many to righteousness, and build up Your Church among us. Make such as know You — zealous in Your service, and holy and consistent in their lives. Bring back to the remembrance of the hearers Your Word spoken yesterday in Your House. Turn us again, O Lord God Almighty; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved.

Accept, O Father, these my humble petitions. All through this week be ever near, and for Your name's sake, teach me and guide me. Grant this, for Jesus Christ's sake.

MONDAY EVENING.

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:6

O Almighty God, my Heavenly Father — teach me to draw near to You, and draw near to me. I come to You in the name of Jesus, my only Mediator and Advocate. I bless You that You are ready to hear. O fulfill Your own promise. You see in secret. You know each secret desire. Bow down Your ear and hear me. Make my heart Your sanctuary. Enrich me with all the graces of Your Spirit. In the day when all secrets are known, may I find an abundant answer to every petition.

I beseech You, most merciful Father, to cleanse me from secret faults. The darkness hides nothing from You. You have marked every unholy thought and every sinful imagination. O forgive me everything that Your eye has seen amiss. Forgive every envious or unkind thought, every unjust suspicion and covetous desire. Fill me with Your Spirit, and make me holy as You, O God, are holy.

O gracious Savior, kindle in my heart the spirit of true and genuine love. You have loved me and given Yourself for me. May I believe Your great love, and love You above all. You are worthy to be loved far above any creature. O that I may yield to You my best affections! May nothing steal my heart from You. Make me love You more and more, and may Your love constrain me to live no longer to myself but to You. Take from me all unbelief, worldliness, and hardness of heart — and may Your love be my joy on earth and my everlasting portion in Your kingdom.

O Lord, send Your Holy Spirit and endue me with tender charity toward all men. Give me fervent love to Your people, and may I ever pray for them and seek their welfare. Give me true

compassion for those that are ignorant and out of the narrow way. Make me wise to win souls, and enable me to speak a word in season to those who are far from You. May I take up my cross and follow You in this blessed work.

O my Father, hear these my prayers. Watch over me through the night, and keep me safely beneath Your watchful care. Bless all whom I love, and give them every blessing I desire for myself. I ask it, for Jesus Christ's sake.

TUESDAY MORNING.

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

O God, the God of all grace, I approach You this morning in the name of Jesus. Bow down Your ear and hear me, for I am poor and needy. I thank You for Your tender care through the past night. Be with me, and keep me as I go forth to the duties of this day. May I set You always before me, and whatever I do, may I do it for Your glory.

Heavenly Father, fulfill Your promise and make all grace abound toward me. I have no power of myself to do anything aright. Without Your continual help, I cannot please You. But strengthen me according to Your Word. Cleanse me from the sins and neglects of days gone by. Assure me of Your forgiving love. Teach me henceforth to serve You better.

O Lord, give me grace sufficient for every duty, and enable me to overcome every temptation.

Most merciful Savior, be my Shepherd and Friend, and bring me daily nearer to Yourself. Draw me, and I will run after You. Give me the spirit of prayer. Through the toils and temptations of each day, may I often lift up my heart to You. When You say, "Seek My face," may I ever say unto You, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." O may I take on me Your easy yoke and light burden. Day by day may I follow in Your footsteps, and in everything learn of You. May I leave every care and trouble with You. Undertake for me at all times. If others are thoughtless or unkind, cheer me with Your smile. If I am lonely and desolate, say unto me, "I will never leave you, nor ever forsake you." May I come and tell You all my sorrows. Keep me always happy in Your love. May I rejoice in You all my days.

O Lord Jesus, You were ever holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners — make me holy as You are holy. Keep me from the evil that is in the world. Make me watchful, and may I never go in the way of danger. Teach me to take up my cross daily and deny myself. Make me ready to give up my own will for the good of others.

O God, have mercy on those who are walking in the way of evil. Turn their hearts back again to Yourself. Guide those who desire to know and love You. Teach them out of Your Word, and fulfill them with Your Spirit. Be near to all my relations and friends. Be their God and Father evermore.

O Father, hear these my humble petitions. You know all that I need — give to me according to Your wisdom and Your love. Through the day direct and control all that I say or do. Bless me, and make me a blessing wherever I go, for Jesus Christ's sake.

TUESDAY EVENING.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus!" Php 4:6-7

O Almighty God, the God of peace and love, be merciful unto me this night, according to Your Word. Receive me through Christ Your well-beloved Son. He was made sin for us, that we might be accounted righteous in Him. For His sake, hide Your face from my sin, and accept me as Your dear child. Heal my backslidings. Love me freely, and let the dew of Your grace ever rest upon me.

O God, whose never-failing providence orders all things both in Heaven and earth, I would acknowledge You in all my ways. I thank You heartily for Your goodness in days past. May I trust You for all that is yet to come. You are the only wise God. O keep me from leaning on my own judgment — but guide and direct me in all that I do. Show me the way in which I ought to walk, and teach me always what I ought to do. Give me strength sufficient for my day, and uphold me in Your holy paths.

Heavenly Father, enable me in everything to make my requests known unto You. Keep me from being anxious about the future. Help me to do my duty day by day, and to leave the outcome in Your hands. You know my frame, and remember that I am but dust. O deal with me in Your pity and compassion, even as a father pities his children. Be the helper of the helpless, and undertake for me in every trial and concern. Be ever near me, and may I rejoice that You will make all things work together for good to those who love You.

O Lord, I beg You, send me Your Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify me. You know that I have loved the world too much, and that I have not loved You as I ought. May I henceforth give You my whole heart. Give me victory over my own besetting sin. O deliver me from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy.

Gracious Father, keep me from envy, and hatred, and all uncharitableness. Set a watch before the door of my mouth, and may I never speak evil of others. Fill me with holiness, love, and peace, and prepare me for Your Home above. May each night find me more like Jesus, and may I be ready to meet Him with joy at His coming.

O my Father, through the hours of the coming night keep me as the apple of Your eye. May no harm come near this dwelling. Bless all whom I love, and make them truly Yours.

Grant these my humble petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31

O Eternal God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, help me to draw near to You with a true heart. May I come to You with boldness in the name of Christ. Behold Him pierced and wounded for my transgressions — and for His sake, blot out all my iniquities. Receive me to Your favor, and keep me through this day in peace and safety.

Most merciful Father, make me to abide in the path of Your commandments. I have no might or power to serve You, but my strength is in You. I wait upon You continually. Renew me day by day by Your Holy Spirit. Uphold me by Your own right hand. Increase my faith, and give me a firmer confidence in Your promises.

O God of love, pour into my heart greater love to Your name. Fill me with lively hope, and may I mount upwards in holy joy and fervent desire for Your grace. O may I run with patience the heavenly race, and never tire on the road to Zion. Lift me up whenever I fall, and make me watchful lest I grieve You by any willful sin.

I beseech You, O Lord, make me mindful of every duty, especially in my own home. Make me active and diligent in the work I have to do. Keep me from any jealous or envious feelings. May the law of kindness be on my tongue. Teach me to remember the blessing that rests on the peacemaker, and make me gentle and forbearing toward all. Give me the love that is patient and kind. Through the grace of Your Spirit, make me ever ready to return good for evil, and to pray for any who deal unkindly toward me.

Most merciful Lord, cast Your bright beams of light upon Your Church. Enlighten all Your children by the teaching of Your Spirit. Sanctify them by Your truth, and bring them at length to those unspeakable joys which You have prepared for those who sincerely love You.

O my Father, I thank You for Your daily mercies. I thank You for Your loving care over me. I thank You for every gift of Your good providence. I thank You for Your Holy Word and the knowledge of Your Son Jesus Christ. O give me a heart full of gratitude to You, and teach me to show forth Your praise by living to Your glory. Hear me, O my Father, and be with me through this day, for Jesus Christ's sake.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16.

O most Merciful Father, I draw near to You again this night. I praise You for the many mercies of this day. I praise You for bringing me safely to its close. You have given me strength for the duties I have had to perform. Be with me now, and guard me safely through the hours of darkness.

You who hear the prayers of Your children, I thank You for the throne of grace to which You invite me. I thank You for the new and living way You have opened through the blood of Christ. I thank You that He is now my Great High Priest — ever interceding for me. O teach me to come boldly into Your presence, that I may pour out my heart before You. Quicken me by Your Spirit, that I may come to You with full assurance of faith. Even as a little child, may I look to You for all that I need.

O Lord Jesus, You are touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and care for us in all cares. Help me ever to be looking unto You. Let Your pardoning mercy cover all my sin. You know what I am. I have grieved You continually by my forgetfulness and coldness of heart. I have broken my best resolutions. I have yielded too often in the hour of temptation. In everything I have come short of serving You as I should. O loving Savior, pardon all my misdeeds, wash me in Your blood — and I shall be whiter than snow.

Gracious Savior, give me grace and help in each time of need. In days of comfort and prosperity — keep me from forgetting You and going back to the world. In days of trouble — keep me from murmuring and impatience. May I know that You do all things well. When I am tempted in any way to do wrong, stand by me, and help me to resist every snare.

Most merciful Lord, keep me from all evil, and save me to the uttermost. Give me true zeal that I may abound in every good word and work. Work in me both to will and to do according to Your good pleasure, and fill me with the joy of Your salvation.

O God, behold in Your Fatherly goodness, all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate. Let Your everlasting arms be beneath them, and Your Fatherly wing over them. This night be near unto me and all those I love.

Waking or sleeping may I abide in fellowship with You. Refresh me with quiet sleep, and enable me to serve You better on the morrow, for Jesus Christ's sake.

THURSDAY MORNING.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children — then how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Luke 11:13.

O God, My Heavenly Father, I come to You this morning in Your own appointed way. I come to You through Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Sprinkle me afresh with His precious blood. Receive me for His sake, in Your tender love. Since He ever pleads for me — hear my prayers, and give me all I need.

O Father, I thank You that You are kinder than any earthly parent. You are more ready to give to those who ask You, than a father to give good things to his children. Increase my faith in Your love. May I rest upon Your tender care. Whatever I ask of You, may I look to receive according to Your wisdom and Your grace.

O God, I ask of You today the filling of Your Spirit. You have promised that He shall make His abode in the hearts of Your children. O send to me the Comforter, to convince me deeply of my sinfulness. Take from me the heart of stone, and give me the heart of flesh. Teach me and lead me into all truth. Reveal to me more of the love and grace of the Lord Jesus. May I know Him more and more. May I ever look to Him as mighty to save and help me, and may I trust Him for evermore.

O Holy Spirit, come and make my heart Your dwelling-place. Cleanse it from all defilement, and make it Your abode continually. Renew me in the likeness of Christ. Adorn me with humility, love, and holiness — and sanctify me wholly both in body and soul.

Almighty God, the God of all flesh, have mercy on those who are yet far from You. Turn the hearts of such as reject Your Word. Open their eyes, and show them their error and their sin. Look upon those now living in the practice of evil. Make them hate their sins, and choose Your service as their delight. Awaken the thoughtless, and guide those who desire Your salvation. Restore backsliders to Your fold, and make all Your children more perfectly to do Your will.

O Father, hear my prayer, and be with me all through this day, for Jesus Christ's sake.

THURSDAY EVENING.

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him 1 John 4:16

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, give me this night a due sense of Your glorious Majesty. May I worship You with reverence and godly fear. But I would come to You with boldness, for You are my loving Father in Christ Jesus. O teach me to see my exceeding need — and Your own exceeding grace and bounty. For Christ's sake, O my Father, bring me very near to You, and enable me to trust You this night and always.

O Heavenly Father, Your name is Love. I was far from You by wicked works — but You beheld me in Your mercy. I thank You for Jesus, as the atoning sacrifice for my sins. I thank You for the gift of Your Spirit. I thank You for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. O may I love You, for You have first loved me. Manifest Your love to me more and more, and fill me with the spirit of gratitude and praise.

O blessed Savior, may I ever abide in Your love. Let Your Spirit rest upon me, that I may trust Your Word and rejoice in Your free salvation. Keep me in the sunshine of Your presence, and may no willful sin cause You to hide Your face from me. May I seek Your face continually, and never be weary of searching Your Word. Make me to love Your Holy Table, and prepare me from time to time to draw near in faith, that I may partake of the emblems of Your dying love.

O Lord Jesus, teach me to love others — as You have loved me. May I forgive any who wrong me — as You have forgiven me. May I bear with the infirmities of the weak. O keep me from all harsh judgments of the conduct of those about me. Make me ever ready to cover their failings with a mantle of charity. May I rather pray for them, than speak hastily against them.

O Father, receive me tonight to Your care. May I lie down in peace and sleep, for You, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Bless all whom I love, and watch over them for good.

Forgive me the sins and shortcomings of this day. According to Your mercy, remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord. Hear me, O Father, and do for me better than I ask or think, for Jesus Christ's sake.

FRIDAY MORNING.

"The same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon Him." Romans 10:12.

O my heavenly Father, I come to You this morning to bless You for Your goodness. You dwell in the heavens, but You behold Your redeemed people in mercy. I bless You for all Your benefits. I bless You for Your preserving care through another night. I bless You for the light and comfort of another day.

O God, renew to me Your goodness through this day. You are good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon You. For Your dear Son's sake, give me whatever I need. Give me a conscience free from guilt through the blood of Christ. Bestow upon me every grace of Your Holy Spirit. I am but as a little child. I am weak and helpless in myself, and I cannot please You without Your special grace.

O Lord, help me every moment to do Your will. Teach me to walk worthy of You. May I watch against every sin. Mortify in me all selfishness, and pride, and self-will. Root out of my heart, every wrong desire and everything that is contrary to Your Word.

I beseech You, O Father, subdue in me every rebellious and murmuring thought. Clothe me with humility and love. Fill me with holy charity towards all men. May I ever be looking unto Jesus, and thus be conformed to His image, and changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord.

O Lord, I beseech You, let Your continual pity cleanse and defend Your Church. Let Your Spirit descend upon us in larger measure, and banish from our midst all error and unbelief. Make Your people fruitful in every good word and work. Regard in mercy, those who have many temptations and few privileges. Be gracious to our soldiers, wherever their lot may be cast, and make them good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Remember our sailors with Your favor. Keep them from storm and tempest at sea, and the snares that beset them when they come on shore.

O Lord, have mercy upon all men. Show Your pity upon all prisoners and captives. Take beneath Your special care the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed. Deal in tender mercy with all those in trouble and distress, and give them a happy outcome from all their afflictions.

O Father, hear these my humble petitions. Bless me this day, and bless all those for whom I would pray, for Jesus Christ's sake.

FRIDAY EVENING.

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Psalms 34:15.

Unto You do lift I up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. You delight in the prayers of Your children. May I delight to call upon Your name. O Father, I am not worthy to come to You. My sins are increased, and my trespasses have grown up unto the heavens. But I plead with You the name of Jesus. May His blood answer for my guilt. May His perfect righteousness cover all my unrighteousness. Only for His sake, I ask You to regard me with favor and loving-kindness.

I bless You, O Father, that Your eyes are ever upon Your redeemed children for good. You know their sorrows. You mark every tear and every sigh. O teach me to trust You in every hour of trouble. May I bring to You every need and care. May I cast every burden on You, for You will sustain me. You will hearken to each secret cry. Your ear will attend to my humble petition. Come, blessed Lord, and abide with me continually. Do not hide Your face from me. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

O Lord Jesus, I would look unto You for all that I need. Your arm is mighty, and Your promise is sure. Bruise Satan under my feet. Help me to resist every temptation. Keep me from turning aside to the right hand or to the left. Deliver me from the snares of this present evil world. May I never follow the example of the ungodly, nor desire the sinful pleasures which draw many from You. May I love Your holy Word, and find a joy in the study of Your Word. O Savior, remind me that I am not my own — I have been bought with Your precious blood. Fill me with Your Spirit, that I may live for You and yield up all I have to Your service.

Gracious Father, take me this night beneath Your loving care. Your loving-kindness is better than life. O may I put my trust beneath the shadow of Your wing. Let Your mercy embrace me on every side. Bless all my friends, and those who pray for me. Keep them from harm and danger. Cleanse them from all sin, and make them fit to be partakers of the inheritance of Your saints.

O Lord, pardon whatever is amiss in my prayers, and fulfill all my petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SATURDAY MORNING.

"The LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said: Ask for whatever you want me to give you." 1 Kings 3:5

O Merciful And Gracious God, I hear Your voice this morning inviting me to seek You. You are more ready to hear, than I to pray, and You call me to Your mercy-seat. O Father, teach me to ask such things as are pleasing to You. Increase my faith, that I may believe Your willingness to hear — and bow down Your ear and grant me above all I ask or think.

O Lord, I beg You, give me true wisdom. Without You I go astray continually. Guide me every moment by Your counsel. Let Your Holy Spirit be my Teacher. Unfold to me the treasures of Your Word. Make me to understand its precious truths. Show me the evil and the danger of sin.

O Father, give me a clear knowledge of Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Reveal to me the path of holiness — and enable me ever to walk in it.

Blessed Lord, my only hope and Savior, may I look unto You for all wisdom, righteousness, and strength. You gave Yourself for me to redeem me from all iniquity, and to purify me wholly for Yourself. Fulfill in me the purpose of Your love. Forgive through Your blood, all that has been amiss in days past, and help me to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Make me harmless and blameless, without rebuke, ever seeking to glorify Your name. Fill me with Your Spirit, that I may shine brightly for You. May I live looking for Your appearing in the clouds of Heaven.

O Lord God Almighty, bless our country, and make Your face to shine upon us. Let Your favor rest on our civil leaders. Give wisdom to those in authority, and may they rule in Your fear and love. Establish among us, the true doctrines of Your Holy Word. Banish all profane swearing from our streets. Let Your name be honored and Your holy Sabbaths be kept sacred for Your service. Comfort all Your sorrowing children. Turn the hearts of the careless and unbelieving. Pour forth Your Spirit abundantly on all who minister Your Word tomorrow, and increase the number of Your people in our land.

O Heavenly Father, hear my prayer. Be with me this day and evermore, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SATURDAY EVENING.

"It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24.

Almighty And Everlasting God, I come to You at the close of another week. Be my refuge and strength amidst all the changes of this passing world. O Father, I cast myself upon Your mercy in Christ Jesus. My debt is great, and I have nothing to pay. But I thank You that Jesus has paid my

debt and borne my sin in His own body on the tree. For His sake receive me and bless me this night, and make Your face to shine upon me.

Gracious Father, I bless You that Your door of mercy is still open. You are waiting to be gracious. You have promised to hear us even before we call, and to answer while we are yet speaking. Give me the spirit of prayer, that I may truly call upon You — and then open Your hand and show Yourself rich in answering my petitions.

O Eternal God, make me to know how frail I am. My life passes away like a shadow. Day by day and week by week my time is running out. Teach me to use well, the days that remain. May I seek first Your kingdom and righteousness. Give me a sure hope that will never make me ashamed. Keep me from all sin, and create in me a new and contrite heart. Enable me to fix my hope on Jesus alone. Let His blood and righteousness be the ground of all my confidence. O Father, fill me with Your Spirit, and may I rejoice in Jesus as my unchangeable Friend and Savior.

O Lord of all power and might, look down in mercy on Your Church. May the Holy Spirit the Comforter be present tomorrow in all the assemblies of Your people. May Your Word be proclaimed with power, and may many souls be led to Jesus. Strengthen and comfort Your own people, and prosper the labors of all who work in Your vineyard.

O You who are the Hope of all the ends of the earth, raise up faithful laborers to preach Your Word among the heathen. Send forth Your light and Your truth into every land. Let Your Spirit go before and prepare the hearts of the people. Turn them from idols to serve You, the Living and the true God. Let the name of Jesus be precious to multitudes, and may His Kingdom advance and spread.

O Lord God, be near and hear these my prayers. Keep me and all I love beneath Your watchful care, for Jesus Christ's sake.

08.03. Occasional Prayers

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS A prayer before reading the Bible

Heavenly Father, I thank You for the precious jewel of Your Holy Word. I thank You that every portion of it is given by the inspiration of Your Spirit, and is profitable for my instruction in the way of life.

O merciful Lord, send to me Your Spirit to guide me into all truth. Shine upon every page, and teach me whatever I need to know. Open my eyes to behold the wonders of Your love and mercy. Out of Your Word reveal to me my exceeding sinfulness, and bring me in true humility to Your footstool. Show to me the glory of Christ. May I learn more of His free grace and of His full salvation. Point me to Him as my only Hope and Savior. Through Your Word may I trust wholly in Him, and grow more like Him in holiness and love. Sanctify me by Your Word.

O Father, may I search Your Word continually and prize it more than all the treasures of the world. Keep me from reading any book which will take away my delight in it, and keep me from everything in my daily life that is contrary to its precepts. O make Your Word to me a living word, and may those about me see that I follow its holy teaching.

Hear me, O Father, and be my teacher, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A prayer for the New Year.

O Heavenly Father, Your mercy reaches unto the heavens and Your faithfulness unto the clouds. In Jesus' name I come to You at the beginning of another year. How can I praise You as I ought for all Your tender care in years that are past? Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Be my everlasting Refuge. May I enter upon this new year accepted in the Beloved, and cleansed from every sin of past years. Whatever may happen in the future, I would leave with You. I would commit to You, every need and every care. Take charge of me both in body and soul. Teach me to profit, and lead me by the way that I should go. O guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

O God, the only wise God, You alone know the path that lies before me. If this year should be my last, prepare me for the great change. Give me a sure hope in Jesus which nothing can shake. May I ever rest upon Him who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

O gracious Savior, be my All. In health or sickness, in life or death — be my shelter and my safeguard. Keep me ever by Your side, and when the shadows of earth pass away, may I see Your glory and be with You where You are.

O Lord Jesus, help me through this coming year to bear more fruit for Your name. May I not be like the barren fig-tree, only fit for the axe — but may I be a fruitful bough filled with the fruits of righteousness and watered continually with the dew of Your blessing. Fill me with love to You and with unselfish kindness toward all around me. Comfort me, and by Your Holy Spirit establish me in every good word and work, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer for a birthday.

O Eternal God, my Father and my Friend, I praise You for Your goodness and loving-kindness toward me. I would remember all the way that You have led me, and bless You for every token of Your fatherly care.

I thank You, O Father, for preserving me through every danger of my past life. I thank You for sparing me to enter upon another year. I thank You for all the promises of Your Word which You have given to cheer and sustain me.

O Heavenly Father, keep me henceforth in Your fear and love. As I look back on my sins, and failures, and neglects, in days gone by — assure me of Your forgiving mercy; through Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree, wash them all away, and accept me for His name's sake.

Help me, O Lord, to spend well the days or years that yet remain. My days on earth are as a shadow. My life is as nothing before You. But teach me, O Lord, to live always as in Your sight. I give myself afresh to You this day. I lay myself and all that I have at Your feet. May I be wholly Yours. May Your Spirit sanctify me both in body and soul. Make me more holy, and useful than I have ever been before. From this day bless me indeed, and make me a blessing wherever I go. Guide and direct me in all my ways, and uphold me with Your own right hand. Support and comfort me in every sorrow. Never leave me nor forsake me, but bring me in safety to Your kingdom.

O Father, teach me to trust in You at all times, and when life is over may I sit down forever with You in Your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. A prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look down in mercy on Your Church. I come to claim the promise of Your Spirit. You have promised to send down the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, upon Your people. In the name of Jesus, our ascended High Priest, I beseech You to fulfill Your own word. O Heavenly Father, let Your Blessed Spirit come as the rain and the dew from above. Fill Your ministering servants with the spirit of wisdom, and zeal, and power. Endue them with tender compassion for the souls of men, and strengthen them with might to go forth everywhere to testify of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. May the love of Christ constrain them to live for Him, and to abound in every good word and work.

Come, O north wind, and blow, O south wind, upon the garden of the Lord. Drive away all ignorance, error, superstition, and unbelief. May the fruits of righteousness increase and abound, and may those who love You be of one heart and mind in Your service.

O Lord Jesus, have mercy on all those who have no mercy on themselves. Awaken the careless. Convince the lost sinner. Turn to Yourself those who are far astray. O pour water on those that are thirsty, and floods on the dry ground. O bless the young. Pour Your Spirit on the children of Your servants, and Your blessing on their offspring. Give power and success to the teaching of Your Word in our Sunday schools, and guide the footsteps of many a young pilgrim into the way of peace.

Blessed Lord, who has all power in Heaven and in earth — revive Your work in the midst of the days. Reveal Your mighty arm, and let Your Spirit work mightily in Your Church. Deepen the life of Your children, and fill them with all joy and peace in believing. Bring in multitudes within Your fold,

and glorify Your name more and more, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer for missions to the Heathen.

O God, You who are the hope of all the ends of the earth, prosper Your Word and send forth the Gospel of Your salvation to every part of the world. O Lord, You have given Your Son Jesus Christ to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles. You have bidden us preach Your Gospel to every creature. We wait upon You, O Lord, for the power and grace we need. Give the word, and great shall be the company of the preachers. By Your Holy Spirit raise up many to carry the message of Your salvation to the heathen. Fit them for their great work. Send down Your heavenly light into their minds, and endue them with constant zeal to proclaim Your truth.

O Lord, break down every hindrance, and may Your Word have free course and run and be glorified. May every idol fall and every prejudice be subdued before the power of Your Gospel. Dispose many to come and learn from Your servants, and then give them courage to confess the Savior's name. O Lord, raise higher the standard of holy living among the heathen who receive Your truth, and by their good works may Your light shine forth among their countrymen.

We beg You, merciful Lord, be gracious to the native congregations gathered out of heathen lands. Send out among them more and more Your light and Your truth. Confirm them in the faith. Sanctify them through Your Word. Make them witnesses among the heathen that yet know You not. O Father, specially bless the native pastors. Make them burning and shining lights. Enable them to abide steadfast in Your fear, and to carry Your Gospel to the regions beyond them.

O Savior, prosper this good work. Give to Your Church at home the spirit of cheerful liberality and holy zeal in spreading Your truth, and in the day of Your coming may we see many of every land clothed in white robes rejoicing to meet You. Fulfill, this petition, for Your name's sake. Amen.

Short Petitions for Mid-day, adapted from the Psalms.

Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving-kindness. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy, remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord. Show me Your ways, O Lord — teach me Your paths. O holy and merciful Savior, my eyes are ever toward You. Keep my soul and deliver me. Let me not be ashamed, for I trust in You. Amen.

O Lord, You are my light and my salvation, in You do I trust. When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said unto You, "Your face, O Lord, will I seek." Hide not Your face far from me, put not Your servant away in anger. You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Hear me, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. In the time of trouble, hide me in the secret place of Your Tabernacle. O Lord, set me up upon a rock. I will sing praises unto You, O God, for I shall see Your goodness, and Your mercy endures forever. Amen.

Show Your marvelous loving-kindness, O You who is the Savior of those who put their trust in. O hold up my goings in Your paths, that my footsteps slip not. Keep me from the paths of the destroyer. May I behold Your face in righteousness, and be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. Amen.

Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto You when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. Be my strong habitation whereunto I may always resort. Be my Refuge and my Fortress, my God — for in You do I trust. May Your mercy and truth preserve me. So will I sing praises unto Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows. For the sake of Your Anointed, fulfill all my petitions. Amen.

Bow down your ear, O Lord; hear me, for I am poor and needy. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto You daily. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth. Knit my heart unto You, that I may fear Your name. You, O Lord God, are a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. O Turn unto me, and have mercy upon me. Give Your strength unto Your servant, and save him who trusts in You. Show me a token for good, and help me and comfort me, for Your name's sake. Amen.

Prayers for Holiness, adapted from Paul's Epistles.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant me, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with might by Your Spirit in the inner man. May Christ dwell in my heart by faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, may I be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. O Lord, fill me with all Your fullness in Christ Jesus our Lord, and for His sake do for me exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think, according to the power that works in us. Unto You shall be the glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

O God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Grant that the eyes of my understanding may be enlightened, that I may know what is the hope of Your calling; and what is the riches of the glory of Your inheritance in the saints. Manifest toward me the exceeding greatness of Your power, which You have wrought in the resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ. O Lord, I pray that my love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. Grant that I may approve the things which are excellent, and that I may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. May I be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, and may I thus live to Your praise and glory for His sake. Amen.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may I be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. May I walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of You. Strengthen me with all might, according to Your glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness. O God of Hope, fill me with all joy and peace in believing, that I may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O God of peace, sanctify me wholly. I pray that my whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless to the end. Fulfill in me all the good pleasure of Your goodness and the work of faith with power. May the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in me and I in Him, according to Your grace. O Lord, make me to increase and abound in love toward Your saints and toward all men, and establish my heart unblamable in holiness before You, at the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints. Amen.

Prayer before taking a journey.

O Almighty God, my Guardian and my King, I ask You to protect and keep me during the journey I am about to take. For the sake of Your dear Son, be ever near me as my Father and my God. You are the watchful Keeper of Your people. You never slumber nor sleep. O preserve me, I beseech You, from all danger and evil on the right hand and on the left. Be my shield and my strong habitation. May I ever flee to You, and may I be assured that You will never fail me.

Gracious Father, grant me Your peace wherever I go, and may I serve You with a quiet mind. Prosper me in my journey, whatever may be its object. Comfort and refresh me, if I go for rest and recreation. Give me wisdom and strength for any duty I am called to perform. Give me a word in season to cheer any burdened heart; and may I be able to add to the enjoyment of those I meet. When alone or with others, may I ever see You beside me. Give me the spirit of kindness and sympathy, and may both my words and my life bear witness for You.

O Father, at all times and in all places, may I glorify You. Bless me and make me a blessing in the home where I stay. May I leave behind a savor of Christ, and may His name be exalted through me. May I never be ashamed to own Him as my Master, and teach me ever to walk in His footsteps. May I honor Your Word, and give me some token that my journey has not been in vain.

O Father, hear me and bless me, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Prayer before a voyage at sea.

O Almighty God, who holds the winds in Your hands, and rules the raging of the sea — I commit myself to Your care. If Your presence goes not with me — do not allow me to go forth on this voyage, for I have no help but in You. O Father, be very near to protect us both by night and by day. Preserve us from fire and storm and every other danger. Guard both the passengers and the crew, and keep us ever in Your holy fear.

O mighty Savior, who stilled the waves and said to them, "Peace, be still!" teach us that Your power is still the same. Be with us in the ship, and should any sudden fear arise, enable us to turn to You and rely upon Your aid.

Give unto all on board the spirit of true religion. May Your Word be honored and Your holy day observed. Give me grace to be useful during the voyage. Both by word and example may I do good, and not harm, to those about me.

O gracious Savior, give us a favorable voyage, and bring us in peace and safety to our journey's end. As I pass through the waves of this troublesome world — be my Refuge and Strength; and when the journey of life is past — may I reach the haven of eternal rest, for Your name's sake. Amen.

Prayer after a safe voyage.

O Mighty And Merciful God and Father, I bless and praise You for Your faithful care over me. I bless You for bringing us in safety through the perils of the deep. I bless You for Your merciful hand which has been over us for good. O that I may praise You for Your goodness, and for Your wonderful works toward the children of men!

Gracious Father, for Your dear Son's sake, be with me now on the dry land, as You have been on the sea. Suffer me not to forget Your tender loving-kindness. Stir up my heart to love and serve You more than ever before.

O Father, You have preserved my life from many dangers. May that life be wholly given unto You. Forgive all that is past, and cast my sins into the depths of the sea. May the blood of Christ cleanse me from all guilt. Henceforth let Your Blessed Spirit rule in my heart. May my peace be as a river, and my righteousness as the waves of the sea. Make me to excel in every Christian grace, and to abound in all good works.

O Heavenly Father, hear this my prayer, and fill me with holy joy and gratitude to You, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A prayer in trouble, gathered from the prophecy of Jeremiah.

O Savior in time of trouble — why should You be to us as a stranger? Why should You be as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us. We are called by Your name. Leave us not. O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, it for Your name's sake. For our backslidings are many — we have sinned against You. O Lord, my Strength and my Fortress, be my Refuge in the day of affliction. Heal me, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved — for You are my praise. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment — not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. O Lord God, behold You have made the Heaven and the earth by Your stretched out arm, and nothing is too hard for You. You show loving-kindness unto thousands. Great in counsel and mighty in works — Your eyes are open upon all the ways of men. O Lord, I call upon You — answer me, for Your name's sake, and show me great and mighty things, according to Your loving-kindness. Amen.

Prayer under the loss of a child, or near relative or friend. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusts in You, and under the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be over and past. O Father, I call upon You in my trouble, for none else can comfort me. I know not where to look, but to You. Be my shield and hiding-place. Draw me near to Yourself, and enable me to cast my burden upon You.

O Friend of sinners, You were anointed to bind up the broken-hearted and to comfort all that mourn. O Lord, fulfill this Your good pleasure. Put away every sin that would hide from me the light of Your countenance. Clothe me in Your spotless righteousness, and help me to lean on Your everlasting arms. Be my stronghold in this day of trouble. Be to me as a Brother born for adversity, and as a Friend that loves at all times. Leave me not to my own sorrowful thoughts, but help me to stay myself on Your sure and faithful promise.

Blessed Jesus, may I think of Bethany and all Your love to the mourning sisters. You wept by the grave, and You are still the same. In all our afflictions, You are afflicted. You are full of sympathy for all who turn to You. O Savior, think of me and plead for me in my trouble. In the loss of one so dear, O may I find my all in You. Sanctify this trial to me. Make me to care less for the world, and more for You. Show me the sins by which I have grieved You, and may Your Blessed Spirit take up His abode in my heart. Make me submissive to Your holy will. Teach me to believe that all is done in perfect wisdom and love. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away — blessed be the name of the Lord!

O Lord, raise my heart to the blessed Home of Your saints. Prepare me for those unspeakable joys which You have prepared for such as love You. I thank and praise You for that land of joy and hope. I thank You for all Your servants departed this life to share its blessedness. O Father, keep me from the evil of this present world, and then bring me to the City where sin and sorrow are unknown, and where tears and temptations can never come.

O God, accept these my petitions, and be ever with me, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A prayer in time of sickness.

O Heavenly Father, You are a merciful God. You do not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Teach me to trust in You, even when You chasten me. Teach me to see my sins laid on Jesus, and for His name's sake assure me of Your favor and loving-kindness.

O Lord, in weakness and suffering be at my right hand. Help me to bear with patience each trying hour. Whatever cross of pain or weariness You appoint, O keep me from distrusting Your love or murmuring at Your dealings with me. O Father, may I ever lean on You, and wait on You — until You relieve and comfort me. Fulfill in me the purpose of this correction. Give me a humble spirit, and a clearer sight of my sin and unworthiness. Lay me low at Your footstool as I remember my own vileness — but lift me up in hope and joy as I remember Your exceeding mercy. Bind me closer to the Savior.

O blessed Jesus, I would ever hide myself in You until every storm of life is past. Remind me of Your own bitter anguish which You bore for my sake, and may I know that You care for me. Be ever at hand to cheer me by Your sympathy and love. If it be Your will, restore me again to health and strength, and may I use the rest of my life better than that which is past. Make me live for eternity. The present life is but for a moment. O that I may so pass through temporal things, that finally I lose not the eternal things! In sickness and in health, let Your Spirit ever abide with me, and may I glorify Your name continually both in life and in death.

O Savior, glorify Yourself in me, and may I at last behold Your glory and dwell with You in Your kingdom, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer in the Prospect of Death.

O Eternal God, I flee to Your mercy as my Refuge and my Hope. I dare not trust in anything I have done. My best days have been full of sin. O God, save me and deliver me, for Your mercy's sake. Wash me from every sin in the blood of Jesus. Look upon me, O Father, in Him. May His righteousness cover every spot and stain of evil.

Blessed Savior, help me to rest in You. In this solemn hour be very near to me, and hide me in Your wounded side.

O Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world — grant me Your peace! Say to my soul, I am Your salvation! Comfort and cheer me with Your presence. When I pass through the river, be with me. Let not the waters overflow me. O keep me from all doubt and fear, and may I stay my soul on You. May Your sure promise be the pillow of my soul! O Lord Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes on You shall never die. O keep me still trusting in You. May Your everlasting arms be underneath me. Hold me up, that I sink not. O Savior, bring me safely to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with You, world without end. Amen. A prayer of thanksgiving after the birth of a child.

O Merciful and Gracious Father, I give You hearty thanks for Your great mercies toward me. You have heard the voice of my prayer, and saved me in the hour of danger. I found trouble and heaviness — but You supported and helped me.

O Lord, what shall I render unto You for all Your benefits toward me? Grant that I may ever love and praise You and call upon Your name. May I yield to You afresh the life which You have preserved. Endue me day by day with Your Holy Spirit, that I may look unto Jesus as my righteousness and strength. Teach me to serve and please You more and more, and may I live only to glorify You.

O Father, I bless You for the precious gift You have committed to my charge. Give Your special blessing to this little one. Make him wholly Yours. As years advance, may he grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of You.

O Lord, may I nurse this little one for You. Give me grace to train him up in the way he should go. O Good Shepherd, teach me to follow in Your footsteps, and make my life a pattern that my child may safely copy. Be evermore his Guide and Protector. Keep him in Your narrow way. Bring him at length to Your fold above, for Your name's sake. Amen. A parent's prayer.

O God, I beg You to send Your blessing on the children whom You have given me. I would give them back to You, and beseech You to enrich them with Your grace. For Jesus' sake bless them indeed. Bestow on them Your Holy Spirit. Touch their hearts, and lead them to Yourself. May they learn to love the Savior's name and to follow in His footsteps. Draw them to Yourself by the cords of Your love. Show them the happiness of Your service. O teach them the blessedness of those who early seek You. May their whole life be gladdened with Your presence.

O God, who gives wisdom to those who ask You — make me wise in training my children for You. Teach me the solemn responsibility that lies upon me. Give me grace to live before them as a Christian should. Keep me from putting any stumbling-block in their path. Keep me from any word or action that may bring a reproach on Your name, and help me to adorn Your Gospel by the beauty of a holy life. Save me from all haste and passion when they do amiss, and make me ever gentle and kind in my dealings with them. May I never discourage them by needless harshness, but make me firm in keeping my word toward them.

O Father, keep us all in Your fear and love. May the voice of joy and praise be ever heard in our home. May none of its members be absent in the day when You make up Your jewels. Grant these my petitions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A prayer for a visitor among the poor.

O Lord Jesus Christ, You have ascended to the Father's right hand as a Prince and a Savior. Be my Savior and my King. May I trust You for all I need, and faithfully serve under Your banner. O Lord, make me a good soldier of Your cross. May I never be ashamed of Your name, and may I strive to set forward Your kingdom and Your glory.

O Lord, it is written in Your Word that "those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." Fulfill to me this blessed promise. May I labor to win souls for You. Let Your Holy Spirit rest upon me and quicken my love and zeal in Your service. Make all grace abound toward me that, having all sufficiency in all things, I may abound in every good word and work.

Blessed Savior, I rest on Your promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Be ever with me when I go forth to sow the seed of Your Word, and to speak to others in Your name. Give me the spirit of wisdom, meekness, and patience. May I know when to speak, and when to be silent. Let Your Spirit ever go before me, and dispose the hearts of sinners to receive Your truth. O Lord, ever stand by my side and suggest and control the words I utter. Fill me with the joy of Your salvation, and out of a full heart, may I tell others of Your willingness and power to save.

O Lord, I beseech You, raise up many to work for You, and prosper every effort that is made in Your name. At the day of Your coming, may I be found with my loins girded and lights burning. May I hear Your voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant — enter you into the joy of Your Lord!" O hear this my prayer, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer for a Sunday-school teacher.

O Lord, My Heavenly Father, I thank You that You have called me to be a worker in Your vineyard. Endue me with Your Holy Spirit and enrich me with Your heavenly grace, that I may be faithful in my work and never grow weary in Your service.

O loving Savior and Redeemer, fill me with sincere love to You. You know all things. You know every heart. I beg You, help me to trust You with my own salvation and to love You more and more. May I diligently feed Your lambs, and lead them to You, the Good Shepherd. Stir up my heart in tender compassion for such as are careless and thoughtless. Teach me day by day out of Your Word, that I may know how to teach them. Make me careful to put no hindrance in their way by my own life or conduct. Keep me from all vanity and love of dress and display — anything that might be a stumbling-block in their path. May I never by word or deed cause them to reject Your Word, but may I recommend Your Gospel by everything I say and do.

O God, give me the spirit of prayer. Make me delight in drawing near to You, that I may be able to teach the children to pray in sincerity and truth. I know that without faith and prayer, my work will be in vain. Lord, increase my faith, and quicken me that I may call upon Your name.

O Father, bless every one of these little ones, and lead them early to Yourself. Make them willing to learn, and then help them to practice what they know. May they love the name of Jesus and walk in His footsteps. May they be loving and obedient to their parents, and kind one to the other. Wash them in the precious blood of Jesus, and preserve them to Your heavenly kingdom, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. A prayer for a young person in service.

O Heavenly Father, teach me ever to look up to You as a little child. Through the Savior's blood, forgive me all my sins, and may I ever rely on Your Fatherly care. You have placed me where I am. You have appointed for me the work I have to do. Lord, help me to do it for You, and to act in everything as Your servant. May I not strive to please myself or my fellow-creatures, but to please You, who examines the heart. Give me Your Holy Spirit more and more. Help me to love You best of all, for You have loved me. May I look to Your favor as my great reward; and when anything troubles me, may I fly to You as my only refuge.

O Savior, be my righteousness and strength! Show me Your ways, and help me to walk in Your footsteps. Keep me from all sin and evil. Keep me from every wicked word and thought. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and make me faithful and true in all my ways. Make me to hate all

slander and evil-speaking, and may I ever be kind and gentle toward all. May I never hearken to the persuasions of the wicked. May I be careful over the use of my time. Save me from the love of dress, and from the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment.

O Lord, I beg You, bless my fellow servants and all who belong to this family. Make every one a true Christian, and may every one in this home be found at last in the Father's house.

O Savior, make me pure in heart, that I may see You in Your kingdom. Give me a delight in Your Word, and may I choose that good part which shall never be taken from me. Lord Jesus, be to me as a Friend who loves at all times, and bring me safely through every temptation, and may I be with You where You are forever and ever. Amen. A prayer for an anxious inquirer.

O God, the merciful God, I come to You in my trouble and distress. My guilt is very great in Your sight. My sins are more than I can tell. I dare not hide anything from You, for You know me altogether.

O Father, for Your dear Son's sake, be merciful unto me according to Your Word. Give me a broken and a contrite heart, and show to me whatever I have done amiss. O God, pardon all my sins and blot them out of Your Book. Not for my repentance or prayers, but only for Jesus' sake — freely forgive me and deal with me according to Your loving-kindness.

O Lord Jesus, my only Savior, I flee to You and look to You alone for all I need. You have died for sinners — and therefore for me. You are able to save to the uttermost — therefore You can save me. O save me, or I perish! O save me from the power of my sins and deliver me from every evil habit! Keep me from all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Fulfill to me Your own promise, "Him who comes unto Me I will never cast out."

O Lord, I believe! help my unbelief. None are too bad for You. None are beyond the power of Your grace. O teach me to trust You utterly! Welcome me just as I am, and supply my every need. Blessed Jesus, I cannot change my own heart or atone for the very least of my sins. But You can do all. Give me true repentance. Wash me in Your blood. Fill me with Your Spirit. Renew me in Your own image. Work in me both to will and to do after Your good pleasure.

O Lord, accept this my prayer. You listen to every sigh or groan. My desire is not hidden from You. In Your wondrous love, receive me now to Your favor and bring me to everlasting life, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer for any special season of dedication to God's service.

O Lord, uphold me Your child with Your heavenly grace, that I may continue Yours forever, and daily increase in Your Holy Spirit ever more and more, until I come to Your everlasting kingdom. Amen.

O Father, I am Yours and Yours alone. You have made me for Yourself. You have preserved me all my life through by Your watchful care. You have redeemed and saved me by the precious blood of Your dear Son. Let Your Spirit rest upon me, and teach me that I am not my own. I would yield myself to You as a living sacrifice to be wholly given to Your service.

O God, cleanse my heart from every evil thing, and incline me to live to You alone. Make it my delight to please You in all that I do. Make it my food and drink to do Your will, for that will is Love. May I find that Your service is perfect freedom. O Savior, may I wear Your easy yoke continually,

and resist every temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Blessed Lord, glorify Yourself in me. Fulfill in me all the good pleasure of Your goodness, and the work of faith with power. Increase my faith, that I may trust You at all times. Kindle my love toward You, that I may rejoice in You above every earthly object. Give me, for a helmet, the hope of Your coming kingdom. Make me zealous in every good work and especially in winning souls for You.

O Lord Jesus, I cast myself upon You for all that I need. You know my weakness. You know my proneness to go back to the world. Only Your omnipotent hand can sustain and uphold me. Loving Savior, be my constant Guide and Protector. Make me a vessel unto honor, very useful in Your service. Prepare me for Your own glorious appearing and set me at Your right hand forever. O Lord, let this my petition be ever before You, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer before coming to the holy communion.

O Lord Jesus, You have bidden me come to Your Table in remembrance of Your dying love. I would obey Your call. Bring me to Your banqueting-house, and may Your banner over me be Love. May I come with a joyful heart, and draw me very near to Yourself.

Gracious Savior, may I know more of Your exceeding love and the innumerable benefits You have purchased for me by Your blood. Give me Your Spirit, as the Spirit of remembrance, that I may think of Your blessed promises. Lord, feed me with the bread of life! By faith in You, may my soul be strengthened and refreshed as I partake of the bread and wine. Lift up my heart to You, my glorified and ascended Savior, and plead my cause at the Father's right hand. Come, Lord, and manifest Yourself to me as You do not unto the world! May I see You present by my side and speak to me a word of peace and consolation. Make me to rejoice in Your salvation. I adore and praise You, that You have loved me and washed me from my sins in Your own blood. O may I love You more and more!

O Lord Jesus, teach me to honor You when I leave Your Table. Make me very watchful and consistent in my daily walk. Let none speak evil of Your name, through my fault. O that I may be lowly and loving and in everything like You! Teach me to deny myself for the sake of others, and may I gladly yield myself and all I have to Your service! Give me the spirit of kindness and forbearance towards those who join with me at Your Table, and whensoever I can, may I be ready to do them good.

O Lord Jesus, fill me with Your grace and heavenly blessing, and bring me to Your marriage Supper in Your kingdom, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer for purity.

O Holy And Merciful God, help me to draw near to You in the name of Jesus. Teach me to remember that without holiness, no man can see Your face — and that no unclean thing can enter into Your presence. O Lord, I humble myself before You. Behold, I am vile — what shall I answer You? You know how far I have gone astray. Cleanse me from every spot and stain of evil, through the blood of Christ. Give me true repentance for all that is past. Bestow on me the continual aid of Your Spirit, that I may crucify the flesh, and mortify the deeds of the body.

O God, my Father, help me to flee from youthful lusts, and rather to die, than sin against You. Remind me that my body is the temple of Your Spirit, and may I never defile it by anything polluting or unchaste.

O Savior, who once suffered being tempted — You are able to support those that are tempted. Lord, keep me from sin in whatever form it may assault me. Keep me from the evil look, and turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. May I never utter a word that may do harm, nor listen to a word that may injure my own soul. Keep me from the tongue of the flatterer, and from the persuasion of the wicked. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the power of Your Spirit, and renew in me a right spirit.

Blessed Master, be ever near me, and keep me from every snare. O keep me from the sin whose end is bitter as wormwood, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Fill me with love to Yourself. Adorn my life with every Christian grace and virtue. Bruise Satan under my feet, and bring me to Your kingdom, for Your name's sake. Amen. A prayer against intemperance.

O Merciful God, I am ashamed to come before You, for I have sinned. I have fallen by my iniquity, and I have no power to rise. But in You is my help. There is forgiveness with You, through Christ. For His sake pardon all that is past, and give me grace to live a new life.

O Lord, You have bidden us deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. You have commanded us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. I look to You for power to do this. Make me very watchful against the approach of temptation. Keep me from any company where I may be in danger. May I never go into places and scenes where I shall be likely to fall.

Blessed Savior, I look to You to keep me day by day. You refused to turn stones into bread, to satisfy Your hunger. You suffered thirst by the well of Samaria, and on the cross of shame. O Lord, You have done this for me, to give me the living water that springs up to everlasting life. For Your sake, help me to deny myself and take up my cross and follow You. Keep me from all self-indulgence, and enable me to keep the vow of abstinence I have made.

O Lord, You know how far I have fallen. O lift me up by Your own hand. Give me victory over the sin that has beset me, and make me an instrument of rescuing others. Remind me that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven, and grant I be not drunk with wine, but be filled with Your Spirit, and at last sit down with You in Your kingdom, for Your name's sake. Amen.

09.00. Little Foxes, and How to Catch Them!

Little Foxes, and How to Catch Them! By George Everard, 1878

09.000. Contents

- Contents 1. The Tender Grapes.
2. The Power of Little Things.
3. Indolence.
4. Selfishness.
5. Indecision.
6. The Love of Money.
7. The Love of Dress.
8. Murmuring and Discontent.
9. Envy.
10. Distraction in Prayer.
11. Daily Worries.
12. How Shall I Conquer.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net