

WRITINGS OF HENRY LAW - VOLUME 1

by Henry Law

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

99 Chapters

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01.00 BEACONS OF THE BIBLE

BEACONS OF THE BIBLE

by Henry Law, 1869

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01.00a Preface

PREFACE To the citizens of Gloucester

Dearly Beloved, Allow a few words to premise my purpose in thus approaching you.

I am constrained by feelings fervent--affectionate--deep-seated. Let gratitude be first named. I should indeed be heartless, if I were untouched by kindness: and I should be worse than heartless, if not moved exceedingly, when kindness is exceeding. I came a stranger to you, but I received not a stranger's welcome. Expecting courtesy, I was met by friendliness. Advancing days have not diminished this happy brotherhood. Increased communion augments my weight of thankfulness. Acknowledgment then is due. I give it as I can. To give it as I would, baffles my power.

Next, duty bids me thus speak. I owe you service in the holiest sense. I hold a spiritual office. I am here to promote the interests of your immortal souls. All other purposes of residence among you vanish before this absorbing thought. I am placed in your midst to help you on a heaven-ward course. I have indeed no priestly eminence. The Gospel knows no priest, except Jesus within the veil at God's right hand. My highest station is to be your servant in the Lord. My highest work is to minister to you God's Word. My highest privilege is to deal closely with your souls. My highest happiness is to win these souls to Christ. Hence the main efforts of my lip and pen are rightly yours. In partial payment of this debt, I draw near in these pages. If they, the Spirit helping, should do Christian work, your claims will not be wholly undischarged.

Next, intense desire should not be silent. Duty is a cold term for ardent feeling. A lukewarm ministry is a withering blight. It is an iceberg in the Church. It freezes and deadens. But can lips be cold which speak of heaven--of hell--of never-dying souls--of God's everlasting love in Christ! With such themes hearts should glow--words should burn--arguments should put forth giant-strength--entreaties should agonize. Every faculty should grapple with individual men, refusing to let them go until they give themselves to God in Christ. I sincerely would show such longing towards you. Away with indifference when such interests are at stake! If you should not be saved, your life is misery--your death is ruin. Your trade may prosper--your health may flourish--your friends may smile--outward advantages may abound. But the end is near. What will that end be! I know this. Can I then speak with chilly apathy? I would that these pages, as a flame of strong desire, could reflect the Savior's zeal.

These are the feelings urging me to present a series of Beacons to you. The subjects are wholly scriptural. The Bible is the mine supplying every stone of the simple fabric. On each is inscribed, "Thus says the Lord." Thus I would call your minds to the study of God's Word. The Bible is the richest treasure of the world. Without it the palace is a dark blank. With it the humble cottage sparkles with celestial light. It is the transcript of God's heart. It tells, what reason is weak to find, our Heavenly Father's will. It is pure truth without one shade of error. The Spirit's pen composes the whole. It gives knowledge on all things needful for time and for eternity. It is a safe guide

through life's entangled path. It is a compass through shoals and rocks--amid winds and waves--to heaven's eternal rest. The sage is ignorant without it. The peasant learns from it salvation's road. It is a solace for every hour. It is a companion always ready to converse. It cheers when other comforts fail. It is arrayed in every charm for intellect. It never wearies. It is always fresh. Its oldest truths cannot grow old. Its readers become more wise--more holy. Other books may puzzle and corrupt. This is from heaven, and leads to heaven. This enters the heart with purifying grace. The Savior prays, "Sanctify them through your truth: Your word is truth:" John 17:17. Hence I would win you to be Bible-students. What, if the study so enchants and so enchains, that other writers, in comparison, are paled! You become gainers in understanding and joy. In the place of earthly things surrendered, you receive a heavenly substitute. Man's silence is no loss, if God arise and speak.

Next attention is here called to Genesis. Where all is marvelous and all divine, no part can have surpassing worth. But this book asks primary notice, as the oldest history in the world. It reveals wonders otherwise forever hid. The Prince of Reformers deliberately said, "There is nothing more beautiful, nothing more useful." I pause not to enumerate its special charms. But I may truly state, the more you search, the more your minds will wonder, and your hearts will love. Read it as literally true. Then no human philosophy will beguile. Ponder its characters. You will find on them the intrinsic stamp of truth. You will soon feel, the pen which depicts is not of man. He only who made the heart can thus anatomize.

Object not, that I select the dark side of each picture. Sin must be known, before the grace of God can be prized. The remedy is not for the healthy. My first purpose is to unmask sin. I would show it, as our direst enemy--the cause and origin of all our woe--the spring of misery in earth and hell. Thus I present a mirror exhibiting its dreadful prevalence. I take this stand to deepen abomination of this evil. But mistake me not. I urge you not to flee sin--that by sinlessness you may earn heaven. This would indeed be to mock man's misery--and to offer poison in a deluding cup. Would he not be mad, who bade gravestones to move--or nature to frame wings to soar above the skies! I would be madder, if I taught, that sin hated was sin expiated--if I proclaimed, that present doings could undo past guilt. Our best is but deficiency. Deficiency has no surplus of merit--but rather desert of wrath. No! I would scare from sin, that you may seek refuge in Christ. These pages will attain their end, if by the Spirit's help, they bring you from sin--from self--from each vain confidence to Him. All perish who are not one with Him. This oneness in individual souls is only by faith--the gift of grace--the Spirit's mighty work.

Accept, then, these Beacons as assurance of sincere desire that you should be the happiest among the happy--the most joyous among the joyful--the most holy among the holy--the most godlike among the godly--the most saintly among the saints--the most heavenly-minded among the heavenly--the most glorious among the glorified. This state of grace will be in proportion as you dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. May your souls be wholly swallowed up in Him! Then your sins are all forgiven--and blessed will be life's little speck--glorious will be heaven's eternal day.

I know you dwell amid grand reminiscences and holy privileges. You boast that Hooper was yours, who witnessed in flames for Christ's pure cause--that Miles Smith was yours, who gave us, rendered in our own tongue, a large portion of God's Word--that the noble Whitfield was born your citizen--and aged men still tell of your Ryder's saintly walk. Your admiring eyes rest on a splendid

church--the county's pride. The frequent bell calls you to public prayers. Let these things be duly valued. But they are mere externals, and as such fall short of grace. Husks are not the fruit, although they may hold it. Salvation is an inward work. May it be yours! May He whose love sent Christ to save, smile savingly on you! Among the redeemed may none outshine you in the crown of Jesus!

I have the honor to be,

Your faithful servant,

Henry Law, May, 1868

01.01 THE SERPENT

THE SERPENT "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field."-- Genesis 3:1

Evil is universally present. It lives in every climate--in every age--in every heart. There is no place exempt. Every soil is profuse with its luxuriance. Each period is its era. Other things vary; but, in all varieties this uniformity prevails. While great diversity marks the intellect, and powers, and characters of men, each and all breathe this common atmosphere, and wear this common dress. The thought naturally arises, "How could this monster first spring into life? Who is the author of its being? Where is its cradle?" It is, however, the part of wisdom quickly to check enquiries, which might exercise forever, but must forever elude, our search. The mystery of sin's birth is shrouded in impenetrable clouds. It lies beneath unfathomable depths. It sits above heights inaccessible. The dreadful story is buried from our sight. The secret is not unveiled on earth. It is vain, then, to grope in darkness. It is folly to speculate, when the utmost gain must be disappointment. Thought and time are lost, when we pursue a fleeting phantom. They, who pass from guess to guess on this subject, find that their progress is from ignorance to ignorance. How sin gained its first breath must be unknown, until the day of larger revelations. But while we give no heed to speculations, which only darken knowledge, it becomes us to ponder reverently the revelations of our Bible. We have a record of sin's descent upon our world. Its introduction into man's heart is related. The story indeed is brief. Only a few black lines are drawn. The full portrait is not filled up. But the dreadful transaction is disclosed--and it affects us too closely to permit indifference. Let us, then, draw near, with solemn minds. And may the one great Spirit of eternal truth guide our feet into rich pastures of sanctifying wisdom!

Creation, springing from the Creator's hand, was perfect. It was worthy of the all-good Maker. "God created man in his own image--in the image of God created he him:" Genesis 1:27. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," Genesis 1:31. The wisdom, love, and power of God could not have raised a fairer fabric.

Thus Eden's garden surpassed improvement. Our first parents--pure in holiness--rich in every grace--the unsullied reflection of God's own nature--moved amid perfect scenes. The glory of their state was this, they were the image of God. This was the glory of their dwelling, God pronounced it to be "very good." Thus earth needed not accession of delight. Man joyed in all around him--all within him--all above him. Around was every charm--within was happy innocence--above was a smiling Father. God was everywhere--in everything.

Believer, while you marvel at this dazzling brightness, remember, there is something inconceivably better in store for you--bless God for your heavenly hope.

Eden's sun is soon eclipsed. This bright day soon darkens. The flowers of this garden soon fade. Into this Paradise the Serpent comes. Simple are the words which introduce the monster. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." He appears--and his work soon betrays him. The work is subtle evil. This fact alone establishes that

he is more than his assumed form pretends. In semblance he is one of the beauteous creatures, sporting in this garden's paths. But they are irrational, gifted only with the limited powers of instinct. But here is one, who, seeming to be a serpent, uses speech, and reasons with consummate skill, and evidences the depths of evil. He must be more than mere serpent, who has more than a serpent's powers and wiles. Thus the conclusion is approached, that the devil, to accomplish his vile ends, hides himself beneath this mask--clothes himself in this shape--decks himself with the unsuspected features of a creature of Paradise. The Spirit of God attests this fact. Speaking of the devil, He names him "old serpent." Unveiling some of the terrific wonders of the last days, He says, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" Revelation 12:9. And again, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand--and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." Revelation 20:1-2. The Spirit, foreshowing Satan's ruin, names him, as the creature in whose form he here appears. The old Serpent, which shall be destroyed, is the devil. The old Serpent, then, which crept into Paradise, is the devil.

Paul adds his heaven-taught confirmation. Surely the devil is before his eye, when he warns the Corinthians, "lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety," so their minds should be corrupted. 2 Corinthians 11:3.

Thus the disguise drops--the mask falls--the veil is withdrawn--the deception is detected--the plot is discovered--the sleight is discerned--the treachery is disclosed--the trickery is visible. This is no harmless creature. This is not one of a beauteous tribe, ignorant of evil. This agent belongs not to a race of living ones, declared by God to be "very good."

Here is the devil--that apostate spirit--that accursed being--that arch-rebel--that daring adversary of God--that merciless foe of man. Eden's Serpent truly is the devil. His work declares him. God's word denounces him.

Taking, then, our stand upon this indisputable fact, let us humbly pray the great Teacher of the Church to press upon our hearts the obvious warnings.

1. The devil is a real person. The devil is no myth--no dream--no vision--no fable--no allegory. It narrates the real conduct of a real person. It is no fictitious tale. It is not amusement for imaginative minds. It is no stage, on which imagination may blow bubbles. All is historic verity and unvarnished fact. Here are the doings of an actual living being. As God truly is--and Christ truly is--and the Holy Spirit truly is--and we truly are--just so the devil truly is. Works prove a workman. Acts show an agent. So real performances stamp a real devil.

Reader! these are days in which proud reason sneers at ancient verities, and regards Bible-statements as materials for the construction of airy palaces of conceit. Be not deceived. As the Serpent beguiled Eve, so now he beguiles unstable minds. As he persuaded her to view him as a friendly counselor, so he persuades them to regard him as a shadowy semblance of some vague mystery. Listen not to such fond dreams. The Bible begins not with enigmas. It is not constructed to puzzle and perplex. Trifle not with the faithful statement but be assured, that there is no truth more tremendously true, than the existence of a personal devil. Watch then, and pray. He is always personally near; for he "walks about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Bar the portals of your heart. He seeks to make that heart his personal home. He is the "spirit that now

works in the children of disobedience." Ephesians 2:2.

2. The devil is a hater of God. Who hates God most? Surely he who most contravenes His will. Of the devil's antecedent rebellion, nothing should be said, for nothing can be proved. But here a patent fact evidences his enmity. He aims directly to upset God's plans. He arms himself in the panoply of bold opposition. He sees the divine arrangement, and he sets himself to disarrange it. He views creation bright in every beauty, and he plots to soil it. He marks the birth of an eternity of pure delights, and he arises to infuse the element of misery. God had made man in His own likeness. Satan comes forward to destroy the holy image, and to transform the heavenly work into fuel for his hell. He seems to reason— 'Man is formed to show forth God's praise, and to be His delight. But this benevolence shall fail. Man shall be robbed of innocence; he shall be debased into a rebel, fallen as I am--an object fit only for abhorrence. Thus he schemes--thus he uplifts his arm boldly to fight against God. See, then, how he hates God.

Reader! you profess to love God. Where is your evidence? Do you abhor the fiend, who from the beginning has strained his every power to subvert God's kingdom? Do the warm feelings of your heart respond, 'I hate him who hates my God--God's foes are my foes--His friends my friends--I avow myself to be His soldier and His servant--I march beneath the banner of the God of heaven against the legions of the god of this world?'

3. The devil is a hater of man. Who hates man most? Surely he who most contrives his misery. In Eden there was sweet bliss. Every faculty was the inlet of God. Every thought--full of Him--was only joy. The morning dawned to bring God near. The day advanced to bring Him nearer. The closing evening closed not the communion. Sinless man lived in the raptures of heavenly converse. His breast was cloudless sunshine. Satan beholds and writhes-- "What! shall man share the peace which I have lost; and rejoice in joys, which never can be mine again?" Such bliss is torture to him. He will not rest until he uproot it. Such happiness stings him, as a gnawing worm. He must destroy it. He dwells in wretchedness--and he now comes to drag down others to his level. Earth had never heard a sigh nor seen a tear, until this enemy of happiness appeared. Since that day pains and anguish have run a ceaseless course. His aim was to create misery, and mercilessly he succeeded. See, then, how he hated man.

Sad that the sons of men should lend their ears so gladly to their deadliest foe, and drink so readily this viper's poison! What madness to court the embrace of such an enemy--to admit the sure murderer to our abode--to open the door to the known robber! This is their madness, who fondle this hater of our race.

4. The devil is most daring. Truly nothing daunts him. His case is hopeless, therefore he is reckless. Paradise was divinely pure, but still undaunted he rushes in. When man was heavenly as heaven, boldly he addresses him. Is he more timid now? Far otherwise. There is no place so pure, that his foot fears to tread it. There is no holiness so holy that he ventures not to touch. His hand will open the sacred gate--his foot will pass the boundary of every sacred enclosure. The sanctity of Jesus scared him not. No heaven-appointed ordinances repel his step. He whispers to the praying saint. He mounts the pulpit-steps. He joins the worshipers in hallowed courts. He is by the side at sacramental feasts. Sacred is the saint's dying chamber; but he shoots his arrows there. His daring cannot be exceeded.

Believer, labor to grow in grace. Each day put on more of the Lord Jesus. Agonize for nearer conformity to His image. Fly with quicker wing to the heights of holiness. But bear in mind, that as you rise, the tempter will pursue you still.

5. The devil is consummate in skill. He watches for the appropriate opportunity; and then applies the suitable snare. Eve is alone--then he is by her side. In Adam's presence the bait could not be laid. If Adam's counsels could be sought, the bait could not succeed. The only opportunity is adroitly seized.

Next mark the artfully-constructed snare. The object is to introduce sin. Sin is transgression of God's command. Our parents had free permission of full enjoyments. In this permission there is no door for disobedience. But there is one--only one prohibition. If guilt can enter, it must be by this path. The trial shall be made. The seducing words are few; but they comprise all deceitfulness. A DOUBT is first insinuated. "Has God said?" Is it truly so? There may be some mistake. A spark to kindle DISCONTENT next falls. "You shall not eat of every tree." Is this consistent with unbounded kindness? Why this arbitrary limit?--A bold DENIAL of danger follows. "You shall not surely die." It is a futile threat. A promise of abundant gain crowns the lure. "Your eyes shall be opened." The skill is perfect.

Reader! beware. He, who tempts you this day, has not declined in subtlety. No, the experience of long ages, if possible, sharpens his cunning. The school of incessant practice teaches him to cast the net more craftily. He ever has been, and ever will be, matchless in deception.

6. The devil shrinks not from the blackest sin. His first appearance shows that there is no iniquity so foul, but he will handle it; no depth of evil so profound, but he will fathom it. He commences with trampling down all truth. "You shall not surely die." He rises upon earth the meridian orb of crime. He blushes not--nor trembles--nor pauses--nor scruples. His earliest words are the lie of lies. So now he allures each victim to the extremest extremity of evil. He never will forbear, while he can plunge them deeper in sin's abyss. The vilest iniquities are most congenial to his nature. Reader! go not one step with him. There is no finality in his downward course.

7. The devil has dreadful power. Weak agents fail. Difficulties baffle them. But Satan is not baffled. His first victory was hard to win. But he quickly won it. Eve had no inward proneness to yield. No inborn corruption betrayed the portals of her heart. Her citadel was firm in walls and bars of innocence. But still he succeeded. He gained admission, and set up his throne of conquest. Can there be clearer proof of his transcendent powers?

Reader! beware. All his mighty arts plot your destruction. The innocent fell, when attacked only from without. How can you stand, when a legion of traitorous desires are ready to surrender? His outward solicitations are aided by your inward lusts. If you escape, a stronger than this strong one must befriend you.

Such is the Serpent's appearance in Eden. Here the description ceases. Other Scriptures unfold a lengthened roll of his malignant might. As man's history advances, his cruelty and wiles swell into more frightful form. Our annals are a vast catalogue of his foul exploits. The first picture presents only this broad outline. But it is a clear display of his reality--his hatred to God and man--his daring--his skill--his deep iniquity, and his tremendous power.

Believer, you may view him and still smile. This conqueror is conquered. Captivity is led captive. The spoiler is spoiled. This strong one is bound. You are rescued. You are safe. True, he will often assail, affright, roll you in the mire, and wound your peace--but he cannot destroy. His might is great--but your Almighty deliverer is far greater. His hosts are many--your one Jesus Himself is infinitely more. He indeed desires to have you, and his efforts are terrible and incessant; but your Jesus ever lives to pray for you, and His prayers are ever heard. Therefore, go forward, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Ephesians 6:13. Fear not. Fear not, Christ is with you. Be not dismayed, He is your God. Resist this foe, and he will flee. James 4:7. Raise the banner of the cross, and he will tremble. Wash in the blood, and he cannot touch you. Cry to the Captain of Salvation, and all heaven aids you. Thus go on your heavenward way rejoicing. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20. In Christ you may victoriously shout, "Oh my enemy, your destructions are come to a perpetual end. You have wounded, but Christ has healed. The death brought in by you, brightens through Christ into eternal life."

01.02 EVE

EVE

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6

Eve stands on a dark pinnacle. She is the first to sin. Thus she poisons the spring of all following life--and plants upon earth the tree upon which humanity hangs, as a blighted branch. Such is her sad pre-eminence. Who has not shudderingly pondered the fruits of her transgression! It slew innocence--banished peace--cut all the roots of happiness--expelled God from the heart. It opened wide the floodgates of guilt and fear. It brought in an accusing mind, and a gnawing conscience, and foreboding tremblings. It gave being to tears, and sighs, and groans, and pains, and anguish, and all the tribes of misery. Death, and the curse, and hell blackened in its rear.

Believer, never contemplate this ruin without adoring God for its far more exceeding reparation. Sin came. Jesus follows to take it all away. Life died within man's soul. Jesus appears a quickening Spirit, and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. The torch of creature-righteousness expired. The Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.--Malachi 4:2. Do you bewail the loss? No, rather rejoice for the infinity of gain. But still it is our wisdom often to mark the story of Eve's fall. The cases differ. But in this mirror we should see ourselves. Her nature was pure holiness. Each inward impulse was God-ward. To bask in His smile--to joy in His fellowship--to taste His goodness was her full delight. She had no native will to stray. In us the inborn bias is all downward. The tide of inclination rushes strongly towards evil. Our nature has no heart for God. Her temptation was wholly from without. The devil came. He put forth all his subtlety to beguile. She listened, and she was beguiled. In us there is a brood of hellish desires. The Tempter knocks. They traitorously invite him to come in.

Such is the difference. But still there is sad sameness. The Tempter is the self-same person. His quiver holds the self-same shafts. As he assailed Eve, so he assails each one of her descendants. It is therefore the path of safety to study well his arts and ways. Intelligence of an opponent's warfare is a good shield. Forewarning is a bulwark of defense. Observers of a beacon escape the peril. The mariner, acquainted with the chart, steers from the rocks and shoals.

Eve was vanquished by three crafty thrusts. Three poisoned arrows gave the deadly wounds. The flesh was seduced to lust--the eyes to long--and pride to covet. The forbidden fruit was exhibited first, as good for food--next, as pleasant to the eyes--then, as desirable to make one wise.

Now, just as in the acorn, the monarch of the forest lives; as a small seed contains the planks for mansions, ships, and mighty works--so, in the earliest temptation there lies the embryo of sin's whole progeny. All Satan's efforts, which have been or shall be, are varied aspects of his first art. The plan of all his after-schemes is wrapped in Eden's plot. He always triumphs by the development of a stratagem here shadowed out. As then, so now, his victims fall through the flesh,

the eye, or pride.

1. The FLESH is mighty to corrupt the inner man. Its doors are countless. Its casements are seldom closed. Through these there is quick access to the heart. It also is our encompassing mantle. We cannot escape its close embrace. We never move but in its company. There is no time, when it is absent. Hence its prodigious power.

Eve shows how easily it yields. In the happy garden there was all abundance to gratify the palate. Countless trees presented all deliciousness. A rich banquet of delights was spread. One only fruit was banned. Eve was slyly led to gaze upon it. Then carnal longings arose. In appearance it was "good for food." The appetite desired. She extended her hand. She touched. She plucked. She tasted. She ate. God had forbidden--but the flesh broke down the barrier. The peril of transgression was terrific; but fear vanished before this craving. The lust burst all restraints. The devil moved the flesh, and so enchained his captive.

He thus discovered the weakness of the fleshy tenement. He saw an opening so ready to admit his wily steps. He found a latchet yielding to his touch. Thus experienced, he has ever wrought soul-havoc through the flesh. Whoever lived too high--too low--for these sad baits! Consult the annals of the world. In almost every page foul falls proclaim the deathful work of sensual allurements. On all sides there are plains strewn with the slain. If we ask, "Who slew all these?" the reply is at hand. The devil spread some carnal indulgence. The fruit seemed good to give a momentary delight. The victims took the cup, and drank the draught of death. When years of conquest had rolled on, plumed with large triumphs, he meets the God-man, Jesus. Here was the first in human nature, unsoiled by his touch. Amazed--perplexed--but hopeful still, he gathers all his might for a vast effort. He finds the object of his hate weak through long fasting--alone--disconsolate--in cheerless gloom. The opportunity is most favorable. All things around concur to promise victory. He takes the shaft, by which Eve, innocent, and full of every enjoyment, fell. Surely Jesus, worn out--weary--sad--will not withstand. The enticing suggestion is whispered, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matthew 4:3. The flesh craves--to satisfy it how easy!--One word brings full supply--food comes at your bidding, and fainting nature will revive. The arrow wings its harmless way. Jesus opposes the sword of the Spirit. "It is written," shatters the attack.

There is then no necessity in flesh to yield. Proneness to totter is not inability to stand. Slippery ground cannot compel a fall. There is one, whom the lust of the flesh could not seduce.

Believer, adore this vanquisher of that foul destroyer. Clinging to His side, take courage. This lust is not insuperable. He can enable you by His grace. He can put within you the power of His Spirit. He can bear you in His arms, above each snare. Be not dismayed by fast-falling showers of vile suggestions. Doubtless he, who subdued Eve, hopes to subdue you. He, who dared to solicit Jesus, fears not to tempt you. But the temptation is not sin--the whizzing of the arrow is not a wound. A conqueror is ready to make you more than conqueror. But you must be skilled to use the sword, so mighty in the hands of Jesus. By the breath of His omnipotence He could have swept the Tempter to perdition. But He resists as man, with a weapon always within each man's reach. Learn well, then, the contents of your Bible. Apply them well, and then the foe will quickly fly. But perhaps accusing memory tells of many falls. The flesh has often sold you unto sin. You tremblingly inquire, 'Can these deep wounds be healed? Can pardon pass by such offences?'

Jesus again presents Himself. He is the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Here is the only cure. But it is all-sufficient. Pile all the sins, which flesh has ever sinned, they vanish in this stream! Wash and be whiter than the whitest snow.

2. The EYE is also an inlet of solicitations. Eve warns again. She fixed her eyes upon the fruit, and soon its beauty put forth fearful fascination. The attraction strengthened. Resistance melted, as snow before the sun. The enchanting appearance bewitched. The outward show injected sparks of longing. The fire kindled. The bait was taken. The eye betrayed. Sinlessness perished. The devil thus found another crevice in our battlements and cruelly he has used the entrance. He discovered his advantages through the eye. And no opportunity has he ever lost. From that day he has been diligent to exhibit fascinating scenes, to gild externals with bewitching beauty, and to lead through them into sin's vilest paths. The baits of this class are indeed countless. The catalogue contains each object of our sight. Here shine the pomp and splendor and parade of life--the gold--the silver--the sparkling jewel, and the brilliant gem. Here glitter all the decorations of elaborate skill--all the possessions, which money can procure--all costly foods--luscious feasts--splendid banquets, and intoxicating bowls. Here dazzle the showy equipage, and the gay attire. But while the roll is too vast to unfold, Satan knows all, and knows well how to use. He fans the desire to possess. He silences the timid scruple, and lulls the warning conscience. He suggests many means to snatch the dazzling prize. None of our race escape this trial. The monarch and the noble covet more exalted splendor. The poor man in his lowly hut looks enviously on some better lot. To every eye something pleasant is attractively presented. And then the seed of craving ripens into crime. Quickly the hand seizes what the eye loves. Where is the child of man uninjured through this organ! It seldom opens, but temptations press through to our hurt.

Behold again the second Adam. The devil, failing to allure the flesh turns to the eye. He "takes him up into an exceeding high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Matthew 4:8. What mind can picture such a scene! In panoramic circle all beauties and splendors pass in review. All in earth, brilliant to attract, strong to allure, glitter in loveliest garb. All magnificence is expanded, as in a map, lit up in the sweetest charms. All attractions are accumulated in one mass. If the eye of Jesus can lust, the flame will kindle now. When the whole lies at his feet, the Tempter thus solicits. "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:9. A little act of fleeting homage makes you full possessor of this treasury of delights. The dreadful blasphemy recoils. Jesus again displays the sword of the Spirit. Again the Word of God prevails. The devil shrinks back startled--affrighted--foiled--baffled--defeated.

Believer, rejoice, again I say, rejoice, in your all-conquering Lord. Grasp Him tightly with the hand of faith. Then you rise above your foe. Then the lust of the eyes will cease to lust. Indeed His glories will so eclipse all other view, that earth's best beauty will appear a blank. But you have often yielded. Like Achan, you have touched the accursed spoils. Desire has entered through the lattice of your eye. It has found lodgment in your heart, and slimed the inner man. You are defiled. How can peace be regained? Rejoice again. For every sinner's every need there is a full supply in Jesus. He has a remedy for every wound. There is balm in our Gilead. There is a physician there. His blood sprinkled on the conscience calms all aching. Plead it in faith, and all the sinful offspring of eye-lust lose their condemning power.

3. There is another broad road open for temptation's feet. It is the desire to be great--the ambition to be distinguished--the lust of admiration. The Spirit names it, "The pride of life." 1 John 2:16. This net too was first spread in Eden. The devil showed the fruit--and whispered, that the taste would enlarge the faculties--give nobler wings to intellect--communicate new stores of knowledge. While she beheld, the poisonous thought took root, the tree is "to be desired to make one wise." But was not her intelligence enough? She knew God. In that knowledge is the joy of joys, and life for evermore. Can more be gained?--But she heard of enlightened eyes--of being "as gods"--of growth in mental power. Ambition kindled. She coveted the deceptive boon. She lusted and plucked. What is her new discovery! She went down into the school of evil to learn experimental lessons of disgrace and shame. From being tempted she became a tempter. She found that she was naked and was afraid. Such is the wisdom which disobedience earns.

Satan triumphs--and the triumph teaches him again, where the heart's citadel is very weak. He clearly sees what an ally he has in the PRIDE of life. Through all time he has used this power--alas! with what success! Eternity will terribly exhibit the millions upon millions slain through this lust. This net is very wide. Its meshes are the countless modes by which conceit is gratified and vanity excited. Ah! how he casts it now! How he flatters reason! How he persuades the puny intellect that it can soar above our Bible-heights! How he encourages our childish fancies to sit in judgment on the truths of God! His honied bait now is, Be wise--be wiser yet--break from the trammels of poor Scripture-thoughts. Mount into brighter light. Leave to superstition's babes the teaching of that antiquated Book. Cast away the twilight candle of by-gone times. Kindle your torch at reason's sun. He shows a tree laden with poisonous berries, and whispers, that it is desirable "to make one wise." His silly victims eat--and deeper darkness fits them for the blackness of perdition's cells.

It cannot be, that holding such a weapon, he will fail to use it against Jesus. The flesh refused lust--the eye was blind to godless desires--will not the pride of life beguile? This only hope remains. The trial shall be made. Out of the multitudinous temptations thronging this class, vain-glory is selected. Jesus is borne to the pinnacle of the Temple. The thought is presented, what admiration will applaud, if you descend, as on expanded wings, unhurt! Fruitless also is this last attempt. The second Adam again wields the sword of the Spirit. Again the Tempter quails. One in human form mightily escapes--gloriously subdues.

Thus in Eden we see the devil's triple art and full success--and in the wilderness his full defeat. In the one we learn his master-wiles--how strong! almost invincible! In the other we behold them as flimsy threads and crumbling reeds.

Believer, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, you have daily cause to mourn Eve's fall. One with Jesus, you have more cause to glory in His victory. Let then your life be lively praise. Realize your gospel-state. As child of corruption you always totter on temptation's ground. As child of God in Christ your feet are on a rock of triumphs. The threefold implements of hell will surely all assail you. But Jesus leads you to a conqueror's crown. He gives you the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. In Him boldly go forward. In Him you shall beat back the lust of the flesh--the lust of the eyes--and the pride of life. And yet a little while, reigning on the heights of glory, you shall see the legions of evil cast into their own pit.

01.03 CAIN

CAIN "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Genesis 4:8 When evil fills the heart, evil effects will soon appear. From tainted sources tainted waters flow. The bramble must be clothed with thorns. The tree proclaims the qualities of its root. When poison permeates the veins, the whole frame sickens. The plague begun spreads an infecting course. When Adam fell, the inner man became entirely corrupt. Now, corruption cannot but propagate corruption. The parent reproduces his own likeness. Hence every child is born in sin. No cradle holds an innocent one. Each offspring of the human family steps upon earth dead towards God--corrupt in inward bias--prone to iniquity. He brings no eye to see God's will--no ear to hear His voice--no feet to climb the heavenly hill. He is an alien from righteousness--a willing slave of Satan--blinded in intellect--a pilgrim towards a lost land--a vessel fitted for destruction--a current strongly rushing downwards. His heart has many tenants; but God is no longer there. The palace once so fair is now overrun with weeds. Like Babylon in ruins, wild beasts of the desert lie there, and the houses are full of doleful creatures-- Isaiah 13:21.

Reader! such surely is your birth-state. Has your soul realized the dreadful truth? Do you abhor natural self? Has the life-giving Spirit quickened you with renovating might? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus? If so, while in these pages you contemplate Cain, surely you will bless the rescuing grace. If otherwise, may his dark picture scare you from delusion's dream! Would you be saved! You must be born again. Would you see heaven? You must be translated into the second Adam's kingdom.

Let now man's first-born be surveyed. Ponder his course. His deeds will show the disposition of his mind. The story will endorse this view of human fall, and prove that no abyss can be more deep. The early annals of the world feed not mere curiosity. Superfluous statement finds no place. Thus as to the first family we briefly read, that it commenced in Cain and was increased by Abel. The birth of the elder seemingly was hailed with rapturous delight. The mother in her joy exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Genesis 4:1. The younger received the name of Abel, which means vanity. Is not this token, that he was comparatively disesteemed? If so, the lesson meets us, how man miscalculates and human expectations err. Blessings reflect a sovereign will. True good descends in channels long since marked by wise decrees. The arrangements of heaven are deeper than earth's hopes or wishes. Not man's desire, but God's own purpose, rules events. Of the childhood of these brothers we have no mention--a veil conceals their early training. The history only states, that their professions were the peaceful work of pastoral life. They lived in nature's field. They labored under heaven's own canopy. Abel kept sheep. Cain tilled the ground. One watched the flock. The other sowed the seed and reaped the grain. But surely it is not a vain surmise, that alike they shared the same instructions from their parents' lips. Thought may go back and listen to the converse of the primal household. Doubtless these sons would often be riveted by rapturous recitals of the garden-home--the lovely beauty of each scene--the blessedness of God at all times near--heard in each sound--seen in each object--adored in every movement of the mind. Would they not hear, also, of the tempter's sly approach--his daring lie--the ear too easily

beguiled--the lingering look--the rising doubt--the new-born lust--the fatal touch--the dreadful taste--the instant midnight of the soul--the wreck of godliness and peace--the downcast shame--the trembling fear--the inward horror--and all the terrible realities of a sinful state? Would they not then be told, how grace illumined this dismal gloom--how mercy winged her way to promise recovery--and the woman's seed--and coming redemption--and purposed salvation--and One, whose death would utterly annihilate the devil's triumph, and whose life would bring in everlasting righteousness? Next they would see the right of sacrifice. Every bleeding victim would proclaim sin's dreadful penalty. This ordinance would portray atonement through another's blood. The skins, also, of these slaughtered beasts, supplying clothing for the body, would fitly show the obedience of the dying Savior as the soul's justifying robe.

These lessons are the full Gospel in microscopic form. All saving truth is here embodied. And who can doubt, that Cain and Abel were thus taught alike the outlines of salvation's scheme? They had their Bible in their parents' teaching. Human malady and heavenly cure--the peril and the refuge--the ruin and the rescue--their state, as Adam's sons--their hope through grace would be their earliest instruction. Is the effect the same? Are their minds brought to the like holy faith? Far otherwise. The sun, which melts the snow, hardens the clay. While outward lessons are the same to both, only one heart is savingly impressed--the other becomes harder. Great difference would hence pervade their total character. But it comes most vividly to view in their approach to God.

Behold the worshipers. First mark Cain. He feels that homage is the great Creator's due. Therefore he makes an offering. But he consults with 'blinded human reason'. He listens to his wayward will, and so infers, that the produce of his own toil is sacrifice most fit. He brings "of the fruit of the ground." In this at once the working of self-righteous pride appears. He worships as a vain free-thinker. Here is no confession of his guilty need. Here is no faith in the revealed atonement. Here is no acceptance of the way of grace. Here is no delight in reconciling blood. God's mode of access is rejected. Self-will rebelliously concludes, "I stand bold in uprightness--free to commune with God! Why should I humbly plead another's death? Why should I trust another's power to save? I pay the fruit of my own labor. Sufficient is this obligation to my Maker. This only I present." Such is the constant voice of nature. Such is the vanity of unregenerate man. Inflated by high thoughts of SELF, he tramples GRACE beneath contemning feet.

Now turn to Abel. He likewise comes to worship. But the contrast is great, as light from darkness. The firstlings of his flock are in his hand. He raises an altar. Thereon he lays a dying victim. The Spirit testifies of the principle, which moves this act. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Hebrews 11:4. Expand this conduct. It sweetly shows soul-humbleness--consciousness of nature's ruin--confession of extremest need--acknowledgment of life's forfeiture--reliance only on the atoning Lamb. A voice from Abel's altar cries, "My eyes are to the coming Savior. I rejoice in Him, as all my hope--desire--pardon--life."

Reader! you see the amazing difference. How is it so? The answer is near and sure. Grace visited one--the other was passed by. To Cain all pious precepts were as water cast upon a rock. To Abel they came as good seed falling on good ground. It was so because some mighty power touched the younger--while the elder remained in nature's hardness--ignorance--conceit. This power was

heavenly and from heaven.

Thus Adam's children show that grace alone can convert a soul. Parents--guardians--teachers--pastors--friends must use each effort and must strain each nerve. But vain is every zealous toil, except the Spirit fly to help. Without light from the Holy Spirit, sin never can be felt and Jesus never can be seen--sought--loved. Souls quickened from on high, and they alone, hasten to salvation's ark.

You, who, Abel-like, present a stricken Savior in your arms, be conscious, that you are monuments of mercy--own your vast debt--give thanks--adore. "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves--it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8. You are followers of "righteous Abel." "Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." Isaiah 54:17. Can faith thus worship and receive no smile? This story replies, that heaven rejoices, when gracious souls plead dying merit. God looks with favor upon Abel and testifies approval. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Believer, take all the joy of this grand truth. If you glory in the cross, if your whole trust is in the God-man's work, your prayers are heard--your worship gladdens the bright courts above--God hearkens to your imploring soul, and tokens will descend to prove acceptance. It was so to Abel. It is so now. All who walk in the same faith find like approval.

How different is the case of unbelief! Formalists may present long trains of man-made observances. The service is self-will, not faith. It is a skeleton with no warm breath. It is but 'splendid sin'. There is no note to reach the ears of God. It is abomination in His sight. "Unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect."

Cain quickly felt, that Abel basked beneath approving smiles, while darkness was his doom. Abel's happiness, reflecting heavenly rays, pierces him to the quick. The scum of his iniquities soon rises to the surface. The fiend's internal broodings rush into action. "He was very angry, and his countenance fell." Envy--malice--rage fret as a swelling tide. They sweep all barriers away. God in forbearance checks and remonstrates. But divine patience only irritates him more. Sinful passion takes the helm. The presence of his righteous brother becomes a maddening goad. Earth is misery to him, while Abel treads it. Thus a murderous thought enters his breast--a murderous scheme is formed. For a while pretense hides it. The usual communion is maintained; and as in other days, they walk together to the fields. But now what scene occurs! Surely the very earth will quake--the universe will groan--each leaf will hang its head in sorrow, and the sun hide its startled rays. Cain looks upon his mother's son. But no softening stir. No pity spares. His arm is raised. The blow is aimed. The wound is given. Abel falls a murdered corpse.

There is nothing too vicious for sin to do. There are no depths of crime, from which it shrinks. It trembles not to break a parent's heart, or take a brother's life. It scoffs at fear of man. It braves the vengeance of the Lord. If its impious hands could scale the heaven of heavens, it would do violence to all within those blest abodes. All this is sounded in those fearful words, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him." The annals of ensuing crime show not iniquity more vile. There have been dreadful deeds, enough to startle hell, but where a deed like this! Thus Adam's firstborn exhibits evil in its largest stature. Let us not dream, that sin came upon earth a little seed, and rose by gradual growth into its full enormities. Here it stands at once gigantic in every proportion. It needs not a long course of time to ripen or mature it. Behold again that bleeding one.

It is the "righteous Abel." The first who lived by faith first dies a martyr's death.

Let then none fondly dream, that piety wins love, or faith conciliates the world's favor. If now there be no open outrage, it is because restraint confine the arm. Earth would be drunk with gore, if hatred to Christ could work its will. Brother, also, is slain by brother. Earth's closest bonds are weak to hold back unbelieving enmity.

Behold once more. The deed is done. Blood stains Cain's hands. Ocean, now, with all its waves, cannot wash out that die. Rolling ages cannot sweep it away. Agonies of remorse cannot recall it. No angel's efforts can remove the weight of guilt. The sin is sinned. Account must now be given. The murderer hears the searching question--for God will speak--"Where is Abel, your brother?" "What have you done?" But the hardened heart breaks not. The sullen lips pour forth no cry for pardon. No contrition asks for mercy. He stands an icy pillar of despair. Hope tenders no support. No prospect brings a ray to cheer. He knows not how to bear his being. But forth he must go to reap the harvest sown by sin.

Here the curtain falls. But Cain still lives, and must forever live. But where? What is his present state? What will be his everlasting doom? He was of the "wicked one," and with the wicked one must pass to his own place. The race of Cain, also, still pollutes our earth. It is a faithful admonition--"Woe unto them, they have gone in the way of Cain." Jude 1:11. That way is still a common by-path. The sons of nature crowd it. Grace only can call from it. In this history some of its downward stages are depicted. Pride takes the first step. The sinner, satisfied with self, sneers at the thought of being fallen--vile--lost. His blinded solace is, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Revelation 3:17. Self-righteous, he perceives no beauty in the glorious cross. Unconscious of filth, he seeks no cleansing. Ignorant of guilt, he laughs at pardon. Christ is despised. The Gospel is rejected, as an old wives' tale. No grace bars the heart's door. Therefore the whole legion of hell's passions find admission. They enter and fix their foul abode. Outward warnings are not heard. Frightful lusts are wantonly indulged. A mad career is madly run. Human laws may check overt acts. Cain's enormity may not in very deed be perpetrated--but Cain's depravity dwells within. Then comes the end, which has no end--no peace to soothe a dying bed--the dread account before the great white throne--the sure rejection--the dreadful "Depart from Me"--and lastly, the never-ending prison of anguish and despair.

Reader! let not Cain thus warn in vain. May good to you spring from this dreadful life! Let his example search your inmost soul. Is there one particle of self-justifying pride within? If so, spare it not. Drag it to the cross and slay it there. Open your eyes to solemn truth. In you, that is in your flesh, there dwells no good thing-- Romans 7:18. Your best deserves hell's depths. There is no moment of your life unstained by sin. No thought of your mind could reach the Law's high standard. Away then with all self-confidence. You have no penitence--no tears--no prayers--no services, which need not Christ's atoning blood. Flee then from self to Christ. No pardon--cleansing--righteousness are found apart from Him. Listen to Cain's wail--escape the wrath to come. Rush not to a place of torment. You yet live. Christ is near with open arms. Hasten as the neediest of sinners to Him the sinners' friend. You will find Him willing--able to give uttermost salvation. None perish with their face towards Jesus.

"Spirit of the living God! You who visited Abel, in mercy visit all who read these pages! Call many from Cain's graceless course to Abel's faith and heaven's eternal glory!"

01.04 LAMECH

LAMECH

One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!" Genesis 4:23-24

Here a mysterious personage appears. Dark veils envelop him. He moves with shrouded features rapidly across the sacred page. His few words startle rather than inform. While the eye watches him, he vanishes. Before the ear can fully catch his voice, silence stills the scene. But still he occupies a place on hallowed ground. He is a Bible-character. The Spirit forbids him to be buried in oblivion, and gives him a station in the ever-living word. Thus he stands, as a warning Beacon. Each pupil in the school of truth is bid to learn from Lamech.

Let us then now draw near with prayerful hearts. "Holy Spirit! this is Your record. Pour down explanatory rays. Shine on this dial, which Your wisdom raises. Bring light out of this obscurity. Unfold your gracious purpose. Give the right key, that the casket may fly open. May every reader be wiser by the survey of these dread features!" But let idle curiosity retire. Marvels, indeed, are here, but no details. No lengthened statements gratify a prying mind. No ingenuity can expand the brevity. No research can gain more than the words--One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!" But the brief words are very sad. They plant us in a region enlivened by no sun--in a field without one flower--in a parched desert with no cooling stream--in a deep valley of dreadful shadows. Each sound falls mournfully as the knell of death. The key note of this dirge is sin. Vice bubbles up as from a fountain of iniquity. The whole scene appals. There is not one bright spot. Hope cannot hope, where all is hopeless. Pity may pity, but with much trembling. None can leave Lamech and not sigh. The wretched speaker is of the family of Cain. Lamech is a vile descendant of a vile progenitor. When five generations had passed away, in him Cain seems to reappear. It may be well to approach him by marking the complexion of his TIMES. They show the piteous state of men devoid of grace--in whom self is the worshiped idol, and selfishness the master-passion. The house of Cain grew rapidly. They sparkled in nature's lively gifts. Their energy was great. Their intellect was keen. Their contrivances were shrewd. But we look in vain for love of God, or labors in His service. They planned and toiled indeed. But it was all for temporal aggrandizement--for worldly interest--for comforts, for pleasures. Extensive buildings spread. Inventions in the use of metals advanced. Distinction in melodious arts was reached. Cities arose. Works in brass and iron acquired fame. The harp and organ sounded in their feasts. They became a multitude great in earth's greatness--rich in earth's wealth--skillful in earth's skill--polished in earth's polish--luxurious in earth's luxuries. They were many, and they were not crude. They ascended high steps of cultivation. But all their industry was the intensity of worldly-mindedness. God was not the moving principle. They were emphatically "of the world." This was their character,

"he that is of the earth is earthly." John 3:31. Can we advance without a sigh! how pitifully foolish are the votaries of the world! They may have gifts, which glitter splendidly--but it is only for a speck of time. Their brightest sun soon sets in blackest night. Their joys are no true joys. Their continuance is a fleeting dream. Their flowers have many a thorn, and in the plucking fade. Their fruitless blossoms soon decay.

Children of men, give ear. Why is life yours? Why are you called to tread this earth? Why are immortal spirits planted in your breasts? Why do grand faculties raise you as creation's lords? It has been nobly said, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Shall then all your time, and means, and powers, and energies be frittered in the sordid work of serving time and gratifying self? Awake, arise, renounce such folly. Grovel not in such mire! Study the glorious truths of God's most glorious word. Be one with Christ. Live as citizens of the bright world. Walk with God. Join the high company of His sons. Shine as lights below. Work for eternity. In every employ seek first the heavenly kingdom--the good of men--the glory of the Lord. Take as your chart the faithful saying--"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. When we contemplate man's most brilliant and successful efforts--the books, in which high genius shines--the stately edifices--the almost living statue--the speaking picture--and other monuments of splendid minds; admiration is turned to mourning by the reflection, 'Was this designed to magnify the Lord?' "Whose is this image and superscription?" It avails nothing to have loud praise, where we are not, if we have torment where we are. Many who are crowned as great and glorious here, may awake to "shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2. The old world, with all its ingenuities, ripened for ruin. "And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away." Matthew 24:39

Such were the times of Lamech. Now hear his VOICE. He speaks unto his "wives." But why are there two? Is God's ordinance thus wide? Is double matrimony permitted by the sacred rite? Far otherwise. Consider its intent. God in His tender mercy plans sweetest solace. Therefore He places one of man's nature by his side--to be a second self--a sharer of happiness--a partner of distress--another heart, to which each care may be unbosomed--whose love may make life's journey smooth--whose sympathy may render burdens light--who may diminish loads, and double joys--who may meet tear with tear and smile with smile--who may be intertwined in every fellowship, until death break the bond. Intent and gracious thus to multiply delights, God brought to man "an help-meet for him"--or, as the original declares, "an help as before him"--always near to minister and aid. Genesis 2:18.

Thus the design excludes plurality--and therefore the ordinance grants but one wife. God gives not Eves, but Eve.

Jesus adds His authoritative comment. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one." Matthew 19:5-6. No sentence can be more explicit. Two--not many--shall be one. Adherence shall be to the wife, not wives. But the design is frustrated, when husband joins himself to more than one. Oneness is then broken into diverse parts. Affections which should have one channel, diverge into distracting streams. Marriage is no more godly union but confusion. It is not love, but jealousy. The sweetest type of Christ and His one spouse, the Church, is debased into

dissoluteness.

Lamech disregards God's will. His reckless passions burst the wise restraint. Greedily he wallows in licentiousness--and by his lusts degrades the hallowed oneness into community of beasts. Thus he scorns the primal law. It is not said, that he was the first to perpetrate this sin. But the first record of it claims his name. No polygamist in history precedes him. In sacred annals he stands at the head of a new crime. But did it end in him? Evil, once introduced, spreads as a flame amid dry stubble. The weed, once rooted, can hardly be eradicated. Through latest ages the fruit may still spring up. Hence this domestic misery pollutes not only wilds of savage life, but families of grace. Even David strayed in this miry path. Reader! in pity of others, if not of self, mortify each rising sin. By yielding you may found a mountain of misery--and earn the ignoble fame of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Future generations may trace their wretchedness to your example. Many may wish, that you had never lived. Lost souls may loathe you as paving their road of ruin.

Lamech sinks into blacker guilt. He next appears confessedly a murderer. He openly proclaims, "I have slain a man." True it may be, that no immediate link joins his offences. But true it is, that sin is always a spreading plague. One fault indulged soon swells into a deepening torrent, and widens into a boundless sea. One little leak may sink the noblest ship. One little spark may carry fiery fury to immense expanse. Sin's property is to blind and harden. It soon obscures the light, and then hideousness affrights not, and a monster seems not monstrous. Its contact blunts the edge of conscience; and he, who previously said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" now quickly perpetrates the very deed and blushes not.

See this in Lamech. He tramples down the marriage-law. Then human blood pollutes his hands. He goes literally in the very "way of Cain." Let it be granted, that no perceptible attraction unites these branches of transgression. But let it be maintained, that sin will not live single. It quickly propagates, and fearfully extends. Of the provoking cause, and of the sad details, history speaks not. Until the great day shall reveal all secret things, we can only know that he slew a man. Until all deeds are published to an assembled world, the bare fact only can be seen, that, like Cain, he was a murderer.

Reader! perhaps horror thrills through your heart at this terrific sound. You sigh, "How could this be! Where was his conscience! Was human feeling utterly extinct! How could the thought arise! How could it be cherished! How could the hand be raised! How could the victim be looked on and not spared!"

It is well to shudder at such sinfulness of sin. But in your great loathing turn your eye inward. Mark what passions lurk in your own breast. See what monsters nestle in the chambers of your imagination. There are dormant vipers there. Temptation and opportunity would quicken them into activity. Your heart holds seeds of all iniquity. True, you turn pale at thought of murder. Once David felt the like abhorrence. True, the ripe crime pollutes you not. But what is the ember, from which this flame bursts forth? Is it not anger? Our Lord's illustrious teaching traces these floods of evil to their secret source. Anger conceived, retained, fostered, fanned, soon becomes rage. Rage flares into fury. Fury maddens into recklessness. Recklessness is blind to consequence. Thus, then, you may possess the moving cause, without advancing to the terrific deed. God's eye may see all full-blown evil in your embryo-thoughts. Therefore in all hatred of another's crime, the

gracious man will hate himself the most. He will confess that nature always tends to sin. He will ascribe his guiltless walk to screening grace and to his guardian God. Lamech cries, Kill every sinful motion when it first stirs. It will soon lead to nether-millstone hardness. It may provoke the hopeless doom, "Let him alone." It may bring down the bitterest curse of a "reprobate mind."

He seems to have rolled quickly down into this slough. He speaks of this murder--but with no distress, or pain, or penitence, or shame. Unblushingly he trumpets forth his deed. Unfeelingly he shows his blood-stained hands, as if they were some trophy of illustrious deed.

Ah! when conscience is thus seared, where is the fiend more vile than man! Earth still may be his home, but hell is within! Lamech is a proof. His heart next shows abandoned desperation. He abuses God's long-suffering. He takes it as a weapon to fight the more against Him. Because God is patient, he becomes more sinful. Divine goodness, as the sun shining on a putrid mass, draws out its vileness. Cain for a while had found a respite. He was not cast down instantly into the pit. Avenging lightnings drove him not headlong to his bed of fire. Life was prolonged. No, an especial shield was for a season spread around. This patience on the part of God fomented the basest thoughts in Lamech. He pleads this case. His distorting mind concludes that he was less in crime than his progenitor. He dreams the beguiling dream--if Cain were spared, surely I shall be so much more--if he received protection, surely greater impunity is my due. "If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold surely Lamech seventy and seven-fold."

All this is very black. This conduct touches the last confines of wickedness. How different are hearts broken by the Spirit! Grace always hangs a lowly head, and wails in dust and ashes, and sees the inward blackness, and in its holiest actings still laments, "Sinners! of whom I am chief." But it is nature's base propensity to view self in a blinding mirror. Keen to see others' fault, it has no eye for home iniquities. Sightless as to self, it mis-reads, also, the mind of God. From the sweet flower of God's forbearance, it extracts the direst poison. God spares in mercy. This tender goodness is abused, as if He neither saw nor cared. The wrath withheld is counted as indifference. The hand, which smites not, is despised as powerless. Reprieve is construed to be acquittal. Execution delayed is presumed on as impunity. Patience, the gentle guide to penitence, misleads to hard indifference. The lengthened space is filled not with amendments, but more vile transgressions. Reluctance to take vengeance is insulted, as license to prolong iniquity. The Spirit's warning is verified, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Thus Lamech heaped up wrath against the day of wrath. Thus, also, the men of his dark days sinned with presumptuous hand. Eliphaz depicts their conduct and their end--

Yet you say, 'What does God know?

Does he judge through such darkness?

Thick clouds veil him, so he does not see us

as he goes about in the vaulted heavens.'

Will you keep to the old path

that evil men have trod?

They were carried off before their time,
their foundations washed away by a flood.

They said to God, 'Leave us alone!

What can the Almighty do to us?' Job 22:13-17

Reader! where is baseness like the baseness of thus trampling on mercy? Its language is, 'Because God is good, I will be viler yet--because He grants me longer space, I will the more defy Him.' Where is folly like unto this folly? It misinterprets God's loveliest attribute. It draws aggravated guilt out of these wells of grace. Where is madness like unto this madness? It rushes on the thick bosses of Almighty wrath. It adds fury to the penal flames. It sharpens the gnawing of the deathless worm. For though avenging feet may tardily advance, avenging hands will strike at last more heavily.

O you despisers! tremble and turn. Fall low on knees of penitence. Marvel that you yet live. Bless God, that yet you may repent and pray. Give thanks, that Christ yet offers pardon. But delay not another moment. Remember Lamech, and perish not.

01.05 ENOCH UNHEEDED

ENOCH UNHEEDED "Enoch walked with God." Genesis 5:22

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men--"See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 1:14-15

While Lamech sinned foully in the house of Cain, Enoch shone brightly in the family of Seth. In the worst times some godliness will raise its head. A star often glitters in the darkest night. In a waste wilderness some solitary flowers bloom. A green spot sparkles amid expanse of sands. When sin rushes in like a flood, a barrier from the Spirit meets it. When the Lord's cause lies very low, some saint confesses God--some faithful hand points up to heaven--some noble champion draws the sword of truth--some preacher of righteousness uplifts the Gospel-banner. While the Head breathes, the members do not wholly die. Satan never reigns undisputedly. There was an Enoch in the midnight of the old world. His miniature is exceedingly lovely. It shows much beauty in a little space. One touch displays the man--"he walked with God." But in that simple phrase we read the pure consistency of his happy life. His career was the brightness of a tropic climate--the clear blue of a summer sky--the tranquil flow of an unruffled stream.

Blessed man! he took no step, but leaning on his God--he did no deed, but as in God's sight--he spoke no word, but as to God's listening ear. God was his light within--his life without--the polar star of all his being. He knew no deviating path--no double motive--no divided heart. His way was narrow, but it led straightforward. He saw his guide, and followed fully.

Thus he lived a type of what the Spirit can effect. What man, through heavenly grace, has been; man, through like grace, may still become. The height attained before the flood, is not too high for other days. Away then with the thought, that evenness of godly walk is too sublime for present earth! It is indeed a fearful truth, that the wells of birth-corruption are most deep--that evil cleaves as the very skin--that Satan ever tempts--that the world spreads most fascinating snares--that man unaided surely sinks. But the Spirit lives, and loves, and is omnipotent. He can subdue iniquities, and blunt temptation's shafts, and win the heart to Christ, and fill it with all the fullness of God. Thus the saint, linked to sinful flesh, can still walk closely with his God. Enochs may still bless the earth.

Child of God, do you lament your distance from this state? Be humbled, for you are not what you might be. Investigate the cause. Too often prayer is lifeless--infrequent--vague--pointless--the eye of faith is slumbering, or not intent on Christ--the heart ceases to watch--the shield is dropped--the sword is sheathed--the Spirit is grieved--the Word is not the constant food--ordinances are negligently used--the wings of wandering thoughts are not clipped; indolence puts out the fire of zeal. The walk with God is far from self--from sin--from worldly cares--from formal worship, and from frivolity's enfeebling whirl. It seeks heaven with heavenward face, besieging it with

unremitting cries. It works for God--faithful to His truth--strong in His strength--rejoicing in His presence--valiant for His glory. "Enoch walked with God."

It may be said, that he was thus a magnet to attract, and not a Beacon to deter. His life, indeed, allured to holy paths. The halo around him was the winning beauty of devotedness. But while he meekly lived, he boldly preached. His steps were gentle, but his words were the thunder's roar. Among the sinners of the old world his voice was trumpet-clearness. The Spirit records his key-note. He spoke of the Judgment-seat. He raised on high the great White Throne. He warned of tremendous reckoning. He told of the world ended, and of the endlessness beyond. His spirit bounded to time's final goal. He seems not to have dwelt on Jesus in humiliation, bearing our sins, and making full atonement. He strode over the first advent--the glorious ascension to God's right hand--the session on the mediatorial throne--and all the wonders of Christ's wondrous reign.

He pictured the awe of the concluding scene. His Beacon was the coming Judge. Thus he proclaimed, "Behold! the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

We hence learn, that the old world rushed not unwarned to ruin. God left them not without clear notice. They were told of the sure end. They knew how terrible were the wages of iniquity. The upraised arm was shown. The crushing blow was fore-announced. They heard that clouds were gathering, and that shelter should be sought. The cry went forth, Behold the Judge stands before the door. So it has always been. In every case, God will be justified, when he speaks, and clear, when he judges. Men press to hell, surmounting many barriers. They will not turn even for the prize of heaven. Too late, one agonized confession will ring sadly in each lost cell. "My anguish is my merited desert. Many a sign-post told, that my path was towards this misery. I knew of righteous judgment. This end was blazoned on many a warning scroll. The blame is mine, even as is the suffering. I stopped my ears. I steeled my heart. I trampled on restraints. Therefore I am here. Justice is just, and I am righteously undone."

Reader! these thoughts lead directly to Enoch's Beacon. Mark it, and you shall escape this doom. "Holy Spirit! come and give realizing views. All must be darkness, without Your rays. All must be light, if You give Your presence. All will be hardness, except You melt. The rock will soften, if You will mercifully touch." A prelude sounds, "Behold!" Let every slumberer awake. You listless, listen. Let every eye turn here-ward; for soon each eye must meet the sight. A revelation dawns, dimming all that earth ever saw. Let then all minds now contemplate.

Look onward--realize--"behold." What is the spectacle! Whom do you see! "The Lord comes." The God-man is revealed. Jesus appears unclouded--manifest--in open glory. He, who took flesh, as Bethlehem's babe--He, who grew up at Nazareth--He, who walked a lowly man beside the sea of Galilee--He, who bedewed the garden with His blood of agony--He, who bore the scourge--the buffetings--the mockery--the crown of thorns--He, who died accursed on the accursed tree, and suffered all the penal anguish of our sins--He comes to close the scene of earth, and wrap up the worn-out scroll. "Behold, He comes."

Child of God, "Behold." Gaze steadily. It is your own Jesus. "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as you have seen Him go into heaven." Acts

1:11. Recognize your kinsman--your elder brother--your unfailing friend. It is He, who loved you with an everlasting love--who loved you more than His own life--who espoused you to Himself, in righteousness and truth, forever--who welcomed death, that you might live--who thinks His heavens incomplete without you. By faith you often realize His smile--and see your name upon His heart--and hear the whispers of his love--and lean upon His arm--and joy in His fellowship. Now see Him at hand--in very person--in glorious nearness. Behold, the Judge is your own Jesus!

You Christless ones. "Behold." He, whom you scorned--reviled--rejected--He whose blood you counted as a worthless thing--He, whom you crucified afresh--whose love you ridiculed--whose wrath you braved--whose cause you strove to counteract--whose kingdom you have trampled down--whose scepter you defied--whose humble followers you derided--maligned--oppressed--whose warnings you rejected--whose truth was your jest--whose ministers you shunned--whose word you hated--whose promises and threats you sneered at--"Behold," this Jesus comes! But who can describe the actual spectacle! Faith, with her eagle eye intently fixed on heaven, strives to conceive what soon will shine forth in reality. But weak is the effort. No painter's skill can represent the blazing flame--the sun in mid-day splendor--the glow of life in human countenance--the expression of the sparkling eye. Paul's eloquence could not relate the words of Paradise--they were unspeakable. No angel's tongue can open out the riches of Christ--they are unsearchable. So this sight exceeds all skill of utterance. We only know, that "The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." Matthew 25:31. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father." Matthew 16:27. But here description must be silent. Let the sun intensify its rays into one focus, and magnify ten thousand times its present luster--that brightness would be but an expiring torch--a dying spark--compared to Jesus thus appearing. His human form--for human it will ever be--will be as dazzling as Deity can render it; and every eye shall see it. The encircling retinue, also, will be worthy of the king of kings, and worthy of the purpose of His advent. "All the holy angels" spread their wings around. Heaven sends forth its total armies. The whole company of the angelic host encircle their descending Lord. They attend in all their glittering multitudes. Thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand swell the train. Think of the beauty of one seraph's form--think of the concentrated beauty of the collected throng--think of the God-man Jesus superlatively shining above all. And still thought touches not the grand reality. But the glory of this retinue is more glorious yet. Every angel shall be present--so, also, every saint. All who are Christ's, from righteous Abel to the last-born child of faith, shall add their numbers to the swell of triumph. They shall be very many. Jude depicts their hosts as myriads. At present they may appear a little drop in the vast sea of the ungodly, but when thus gathered into one mass, they will be more than numbers can express.

Believer, mourn not, that now you often seem to stand alone. Truly you are united to a band more than the stars in multitude--more than the sands which gird all oceans.

They shall be very bright. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Colossians 3:4. The corruptible shall have put on incorruption. The mortal shall be robed in immortality. The natural body shall be changed into the lightness, purity, and power of spirit. We now bear the image of the earthly--and it is base, and low, and liable to pains and sad defilements. We shall then bear the image of the heavenly--and it shall be lovely and perfect, as the righteousness of God. But why are the saints thus gloriously assembled? It is their office now

to sit as high assessors in the Judgment. "Do you not know, that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Corinthians 6:2. Again, "Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the Saints of the most High--and the time came, that the Saints possessed the kingdom." Daniel 7:22.

Beloved, your earthly lot may be neglect--contempt--reproach, and poverty. You may drink the bitter cup of scorn. It was so with your heavenly Lord. Shall the poor servant covet greater favor? But the end is near. The scene shall change. Jesus shall re-appear. Then you shall have "beauty for ashes." Then you shall be arrayed in glory by His side. Your place shall be upon His very throne. They, who crushed you, shall see, and tremble, and bewail. The ensuing scene is vivified by terms familiar to the courts of men. Well-known images thus awfully throw light upon the sequel. It is written "The Judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened." Daniel 7:10. Again, "We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ." Romans 14:10. Again, "We must all appear," or be made apparent--conspicuous--manifest, "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." 2 Corinthians 5:10. Once more, "And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books, according to what they had done." Revelation 20:11-12. Thus graphically is the consummation pictured.

We are thus led in lively thought to intermingle in transactions, which must be. The Spirit takes us by the very hand, and brings us to the dread tribunal. He guides us now to take our station, where we so soon must stand. He almost constrains us to make the future present. Who now can say, that coming judgment is an obscure hint! It is revealed in clearest light. It is proclaimed in strongest terms. It is displayed in gigantic magnitude. Oh! that the world would learn, that it is sure--near--inevitable; that it will be universal; that it will be final. Each child of man must act his part. All, who are Christ's, shall then receive their crowns. All, who are not found in Him, must meet their condemnation. But Enoch's teaching omits the full acquittal of the just. Each had indeed his countless and most frightful sins. Each in nature, and by act, had merited the depths of hell. But long ago each had endured his fullest punishment, when the redeeming God-man died. Each too had put on by faith the glories of His glorious righteousness. Each had exhibited by holy walk his vital union with the Lord of life. Each displays full evidence. Each holds the title-deeds to pardon--life--glory. Each has in his heart the fitness for this home. God is faithful. Therefore they are welcomed on the strong ground of right. Jesus purchased heaven, and purchased them, and made them fit. They hear, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. They ascend to thrones of light. Glory--glory to the God of grace! Glory--glory to the work of Christ! But Enoch, dealing with sinners, sings not this song of triumph, he shows not the chariots which bear the saints aloft. That he might check and scare from sin's destructive paths, he opens the dreadful side. He drags the ungodly forward. They must confront the great White Throne. The Judge appears "to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To Convict. Conscience is now terribly awake. It may have slept amid the warnings and expostulations of time-state. It may have stifled all inward tremors under the Gospel-note. But now it is all life. Its eyes are widely open to the iniquity of lost

days--the flimsiness of vain excuse--the positive reality of contracted guilt--the worthlessness of now vanished hopes--the justice of the now-arrived condemnation--the truthfulness of all God's word--the inevitable issue of unpardoned sin.

Earth is now fled away. The guilty have then no terrestrial refuge. Heaven is for the righteous. They have no righteousness. Hell is for the ungodly. They are ungodly. They see it now. They own it. And they must endure. They are convinced, that their whole life was spent in toiling hard to earn the wages of the devil. The time for payment is arrived. His reckoning place is hell. The light of the White Throne makes all things clear. Willful ignorance and self-deception are no longer blind. Memory is awake in agonized review. It sees in one expanding glance the history of all past days. Each action is apparent in true form. Each word again sounds loudly. Each rapid thought swells to the frightful magnitude of overt acts. But each act--each word--each thought is only sin. Denial--extenuation--palliation--have vanished--or, if they show themselves, they aggravate and mock. Truth now reigns. Confession speaks. Such were our lives. These are our sins. This is our fault. This is our righteous doom. This is our merited misery. The Judge of all the earth does right. The mandate lingers no more. "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness--there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 22:13. They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thessalonians 1:9. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matthew 25:46.

You sons of men, who are not safe in Christ--who have not found the shelter of His saving wings--who have not fled for refuge to His Cross--who are not hid in the clefts of His wounded side--who are not washed in the laver of His blood--who are not covered beneath His sin-concealing righteousness, listen to Enoch's faithful word. You--your works--your speeches--your thoughts are all ungodly. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:18. These lives of yours will all rise up again in the Judgment-day, and prove your guilt, and call aloud for wrath. But the final Trumpet sounds not yet. The Throne is not erected yet. The Judge stands indeed before the door, but still His entrance tarries. Judgment is ready, but not yet quite come. The angels spread their wings, but they fly not. You have yet opportunity. Delay affords you space. Oh! then, by all the terrors of that dreadful day--by all the certainties of the foretold assize--by the sure unfolding of all your most secreted deeds--by the exposure of all that you have done and been--by the inevitable sentence--by the outbreathing wrath--by the down-hurling into hell--by the ever-gnawing chains--by the unquenchable fire--by the everlasting worm--by the eternity of torment, you are now implored to pause--to think--to turn--to weep--to be repentant--to seek mercy--to flee to Christ--to hasten to His Cross--to clasp His arms of love--to take Him as your only hope--to cling to Him as your only refuge--to embrace Him as your full salvation. Make Jesus now your friend. He comes to be your Judge.

01.06 UNGODLY ALLIANCE

UNGODLY ALLIANCE

"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Genesis 6:2 The Bible is God's Book, therefore it is all divine. Each page gives proof. No human thought could originate such truths. No human mind could so unfold them. Infinite breadths and lengths--eternal depths and heights, are marvelously wrapped up in a few brief words. Enlightened readers see the sure conclusion--this author is more than man.

Take an early illustration. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. This sentence--the Gospel of the old world--is brevity comprising boundlessness. It is a narrow field without horizon. Analyze the contents. Two antagonistic powers march forth. Two rival empires are portrayed. All earth's sons, who have been, are, and shall be, appear under opposing banners. Their enmity is ceaseless. One is bruised. The other wins eternal triumphs. Thus one little map unfolds the total history of Christ and His blessed subjects--of the devil and his cursed slaves. No mortal pen wrote this.

Doubtless the transcendent object of the verse is the God-man Jesus. The prominent spectacle is His deep humiliation--His painful sufferings--His noble achievements--His final trampling on all the powers of darkness. Christ, as the woman's bruised and conquering seed, largely fills the forefront. But as Christ personal is here--so, also, is Christ mystical. As the term, "your seed," addressed to the old serpent, embraces the whole race of the ungodly--so the term, "her seed," speaking of the woman, is Christ, and all contained in Him--Christ, and all the family of faith. "He is head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." Ephesians 1:22-23. The head is lifeless without its members. Christ is no Christ without His people.

Thus this wondrous verse draws a broad line. On the one side, "your seed" appears--on the other, "her seed." No neutral standing is left. Each mother's son is Christ's or Satan's. This momentous truth pervades the Word. Advance at once to Gospel times. Hear Jesus. "The field is the world--the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." Matthew 13:38. This word is emptiness, except, some have the royalty of Heavenly parentage, while others belong to the apostate spirit's house. John echoes the note. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." 1 John 3:10. The conclusion cannot be eluded--earth is the home of two discordant families.

Sometimes the separate portraits are separately exhibited. The dark compartment is not cloaked. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." John 8:44. They were a reprobate race--and their lives proved their origin. Again, "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" Matthew 23:33. Here, again, is a vile progeny, and their final home. The bright contrast also gloriously shines. God is the Father of a kingly race.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. Jesus is the Father of an ever-living family. His name is "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." Isaiah 9:6. The Spirit is the Father of a spiritual creation. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6.

Thus Scripture marks out, two widely severed realms. It shows a great gulf fixed, and kingdoms on each side.

Vivid facts endorse these statements. Behold man's first-born. Let Cain and Abel be examined. Naturally they spring from the same stock. In form and lineament they correspond. Their outward frames and mental powers import one origin. They have like features. They tread the same earth. They breathe the same air. They have like cravings and desires. They are supported by the same food. They sleep the same sleep. They converse in the same language. Great is their outward sameness. But greater far is their internal difference. In spirit they are as estranged as pole from pole. Cain "was of that wicked one." 1 John 3:12. To Abel the sweet testimony is accorded, "By faith he obtained witness that he was righteous." Hebrews 11:4. All who have faith belong to heaven's family. "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26. Therefore righteous Abel was a son of God.

One received Christ as King--for this is faith's constant act. The other toiled in Satan's prison-house--as all do, who are strangers to this grace. One was light--the other was sightless in a dark world. One was Zion's citizen--the other groveled a worldling among worldlings. One journeyed in the narrow way of life--the other went downwards in destruction's broad road. This is the truth interwoven in the text before us. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men." Diverse families are here. Some were born again--and thus a new creation made them "sons of God." Others experienced no vital change. They remained corrupt offspring, of corrupt parents--conceived in sin--shaped in iniquity--unclean, because the stream of an unclean fount--dead, because hanging on a withered branch--children of wrath, because their heirdom was the curse.

Such is the mighty difference. What is the power which effects it? It must be external. For all men are equally dead-born. And death can never generate life. The strengthless have no strength. The motionless cannot move. The speechless cannot cry. The skeleton cannot rise. The dry leaf cannot bloom. Ashes cannot brighten into flame. The power, then, is not inborn.

Omnipotence from above achieves the change. The holy Spirit, descending on the wings of love, and moving in the almightiness of His strength, implants new being in the heirs of life. Others, unchanged by heavenly grace, cumber the earth, as moving sepulchers holding dead souls.

Here reason proudly asks--"What is the cause of such distinction? where is the just principle?" Faith with all reverence replies--"The cause is wise, for it is God's wisdom--it is good, for it is God's will--it is righteous, for it is God's resolve--it is holy, for it is God's decree.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25. There is no stern severity--no arbitrary caprice--no sport of chance. "He works all things after the counsel of His own will." Ephesians 1:11. True, faith reads not yet the records of the courts above--but it confidently reposes on the word--"What I do, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter." John 13:7. As the tabernacle rose after a pattern marked out in the Mount--so the antitypical Church rises

according to an eternal model. Wisdom and love lay the first stone--wisdom and power frame the materials--wisdom and mercy fit each to its place--wisdom and truth bring forth the topstone--wisdom and grace receive the total glory. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33. The glorious reign of truth will soon break forth. Then the chosen family shall put off disguising flesh, and rightly put on robes of light, and show their crowns of gold. Now they are intermingled with the crowds of earth. They move as others up and down the world. In this field the wheat and the tares grow side by side. In this wilderness the rare flowers are beset with weeds. In these waters, good and bad fishes promiscuously swim. In these pastures, the sheep and goats crop the same herbs. In this great house vessels of gold and wood, of silver and earth, have the like shape. At this banquet guests robed and unrobed sit down. At this mill two grind together, the one to be taken, the other to be left.

Thus in time-state the heirs of mercy and of wrath are intermixed. The flesh is their common tabernacle. An atmosphere of contagion envelops both. The spiritual seed must traverse the slippery ground of earth. The tempter marks them well--and hates them most--and never ceases to assail. Traitors, also, in the heart, are active to betray. They are not, as to spirit, of the world. But, as to flesh, they are still in the world. Outward allurements woo them to forbidden paths. The old nature--still alive--looks too complacently on congenial evil. Old passions, pent up, beat rebelliously on the holy barriers. Thus countless are the occasions of transgression. Multitudinous are the pitfalls in the way. The history of the old world brings these perils into open light. But it especially shows one sunken rock, the scene of many wrecks. It raises a Beacon on one tremendous precipice. It warns, that MARRIAGE, designed for pure delights, is often perverted to a deathful snare. The record thus speaks. "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Such was the ancient mischief. Alas! it has survived the flood. Those waters drowned not the fire of such lust. They quenched not the evil embers of the heart. Proneness to ungodly alliance still exists. Here still a fruitful spring of misery is found.

What inlet induces this temptation? The word replies--the eye. "The sons of God SAW that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Just so Eve saw the many beauties of the baneful fruit. The fascination enters through the door of sight. The lovely features, the attractive look, the charm of countenance, the grace of symmetry, the beauteous frame decked in the elegance of attire, gradually fix the gaze. This gaze is danger. For the fleshy element ever has leaks--imperiling the bark. It opens many crevices to godless thoughts. It is not yet in heaven. It is not yet angelic. It has not yet escaped the tempter's territory. Child of man, beware. Make a covenant with your eyes.

If the spark of desire once kindles, Satan is quick to fan it into flame. Conscience, at first uneasy, is soon quieted by subtle opiates. Hindering mountains will soon sink down. A path will open to facilitate advance. At each interview objections will seem less, and at last almost nothing.

There may be moments of reflection, when the spiritual obstacles may intrude. It then may be felt, that the attracted hearts meet not in Christ--that the needles point not to the same Polar Star. But then hope whispers, that wedded union may soon lead to union in the Lord. The child of God will fondly trust, My tender teaching, unreserved counsels, strict example, holy walk, and fervent

prayer, will soon issue in my partner's thorough change. Soon the one Savior will be our common trust and joy.

Here is ungodly compromise. No hope of possibly resulting good can justify ungodly means. This principle is rotten to the core. It has been the sluice-gate of a flood of crime, and girdled earth with zones of misery. Actions from such motive are manifest transgression and most fearful risk. SELF is gratified under pretense of winning souls. Presumption madly presumes, and arrogates the property of God. Can man convert? No! He alone who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can give the light of Christ. To marry, hopeful of conferring grace, is to plunge into wild billows, dreaming that some life-boat may venturously rescue--or some plank may providentially afford escape.

Sometimes hearts are led on by misinterpretations of God's providence. The opportunities of communion--the combination of facilities--the disappearance of all hindrance--the mutual wish, are fondly received as tokens of divine approval. The thought is cherished, 'Surely this union must be of heaven, or the path would not thus open.' Blinded passion finds a providence in Satan's traps. No outward barrier appears--and their the sloping descent seems smoothed by a heavenly hand. Other beguilements soon spread their lures. Checking conscience speaks no more. Then alliance joins the godly and the godless. The gracious and the graceless pass under an unequal yoke.

Alas! what fearful folly--no, what undoubted sin! How visionary the hope of any sunbeam from such a cloud! What incongruity! How can two walk together, whose motives, principles, desires, objects, aims, pursuits are separate, as pole from pole? One seeks God, as the chief good. The other follows this world as the guide. One brings each matter to a throne of grace. The other only cares to know the policy of man. One glories in the cross. The other counts it as a weak dream. One prizes the blood, as all salvation. The other scorns it, as enthusiastic folly. One grieves, that earth, with its vast multitudes, is waging war against its rightful King--and longs to send the saving truth on eagle's wings abroad. To the other, Christ's glory is an empty sound--a thought without reality--a shadow without form. To find amusement in the vanities of time--to sip admiration from the cup of flattery--to flutter with the giddy moths around the blaze of merriment, is the whole life. It would be easy, but more sad, to trace these paths of separation. Suffice to say, while grace is grace, it must tend heavenward--while the heart is graceless, it must shun God. Thus the sons of God and children of men essentially diverge.

What then are the baneful fruits? Can there be harmony with no connecting cord? Can there be happiness with such dislikes? Can there be peace without agreement? "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14. The house is divided. The family is at variance. The graceless may not gain. The gracious surely loses. For the spirit must be depressed. Zeal must be disheartened. Activities must be impeded. And mourning must sadly sit, where joy and gladness should sing cheerfully.

Ungodly alliance in the old world thus stands as a warning Beacon. Let the regenerate mark, and be wise. If they take partners from the charnel-house of Satan's empire, they gain no blessing, but a curse--no happiness, but woe--no solace, but discomfort--no help, but hindrance--no delight, but grief--no credit, but a shame. Woe waits on unions, which are not the fruit of earnest prayer--contracted for God's glory--cemented in His love--and wholly "in the Lord." But marriage is a typical rite. It has a mystic meaning. It points to heavenly union. It shows the soul's alliance to

the Lord. It brings Jesus before us in all His faithful love. He is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Church is His affianced bride. In such espousal, all is right. Error here can find no place. Misery hence cannot arise. Disappointment cannot ensue. The bonds and fruit are altogether holy. The communion is one stream of sanctified delight.

Reader! has your soul formed this glorious contract? Are you cemented into Christ? Is your heart wholly given to Him? Is it one with Him in devoted love? Do His vows bind you? Is your life the happy service of a faithful spouse?

If hitherto you have lingered afar off, let this hour witness your glad espousals! Hesitate no more. Draw near. He never turns in coldness from the coming soul. Only behold Him, and your love must kindle. Mark well His beauty. Compared to Him, the sun is dark--the heavens are a cheerless blank--and nature's loveliest garb but as vile sackcloth. To see Him is to love. Behold His grace--His tenderness--His noble efforts to secure His bride. He leaves His heavens. He condescends to lowliest state. He spares not His very life. He sheds His blood to cleanse her. He hangs on the accursed tree to ransom her. He undergoes her every penalty. He bears her legal curse. He pays her every debt. He expiates her every sin. He endows her with all He is--with all He has. His righteousness is her robe. His heavens are her home. His throne is her seat. His glory is her portion. His eternity is her everlasting day. In this union there is no varying fickleness--no cooling affections--no partings. "I change not, therefore you are not consumed." Malachi 3:6 "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." No treachery in her provokes divorce. He loved her in her filth and misery. He loves through all her faithlessness. He will love her through eternity's eternal course.

Reader! beware of Ungodly Alliance. But seek above all things this glorious espousal. Rest not, until you can truly say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

01.07 THE SPIRIT STRIVING IN VAIN

THE SPIRIT STRIVING IN VAIN "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Genesis 6:3

Frightful was the havoc wrought by sin's entrance! Its scythe laid low all inward godliness. Its poison tainted the whole man. Evil seized the rudder of the vessel, and steered it far from God. Vile passions took the sway. Earth became a dark downward road to hell. But still the devil was not thoroughly triumphant. Some power was soon found to counteract. Barriers beat back the flood of wickedness. The sweeping hurricane was restrained. The world was not unchecked rebellion.

Some captives were wholly rescued from the tyrant's grasp. Some souls burst from the tomb. They put off the grave-clothes. They went forth new beings with new life. In surrounding darkness, Abel had sight to see redemption's path. Amid a stumbling crowd, Enoch had strength to walk with God. In other cases, evil was checked--but not subdued--enmity was shackled--but not removed--conscience was roused--but not enlightened--convictions troubled--but no conversions followed. This counteracting agent was God the Holy Spirit. From the beginning He worked mightily. Creation's morn witnessed His going forth. When earth was formless--void--dark--an unsightly chaos--a shapeless mass, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Genesis 1:2. Then lovely order smiled, and robes of beauty decked this lower world.

"By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Psalms 33:6. "By His Spirit He has garnished the heavens." Job 26:13. The skies obeyed His bidding, and sparkled with its canopy of orbs. But these material wonders are but faint shadows of His inward power. The soul is the theater of His grand exploits. Here he sows seed for harvests infinite--eternal. But His interior dealings are wrapped in deepest mystery. The modes of acting differ. "The wind blows where it wills." John 3:8. Sometimes it rushes with the storm's furious force. Sometimes it sighs softly, as a summer breeze. Dissimilar, also, are the results. There are His special conquests. There are His common calls. Some men are His glorious trophies, Others are beacons warning not to resist His love.

These diverse cases claim our notice. Holy Spirit, come, now reveal Yourself!

There are the heirs of life. God in eternal counsels marked them as His own. The Son received them, as His bride--His body--His portion--His jewels--His delight. The Spirit knows them well. In right time, and in best way, He works His wonders in them. He finds them indeed, like other men, steeped in corruption--molded in evil--alien from God--blind in understanding--hardened in heart--Satan's willing slaves--wanderers in destruction's road--journeying without thought towards sin's last home. By heavenly rays He dissipates their darkness. He gives them eyes to see the beauty--the extent--the glory of the wondrous law. He reveals God and His attributes--God and His just demands. He implants the sense of terrible transgression. The sinner trembles and is full of shame. He feels, that countless sins doom him to eternal wrath. Then wholesome thoughts bud forth, Ah! where can I fly? Is there no refuge? Am I forever lost? Must I reap endlessly the dread

fruits of my earthly course? Is hell my hopeless home?

Happy the day, which witnesses these inward throes! Nature never sows such seed. Their origin is always one. They are from heaven. They are inwrought by the Spirit's power. But when the Spirit thus slays pride, and chases ignorance away, and leads into the valley of deep humiliation, the way is opened for reviving visits. He raises from this miry clay. He uplifts to a solid rock. He shows God's purpose of redemption. He tells the story of love, and grace, and mercy. Christ is revealed, ready to undertake the rescue--powerful to achieve it. The coming to our earth in human nature--the cup of suffering emptied to its dregs--the blood, and all its cleansing power--the cross, and all its expiating virtue--the death, and all its ransoming effects--the sin-bearer, and His surety--agony--the curse-remover, and His liberating pains--the law-fulfiller, and the transfer of His righteousness--pass in review before adoring gaze. The contrite sinner looks--wonders--believes. He sees Christ--all mighty to save--all willingness to welcome. Subdued--melted--attracted--he ventures near, and nearer yet. He stops not, until he falls into salvation's arms. He sits down under Christ's shadow with great delight. He is persuaded, that sins are remitted--pardon conferred--God reconciled--heaven secured. Happy, glorious work! It is the Spirit's doing. He effects it in full accordance with eternal counsels.

He, who this begins, carries on the spiritual building to the glorious top-stone. He constantly makes fuller--larger--richer--more glowing, more enchanting revelations of the Lord. The soul gazes more intently. And as it gazes, it joys the more, and loves the more, and brightens into divine resemblance. The mind is changed into the mind of Christ. The new man is put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:24.

Thus as the title-deeds to heaven are more clearly read and more devoutly prized, fitness for it ripens. The Spirit's daily visits daily elevate the walk. He is a guest mighty to warn--to teach--to guide--to cleanse--to purify--to sanctify--to cheer--to bless. In loving arms he safely bears the happy saint above the billows of earth's stormy voyage. He guards him from the tempter's wily snares. At last He lands him in the haven of pure peace--the home of many mansions--the blessed Paradise of the saved. He gloriously prevails. He goes on conquering, until crowns of life encircle the Christian warrior's head. Thus every saved soul shines forever a monument of calling--enabling--sanctifying grace. They, who enter heaven, are born again by the Spirit's renovating power, and brought to Jesus by His conquering arm. He mightily commences, prosecutes, and ends the work. Omnipotence ceases not its marvels, until victory tramples down each foe. Every pilgrim saint on earth, and every glorified saint above, is evidence of these sovereign triumphs. Hallelujah to the Father! Hallelujah to the Son! Hallelujah to the Holy Spirit! But all are not thus graciously subdued. Earth is thronged by multitudes, strangers to Jesus--never fleeing to His cross--never sprinkled with His blood. Hardened they live. Hardened they die. Is it then true, that the Spirit never knocks at their hearts' door? Have, they no outward warning and no inward check? Are there no gleams from above, ending only in darker darkness, and more aggravated woe?

Let it be repeated, that this mystery is deep. But Scripture is not silent here. And Scripture's voice is always echoed by experience. The word is full of teaching. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." It is a fact, then, that He sometimes strives for a while, and ceases. He approaches, and withdraws. He comes again. Admission is denied. Visits become more rare, and then are

discontinued. The knocks unanswered, faintly return, and ultimately die away. Inward stillness is no more disturbed. The soul sleeps on, and dreams into perdition.

It was so with the ungodly of the old world. The Spirit is the same in ages past, present, and to come. He strove not always in those wretched days. He strives not always now. But still he strove before the flood. What was His mode of dealing? Annals are brief. But yet they give some glimpses. He gave loud testimony. He sent forth the thrilling note of truth. He raised up preachers to warn and call. There was Enoch. His trumpet gave no doubtful sound. With words clear as the very light, and dreadful as the thunder's roar, he told of coming judgment--and earth's final scene--and vengeance to the uttermost.

There was Noah. He stands on a high pedestal, as a "Preacher of Righteousness." His theme then would unfold our gracious God--glorious in justice--holy in His claims--and yet providing a covering for the sinner--a garment fit for heaven. Through many years he waved on high the Gospel-torch. In all these warnings and displays of saving love the Spirit put forth energy. Who can tell, what frequent terrors shook the hearers! How often the breast sighed--the heart quaked--the tears streamed; how again and again sin was seen as the worst foe, and vows were formed to leave it. But the emotions were evanescent. The preacher ceased, and with his voice conscience resumed its stupor. The old allurements came. The Spirit was no more heeded. Impressions were obliterated. They were as words written on the sand. The coming tide effaced the whole. At last the heart became a very rock. Wave upon wave might now pass over it, wind after wind might now beat on it. But it continued rock. The Spirit ceased to strive. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." This appalling truth was thus appallingly exemplified. Reader! contemplate the fact. The mirror may reflect your state. Dealings with your spirit are patent only to yourself. Your heart is hidden from your neighbor's view. No other eye can read these solemn secrets. But you may be conscious, that frequently a voice has spoken in the inner chamber of your thoughts. You may well know, that an unseen hand has sometimes touched you.

Perhaps in the SANCTUARY, when men of God have deeply probed your troubled mind--and told of sin's sure end--of judgment near--of hell beyond--of flames, which never die--of worms, which ever gnaw--in terror you have resolved, that wrath's tremendous thunderbolts should never fall on you. But the fear lasted not. As the early dew it passed away. You still are what you have long been. You cannot forget the inward struggle. It may return no more. "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps when from the pulpit-throne JESUS has been most lovingly displayed--when in persuasive testimony He seemed to come a very suppliant to your heart's door--when all His grace, and gentleness, and love, beamed beauteously before your eyes--then meltings within have moved, and your soul has spread its wings to fly with rapture to His ready arms. But you delayed. The hardening world again surrounded you with entangling chains. The warmth expired. You fell back into deadness. An attracting Savior receded from your view. Your dim eyes closed on salvation's glory. Will they see the luster of that light again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

There may have been times, when thundering PROVIDENCE shook, as with earthquake-shock, the caverns of your slumbering soul. Some vast catastrophe, sweeping with relentless swoop multitudes into the unseen world--some desolating malady, stalking with death's scythe through the affrighted land--some sudden stroke, felling in life's prime a relative or friend--some strong

disease, seizing with iron grasp your tottering frame--some loss of property, bringing chill poverty to sit beside you--some blighted scheme, presenting you with disappointment's cup--some cruel slander, casting foul blight upon the fairness of your name; these, or the like calamities, may have revealed the world's deceptive emptiness. Awakening from sleep, you have resolved to rise above such fleeting scene. Weary of vanities--alive to peril--your thoughts have turned to lasting joys and safety in the only Savior. You are conscious that the call was loud--was heard--was almost obeyed. But you paused. Earth's arts again put forth their witcheries. You are as far from Christ as ever. Will like visitations visit you again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps your eye rested on some BIBLE-WORD, or pursuing texts haunted your ear. Extraordinary light shone round you. Truth spoke in new and most convincing force. Time seemed to vanish. Eternity stared you in the face. Gigantic realities appeared gigantically real. You felt the duty and the wisdom of immediate change. But before you turned, some snare entrapped you. You are still unchanged. Will your Bible thus speak again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps some FRIEND in pious earnestness grasped your hand, and reasoned, and implored. You confessed, "My course is wrong--I have no present peace--I dread the future; I hear of Jesus and joy and peace in Him. I will arise and seek Him." But no. You loitered in the world's foul ground. The opportunity was lost. No one seems now to care for you. Will friendly calls again call you? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Reader! do you in these sad lines discern your very picture? Does conscience herein perceive a pathway trodden by your hardening soul? Then listen to a solemn note. It may be another and a conquering visit from the Spirit.

It would be murderous cruelty to conceal, that you are tottering on destruction's brink. You see there is a period in the downward course, when warnings warn no more. The word, now ringing in your ears, proclaims, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

You have heard, also, of a "reprobate mind." This is no unmeaning sound--no shadow of an unreal form--no figment of imaginary woe--no term invented to give groundless terror. It is a sad description of a sadder state. It is the deathful blight of the out-poured curse. It is the midnight darkness of a soul drifted to realms uncheered by any Gospel-ray. Tremble, awake.

There is, also, a decree, which locks up in hopelessness--which paralyzes all the means of grace--which freezes all the streams of feeling--which chokes all the avenues of impression--which rivets the chains of Satan. God from His high throne may pronounce, "Let him alone." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Hosea 4:17.

Then the final curtain falls. Judicial deafness supervenes. The hardness cannot melt.

Analyze the dread decree. It blocks up all the channels, through which saving mercy flows. "Let him alone," my MINISTERS. When you set forth the Savior's love--and all the glories of His finished work--and all the pardon purchased by His blood--and all the peace of faith--and all the happiness of heaven--"let him alone." Let all be dark before his eyes. Let no sound pierce the deep grave of his soul. Hearing, let him not hear.

"Let him alone," my BIBLE. When his eye rests on brightest texts, inviting to the cross--warning of hell--depicting the eternal world--showing the ransomed with their harps of gold--unfolding the

realms of agony--let the page be a vacant blank. Let every word be as a skeleton, breathing no life. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my PROVIDENCES. If the whole universe were convulsed with earthquakes--hurricanes--appalling terrors--desolating plagues, let him look on unmoved. Let him stand hardened by the open grave. Let him be hardened on the bed of pain. Let things most adverse, things most prosperous, be alike to him. Among them all, let his rocky heart become more adamant. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my SON. You are all love--all grace--all mercy. But love must not love him. Grace must not look savingly of him. Mercy must not yearn tenderly over him. Your blood must not cleanse him. Your cross is not for him a shelter. Your righteousness is not his robe. You have knocked often at his heart. Knock no more. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my SPIRIT. It is your property to bestow grace. It is your province to convince of sin. It is your prerogative to reveal Jesus. It is your glorious office to minister salvation. But leave him graceless. Break not his fetters. Give no sight of Jesus. You have striven often. Strive no more. "Let him alone."

Reader! what a Beacon you have here! Do you tremble? Then the decree has not imprisoned you up in condemnation. Be wise, and never trifle more. Heed every whisper of the Spirit. When He warns, turn! When He teaches, drink deeply of the lesson. When He calls, hasten with all speed. Quench not the first spark of His light. Never neglect His gentlest voice. Never resist His mildest drawing. Watch Him with intent gaze. Follow Him with instant step. Yield to Him in full obedience. He leads from sin--from self--to Jesus and to heaven.

Holy Spirit! seal for glory all readers of this warning!

01.08 THE FLOOD OF EVIL

THE FLOOD OF EVIL

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5 A solemn scene here opens. Who can contemplate it, and shudder not? God appears looking down on earth's inhabitants. What sight meets His eye? It is wickedness--great wickedness. He sees evil--only evil--in every imagination of every thought of every heart. Can it be so? Man who entered Eden's garden, the happy image of his God--who stepped upon earth's stage, decked in pure robes of innocence--whose early thoughts were only redolent of heaven--whose primal bias moved in the attraction of holiness--whose infant affections beat with the pulse of righteous love--whose dawn was the clear light of godliness--can man be now so changed!

How is the sparkling jewel tarnished! How is the bright gold dimmed! The crown has fallen from the head. The lovely robe is tattered. The features no more smile in beauty. The flower once fragrant is a weed. The holy nature is degenerate. Love hardens into enmity. Blasphemy pollutes the lips so lately tuned to praise. The subject holds the rebel's weapons. The child is an apostate alien. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Man--can he now be so changed!

Yes! Sin has come with its debasing power. Alas! what ruin it has wrought! How terrible are its properties! How frightful are its effects! How desolating is its step! How withering is its touch! The garden of Eden--the beauty of all beauties--bloomed before it. It passed the gate, and the misery of all miseries followed in its rear. Man, lovely as a ray of righteousness, stood before the fiend. He parleyed with it, and became this mass of evil.

Such the change. And sin effected it. Reader! think deeply, that it is a fearful thing to stray from God. Behold the dark abyss, into which transgression fell, and hate the erring path. Mark these wide ravages, and loathe the spoiler. Contemplate a world undone, and utterly detest the murdering monster.

But, perhaps, while you survey the record, some doubting thoughts arise. The inquiry may intrude, 'Is this description literally correct? Are not the colors too darkly laid? Is there no rhetorical excess?'

Let such misgivings be cast out. They hold the germ of skeptic blindness. Nothing here can be exaggerated. The speaker is eternal Truth. If man had framed the sentence, it might have been tinged by inability to judge or proneness to state incorrectly. But no created intellect here decides. God, the Holy Spirit, from His bright throne, makes the announcement. Heaven's voice sounds in the words, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God's all-piercing eye cannot read wrongly. The Spirit's hand cannot pen error. Let then all heads bow low. Let every ear devoutly listen. Let every heart assent. Undoubted truth speaks here with open mouth.

Thus with sorrowing reverence we draw nearer to the fearful picture. In the foreground stands "WICKEDNESS." This is a frightful monster. It is antagonism to our God. It rears a counter-standard to His will. It tramples down His laws. It defies His authority. If possible, it would scale the skies, and hurl Him from His throne. Its aim is to convert heaven into hell. Whose is this wickedness? The "wickedness of man." Man, and man alone of all, who breathe the vital air, claims wickedness as his own. "We know, that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Romans 8:22. But the blame is not theirs. Theirs is the suffering. But man's wickedness let loose the plague. "Cursed is the ground." Thorns and thistles bristle on its soil. But the fault is not in it. Man is wicked--therefore his abode is this disorder. Creatures endure much anguish--hardship--suffering--death. But their disobedience roused not avenging wrath. Man is the culprit. His crime sinks earth into a slough of woe. The degradation is world-wide. The cause is wholly his. Wickedness is his sole property. Therefore, O man, see your exclusive criminality. Boast not of any excellency. Glory not of reason--faculties--power--mind--intellect--talent. Parade not your stores of acquired wisdom--your investigating knowledge--your elaborating skill. But rather blush, that your superiorities claim wickedness as their territory. The picture next exhibits man's HEART. This is the home of the affections--the spring-head of desires--the cradle of each impulse. Here the character receives its form. This is the rudder of the life. This is the guide of daily life. As is the heart, such is the individual. Here schemes, and plans, and purposes are conceived. The heart is the mother of contrivance and device.

What is naturally transacted in this laboratory? The reply here meets us. "Every imagination"--every germ of idea--every incipient embryo of notion--every feeling, when it begins to move--every passion, when it stirs--every inclination, as it arises, is "only evil."

Frightful word--Evil. Here wickedness comes forth in another but not less frightful form. Evil. It is the offspring of the evil one. It bears the impress of the devil. It is foul, as he is foul. It is vile, as he is vile. It is accursed, as he is accursed.

"Only evil!" No ray of light mitigates the darkness. No spark alleviates the impure night. No righteous spot relieves the sinful monotony. No flower of goodness blooms in the noxious desert. Uniformity without one check rules. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart" rush out in one stream. No rill finds other vent. All flow in the one channel of evil--"only evil."

Turn not too quickly from this picture. It is not yet complete. The full hideousness is "only evil continually." What! is there no respite? Is evil never weary? Does no intermission break the tremendous sameness? Ah! no. There is no moment of a brighter dawn. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." There is continually this miserable continuity. Thought chases thought with lightning-rapidity--but each is only evil without mitigation--without pause. Swiftly they rise and swiftly fly--but their wings are only evil--never flagging--never varying. Countless are these imaginations; but they all show one feature--evil continually. There is no better viewpoint.

Reader! the point is reached now for home-application. Draw back the curtain and mark the contents of your breast. Your own heart in its natural state is this flood of evil. Do you startle? Are you indignant at the charge? Is your first impulse stoutly to contradict? If so, it is a fatal sign. It proves decisively, that the imaginations of the thoughts of your heart are very evil. When the Father of lights gives saving grace, then instantly the foulness of the inner man is seen! Then the

illuminated conscience testifies, "Behold, I am vile." When the revealing Spirit uplifts the heaven-lit torch, then new-born vision discerns the sin-sick ruin. You cannot see--no, you deny--the rule of sin within you. But may not the plague--although unfelt--exist? Night hides, but cannot nullify, the landscape. Lack of perception destroys not surrounding realities. Appeal to a regenerate man. The response most readily asserts, that no description can exaggerate the flood of evil, which once deluged his heart. Charge him as shaped in iniquity, he meekly sighs--"Alas! how true! But, blessed be God! through grace, I am a new man now." But your experience is unconscious of a change. Therefore you are unchanged. And if you are unchanged, you flounder yet in evil's flood. May then the Lord of life give light--give sight--to see your own ailment in the mirror of these words! "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." But you reject this sentence as depicting yourself. You half hope that it belongs to some bygone days. You confine it to some long-past period of especial evil. You abjure its general features. You question its application to man's whole family, in every age. But say, is it not a life-likeness of our first parents, from the moment of their fall? Behold them sinless. God was their hearts' delight. Behold them guilty. What is their conduct? Shame overwhelms them. Therefore evil has torn off innocence. Trembling occupies their hearts. "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Genesis 3:8. They spring not joyous to the loved communion. They flee. They seek some covert. They shrink into concealment. Is it not evil to shun God? This is their desire. Thus the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts prove wickedness--great wickedness. They dream, that trees can hide them, from the all-probing eye. This folly is most evil! Evidence is clear, that evil now is the parent of their imaginations.

Adam, when called, speaks in reply. What are his words? Alas! we see no penitence--no humility--no cry for pardon. He avows his fear. Thus he betrays evil; for he allows that punishment is due. Adam's lips unwittingly attest that the imagination of his thoughts is now a flood of evil. When God probes deeper, deeper evil rises to the surface. The blame is cast on others, no, on God Himself. "The woman, whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree." While Eve is charged as bringing the temptation to his hand, God is implicated, as bringing a tempting partner to his side. Can evil exceed this?

Eve, also, is now a flood of evil. She screens herself behind the serpent's craft. "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." The main sin is another's. I only yielded to seducing guile. Here then the broad fact stares us broadly in the face. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, from the first day of sin, was only evil. Each word--each act--the produce of each thought--was evil--only evil.

It is clear then, that evil gained universal sway in Adam's heart. Thus it poisoned the spring of future streams. It utterly corrupted the soil of human thought. Now the source being unclean, cleanness cannot issue from it. It follows, then, that man in every age must enter life with a heart evil--only evil continually. "As face answers to face in water, so answers the heart of man to man."

Think then no more, that this portrait delineated peculiar vileness. Such was the first sinner soiled by sin. Such are all born in sin's family.

Reader! it is then your very state, as a corrupt branch of a corrupted tree. It is your pollution, as descending from this tainted fount. Until grace works its wondrous change, wickedness--great wickedness--prevails. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." Evil

is the common flood. But out of these materials God peoples heaven with a redeemed multitude, pure and glorious as Himself. Yes, through grace, there is relief large as the need. There is a remedy, mighty to heal the deepest depths of the disease. The sinner is not forever buried in hopeless guilt. God, from all eternity foreseeing the fall and its tremendous woe, devised a reparation wide as the breach. This gracious work is entrusted to his beloved Son. Jesus consents to take the guilty place. He opens on the cross the fountain of all-cleansing blood. The flowing stream is efficacious to wash away all sin. Its virtue obliterates all stain of evil. Thus, though iniquities are more than all wide ocean's sands, and each of deepest dye, the atoning death can make them whiter than the purest snow. The blood of Jesus touches them, and they forever vanish. They recede far as the east is from the west. They sink from discovery, deep as the sea's unfathomable depths. The believer's wickedness doubtless has been very great. The imaginations of the thoughts of his natural heart have long been only evil. But not one speck of all this vileness can be found. The glorious merits of the dying Jesus have expiated all. Sin has done its worst to ruin; Jesus has done far more to save. But Jesus meets the children of His love with more than cleansing blood. He clothes them also with His robe of righteousness. He, in their nature and their stead, obeyed to the utmost all the holy will of our most holy God. He places this obedience to their account, as if it were the garment wrought by our own hands. In this they stand at heaven's portals, and the gates fly open. Their plea avails. They are counted befitting inhabitants for the palace of the King of kings--fit partners for His very throne. Sin destroyed creature-righteousness. Jesus brings in a divine righteousness. But the Gospel-mercy is richer yet. Nature's heart, is, as has been shown, a quarry of vile materials. It cannot be mended. These stones can frame no holy fabric. But grace works wonders. The Holy Spirit comes, and a new creation springs to life. He takes away the stony heart. He creates it gloriously clean. Thus old things pass away. Thus all things become new. The moral desert smiles fruitful and fragrant as Eden's garden. It rejoices and blossoms as the rose-- Isaiah 35:1. Instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree--instead of the brier comes up the myrtle-tree--and it is to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off-- Isaiah 55:13. The love of God is implanted. Delight in evil is rooted up. Conformity to the image of Jesus is inwrought. Holy communion and holy ways are now the sweet delight. Heaven is longed for, as the realm of perfect purity. The call to cross death's Jordan is welcomed, that sin may be forever left behind, and sinful sounds no longer vex, and sinful sights no longer pain, and sinful temptations no longer trouble. The soul longs for scenes, and company, and atmosphere, where all is love. The believer's wickedness has doubtless been very great--the imaginations of the thoughts of his natural heart have been very evil; but he is born again. Sin made man very vile. The Spirit enters, and a new fabric rises. Blessed be God for His sovereign work of grace! Blessed be God for Jesus and the Spirit!

Reader! this Beacon tells you what man is by nature--what you were by birth. Say, what is your present state?

01.09 THE FLOOD OF WATERS

THE FLOOD OF WATERS

"Behold, I, even I, am going to bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish." Genesis 6:17

We now reach the most dreadful scene which earth as yet has witnessed. Horror of horrors darkly frowns. The whole world lies drowned! Depths of waters have gone over it. What Beacon can be more appalling! Its warning speaks loud as thunder's roar. It terribly proclaims that righteous wrath is no vain dream. Each drop in this unsparing deluge cries piercingly, 'Behold sin's merits!' What seeds of misery are sown by it! How deep is the cup of vengeance in its hands!

Holy Spirit, send now especial help! Shake deadness from our hearts. Quicken dull ears to hear. Implant poignant conviction of the malady and its misery. Disclose the evil and its curse. And then display the Gospel in all the brightness of its rescuing love.

Let the curtain gradually rise on this wide desolation. God speaks--"Behold I, even I, am going to bring a flood of waters upon the earth." There must be some mighty cause. What can unbar these fearful sluice-gates? The cause, indeed, is mighty. The effect is mightily commensurate. God saw the whole earth flooded with evil. Can evil thus dwell--and vengeance slumber! This cannot be. The flood of wickedness calls for flood of punishment. But God proceeds not without avowal of reluctant sorrow. The preface to this sentence states--"It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at His heart." Genesis 6:6. Thus condescendingly He speaks as man to man. He adopts, as His own, feelings known to our experience. He comes down to the level of human intellect. Let not the statement be misinterpreted, as denoting fickleness in the great "I Am." The deep channel in His immutable purpose cannot change. With Him "is no variableness neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. The announcement only prepares for altered action, such as human agents show, provoked by disappointed hopes--goaded by pained spirit. Abounding wickedness begets results, which men would naturally expect, if any work regretted and bewailed, had become grief to the designer's heart.

We are thus guided to the dread resolve. Patience can endure no more. Outraged attributes claim vindication. The righteous sentence therefore is pronounced--"I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth--both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air--for it grieves me that I have made them." Genesis 6:7. "Man, who treads earth, the glory of creation--the mirror of My skill and power--the home of undying life--made in My very image, after My likeness--crowned with authority over lower beings--man shall be swept away--and not man only, but with him all the living world. Sin has made him abominable. He has infected nature's universal range. The stain is universal. The ruin shall be universal too."

Reader! pause here. Crowds of solemn reflections press forward. Check not their dreadful voice. They loudly proclaim that iniquity is a monster wholly hated by our God. Can it be otherwise? He is

holiness too dazzling for mortal eye to view. How can He tolerate unholiness? He is purity too vast for human intellect to grasp. Can He be lenient to impurity? He is righteousness too perfect for imperfect words to open out. Can He endure unrighteousness? His whole essence and being--are Holy--Holy--Holy. His word, His throne, His heavens, are Holy--Holy--Holy. How then can He look down on sin? How can His indignation sleep, when He surveys a world filled only with transgression? Reason alone concludes, that the wicked cannot stand in His presence. Revelation tells us of anger justly rising, and vengeance justly smiling. The present fact adds fearful confirmation. "God looked upon the earth; and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Genesis 6:12-13 But tenderness still grants some respite. Even now God strikes not without a pitying pause. He loudly proclaims, that wrath is kindled and fury ready to break forth. But still a forbearing hand seems slow to execute. Where is the sinner who goes down unwarned into the pit? An unseen hand often restrains with gentle touch; a voice within often persuasively reminds, that ruin follows sin--that against it heaven's gates are barred; and all God's attributes are armed; and all God's universe will rise--that for it hell burns--and the fiery lake is heated; and the everlasting chains are forged. The annals of the old world prove this. When the avenging arm is raised, mercy pleads, 'Not yet!' Truth announces, that the inevitable end should come, but forbearance checks the final step. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man--for he also is flesh, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3.

Here is a respite. Here is space to think--to weep--to turn--to pray. The space, also, echoes with tidings of God's grace. A faithful teacher is raised up. "The patience of God waited in the days of Noah." 1 Peter 3:20. To the last moment faithful lips proclaim a refuge. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Can we proceed without pondering this lovely picture of a saintly man! Amid the flood of evil he lived, the first of human race, graced with the more than royal title of "just" or righteous. In this name the principle of his life appears. God in His sovereign love, and by the mighty power of His spirit, implanted faith in his heart. Thus he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Hebrews 11:7. His enlightened eye discerned redemption's distant day. His enraptured heart entirely embraced salvation's scheme. His confiding soul reposed delightedly upon the God-man's work. Thus he was righteous in the Righteousness of God. Faith in the heart must be uprightness in the life. So Noah was perfect or sincere amid abounding wickedness. He walked in the light even as God is in the light, and they had fellowship one with another. He could not be silent. The zeal of a saved soul must blaze. The sun cannot be dark. The fire cannot be ice. The ocean cannot but swell with flowing waves. The vigorous tree cannot be barren wood. He who knows Christ cannot be mute. Gratitude must work. Love must extol. Faith must point to the dying Lamb. The faithful subject must proclaim the King. So in this interval Noah raised his faithful voice.

He preached loudly by voice--loudly too by deeds. A refuge was revealed to him. The ark--a graphic type of the Deliverer, Christ--was to be built. "By faith," he diligently worked--Hebrews 11:7. Through many years of tarrying wrath he toiled. It is instructive to stand beside him in his persevering labors. It is no visionary thought, that countless sneers and keenest ridicule would oftentimes mock. Unbelief would jeeringly deride a work so strange--a ship too vast for any waves to float, constructed on dry ground! Designed to save from unknown billows--from a flood signaled by

no foreshadowing marks! In it two of every living creature to be housed! What instinct would direct them! male and female side by side! who would thus select and guide! the fierce, the tame, to consort in peace! where would their food come from! how shall Noah's household live uninjured in their midst! what turmoil--contagion--uproar--peril--fights! These, and like jests, would shoot their venom at his heart. But he looked up to God--away from earth. Faith made him quick to heaven's voice, and deaf to man's reproach. Thus they persisted--he in obedience--they in sin, until the set time arrived. Is it not so now? Unbelief still lives. Its atmosphere is the secret, or muttered, or uttered sneer. But fast comes on the time, when faith shall triumph--unbelief shall perish. We read this in the end of the old world. The decreed years by sure advance reached their appointed goal. No unusual signals seemed to have marked the nearing of the avenging waters. There was no wail above. There were no tremblings below. The sun poured down its usual rays. The skies presented their clear canopy of blue. Nature shook not with foreboding terrors. Earth seemed at peace. The groves were melody. The fields waved happy crops. The guilty inhabitants rose to their daily toil and sin. Nothing disturbed the dream, that the course of events, which had always been, would continue forever. "They were eating and drinking--marrying and giving in marriage"--"and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away." Matthew 24:38-39.

Fearful scene! appalling ignorance! destructive blindness! besotted folly! But in defiance of awakening warnings, such catastrophe will be poured out. What says the Lord? "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The returning Jesus stands at the door. His chariot-wheels are ready to descend. His saints are bounding towards the glorious advent. Prayer is ever crying, "When shall it once be?" "Come Lord Jesus--come quickly." But that day of days will find the godless world asleep--busied with its daily triflings--drunk in besotting merriment. Stupor will introduce despair. Was not the old world thus startled? The ark receives the faithful remnant. The Lord's hand bolts the door. And then the heavens darken. The burdened clouds lower. All nature trembles. The storm breaks. There is no more delay. The rain descends. The showers increase. The waters fall in ceaseless torrents. Floods from above stop not their fury. Springs from beneath heave up their streams. What a moment for astonished man! What terror would thrill through the stout-hearted, when first the fear assumes real form. Can the Preacher's threat be verified! Is it so--that earth shall be a watery waste! Truth--found to be truth too late--stares them in the face. They look upwards--nothing but waters fall. They look around--the earth seems to be dissolving into ocean. Where shall they flee--to lofty buildings--to trees--to hills--to mountains? Alas! deliverance is not in them. Waters follow with their rising swell. All refuge fails. There is no respite in the falling deluge. There is no ascending above the ascending tide. The work of sure destruction surely goes forward. Death stalks abroad unchecked. The rich--the poor--the noble--the peasant--the lettered--the ignorant--the young--the old, lie in the one embrace of drowning throes--they are all swept together to one tomb of waters--they all disappear beneath one covering flood. No cries avail. The ruin cannot stop--no wringing hand--no smitten heart--no bended knee--no upward look--no contrite tears--no agony of prayer--no loud acknowledgment of guilt--no arms extended towards the ark, can mitigate the execution. Perishing multitudes find too late, that God is true, see too late wrath gone forth to its work, and feel too late the iron-pressure of its hand, and learn too late the bitterness of being lost.

Ah! with what anguish do they now see the ark borne peacefully above the billows. What sharp remorse contrasts the happy safety and the dread despair! The thought now burns them, as a fiery

coal--oh! that we had been wise--that we had listened--that we had not closed our ears--that we had not hardened our hearts--that we had not madly resisted every warning--that we had not wilfully defied destruction! But we would not hear--and this is our desert. We would not turn--and this is the result. We would have our sin--and these are sin's wages. Once we would not have our God, and now we can not.

Reader! seek profit from this end of sin. See not in vain the whole earth one charnel-house. Gain wisdom from this wide reign of desolation. Ponder what the Holy Spirit inscribes upon this recording pillar. "All the living things on earth died--birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. Every living thing on the earth was wiped out--people, animals both large and small, and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat." Genesis 7:21-23. The ruin was thus sure and vast. All terms are brought together to depict life totally extinguished. Death in wide-spread arms embraced all breathing beings. One unsparing scythe felled all living things. Sin had spread very largely. Destruction overspreads it. Crowds of sinners thronged the earth, and they are crowded into a grave of billows. Man's pollution had polluted the world and all its contents. All, therefore, are thus swept away. Sin is no trifle. It cannot go unpunished. A deluged world sighs a sad proof. This wrath was visible. But there is wrath beyond--far worse--eternal.

Now look forward. Another flood draws near. It is decreed--denounced. God's word foretells it. God's holiness requires it. God's power will bring it. God's wrath will inflict it. Have you not heard--do you not know--that "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men?" 2 Peter 3:7. The world, profuse in iniquity, is ripening as dry stubble for these flames. Patience again will reach its limits. The fiery deluge is ready to devour. Vengeance will soon unloose the final woe. Say then, what will be your case, when this last flood of flames glares terribly? Are you delivered from the wrath to come? Are you secure within the one appointed Ark?

Happy, thrice happy they, whose glad response can testify, that, through abounding mercy, they are locked safely in the arms of Jesus. Nestled there, they know no fear. In Christ they are at peace with God--cleansed in expiating blood--robed in glorious Righteousness--sanctified by the indwelling Spirit--newborn by transforming grace. Thus they await, calm in heavenly joy, the coming of the day of God--in the which "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

Thus beside the Beacons of just wrath, may these pages always place the glorious cross. Amid the threats of righteous judgment, may they ever sound the Gospel-note of full redemption. Above the warnings of perdition, may they wave the banner of salvation. If earth's loftiest mountain were the Pulpit--if the thunder's loudest clang were the voice--if the assembled family of man composed the audience, let this proclamation issue, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. The curse of the Law thunders in vain around them. It fell on Jesus in their place, and was exhausted on His head. It should no more scare--for it can no more harm. God's justice--the inexorable foe of every sin--no more presses its claims. It is now their advocate. It pleads, that full satisfaction has been made, and payment rendered to the uttermost.

To punish those who died in Christ, would be unjust. Their death is past. They sit above the coming flood. They soar above these everlasting miseries--saved with everlasting salvation--blessed with everlasting blessedness. Soon they will shine forth, glorious in everlasting glory--waving everlasting palms--hymning everlasting praises--joying in everlasting joys. "The Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended." For them there is no flood of wrath--no flood of fire--only a flood of glory!

01.10 THE RAVEN

THE RAVEN

"He sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth."--Genesis 8:7

Blessed are they, who find their constant pleasure-ground in the luxuries of the Bible! They commune with the mind of God. They listen to a heavenly voice. They bask in rays of purest light. They feed in wholesome pastures of refreshment. They fear no poison from the weeds of error. No devious path can lead their steps astray. Wisdom from above guides sweetly them. The Spirit, as high Teacher of the Church, instructs the students. They advance safely, happily, from grace to grace. The lessons are vast, as the mine from which they spring. They are pure, as the realms to which they call. They warn of sin--its filth--its misery--its end. They unfold Jesus in all the glories of redeeming love. They exhibit holiness, as the road to holy heaven.

Reader! heed a salutary admonition. Study the Bible, as holding treasure for your soul. Study in the earnestness of prayer. Study with eternity outspread before you. Study with the lowliness of a poor sinner before a speaking God. Study with faith devoutly grasping every word. Close not the volume without inquiring, "Is sin more hateful--the world more worthless--the flesh more treacherous in my sight? Is Jesus brought nearer to my adoring soul? Is my heart won to more entire devotedness? Am I more resolute to live for Him, who died for me?" The lively word should thus give life. But this teaching is more than mighty in its matter. It is attractive in its varied mode. It charms by inexhaustible diversity. It summons all creation to its service. It traverses the universe of things alive and lifeless. It uses all their stores, as handmaids to profounder truth. A few flowers, culled from this spacious garden, will illustrate this. It looks above, and from the wonders of the skies brings testimony to Redemption's nobler work. The orb of day proclaims the Sun of Righteousness. The glory of the lovely light is typically significant of "the true light." "I am the light of the world--he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. The glittering star has a Gospel-voice. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Revelation 22:16.

It looks to the earth, and Christ is seen throughout the countless produce. The stately tree--the fragrant flower--the flowing stream--the living stone--the riches of the mine, and all the length and breadth of its immensities, call us to adore "the chief among ten thousand."

So, also, the world of animal life inculcates thoughts of highest import. The lion, ruling the forest in his might--the ox, not ignorant of its owner--the donkey, quick to discern its master's crib--the washed swine returning to the mire--the gentle flocks reposing in the meadows--the goats cast out from the fold, and other tribes, warn by their peculiar characteristics. Each seems to say, 'Immortal souls may harvest deep profit by observing me.'

Among these monitors the feathered creation occupies its place. To each of this class some specialty belongs. These different species are not given in vain. The mind, which framed their

diverse instincts, writes on each some admonition.

Sometimes the lesson is distinctly drawn. Sometimes nothing but the habit of the winged one is stated. The reader is left to ponder it in meditative prayer.

Such is the case of the first bird named in sacred annals. Its notice is brief. It appears when the waters of the deluge were partially assuaged. Noah had been told by God what God alone could tell. The coming of this ruin had been distinctly announced beforehand. No human means could ascertain when thus the floodgates of heaven would open, and all the fountains of the great deep be broken up. This then was taught by a revealing voice. But God fixed not the moment of departure from the ark. Deity instructs sufficiently, but not superfluously. What reasoning powers can discover, no inspiration will unfold. When ordinary means suffice, no miracle will interfere. Noah by natural resource must learn, when earth again shall be dry ground.

He seeks aid from the winged inhabitants of the ark. He selects the Raven. He sends it forth on embassy of observation. "Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and he sent forth a raven." Genesis 8:6. In vain he waited. There was no return. It brought no tidings. Its wings beat not again against the window of its departure. It sought no more admission into its former shelter. "It went forth to and fro." It wandered up and down. It found some resting-places perhaps on the loftiest crags of the reappearing mountains. It was content to perch on any height. It was well pleased to feed on any floating carrion. It cared not where it perched, or where it gained support, so long as it had no restraint. It left the ark, pleased to escape. It left the ark, never to re-enter. My soul, mark well this wandering RAVEN. It gives a warning. It speaks of disappointment. Noah expected its return with tale of earth's revival. But it came not back. It cheered him not with an assurance that the destroying waters were assuaged--and desolation's reign was past. It gave not the solace of abated ruin. It never said, 'Go forth--walk up and down in peace--peril has ceased--earth is again a dry abode.' From all the streams of teaching flowing from this spring, let that be heard which is most vitally instructive. Let us then first observe an allegoric emblem of the Moral LAW. Doubtless no such lesson is primarily designed. But profit may be incidentally deduced, when not originally meant. The soul intent on holy growth, may gather flowers in a field tilled to render other crop.

It is sadly true, that many turn to the Law for life--for peace--for righteousness. But can its voice proclaim these blessings? It is, indeed, an ordinance--godlike in majesty, sublimity, and truth. It is seated on a glorious throne. It is a picture of Jehovah's mind. It shows the lineaments of His eternal essence. It is wondrous in brevity--infinite in extent. Love is the substance of its whole requirement. Love shines, as the dazzling crown upon its brow. Love is the one channel of its course. But still it is so boundlessly expansive, that its wide arms embrace each thought--each word--each work of all, who ever trod, or shall tread, earth.

It announces, that deviation from pure Love is utter abomination in God's sight. It points to heaven and cries, 'Love is the one atmosphere of that bright home. Nothing breathes there but Love.' It stands as a guard before the shining portals. It drives back all transgressors of its grand enactment.

View now the sinner's breast, when penetrated by the Spirit's light. Conscience instantly accuses of transgressions--as many as the moments of existence--towering high as mountains piled on

mountains--extending in multitude, as all the sands of ocean's shore--embodied in each act--sounding in each word--staining each thought. Will the Law draw softly near, and wipe away all tears, and silence fears? Will it bid gloom to disappear? Will it diffuse the calm of heavenly peace? Will it show wrath appeased--and vengeance satisfied--and deathful weapons laid aside? Far otherwise. The Raven brought no happy tidings. The Law can tell no tale of comfort. It leaves the soul in deepest cells of uttermost despair. It pays no soothing visits. It has no cheering note. It has no messages of reconciliation. It raises not from terror's agonizing depths. It only affrights with its inexorable threats. It thunders, 'Give me my due. Pay the full debt contracted by offence.' But the insolvent cannot pay. Therefore the curse must fall. Thus it inflicts banishment from God--exclusion from the realms of blessedness--consignment to the prison-house of hell. Thus it piles anguish upon anguish, which never can relax, until the ages of eternity shall cease.

Reader! study the Law profoundly. Ponder its breadth--its length--its depth--its height. Gaze with open eye upon its perfect purity. Mark well its large and just requirements. Realize your own infinite shortcoming. See your whole life one mass of violation. Mark, how it fastens condemnation on you. View its high barrier, excluding you from heaven. Weigh its strong chain, dragging you to hell. Take the inevitable truth. It has no word of peace. It never pardons. It gives not life. It surely dooms to death. Expect not help from it. No, flee far from it. If you escape not, it will surely slay you. The Raven cheered not the inhabitants of the ark. The Law brings no relief.

Noah, disappointed, sends forth another messenger. The DOVE speeds her gentle way. She tarries not. She soon relieves the anxious fears. Her welcome wings are heard again. Joy brightens at her glad return "When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth." Genesis 8:11 This leaf relates a happy story. The waters are abated. The destroying element has subsided. Peril has fled away. Security again smiles. The detaining doors may now be opened. Earth is again verdant. Solid ground invites returning steps. Let now thanksgivings rise. Let praise ascend. Let man reoccupy his renovated home.

Here is a lovely emblem of our GOSPEL! What the Law announces not, is sweetly published by glad tidings from above. Welcome, thrice welcome news resound from heaven. Floods upon floods of joy unspeakable issue from Zion's heights. Full salvation is revealed. On earth peace, good-will toward men, are gloriously proclaimed.

Hearken, O children of men. Give ear, my soul. Would that all earth's sons, from East--from West--from North--from South, could be the audience! Would that all might hear the faithful sayings of the blessed Gospel! Christ is the first and last--the sum and substance of this noble word. Christ--chosen--sent--anointed--accepted of God. Christ--wondrous in His person--the mighty God--therefore infinitely glorious to save. Christ--very man, therefore entirely qualified to represent the family of Adam. Christ--loving from everlasting to everlasting, with love knowing no origin--no end--no intermission--no degrees--with love always unchangeably the same--perfect--pure--intense--enduring. Christ--hanging on the accursed tree--laying down His life a sufficient ransom-price--by His blood closing the gates of hell--quenching God's fiery wrath--paying all demands--satisfying every claim--glorifying every attribute--washing out each crimson-stain of all His ransomed flock. Christ--gloriously fulfilling every iota of the glorious Law--saying to each command, 'I fully have obeyed'; and then transferring the vicarious

obedience, as divine righteousness, to His bride the Church--her robe for heaven--her luster in the courts above.

Christ--purchasing the Holy Spirit, and sending Him to bless the Church with all His powers to teach--to sanctify--to comfort--to adorn--to beautify. Christ--rising from the grave, a proof, that God is satisfied--and all redemption fully earned--a pledge, that the ransomed in their turn shall put on the beauties of a resurrection body, worthy of a resurrection-state. Christ--ascending to the right hand of the majesty on high, representing all His people in Himself--bearing their names upon His shoulders and His heart--receiving all gifts for them--pouring down all blessings on them. Christ--coming to institute a glorious reign--to change the living--to raise the dead--to execute eternal judgment--to fill all heaven with glory--to awaken the eternal song of never-ending hallelujahs.

O my soul, what a flood of tidings of great joy! Spring forth to welcome them. Stretch forth your arms to clasp them. The Law frowns condemnation. The Gospel thus smiles salvation. The wrath is gone. Destruction's billows are no more seen. Dismiss all fears. Annihilate your shivering doubts. Tremble no more. Open the gates of liberty. Go forth, as Noah, upon the renovated earth. Walk up and down in the green pastures of delight. See all around you verdant and redolent of peace. Enjoy. Give thanks. Lift up the voice. Sing praises. All things are yours--the world--things present--things to come--all are yours--and you are Christ's--and Christ is God's. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Following the Gospel-voice, we dwell as lords of a wide universe of peace. We lie down in green pastures--we feed beside still waters. The hand of love makes full provision. Goodness and mercy follow our steps, as the attending shadow. This Gospel flies from heaven, assuring us, that God, even our own God, shall bless us. Thus, like Noah's dove, it calls us forth to liberty and joy. All glory to the Gospel of free grace! All glory to the Gospel of eternal life! But mark again the Raven. We may learn much from its departing flight. Without unduly giving wings to imagination, we may here trace silly worldlings in their silly ways. To such, the Gospel-ark is not a welcome home. Its holy boundaries are uncongenial. They flee its pious inhabitants. They shun its righteous shelter. The easy yoke galls, as an enfettering chain. The light burden is as a heavy bondage. They give the wing to their unbridled passions. They are carried away by wild desires--and craving appetites--and raging lusts. Their feet speed hastily from spots, where Christ is the one testimony--where God is lovingly adored--where eternity in vivid colors is brought near.

O my soul, take warning. Make the Gospel-ark your constant dwelling-place--your much-loved home--your safe retreat--your all-protecting shelter. Dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. Abide in Him, and He in you. Nestle sweetly--rest securely--in the screening refuge of His wounds. Stray not away from Him.

There is a beacon, also, in the Raven's restlessness. It wanders to and fro, and never settles. Worldlings wandering from Christ find no repose. Tossed up and down, they lead a weary life. Hurried here and there, they are strangers to all peace. Some vain allurements offer rest. They seek it only to take early flight. Another spot invites. It promises much, and disappoints the more. Behold the fretting waters of the troubled sea. They represent the constant motion of the unfixed mind. Thus always craving--never satisfied--the weary votaries of earth drag out their uncalm days.

O my soul, have you found Christ? The true believer sweetly sings, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Song of Solomon 2:3. Shall God say of Zion, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it?" Psalms 132:14. And will not you respond, Christ is indeed my rest forever? Nothing shall tempt me from my home of joy. The Raven's food erects another beacon. What nourishment could it find in the drowned waste? What, but the putrid remnants of the floating carcasses? Thus worldlings starve their souls amid the husks and carrion of their pleasures! Their maxims are false, and therefore poisonous. No wholesome nutriment is there. Their cup of joy at best is flavorlessness. Contrast the banquet-house of faith. The WORD luxuriantly contains supplies to cheer--to strengthen--to refresh. The PROMISES, what animating cordials. The truths of the CROSS, what a well-stored table! Jesus is the bread of life. The soul partakes and lives. The prospect of the HEAVENLY REST, what a rich feast! "Eat, O friends--drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." The LOVE OF CHRIST, how invigorating! "Your love is better than wine."

Reader! be always a guest at this table, and "eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

If any worldling should peruse this page, may his eye turn not again to that poor cheat, the world. May it look to Christ, and never look away! He is sure rest. He is safe refuge. He is a treasury of all delights. He satisfies, until the full soul can hold no more.

01.11 DRUNKENNESS

DRUNKENNESS

"After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent." Genesis 9:20-21

How frightful is this spectacle! Man lies bereft of reason--stripped of consciousness--impotent to think--powerless to act--degraded lower than the level of the beasts--wallowing in the sink of filthiness. Who is this man? Many feelings urge us to turn aside--to look away--to close our eyes. The sight of sin cannot but distress. It is the misery of earth, that it resounds with evil sounds, and presents vice at every turn. But this scene meets us in the Bible-page. Therefore we must pause and ponder. The Spirit cloaks not the dreadful fact. No screening mantle hides. It is exposed to open light. Readers are bade to mark it. The Beacon is divinely raised. It may not be ignored. The Church in every age must fix on it a mourning eye. This man is Noah. How lovely in his early record. Amid a world of wickedness, he shone as a ray of purity. While earth seemed one vast wilderness of sin, he bloomed a fragrant flower, and showed the fruitful branches of a healthy tree. His first mention proclaims him as beloved of God. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8. Distinguishing mercy enriched him with choice favor. His elevated conduct proves this heavenly preference. It follows, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. Analyze this character. He is "just." Therefore faith reigned in his heart. It is a foremost principle of truth, "The just shall live by faith." Noah is entitled "just." Therefore he lived by faith. This grace is a fruitful tree. It was so in Noah's case. He was sincere and upright amid the crooked of his age. He strove against the downward stream. He took each step in holy fellowship with God. He sought heavenly guidance. He leaned on heavenly support. Thus he boldly trampled down sin. Thus he moved Zionward in the narrow way of life. When hearts are filled with truth, the lips cannot be mute. Hence valiantly he preached. Earnestly he warned. Plainly he taught. Faithfully he denounced sin. Regardless of reproach and ridicule, he uplifted the Gospel-torch. He called the dead to rise and live. He told of wrath just ready to descend--of judgment near--of the sure wages of transgression--of all the terrors of avenging justice. He showed both by type and word the only refuge. This and much more flows fully forth, from his next title, "Preacher of righteousness." 2 Peter 2:5. While he thus lived and labored, wondrous revelations cheered his soul. God visited this favored child with intimations of the coming end. He was instructed to frame a saving home. He believed and prepared the ark. When the set time had come, what frightful marvels terrified his sight! He saw the falling deluge--the panic of the doomed world--the misery of multitudes vainly battling with death--the waters swelling over drowning crowds, He heard their agonizing cries, until silence brooded over lifelessness. How would he tremble at the fruit of sin! How would he bow in reverence before God rising to take vengeance! But he saw and heard, realizing his own deliverance. While others perished, he was preserved. While wrath slew masses, it spared him. His humble heart would doubtless confess, 'By grace I am thus saved!' How would his rapturous praise bless the Giver of such unmerited distinction. How would his supplicating lips implore, that mercy's shield might ever guard him! The

time arrives for departure from the ark--he treads again earth's solid pavement. He stands on the ground cleansed of its defiling inhabitants. His gratitude again would burn in joyful blaze. His heart's one pulse would throb with adoration. His lips would pour forth an overflowing stream of warm thanksgiving. This is inscribed on his earliest act. Before he rears a dwelling for himself, he builds an altar to the Lord. The God of his grace--his mercies--his rescue--his salvation--merits and receives his instant worship. On this altar he piles many victims. Each represents the one sacrifice for sin. Each proves, that in lively faith he looked to the atoning Lamb of God. Each tells, that he well knew and truly loved the Gospel-hope.

How beautiful is this view of pious faith! Heaven always smiles on faith. It was so then. It is so now. It shall be so, until all faith's work be ended. God seems now to open wider the treasury of heaven, that richer blessings may crown his servant. He constitutes him lord of the earth, and of earth's fullness. And lest the fear should ever arise, that falling showers might swell into another flood, he gives assurance of security. He adds a brilliant witness in the skies. A rainbow of varied hues spans the skies--a seal of the covenant of safety from watery ruin. "God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all the creatures upon the earth." Genesis 9:17. Was ever man so encircled with favors? Surely these golden chains will bind him to unbroken walk with God.

Alas! the thought arises as a bright morn, soon to be obscured with clouds. Noah was but man. Filled indeed he was with copious streams of grace. But still he was but man. And the word is ever true, "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Psalms 39:5.

He now proceeds to cultivate the ground. The deed was right. The labor was his duty. God does not call His servants to idleness or ease--to folded arms, and slumbering sinews, and unemployed powers. Sloth is the mother of all evil--the nurse of frightful crime. It must not sit down in faith's household. Adam is placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15. The Gospel-precept is, "My son, go work in my vineyard to-day." "Not slothful in business," is the believer's rule. View Noah, industrious in his vineyard, and frown not on commendable toil. The earth made rich returns. The trees brought forth abundantly. The luscious juice presented wine to renovate the strength and to restore the worn-out frame. Here was precious blessing. Let thankfulness receive, and moderation moderately use. Let the cup be sanctified with holy praise. But ah! this is a world of snares. To be beyond temptation is to soar high above this earth. Beneath the flower the viper lurks. The pathway is beside a precipice. The goblet may beguile. The use may exceed bounds. In the deep draught there is poison. Overmuch brings death. There is no mercy incapable of abuse. There is no privilege, which may not be misused. The cheering wine may make a drunkard. The strengthening bowl may hurl a saint from his high pinnacle. Could it be so with Noah? Fact must be heard. The record cannot be erased. Noah "drank of the wine." Who can blame this! God gave the wine as a legitimate support. But the misery is here. "He drank of the wine and was drunken." Who will not sigh! Who can restrain the pitying tear! Alas! that such a sin should foully stain so great--so good a man! But it is so. His sun goes down behind this darksome cloud. This miserable blot pollutes the beauty of his name. This vile transgression soils his pure career. The day cannot be cancelled. The deed cannot be recalled. Intoxication was incurred. Concealment cannot hide it. The sin was done. Noah--the glory of the ancient world--the first fruits unto God of the new world is dishonored, as the first drunkard. "He drank of the wine and was drunken."

All sin is frightful in its nature--fearful in its course--destructive in its outcome. The devil kindles it. God hates it. Wrath pursues it. But where is the sin so pregnant with all evil as drunkenness? Mark its effects upon its miserable victims. It puts out the lamp of reason. It quenches the light of every faculty. It cripples every power. It destroys each spark of consciousness. Behold the besotted man. His eyes possess no more the property of clear perception. His ears receive not the true sound. His feet refuse to lead him in straight paths. His tongue gives vent--at best to folly--more frequently to blasphemy, and every vileness. Ah! what a spectacle! No beast is so degraded. No fiend outside hell's confines can be more foul. He lies contemptible below contempt. He is a powerless victim open to all assaults. The walls are broken. The gates are open. None guard the portals. All foes may enter in. There is no vigilance to discern approaching destruction. There is no arm to ward it off.

Amnon lies murdered. Absalom's vindictive heart arranged the scheme. Absalom's servants gave the deathful wound. But Amnon's hands received the stupifying bowl, and thus laid bare his bosom for the blow. "Absalom told his men, 'Wait until Amnon gets drunk; then at my signal, kill him!'" 2 Samuel 13:28. He was smitten and he fell. His soul awoke from drunkenness in realms where sleep can sleep no more.

Behold Israel's king Elah. He is in Tirzah, in the house of his steward Arza. The feast is splendid. The goblets sparkle with enticing wine. He sits high in the banquet, "drinking himself drunk." The crowned drunkard is defenseless. Zimri enters and spares him not. He falls into the grave of drunkenness. He goes hence to meet a drunkard's doom. 1 Kings 16:9.

Benhadad, king of Syria, invades Israel. Mighty is his army. Victory seems near. Who can resist the overwhelming troop! But the 'God of battle' leads on His people. Israel's little company advances against the invading host. Now mark the state of the insulting Syrian. "Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions--he and the kings--the thirty-two kings, that helped him." Thus their power was gone. Vain the sword--the spear--the horse. A drunkard cannot use his own resources. So the Syrians are destroyed with a great slaughter. Drunkenness strips them of their power, and renders them an easy prey-- 1 Kings 20:16. Who has not pondered Belshazzar's evil end! The Babylonian monarch "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." "While he drank the wine," he rushed into enormous sacrilege. He called for the consecrated vessels of God's temple. They drank wine from the holy bowls. In mad idolatry they praised the gods of gold and silver--of brass--of iron--of wood--and of stone. But now what terrors seize the besotted monarch and his guilty guests! The Lord from heaven by a fearful miracle announced the kingdom ruined, and the king rejected. "And in that night was Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, slain." Daniel 5:30. Thus drunkenness uproots kingdoms, and slays kings.

Ahasuerus stands forth guilty of childish folly. When did this silliness occur? Was not excess in wine the moving cause? It is recorded, "When the heart of the king was merry with wine," he gave the indecent order-- Esther 1:10. Who has not mourned the holy Baptist's cruel murder? But what brings in this dreadful crime? Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief rulers of Galilee. Reason was extinguished by the exciting revelry. The oath was rashly sworn. The savage order was sent forth. The Baptist lies a mangled corpse. His head is placed upon the platter--a fit dish for such a feast! Oh! wine, what have you done? "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." Proverbs 20:1. But drunkenness pollutes not only the high halls. It is not

restricted to royal robes and golden bowls. It is not limited to station, climate, or place. It spares not humble dwellings. It cruelly invades the village--the hamlet--the rural lanes--the crowded alleys. But wherever it appears, it comes a heartless and destructive pest. Unhappiness in every form attends its steps. Sickness, and withered frames, and early death are its sure fruits.

Whoever would contemplate wretchedness--let him mark the wretched drunkard. Whoever would see misery--let him enter the drunkard's home. Whose are the trembling limbs--the feverish pulse--the aching head--the restless mind--the gnawing remorse--the hardened heart--the reckless disregard of reputation--the stifling of conscience? These woes are the drunkard's lot. He is unhappy, and the cup is his relief. He drinks again to lull remorse. He awakens to deeper sorrow, and to drink the more. The more he drinks, the more he thirsts. Disease soon shows its face. The bodily and mental powers fade. Trembling imbecility follows. So the drunkard goes downhill to a drunkard's grave. Whose is that wretched home? Poverty and filth have the possession. Neglect and squalidness occupy it as their own. The wife, unaided and downcast, with weeping eye and broken heart, sees hopeless poverty. The children, famished--naked--untaught--proclaim the shameless father's hardened heart. The wages, needful to sustain them, supplies the parent's poison. This is a drunkard's home.

It may be that some drunkard's eye reads this. If so, most mighty Spirit, make this entreaty mighty for his rescue! Friend, stop. Cast down the murdering cup. Taste not another drop. Touch not. It is sure ruin. Enter no more the haunts of sure destruction. To stop may be recovery of health--of name--of character--of happiness--of competence--of peace. To advance is recklessly to dig your early grave; and, what is worse, to fasten endless torment on your soul. Friend, stop. The devil strives to lead you on. He has succeeded hitherto. But he cannot compel you. Resist, while yet you may. Withstand your cruel foe. Friend, stop. The holy Savior yet may save you. His glorious prerogative is to receive sinners. He never casts the coming suppliant out. Your sins are frightful. But He can pardon all. Your heart is hard. But He can soften it. You are in fearful case. But He can snatch you as a brand from the burning. Renounce your vice--resolutely--at once. Turn, and you may be rescued from sin--from hell. Turn, and you yet may enter heaven. But drunkenness assumes a darker phase, as linked with Noah. An aged--a long-tried--an experienced saint is entrapped in this snare. No warning can be louder. It speaks with trumpet-tongue. We learn, that no advance in grace can raise above the devil's far-extending arm. No lengthened walk with God mounts to a path above his reach. Holiness of many years screens not from Satan's assaults. While flesh is the tabernacle, there is danger. While earth is the home, it will be haunted by this untiring foe. There is no moment when the watch-tower may be left. The constant attitude must be the bended knee. The arm must ever wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the eternal Word. The shield may not be laid aside.

Believer, open your eyes widely to your real position. Bright indeed are your hopes. The Lord, who bought you, watches you with unfailing love. The angels are your guards. The Spirit is your teacher. The Word is your text-book. Heaven is your final home. Your eternity is glory. You will not fail finally. "He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Php 1:6. Your God will perfect that which concerns your soul. But still Satan never ceases to hate and tempt. Draw then nearer and nearer to the sheltering side of your beloved Lord. Let your eyes ever gaze upon the cross. The more you see redeeming blood, the more you will abhor iniquity. Trust not, however, to previous grace. It was sufficient for its day. But each day needs its own

supply. This help is ready. The treasury is open. Approach by faith. Go in by prayer. Receive heaven's bounty. Seek, also, in all things to be conformed to Jesus' image. He was "holy--harmless--undefiled--separate from sinners." Hebrews 7:26. Above all, feast on the precious promises--so will you cleanse yourself "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1. But still remember, that each day is full of peril. Therefore never cease to watch. Do not forget, that in one unguarded moment a terrible downfall may occur. Think, also, that one false step brings terrible disgrace on your good reputation, and causes hell to laugh, and all the enemies of God to revel in blaspheming sneers. Your sin may ruin multitudes. Therefore, for your soul's sake--as you love Jesus--as you desire the progress of His truth--as you would cause the Gospel to be honored, be very careful--abstain from evil's contact--let your light shine brightly.

01.12 FILIAL IMPIETY

FILIAL IMPIETY

"After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done." Genesis 9:20-24 The earliest days of earth witnessed sin in full-blown magnitude. The monster was quick to raise a giant-head. Every succeeding morn has dawned on its tremendous work. Each swift-flying moment has been stained by its defiling touch. The world has never known a respite. The sluice-gates have not closed. The terrible stream has ever flowed. When but one household lived, this plague of evil crept in. Sin took its seat amid that little company. The seed of the serpent even then hated the child of faith. Cain rose in wrath. The righteous Abel fell a murdered corpse.

After a course of sinful years, the flood cleansed earth of its polluting inhabitants. Then one domestic band occupied the renovated soil. But sin went forth even among them. The drowning waters have not destroyed it. In the young world brother slays brother. In the renewed earth a son, with impious recklessness, treads down a venerable parent. In the one case, fraternal ties afford no shield. In the other, the love, the reverence, which are the father's due, daunt not the assailant. A brother's blood is shed. A father's fame is mangled. There is no adamant like unto sin's hardness. This last enormity now meets us. It is deeply steeped in misery. It is a cup filled to the topmost rim with bitter waters. It is a picture, in which each shade darkens blackness with blackness.

Noah, after a long life of saintly eminence, gives forth a sad occasion. In thoughtless moment he deviates into sin's path. He thus provokes the unnatural blow. He foully falls, and by his fall he slopes the way for the son's fouler evil.

Partaking of the produce of his vineyard, he gives free reins to unrestrained indulgence. He drinks, until he lies a drunken man. Reason is thus beclouded. Consciousness becomes bewildered. He is outstretched within his tent--helpless--besotted. His walk had long been heavenward--but this unguarded moment hurls him from his lofty pinnacle. He sinks into shame's lowest depths.

Here crowds of mournful thoughts arise. What savage joy would fill the heart of Satan! What shouts of triumph would pervade his hellish realms! What a victory would now elate him! How surely will he mangle the victim caught within his net!

Results--so sure to follow--suggest most strong entreaties to each child of God. Beloved, realize your countless calls to pure and blameless life. Consider what observation ever watches you! What scrutiny marks your every step! What devouring tongues will magnify your least offence! They, who are prone to fabricate unreal faults, will surely magnify unquestionable shortcomings.

What, if you stray? Vice boldly triumphs. Religion is bespattered with all sneers. Taunts openly proclaim, that all men are alike in secret life. Insinuations whisper, that the worst are they, who falsely claim a higher standard, and cloak iniquity in vile hypocrisy.

It may be, also, that beginners in the heavenly walk are startled and discouraged. Inexperience falters, and perhaps turns back. The early spark of piety is quenched. The world wins back the victims struggling from its grasp. Satan's chains again are tightened around the prey almost escaped.

Thus grievous faults in God's children are the direst wounds to pure religion. The Savior's name is profanely mocked. His holy truth is blasphemed, as a lie. The narrow way, which only leads to life, is ridiculed, as truthless scrupulosity. Believer, would you not die for Christ? Resist, then, sin unto the death. Yielding, you may wound Him, by whose stripes you are healed.

Noah's shame soon sees the light. But whose step first crosses the threshold of the tent? Who first perceives the misery? What eye first rests on the dishonored patriarch? His youngest son is guided to the door. This seems a gracious providence to screen the fallen. Exposure would be probable, if some unfeeling stranger should behold. An alien might be not careful to conceal--no, rather prone to propagate. But Ham, Noah's son, is the discoverer. Can he, with unweeping eye, and with unsorrowing heart, discern the fact? Can he fail to use all means to cloak the infamy? Can he seemingly rejoice in this enormous blot? Can it be, that his lips can open to proclaim it? Can he hasten to make known the fall? Can he reveal it even to his brothers?

Stand aghast at the occurrence. It is written, "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside." Genesis 9:22. Oh! vile iniquity--most hateful hardness--most unnatural cruelty--most abominable impiety! The greatness of the sin is announced terribly on the instant sentence, "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him--and he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Genesis 9:24-25.

We are thus brought with mourning hearts to analyze this sin. Ham sees the fall of a tried saint--an aged patriarch--his father. He weeps not. He conceals not. He hastens to expose.

Here is hardness not melted by the dews of heaven. Here is the recklessness of a man touched not by the Spirit's gentle power. Here is a startling proof, that the old heart is the nest of every unclean bird--the home of every ungodly passion--the spring of every loathsome stream--the deadly tree of every poisonous berry--hostility to God's family--intense aversion to the loveliness of grace--the image of the old serpent. Ham in the dawn of post-diluvian days, as Cain in the morning of the world, was only nature's offspring--shaped in iniquity--conceived in sin--one of the viper's brood--and therefore wholly a mass of hatred to the heirs of faith.

Here is the spring of this appalling conduct. Ham's breast beat not in sympathy with Noah's habitual piety. No, rather, his inner man was thoroughly a counter stream. He long had marked the current of the saintly life. He had observed the close walk to God. He hated the light. He writhed beneath the brightness. He had received long trains of truthful teaching. But the good seed found no prepared soil. No root was taken. No fruit sprang up. Alienation rejected. Enmity abhorred. His taste was wholly worldly. His deeds were only evil. And now an unlooked-for opportunity was obtained. He found his father plunged in the mire of sin. His godless heart felt hellish joy. He

cannot spare. He will not pity. He rushed, as a wild beast, to devour the prey. He called his brothers to the spectacle. No reverence for the long-witnessed godliness of his father restrained him. No love for such a father checked him. No reluctance to revile so high a name hindered him. Hatred of truth found matter for its sneers. A damaging fact was in his hand. He glories in his triumph. And thus, on the wreck of his own father's fame, he erects the Beacon of Filial Impiety.

Frightful indeed is this Beacon. The writing on it fully DISPLAYS NATURE'S VILENESS. It hoots away the weak fallacy, that man's own heart is naturally filled with seeds of excellence. No, rather, it shows it as a magnet pointing to evil, as its polar star. Social life and salutary laws may stand a barrier to the outbreking. But such restraint reaches not to the root of the disease. The chained tiger loses not its wild ferocity. The dam, which checks the tide, gives not an upward course. A mask may hide the face, but it imparts no beauty to the covered features! Culture may expand the intellect, but it implants no spiritual affection. Whenever nature is only nature, however curbed or tutored by external factors, it still remains a sprout from evil's root. Hence the necessity of new birth in order to become heirs of life, "Marvel not, that I say unto you, you must be born again." John 3:7. Hence the all-pervading change, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature--old things are passed away--behold all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17. The Beacon next shows NATURE DELIGHTING TO DISHONOR GRACE. Its hatred burns against the Lord--His blessed truth--His humble followers--His holy cause. When godliness shines forth, and casts sweet rays around, and wins commending notice, and shames depravity, and draws attracted souls to Zion's ways, the sight is wormwood to the serpent's seed. They cannot wholly defame transparent truth. But they will rush in to calumniate, if the least door be opened. What, if a good man be entrapped! What, if sparks long stifled blaze again! What, if unwary steps descend into the crafty snare! What, if the tempter gains unhappy mastery! Then what vile triumph! What open sneer! What base reviling! What eagerness to expose! What efforts to magnify! What stout denial of religion, as a real principle! What insinuation, that piety is only fraud! What weak conclusion, that Gospel-walk is an unreal show! What a loud cry, that they are not the worst, who wear no mark of Christianity! What venomous jeers, "Come see this saint! Ah! ah! it is as we suspected!"

Few saints reach heaven but through some storms of pitiless reproach. Distinguished indeed are they, whose constant wariness--and tight adherence to the Lord--and unremitted prayer, guard them from giving cause to blasphemy. While we lament that blame too often soils the little flock, one precious comfort cheers us. We look to Jesus, the Lord our righteousness. He passed through years of life, pure as a sunbeam penetrating hovels of uncleanness. Mark His challenge, "Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin?" John 8:46. Mark the often-repeated acquittal, "I find no fault in Him." Mark the unexpected testimony, "Have nothing to do with that just man." Matthew 27:19. Mark the impartial witness, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15:39. But throughout His ministry a bitter enemy stood ever by His side. Judas, who was a devil, watched His every step--heard His every word--the companion of His public walk--the comrade at His private fellowship--the attendant in His loneliest retreat-- John 6:70. Had there been one moment of unguardedness--one approach to devious path, greedily he would have seized--cruelly, also, he would have denounced. But when remorse fixed its tormenting fangs in the self-loathing traitor's breast, then he pours forth the accurate confession, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matthew 27:4.

Blessed be God! All praise to wondrous grace! Earth has seen "Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. His faultless obedience was wrought out for His Church. It is their beautiful robe. It is their glorious clothing. It is imputed to them, as their own deed. It is their title to the heavenly kingdom. It is their rich adornment through eternal ages. It fades not with revolving years. It cannot change its changeless hue. It ever shines bright as very Deity. Believer, clasp it. Delight in it. Trust in it. It cannot fail. Commend it. It exceeds all praise. Glory in it. It is worthy. But its full beauty you will never see, until heaven's day reveals it. Its perfect worth you cannot know, until you receive the crown, which it has earned--the throne, which is its due. Your best righteousness is but a filthy rag. Your too frequent falls bespatter you with mire. But your Jesus is unsullied purity. And all His purity decks you. The hands, which wrought righteousness, bestow it. In it you triumph. In it you reign forever. But a still darker feature deforms this Beacon. It is a son, who wounds a father's name. Ham tramples upon Noah. He joys in this delinquency. He revels impiously in the parental shame.

Godly parents cannot secure godly offspring. Only the Spirit achieves spiritual work. The homes of unconverted children nurture no harmless vipers. No bond of trustworthy affection unites the ingrates. Darkness cannot love light. The chained lion may not reach the neighboring lamb, but if occasion favors, the savage beast will show devouring fury. The ties of parentage cannot erase hostility to grace. The race of Ham will last, while earth abides. He was not slow to mock, and to pull down the father's pyramid of worth. What has been, will be again, if opportunity be given. The hoary head--the sacred claims--the recollection of long years of love--the experience of all guardian care, are a weak covert. The unconverted heart cannot spare piety. It breaks down all barriers. No sanctity can keep it back. It godlessly will rush to desecrate even a loving parent.

"Noah awoke from his wine." Forgetfulness is short. Consciousness returns. He opens his eyes on the realities. He is sensible of his own grievous fault. He is cognizant, also, of his own son's impiety. He "knew what his younger son had done unto him." Can he fail to loathe himself, because of his own evil? Can he fail to loathe himself the more, when he perceives that his sad fall has led his own child into black waters of enormity? A good man's sin may be exposed to many eyes. But God alone sees the deep humiliation of the wounded spirit--the many tears--the earnest cries for mercy--the self-aborring anguish--the increased self-distrust--the life long grief. Noah would well learn, that the atoning blood was rich to wash out all his crimson stains. He would not doubt that divine righteousness would completely cloak his terrible defilement. But, pardoned by God, he never would forgive himself. Until the grave covered him, he would walk lowly--contrite--with downcast head--with bleeding heart--with many a self-condemning thought. But now the Spirit of the Lord moves mightily in the patriarch's heart. His lips are guided to pour out predictive woe. "Cursed be Canaan--a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The father's sin must have on earth a terrible result. A father's eye must foresee misery hunting his son's progeny to their last race. A father's mouth must utter the malediction.

While Noah thus spoke--how would his heart quiver--how he would loathe his drunken day--how would he quake, when thus branding line after line of his descendants! But tenderness is mixed in this agonizing trial. The father is not called to mention Ham. This bitterness is withheld. The curse is fixed on the next generation. Canaan's name is named.

It is outside the purpose of this tract to show how a long race of poor and abject slaves have verified the dreadful doom. Tribes upon tribes in iron bondage--under cruel yoke--oppressed--degraded--scorned--maltreated worse than laboring beasts--have proved that Ham's impiety has cast a blighting shadow over descending clans. The curse has fallen heavily.

Reader! do not forget, that every sin is linked with an eternal curse. The misery begins in time. But it does not stop there. Onward it rolls. Forward it extends.

Reader! flee all sin. You may see its first step. You cannot trace its last. You know how it pollutes earth. Can you tell how it embitters eternity?

Believer, bless Jesus with adoring love. He has redeemed you from each curse. This is not all. He blesses you with every blessing.

01.13 BABEL

BABEL

"That is why the city was called Babel, because it was there that the Lord confused the people by giving them many languages, thus scattering them across the earth." Genesis 11:9

Many millions throng the earth. But from one home they spread. The source is the same. The ark contained the parent stock. The progenitors of the human race all sat around Noah's table. The family and the speech were one.

Presently, the languages are many and unlike. The medium of vocal communication varies more than the changing climate. A multitude may speak together, and all be strangers to each other's minds.

Whence came this discrepancy? It obviously exists. But the existence is not the fruit of original constitution. It is no natural result of time's advance. The lapse of ages would not produce it. Ingenious guesses may attempt a solution, but flimsy guesses contradict themselves. Research may weary itself, and gain no safe conclusion.

One book alone conducts to the reply. The Bible is that Book. One author only fixes the date. Moses alone gives the explaining story.

Reader! come now, and in this sacred record learn the origin of diverse languages. It will be no surprise to find, that sin opens the sluice-gate. There is no jar--no discord--no confusion in this world, of which sin is not the baneful root. The scene commences as a tranquil morn. The first word of our chapter simply tells, "The whole earth was of one language and of one speech." Genesis 11:1. When common prayer sought common blessings, one sound approached the throne of grace. When common praise proclaimed the common gratitude, one chorus swelled with melody. All joys--all sorrows were related in one note. One was the language of business--of sport--at home--abroad. None spoke but every hearer understood. Through the whole family uniform utterance prevailed.

Thus the progeny of Noah reached Shinar. Here is an area of widely-spreading plains. It invites them to construct a settled home, that weary wandering may cease. The tempter suggests the thought. They yield. The waters of the deluge had not extinguished evil passions. Outward judgments expel not rebellious lusts. The heart is still strewn with the stubble of iniquity. A little spark will kindle quick combustion.

Thus at Shinar impiety works impatiently. They murmur, "Shall it be that we thus roam, unsettled as a rolling stone, or chaff of summer threshing-floor--hurried from place to place, a homeless horde? Is it not wisdom to concentrate our numbers? Unification will secure our fame--oneness will consolidate our power, and raise us high in firm magnificence--free--independent--feared." In accordance they concoct a godless plan. "Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness! This will bring us together and keep us from scattering all

over the world." Genesis 11:4. Let mighty walls extend around, and shield with defense our one vast dwelling. Let a gigantic tower arise, whose top may scale the skies. Let the whole earth admire our impregnable abode. The skill is ours. Materials abound. Arise, then, let us build.

We have not far to search for the vile motives of this impious plot. The sacred narrative withdraws the veil. "Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness!" Genesis 11:4. Vainglory says—"let us build a monument to our greatness!" Believer, do not attempt to construct a name for SELF. There is a name provided for you. It is a refuge, high, glorious, sure. No enemy can level it. No skill can strengthen it. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower--the righteous runs into it, and is safe." Proverbs 18:10. Build not with rubbish of your own, when such a fortress is prepared.

Vain-glory ("ostentatious pride, especially in one's achievements" —editor) where is the heart in which this monster has no nest? It is the common rudder of man's life--the pole-star of his course. Self-exaltation is the secret spring of exploits--labors--toils. It urges the warrior to the camp and field--it nerves his arm, and drives him undaunted through unnumbered perils. The student, intoxicated by this cup, refuses rest, and leaves no stores of literature unexplored. Behold the splendid palaces--the noble castles which adorn the land. View the monuments of ingenious art--the grand productions of elaborate skill. Read volumes in which rare genius sparkles in each page--the mighty exploits of commanding mind. On these a true inscription would record—"These works were designed to win a name among the sons of men."

If such be the prompting motive, the end is disappointment's bitter cup. The world pays only misery to its poor slaves. A mocking shadow is pursued. No substance is ever grasped. Did Babel-builders gain renown? A name, indeed, they have obtained. But it is a name of ignominy. They raised a monument which tells their shame. In after days, at this same spot, we find this passion ruling the Chaldean king. See him walking in the palace of his vast empire. His words proclaim the inner pride, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Daniel 4:30. Did he long strut in this self-exaltation? While he yet spoke, Divine displeasure frowned. Men cast him out, as lower than the human race. He herded, fit comrade, with the mindless boasts. Thus soaring pride earned low contempt. The haughty monarch groveled with the brutes.

He best subserves his fame, in whom all SELF is slain. Jesus in all things is our perfect model. In Him SELF had no life. He "pleased not Himself," He never sought His own renown. One zeal consumed Him--to glorify His heavenly Father's name, and to bring honor to His holy attributes. Paul ranks the chief of heroes. How was his fame won? Mark the principle of his heart--the precept of his lips. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Php 2:3. He thus walks humbly in humility's low valley--"according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death--for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Php 1:20-21.

How dismal is Babel's contrast. Indeed, the constant history of the unrenewed will is a mirror reflecting SELF. Here is the common impulse, "Let us make us a name." Where SELF is thus the idol, God must be dethroned. These builders give proof. The wide city--the high tower are planned, "lest they be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." God's will is here defied. That will

had said, 'By them the earth shall be replenished.' To accomplish this prohibited idle clustering in one spot. It required constant march and wide diffusion. Ease must be denied. God called them to move. They willed to tarry. The command is, 'Let earth be visited in all its parts.' The reply is, 'We will not be thus scattered.'

How sweet again to turn to Jesus. How lovely are these earliest words, "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" How refreshing is the continued echo, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." John 6:38. How brightly consistent is the sequel, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Matthew 26:39. In that prayer which soars on sublimity's high wing, we are taught to eschew this Babel-building spirit. "Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven." At Shinar this vainglory and self-will resolves to have no Lord. Therefore the work advances. The scene is busy. What rapidity of motion! What energy of mind! What industry of hand! Each look betokens fervent interest. Strength is put forth. Sinews are strained. Deep are the foundations laid. Firmly the walls are cemented. What can withstand them? Success seems sure. But is God oblivious of the daring effort? Are His eyes closed? Is His mind indifferent? Are not His ears open to this din? Is His hand shortened? Have His resources failed? Has He no power to check? Shall worms of earth now triumph? Shall their name eclipse His? Shall their impiety prevail? How easy again to open the windows of heaven, and pour down an overwhelming deluge! How easy to cause earth to gape, and swallow in one grave the workmen and the work! How easy to bid lightnings from above and flames from beneath to make wide Shinar one smoking furnace! But no--judgment shall go forth indeed; but in new form. The scheme shall be most marvelously blighted, and all succeeding ages shall bear a brand to tell the tale of this sin's due reward. The Lord decrees, "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand each other's speech." Genesis 11:7. God speaks, and it is done.

Return to the scene. The morning dawns. Fair nature smiles in usual beauty. The heavens--the earth--foreshow no coming marvel. All things around are ready for advance. The men are conscious of no inner change. They speak as heretofore. They shout--they cry--they call--they joke. But now amazement fills them. All is confusion. Each marvels at his neighbor's barbarous tongue. Each stares and questions, What does this dissonance mean? Is it insulting mockery? Has reason lost its seat? Doubtless they revile--reproach--expostulate and rage. Anger can only augment disorder. Discord is universal. Means of communication are utterly departed. Intelligence has ceased. There is no common tongue. There is no intelligible word. Thus the work finds a pitiable end. Humbled--defeated--mortified--disgraced--they part, because all mutual communion is gone. "In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the earth; and that ended the building of the city. That is why the city was called Babel, because it was there that the Lord confused the people by giving them many languages, thus scattering them across the earth." Genesis 11:8-9 From that day earth has been Babel. Language continues diverse. But the difference warns solemnly. It tells the sure defeat of all vain-glory. It derides pigmy creatures boasting to defeat Divine decrees.

Stop, proud man--stop! Let Babel check your childish dreams. You will awaken to the inheritance of scorn. Stop, rebel--Stop! You rush against the shield of Omnipotence. If God has spoken, it will surely be. All His resolves stride gloriously onward to their glorious end. But Babel is not all dark. A Gospel ray here shines. Doubtless its main feature is requiting wrath. But look again; there is a smile of grace. Division of languages proclaims God's hatred of vain-glory. But for all evil a remedy

is ordained, and gift of languages shall spread the Gospel tidings through earth's surface. Behold the miracle of Pentecost. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4. Thus inspired heralds sounded salvation's glories, and the name of Jesus in every tongue--in every climate.

Think, also, of heaven's one harmony. No dissonance shall vex those blessed abodes. One chorus shall swell from the countless multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. The one loud cry shall be "Salvation to our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10.

01.14 ABRAHAM IN EGYPT AND AT GERAR

ABRAHAM IN EGYPT AND AT GERAR

"Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." Genesis 12:13 Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Genesis 20:2 When grace subdues the heart, a wondrous change ensues. Earth knows no greater. But words are weak to picture it. Images lend not sufficient aid.

Light shines, where once night brooded. Satan's chains no more enslave. The prison-bars are broken. Right principles direct. Right ends are sought. Right means are used. Life now is life indeed, for the man lives to God. Such is a feeble outline of the new creation. But is sin therefore dead? Wounded indeed it is. But like the gashed snake it retains power to sting. Sometimes it revives in fearful strength. Though crippled, it strives to conquer. It may seem for a season to regain its hold, and win brief victory. It may roll the new man in the mire. But it cannot keep him down. Its real dominion is gone. Its existence only lingers, until full escape from this world delivers wholly from its touch. Where is the saint who is not conscious that the foe still lives? Witness the closet of the man of God. What bitter humblings! what smitings of the breast! what sensitive laments! what writhing under the motions of corruption's filth! Tears, sobs, and cries are frequent. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." Faithful Scripture warns of this constant conflict. It tells, that the heavenward march is over treacherous roads, where many pilgrims slip and stumble! Earnest exhortations call to watchfulness--to prayer--to use the shield of faith--to gird up the loins of the mind--to fight the good fight of faith--to give no place to the devil. The honest page is often darkened, also, by recitals of sin's unexpected outbreak. Sudden eclipses hide the brightest orbs. The glittering star falls quickly from the sky. Waters lately so calm, cast up mire and dirt. Thus instances divulge, that sinful nature continues to be nature, even where grace has undoubted seat. This Beacon gives a graphic proof.

ABRAHAM appears. How marked with special favors! How enriched with heaven-born powers! How crowned, as God's distinguished child! Heir of what hopes! Laden with what treasures of high promise!

He dwelt in early youth, an idolater in an idolatrous land. In nature's darkness "he served other gods." Joshua 24:2. In due time the God of glory reveals Himself. He calls his servant to leave Chaldea's godless scenes. He guides to a home typical of heavenly rest. The pilgrim holds as a staff, grand promises and assurances. Light, bright as Bethlehem's star, beckons onward. The distant horizon sparkles with illimitable blessedness. His ears hear heaven's pledge, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great--and you shall be a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you, and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3. Could faith ask more? Could heaven give richer hope? Surely the owner of such promises will stand as a fortress garrisoned with all strength! He will have feet, which never can be moved--a hand, which never can hang down--a heart, which

never can know doubt! All fear must be forever banished! Far raised above misgivings and alarms, this blessed one will boldly march on solid ground throughout earth's pilgrimage. The trial comes. Grace must be tried. Rare is the faith which boldly resists. Happy the hero, whose eye never looks off from Jesus. Beloved, you must encounter winds and billows. Heed them not. Gaze only on your Lord. Thus you will never sink. The trial comes. Provisions fail. Famine grievously prevails. Abraham meditates to seek sustenance in Egypt's fertile fields. Is this an act of faith? He holds the pledge, "I will make of you a great nation." Shall he tremble, lest dearth of food should nip this sure hope? But he distrusts, and he turns his face towards Egypt.

We find that one sin leads to more. Temptations seldom come alone. One knocks. If the door be opened, a troop will enter.

It was thus with Abraham. When he draws near to heathen-land, he looks on Sarah. Her countenance is lovely. Beauty so rare will rivet admiration. In her attractiveness he sees danger for himself. He reasons, she is mine--she may not be another's, until I be removed. If I be slain, what will check the wishes of a foreign suitor! Therefore surely I shall die. Has then the promise been recalled, "I will make of you a great nation?" But faith succumbs to fear. He suggests falsehood to his wife. "Say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and my soul shall live because of you." Genesis 12:13.

Thus in full sight of evil he proceeds. The net is spread before his eyes. He knows it, yet he flees not. Evasion promises safety. The evasion involves falsehood. Untruth is his scheme of security in Egypt. The plan is godless, yet he scruples not to act it out.

Reader! perhaps you bask in sunshine of especial favors. Perhaps you boast, that the promises are yours. Still you are not above temptation's reach. You still may tamper with sad sin. Abraham thus sinned. Beware. The land is reached. Sarah is seen, and eyes admire. Her lovely countenance is praised. Pharaoh hears. Into his palace she is conducted. The denial of the wife shields Abraham. But Sarah totters on the brink of foulest shame. The Lord interposes. In spite of themselves the culprits are rescued. Great plagues trouble the king, and all his court. The cause is revealed. The pretended sister is in truth a wife. The conniving patriarch is summoned. What shame would cover him, when thus a heathen's lips reprove! "What is this, that you have done unto me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?" Genesis 12:18. Why did you lay this trap before my unconscious feet? Then safe from injury the patriarch is dismissed.

Sad is this sight. The child of God--the heir of heaven--the chosen progenitor of the world's Savior is downcast in discovered guilt. He stands abashed before a worshiper of stocks and stones. What shame would fill his heart! He had distrusted the living God, whose power was boundless--whose hand was never-failing refuge. He had brought plagues upon a guiltless house. Merited reproach now stings him to the quick! Where will he hide his face? What time will dry his penitential tears? Surely henceforth his trust will be unfailing--his courage will never flinch again--his zeal for pure truth will be unquenchable. Untruth will he hated, as a vile monster--the touch of falsehood will be feared as a plague-spot. Is relapse possible into this identical sin? He knows not man's corruption, who cries, 'It cannot be.' While life remains the tempter will renew attack. He will seek again the crevice through which once he crept. He will mark the chinks which once his arrows pierced.

Time rolls on its course. Abraham deepens in the knowledge of his God. Repeated favors cheer him. In combat against mighty kings, heavenly power befriends him. He fights--they are thwarted and flee. After the victory, he is commanded to reject all fear. He hears the strength-inspiring word, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. He is told that his ardent longings shall be gratified. Against hope an heir would be born. Isaac shall gladden his home. "In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

He witnesses, also, God's dreadful judgments on the guilty plain. He hears terrific overthrow denounced. He sees the execution. Early in the morning he revisits the place, where he had stood before the threatening Lord. "He looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the cities of the plain, and behold, and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28. Thus the mercies of God's loving heart were spread before his wondering gaze. Thus, also, he saw the power of just wrath. What large experience! He will surely trust, and never fear what man can do! He will surely be impregnable to evil, and walk before God in perfect heart!

After this the Patriarch leaves Mamre and seeks Gerar. What motives prompted him, the story tells not. But he desired no settled home on earth. His eye looked far above. He lived a citizen of that "city, which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:10.

Doubtless at Gerar, as in earth's every spot, ungodliness would be rife. His mind concludes, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." Genesis 20:11. Instantly his early apprehensions live again. His faith again recedes. Death seems again at hand, because pretty Sarah is his wife. The old temptation re-spreads its wily bait. His former disgrace fades from his view. His grievous fall haunts him no more. The keen reproach of Pharaoh is forgotten. Distrustful of His God--forgetful of the past--reckless of the future--he sins again the same foul sin. He rushes again into the same open net! He suppresses again the truth. He exposes Sarah again to hideous crime. He opens the door for vile deeds in Gerar's palace. Where is his heart! where his piety! where his faith! where his love towards God! where thought for Sarah and his own soul! where his delight in holy ways! where his abhorrence of all evil! where his remembrance of Egypt--of his fall--his disgraced dismissal! Alas! his lips again deceive. He frames the subterfuge, "She is my sister." Can faith so totter! Can the most faithful of God's children so belie his high profession! What man, however deep in Christian experience, can read and tremble not!

Sarah is brought to the king's house. Abraham is acquiescing. His heart seems dead. He forgets that the season is now near when Isaac shall be born. But God is God still. His faithfulness, and love, and truth change not. Dreams on his bed affright Abimelech. It is revealed that Sarah is already wedded. Death is denounced on him and all his house, if the stranger's wife be violated. Guilty Abraham again stands humbled before a heathen prince. How would the words of dignified reproach sound witheringly through every corner of his heart! "What is this you have done to us? What have I done to you that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? This kind of thing should not be done!" Genesis 20:9

Reader! think of Abraham so reproached--for such a sin--at such a place, and by such lips! Think, and remember self. The same snare may not endanger you. But snares to kindred offence are always near. Open falsehood may be indignantly rejected; but the occasions are many, when, by a wrongly-colored word--by an ambiguous term--by a misguiding emphasis--by a suppressed avowal, the hearer is intentionally deceived--truth is virtually denied--erroneous impressions are

stealthily conveyed.

Reader! beware! The prevaricating whisper is repetition of the earliest sin. In every misleading word there is a likeness of the Devil--the liar from the beginning. The dishonest whisper may seem but a little bud; but God sees in it full-blown iniquity. The equivocation may be half-muttered; but in His ears it has a trumpet-tongue. Who will not pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, upon my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Psalms 141:3. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." Psalms 19:14.

01.15 LOT

LOT "Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom." Genesis 13:12

Many heirs of glory live ingloriously. Heaven is their purchased rest, but their footsteps seem to be downward. Angels are their commissioned guards, but too often Satan leads them in his chains. The accuser gains frequent advantage. He rolls them in the mire, and can ask, "Are these the garments of God's sons?" In their hearts there is incorruptible seed, but nasty weeds are intermixed. They are translated in spirit into the kingdom of grace, but still the flesh is weak. As justified, they are complete. Their title-deeds to heaven are sure. As sanctified, they are miserable shortcomers. Their outward evidence is full of blots. The fact is patent. We see it, and we marvel not. We see it, and we mourn. But while we mourn, let us take heed. A good man's failings should, through grace, be our escape.

Such is the gloomy preface to Lot's story. If the Spirit's hand had not withdrawn the veil, and showed the secrets of the inner man, the appearances would leave us in much doubt. The visible career would startle and perplex. The most hopeful hope would place him tremblingly in the list of saints. But the Spirit, who by the pen of Moses, records his tottering walk, by Peter's lips announces him as "just." Thrice, in short compass, a glorious title enshrines him among the saved-- 2 Peter 2:7-8. The voice of truth proclaims him "righteous." Therefore in God's sight righteous he was. In fallen man no righteousness can find a root, or raise its head, except when sown by sovereign grace. Grace gives the faith, which alone justifies. Grace leads the sinner to the Savior's merits. Grace hides him in the pierced side. Grace gives the hand to put on Christ's covering robe. Grace opens the lips to plead redemption's work. Grace only can unite to Christ, and only they who are ingrafted into Him--sheltered in His wounds--washed in His blood, are righteous before God. But Lot was righteous. The Spirit bears this witness. Therefore Lot was a child of grace--heir of God--joint heir with Christ. The Spirit supplies further evidence. He tells us, that his life in the vile city was distressed. Every day he saw vile deeds, and they were vexation to him. Every day he heard vile sounds, and they were barbed arrows to his grieving heart. Evil was hateful to his renewed spirit. He breathed not freely in such atmosphere. Familiarity blunted not the piercing edge. Each hour came laden with its sorrows. He dwelt in Sodom willingly indeed, but still unhappily. The pain was evidence of uncongenial principle. In spite of miserable frailties, Lot was a righteous man. A rough shell may hold a pearl. There may be silver amid much dross. Life may exist within the stem, when leaves are seared and branches dry. The spring may yet be deep, while waters trickle scantily. A spark may live beneath much rubbish. Thus Lot is a Beacon, giving proof that grievous faults may co-exist with grace.

Approach the story. Lot's first days are bright with hope. He is near kinsman to Abraham. He journeys by the patriarch's side. Together they leave Ur. Together they reach Canaan. He early received knowledge of the living God. In youth he was disciplined in a godly school. A godly model was before him. Thus in life's morn he was allured to godliness. But godly atmosphere nips not the roots of evil. The school may be most pure, but the scholar may soon go astray. The time arrives

when these kinsmen must part. Their herds multiply. The same fields are narrow to pasture the united flocks.

Now a difference of character appears. Abraham shines forth unselfish--noble--generous. He yields selection of abode to Lot. He is content to take what his more selfish relative rejects. His offer is truly great. Lot's choice is narrow-minded. Hear Abraham, "Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I ask you, from me--if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right--or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go the left." Genesis 13:9. Lot surveys--calculates--resolves. "Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. Lot chose that land for himself--the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain." Genesis 13:10-12

Lot only cares to gather this world's good. Water abounds. Herbage is fertile. The flocks will thrive. His produce will increase. Coffers will swell. He desires to be great in temporal pelf. No other thought occurs, or, if occurring, it is soon stifled. But had these luxuriant plains no disadvantage? Who were the neighbors? What was that Sodom, beside which his tent is fixed? "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:13. Theirs was no common disrepute. Lot knows it, and yet he selects the neighborhood. The fields invite. He disregards prosperity of soul. The moral purity of his household is light in the balance. Spiritual welfare is ignored. The miserable choice is made. Let the soul starve, if outward plenty be secured.

Alas! in every age, at every turn, Lot meets us. Callings--professions--alliances--partners--friends--homes must be selected. What now is the inquiry? Is the prime question, where will eternal interests receive most care? Where will godly associates surround? Where will conspicuous piety allure to heaven? Where is the Gospel honored--proclaimed--adorned? Where is Christ raised on high as All?

Ah! when will vain man be taught, that there is no profit, if the soul suffers loss? When will externals be viewed through the one medium of eternity? When will the truth be seen, that he who gains heaven gains earth besides? When will the fact be realized, that all things are the Christian's, whether "life or death, or things present, or things to come." 1 Corinthians 3:22. Christ is true riches--the pearl of great price--the treasure of treasures, laid up above the injury of rust and moth--high beyond the despoiling hand of thieves. He then, who wins Christ, wins all. Happy they, who "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." Php 3:8. Happy they, who avoid the partnership--the profit--the connection--the rich pastures of earthly-mindedness! Happy they, who choose rather to be poor on earth, and share the thrones and crowns of heaven!

Now the scene darkens. How surely is forgetfulness of God a descent without escape! Feet cannot stand on slippery ground. Let the stone roll, it will move rapidly. Thus we soon find, that Lot is weary of tent-life in the plain. The record states, "He dwelt in Sodom." Genesis 14:12. The rural quietude is left. He seeks the city. The walls are entered. Nearest contact is desired. To the very midst of all iniquity he moves his abode. He plants himself--his wife--his children--in the center of

abominations. He levels all barriers. He courts evil's contagion. He tempts the devil to tempt them all. We can conceive no motive for thus passing the city gates, but love of pleasure--indulgence--gain.

Remember Lot's family thus fixed in Sodom, all you who deliberately place children in corrupting circles. But will he prosper? None ever truly prosper, who leave God. His presence is blessing. His blessing makes rich, and he adds no sorrow thereto. Is Lot's ease now uninterrupted? Is his comfort an unruffled stream? Soon the din of war is heard. Hostile invaders cross the borders. The men of Sodom flee defeated. The town is pillaged. All property is ransacked. The inhabitants are enchained. Lot and his family share the prisoners' doom. Their goods are seized. They are dragged forth to distant bondage. Remember Lot despoiled and captive, all you who seek joys and delights, where God is not honored. There is no peace, but in His smile. There is no safety, but beneath His sheltering wings. But God forgets not His poor erring child. He smites, but still He loves. He prunes the tree, that it may bear more fruit. "Though he causes grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Lamentations 3:32. Mercy still hovers round him. Deliverance is graciously ordained. Tidings reach Abraham of Lot's distress. He arms his numerous dependants. He pursues the victorious invaders. He entirely subdues them. He rescues Lot and his family from the captor's grasp.

Lot is now at liberty. He is free again to choose a home. Surely Sodom will be shunned. No! to that place he quickly returns. His will is to re-inhabit the accursed spot. Again he casts his anchor in the vile haven. He seeks the same neighbors. He prefers the proximity of the same iniquities. Ah! the deadening allurements of this world! How hard to dash away the cup, if once the poison has been tasted. God had most loudly warned. The warning is unheeded. Providence had frowned. The frown is slighted. Mercy had dealt lovingly. The love melts not. Weak seductions prevail. Again the hateful city is the chosen home. And now iniquity revels unblushingly through the place. The waters rise to the brim. The cup overflows. God's patience can no more suffer. The cry ascending from this sink of evil reaches the heavens. Their conspicuous sin awakens conspicuous wrath. Vengeance waxes very hot. Tremendous overthrow must lay them low. Appalling letters must blazon the decree, "The wicked shall not go unpunished." The last night of Sodom comes. It is indeed a night of horrors. Hell's monsters seem let loose. Can this scene be on earth? Can these vile wretches partake of humanity? Can Lot be resident among them? Yes, he is there; and God is not forgetful of him.

Angels are sent. They tell him their dreadful commission. The place is doomed to instant destruction. He is bade to collect his sons--his daughters--his sons-in-law--and all his own, and rapidly to flee. He goes forth to warn; but his own children jeer; and then the fatal morning comes. Lot seems in no holy haste to move. It is recorded--At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out of here right now, or you will be caught in the destruction of the city." Genesis 19:15. But still he lingers. It is added, "When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful." Genesis 19:16. But still he shrinks from fleeing to the mountain. He supplicates that he may tarry in the contiguous Zoar. Permission is obtained. "But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:22. How marvelous, how condescending is the grace of God! "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not." Lamentations

3:22. But still there is terrible vengeance on abominable sin. Lot is safe in Zoar. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." Genesis 19:24. "And Abraham looked toward all the country of the plain, and beheld, and lo! the smoke of the country went up, as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28.

Here let the curtain drop. No good remains to be recorded. Enough of evil has been seen. Let Lot now disappear. But let his Beacon ever warn, that weak surrender to seducing enticement is misery and shame.

Believer, in this mirror do you see any features of yourself? If so, awake, arouse. Tread down all fascinations. Reject forbidden profit. Give to the winds desire of worldly indulgence. Take up the cross. Deny yourself. Come out. Be separate. Touch not the unclean thing. Follow Christ fully. Put on the whole armor of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Act valiantly. So only you will win good trophies. So only will your crown be bright.

Many eyes are keenly watching. Many ears listen to your converse. Many sieves test your consistency. Let your sincerity be clear as the midday sun. Be thoroughgoing. Let firm 'indifference to ease' be stamped on your whole walk. Thus be a blessing to your house--your town--your country. Thus bring glory to the Lord, who called you from the filth of earth to walk with Him in white.

01.16 SARAH'S UNBELIEF

SARAH'S UNBELIEF Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh?" Genesis 18:13 The scene is in the plains of Mamre. The time is when the midday heat is vehement. The patriarch, now fast descending in the valley of years, is seated in the tent-door. Doubtless his thoughts now intermix with heaven. How blessed are such seasons! The happiest hours are spent in converse with the unseen world! How bright would earth be, if the mind soared more frequently to things above! A gracious eye is watching him. A heavenly friend ponders his heart's meditations. He, who was near to Nathanael beneath the fig-tree's shade, now reads Abraham's musings. There is no solitude which God surveys not. There is no wayside prayer unheard. The songs in Philippi's jail fly upwards. The rapture in Patmos is marked. No lonely aspiration is unheeded.

Abraham lifts up his eyes. Three strangers approach. The mystic number is not without meaning. Its frequent occurrence in the sacred page has sure design. God's every arrangement is offspring of Divine intent. There is no random word, where all is spoken by celestial lips. Faith knows this well, and ever ponders--ever learns.

Hence in this selected number we see the emblem of our Triune God. Grand thought! The holy--blessed--glorious Trinity, three persons in One God, is the God of our salvation. Let us devoutly heed each symbol. Let us rejoice and reverently adore. In this mystic band one form claims notice. The Eternal Word in human guise visits His servant. Before the time of incarnation, His delights are with the sons of men. He appears to Moses in the burning bush. He cheers Joshua as the captain of the Lord's hosts. He struggles with the wrestling Jacob. He brings tidings to Manoah and his wife. He walks with Israel's captives in the midst of the burning furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is awe-struck. He exclaims--Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt--and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel 3:25. Abraham knows his visitors, and reverently bows.

Let us not advance without the true thought, that Christ abounds throughout our Bible. The Book is emphatically "the Word of Christ." His image would be more discerned, if cold unbelief weaved not so many veils. Many doubt too much. How few believe enough! Abraham with reverential joy urges the guests to tarry. As they condescend to tread this earth, so he requests that they will take food, as earthly pilgrims. Who ever prayed in vain for the Lord's presence? He stood still, when Bartimeus called. He stops now, when the patriarch invites. Reader! your heart, also, might be His perpetual seat. With eager haste all hospitality is prepared. The welcome is not unrewarded. The former promise is renewed. The tidings--so early given, but in performance so long delayed--again delight his ears. "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and lo! Sarah your wife shall have a son." Genesis 18:10. The gracious word could not be recalled. In heaven's courts there is "no variableness, nor shadow of turning." Lapse of years may seemingly raise difficulties, but the event shall be. "Sarah your wife shall have a son." The words reach Sarah's ears. She stood behind in the tent-door. How glad their message! "She shall have a son." How grand the far-extending blessing! "She shall be a mother of nations, kings shall come from her." Genesis

17:16. One from the courts of heaven now seals the pledge. Surely her heart will break with joy! Her happiness will surpass bounds. Her mouth will be quick to sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Luke 1:46-47.

Alas! how different is the fact! She laughed within herself. This laugh is not the exuberant delight of Abraham, when he first heard this truth. It is the scornful sneer of unbelief. Its language says, it cannot be. It is impossible. The course of nature forbids. I am old. My husband is old. The very thought is folly.

Thus Sarah laughed. Who will not blame her, for the sin is deep? Who will not check surprise, for the sin is common?

Reader! analyze the sin, and mark its dark ingredients. All skeptic doubts are full of vain conceit. Vain man assumes more than Divine prerogative. In pride he sits as judge of what God can perform. He is bold to call God's attributes to his puny bar. He sets boundaries to superhuman power. He confines God's wisdom to the limits of his own notions. What is so silly as man's so-called reason! It is a created quality, and still it vaunts itself as higher far than the Creator. It owes its being to sovereign will, and yet it plumes itself as mightier than its originating cause. Its every power is a gift, and still it claims to be far wiser than the giver. Its faculties arise--expand--increase--decay--just as God wills; and still it struts haughtily, as if independence were its attribute.

It mainly assails the truth and power of God. Thus it showed hideous features in Moses. Though so long experienced in the school of miracles, he says, "You have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" Here is the sneer of unbelief! Here is a skeptic taunt! The Lord's reply shatters such silliness. "Is there any limit to my power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!" Numbers 11:23. Oh! that the sons of men would deeply ponder the wise sayings of the Spirit, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor, has taught Him?" Isaiah 40:13. "Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." Isaiah 40:28.

Reader! settle in your mind the truth, that God is all-wise--all-true--almighty. The heart thus stored cannot nurse unbelief. The ground is then preoccupied. There is no place where doubt can rest. Their the only question is, "Has God spoken?" If so, the end must be according to the word. Be persuaded, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, then perplexities are gone. We may not see the time or manner of performance. Attending circumstances may be hidden, but we well know, As it is written, so it shall be.

Now, the admonition of the Lord exposes the weak ground of unbelief, "Why did Sarah laugh?" What cause can justify the jeer? When was it known that trifling sayings were uttered by me? Was any word not thoroughly fulfilled? Did any promise ever fail? Cannot every child of God testify with the dying Joshua, "Behold this day I am going the way of all the earth; and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you--all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing has failed thereof." Joshua 23:14. Let the believer bring forth the catalogue of promises. It is a sparkling chain, in

which each jewel is from the treasury of heaven. It is exceeding long--what mind can count the precious links! They belong to many circumstances and many days. They pledge countless victories over many trials and many foes. But when the end arrives, the testimony is firm; not one ever failed. All were firm as the everlasting hills. All were true as the Speaker, who is Truth.

Why then do scoffers laugh? Where is excuse for such irrational distrust? If one vessel had suffered shipwreck in this wide sea of predictions--if one voyager had failed to reach the promised haven--if one instance could be adduced, in which God spoke and accomplishment came not--if there had been one eclipse of the glorious luminary of Divine announcements--then incredulity would have a resting-place, and the laughter might reply, "For this cause do I laugh." But no such plea was ever found. God's Word has had long trial. It has been roughly dragged before many a prejudiced tribunal. Judges have sat pre-determined to condemn. Advocates have used prodigious talent to beguile. The jury have been ready to put darkness for light. But all in vain. God's every word has raised a triumphant head above submerging seas. It has stood as a rock lashed by the mighty waves of many thousand years. But the tempest's fury only consolidated. And so it ever must be. He who utters is eternal truth. Therefore fallibility can have no place. The Speaker wields the Scepter of Omnipotence. Therefore to accomplish is as easy as to say.

Why then do scoffers laugh? O my soul, stand far apart from such profanity. Clasp to your heart of hearts the comforting assurance, that nothing in all the treasury of the Word can fail. Delight in the countless promises. They are the rich inheritance of faith. Ponder them well. They are adapted for all circumstances of prosperity or woe. They are a pillow for the aching head--a staff for the pilgrim's march--a shield against the tempter's every dart--a light in every hour of gloom. Drink deep their cordial cup, and be persuaded, God will do what God has said.

Sarah laughed. But was this sin unseen--unnoticed? It is true no human eye was resting on her. She stood in the tent-door. She faced not the heavenly visitant. His back was towards her. But from His gaze no tent could hide--no darkness screen. Every movement of her mind--every rising doubt--every ridiculing sneer was read, as are the pages of an open book. When will the perversity of man justly weigh Omniscience? "Our secret sins are ever in the light of His countenance." Psalms 90:8. Man may dig deep, but he cannot hide. He may plan secrecy. He may weave dark veils. But there is no cover from the all-pervading eye. Darkness is light to Him, with whom we have to do. The secret chamber and the public mart are both alike. The solemn remonstrance speaks, "Why did Sarah laugh?" and then the grand inquiry follows, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Impossibility has reference to restricted power. It touches not Omnipotence. Space is unknown to infinity. Time bounds not eternity. No strength retains almightiness.

Fear seizes Sarah, when detection came. Bold in concealment, she trembles when unveiled. Proud scoffers imagine that they are unknown. It is a fond dream. The day is near, which will reveal their every sneer. The great white throne will drag all secrets from their flimsy refuge. And then terrors will grasp them with iron grasp. They must meet Him in fear, whom they feared not to scorn.

Sarah quails and denies. Thus sin is seldom single. It is a root producing many stalks. It is a river parting into many streams. Scoffs lead to lies. But no lie can undo the deed. Truth instantly confronts her, "No, but you did laugh."

Sinner, shun each sin. Avoid its adhering stain. It is a bloodhound, which will hunt you down. Conscious that your sins are many, heinous, and of crimson dye, take each--take all in penitence and faith to the one cleansing fountain. And when you hear, "No, but you did," be ready to confess--"I did; but Jesus died." This is the only hope. At the cross is the only smile of pardon. Faith meekly pleading there obtains remission of all guilt--even the vile guilt of 'unbelieving scoffs'.

01.17 CITIES OF THE PLAIN

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

"Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, eliminating all life—people, plants, and animals alike." Genesis 19:24-25

Reader! you are called to a dreadful scene. Turn not away. Face it with open eye. View it solemnly with mind intent on profit. You approach not a drowning world. A blazing plain meets you. The heavens open not to pour down floods of water. Cataracts of flame descend. It was terrible, when unsparing waves destroyed. It is not less terrible, when fiery billows overwhelm. But there is difference. A world once drowned is drowned no more. But the burning deluge comes again. What has been will be. The fearful picture of the past is fearful presage of the future. Draw near, then, seeking deep instruction. The record is an awakening admonition. Holy Spirit aid! Give edifying grace! Without Your help smiling scenes allure in vain, and terrors scare with unavailing frown.

It was a lovely scene, which charmed Lot's heart. He surveyed the watered plain of Jordan. It super-abounded with all plenteousness. Fertile pastures gave luxuriant food. Enriching streams wound their course through them. Here flocks might largely graze and calmly rest. "It was as the garden of the Lord—like the land of Egypt as you come unto Zoar." Genesis 13:10. It was rich as the richest of all lands. Earth seemed to have no kindlier spot. It smiled as the fair Eden.

Lot was not slow to choose. He took this region as his home. Is his choice wise? He looked to externals only. Outward beauties decided him. He cared not, how the natives lived. He asked not, what will be the influence of the neighboring townsmen? He considered not, that godless companions make fruitful fields no gain. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Timothy 6:9.

It is sad to see Lot settling in this plain. It is sadder far to see him soon moving into Sodom. Sin's course is ever downward. The stream rushes rapidly. It is easy to be entangled in this net. It is difficult to escape.

Abundance brings short peace. Wealth invites spoilers. The sound of war is heard. His home is ransacked. His property is pillaged. He is hurried a captive to a stranger-land. He has no help in his own resources. But Abraham hears of his kinsman's ill. He pursues the foe, and brings deliverance. Does Lot gain wisdom by calamity? Does he now flee the vile vicinity? How true it is, that no events of sorrow or of joy convert, except where sovereign grace gives blessing. How incessantly should prayer implore the guiding power of the Holy Spirit! Will Lot return to his tent life in the ungodly plains? His conduct is far worse. He is still bent on sojourning within the guilty walls. But everlasting love still loved him. His name was in the book of life. "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." Romans 11:29. Therefore grace, though dim and feeble, did not utterly expire. Horrid sights meet him at every turn. Frightful sounds incessantly shock his ear. It was pain to him, but pain which he voluntarily sought. "Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by

the wickedness he saw and heard day after day." 2 Peter 2:8. At last the cup of Sodom's abominations overflows. Vengeance may tarry long, but it surely falls. God's eye sleeps not. The iniquity of these cities becomes fully ripe. Wrath's sickle will do its work. A fearful night precedes destruction's day. At evening Lot is seated in the gate. Two heavenly visitants approach. Their embassy is wrath. It is the joy of angels to do heaven's behests. To scatter mercies they fly speedily. To sweep with ruin's bosom, they hesitate not. To obey God is their highest honor, whether in works of love or woe.

Lot welcomes them with reverence. He craves their presence as his guests. They yield. They accept his dwelling as their shelter. How blessed to have angels in our homes! This is the Christian's constant privilege.

"The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them." Psalms 34:7. Unseen inhabitants throng the favored dwelling. If eyes were open, angelic forms in glorious retinue would shine as guards. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. Higher, also, is the believer's happy state. His heart is the palace of the Triune Jehovah. Thus Jesus speaks, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:23. The Spirit testifies, "In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:22.

We are taught to pray, and therefore to expect, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." Ephesians 3:17. It is the voice of our Beloved, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock--if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. In this dreadful night the iniquity of Sodom reaches detestable height. Annals of crime possess no parallel. Paper would almost blush to give recital. The pen shrinks from the record. The guests of Lot exhibit mighty power. They check with blindness the infuriated crowd. They bid Lot to collect his family. "Do you have any other relatives here in the city? Get them out of this place—sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. For we will destroy the city completely. The stench of the place has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it." Genesis 19:12-13.

It is great peril now to leave the house. But compassion excludes fear. Lot seeks the spouses of his daughters. He urgently implores them. "Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is going to destroy it." Genesis 19:14.

Grace braves all peril to save souls. They who realize salvation are untiring to extend the boon. They feel, "yet there is room." They yearn that others should rejoice in their joy, and share the safety, which is their delight. Lot seeks and warns in vain. Thus Noah seemed a fanatic to the wicked of the old world, and Lot is scorned as one that joked. Unbelief always sneers at truth. The faithful cry aloud, 'Flee from the wrath to come'. Derision answers, 'We see no sign of coming judgment. Let preachers preach, and madmen rave, who are we, that we should tremble at unrealistic alarms?' So the night passed. The morning came. Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters which are here, lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Genesis 19:15. Woe to those who tarry recklessly on the accursed ground. If any reader be conscious of reluctance may he seek sovereign grace to slay it! From self against self may mercy rescue! It was so in Lot's case. "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being

merciful unto him, and they brought him forth and set him without the city." Genesis 19:16.

Lot importunes, that he may rest in Zoar, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh! let me escape there, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." Genesis 19:20.

How gracious is the Lord! how piteous of human weakness! how ready to hear prayer, though intermixed with much alloy! how quick to spare at the cry of intercession! Would that God's children would give him no rest. Then how changed this earth might soon become! The angel answered, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:21-22

Lot is in Zoar. The eastern sky is bright. Light dawns as in other days. The sun arises upon earth, and gilds the city's towers--the trees--the meadows of the plain. The busy world is busy in its customary work. Men are going forth to their accustomed toil and pleasure. "They did eat--they drank--they bought--they sold--they planted--they built." Luke 17:28. But it was the last time. Ah! last times must come. Suddenly unusual signs glare in the skies. Heaven is not black with gathering clouds; but lurid with outbreking fire. The canopy above is as a blazing furnace. Streams descend, not rain or hail, but liquid flame. Lightning succeeds lightning in incessant flashes. Boiling brimstone falls with terrific fury. It seems as if all hell was rushing upon earth. Where can the guilty inhabitants flee? All around them is a blaze. The flame devours each mansion. Shall they rush into the plain? It is as a molten sea. Above--beneath--around--one vast conflagration crackles. A fiery tempest ravages. A fiery deluge overwhelms. There call be no escape. They, whom indomitable lust had long consumed, are now the prey of indomitable flame. Their sin had known no parallel. Now vengeance without parallel destroys.

There is no exemption. The aged and the young--the parent and the child--the learned and the ignorant--the rich and the poor--the noble and the peasant lie a charred mass. The splendid buildings and the lowly hut--the groves--the vineyards--the corn--the pasture-lands lie a blackened waste. "The next morning Abraham was up early and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the Lord's presence. He looked out across the plain to Sodom and Gomorrah and saw columns of smoke and fumes, as from a furnace, rising from the cities there." Genesis 19:27-28

Reader! Allow a warning word. Deeply ponder this appalling Beacon. The dreadful vengeance is recorded to urge vile sinners from like doom. The gracious Spirit stands pointing to these burning plains. His loving voice sounds loudly, "Escape for your life--look not behind you; neither stay in all the plain--escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." Genesis 19:17.

Hearken! He cries by Peter's voice, "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making an example unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6.

"An example!" Like vengeance, then, will surely overtake impenitents. The pent-up fire will again break forth. Hearken! He speaks by Jude, "And don't forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with sexual immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and are a warning of the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil." Jude 1:7

Again, "an example!" The like course leads surely to like end! The voice will soon be heard, "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41.

Let it not be written in vain--"Behold the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." Malachi 4:1. The scene is near, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. May the Spirit give us grace to be ready--safe in the only ark of safety--the blessed Jesus. By faith let us flee into His wounded side. By faith let us nestle in His very heart. Then, amid flames of a burning world, we shall be high above the reach of harm. Heavenly Father, bless these warning words!

01.18 LOT'S WIFE

LOT'S WIFE "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Genesis 19:26

How wondrous is God's mercy to the children of His love! It is ever tender, and it never fails. By gentle constraint angels draw Lot beyond the walls of Sodom. They set him in the plain. They urge him forward--"Escape for your life--look not behind you." Genesis 19:17. Thus mercy impels him and gives counsel.

"Look not behind you." He obeys, and safely enters into Zoar. He witnesses not the descent of wrath on the doomed plain. His feelings are not racked by contemplation of the overthrow. The writhing misery is behind him. But in Zoar he looks around. He sees not his wife. He tarries, but she comes not. He searches, and what meets his eye? A pillar stands where she had halted. Her figure is transformed to salt! Do we inquire the cause of this woe? The faithful monitor replies, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Why did she hesitate? The act was grievous sin, because the precept was precise. "Look not behind you." What excited to this faltering? The reverting eye betrays the heart. Affections were yet in Sodom. The pleasures of the godless city had been, alas! too dear. Circumstances had compelled departure. But fond feelings were not yet uprooted. She casts a wistful glance to her bewitching home. She turns to the scenes which had so often charmed. She sighs over the spot of many a seducing joy. Ah! guilty look! It proved inward unsoundness. It gave evidence of reluctant flight. The separation is in person, not in will. She is but partially estranged. Sodom is left, but Zoar is not reached. There is an intervening plain, and in that plain she perishes. A few more steps of self-denial might have conveyed to safety. A few more persevering moments might have brought deliverance. But she pauses, and dies miserably. This frightful scene thus glares for special admonition. Until the Lord comes, the record lives. While need shall be, it loudly teaches. The lips of Jesus especially enforce the lesson--"Remember Lot's wife." Luke 17:32. Let her image ever stand before you. Let her sad story be engraved on memory's tablet. View it, and learn. Ponder it, and beware. Heed it, and be wise. But for whom is this Beacon raised? Who are in peril of sinning as she sinned, and falling as she fell? Not they, who are fast bound in chains of ignorance. Not they, whose life is unresisted sin. Not they, who are blind captives in the devil's cell. Not they, who are strangers to the stings of an upbraiding conscience. Not they, who have never trembled lest perdition should be their endless doom. Not they, who have had no glimpse of heaven's glories. Not they, who have never gazed on Jesus' beauty. Not they, who are wholly indifferent to His dying love--His cleansing blood--His all-atoning offerings--His reconciling sacrifice--His curse-removing agonies--His law-fulfilling life--His rising power--His interceding work. No. The warning is to those within whose hearts some rousing work has stirred--who have been shaken from the sleep of death--who have burst many a detaining fetter--whose conscience has been pierced--who have heard the voice, "Escape for your life--look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain--escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." "Turn! turn! for why will you die." Ezekiel 33:11. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Ephesians 5:14. The class is large who thus start for heaven. Some efforts are vigorously made. The city of destruction is left. Some rapid

steps commence flight. For a brief time all seems fine. But the march is long. A dreary wilderness must be traversed. Hardness must be endured. Temptations must be trampled down. A fight must be fought. The hand must ever hold the sword. The shield of faith must never be allowed to fall. There is much danger, lest they loiter--be disheartened and look back. To such professors the warning cries, "Remember Lot's wife." To such, for a while, all may have a hopeful look. But good beginnings secure not happy ends. The morn dawns brightly. The rising beams foreshow a beauteous day. But sudden clouds appear. The skies is dark. The sun descends mantled in gloom and storm. The vernal branches gladden the eye with countless buds. What promise of rich fruit! A night of blight follows. The blossoms fall, and leave a barren stem. A gallant ship glides gaily from the port. It proudly breasts the waves. Pleased expectation paints a joyous voyage and happy entrance to the distant haven. But a sunken rock is struck, or a fierce hurricane assails, or a leak opens and expands. The vessel sinks, and few survive to tell the woeful tale. How often is healthy childhood marred by the touch of malady! How often is robust youth beguiled by sin into decrepit age. Thus vivid illustrations impress the truth, "One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off." 1 Kings 20:11

It is not easy to hold a long rope straight. Feet often slip, if the ascent be tediously steep. Thus many falter in the heavenward course. "Remember Lot's wife." Is it asked, how can such regression be? Let obvious instances reply. One for a while burns with devotedness to Christ. No hindrances deter. But a pause comes. He slackens in his speed. He stops and looks back. What ails him? He has received the truth amid choking thorns. They spring up with ruinous vitality. The love of the world revives. Its show--its vanity--its delights regain their seat. The thought intrudes, "How happy were those early days." "How sweet the goblet of those laughing hours!"

Thus to Israel's children the luxurious fare of Egypt reappeared. They thought of the past, and longed--Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the ISRAELITES began to crave the good things of Egypt, and the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. "We remember all the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that we wanted." Numbers 11:4-5. The manna from heaven was despised. The dainties, though eaten in slaves' chains, excited regret. The love of worldly things regained ascendancy. They looked back.

Let the sad case of DEMAS next be viewed. He stood a foremost champion in the cause of Christ. He braved all peril. Paul's chain deterred him not. He was not ashamed of the noble prisoner. The apostle, writing from his cell, claimed him as a fellow-laborer--Philemon 24. Surely his heart is garrisoned by grace! Surely he will be faithful unto death! Surely by the glories of the cross, the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world! A few years pass. The undaunted Paul is again a prisoner at Rome. Is Demas still beside him? Does he still share the peril and the shame? The witness is--"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Timothy 4:10. The baubles of the world, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," presented their seductive charms. Paltry desires still smouldered in his heart. A breath of temptation rekindled the base flame. He looked back, and left the company of Paul. Unhappy man! The sequel is not known. It may be, that bitter tears bewailed his wretched fall; and agonies of penitence sought pardon. This the eternal world will tell. We only know his affections were bewitched, and he went back.

Sometimes timidities arise. A foul brood of doubts--distrusts--dismays--flap trembling wings. The path, at first so pleasant, is infested by lions. Doubtless the prize is precious. But the conflict demands much cost. Nerves must be strained. No respite can be given. Unfaltering continuance must be braved. A few steps are made in glad alacrity--their endurance becomes hard. There is the fatal pause. There is the dastard look behind. "Remember Lot's wife."

ORPAH and Ruth showed much attachment to the widowed Naomi. They both arise to flee from Moab. But the way was long. Hardships were before them in the land of Judah. Naomi warns them of the risk. "Go return each to her mother's house." "Return, my daughters." They both were melted into tears. They both glowed with affection. But one was firm. The other trembled. The journey--the distance--the doubtful home darkened the scene. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth, cleaved unto her."

PETER saw Jesus. He desired to be with Him. He boldly left the ship to tread the sea. He viewed the raging billows. He marked the howling wind. He trembled. He looked away, and he began to sink. Thus doubts and fears often check the onward course. "Remember Lot's wife."

Sometimes the early steps of YOUTH seem heavenward. The world allures not. Godly friends are loved. Godly work delights. But soon a change occurs. The world, which once was as a faded flower, now presents fragrance. But whence this decline of godliness? The pious parent is removed. The faithful pastor's ministry is ended. The friendly monitor is no longer near. Thus "Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him." 2 Kings 12:2.

Sometimes ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCE is shipwreck to the soul. When state is humble, and means are contracted, the spirit is lowly, and God has unrivaled sway. But if prosperity applies its testing wand--if riches smile where poverty once frowned--then it appears that outward condition is not real grace. Israel's hard days were Israel's best days. How tender is the admonition, "Thus says the Lord, I remember the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness in a land not sown!" Jeremiah 2:2.

There is a striking word in the records of Jehoshaphat. "He walked in the first ways of his father David." 2 Chronicles 17:3. Royal advance was no real gain to David. It brought declension. The lowly shepherd felt more of heaven than the king. He walked more closely with his God in the green meadows, than in the gilded palace.

Let then this picture of Lot's wife give caution. But let it not discourage. If grace be real, it may have many falls; but it will rise to fight more vigorously, and to gain final triumph. He who begins the good work will perform it to the day of Christ-- Php 1:6. Water from lofty source will rise to lofty height. Fire will live beneath much rubbish. The true child of God will continue in the faith grounded and settled, and will not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Behold the veteran PAUL. He appears bearing the scars of many a conflict--battered by many a blow--wearied by a lifelong race. He reviews the past. The scene is trial--strife--fierce warfare. But he survives to bless God, and to adore sustaining grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his

glorious return." 2 Timothy 4:7-8 But perhaps some reader sighs--I am as the wife of Lot. Once I ran well--but I have looked back. Old pleasures tempted. I have yielded. Can there be hope for one so vile? Yes. Hope cannot die while Jesus lives. You may have sinned thus grievously--but you are not transfixed a monument of relentless wrath. You yet live. You stand on praying ground. Space is yet granted. The throne of grace is yet before you. Abundant promises in rich profusion call. "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you. Return, backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." Jeremiah 3:14, Jeremiah 3:22. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. Say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Hosea 14:2. Plead the precious blood, whose virtue never dies. It can wash out your crimson dye. Fly to the cross. You cannot perish beneath its screening shade. In Jesus' name wrestle with the God of all grace. Restoring grace will help you. The quenched Spirit will burn again within you. You will run your remaining race, "looking unto Jesus." The sight of Him will pale all other luster. The eye which sees Him is blind to sublunary tinsel.

01.19 ISHMAEL MOCKING

ISHMAEL MOCKING "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." Genesis 21:9 The believer's present heritage is vast and rich. But it is not pure sunshine. He basks indeed beneath the cheering smiles of heaven. But earth eyes him with malignity. As "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." James 4:4; so, God's favor brings the world's hate.

Scripture hides not the fact. They who leave all for Christ, receive an hundred-fold now in this time, with persecutions, "and in the world to come eternal life." Mark 10:30. The warning is clear, "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." John 15:19. Blessings from God, and malevolence from man go hand in hand. The blessed must suffer; but they rejoice in suffering and win a crown. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:10-12. This is exemplified in Scripture-story. It has been seen in Cain. It meets us now in Ishmael. To introduce Ishmael, we must return to Abraham. It is joy and gain to do so. The patriarch's portrait is largely drawn by the Spirit's pencil. It is, therefore, a most precious study. Here, as in a mirror, the weakness and the power of faith are shown. Sometimes this grace appears as a flickering flame. Sometimes it sinks very low, and seems almost extinct. Then it springs up in giant-strength--brilliant as the noon-day sun. Sometimes it trembles as a reed. Then it defies impossibilities. But being born of God, it never dies. It is divine, and therefore immortal.

Abraham leaves his Chaldean home, armed with a noble promise--cheered by transcendent prospect--"I will make of you a great nation." Genesis 12:2. Strong in this hope, "he went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came." Genesis 12:5. But Sarah gives him no heir. Time rolls on. Year follows year; and he continues childless. The promise tarries; but again and again it glitters in his sight. When he bewails his vacant home, the Lord brings him beneath the starry canopy, and says, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that--too many to count!" Genesis 15:5. Still fulfillment lingers--no son is born. Faith hangs a weary head. It wavers, and adopts a godless project to attain the end. But human policies help not God's decree. No might can frustrate; no scheming can accelerate His time.

Sarah, to secure offspring, resigns her wedded place to the Egyptian handmaid. The scheme succeeds. The patriarch is a parent. Long space now intervenes. For about fifteen years young Ishmael thrives, the hope and stay of Abraham's house. And now renewed promises delight him. It is announced that aged Sarah shall herself be mother of the heir. Holy joy transports him. But still he clings to Ishmael. "Oh! that Ishmael might live before you!" Genesis 17:18. The prayer for Ishmael is largely answered. But the heirdom shall not be his. Sarah indeed shall bear a son; and

with her Isaac the covenant shall be confirmed. God spoke. Who can withstand! The event seemed impossible. Nature's course prohibited. But what can stop Omnipotence! The centenarian Abraham embraces Isaac. The tent of Sarah cradles her offspring.

What joy would now pervade the family! Faith would expand by seeing that God's word must stand. But soon this joy is clouded. While Isaac's years are tender, Sarah has proof of bitter hate in Ishmael. The story simply states--"She saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking." Genesis 21:9.

After long years, the Spirit elucidates that term. He shows that malice soured the heart, and that derisive scorn polluted the first-born's breast. "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Galatians 4:29. Strong feelings agitate the anxious mother. She cries, "Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Genesis 21:10. The fond father hesitates. He has parental love for Ishmael. He would retain him by his side. But God interposes, "In all that Sarah has said unto you, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall your seed be called." verse 12. He obeys. Hagar and the youth are banished. They wander forth into the wilderness. Isaac remains the joy of the house--the heir of the promise--the fountain whence the true Church flows--the progenitor of Him in whom all blessings dwell.

Such is the narrative--attractive in its pure simplicity--abundant in its holy lessons. From every incident a voice strongly cries, 'Act faith in our wonder-working God. Nothing is too large for His love. Nothing is too hard for His power.' But there is far more than instructive precept here. There is a blaze of spiritual light. The Spirit, by Paul's pen, lifts up a flaming torch, and casts back rays on this early record. Thus illumined, each point jumps forth resplendent in Gospel truth. The facts remain in all their verity; but each fact becomes a mirror of salvation's scheme.

We here see how wondrous is the Word which chronicles God's wondrous dealing. Behold the annals of one family. They are a world-long story. They image the doings of succeeding ages. They are a seed prolific of vast harvest, while earth remains.

Return to Abraham's house. There are two women--Sarah and Hagar--one is free--the mother of free offspring. The other is a bond-maid--the parent of slaves. But, in these women the Spirit shows the TWO COVENANTS of God with man. The one is the covenant of grace, confirmed and ratified in Christ, which calls to Gospel liberty and life. The other is the covenant of works, which dooms to galling slavery and death. In the sons we have the diverse seeds which separate mankind. Isaac images the heaven-born family--the sons of grace--the heirs of eternal righteousness in Christ. Ishmael is dark as the type of that sad progeny, the sons of nature, whose only hope centers in self and self's performances. The parallel exhibits the black features of poor nature's seed. They hate the light, and would extinguish it. They persecute the lowly followers of the Lamb, and sincerely would chase them from the earth. The sequel, also, is here foreshown. The slaves of the law are driven away--most wretched outcasts. The Gospel freedmen receive the inheritance of life.

Such is the story in its allegorical intent. Each point claims closer notice. Holy Spirit! draw back the veil! Conduct each reader into the inner sanctuary of Christ's truth! HAGAR represents the dispensation of the LAW. Originally this law is written by God's finger in the heart. On SINAI it is

proclaimed anew amid tremendous portents of majesty and awe--in the terrors of thunders--lightnings--and the trumpet's clang. It reveals Jehovah as all glorious in holiness, demanding spotless righteousness from all the sons of men. It is simple, brief, and clear as the light of heaven. It exacts love--perfect and unsullied, without one deviating step. Its edicts stretch from earliest to last breath. It asks obedience in every movement of the mind--in every station, circumstance, and age. Compliance is eternal life. Infringement is inevitable death. It holds a relentless scepter. It exacts life-long and undeviating service. But it gives no help. Its subjects are weak in nature's weakness--and fettered in the chains of nature's corruptions. It extends no hand to strengthen. It sternly cries, "Do this, or die." It never melts in pity. The voice of pardon is not heard within its realms. It knows no sounds of peace or comfort. Repentance is ignored. The weeping eye--the smitten breast--vows of amended walk, are inexorably repelled. The Law sits unbending on an iron throne. Its slaves are lashed to work. Failure dooms to hopeless misery. Such is the covenant exemplified in Hagar. It is holy and most gloriously righteous. But it frowns terribly on fallen man. In contrast SARAH shines brightly. She comes forth the emblem of the covenant of GRACE. When midnight darkness seems to cover earth, free favor rises as the morning star. Let thanks be heard. Let praises swell. Let loud thanksgivings fill the courts of heaven. Let grateful hearts pour forth adoring hallelujahs. Grace comes. Man is not left to hopeless bondage under Sinai's law. Another compact is made in heaven. Of this Christ is the sum--the substance--the glorious whole. He undertakes to be its surety. All that the Sinaitic Covenant demands, He will perform. All the dread penalties, so justly claimed, He will undergo. All on whom His Father's love shines savingly, He receives as members of Himself. They are contained in Him. He is the Head--they are the body. For them He lives. For them He is obedient. For them He dies. He represents them in His life--His death--His rising from the grave--His session at God's right hand. Glorious Covenant! Worthy of the Father, who decrees! Worthy of the Son, who undertakes! Worthy of the Spirit, who applies! Throughout grace reigns!

It is a covenant of liberty--of joy--of peace--of hope--of holiness. All, who by faith embrace it, are free to all extent of freedom--free from the terrors of the curse--the dread of hell--the frown of God. They rejoice as heirs of heaven and endless bliss. They float on the waves of an ocean of peace--peace, with God reconciled--peace, with conscience lulled. They glory in hope of the glory of God. By the Spirit's mighty power and indwelling strength, they adorn the Gospel by most holy living. They blossom and bear precious fruit. Trees of righteousness--planted by the Lord--tended by his constant care.

Hagar in nature's strength bears Ishmael. There is no marvel. There is no deviation from accustomed course. Sarah, against all hope, by virtue of God's promise, by intervening wonder, gives birth to Isaac.

Such are the two divisions of mankind. One race is wholly Natural--born after nature's mode. They live as men according to the flesh. Their thoughts--their feelings--their desires--their hopes, look not beyond this world's horizon. They rise not above its low level. Under the covenant of works they live--they die--they meet the judgment-seat. The other race is wholly SPIRITUAL. They are the sons of God's eternal promise. They are born indeed in nature's wilderness, and in the prison-house of the law. But the Spirit in due time marvelously visits them. He gives them a new nature--new desires--new hopes--new powers--new prospects. By His own power He opens their eyes to see their natural condition--their ruin under the Law--the beauty of Christ's finished

work--their full deliverance in Him. He imparts faith to flee to Him--to cleave to Him--to love Him--to serve Him. They are no more carnal, "but spiritual." They come out from the world and are separate. To God they live. To God they die. Such are the two seeds. Ishmael and Isaac are their types. Of old it was declared, that ENMITY was put between them. So it ever has been. So it ever will be. Ishmael soon showed malicious hate of his young brother. His race still lives and hates. The annals of the Church are stained with persecution in each page. If power equaled the will, the godly would long since have been extinct, and Christian truth been cast into outer darkness. Let holy prophets give their witness. What was their crime? They told of God--His will--His truth. They warned of evil. They counseled to reform. Therefore hatred assailed them, cruelty tormented them, and they were hunted, as foes of man, from earth.

Let martyrs in noble army move forward. They appear galled with irons--lashed with scourges--branded with every indignity--perishing amid all torments--victims of savage cruelties. But what was their guilt? They firmly maintained the truth of Christ. They resolutely scorned to bow to idols. They dared to shout amid the flames, "None but Jesus." On the rack they gloried in Christ's cross. Therefore the Ishmaels persecuted.

Let Jesus Himself be seen. He walks this earth the incarnate God. Perfect love dwelt on His lips, and moved in His every step. What is His welcome? Let the judgment-hall--let Calvary reply. Ah! sin of sins! Enmity could not evince more spite. Malice could not inflict more torturing pains. Abhorrence could not invent more ignominious death. The apostles follow. The enmity is not less keen. The sure word still finds fulfillment, "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. Restrictions may repress overt acts. But the same spirit lives. The inner feeling in every Ishmael's breast is enmity. The dragon chained is still a dragon. Satan, released from his millennial chain, shall not be softened. 'Holy Father, hasten the time when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all your holy mountain! When your sons shall wear one garb--use one tongue--breathe one climate of love! Hear our cry. Your Name is Love.'

01.20 ISHMAEL CAST OUT

ISHMAEL CAST OUT But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." Genesis 21:9-10

Sinners may revel, but their day is very brief. Thorns crackle with high blaze, and quickly subside in ashes. The godless laughter is the prelude of long wailing. The morn soon fades--the evening shadows fall--the night comes on apace--the night which knows no dawn. The Spirit sounds the knell of short-lived evil--"Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be--yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." Psalms 37:10.

Thus Ishmael's malicious sport soon ends. Sarah's watchful eye detects. The persecutor may not tarry. The sneer--the taunt--the petty tyranny must cease. Isaac shall no more dread the banter or the blow. The teasings, which were pain to the meek child, shall no more trouble. The mother demands immediate expulsion, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son." The patriarch hears God's confirming voice. He instantly complies. The young oppressor is driven far away.

Thus speaks the narrative. It is an outer bark--when it peels off, the rings of inner meaning are discerned. These rings are many. Each is a wealth of thought. But the intermediate fulfillments of the type are but as lesser lights before a final blaze. Through, then, the long perspective, let us at once approach the close. Let the eye rest alone on the ultimate conclusion. The consummation is an eternal gulf between the children of the covenant of works and heirs of grace. This consummation comes--it surely comes--it quickly comes. Angels are ready to sound the final blast. Listening ears are waiting for the trumpet's clang. At any moment it may shake the universe. Then all, who have breathed life's breath, must take their place. Each must hear, "Come," or "Depart." Each must have a blessed welcome or be cast out.

Reader! be wise. Anticipate the dread result. Live, as did Jerome, with this trumpet's echo always in your ears. In envisioning thought, then, let the white throne be set--let the all-righteous Judge be seated--let the recording books be opened--let all, who ever lived, stand at the bar--let him who writes--let all who lead, face the account, and meet the last day's scene.

Now sovereign Justice reins. Truth spreads revealing light. All masks now fall. Deception vanishes. Hypocrisy can no more deceive. The worse can no more seem the better cause. The sons of the Sinaitic code expect eternal life. On what plea? They have no plea but their own merits--their fulfillment of the law's demands. But the record of their days is continuous sin. Are these doings a portion of obedience? What are these passions--lusts--rebellious acts? What is the evil, which has soiled each hour, and stained each thought, and stamped transgression on the whole life's course! Guilt cannot be denied. Excuse there can be none. The law's reward has not been earned--what is the inevitable outcome? The curse must fall. Justice condemns. There is vast debt. No payment can be made. Then what can stop the sentence, "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." Matthew 22:12-13. The executioners are

ready. The cell is prepared. The chains are forged. The jailer receives his convicted prisoners. Transgressors are cast out. This is faint outline of the end. Scripture portrays it in these dreadful colors, that men may ponder and take heed. Reader! you can never say that clearest warning is not given.

CAST OUT FROM WHAT? There is now a long farewell to earth, and all that earth contains. Through life's short day unnumbered mercies strewed each path. The sun shone sweetly. The fanning breezes wafted delight. The groves re-echoed with the warbler's melody. The verdant meadows spread their soft carpet. Flowers charmed with fragrance. Fruits regaled with varied lusciousness. The outcasts no more taste these pleasures. The cup has fallen from their hand. Earth is forever gone.

There was much happiness in communion with fellow-man. The lively talk--the mirth of social hours--the friendly interchange of thought enchanted the vacant time. No friend will now be seen. The last smile has been smiled. The last enlivening word has died away.

Ordinances of religion brought some tranquil hours, although no saving profit. These privileges come no more. No chimes invite to worship. No sacred Scriptures tell of God's gracious will. No preacher proclaims Christ. No pulpit declares His dying love--His precious blood--His rising power--His willingness to save--His promise to receive all seekers of His grace. The Gospel's last note has sunk in silence. No returning Sabbaths bring repose. No sacred song gives solace. "Come to me" will never more be heard.

O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out.

Hope, also, at last is fled. It often came and whispered soothing things. It showed a glimmering prospect of penitence--amendment--pardon. It flattered, 'all may yet be well.' Where is hope now? It vanished with the yell, "Too late--too late!" It is transformed into despair.

Need I say, there is the absence of those lovely sights which cheer the mansions of the saved. No angels spread their sparkling wings around. No white-robed multitudes glitter with their crowns. No Christ is seen. No God reveals His glory. There is "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out.

All this is doleful gloom. But this is only negative. Absence of joy may not be agonizing pain. But a dreadful veil must be drawn back. Scripture sounds a more frightful note. It speaks in tender compassion--to warn, that we may flee--to urge, that we may escape the wrath to come. Reader! look yet again, and may the look be your salvation. Is darkness dismal--cheerless--disconsolate--a fit emblem of ignorance, misery, and filth? Over these realms an impenetrable pall of blackness, of darkness forever hangs. The darkness is so black, that blackness cannot be blacker. Is weeping a sign of wretchedness and woe? Here is weeping never ceasing to shed tears. Is wailing the bitter utterance of irrepressible distress? Here wailing is an ever-echoing wail. Does gnashing of teeth betray the upbraidings of remorse? Is it the sign of self-hating reproach? Here gnashing of teeth is unrelenting. Is there keen torture in the worm, that ever gnaws and never leaves its prey? Here the worm dies not. Does fire indicate extremest agony? Is it pain in most excruciating form? This fire is never quenched. The lost writhe terribly on beds of flame. They float in lakes of fire. Do they crave

one drop of water to cool tongues parched in agony? It may not be. A portion is presented to them--who can read and tremble not! "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb." Revelation 14:10.

What must that misery be, which the omnipotence of God puts forth all its might to intensify! No thought can imagine. No tongue can utter. But such the misery which groans in these dreadful dwellings. It is an dreadful word, "He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Revelation 19:15. If this were solitary anguish, it still would be anguish in the extreme. But the misery is multiplied by the wide fellowship of partners. On all sides there is companionship of woe. The eye can only rest on others in like torments. The ear can only hear the wails of fellow-sufferers. Shall it be said that these descriptions are shadowed out in figurative terms? Let it be granted. But what is gained by such concession? The Spirit cannot exaggerate or overpaint. The reality will not be fainter than the picture scene. No, rather language fails to show the total truth. No painting can depict the fire's touch, or show the serpent's deadly sting, or indicate the lion's rage. So no word-painting can fully show the misery of the lost. O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out! But pains may patiently be born if reprieve gilds the horizon, or ease be seen in the distance. But there the tide ever flows at fullest height, and cessation never comes. Millions of years bring no end nearer, and millions succeeding millions is but commencement of interminable woe. There is one constant present, and that present is overflowing cup of torment. O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out! But when Ishmael is cast, out, the true heir remains. To this woe there is bright contrast. Look to the right hand of the Judge. The sheep of His pasture are there folded. The children of the covenant of grace await the outcome. Their cruel adversary exhibits all their sins. He establishes their guilt. He demands their full punishment. They deny no charge. But they present a plea for acceptance. It is simple, but unanswerable. Their plea is Christ. Their lives show that by the Spirit's power faith became the inhabitant of their hearts. This faith united them to Christ. It made them very members of Him their glorious Head. Thus, all His sufferings were their sufferings. All His work was their work. In Him they died. In Him they paid the law's extremest penalty. In Him they wrought out complete obedience. None can lay anything to their charge. Christ's death is full acquittal. Christ's life is a spotless robe concealing every sin. They ask no mitigation of the law's just claims. But they ask life and heaven on the sure grounds that Jesus is the law-fulfiller. They prevail. "God is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." Romans 3:26. They have full right to all which Jesus earned and purchased. They receive it. The accuser is silenced. They hear the welcome, "Come you blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. Theirs are the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

Reader! in thought behold them in their blest abode. Holy Spirit! in tender love illumine the picture which Your Word presents! The realms are bright in one expanse of light. Are the sun's rays lovely? But these rays are darkness to this light. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 21:23. On earth their eyes were oftentimes charmed with scenes of beauty. But what is the best beauty of a sin-soiled world compared to the charms which now invest their homes! How glorious are the abodes which infinite love and power have prepared! "I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. To believers earth is the home of many griefs. The body often droops in languor.

Racking pains harass the frame. Hunger and thirst afflict. Tears furrow the cheek. Sighs cause the breast to heave. But the whole mass of sorrow is now abolished. They hunger no more. They thirst no more. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Isaiah 33:24. "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 are passed away." Revelation 21:4. O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom. On earth, temptation makes days bitter. There are constant groans from "the body of this death." "The law of the members wars against the law of the mind." "The flesh lusts against the spirit." Inbred corruptions soil every act, and banish peace and awaken self-aborrence. Now there is freedom from all the presence--all the touch--and all the sense of evil. The Spirit can never be more vexed. Ingratitude and unbelief are totally extinct. The redeemed are as holy as God is holy. They are as pure as Jesus is pure. They are as far from sin as heaven is from hell. The travelers along the narrow way are often desolate. Their friends are few. They rarely enjoy holy fellowship. Their dwellings are in loneliness. But now what multitudes surround them! All rejoicing in the same joy--all clothed in the same robes--all singing the same song--all breathing the same love--all washed in the same blood--all ascribing their full salvation to God and to the Lamb. Blessed company! They sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, apostles, evangelists, and the noble army of martyrs, and the valiant body of reformers, and all who ever loved, and served, and gloried in the blessed Jesus! O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom! The greatest solace in life is the felt presence of Jesus. It is the joy of joys to hear His voice in the Word, and to catch a glimpse of His smile. But mists intervene. The bride seeks Him, but she finds Him not. In heaven there never can be separation. Eternity is uninterrupted access to Him. There is no eclipse to the sight of the King in His beauty. The redeemed follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They walk with Him in white. They eat and drink at His table in His kingdom. They are forever with the Lord. The thought is too much for earth. What must the consummation be!

O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom.

01.21 ESAU

ESAU "Esau despised his birthright." Genesis 25:34

Read the annals of the world. They exhibit sinful parents and their sinful sons. Read the annals of God's chosen seed. It is not an unblemished page. The graceless sit in families of grace. Faith flows not in the stream of human blood. The saints are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13.

Behold the family of Isaac. The members are few. Twin sons share their parent's love. We cannot doubt, that childhood's culture was the same to both. Each would be similarly taught the fear and love of God. But one was a child of darkness--one of light. The Spirit sounds a clear note, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? says the Lord--yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Malachi 1:2-3.

Early they show most diverse tastes. Esau's delight was in the fields. Robust exercise was his delight. It was his joy to climb the mountain and to scour the plain. His venison fed Isaac with dainty fare. The quiet Jacob cared not to leave the tents. Near to his home he watched the flocks. He lived beneath the mother's eye, and thus secured the mother's heart. She, also, would often ponder the divine announcement, "The elder shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23. She would anticipate her beloved's sure pre-eminence. Such the domestic picture of the patriarch's home. A memorable day arrives. Jacob had gathered some red beans, and had boiled them into porridge. Esau suddenly appears, faint from the chase, and ravenous for food. The lentils are prepared. His appetite is keen. Desire is strong. His strength is exhausted. Rapidly--impatiently--voraciously he cries, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew you've made." verse 30. Jacob's besetting sin quickly appears. He presents no generous gift. He shows no readiness to renovate his worn-out brother. His thought is wholly selfish. He keenly marks his opportunity. He coldly trades with his advantage. He makes unnatural merchandise of his red stew. He knows the birthright is with the elder. But now he can tempt the elder to surrender it. His lips frame the base proposal, "Sell me this day your birthright." verse 31. The weary Esau took counsel only of weak flesh. He felt his strength was quivering in life's socket. "Behold I am at the point to die." Without this food I must expire. The birthright cannot extend my days. I speedily go hence, "and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" verse 32. The calculating Jacob urges his famished brother. The barter must have the ratification of oath. "Swear to me this day." Hesitation ceases. Appetite prevails. "He swore unto him--and he sold his birthright unto Jacob." verse 33. The base bargain is complete. Jacob gives payment of his bread and stew. The profane Esau greedily devours. He gives no sign of penitence or shame. He shows no grief for his degraded state. He mourns not his primogeniture thus lost. He is as lighthearted as before. "He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way." verse 34. He bears, indeed, another name to mark the transaction. "Therefore was his name called Edom." verse 30. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." verse 34.

What is God's verdict of this deed? The Holy Spirit is not silent. He brands it as "godless." It bears forever the stigma of impious disdain of sacred privilege. It is black with the guilt of trampling holy things beneath the foot of scorn. "Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He

traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal." Hebrews 12:16

What were these rights of the first-born? Scripture gives clear intimations. There was temporal pre-eminence. He was endowed with a double portion of territorial possession. There were, moreover, spiritual privileges. In patriarchal family the firstborn had distinguished dignity. He was revered as ruler in the house. To him belonged the teacher's chair. And until Divine appointment limited the priestly office to the line of Aaron, he discharged the holy functions of religion. These rights were heaven's own grant, and therefore to be highly prized. Rashly to relinquish them was to disdain the ordinance of God. It was profane to think lightly of all-wise decree. But in the family of Abraham the birthright granted much more. The wondrous promise of Canaan was linked to it. The firstborn was the heir of this domain. The spiritual import of this land was seen by faith. "All these faithful ones died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth. And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them." Hebrews 11:13-14, Hebrews 11:16. Thus to despise the birthright involved contempt of the celestial kingdom.

There was more than this. "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. The great Redeemer shall be Abraham's lineal offspring. When the grand Deliverer shall arise to roll back the curse--to cancel sin--to give adoption to God's family--to perfect salvation, He shall be Abraham's heir. Oh! wondrous privilege! Oh! transcendent pre-eminence! To be progenitor of a long line of mighty monarchs is an empty bubble compared to such glory. To sell the birthright is to barter more than angelic honor!

Thus Esau was godless. We read--we marvel--we pity--we condemn. We reason, surely never was folly like this folly! This sin surpasses sin! But, Reader! perhaps you are this man. The race of Esau yet lives, and will live, until the Lord returns. Do not multitudes profanely scorn the glorious privileges and prospects of Christ's Gospel? He calls by the ministry. He invites in the Word. They care not to hear. He sends repeated messages to tell of the rich inheritance. "They despise the pleasant land. They believe not his word." Psalms 106:24. Ambassadors cry aloud. "We beseech you in Christ's stead." They respond, No, no, we rather choose earth's emptiest pottage. Ah! fools! Ah! worse than fools!

If any Esau should read this page, may the Beacon touch his besotted heart! May the good Spirit open his eyes to see the riches of the glory which is thus scorned! It is a noble prayer, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him--the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Ephesians 1:17-18. Let us not cease to press the petition until the answer fully come. The prospect is a boundless ocean of supremest joys. The eye is dazzled. No tongue of men or angels can tell the half. The believer feels, but his full heart cannot give utterance.

Among these treasures, the most sparkling gem is total obliteration of all sin. Who can tell the ecstatic rapture to an accusing mind to know that the blood of the Cross thoroughly wipes out every stain! Who can depict the relief to a burdened conscience, when the assurance comes, that

the all-searching eye no more discerns a speck of guilt! Ten thousand worlds are dust, compared to the faithful saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow--though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18; and again, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:34. In the catalogue other blessings without number shine. There is refuge from the law's tremendous curse. This curse is rightly due to every breach of the pure code of love. But it is all expended on the surety-head of Jesus. The avenging sword is buried in His breast. Heaven is now thrown open, and it is a blaze of love. There is the joy of reconciliation--the serene delight of looking up to God, as a Father arrayed in loving smiles. There is adoption into His family. There is no more distance or estrangement, but heirdom of heaven--joint-heirdom with Christ. To believers the pledge is given, "All things are yours--things present and things to come." Life is yours, that you may receive grace. Death is yours, that you may be crowned with glory. Providences are yours, that all things may work together for your good. Angels are yours, to encamp around your path, and to render unseen, but not less certain, ministry. A throne of grace is yours, that you may boldly tell out all your fears, and all your need, and find supplies of mercy and support. The glorious Word is yours, to teach--to warn--to comfort. All the precious promises are yours--at every moment inviting you to the brightest of bright prospects. God's righteousness is yours, to cover all your defilement. It is so pure, that Omniscience can discern no flaw. It is so worthy, that God throughout eternity cannot sufficiently reward. The Holy Spirit is yours, to open your eyes to your own deformity--to reveal the full glories of the great Redeemer--to unstop your ears to hear His wooing voice--to expand your heart to receive Him in all His fullness--to quicken you to serve Him with all your powers--to strengthen you to resist temptation's wiles--and to love holiness with all your soul and might. What can a sinner need, which shines not in the Gospel! What can God bestow, which is not pledged and laid up in Jesus for all who cleave to Him in faith!

Reader! despise not such inestimable good. Barter it not for unsubstantial pleasures, which perish while you touch. What can present a rivalry? Is it the allurements of sense? They who grovel in such mire, sink to the level of the beasts and brutes. Are you tempted by the glittering bait of earthly honor--are you seeking to touch the pinnacle of human fame, and to receive the incense of poor man's applause? Do riches captivate? Bring forth the righteous scales. In one heap all these baubles. Pile them up high. Let all the glory of the world be gathered. In the other place "the unsearchable riches of Christ"--"the exceeding weight of glory"--"the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore"--"the righteous crown, which fades not away." Say, which scale prevails!

Sell not such wealth for a mere nothing. Suppose you gain these worldly trifles to the utmost limit of desire. Suppose your cup of honors, wealth, and sensual joys to overflow. How long will the possession please? Sickness--disease--appear. Means of enjoyment fail. The airy phantom vanishes. The bubble bursts. Misery bewails, "I have grasped a shadow."

Let it be granted, that you quaff this goblet with strength unimpaired through years of marvelous extent. But what is the longest life?--a span--a hair's-breadth--a vapor. What is your final profit? Think of the death-bed without hope--the grave without redemption--the judgment-seat without a plea for pardon--eternity without salvation--the soul departing without Christ. Think of the never-dying anguish--the tortures of the upbraiding conscience. Ah! the bitterness of the reflection, 'Once the cross was erected in my view, and Christ was preached, and heaven depicted. But I despised the Gospel-tidings. I bartered my soul, and scorned the heavenly portion.'

Remember, also, your choice is free. The tempter may tempt--but he cannot compel. Seductions may be strong--but motives to resist are stronger far. You are self-slain when you prefer the pottage to Christ. Jesus drags to light self-will as the misleading traitor, "You WILL not come unto me that you might have life." John 5:40. It is your deliberate cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Not Christ--not holiness--not heaven--but this world, and this world's flimsy tinsel.

Esau speaks once more. It is a voice of keenest anguish. Rebekah and Jacob conspire to rob him of his father's blessing. When he knew his loss, "he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. Have you but one blessing, O my father? bless me, even me also, O my father; and Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." Genesis 27:34-38. It is now too late. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Hebrews 12:17. The hour will come when the door of mercy will be shut--when the gates of blessing can no more open--when prayer is no more heard--when wrestling entreaties avail nothing--when tears no more can move, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Proverbs 1:28. But that day is not yet fully come. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Revelation 3:20. Open quickly. Tomorrow it may be too late. Another call invites you. Heed it. Oh, heed it. It may be the last.

01.22 REBEKAH

REBEKAH "Upon me be your curse, my son." Genesis 27:13

God's Word is a rich treasure. The value reaches its pinnacle, when we believe surely that each sentence is the Spirit's gift. Proofs of this are large and perfect. But there are incidental evidences of the Bible's truthfulness, which are of wondrous worth. These should be diligently sought and dearly prized. They add stability to faith. Among these transparent honesty is not the least. The characters, moving across its stage, are not arrayed in unreal robes. They are not exhibited in imagination's garbs. They shine not in fictitious beauty. They soar not above the level of mortality. They appear as men and women born in the family of a fallen race. As we read, we feel this story is truth's record. An inventive pen would probably have decked the patriarchs in superhuman excellence. They would be shown as almost gods on earth. At least, no failings would be made conspicuous. Their walk would not be stumbling. No falls would soil their robes with mire. But the plain candor of the Book depicts them as they really were. Thus Abraham errs and errs again. He stoops to low subterfuges, which heroes of a fabulous romance would scorn. Isaac follows, and in a life of calm repose betrays, that, with his father's grace, he had his father's faults.

Rebekah, partner of his deceit at Gerar, conspires to deceive her husband, well in age. Jacob's career is foul with dishonest subtleties. These are indisputable marks of a true narrative.

These sins, also, stand out prominently as signals. They prove how surely Satan will assail God's sons--that no high walk is higher than his shafts can reach--that no heart is so armed with grace as to be invulnerable to his wiles. They cry, 'let saints beware of grievous falls.' They warn, as rocks against which many a gallant vessel has perilously dashed--as quicksands entangling the unsuspecting crew--as vipers lurking in a verdant path--as foes concealed in secret ambush--as pitfalls in the upward road. These are monuments proclaiming the foe's triumphs and man's weakness. We read in them, "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"-- Psalms 39:5. They endear, also, that precious blood, in which the believer washes his every act--his every word--his every thought. Then the stains become white, yes, whiter than the newly fallen snow.

Thus we approach Rebekah's grievous sin. Old age, with stealthy step, has overtaken Isaac. Decrepitude prevails. The keen eye is dim. Objects are involved in mist. The sight is clouded in imperfection.

Reader! become familiar with the inward sight of Christ. Live gazing with rapturous faith on the Invisible. He will not withdraw, when outward sense decays. His countenance most brightly shines, when need is greatest. Darkening nature intercepts not heavenly rays. The sightless Isaac thinks of his earthly end. The priestly office is his right. He must discharge it, and pronounce the priestly blessing.

We see the type of Jesus. He came to bless. He lived to bless. As the true High Priest He ascends with blessings falling from His lips. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them." Luke 24:50. Happy the parent, who bequeaths a legacy of blessing!

Happy children, who receive the rich inheritance of blessing!

Good and holy is Isaac's wish to bless. Self-willed--presumptuous--ungodly is his resolve to bless him, whom God had not blessed. His heart disposed him to prefer his eldest, Esau. The venison pleased the palate. But he had heard God's clear decree, "The elder shall serve the younger." In his own case the elder, Ishmael, had been put aside. He knew, also, that Jacob had obtained the birthright. But paternal fondness tempts him, and he strives against Divine arrangement.

Esau is sent forth in haste to kill the deer--to dress the dainty dish, and then to kneel before the blessing patriarch. When will vain man learn to bow in reverence before God's counsels? If He decrees, not all the wisdom of the wise--not all the shrewdness of the shrewd--not all the cunning of the crafty--not all the might of the most mighty can negate--"From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do. No one can reverse my actions." Isaiah 43:13. If He speaks, result is sure. All power is His. All creatures are instruments to execute His will. This truth is engraven on the marvelous sequel. Dark lines proclaim man's grievous errors, and God's prevailing mind.

Rebekah overhears the patriarch's converse. She marks the speed of Esau to the field. Uneasiness assails her startled mind. What! shall the paternal blessing rest on Esau's head! What! shall he thus be raised in power and dignity above Jacob! Can I prevent? Yes. There is time. The means are mine. The means, indeed, are artifice and deceit; but they will help the destined end.

She reasons--she resolves--she half persuades herself, that sin is no sin, and deceit no deceit, if ultimate good shall be the issue.

Alas! how blinding is the devil's power! How tremendous is his skill to smooth the downward path! How easily he dresses evil in the garb of right! He insinuates the falsehood, "that ends may sanctify the means--that no plan can be wrong, by which right is subserved."

Rebekah's willing steps are snared. She quickly finds Jacob. Success depends upon speediness. How many fall, because there is no pause for thought. Reflection oftentimes brings escape. She relates her husband's purpose. She states her plot to outwit. Who will not tremble, when they see a mother tempting, and a son entrapped? The wary Jacob at first hesitates. He scruples, not because the deceit is hateful to his soul--not because he loathes the crime of cheating an aged parent--not because of impious presumption in diverting God's purposes from their own channel--but lest detection should unmask him--lest failure should ensue--lest, discovered by natural unlikeness to his brother, he should not only lose the blessing, but should be blasted by a curse. He hates not the sin, because it is sin; but he mistrusts it, lest it should not prosper. He will embrace the viper, if it has no latent sting.

Rebekah, intent to carry out her scheme, presents her head to bear the curse. The dreadful words are heard, "Upon me be your curse, my son--Help me, and if sufferings come they shall be mine." She persists, reckless of the future. How truly is sin's path a rapid rushing down a steep descent! No further hesitation checks. The treacherous project progresses. The goats are slain. The savory food is prepared. Jacob is masked in clothing not his own. His hands are roughened by the skins of goats. His neck is similarly disguised. Thus he draws near. His lips tremble, "My father." Isaac, surprised at the quick return, replies, "Here am I--who are you, my son?" Then the bold lie is heard, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." Genesis 27:19. Alas! that words so false should

fearlessly be uttered! When once the sluice is opened, impetuous torrents have resistless course. A small spark falls, and wide-spread conflagration blazes. Lies must be hid by lies. Truth's path forsaken can hardly be regained. Sin speeds with lightning speed. The father marvels and, inquires, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" How daring is impiety! The holy name of God is now brought in to bolster up the fraud, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." The cautious parent desires evidence, that Esau is before him. His eyes help not. But he desires to test by feeling. The skins deceive. But still the voice betrays. Therefore the clear question is clearly put, "Are you my very son Esau." Genesis 27:24.

Ah! what a moment! Will he persist in this unfilial treachery? Will he add sin to sin? Will he upraise the topstone to this pyramid of evil? Will he lay darker colors on this base iniquity? Will not his heart relent? Will he not loathe his vileness and retract? Ah! no. The barrier is crossed. He rushes onward. "Are you my very son Esau? and he said, I am." The father, no longer doubtful, eats of the food, and drinks of the offered goblet. He invites his child to the paternal caress, "Come near now, and kiss me my son." His heart is cheered. His spirit is revived. In flow of glowing language he heaps the mightiest blessings on the deceiver's head-- Genesis 27:28-29.

Still, Gods purposes prevail. The blessing was decreed to Jacob. On Jacob it fully falls. Thus in a dense maze of human evil, heaven's plan is furthered. There is much to perplex and to distress, but one fact remains intact. God must be true. No vileness on man's part can intercept the current of his settled plans. The mother's hateful sin is not the less--sin must be sin, whatever be the motive and result; but sin, however grievous, will form no barrier to God's arrangement. In after days, when God's pity planned relief to the parched sons of Israel, Moses received direct command to take his rod, and to speak to the rock before their eyes. It was promised that the yielding stone should pour forth streams obedient to the voice. Moses impatiently adopts his own course. He follows the angry dictates of his own course. He is not content to act submission. He smites the rock. He smites it twice. He speaks, moreover, but in terms of passion, to the rebel people. Thus Moses sinned. But will his sin hold back the destined mercy? Will the camp lose the blessing? No. God's pity is still pitiful. The waters flow. The thirsty are refreshed. But Moses must bear his sin. His feet shall never tread the promised land. Bye-ends intercept not Jacob's promised blessings.

Reader! take warning. Leave God to work His will in His own way. Take not the rudder from His hand. Anticipate not; but meekly follow. His ways are always right. So is His time always the best. "If the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Habakkuk 2:3. If Samuel lingers, let not Saul usurp his office. To wait is wisdom. Impatience frets to evil. Tear up each root of doubt. The noxious weed will quickly spread, and raise a crop of trouble.

If Rebekah had meekly paused--if in submissive patience she had calmly left the matter to her God, the blessing would have been most sure. Her conscience would have received no wound. Following troubles would not have saddened her last days. Now what sorrows come! Esau, enraged at the deceit, proclaims his purpose to slay the supplanter. He only pauses until death closes the eyes of Isaac. He thinks the time is very near. "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." Genesis 27:41. The affrighted mother plans to remove her much-loved son. She hurries him beyond the reach of murderous design. She counsels him to flee to Laban. She thinks the absence will be brief. "Tarry with him a few days, until your brother's

fury turn away." Genesis 27:44, but were the days few? He wears out weary years in hard service. Aged Rebekah must lie down and die. In her decline no son is near to cheer. Her dying eye rests not on the beloved face. His voice soothes not. He is far off. He has indeed the blessing; but the mother sees him no more. If she had fully trusted God, how joyous might her last hours have been!

Jacob deceives; but frauds pursue him. In the house of Laban he is the victim of a wily scheme. In his declining years his sons conspire to cheat him. He had used the skins of goats to delude, so the blood of goats is used to mislead him--Then Joseph's brothers killed a goat and dipped the robe in its blood. They took the beautiful robe to their father and asked him to identify it. "We found this in the field," they told him. "It's Joseph's robe, isn't it?" Their father recognized it at once. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal has attacked and eaten him. Surely Joseph has been torn in pieces!" Genesis 37:31-33.

It is a solemn word, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Numbers 32:23.

Sometimes the scourge proclaims its mission. The punishment bears inscription of the offence. It tells loudly the evoking cause. In her son's death the conscious mother saw deserved wrath. "Are you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" 1 Kings 17:18. Adonibezek, maimed as he had maimed others, piteously wails, "As I have done, so God has requited me." Judges 1:7. Mark the end of Jezebel. She had caused dogs to lick the blood of Naboth, and in the self-same place her blood is licked by dogs. David sins foully, and foul evil soon pollutes his house. He sins in resolving boastfully to parade his nation's numbers. Immediately a pestilence sweeps seventy thousand of his subjects from the earth. Haman plots Mordecai's death. A lofty gallows is upraised. Who is the victim? Who dies there in ignominy? The king, enraged with Haman, issues the mandate, "Hang Haman thereon." Esther 7:9.

There is a guilty church, drunk with the blood of saints. What is the cup which it must shortly drain? It is the cup of blood. "You are just in sending this judgment, O Holy One, who is and who always was. For your holy people and your prophets have been killed, and their blood was poured out on the earth. So you have given their murderers blood to drink. It is their just reward." Revelation 16:5-6.

Reader! be wise. Seek only to know God's will. Strive only to walk in His way. In devious paths misery lurks. Happy the walk when holy means conduce to holy ends! Let God's commands be our one motive--His word our rule--His Spirit our guide--His glory our aim. So only can we hear the glad welcome, "Well done!"

01.23 JOSEPH'S BRETHREN

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN

They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Genesis 42:21

Sin is altogether vile. Its mildest look is loathesomness. It always frowns a hideous monster. Its weakest breath is poison. Its feeblest step treads down God's lovely law. But guilt has shades. Iniquity has diversities of stature. In some sins we see the crimson dye--the giant form--the condensation of all evil. They seem the cage, in which all foul birds flutter--the field, in which all weeds rankle. In this class are ranked the violations of nature's ties--transgressions against domestic bonds. Such enormity is full-grown in Cain. His hands are stained with the blood of his mother's son. It frightfully reappears in Joseph's brethren.

Reader! we must not shun this hateful picture. But it is sweetly relieved. A halo of Gospel-light surrounds it. Joseph suffers cruelly. Sin acts its direst part. But at every turn Jesus shines forth. We loathe the evil, while bright foreshadowings of salvation's scheme intermingle holiest delight. In this study faith weeps and joys. The Beacon saddens, while the interwoven Gospel cheers. The opening story names Joseph as his father's dear delight. "Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children." Genesis 37:3. He was the first-born of Rachel--his heart's joy. The birth was late, when hope had almost ceased to hope. Attractive qualities, also, made the youth more dear. The pious love commands all praise. But its display was ill-considered. In fallen nature passions soon lose just balance. The brothers mark this partiality. The sight is wormwood to their suspicious minds. The parent's preference kindles their jealousy. Dry leaves flare when a slight spark falls.

They hate him, also, because their vicious conduct finds no congeniality in him. He shuns their evil and complains.

Instantly the type shows Jesus. The Father's voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son." Matthew 3:17. The Spirit witnesses, "Your holy child Jesus." Acts 4:27. "You love righteousness and hate iniquity." Psalms 45:7.

Reader! it is well to treasure up each indication of our Lord--"the chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely One." He sparkles throughout Scripture, as stars in the clear skies.

Soon a fond act augments the discontent. The father decks him in a coat of many colors. They err not, who discern a mystic meaning in this robe. Reuben had vilely sinned. The birthright was revoked. Jacob's desire gives it to his Rachel's first-born. The robe--the emblem of the first-born's privilege--seems to announce this. In it the brothers saw the pre-eminence of the younger--Their aversion strengthens. Their tones--their words--betray their spite. "They could not speak peaceably unto him." Genesis 37:4. Behold our High Priest appears in His priestly garb! "In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man clothed with a garment down to the

foot." Revelation 1:13. "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Psalms 45:8.

Next, in the visions of the night a marvel is revealed. While reaping with his brothers, his sheaf exalts its head--their sheaves make lowly reverence. He relates this dream. The obvious meaning embitters the previous enmity. They reply, "Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" Genesis 37:8. The waters of bitterness rise higher. Again, we see our blessed Jesus--we hear the adversaries' proud rejection, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19:14.

Another vision quickly follows. The foreshadowing is the same. The colors are more clear. The sun--the moon--and the eleven stars bow before him. This also he divulges. The breach is widened. The envy maddens.

Soon the evil passions find vent. The brothers remove their flocks to distant pasture. Jacob sends Joseph to bring tidings of their welfare. He is directed to their tents at Dothan. He there hastens. They discern him afar off. They perceive their opportunity. Satan, also, knew his time. He enters mightily into their ready hearts. He suggests. They yield. They plot to slay him. Thus the Jews took counsel to put Jesus to death. They exclaim, "Behold this dreamer comes?" Again the antitype appears, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." Matthew 21:38. They resolve to cast him into some pit. They jeer, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." The counterpart is seen at Calvary. "You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself." Matthew 27:40. "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross." verse 42. "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." verse 49. They plan a murder to defeat the dreams. Their sin promotes fulfillment. The Jews thus purposed Christ's destruction. They murder, and thus verify the types--the prophecies--and the final triumph.

Reuben desires to save him. He resists not openly. He suggests expedient to deliver. Pilate similarly knew that the Chief Priests had delivered Him for envy, and weakly strove to rescue. They strip Joseph of his coat. So the crude soldiers take Christ's garments. In vain the youth beseeches. Keen is the anguish of his heart. They pitilessly disregard. He implores. They are obdurate, and cast him barbarously into the pit.

Again we hear the voice of Jesus. "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the deeps." Psalms 88:6. Again we see deliverance. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit." Psalms 40:2. Through the good hand of God the pit is dry. Thus instant death is averted. The heartless brothers sit down to eat and drink. The cruel Jews, in hard unconcern, "sitting down watched him there." Matthew 27:36.

Now merchants appear journeying towards Egypt. Judah reasons, our brother dying in the pit is gainless. His blood, also, will accuse. To sell him is a present profit and less guilt. He will live, and we, unstained by blood, shall be enriched. Consent is ready. The bargain is soon made. Twenty silver coins are paid. Joseph is carried down to Egypt. Who can see Judah's covetous desire, and not discern the traitor Judas!

They, who cared little for the tears of Joseph, next hasten to agonize their father. They dip the coat in blood. They carry it to Jacob. They bid him mark the stains, and to conclude a probable event. How hardening is sin! How downhill is its rapid course! The guilty brothers are more guilty sons. Unmoved at Joseph's misery, they are callous at their parent's woe. They will add patricide to their

guilt. They care not to bring down Jacob's aged hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Let the sequel of the youthful exile rapidly be marked. In his afflictions God extends His overruling hand. Jesus, also, shows His ever-present image. Egypt is reached. A sale is readily effected. An officer of the king becomes possessor of the captive. It soon appears that he is rich in heavenly favor. Prosperity, as a shadow, follows his steps. Hence, to trust him is his master's wisdom.

Faith is ever sorely tried. He is solicited to vile iniquity. But Satan pierces not his grace-armed heart. Revengeful criminations follow. Into the dungeon he is cast. Here the blessed Jesus appears "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His pure blamelessness scares not the tempter. Every Satanic art is tried. But still the pure Conqueror is defamed, as a "tax-collector and sinner." "They laid to my charge things that I knew not." Psalms 35:11. In the prison God deserts not His servant. Blessings can visit dungeons. Mercy can enter, when bolts and bars impede. Among the prisoners there are two of note--servants of the royal household. Each dreams a dream in the same night. Joseph interprets. In accordance, one is hanged, the other is restored to honor in the court. Is not Jesus thus "numbered with transgressors?" Is he not uplifted between two culprits?--one dies in hardened guilt--the other--wondrous trophy of the Cross--is snatched from perdition, and borne in triumph to the kingdom.

God sends a dream to Pharaoh. He is greatly troubled. The wise men of the land are baffled. They find not the meaning. Joseph's skill is now remembered. He is summoned. He unfolds the mystery of the night vision. He tells of coming plenty, and succeeding famine. He wisely counsels, let stores be gathered, and provision made. Pharaoh perceives his vast endowments. He exclaims, "Can we find such a one as this is--a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Genesis 41:38. Of Jesus we read, "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." John 3:34.

Joseph is raised to loftiest pre-eminence. The scepter of the realm is in his hands. The king makes him "Lord over all his house, and ruler over all his substance." Psalms 105:21. He sits in the highest seat. All knees must bow before him. Thus Jesus passes from the prison and the grave to the right hand of the Majesty on high. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Isaiah 9:6. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Psalms 2:6. He proclaims, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. The Spirit teaches, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Php 2:10-11.

Pharaoh divests not himself of all authority. "Only in the throne will I be greater than you." Genesis 41:40. Here we see the glorious consummation. The mediatorial kingdom will have a close. The purposes of grace will be completely accomplished. "Then comes the end and he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Happy for Egypt that Joseph ruled! Happy, thrice happy for the Church, that Jesus holds the scepter. On His throne He orders all things for supremest benefit. The earthly scene often seems perplexed. Confusion and disorder weave a tangled web. But the rule is in a mighty hand. He guides all providences to accomplish good. No sparrow falls, but by His will; and soon adoring lips will gratefully proclaim, "He has done all things well." Mark 7:37.

Joseph's especial work is to distribute food. When famine grimly stalks throughout the land--when the staff of life is broken--when means of relief all fail--the royal mandate is, "Go unto Joseph--what he says to you, do." Genesis 41:55.

Thus Jesus feeds His flock. His open treasure-house fills the hungry with good things. He cries. "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isaiah 55:2.

He provides all viands for the needy. It is far easier to count the ocean's sands, than to calculate the never-failing plenty of His table. Pre-eminently He gives Himself--"My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." John 6:55. Faith is the eye which sees this nourishment--the hand which takes it--the palate which digests it. Away with the monstrous figment of imagination--that carnal lips press divine substance. The very thought is childish superstition. Let reason, scripture, and experience speak. They all reject such pitiful absurdity. Faith only knows the mystery of the God-man's body broken on the cross--the God-man's blood shed to atone. The new-born soul feasts spiritually, and is strengthened. Thus the true Joseph deals out celestial stores. "I am that Bread of Life." John 6:48.

Crowds hasten to Egypt's one store-house. But though earth teems with need, few will apply to Jesus. In Joseph's day, the way is long, and the journey is beset with perils. But hunger impels, and they delay not. To famished sinners the feast is spread before their very door. Still they will not stir and take. The food in Egypt must be bought. The Gospel-feast is "without money and without price." The invitation sounds, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." Song of Solomon 5:1. The famine spreads beyond the Egyptian confines. It enters the tents of Jacob. Ghastly hunger sits at his table. The tidings come that grain abounds in Egypt. Jacob, retaining his Benjamin, sends forth his sons. They are suppliants to Joseph. He recognizes them, though they discern him not. Thus Jesus knows and ever knew his own. His eye yearns over them in love, while they are ignorant of Him. Joseph deals roughly with them. Jesus oftentimes seems hard and harsh, while mercy is His real design. They are accused. They are immured in prison for three days. Their awakened consciences now sting. In their punishment, they read their former crime. Their sin finds them out. It grasps them with giant's grasp. They say one to another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Genesis 42:21.

Reader! see how past sins revive, and burst their long-closed tombs, and shake accusing heads, and tell their frightful tale, and prove that they are linked to everlasting wrath. The marvelous story ends marvelously. Jacob, and Benjamin, and all the patriarch's house stand humbly before Joseph. They see in the outcast youth the savior of their race. The dreams are true. There is no failure in all God's wondrous design. Egypt becomes a refuge. Thus Jesus brings the children of His love to a sure shelter. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." Beneath the cross is everlasting safety. Goshen is, also, a school of discipline. Thus by wise trials saints are fitted for their glorious home. Hard service prepares them for the crown.

Reader! turn not from this story without loathing--hating--abhorring sin. Touch it not. It stains like pitch. Once done, it will pursue and hunt you down. But adhere to Jesus. See Him resplendent throughout the warning of this Beacon. Adore Him as all grace--all mercy--all compassion--all love--all righteousness--and all salvation. He, and He only, can make clean--He, and He only, can give pardon--He, and He only, can upraise to heaven.

01.24 DEATH

DEATH "And he died." Genesis 5:1-32 This chapter celebrates the victories of DEATH. The conqueror unfolds his standard over a prostrate world. The chieftains of the elder age pass in review. DEATH meets them. They bow before him. Except Enoch, they all fall slain. DEATH plies his sting, and they cannot escape.

Reader! seek profit from this deathful page. The same destroyer still has like power. He tracks your steps. His eye rests on you. His dart is poised. He soon will overtake. His chilly hand will bear you away. Your life will cease. You will be numbered with the dead. The grave will cover you. You will moulder in the dust. The worms will have their food. Others will take your place. Your name will fade. The sun will rise, as before. Nature will still put on her blithesome robe. The birds will sing. The earth will bear her fruits. Man will go forth to toil--to pleasure and to sin. Your absence will make no lasting void. All will go on, as though you had never lived. Come, then, and be familiar with this leveler. Walk daily by his side. Let him be no stranger. Wise acquaintance turns his frowns to smiles. Grace makes this foe a precious friend.

Let us consider the womb which bore this mighty one. Whence came his being? In what cradle was he nursed? Who forged his fearful armor? Who braced him with such indomitable strength? Who gave him chains to bind all Adam's race? Who sent him forth resistless to subdue? At once a negative appears. Death forms no part of man's original. The first fabric had no flaw. It upraised its head grand in enduring life. It held no seed of imperfection or decay. Old age--decrepitude--disease--were not at first born with man's body. Mortality is not his necessary adjunct. Life possesses not in itself the ingredients of decline. But life depended on a sinless course. It was the comrade of obedience. If disobedience intervened, there must be penalty. The penalty was death. "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die" [dying you shall die] Genesis 2:17, Man fell. Transgression soiled him. Mortality ensued. The beauteous frame lost its unfading youth. Dust it was, and now to dust it must return. See then the cause of death. Sin brought in this ruin. The sting--the barbed point--the conquering weapon--the relentless shaft of death, is sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin--and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Romans 5:12.

Thus the poisonous stream is traced to its true source. The deep roots of the tree are found. The seed is seen, from which the withering crop springs. The culprit is detected and is dragged to light. Sin is the murderer. Sin worked the woe. Pile in one mass the countless dead, from Abel to this hour, and ask, Who slew all these? The clear reply is, sin.

Reader! can you read this, and not abhor the monster. SIN is the cause of all the evil which this earth has seen. It is the parent of all the misery yet to come. No tear bedews the cheek--no sigh rends the heart--no pain gives agony--no anguish gnaws, but sin effectuates all. Sin digs each grave. Sin clothes all mourners with their weeds. It marred a fair creation. It marks your body for dissolution. Take heed, lest it be ruin to your soul.

Let us now analyze more closely the vast tyranny of sin's firstborn--DEATH. See its effects upon that marvelous machine, man's body. It touches. Its touch is ruin. Decomposition instantly ensues. The vital powers wither. Animation is extinct. Motion is fled. The limbs freeze into icy marble. The luster of the sparkling eye is dim. It has no sight. The smell discerns no fragrance. The ear is deaf to melody. We lift the hand--it falls. We pierce the skin--it is insensible to pain. Expression no more brightens in the wan look. The blood no longer flows in warm current. The pulse no longer proclaims vital glow. The "silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, the wheel is broken at the cistern." Ecclesiastes 12:6. Decay invades the frame, and poisons it with effacing finger. The dearest friends shrink from the object of their tenderest love. Its presence cannot be endured. It must be buried out of sight. It must be hidden in kindred dust. Reader! yet a little while, death will turn you to this corruption. "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Isaiah 38:1.

See, then, the fruits of sin, and hate it as the origin of all woe. But limit not the thoughts of death to your own body. Take the widest range. View the whole race of man. Death tramples upon all. No station is too high for its assault. It hurls all monarchs from their thrones. No lowly hut escapes its entrance. It tears away the poorest from poverty's hardest bed. No genius can devise exemption. It annihilates the noblest intellect. It bears off the orator--the poet--the most skilled in arts and science--the hero from the battle-field--the statesman from the helm of empire. It respects not the hoary head. It strangles the infant at the mother's breast. It slays the bridegroom and the bride--the parent and the child--the merry and the sad. Its sway is universal. Within a century it extinguishes the earth of its inhabitants. Its ever-moving scythe knows no repose. Its sword has no scabbard.

It is, moreover, capricious in its work. When least expected, it is near. Sometimes it tarries long. No one can surely state the time--the place of its destroying-wound. Reader! "set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." But is this malady without remedy? Is this a night which has no morn? Is there no light behind this cloud? Is there no help? None, if our view be limited to earth. But look off to Jesus. In Him there is all help. He is far mightier than this mighty tyrant. He can recover victims from his grasp. He can snatch the prey from his fangs. He can snap his strongest chains. He can destroy the destroyer. He makes all His followers more than death's conquerors. He plants their feet upon his prostrate neck. He puts a new song into triumphant lips, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. Now in the house of pilgrimage the saints may cry in rapturous confidence, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." verse 57. This background, black with such blackness, throws into dazzling light the Gospel triumph. But here all language fails. No tongue can speak the glories of our Jesus. No glowing touch can picture His excellence. It were easier for color to outshine the sun--or painter's art to eclipse the sparkling diamond--or voice to surpass the thunder's roar, than for words to celebrate the victory over death. But let us calmly view the work of Jesus, and receive His comfort.

He appears on earth. His path is bright evidence that He is more than man. In the long chain of proof, He exhibits death utterly subdued. The cases, probably, were not few. Enumerating His wonders to John's disciples, He adds, "the dead are raised up." Matthew 11:5. We read, also, that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matthew 27:52-53.

Ponder the instances which are specifically given. The Spirit records them, as a cordial to our faith. May His power put life into the narrative!

JAIRUS had a youthful daughter. At tender age she sickens. While the afflicted father implores help, he hears that death has done its work. Surely now all hope is fled! Jesus replies, "Be not afraid, only believe." Mark 5:36. He adds, "She is not dead, but sleeps." The weepers know that life is gone. They laugh Him to scorn. Jesus reaches the lifeless bed. He takes the stiffened hand. He speaks, "little girl, I say unto you, Arise." Exert yourself, O death. Now, show your power. Retain your victim if you can. Brief is the conflict. Death yields. "Immediately, the little girl arose, and walked." Mark 5:42. Let faith crown the victor. He stands death's conqueror.

Again, when He draws near to NAIN'S gates He meets a mournful train. A young man is carried out, the only son of his mother, and she is a widow. Jesus speaks omnipotently, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise." Luke 7:14. Death cannot hinder. His shackles break. "He who was dead sat up and began to speak." Crown Him again. Death is a stricken captive in His mighty hands.

Once more, LAZARUS is sick and dies. He is carried to his rocky cave. Jesus returns. He commands, "Take away the stone." They remonstrate, that death had preyed upon its victim for four days, and that decay had done its work. Jesus cries loudly, "Lazarus, come forth." Death cannot counteract. The mandate compels obedience. Death relaxes its grasp. "He who was dead came forth." John 11:44. Crown Him again.

These instances confirm the fact, that Jesus is mighty to hurl death from his tyrannic throne--to shatter his fetters--to tread down his power. At His bidding the lifeless live again. A stronger proof remains. JESUS must die in His people's stead. In all things He must be their substitute--drink their cup--pay their penalty--occupy their place. Therefore He voluntarily yields to death. He bows the head and gives up the spirit. But through death He destroys him that had the power of death. Mark the outcome. If death has prevailing power, let it now be shown. Jesus is within its prison. Let death bar fast the gates--rivet the chains--detain its captive--display supremacy. It fails. It is conspicuously defeated. Jesus holds its boasted prowess in derision. It was not possible that He should be held by it. He strides forth from the tomb. He tramples down opposing barriers. He shows Himself again alive by many infallible proofs. Hear the victor's shout, "I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." Revelation 1:18

Adore Him by His title, LIFE. Life is the opposite to death. They cannot co-exist. Where one appears the other flees. But Jesus proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25. The Spirit responds, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Colossians 3:4. Thus He who is essential life, is life to His believing flock. He graciously repairs all traces of decline. No, His restoration infinitely exceeds the loss. Did sin destroy life in the soul? Are we by nature "dead in trespasses and sins?" He quickens and renews. While we are in our blood, He says unto us, 'Live.' By His Spirit He imparts new faculties--new energies--new being--new desires. The EYE, once dark, now opened, sees the wonders of the heavenly world--discerns things as they really are--admires God's glory, and the preciousness of Christ--and reads the significance of the Book of books. The EAR, once deaf, now hears the Spirit's call, and drinks in all the glorious promises, and listens to the Shepherd's guiding voice. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life." John 10:27. The

FEET, once fast in fetters of insensibility, now alert and active, run in the way of Gospel-rule, and climb unwearied the high hill of Zion, and continue steadfast to the end. The PALATE, once insensible to the Gospel-feast, now has quick relish for the heavenly manna. The blessed ones hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they are filled. Thus, while "the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:10. In Christ we spiritually live.

Consider the body. Here Jesus changes death's whole aspect. He dissolves its power. He takes away all icy terror from its sure approach. Death is no more a dreaded foe. It comes as a welcome friend. It is a jewel in the believer's casket. "All things are yours, life and death." It brings tidings that the chariot is ready to convey to endless rest--that the weary pilgrimage is ended--that Jesus is waiting to receive--that the ready mansions are prepared to welcome. Death is no loss to those whose life is Christ. Paul felt the truth, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Php 1:21. To depart and to be with Christ is far better. But who can tell what gain? who can measure the length and breadth of the far better! Death opens the cage-door, and the liberated spirit flies to the sight of Jesus. It dissolves the detaining clay, and instantly the spirit is in Paradise. It touches, and its touch is never-ending bliss. Thus Jesus is our Life. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits." Psalms 103:1. But the triumph of triumphs is not yet told. The consummating scene comes on speedily. Then will believers raise victorious heads. Their earthly frames will spring forth from their graves. A voice--a mighty voice--the voice of Jesus shall call, and they shall stand again on earth, a living multitude in living bodies. But oh! how changed! All traces of sin, and sin's hideousness, and sin's deformity, and sin's infirmity are forever gone. Corruption--dishonor--weakness disappear. Incorruption--glory--power, reign. The natural body is now spiritual--"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. Where is death? It is completely vanquished. It is utterly abolished. It is swallowed up in victory. "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:14.

Thus believers in resurrection-robos inherit life--the life of immortality--the life of glory--the life of blessedness in the presence of God and of the Lamb. Who will not love, and bless, and serve this great Redeemer--this glorious Conqueror--our thrice-precious Jesus! How perfect is His work! Its pinnacle cannot be higher. What adorations can we adequately render! Let every breath be praise. Let our few days on earth be wholly a thank-offering. Let our one study be to magnify His name. How little is all life-long service when weighed against the debt! But by the Spirit's help, let all we can do be most gladly done. And while abounding in the work of the Lord, let us ascribe all strength--all pardon--all salvation to free grace! The happiest pilgrimage on earth is living out of self, in Christ, to God--in sight of heaven--in hope of glory--smiling at death, and realizing endless life. Hallelujah! Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

02.00 - Family Prayers

Family Prayers

CHOICE EXCERPTS

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

02.000 - Choice Exerpts

CHOICE EXCERPTS The throne of grace

(by Henry Law)

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of Your glory! Blessing and honor and glory and power be to You, O Father of mercies, O God of all grace and love.

We thank You, that, as vile and sin-soiled as we are—we may come into Your immediate presence, and hold this converse with You, and commune with You concerning all our concerns, all our sins, and fears and hopes and desires.

We are astonished that we, poor sinners on earth, may speak directly to You—our great and glorious God, on Your throne in the heaven of heavens! How wondrous the thought that our poor breathings may fly on the wings of faith, and have instant access to the ears of Your grace!

We thank You that, in the multitude of Your tender mercies and the riches of Your pitiful compassion, You have been pleased to erect this throne of grace before which we now most humbly bow. We bless You that here, free grace reigns. We bless You that, at all times and in all places, we have open access to You through the blood of Your dear Son.

We bless You that the veil is open, and that in His great name we may ever approach and find You ready to hear, waiting to be gracious, arrayed in smiles of love, bidding us to touch the scepter of Your sovereign mercy, inviting us to pour out every need and desire of our hearts, and promising to give more than we can ask or think.

Grant, oh grant, that we may be wholly consecrated to You. May we, in spirit, soar far above earth. May our hearts be fast barred against admission of worldly thoughts or cares. Send Your peace, passing all understanding, as a flood into our anxious minds. May our meditations of You be sweet. May we drink deeply of the refreshing streams proceeding out of Your throne. May we feast on the heaven-sent manna of Your precious Word, and thus gather strength for the upward race.

Hear us, answer us, bless us we pray. All we ask is in Jesus' name, and for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time." Hebrews 4:16

~ ~ ~ ~

Calvary's stupendous scene!

(by Henry Law)

"It is finished!" John 19:30

Holy Father,

The heavens, the earth, and all that are therein, proclaim Your wondrous goodness. But Your love shines forth in surpassing luster—at Calvary's stupendous scene! At the cross we see Your heavenly grace removing the tremendous load of our iniquities from us—and heaping them all on Your beloved Son! We see Him standing as a transgressor in our place. We see Him, who knew no sin—made sin for us. We see Him, the all-holy One—accounted as a curse! We see Your justice leading the spotless Lamb to the slaughter—and rigorously demanding the full payment for all our sin-debt!

The avenging sword entered into His very heart! The stream of sin-atoning blood flows!

Full recompense was meted out!

Divine Justice can ask no more.

Charges against us are all obliterated.

The debt-book is cancelled. If our sins are searched for, they cannot now be found!

The spotless Lamb was devoted to all anguish—that we may be inheritors of all joy.

He was cast off from You—that we may be brought near to You.

He was treated as Your enemy—that we may be welcomed as Your friends.

He was deserted by You—that we may be received to Your everlasting favor.

He was surrendered to hell's worst—that we may attain heaven's best.

He was stripped—that we may be clothed.

He was wounded—that we may be healed.

He thirsted—that we may drink of the water of life.

He was in darkness—that we may rejoice in the glories of eternal day.

He wept—that all tears may be forever wiped from our eyes.

He groaned—that we may sing an endless song.

He endured all pain—that we may rejoice in unfading health.

He wore a crown of thorns—that we may receive a crown of glory.

He bowed His head in death—that we may lift up our head in heaven.

He bore earth's reproach—that we may receive heaven's welcome.

He was tormented—that we may be comforted.

He was made all shame—that we may inherit all glory.

His eyes were dark in death—that our eyes may gaze on unclouded brightness.

He died and rose—that we may escape the second death, and live forevermore.

O gracious Father, thus You spared not Your only begotten Son—that You may spare us! All our sins are cast behind Your back—all are buried in the ocean of reconciling blood!

We can only fall low and cry, "We adore You for the gift of Your Son as our substitute; for the death of Your Son as our ransom!"

Blessed Jesus, we have been standing beneath Your cross. The sight constrains us to the deepest humility. Our vile iniquity—is the cause of Your shame! We cannot fathom the sins which plunged You into such depths of unutterable woe! We cannot estimate the burden of wrath which thus crushed You. We cannot deny that the sins which stain us are evils of infinite malignity, since nothing but Your blood could wash away their guilty stains! As transgressors, we abhor ourselves before You.

While we humbly gaze—may we anxiously ponder, "Why, blessed Jesus—why did You thus die?" May Your precious answer sound through every part of our hearts and souls,

"I died—that you may not die.

I laid down My life—to purchase your life.

I presented Myself as a sin-offering—to expiate all your sins. My blood thus streams—to wash out all your guilt. The fountain is thus opened in My side—to cleanse you from all impurity. I thus endured your curse. I thus paid your debt. I thus rescued you from all condemnation. I thus satisfied divine justice for you!"

~ ~ ~ ~

We meekly knock at mercy's gate

(by Henry Law)

"All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind!" Isaiah 64:6

Holy Father, Almighty God,

We feel our weakness, our ignorance, our deep corruptions. We meekly knock at mercy's gate. Regard us in tender love—for Jesus' sake. Bend down Your ear—and grant Your smile.

We are blind—be our light.

We are ignorant—be our wisdom.

We are steeped in selfishness—pluck all SELF out of us.

In the deep sense of our guilt—we fly for refuge into the wounded side of Jesus! Be merciful, be merciful unto us—our only hope is in Your unfailing mercy. Our sins rise higher than the heavens—but Your merits on our behalf surpass the very heaven of heavens!

Our unrighteousness would weigh us down to hell—but Your glorious righteousness exalts us to Your heavenly throne!

All things in us call for our damnation—but all things in You demand our forgiveness.

We appeal, then, from Your throne of perfect justice—to Your throne of boundless grace!

Blessed Jesus, we hide ourselves in the sure covert of Your wrath-appeasing wounds!

Grant us to hear Your voice assuring us: that by Your stripes we are healed; that You have been bruised for our iniquities; that You have been made sin for us—that we might have Your divine righteousness; and that all our vile and grievous iniquities are forgiven and buried in the ocean of Your sin-concealing blood!

We are guilty—yet pardoned!

We are lost in ourselves—yet fully saved in You!

Enable us to cling firmly to Your cross—even as we now seek safety and repose beneath its sin-atoning shelter!

Let floods of sustaining grace from Your inexhaustible treasury, enrich our poor and weary souls.

If the enemy approaches, quicken our steps to flee into the wounds of Jesus as our sure refuge! Sheltered in the ark of safety, may we cease to tremble at all alarms. May You, our good Shepherd, lead us this day into the green pastures of Your refreshing Word, and cause us to lie down beside the rivers of Your divine comforts.

These prayers we humbly offer in the name of Jesus Christ, trusting only in His saving merits. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~ As we pass along the miry paths of life

(by Henry Law)

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens. From Your high throne behold with gracious eye—Your humble servants. We would not cross the threshold of this day, without committing ourselves, our souls and bodies, all our concerns, and all our friends—to Your guardian care. We know that we are not our own; we desire to be wholly Yours. Watch over us, keep us, guide us, direct us, sanctify us, and bless us. Incline our hearts to delight in Your holy ways. As the potter frames the clay—may You mold us wholly into the blessed image of Jesus! Make us vessels of honor, fitted for Your service. May our lips, as well-tuned harps, sound the sweet melody of Your heavenly praise. May all around take knowledge of us—that we have been with Jesus—that we are dead to earthly vanities—crucified with Christ—yet living by Your Spirit—trampling the world beneath our spurning feet—having no conformity to its lying vanities—but being transformed by the renewing of our minds—clad in Your whole armor—shining as lights in the dark world—and having "holiness to the Lord" conspicuous on our brow!

We do not know with what matters, we may be intermingled with this day. Let no evil soil our hands. Help us, as we pass along the miry paths of life—to keep our garments pure from all spot and stain. While transacting needful concerns, may our affections be high in heaven with You. As the flame tends upward, so may the fire of heavenly love in our souls, kindled and fanned by Your Holy Spirit—be ever ascending in a brighter and purer blaze!

Keep our gaze immovably fixed, not on the things which are seen—but on the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are unseen are eternal. Open our eyes to see "emptiness, fragility and mockery" inscribed on all earth's vanities! They cannot satisfy! As a shadow—they depart and flee away! While we grasp them—they are gone! May we view all things in the 'mirror of eternity!'

Impress on us the solemn truth, that in a little while, "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare!" May we move through this world, with one aspiration ever swelling within our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

~ ~ ~ We are tied and bound by its enslaving chain!

(by Henry Law)

"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

Blessed Jesus, we kneel before Your cross, humbly praying that through Your Spirit, power may come forth from it—to show us more deeply, the heinousness of our sin.

We see You laden with our iniquities. What must iniquity be—if there can be no pardon except that You should thus expire in agony! We see the outgoing severity of divine wrath. What must that evil be—which thus requires it! In that crown of thorns,

in those pierced hands and feet,

in those bleeding wounds,

in that bruised frame,

in that dying cry

—we are taught the enormity of our guilt!

We know that the worth of Your blood is infinite. Its precious value exceeds all thought! Infinite therefore must be the evil—for which it is the only ransom. Exceeding all thought must be the guilt—which requires such a great price! In Your death—we see the tremendous guilt of our sins. We see it, and we cast ourselves in the lowliest humility before You.

SIN is the malady which so sorely afflicts us. It cleaves to us as our very skin! It is born in our birth. It lives in our lives. It adheres to us when we lie down to die. It follows us as our very shadow! It intermingles in our every thought. When we go forth—it is by our side. When we come in—it still accompanies us. We are tied and bound by its enslaving chain! At Your cross—we are taught how terrible is the evil of sin. We see how unutterable is the wrath which it so righteously deserves.

Laden with our mountains of sins—we come to You for refuge. Looking to You, and striving to estimate more and more the riches of redeeming grace—we loathe and abhor ourselves—as fully sin-soiled and polluted. We marvel that . . . the sun consents to give us light,

the air consents to supply breath,

the earth consents to bear our tread,

the fruit tree consents to nourish us, Your creatures consent to serve our use.

Because of US—the whole creation groans and travails. Justly might all things, animate and inanimate, rise in abhorrence of us!

How much more do we marvel, precious Jesus—

that Your compassionate heart yearned over us,

that Your love hastened to our rescue,

that You endured all our curse, and all our guilt!

We bless You—while we hide our heads in deepest shame!

Gracious Savior, may the sight of Your unutterable sufferings excite in us—due detestation of this monster, sin! Oh, forbid it, that we should ever dally with that foe—which brought You to such anguish. Forbid it, that we should fondle in our breasts that viper—which stung You to death! Forbid it that we should lightly regard that sin, which kindled the flames of hell, from which nothing but Your dying love could snatch us! May we hate it with unrelenting hate! May we abhor it with abhorrence—only exceeded by the infinite love with which we desire infinitely to love You, our adorable Savior!

But while we pray that henceforth we may increasingly abominate all evil—we know that, without Your grace, our traitorous heart will look treacherously back. It has often deceived us. It has often betrayed us. Bind our truant heart more closely to Yourself. Never allow it to stray.

You are our only Redeemer. You are our only help. Repentance, and strength, and pardon are the free gifts of Your grace. We adore You that You are exalted to be Lord and Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Your people. Fill us, we beg You, with godly sorrow. From the depths of our humiliation—we cry aloud to the heights of Your mercy! Having died to deliver us from the punishment of our sins, we trust You to deliver us from their power. Hear us, we earnestly beseech You. Amen.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!" Psalms 139:23-24

~ ~ ~ Our tears of penitence cannot remove one blot!

(by Henry Law)

"Where sin abounded—grace did much more abound!" Romans 5:20

Heavenly Father,

Deepen in us this day, contrition for our vileness, as miserable sinners in Your sight. How often without resistance, have we floated down the stream of evil! We cloak not our wretchedness. Our lips are ready to confess—but our hearts are slow to feel, and our feet are reluctant to amend our

ways. We bring our hard hearts unto You. Break them by Your Spirit—and then bind them up by Your grace. Wound them to the core—and then pour in the Gospel-balm!

Such is the blindness of our fallen nature—that we cannot see sin's deformity, except as You are pleased to unmask it. Such is our deadness—that we cannot hate it, except as You shall graciously implant abhorrence. Such is our infirmity, that we cannot flee it—except as Your strength enables. Conscious of our total inability—we come to You for light, for help, for strength, for blessing.

Our sins beyond number stare us in the face! They are piled as mountain upon mountain. Their height reaches to the heavens! But their full extent is open only to Your omniscient eye. The burden of our known transgressions weighs us to the dust. But the burden is light, compared to the mass which the scales of Your justice hold. We see but little, because our light is partial and our sight is dim. How must we appear, as seen by You, before whom the very heavens are not clean! You charge Your holy angels with folly. What must be Your estimate of our polluted souls! Humbled for what we see and feel; fearful for what is known only unto You—we meekly cry, "Pardon all our sins—for Jesus' sake!"

We smite upon our breasts, as utterly unworthy of the least of Your gracious and unfathomable mercies. Hear now our cry, and work in us by the omnipotence of Your Holy Spirit, more profound and abiding repentance.

Give us more and more of that godly grief— which ever fears and trembles, and yet ever trusts and loves which is ever watchful and prayerful, and yet is ever confident and hopeful. May the remembrance of the sad past—quicken us to walk in entire newness of life. Grant that through the tears of penitence, we may see more clearly—the brightness and the glories of the saving Cross!

Oh! blessed Jesus—we flee to You! We cling to You. Our countless iniquities condemn us—but You will wash them all away! Our tears of penitence cannot remove one blot! But Your blood has all cleansing merit. Our prayers can earn no pardon. But Your mercy says, "Your sins which are many—are all forgiven!" The more we loathe ourselves—the more we love You! Our vile demerits—commend Your glorious worth!

~ ~ ~ ~ The sword of Divine justice buried in His sinless heart!

(by Henry Law)

Holy Father,

We blush to lift up our eyes unto You, O God of all grace and love. Shame and confusion of face humble us to the very dust. Wherever You have been boundless in mercy—we have been abundant in sin! We cannot measure our ingratitude. We cannot estimate our vileness. Each day has added to our guilt. Each scene has witnessed our wicked hearts, our straying feet and our offending tongues. What is there in heaven or in earth, above, around, without, or within—which condemns us not? The sun condemns us, which has seen our misdeeds; the darkness, too, which hides nothing from Your all-penetrating eye! The cruel accuser justly accuses us. Your righteous law, Your holy Word, our sin-soiled consciences, our public and our private hours—write dark things against us!

We make no denial. We frame no excuse. We confess, Father, that we have sinned against heaven and before You—and are not worthy to be called Your sons!

But still we live! We live to fly as contrite penitents to Your extended arms! We know that You will not cast us off—for Jesus brings us near. You will not condemn us—for Your dear Son died in our place. You will not mark the mountains upon mountains of our sins—for the Savior has removed them all. His precious blood has washed out every crimson stain!

Christ's spotless robe of righteousness, covers all our deformities! We put it on by the hand of faith—and we rejoice that we are lovely in His precious loveliness, and beauteous in His matchless beauty.

Open widely the eyes of our faith, that we may see all our justly merited curse, expended on the faultless head of our precious sin-atoning Savior, and the sword of Divine justice buried in His sinless heart!

We come to You . . .

clinging to His cross,
sheltered by His side,
hidden in His wounds,
cleansed in His blood,
covered by His spotless robe,
beautified in His salvation!

~ ~ ~ ~

We confess with shame

(by Henry Law)

We confess with shame—past hours wasted in unprofitable reading and other worldly entertainments. If other days are ours—guide us that no more time be squandered in vain pursuits.

Impress on our minds the shortness of time—the work to be done—the account to be rendered—the nearness of eternity—the misery of lamps expired, when the voice of the Bridegroom is heard.

May we never forget that . . .

Your eye always sees us;

Your ear always hears us;

Your recording hand commits all to a book of remembrance;

all hidden works must be unveiled at the judgment day!

Above all things—may we seek Your favor!

Above all things—may we dread Your frown!

May Christ be the pulse of our hearts.

May He speak in every word of our lips.

May He shine in every step of our earthly walk.

Grant our requests for His dear sake. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~

It is the vile monster!

(by Henry Law)

We beseech You to deepen in our hearts—the abhorrence of all evil. May we hate sin with perfect hatred. It is the vile monster which . . .

defies Your power,

casts off Your yoke,

treads down Your lovely law,

defiles our nature,

spreads misery throughout this earth,

brought death into the world, and

nailed the spotless Lamb of God to the accursed tree!

Teach us to look to Jesus on the cross—and so to estimate its loathsome guilt in Your sight.

Could there be no pardon—but through Your dear Son's death!

Could no cleansing wash out its filth—but Jesus' precious blood! Could no atonement expiate the evil—but the shame, the agony, the bruises of Christ, the incarnate God!

We see the boundless price—may we read therein the boundless guilt!

In the infinite payment—show us the infinite debt!

Thus may we discern the deadly viper in its real malignity, and tear it with holy indignation from our breasts, and resolutely turn from its every snare, and refuse to hold polluting dalliance with it!

~ ~ ~ ~

May we read the meltings of Your heart towards us

(by Henry Law)

You have made us Your favored inheritance, the garden of Your choice delights. You have washed us from all our filth. You have covered us with the spotless robe of Your righteousness. You have adorned us with the glories of Your pure obedience.

What could have been done more for Your vineyard—which You have not done for us! You have loved us more than Your own life. With loving-kindness You have drawn us. You forgive our daily and hourly transgressions. None of our sinful provocations separate us from Your sympathy. You will never leave us nor forsake us. You preserve us until we safely reach the heaven of heavens, and sit beside You on Your glorious Throne!

Now we would go forth to our appointed work, walking by Your side, leaning on Your arm, holding sweet converse with You. May we be as the salt of the earth—a blessing to all around.

~ ~ ~ ~

Shall we, then, flaunt proudly in Your sight?

(by Henry Law)

"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!" Jeremiah 9:23

Who are we, that pride should swell within us! Our original is the mire beneath our feet. Dust we are—and unto dust we soon return. In material, we do not surpass the most detestable reptile. Whatever difference of form and intellect is ours—is freely granted by Your goodness. Our every faculty of mind and body—is Your undeserved gift.

Thus low as creatures—we are far lower as sinners. We have times without number trampled on Your righteous law. Sin's deformity is stamped upon us; its hideousness darkens on our brow; its loathsome touch has fixed corruption on us. Shall we, then, flaunt proudly in Your sight? The lowest depths of self-abasement is our due place. We are far less than nothing in Your all-seeing eye. Help us to see ourselves—as we are seen by You. Then pride must wither, vanish, decay, and die!

Your Word assures us that You give grace to the lowly. Humble our hearts before You—and then replenish them with Your choicest gifts. May our position ever be the lowliest of the lowly—that our spiritual riches may exceedingly abound.

Enable us to walk on earth—even as Your beloved Son walked. He is our most perfect model. He was meek and lowly in heart. Let His meekness be our all-covering garb. Clothe us entirely with His humility.

~ ~ ~ ~

We would grope and stumble in the bewildering paths of ignorance and error!

(by Henry Law)

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have—that you did not receive?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

Holy Father, Almighty Lord God, listen to the cry of Your humble servants. Without Your light—our minds are all darkness. We would grope and stumble in the bewildering paths of ignorance and error!

Without Your regenerating Spirit—our wills are wholly depraved, and resolutely bent to resist the good and to espouse the evil.

Without Your distinguishing grace—we would at this moment be . . .

afar off from You,

vile among the vilest,

bond-slaves of the devil,

grinding in Satan's mill, and

earning his wages of eternal woe!

~ ~ ~ ~ We offer His blood to pay the debt

(by Henry Law)

Lord God Almighty, Father of mercies, screened from all evil by Your gracious providence, we come to encircle You with grateful praise. We bless You that at every moment, the throne of grace has been opened—and that the scepter of Your love has been extended to us. Pardon us that our prayers have been so few, so poor, so feeble. While You are always ready to hear, and inviting us to close communion—our souls abide amid trifles, and dally with vain follies. We grovel on earth—when we might ascend, through prayer, to heaven and You. Pity us, good Lord. You know of what we are made. You remember that we are dust. O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.

We come not in our own name, seeking Your compassionate grace. We bring the Name of Your dear Son before You, in the arms of our faith. In whatever we have robbed You of obedience—we offer His blood to pay the debt. Impute to our account:

His worthiness—for our unworthiness;

His sinlessness—for our sinfulness;

His purity—for our impurity;

His sincerity—for our deceit;

His truth—for our lies;

His meekness—for our pride;

His steadfastness—for our backslidings;

His love—for our enmity;

His fullness—for our emptiness;

His glory—for our shame;

His perfect obedience—for our incessant disobedience;

His beauty—for our deformity;

His devotedness to Your will—for our waywardness;

His holy life—for our unholy ways;

His perfect righteousness—for our manifold unrighteousnesses.

We hide ourselves in Him. We flee unto Him as our sure city of refuge. We know that in Him—we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins. We rejoice that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Thus we cry, "Abba, Father!" in the name of Jesus, and retire to rest in peace.

~ ~ ~ Your boundless stores!

(by Henry Law)

Holy Father, Almighty Lord God, listen to the cry of Your humble servants. Our defilements prove that we are miserable sinners. Your forbearance proves that Your mercy reaches above the heavens. We still live to cling to the cross of Your dear Son.

We see the world before us this morning. We know our weakness—and we are prone to fear; but we look up to You—and we fear no more. If we venture to go forth alone—we stumble and fall; but leaning on our Beloved—we are as firm as the everlasting hills! If left to the treachery of our own hearts—we shall bring shame to Your holy name; but enlightened, guided, and upheld by Your Spirit—we shall adorn Your heavenly doctrine.

Hear, then, our prayer, and be . . .

our arm to support us,

our light that we may see,

our strength that we may stand,

our feet that we may run,

our shield that we may receive no wound,

our sword that we may repel each foe,

our dew to refresh us,

our sun to ripen each grace.

To enrich us in all fruitfulness and fullness—would not diminish Your riches! To supply all our needs—would not detract from Your boundless stores! May Your presence always abash vice, check worldly-mindedness—and diffuse through us the fragrance of pure godliness.

Assist us, by the lamp of Your Word and the piercing rays of Your Spirit—to search every corner of our hearts. Let no Achan-sin escape detection! Let every Agag-sin be hewn to pieces! Let every idol-sin be stomped into powder! Let every rebel lust be nailed to the Savior's cross! Let "holiness to the Lord" be the language of our lips, the sandals of our feet, and the clear engraving on our brows.

~ ~ ~ ~

Cast them into the deep ocean of His all-cleansing blood!

(by Henry Law)

We give thanks unto You, O Father, for You are good, for Your mercy endures forever! May Your dear Son, our only Savior, be this day more and more revealed to our adoring hearts.

We desire to know the breadth and length, the depth and height of His all-surpassing love!

Help us to gaze more and more with the eye of faith, on Him who was crucified for us—until we are changed into His image from glory to glory. May we learn at His cross—the exceeding vileness and dreadful deceits of sin. We would be taught to measure the infinitude of His tender pitifulness—by the infinitude of His sufferings in our place. We would bring every sin of every moment of our lives—and cast them into the deep ocean of His all-cleansing blood!

Blessed Jesus, through You we have access to the Father. Through You we now draw near. Ever adored be Your grace for this ready way, opened through the rent veil of Your crucified body.

Great High Priest, ever pleading at God's right hand, receive our sin-soiled prayers, cleanse them in Your precious blood, perfume them by the sweet savor of Your merits, and obtain acceptance for them. Extend Your wounded hands in our behalf. Behold us in the depths of our need—and pour down blessings on our waiting souls.

May Your Word go forth, conquering and to conquer. Strengthen it as a hammer—to break our rocky hearts into pieces.

Nothing exceeds Your power.

Nothing is too good for You to give.

Infinite is Your might!

Boundless is Your love!

Limitless is Your grace!

Nothing is too great for You to accomplish!

Put forth Your power, and may . . .

sinner be repenting,

prodigals be restored,

outcasts be brought in,

rebels be subdued,

backsliders be reclaimed,

Satan's captives be released,

blind eyes be opened,

broken hearts be bound up,
the desponding be cheered,
the self-righteous be stripped of their vain pleas,
the formalist be driven from a refuge of lies,
the ignorant be enlightened,
brands be plucked out of the fire,

Your saints be built up in their most holy faith, and fitted for their eternal glorious inheritance!

We ask great things—but we ask of You—our great and awesome God, all in the name of our glorious and almighty Savior, even Your own Son, Jesus Christ, our infallible Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~ Our besotted faculties are dull to comprehend You!

(by Henry Law)

Father of heaven, God of all grace and love,

We thank and adore You for the priceless inheritance which You have reserved for Your children—which is kept in heaven for us, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! Keep us by Your mighty power, unto the full enjoyment of the pleasures at Your right hand for evermore!

Ofttimes have our longing thoughts gone forth to the eternal day—when we shall see You as You are, without one cloud of unbelief, without the interruption of one straying thought, without the downcast look of shame—but when there shall be one bright blaze of glory forever! We thank You that the lapse of another day—has brought us one day nearer to our glorious eternal home! Ofttimes have we panted for fuller knowledge of You, our God. But we have only seen You through a glass darkly. Our besotted faculties are dull to comprehend You; but then we shall see You face to face, and know even as we are known!

We look forward to that day when we take our last breath—we shall knock at heaven's gate in the name of Jesus. We shall present ourselves washed from earth's every stain, in His all-cleansing blood. We shall draw near to Your majestic throne, screened entirely in Jesus—the Lord our righteousness!

~ ~ ~ ~ Shall our eyes be dry?

(by Henry Law)

Father of heaven, God of all grace and love, help us now to lie low in supplicating cries.

We come humbly—because we come as wretched sinners in ourselves.

We come boldly—because we come in the mighty name of Jesus. Strengthen our faith, that we may refuse to let You go—until You bless us with all blessings.

We are pained by our graceless hearts. We bewail our prayerless prayers. We know that whatever we ask in prayer believing—we shall receive. It is because of our vile sin—that we are so poor in grace. We are sluggards in the heavenly race, we are grovelers in the mire, when we should be soaring to the heights of heaven, on the eagle-wings of faith!

What great things have we lost, because we have not drawn near to take them! Pardon the deadness of our poor hearts. On the knees of our hearts—may we be incessant in telling You our sincere needs and our desires. Grant that our life may be one sweet savor of devotion!

Did Your dear Son weep when He saw Jerusalem in the gall of bitterness and unbelief—and shall our eyes be dry when we contemplate the perishing multitudes of this sin-sick world! Our spirits should be stirred within us, when we reflect that the devil reigns as a tyrant over his enslaved dupes!

What present misery!

What future anguish!

What desolation now!

What weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever!

Take our humble prayers, and present them with acceptance, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our all. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~ To follow You fully is heaven—before heaven is reached!

(by Henry Law)

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus!" Hebrews 12:2

O Lord Jesus Christ, in the wisdom of Your tender mercy, You have been pleased to proclaim Yourself as Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! These names are revealed for our peace and joy—that we may acquaint ourselves with You, and find rest unto our souls.

Help us by Your Spirit, entirely to know You according to Your Word. Open widely the eyes of our understanding, that we may fully grasp . . .

the wonders of Your person;

the wonders of Your love and grace and power;

the wonders which You have already achieved by Your sin-atoning death; the wonders which You are achieving by Your unfailing intercession;

the wonders which are yet to come when You shall appear again in power and great glory! Let Your counsels sound sweetly in the ear of our faith, and may we yield in humble obedience to Your sacred precepts. To follow You fully is heaven—before heaven is reached!

Pardon us, that with such bright revelations of Yourself in the pages of Scripture—we have been so slow to learn, and so prone to forget. When by this time, we should have climbed the highest

heights of spiritual perception. But alas! we are groveling in low depths of ignorance! We are blind—while light shines around! Take away all 'scales' from our eyes. Grind to dust—all remnants of the evil heart of unbelief.

Make it our chief joy . . .

to study You,

to meditate on You,

to gaze on You,

to hold communion with You!

Enable us to experience that Your flesh is food indeed, and Your blood is drink indeed. May we be . . .

like Mary—sitting meekly at Your feet;

like the beloved disciple—leaning on Your breast;

like Paul, counting all things as loss, for the excellency of knowing You;

like Peter, appealing to You, who knows all things—that we indeed love You.

Let not our faith cease from seeking You—until it vanishes in unclouded sight!

Answer us, for Your love's sake. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~

Hold me up!

(by Henry Law)

Almighty Father,

Conscious of our own weakness, trusting only in Your grace and power, we beseech You this day to increase and multiply Your mercy upon us. We are going forth to tread on slippery ground—may You uphold us. Our march is through a land of which Satan is the prince—may You protect us. Snares at each turn await our steps—may You guide us. We look around—and fear. We look up to You—and take courage. By Your grace alone can we stand. If Your grace should fail us—instantly we fall. Our earnest prayer is, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:115

~ ~ ~ ~ The old man yet lives!

(by Henry Law)

O ever-watchful Shepherd of Your flock—lead us, guide us, safely tend to us this day. Without Your restraining rod—we shall err and stray like lost sheep. Hedge up our paths—lest we be misled into the unwholesome pastures of the world, and drink of its poisonous streams. Direct our feet—lest we be entangled by some secret snare of the devil, or stumble into his hidden pitfalls. Encircle Your fold by Your protecting power, that the roaring lion may not devour, nor any cruel foe assail. Remember Your ransomed flock. Protect and preserve it as the purchase of Your dear

Son's blood.

O Lord, we beseech You now to defend us, not only from outward adversaries—but especially from ourselves! We have foes which cleave closer to us than our very skin! We cannot escape them. Help us to elude their enticing wiles. In public and in private, when we come in or go out, whether we rise up or sit down—they cling to our heart. Deliver us from their constant baits and traps. The old man yet lives within us and is powerful. Help us to nail him to the cross of Jesus! We earnestly desire to put him off with all his foul deeds—and to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness. If You speak the word—the victory is ours!

Our best strength, is utter weakness. Our firmest resolves, are as fleeting as the morning cloud and early dew. In our flesh there dwells no good thing—it is the vile abode of every corrupt desire. It is the den in which all vile passions lurk. Left to ourselves, we fall. But Your Spirit is omnipotent. Oh! then, bid Your Spirit to arise in all His might, and crush our indwelling opponents!

How often do we mourn that, when we would do good, evil is present with us. The good that we would do—we cannot do; the evil that we would not do—that we do. We look to You to deliver us from the body of this death. Strengthen us with heavenly aid in the inner man, lest we faint and be weary in the conflict—and yield to our bosom-foes. The enemy is within the citadel! Come with Your almighty power and subdue him. Enable us, therefore, by Your Spirit, to mortify all the deeds of the body.

O Jesus, we are Yours! Other lords have had dominion over us—but now we are Your willing servants. O come, then, You who are our Lord, pierce to the death—utterly destroy—abolish in us every particle of carnal self!

~ ~ ~ ~ Our hearts are Yours!

(by Henry Law)

"My son, give Me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways." Proverbs 23:26

Holy Father, Almighty God,

We desire to give our hearts to You, without one shadow of reserve. We beseech You to take full possession of them.

Expel mightily every opposing foe.

Crush every rebel lust.

Mortify each traitorous passion.

Annihilate each earth-born desire.

Our hearts are Yours—for You have created them.

They are Yours—for You have redeemed them by the most precious blood of Your only begotten Son.

They are Yours—because in free love You have renewed them by Your Holy Spirit.

They are Yours—because You have conquered them by Your grace.

They are Yours—because we willingly surrender them to You.

Occupy them wholly by Your presence.

Exclude every intruding rival.

Reign supreme within them.

We would love You now, and forevermore, with all our hearts, and all our souls, and all our might, and all our strength. You are worthy of infinitude adoration, far beyond what our dull hearts can yield. Is love among men awakened by genius, wisdom, worth, and seeming perfection? You are the very perfection of all perfections. All intellect is derived from You. Our scanty rivulets flow from Your unfathomable fountain.

Compared with You—the sun is darkness, all beauty is deformity, all knowledge is folly, the best goodness is most faulty. You, the great Creator, who inhabits eternity, are high above all creatures. So invigorate our love, that it may worthily rise to You and tightly entwine itself around You!

~ ~ ~ ~

While we mourn over our many maladies

(by Henry Law)

"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4

While we mourn over our many maladies—we see that increase of faith would be the grand remedy! Our hearts are often . . .

the cage of every unclean bird,

the fount of every loathsome desire,

the deadly fruit of every poisonous tree,

the open wayside of every earthly lust and passion.

This is because our faith sleeps. Awaken it, good Lord—give it more strength, until it brings all heaven into the soul—and all impurity is cast out.

We now go forth to intermingle with the world. This foe is artful to entrap us. It will approach in an enchanting guise. It will extend many a gilded bait, and will present many a poisoned cup. Lord, increase our faith—and we shall scorn every painted bauble, and trample down every bewitching snare! We shall then be more than conquerors, for this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith! May our hearts be entirely weaned from the world, dead to its outward enticements, and wholly consecrated to You. Help us by Your grace—that we may live with You, and to You, during the little speck of our earthly sojourn.

Oh! hear the cry of our anxious hearts, and increase our faith, through the merits and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

~ ~ ~ This Heavenly Visitor

(by Henry Law)

O Lord Jesus Christ, most gracious Savior, with grateful joy we come to You. We know Your boundless love—and believe that You delight over us. We look to Your cross—and we see how You have loved us!

We remember Your wondrous word, "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever—even the Spirit of truth." We spread before You this most blessed pledge. We present our empty hearts before You—and we meekly beseech You to fill them with Your Holy Spirit.

We earnestly desire to be temples entirely occupied by His presence. We are blind; send Him to give us light. Darkness is around us and within us; may He say, Let there be light, and there shall be light. May He give us faith to see our names engraved on Your heart—our souls assuredly redeemed by Your blood—our lives of sinfulness gloriously covered by Your life of pure obedience. Replenish us with His revealing grace, that we may realize our indissoluble oneness with You—that You have espoused us to Yourself forever in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies, and in faithfulness—that we are one with You as branches are one with the stem, as a building is one with the foundation, and that nothing can part us from Your unchanging love.

In the midst of our sorrows—may His comforts cheer us. In all our trials—may His strength sustain us. When we are disposed to faint and be weary, may the dew of His blessing revive us. May His presence render us very fruitful trees of holiness. By His might establish within us, the reign of righteousness and peace and joy. Send Him as the Searcher of hearts to show us more of our utter corruption, that in deep self-abhorrence, realizing our worse than helplessness, we may flee to You, cling more closely to You, and receive You, as the beginning and the end, the first and the last of our salvation.

By Your Spirit, kindle within us the undying flame of adoration, so that our heaven of praise may commence on earth, and that the endless hallelujahs may be no new song to us. So dispose our hearts, that when He shall seek us with all these blessings on His wings—that we may never vex Him by our indifference and waywardness, never grieve Him by our cold welcome, never resist Him by our harsh rebellion; but may we lift up the gates of our souls that this Heavenly Visitor may come in, and occupy the throne and rule forever!

Especially may Your Spirit aid us when we search the Scriptures. The depths are very deep; the heights are exceeding high. We have no lines to fathom, and no wings to soar; but by His gracious help may we be enabled to explore all truth, to love it with all our hearts, to embrace it with all our powers, and to engraft it in our lives. Thus may we daily become more spiritually-minded, which is life and peace.

Accept and answer our humble petitions, for Your great name's sake. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~

Soon our last grain will fall through the hour-glass!

(by Henry Law)

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16

Time is very short. Soon our last grain will fall through the hour-glass! Grant that we may gather up the fragments which remain, that no more may be lost.

O King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God—be glorified in us and by us this day and forever, through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

"Teach us to number our days aright—that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalms 90:12

~ ~ ~ ~ A little speck, a breath, a vanishing shadow, a fading flower

(by Henry Law)

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16

We humbly pray that all the occurrences of this departing day may work together for our good. A little stage of life is passed. Its end should find us riper in grace—and more fit to see Your face. But we have left many duties undone—may this condemning thought strip us more and more of all self-righteousness; and deepen in us the resolve, that, if other days are ours, they shall, Your Spirit helping us—be more devoted to Your gracious service.

Past opportunities can never be recalled. They once were ours to use, and their misuse adds to our overwhelming guilt. While we plead Your dear Son's atonement as our hope of pardon—may we be quickened to more constant and watchful care. Help us to redeem the time, knowing that to us it is very short— a little speck, a breath, a vanishing shadow, a fading flower. And seeing that we have no merit of our own, may we prize more intensely the inestimable merits of Christ Jesus our Lord, whom we rejoicingly receive as our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption.

"Teach us to number our days aright—that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalms 90:12

Many temptations have beset our path. Grant that in each we may see the deceit, the subtlety, the bitter enmity, and the wily power of our deadly adversaries. May the experience of this day lead us to stand with a more wary eye on the watch-tower of faith, and to cling with more determined grasp to the almighty arm of our protecting Lord. Wherever we have fallen, may we smite upon our breasts and hide our sins beneath the Redeemer's sheltering righteousness. Wherever we have escaped, may we ascribe deliverance wholly to Your sustaining grace, and may our grateful songs exalt the Lord our Strength. If we have been permitted to do anything to the glory of Your great name, whether in word or work—be pleased to add Your effectual blessing, and multiply a thousand-fold, the seed so scantily sown.

~ ~ ~ ~ May we see our sins

(by Henry Law)

O God the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us miserable sinners. Move, we beseech You, in our disordered hearts. Remove the deformities of unruly desire and hateful lusts. Chase away the mists and darkness of unbelief. Brighten our inner man with the pure light of truth. Sow abundantly

the seeds of righteousness. Make our souls fragrant as the garden of the Lord. Enrich them with every godly fruit. Beautify them with heavenly grace. Be our comforter, our guide, our light, our sanctification.

Especially take of the things of Christ, and show them with enlarged power to our longing souls. May we daily learn more of His love, His grace, His tender compassion, His faithfulness, and His beauty. May we delight ourselves in Him with increased delight. Lead us to the cross, and show us in His wounds—the hateful character of sin. May we see our sins, as . . .

the nails which transfixed Him,
the cords which bound Him,
the sword which pierced Him,
the thorns which tore Him,
the taunts which stung Him.

Help us to read in His cruel death—the reality and immensity of His love. Open to us the wondrous volumes of glorious truth in the cry, "It is finished!"

Our atonement is forever achieved,
our debt is fully paid,
all our guilt is washed away,
all our sins most righteously forgiven,
our persons are redeemed,
our souls saved,
hell vanquished,
the devil crushed,
heaven won, and
eternity of glory our rightful home!

Holy Spirit, deepen in us these saving lessons. Write them with Your finger on the tablets of our hearts. May our walk be one of . . .

sin-loathing,
sin-fleeing,
Christ-loving, and
God-fearing.

~ ~ ~ ~ The chosen pleasure-ground of our souls!

(by Henry Law)

O God of patience and consolation, glory be to You, for this throne of grace. Make it ever to us—the chosen pleasure-ground of our souls. May it be the fortress to which continually we flee. Here may we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Here may we see by faith, Your reconciled smile. Here may we rejoice to plead the name of Jesus. Here may we . . .

sharpen the sword of the Spirit,
anoint the shield of faith, and
put on the helmet of salvation.

By prayer also, may we gather supplies of heavenly manna—even the precious nourishment of Your Word. Thus may we be strengthened for each conflict, nerved for our upward race, and empowered for more than conquest over every foe. We know that Christ is the open channel for all blessings to descend upon us. Help us to beg, until the sluices of mercy widely open, and our souls are so replenished, that there shall be no room to receive more.

We marvel at our cruel folly, that when such enriching favors are within our reach—that we are so slow to extend the hand to take them! Compassionate our deadness for Your great Name's sake. Quicken us, arouse us, stir us up, fill us with holy zeal, put strength into us—that we may strive with You, and refuse to let You go. It is Your glory to be vanquished by the power of prayer. May Your Spirit within us, wrest all blessings from Your yielding hands!

~ ~ ~ ~

Let every Agag be hewed to pieces!

(by Henry Law)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!" Psalms 139:23-24

Holy Father, Almighty Lord God, listen to the cry of Your humble servants. May Your presence always abash vice, check worldly-mindedness—and diffuse through us the fragrance of pure godliness.

Assist us, by the lamp of Your Word and the piercing rays of Your Spirit—to search every corner of our hearts.

Let no Achan escape detection!

Let every Agag be hewed to pieces!

Let every idol be stomped to powder!

Let every rebel lust be nailed to the Savior's cross!

Let "holiness to the Lord" be the language of our lips, the sandals of our feet, and the clear engraving on our brows.

With undoubting faith, we place these our poor prayers in the hands of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Intercessor. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~ The mirror of eternity!

(by Henry Law)

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish—that I may gain Christ!" Php 3:7-8

Enable us to view every circumstance in the mirror of eternity! Deliver us from all covetousness of filthy lucre. May we weigh all things in the scales of eternity, and regard all worldly things as less than nothing, which have no value in Your sight.

Let us not forget the day of final reckoning, and do all as unto You, and under the power of that sure word, "You O God, see me!"

~ ~ ~ ~ We now hide ourselves in our great Redeemer's wounds

(by Henry Law)

O Eternal God, who alone has immortality, ever living in glory, unchanged and unchangeable, bend down Your ear to hear. Hearken and bless us. May the close of another day teach us the rapid flight of time. Truly our life is but a vapor. How soon will our sojourn on earth be done. As the spilled water cannot be gathered up, so lost opportunities return no more.

Pardon us that we have so poorly used the hours which have just fled. Pardon us that we have so failed to do Your work and to advance Your glory. We humble ourselves as most unprofitable servants. Our best doings are but filthy rags. Our worst doings—how hateful they must be to You, in whose sight the very heavens are not clean. In shame we now hide ourselves in our great Redeemer's wounds. Clinging to His cross, we supplicate forgiveness of every committed sin and of every omitted duty.

~ ~ ~ ~

It would fall short of our vast debt to You!

(by Henry Law)

God Almighty, heavenly Father,

Your eye of love has never failed to watch us. But our eyes have turned from You, to countless vanities! We smite upon our breasts before You—and bewail our waywardness and folly!

It is through Your protecting care alone, that we now kneel in safety in Your presence. Every moment, streams of mercy have flowed from heaven. We confess with shame and contrition, that we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the grace which You have granted to us. If our hearts should burn in one bright flame of love—if our lips should utter no sound but glowing praise—if our lives should be one incense of thanksgiving—it would fall short of our vast debt to You!

We remember the unprofitableness and the iniquity of our past sins. They arise before us, black in guilt, testifying against us, calling for our condemnation. We would silence their accusing

voice—by burying them all in the deep grave of the Redeemer's wounds.

We present our empty hearts to You. Be pleased to fill them to overflowing with Your choicest gifts. We bring our blinded understanding; chase away all the mists of ignorance and superstition, by bright beams from the Sun of Righteousness. We would take our seat beneath the great Redeemer's cross; may healing streams continuously descend, cleansing us from all our filth, pouring sweet balm into every grievous wound, and purging our consciences from dead works to serve You, the living God.

~ ~ ~ ~

Lest the wily serpent should sneak in!

(by Henry Law)

Today, we especially commend our wicked and deceitful hearts to Your watchful care. We know their treachery. We cannot keep them. Guard their every portal, lest the wily serpent should sneak in. Give us quick discernment of his deadly arts. If he approaches us as an angel of light—may we detect the bold disguise, and bid him, "Be gone!"

Holy Spirit, so uncloak the empty vanity of all earthly things, that no conformity to its baubles may bespatter us with mire. Utterly transform us by the renewing of our minds. May our lips be as well tuned cymbals, sweetly sounding Your praise. May a halo of heavenly-mindedness sparkle around us. We are invited to precious delights. The banqueting-house of Your Word is wide open. The voice of the heavenly spouse calls to us: "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved. Eat that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness!" Quicken us to arise and come apart, and regale ourselves amid the rich refreshment of gospel-promises. May we sit down under our Lord's shadow with great delight—and may we find His fruit sweet to our taste!

~ ~ ~ ~

Permit us to commend their wretchedness to You

(by Henry Law)

Throughout the wide earth, many of Your people this night are lying down in misery and pain. Their consciences accuse of sin; their minds are harassed by tormenting and foreboding thoughts; personal and relative anxieties hold their eyes waking. Permit us to commend their wretchedness to You, their great Creator and Savior. You have . . .

a balm for every wound,

a solace for every anguish,

a remedy for every pain,

a deliverance from every impossible situation,

and a peace for all disquietude.

Hear our prayer for these, Your people, and grant help. You can change their 'night of darkness' into joyful light. Holy Spirit, reveal Jesus to them—which will give them unmixed blessedness. We

thus implore You, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~

We cling to Your saving cross!

(by Henry Law)

A review of this day, causes us to hide our faces in the dust of shame. Our best works are vile and hateful in our own sight! What, then, must they be in Yours! If our purest worship is unclean—how must our open transgressions rise in condemnation! Have mercy, have mercy upon us, for Your dear Son's sake. Have mercy, have mercy upon us, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. Have mercy, have mercy upon us, for the great glory of Your great name.

May we retire to our rest this night, O blessed Savior, in the happy assurance that Your blood cleanses from all sin. We know that You will never cast out the people or the prayers of those who flee to You. To You—we now come. We clasp by faith Your precious promises. We cling to Your saving cross! We desire to wrestle with You in the might of faith, not letting You go, until You bless us!

02.01 - Section 1

Section 1

"Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Matthew 6:9-13 May God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep us. May the Lord look upon us mercifully with His favor; and so fill us with all spiritual blessings and grace, that we may so live in this life, that, in the world to come, we may have life everlasting. Amen.

FIRST WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of Your glory! Glory be to You, O Lord most high. At the commencement of this blessed day, we desire to unite with all the company of heaven and all the saints on earth in uplifting the voice of adoration and praise. Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto You, O Father of mercies, God of all grace and love.

We thank You that, in the multitude of Your tender mercies, in the riches of Your pitiful compassion, You have been pleased to erect this throne of grace, before which we now most humbly bow. We bless You that here free grace reigns. We bless You that at all times and in all places, we have open access to it through the blood of Your dear Son. We bless You that the veil is open, and that in His great name we may ever approach, and find You ready to hear, waiting to be gracious, arrayed in smiles of love, bidding us touch the scepter of Your sovereign mercy, inviting us to pour out every need and desire of our hearts, and promising to give more than we can ask or think. "Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time." Hebrews 4:16 But while we thus look up and praise You, shame and confusion overwhelm our hearts. You are worthy of all praise. We are unworthy to bring any. Your throne is holiness. Our lips are all impure. While we adore You for Your saving grace, we remember the past iniquity of our holiest things. What irreverence in Your worship, what cold formality in prayer and praise, what utterance of lip, with absence of heart—convict us as most miserable sinners! We confess that with seeming reverence we have added provocation to impiety. We bewail the aggravations of our guilt. We acknowledge that unless Your compassions failed not, we would have been cast away from Your presence, and left abandoned by Your Holy Spirit. But for Your dear Son's sake, hearken to our petition, and sprinkle all the hours of all our past worship with the atoning merits of His all-precious blood. May the pleadings of the cross, outcry the accusations of misused service.

Grant, oh grant, we earnestly implore You, that this day may witness deep improvement in us. Grant to us the wondrous blessings in rich abundance which this day was designed to impart. May it be wholly consecrated to You. May we, in spirit, soar far from earth. May our hearts be fast barred against admission of worldly thoughts or cares. May our souls be hid in Christ with You. Send Your peace, passing all understanding, as a flood into our tranquil minds. In public and in private draw us nearer unto You. May our meditations of You be sweet. May our outward exercises be life and liberty and joy. May we drink deeply of the refreshing streams proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. May we feast on the heaven-sent manna of Your precious Word, and thus gather strength for the upward race. Anoint afresh the shield of faith, that we may be able to quench all Satan's fiery darts.

Hear our cry for all the ministers of Your everlasting gospel. May Christ so richly fill their hearts, that all their ministrations may be a sweet savor of His grace. May He be uplifted in all pulpits as the only hope and strength and wisdom and redemption of His people. May we learn in the sanctuary new lessons of His perfect salvation. May our hearts be more and more knit to Him. May this be the Spirit's wonder-working day to us and all the congregations of the living God. Hear us, answer us, bless us. All we ask is in Jesus' name, and for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SUNDAY EVENING.

O God the Father, our great Creator, our gracious preserver, who is ever loading us with loving-kindness and tender mercies—we bless You, we praise You. O God the Son, who by the shedding of Your most precious blood, has made us Your purchased possession, and has redeemed us from all iniquity—we bless You, we praise You. O God the Holy Spirit, who has taught us our need as sinners, and has revealed the finished salvation to us, and has enriched us with spiritual consolations in heavenly places—we bless You, we praise You. O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons, one God, what more could have been done for our souls and for our salvation, which You have not freely and mightily accomplished! The heavens are high above the earth—but greater far are Your mercies to us! We cannot count the stars which bespangle the canopy of the skies, or the sands which begird the seas, or the drops which compose the ocean's boundlessness—but all these are finite, while infinity is the only measure of Your grace.

Fresh proof has encircled us this day. We have been called to sacred rest. Earthly work has ceased, respite has been ours from worldly care and toil. Your courts have opened their doors, admitting us to the holy fellowship of united worship. Your ministers have come forth to teach and to admonish, to warn us of the perils of our pilgrimage, to proclaim Jesus in the glories of His work, and to assure us of completeness in Him. The sacred hours now reach their close. Grant that we may be thus reminded that earthly Sabbaths will soon all cease. O quicken our spirits that we may use each as if the last. Enable us to regard Your courts, as the gate of heaven, and the threshold of the eternal world. May we use our privileges with solemn thought, that the Judge stands at the door. Animate us with the precious joy, that within the veil congregations never disperse, and adorations never cease, and no flesh grows weary, and no affections flag, and no thoughts wander, and praise never droops—but the whole atmosphere is adoring love. Blessed Jesus, hasten the time! When, when will this once be?

While we thus magnify You, O God, our God, for all the precious opportunities of our Sabbath days, we beseech You to guard our minds from making any ordinances our stay or our trust. We

confess the treacherous proneness of our hearts to hew out broken cisterns, and to rest on outward helps. Give wings to our faith, that we may rise through earthly forms and services—to Your immediate presence. May our poor enfeebled prayers show us more and more of our emptiness and vanity and sin. Deepen in us the conviction that our most fervent praises, and most lowly confessions, need to be repented of, and our bitterest tears of penitence need the washing of the only cleansing blood. Thus may our best services bring us nearer to the cross, and prompt the hearty cry, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus!"

Pour down Your Holy Spirit largely into our hearts, to give abiding life to the lessons of this day. May the seed take deep root, and yield abundant fruits of heavenly-mindedness to the praise of the glory of Your grace. May all who see us take knowledge of us that we have been with our God this day. May we reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and by holy example, dispel the mists of surrounding ignorance and unbelief.

We cannot leave Your glorious throne without humbly presenting the whole family of man in the arms of our faith. What need, what wretchedness, what misery, what darkness, what iniquity! Who are we that we should be made to differ? We would manifest our grace—by making supplication for the graceless! How easy for You to speak the word, and darkness shall flee, and the lifeless shall live.

Blessed Jesus, You came to seek and to save the lost; bring, we beseech You, many stray sheep into Your gospel-fold.

We commend to Your special care this night the sons and daughters of sickness and affliction. Be near to dying beds. Soothe the pillows of the suffering. Speak peace to the contrite and the brokenhearted. Sprinkle accusing consciences with the blood of Your cross. Be with us, when we retire from family worship, to the stillness of our own chambers. Give us boldness of access to You, and may we breathe out the inmost secrets of our souls. You know all before we speak—but help us freely to speak, that we may find relief and pardon and comfort. May we lie down at peace with You, our consciences, and all mankind. Give us faith to expect full reply. We ask all, trusting in Your grace and love. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

Blessed Jesus, we draw near as a family with this morning's light—to laud and magnify You, our God and Savior. Help us from on high with Your Holy Spirit—for in Your light alone, can we behold the light of Your countenance; by Your teaching alone, can we know Your precious worth. You must open our eyes to see, our hearts to feel, our lips to praise.

We bless You that You have revealed Jesus unto our hearts. Be it unto us according to all the breadth and length and depth and height of this Your glorious name. We are real and great sinners—may You be a real and great Jesus unto us. Be Jesus unto us—in every moment of the day on which we now are entering, in every circumstance, in our going out and coming in, in our down sitting and uprising, in our study of Your holy Word, in our converse with others, in our closet meditations. Be ever very near. We are blind as to what Your providence may ordain—but we fear no evil if You are our sun, our shield, our stay, our refuge, and our present friend. Be our Jesus in every time of need; when things are adverse, when things are prosperous, when heart and flesh fail, in the hour of closing life, when we stand before the great white throne, and throughout the

ages of eternity!

We know that in us, that is, in our flesh—there dwells no good thing. We bewail our many and our mighty sins. We loathe ourselves because of our vileness, our deep and innate corruptions, and the iniquities of our every hour—from the cradle to this time. We lie in dust and ashes before Your awesome majesty! But in all our misery as sinners—we look to You and our hearts fear not. We triumph, and we glory in Your saving name. It is a treasure-house of all riches for us. Out of its fullness may we this day receive. Thus may we advance to the duties which call us, happy and strong in You, and in Your great and wondrous salvation.

Heavenly Father, grant that the sweet savor of our Sabbath privileges may continue with us throughout this day. May our profiting from holy teaching be deep and abiding. May it be seen of all men that we are making sure progress in the narrow way of life.

We are entering anew on our allotted course, grant that we may take each new step in newness of spirit, with hearts entirely weaned from the world, dead to outward enticements, wholly consecrated unto You. We shall have to wrestle not with flesh and blood only—but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Fortify us with the whole armor prepared by Your grace. Garrison our hearts with heavenly aid. Let every inlet of sense be occupied by spiritual guards. Bar the gates of our fortress, that no evil may gain admittance. Keep us as the very apple of Your eye. Keep us as the vine which Your right hand has planted. Keep us by Your mighty power through faith unto eternal life. Lead us as the sheep of Your fold—in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake, making us to feed in green pastures, and to lie down beside still waters. Let Your glory brightly shine before our eyes. May Your glory be the one aim of all our words and works.

Hear us in behalf of all who ministered to Your congregations yesterday. May their own souls be abundantly nourished by the truths which their lips proclaimed. May they precede Your servants as standard-bearers of the Lord. Bless, too, all who publicly worshiped with us in the sanctuary. May we blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which we shine like stars in the universe, as we hold out the word of life.

We mutually as a family implore Your most especial blessings on each other. We are brought into this close union by Your good providence; grant that we may be fellow-helpers to each other's faith, and spur each other to good works, and encourage each other to run with alacrity the heavenward race. May nearness to each other on earth lead to nearness in the eternal home. Smile on the hearty desires of this domestic circle; and bless us now and evermore for Your mercy's sake in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

Gracious Lord Jesus, we adore You as truly God—all power is given unto You in heaven and in earth. Almighty Savior, accept the evening sacrifice of Your humble and most unworthy servants. From the throne of Your glory look in tender compassion on Your poor suppliants. You have died—that we may live with You forever. Help us by Your grace—that we may live with You, and to You, during the little speck of our earthly sojourn. The close of this day reminds us that the time is short, and that the end comes on apace. Grant that we may ever stand with our lamps burning, and our loins girt. When You knock—may we open unto You immediately, and spring forward

rejoicingly to welcome Your return. Pour Your Spirit so richly into our hearts, that every day may be as heaven begun—and our last day may, indeed, be heaven attained. We think of death—and we remember judgment. O You who have tasted death—in the hour of our death be with us. Let Your rod and Your staff comfort us. Let the brightness of Your presence dispel all gloom. Extend Your right hand to lead us through the shadowy valley. When heart and flesh fail, be the strength of our heart, and our portion forever. Let Your sweet voice sound sweetly in the ears of faith: "It is I, be not afraid! Fear you not, for I am with you! Be not dismayed for I am your God!" When our ears close to earthly sounds—may heavenly melody delight us. When eyes grow dim to earth—may they open in perfect clearness on You, the altogether lovely One. Drive Satan far away. Do not allow him to harass or molest us. We are not ignorant of his malice and devices. Great will be his wrath when he sees that his time is short. His last opportunity will be his fiercest. His last darts will be most sharply barbed. We beseech You, by all Your sufferings for us on the accursed tree—spread Your shield around us. We beseech You, by Your agony and bloody sweat—defeat his last efforts, and give us a joyful and abundant entrance into Your heavenly kingdom. If it is Your blessed will, that pains should test these dissolving frames, may lamb-like patience calm our hearts; and may Your supporting arm make us more than conquerors over nature's last throes.

While the close of this week's first working day prompts these large desires, the review of it casts us into the lowest depths of shame. While we ask the greatest mercies—we feel that we are not worthy of the least of all Your mercies. Our merited portion is confusion of face. What duties have we left undone! Into what evil have we sadly run! Neglect of due service condemns us. Shortcomings and insufficiencies bear witness to our unprofitableness. Manifold transgressions cry, "Unclean, unclean!" We have had opportunities this day of speaking for You; they were poorly used, or wholly abused, and now they are forever fled. May Your pierced hand take of Your own blood and obliterate the record of this day's sins. Blot out as a thick cloud our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins. We plead the heaven-sent promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We remember the full price paid by You on the cross; and we exult in the assurance, There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Thus trusting in the work of free grace, we retire to seek Your face again on our bedside knees.

We remember, heavenly Father, our wondrous privilege of being called to make intercession for others also. Precepts impel—promises invite—examples give encouragement. We are taught that, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." A prayerful Christian is a world-wide blessing. How would this earth blossom and fructify exceedingly, if praying lips gave You no rest. Thus we wrestle with You for all who near and dear to us by ties of kindred, friendship, and social union. Enrich them with all grace. Grant that we may be one in Christ now, and one for evermore. May we together fight the good fight of faith, together lay hold of eternal life, together enter into the joy of our Lord. May Your grace and blessing answer, for the sake of our only Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

O Eternal and most glorious Lord God, we bless You that You have given us by the eye of faith to see You as our Father on Your mercy-seat, and to believe that as we thus draw near to You—that

You will draw near to us. Help us to crave more and more of Your presence, until Your fullness fills us wholly. We would not have one portion of our hearts unoccupied by You. In You we live, and move, and have our being. Do be pleased to live and move within us, breathing in our prayers, inhabiting our praises, speaking in our words, moving in our every movement.

It is our especial prayer this morning that You will be pleased to come, and by Your Spirit to cause our faith to grow exceedingly. Holy Father, mightily increase this grace within us. It is of Your bounteous goodness that we believe—but still, how weak and wavering is our faith, how dim is its light, how tottering is its step, how tremulously it stands, how slow is its growth, how frequent are its backslidings! When by this time it should be mighty to scale the heaven of heavens, it often lies groveling in the dust. How much of distrust mingles with its strongest efforts! Pity our manifold infirmities. Help our vile unbelief. You have been pleased of Your free love—to kindle within us this heaven-sent spark. How easy for You to fan it into glowing flame! O Lord, hearken—for Your mercy's sake. While we mourn over our many maladies—we see that increase of faith would be the grand remedy! Our hearts are often the cage of every unclean bird, the fount of every loathsome desire, the poisonous tree of every deadly fruit, the open wayside of every earthly lust and passion. It is because our faith sleeps. Awaken it, good Lord. Bid it put forth more strength, until it brings all heaven into the soul, and all impurity is cast out.

We now go forth to intermingle with the world. This foe is artful to entrap us. It will approach in fascinating guise. It will extend many a gilded bait, and will present many a poisoned cup. Lord, increase our faith, and we shall scorn every painted bauble, and trample down every bewitching snare. We shall then be more than conquerors, for this is the victory which overcomes the world—even our faith.

Many duties are before us. Our callings demand firmness, energy, and zeal. We desire to work in Your vineyard this day, not slothful in any business—but as Your servants, devoted to Your cause, valiant for Your truth. We know that love is the working grace, and that our love will be commensurate with our faith. Let but our faith stride forth in giant-power, and love will respond and put energy into every act, and then at the close of this day, Your Spirit will bear witness with our spirit: well done, good and faithful servant. Oh! receive the cry of our hearts—increase our faith.

Often do we mourn the absence of our beloved Lord. His smile makes earth a paradise. His voice is the sweetest music to our ears. Without Him, life is a dreary blank. Apart from Him, we stumble and fall. With Him we are strong to do all things. Why is He ever absent? He stands at the door—but it is barred by unbelief. If faith gives entrance, Jesus enters in, and takes up His abode. It is a true word, "Christ dwells in the heart by faith." Longing for this indwelling, we cry, Good Lord, increase our faith. Our joys are at their fullest tide, when we realize that we are members of Your family. Your household is the household of faith. Without it we are strangers and aliens. We know that it is by faith in Jesus Christ that we are Your children. Increase then our faith that we may rejoice in our high relationship, and glory in our glorious inheritance.

You have strewn many precious promises up and down the Bible pages. They are flowers of sweet fragrance, when culled by faith. They are fruit of refreshing flavor, when gathered by this grace. But without it, they are empty husks. Do not allow this treasure—to be no treasure to us. May we be rich in its richness, imbibe its sweetness, feast on its preciousness, draw vigor from its manna, be strong in its strength, and happy in its joy. This cannot be without much faith. Good

Lord, hear the cry of our anxious hearts, and increase our faith, through the merits and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

O Lord God, our Father in heaven, preserved by Your kind providence through another brief stage of our earthly pilgrimage, we assemble around Your mercy-seat. We cannot bless You, as You deserve, for this inestimable privilege of united access to You. We thank You, that, vile and sin-soiled as we are, we may come into Your immediate presence, and hold this converse with You, and commune with You concerning all our matters, all our sins, and fears and hopes and desires.

Grant us more and more by Your Holy Spirit to prize the privilege of prayer. We are astonished that we poor sinners on earth may speak directly to You—the great the glorious God, on Your throne in the heaven of heavens! How wondrous the thought that our poor breathings may fly on the wings of faith, and have instant access to the ears of Your grace! We bless You that prayer moves Your right hand, by which all things were made and are upheld.

It is of Your tender compassion that we are commanded in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto You. May we yield humble obedience, and so may the peace of God which passes all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. We thank You, and we clasp the wondrous promise; we feel the high privilege to which it raises us: Ask and you shall have—seek and you shall find—knock and it shall be opened unto you. So grant now to us who ask. May we who seek find; open the door to us who knock; and in answer to our wrestling cry—fill us with the spirit of grace and supplication. May we pray always and not faint. May prayer be the mold in which our minds are framed, the channel in which our thoughts shall flow, the path in which our feet shall tread, the watch upon the door of our lips. May prayer be with us when we leave our morning chamber, when we move throughout the day, when we retire to our evening rest.

Give us undoubting faith that our supplications never are in vain. May we know assuredly that if we do not obtain our exact petitions—that we shall have larger, richer answers; that it is Your property to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Unasked, You have given the greatest of all gifts, the unspeakable gift of Your dear Son. We hence feel confident that in answer to our incessant cries, You will give us all things needful for life and godliness. May the manner of our prayers be always wise and humble and submissive. When we seek nothing but the glory of Your name, the advance of the Redeemer's kingdom—may we ask boldly and expect fully. When we bring temporal matters before Your throne, may we in humble submission spread out our need, and from our inmost souls breathe out the cry, "Not as we will—but as You will."

Hear too our united supplication for the pardon of all sins which Your omniscient eye has seen in us this day. We are deeply conscious that evil cleaves to our holiest walk. We see and bewail our many transgressions and shortcomings. How many more are in the light of Your countenance. How exceeding is their magnitude before You. Enter not into judgment with us. Behold us only in Your dear Son. Regard us as sheltered from wrath—in the covert of His cleansing wounds. Accept His sacrifice on the cross as our full atonement, and as the perfect payment of our every debt.

We would mention before You all our kindred, family, and friends. May we all be bound together in the bundle of life, which is in Christ Jesus. Sanctify us all, body, soul, and spirit. May we be one now in the bonds of the everlasting gospel—and one forever in the eternal mansions of glory.

We thank You for all who have departed this life in Your faith and fear, beseeching You to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that, this life ended, we may joy with them in Your eternal kingdom. We present these prayers, trusting only in the name of Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

O Lord Jesus Christ, most gracious Savior, with grateful joy we come to You. We know Your boundless love. We believe that You delight over us—to bless us and to do us good. We look to Your cross, and we see how You have loved us. You have given Yourself that we should never die. Surely with Yourself You will add all needful blessings. You have left us a precious legacy of promise; surely you will open heaven wide—to pour down fulfillment.

We remember the wondrous word, "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever—even the Spirit of truth." We spread before You this most blessed pledge. We present our empty hearts before You—and we meekly beseech You to fill them with Your Holy Spirit.

We earnestly desire to be temples entirely occupied by His presence. We are blind; send Him to give us light. Darkness is around us and within us; may He say, Let there be light, and there shall be light. We believe that it is eternal life to know the Father, and You whom the Father has sent; may He brightly illumine our minds to understand with exceeding joy the Father's eternal love, the sure provisions of the covenant of grace, and all the glories of Your finished work. May He give us faith to see our names engraved on Your heart—our souls and bodies assuredly redeemed by Your blood—our lives of sinfulness gloriously covered by Your life of pure obedience. Replenish us with His revealing grace, that we may realize our indissoluble oneness with You—that You have espoused us to Yourself forever in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies, and in faithfulness—that we are one with You as branches are one with the stem, as building is one with the foundation, and that nothing can part us from Your unchanging love. In the midst of our sorrows—may His comforts cheer us. In all our trials—may His strength sustain us. When we are disposed to faint and be weary, may the dew of His blessing revive us. May His presence render us very fruitful trees of holiness. By His might establish within us, the reign of righteousness and peace and joy. Send Him as the Searcher of hearts to show us more of our utter corruption, that in deep self-aborrence, realizing our worse than helplessness, we may flee to You, cling more closely to You, and receive You, as the beginning and the end, the first and the last of our salvation.

We desire to pray always, without doubting and without ceasing. So enrich us with the constant spirit of supplication, that our lives may be continuous prayer. We long to encircle You with the thanksgivings which are infinitely Your due. By Your Spirit kindle within us the undying flame of adoration, so that our heaven of praise may commence on earth, and that the endless hallelujahs may be no new song to us. So dispose our hearts, that when He shall seek us with all these blessings on His wings, we may never vex Him by our indifference and waywardness, never grieve

Him by our cold welcome, never resist Him by our harsh rebellion; but may we lift up the gates of our souls that this heavenly visitant may come in, and occupy the throne and rule forever!

Especially may Your Spirit aid us when we search the Scriptures. The depths are very deep; the heights are exceeding high. We have no lines to fathom, and no wings to soar; but by His gracious help may we be enabled to explore all truth, to love it with all our hearts, to embrace it with all our powers, and to engraft it in our lives. Thus may we daily become more spiritually-minded, which is life and peace.

These blessings, thus earnestly sought by us, grant to all whom duty and affection prompt us to remember in our prayers. Pour Your Spirit on our children, Your blessing on our offspring. Bring home to Your fold, all wanderers and outcasts. Hasten the time when You shall be adored as the one Shepherd of one flock. Accept and answer our humble petitions, for Your great name's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

Ever blessed Lord God, with joy and thankfulness we again with united hearts and voices gather round You in the name of Jesus.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16. We humbly pray that all the occurrences of this departing day may work together for our good. A little stage of life is passed. Its end should find us riper in grace—and more fit to see Your face. But we have left many duties undone—may this condemning thought strip us more and more of all self-righteousness; and deepen in us the resolve, that, if other days are ours, they shall, Your Spirit helping us—be more devoted to Your gracious service.

Past opportunities can never be recalled. They once were ours to use, and their misuse adds to our overwhelming guilt. While we plead Your dear Son's atonement as our hope of pardon—may we be quickened to more constant and watchful care. Help us to redeem the time, knowing that to us it is very short—a little speck, a span, a vanishing shadow, a fading flower. And seeing that we have no merit of our own, may we prize more intensely the inestimable merits of Christ Jesus our Lord, whom we rejoicingly receive as our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. "Teach us to number our days aright—that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalms 90:12

Many temptations have beset our path. Grant that in each we may see the deceit, the subtlety, the bitter enmity, and the wily power of our deadly adversaries. May the experience of this day lead us to stand with a more wary eye on the watch-tower of faith, and to cling with more determined grasp to the almighty arm of our protecting Lord. Wherever we have fallen, may we smite upon our breasts and hide our sins beneath the Redeemer's sheltering righteousness. Wherever we have escaped, may we ascribe deliverance wholly to Your sustaining grace, and may our grateful songs exalt the Lord our Strength. If we have been permitted to do anything to the glory of Your great name, whether in word or work—be pleased to add Your effectual blessing, and multiply a thousand-fold, the seed so scantily sown!

We trust that prayers have ascended this day from our secret closets; and many aspirations from our hearts, when busied in appointed work. May You be pleased to receive them from our great

Intercessor's hands, and may answers descend according to His prevailing worth. Bless also to our souls—every grain of truth which we have gleaned in the rich fields of Your holy Word. May they all take deep root. May Satan steal none away. May Your heavenly dew refresh them. May Your heavenly rays ripen them. May they bear abundant fruit—to our great joy and to Your exceeding praise. And now our wearied frames solicit sleep. Give us the restoring rest needful for the next day's toil. If dreams be ours, may no tinge of evil be intermixed. But may Your Spirit, whether we sleep or watch, make us the blessed temple of His sanctifying presence.

Throughout the wide earth, many of Your people this night are lying down in misery and pain. Their consciences accuse of sin; their minds are harassed by tormenting and foreboding thoughts; personal and relative anxieties hold their eyes waking. Permit us to commend their wretchedness to You, their great Creator and Savior. You have a balm for every wound, a solace for every anguish, a remedy for every pain, a deliverance from every impossible situation, and a peace for all disquietude.

Hear our prayer for these, Your people, and grant help. You can change their 'night of darkness' into joyful light. Holy Spirit, reveal Jesus to them—which will give them unmixed blessedness. We thus implore You, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens. From Your high throne behold with gracious eye—Your humble servants. We would not cross the threshold of this day without committing ourselves, our souls and bodies, all our concerns, and all our friends—to Your guardian care. We know that we are not our own; we desire to be wholly Yours. Watch over us, keep us, guide us, direct us, sanctify us, and bless us. Incline our hearts to delight in Your holy ways. As the potter frames the clay—may You mold us wholly into the blessed image of Jesus! Make us vessels of honor, fitted for Your service. May our lips, as well-tuned harps, sound the sweet melody of Your heavenly praise. May all around take knowledge of us—that we have been much with Jesus—that we are dead to earthly vanities—crucified with Christ—yet living by Your Spirit—trampling the world beneath our spurning feet—having no conformity to lying vanities—but entirely transformed by the renewing of our minds—clad in the whole armor of God—shining as lights in the dark world—and having "holiness to the Lord" conspicuous on our brow!

We do not know with what matters, we may be intermingled with this day. Let no evil soil our hands. Help us, as we pass along the miry paths of life—to keep our garments pure from all spot and stain. While transacting needful concerns, may our affections be high in heaven with You. As the flame tends upward, so may the fire of heavenly love in our souls, kindled and fanned by Your Holy Spirit—be ever ascending in brighter and purer blaze!

Keep our gaze immovably fixed, not on the things which are seen—but on the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are unseen are eternal. Open our eyes to see "emptiness, fragility and mockery" inscribed on all earth's vanities! They cannot satisfy! As a shadow—they depart and flee away! While we grasp them—they are gone! May we view all things in the 'mirror of eternity!'

Impress on us the solemn truth, that in a little while, "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare!" May we move through this world, with our eyes watching for the sign of the Son of man in the heavens. May our ears be ever listening for the last trumpet's peal, and may we be looking for and hastening unto the new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness dwells. May one aspiration ever swell within our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

We know not who of our fellow-men shall cross our path this day. Give us the persuasion that You will order all our interactions with them according to Your all-ruling wisdom. May mutual good be gained and done by us. May we look on everyone as sent by You—with, or for, a blessing. Forbid it, O gracious Lord, that we should not be profited and profitable. At the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, may we bless You for grace brought to us by Your servants this day. And may others bless You for grace communicated through us. Guide us by Your counsel that we may speak each word as our last word, and step each step as our last step. May we go in and out holding our lives in open hand, ready to be surrendered at Your call. If this day should be our last, may it be our best. May earth's farewell be abundant entrance to Your everlasting kingdom. Hearken and do, most blessed God, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

Holy Father, who is like unto You, glorious in holiness, keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin! If Your mercy had any limits—where could we find refuge from our deserved wrath? But Your love in Christ Jesus is without measure and without end, therefore we poor sinners now live before You, to bow in worship at Your throne.

We present ourselves in deep humility. Sins of omission, sins of commission, sins against You our Heavenly Father, sins against Your beloved Son our adorable Redeemer, sins against the strivings of Your Holy Spirit, sins against the dictates of a warning conscience, sins against the precepts of Your blessed Word, sins against our neighbors and ourselves, sins at home and abroad—testify that we have been this day, unprofitable servants and vile transgressors!

Enter not into judgment with us. We plead no righteousness of our own. We cloak no iniquity. We spread out the hours of this day before You—as black with evil. Our earnest prayer is for pardon, through the meritorious death of Him who died for us, and now lives at Your right hand, to make intercession for our guilty souls and bodies. At the close of each day, we are constrained to renew our penitence. How often have we vowed that our love would burn more brightly, our service would be more sincere, and our lives more devoted. We leave our chambers with pious resolve to be wholly Yours—but we soon stumble and backslide, and return to confess our weakness, misery, and sin.

Forever blessed be Your holy name—that the finished work of Jesus needs no addition from our doings! If the slightest merit were needed at our hands, our agonized cry must be, "Lost, ruined and undone!" Heaven could never be ours. We must go from hence—to everlasting destruction, away from Your presence—to lie down among the wailings of the outcasts! But we adore You for Christ our all, and we plead His full, perfect, and sufficient atoning sacrifice. But we feel, that though our works can never justify—yet still their abundance should show forth Your praise, and exhibit evidence that Your Spirit has called us to Your faith and fear, and to pure and loving and

unceasing service. Enable us, we beseech You, if future days should be ours, to amend our lives according to Your holy Word. Increase in us hatred and abhorrence of all evil. Strengthen us to flee the sins which we confess. Make us more resolute, more watchful, more prayerful. Open our eyes to the snares ever before our feet, and help us to escape them, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue. Of Your free grace grant, we beseech You, that no evil fruits may spring up from the evil seeds which our unwary hands have strewn. Let no fellow-creature be hardened in vanity and folly—by our lack of holy living. If we have been ashamed this day of Christ and His Word, pardon our unfaithfulness, and give us opportunity to repair the neglect. If any words from our lips have shown unkindness, malice, envy, or lack of love, grant that they may be no stumbling-block in the way of others. May no unadvised speech or hasty temper in us bring dishonor to Your sacred name. Oh that our upright example may ever rebuke vice and allure to godliness, and give evidence that the ways of Christ are lovely!

Bless with Your enriching grace—every effort made by us to make known Your saving truth. Hear and answer all our prayers for ourselves and others.

Into Your hands we now commit ourselves, our souls, our bodies, for You have redeemed us O Lord, O God of truth. Keep all evil far away. May refreshing slumber, if it be Your gracious will, soothe and restore our powers. Give ministering spirits charge to watch around us. We earnestly implore, that our every thought may be holiness to You. For Your name's sake—send us not empty away. We crave acceptance in the merits of Christ our Savior. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

Father of all mercies—be all mercy unto us. The light returns—but without Your light within, no profit can outward light afford. Give us the saving light of Your Holy Spirit, that we may see You as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation, the delight of our souls, rejoicing over us with joy, resting in Your love. The gift of this day will bring us, we trust—nearer to heaven. May it raise us higher in heaven. May our eternity be happier, our hallelujahs louder, because of the grace now given and rightly used. We especially commend our wicked and deceitful hearts to Your watchful care. We know their treachery. We cannot keep them. Guard their every portal, lest the wily serpent should sneak in. Give us quick discernment of his deadly arts. If he approaches us as an angel of light—may we detect the bold disguise, and bid him, "Be gone!"

Help us to realize that opportunities quickly fly away—never more to return. May all our words and works allure others to the highest walks of faith and love. May the loiterers be quickened by our example, to an increase of diligence. May worldlings be won to the pure delight of spiritual acquaintedness with You. May our zeal for Jesus and His truth warn the timid and irresolute of the fearful doom of those who are ashamed of Him. Cause us to be such mirrors of Your grace that all may see in us how good and joyful a thing it is to live in the service of our God. May we rejoice to remember that You, O God, see us! Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire, and so uncloak the empty vanity of all earthly things, that no conformity to its baubles may bespatter us with mire. Utterly transform us by the renewing of our minds. May our lips be as well tuned cymbals, sweetly sounding Your praise. May a halo of heavenly-mindedness sparkle around us. We are invited to precious delights. The banqueting-house of Your Word is wide open. The voice of the heavenly spouse calls us: "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved. Eat that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness!" Quicken us to arise and come apart, and regale

ourselves amid the rich refreshment of gospel-promises. May we sit down under our Lord's shadow with great delight, and may we find His fruit sweet to our taste.

Help us to have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the holy way, remembering the misery of past days, when darkness blinded our eyes. Enable us tenderly to warn, and with yearning hearts—to draw them from destruction's crowded way.

We thank You for Your heart-stirring Word, which converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

Time is very short. Soon our last grain will fall through the hour-glass! Grant that we may gather up the fragments which remain, that no more may be lost! Be with those who through sickness, age, infirmity, or other disability—cannot labor in Your vineyard. Remind us that our activities may soon similarly fade. Give them the calm joy of holy meditation, and by their prayers may they call down blessings on the warfaring camp and the wayfaring pilgrims. Thus may every member of the Church in his vocation and ministry, joyfully and truly serve You.

Regard with Your especial favor, those connected with us by the ties of kindred and Christian love. Bless all whose friendship cheers us, and whose kindness is a sunbeam to our path. Supply all their needs according to Your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. If there are any who have ill-will towards us, take it out of their hearts, and turn their enmity to love. Never allow us to be overcome of evil—but to overcome all evil with good. If any curse us—may we bless them, knowing that we are thereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing.

O King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glorified in us and by us this day and forever, through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

O Eternal God, who alone has immortality, ever living in glory, unchanged, unchangeable, bend down Your ear to hear. Harken and bless us. Grant that the morning light and the evening shade may alike write lessons of wisdom on our hearts. May the close of another day teach us the rapid flight of time. Truly our life is but a vapor. How soon will our sojourn on earth be done. As the spilled water cannot be gathered up, so lost opportunities no more return.

Pardon us that we have so poorly used the hours which have just fled. Pardon us that we have so failed to do Your work and to advance Your glory. We humble ourselves as most unprofitable servants. Our best doings are but filthy rags. Our worst doings, how hateful they must be to You, in whose sight the very heavens are not clean. In shame we now hide ourselves in our great Redeemer's wounds. Clinging to His cross, we supplicate forgiveness of every committed sin and of every omitted duty.

All glory to Your holy name, that Jesus is revealed to us as the Lord our Righteousness. Accept His obedience—for our disobedience, to the praise of the glory of Your grace. Grant that the beds which we now approach may remind us that graves will soon open for us. As our eyes are now about to close in sleep—so they will soon close on this earthly scene. May our frequent lying down make us familiar with the image of death. May we always be ready, waiting for admittance to Your immediate presence.

Grant that the love of heavenly things may so engross our minds, that attachment to earthly things may utterly become extinct. Our treasure is not here in this poor world. Where our treasure is, surely our affections should be placed. Enable us to reflect that our life is in Your hands. May we then hold it loosely in our hand, prepared for Your recall. We willingly endure pain and suffering to recruit for a moment our transitory health, shall we shrink from the pains of death, which introduce us to the freshness of eternal youth?

Send down Your Holy Spirit to reveal to us all the fullness of the truth, that the blessed Jesus has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. Gracious Savior, proclaim to the ears of our faith, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever". We desire to retire this night in full assurance, that yet a little while, and He who shall come will come and will not tarry; and that when Christ who is our life shall appear—then we also shall appear with Him in glory!

All glory be to You for these precious hopes. All honor be to You for the gospel of the glory of Your grace. All praise be to You for Your unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ. All thanks for the love of the Spirit, who has translated us from darkness into this marvelous light. For truly our fellowship is with the Father said with His Son Jesus Christ.

O You who have showered so many blessings upon earth this day, withhold not Your mercies in the night season. Darkness is not darkness to You—but day and night are both alike. Your gracious hand never wearies. Your power needs no repose. Refresh, we beg You, the multitudes who now lie down wearied and worn out. Keep feverish unrest from those whom sleepless pillows now await. Be their song when all around is silent. Strengthen those who are called to watch by the beds of the sick and suffering and dying. Make them the happy ministers of comfort and peace.

Throughout this night many prayers will be poured forth. Hear them, answer them, send in response the comforts of Your Spirit. Some are constrained to travel—be by their side. Some are tossed on the billows of the sea; if the stormy wind shall arise, may their souls find sweet calm in You. Thus we commend to You all the needs of all Your redeemed people. We bless You that we may thus plead for them. Show Yourself, we beg You, the God of all grace and love and power for the glory of Your name in Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

Another morning, O our God, now dawns. It is the last morning of this week, and it may be the last morning of our earthly course. In the review of all the blessings of the past days, we thank You; and we mourn from our inmost souls that our praises are so feeble and graceless. Pity us for Christ's sake. In Him, Your mercy exceeds all bounds, and survives all time. In Him, be ever a God of mercy unto us. In the uncertainty of what is ordered for us, we place ourselves entirely in Your fatherly arms. We cry 'Abba, Father!' and we confidently implore the children's blessing. If we live through this day, may our lives be the high happiness of serving You. Work in us to will, work in us to do, according to Your good pleasure.

We are blind—be our light. We are ignorant—be our wisdom. We are steeped in selfishness—pluck all self out of us. Make us followers of Your dear Son who pleased not Himself. May it be our food and drink to do Your will. Thus may we finish our course with gladness. Open

our ears very quickly to hear Your Spirit's voice. Without one halting pause may we run delightedly after His beckoning hand. Melt our consciences, that no hardness may remain. Make them tenderly alive to evil's slightest touch. If the enemy approaches, quicken our steps to flee into the wounds of Jesus as our sure refuge. Sheltered in the ark of safety, may we cease to tremble at all alarms. May the good Shepherd lead us this day into the green pastures of His refreshing Word, and cause us to lie down beside the rivers of His comforts. Fill us with Your peace, which passes all understanding, that no disquieting gales from the world may ruffle the calm surface of our souls. In all our needful fellowship with men, enable us to act as servants faithful to their King in heaven, and as entrusted with a blessing for others. May many be the better, and none the worse—that our lips are not yet silent in the grave. Help us never to be ashamed of the gospel of Your grace. May men read in us, that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

Blessed Lord God, make this a blessed day to your redeemed people. Cause the devil to tremble, because Your power is gone forth mightily to save. Call forth sorrow unto repentance never to be repented of. Give new life which never shall be extinct. Put happy songs into many mouths, which shall sound throughout eternity. For the good of our own souls, and for the good of Your whole Church, we pray especially for those whom You have called to be ministers of Your truth. Give them calm hours to equip for work. Call them to undisturbed communion with You. Shut out the world and all its matters from their holy meditations. Help them to draw water from the deep wells of salvation, with which to refresh the flocks. May they taste themselves, and inwardly digest the truths which You shall teach them to proclaim. May they stand in their pulpits as true men of God, as very ambassadors for Christ. May their every sentence be deeply imbued with the Spirit of the Lord, and thoroughly baptized in His blood. May they plead as dying men with dying men, using each opportunity as the last. Let the world see that You will work, and none shall effectually hinder. Roll away the reproach from pulpits that insipidity and ignorance are sometimes found, where zeal should burn and knowledge should abound. As the message of Christ exceeds all other themes, so may it be uttered in eloquence thrilling from enlightened hearts. Let not the enticing words of man's wisdom be sought—but may the Spirit's power give dignity and success.

Hear our prayers too, for those who shall this day make holy preparation to take the teaching place in Sunday schools. Enable them to feel their high position rightly, and duly to estimate each recurring opportunity. Help them to instruct with wrestling prayer, knowing that You alone can command the blessing —with glowing love for souls, feeling that one soul saved outweighs in worth all worlds —with tender patience, remembering Your wondrous long-suffering towards them —with lively faith, believing that no word of truth can ever sound in vain. Bless them. Bless their numerous classes. Cause our schools to shine as centers of gospel-light, and let the Word of the Lord have free course and be glorified through many regenerate parishes. We ask in full faith of abundant answers in Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—we meekly knock at mercy's gate. Father, unto You we cry. Blessed Jesus, Your name we plead. Holy Spirit, by Your help we venture near.

How solemn is all prayer! How more than solemn is a family's last prayer on the last evening of a concluded week. Prayer drew back the curtains of its first day. May prayer now close the door.

What penitence, confusion, shame befit us! This week accumulates our mass of guilt. It proves us offenders at every moment and in every act. If our past hours are weighed in the scales of justice, we must lie low, convicted and undone. The voice of Your righteous law proclaims our manifold transgressions. Condemning conscience mournfully assents. But, gracious Savior, in You we have redemption through Your blood, even the forgiveness of our sins. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us Your peace. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ hear us. Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us.

Why was Your cross erected—but to be our refuge! Why did Your blood stream—but to wash us clean! Why did You become our surety—but that Your death might be ours! Why is Your name Jesus—but because it is Your property to save! We call upon You, that all the purposes of Your grace may be in us abundantly fulfilled. We come unto You. You have said, him who comes unto Me—I will never cast out. Receive us then to Your uttermost salvation.

If we see tomorrow's light, we shall commence a new week. May it be in newness of heart. Repair now with refreshing sleep, our weary powers. Send sweet repose to restore what toil and cares have weakened. Do not allow Satan to molest our rest, or to disquiet with unwelcome thoughts. Pour vigor into our minds, that tomorrow in public and in private we may wrestle with You, as men striving for life, bold to grasp You until our cups overflow. Grant that we may awake from slumbers fresh for every holy exercise, fervent in spirit, alert for Your worship. May no languor oppress. May no intrusive recollections carry us back to a renounced world.

We beseech You also to watch around the couches of Your faithful ministers. Strengthen their energy of body. Give them needful activity of mind. Enable them to go forth a mighty army against the powers of darkness. Animate them with strong arm to unfurl the banner of the Cross. Help them with untiring zeal to deal closely with the consciences of men. With unwearied ardor may they sound aloud the great Redeemer's dying love. Send forth Your Holy Spirit in the gospel's conquering message. Let spiritual blessings fall, and the name of Jesus triumph gloriously.

Thus this week ends. The close reminds us that to each of us, that the race of life is well-near finished. This may be our last united prayer. Hear us then, when in the name of Christ we supplicate the everlasting pardon of all the sins of each and all of us now prostrate before Your throne. May full salvation be our common portion. May the righteousness of God be our robe through all the ages of eternity. May heaven be our one home forever. May our united song increase the praises which shall have no end.

Counteract all the evil which our commissions and omissions have tended to produce. Overrule all matters in which we have had concern wholly to Your glory. Grant that earth may not be worse because our feet have trod it. May we now look round as if our eyes should see this world no more. Do not allow us to bear away from this Your mercy-seat any unforgiving temper or unholy passion. Hallow us throughout, as pure temples of the Holy Spirit.

Give us the blessings which we crave. Give us much more, even all that the merits of Your Son have purchased, and all that the everlasting covenant of grace provides. Pour all heaven into our longing hearts. We would forget none who claim our prayers. Do for them even as for us. Guide them by Your counsel. Receive them to Your glory. Accept our tribute of adoration offered in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SECOND WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING.

O God, You are our God—early will we seek You. It is our joy and our delight, our highest privilege and our glorious honor, to approach in the name of Jesus Your throne of grace. We come with filial confidence, and cry unto You, 'Abba, Father!' Our hearts are too narrow to comprehend the riches of Your adopting love. Our lips fail when we strive to utter just praise. But hear us when we wrestle with You for larger supplies of Your Holy Spirit to enable us to realize our high estate.

We were once dead in trespasses and sins. But now our eyes are open to behold in part Your glory, and lips no longer dumb, hold sacred converse with You. We were strangers and outcasts—slaves in the prison-house of Satan—rebels against Your righteous rule—ignorant of Your gospel-love. But You have brought us near by the blood of Your dear Son. You have softened the heart of enmity. You have called us to be Your children by the faith of Jesus. You have admitted us into Your own family, and made us heirs of Your kingdom, and joint-heirs with Christ! Oh that we might love You—as You love us! Oh that we might walk worthy of You our God, and of Your heavenly calling! Oh that we might reflect the image of the Lord Jesus. The gates of Your earthly sanctuary are now open to us. We are called to unite with Your favored children in public avowal that we are Yours. We are invited to lift up the voice of common prayer and praise with the multitude who keep holy day. We hear Your Spirit's animating call, "Oh come let us sing unto the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms!" Help us as obedient children, to draw near unto You. May we see Your beauty and Your glory with the clear eye of faith. May we feel Your Spirit's mighty power in our hearts. May a live coal from the heavenly sanctuary touch our lips. May we find that we are the called of the Lord, free and strong to wrestle with You as the patriarch of old. May we rise far above earth, and have large foretaste of our heavenly home.

We remember with shame, that often our knees have bowed when our hearts have been unhumbled. Our confessions of misery as sinners have often been an empty sound. In the deep sense of our guilt—we fly for refuge into the wounded side of Jesus. Under the shelter of His cross we supplicate pardon for the past, and help in the worship of this day.

Except Your Spirit shall mightily move in us—no inward fire will kindle. O blessed Jesus, remember Your gracious Word. Do as You have said. Be present where Your people meet, and cause Your nearness to be felt. Especially clothe Your own Word with divine power. May it shine as a light from heaven, revealing You. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness. When Satan shall draw near to infuse coldness and slumber, and careless wanderings into our minds, or to carry away the good seed—may You rebuke him, and drive him far away. Be a wall of fire round about Your congregations, and the glory in their midst.

Heavenly Father, bless all who shall teach Your Word this day, whether in the pulpit, in the school, in visits to the sick, or beside the dying bed. May they receive from You what they shall dispense to others. May their own souls richly feed on the good provisions which from Your storehouse they bring forth. May it be clearly evident that their feet firmly walk in the narrow way to which they invite

others. May they brightly shine in that light which they labor to diffuse.

Thus may there be showers of spiritual blessings on this weary earth. Water with fructifying dew all the good truth which shall be scattered. May the fruits of salvation be abundant. May the everlasting songs be augmented. Bind in closer bonds of love—pastors to their flocks, and flocks to their pastors, and all to You. Kindle mutual prayer for common weal. May they joy in each other's joy, strengthen in each other's strength, and be comforted in each other's comfort. Hear our prayer. Hasten Your kingdom. Bless us for the sake of Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

SUNDAY EVENING.

Lord Almighty, as a family we commenced this day on bended knees; as a family, on bended knees we close it. Prayer opened the portals, let prayer now bar them. In humble faith we asked Your presence and Your grace. For Your presence and Your grace we now give thanks. We began, looking to the Savior; looking to the Savior we conclude.

We felt our need with morning light, we feel it not less at evening's shade. We early smote upon our breasts as miserable sinners; as miserable sinners we smite again. Through all our lives no day has passed which has not proved us guilty in Your sight. The record of every moment—is a record of transgression. But this day the iniquity of holy things adds to our condemnation. Sanctuary-hours accuse us. Prayers have been uttered, while hearts have been prayerless. Praise has been often praiseless sound. Our best services are but as filthy rags. We utterly renounce them. They are unworthy of You, our God. We bewail them as bearing witness to the evil which dwells within us. When the spirit is willing—the flesh is weak. We do not worship You as we ought. We do not serve You as we would. "All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind!" Isaiah 64:6. Be merciful, be merciful unto us—whose only hope is in Your unfailing mercy.

Blessed Jesus, we hide ourselves in the sure covert of Your wrath-appeasing wounds! Our sins rise higher than the heavens—but Your merits in our behalf surpass the very heaven of heavens! Our unrighteousness would weigh us down to hell—but Your glorious righteousness exalts us to Your heavenly throne! All things in us call for our damnation—but all things in You demand our acceptance. We appeal, then, from Your throne of perfect justice—to Your throne of boundless grace! Grant us to hear Your voice assuring us: that by Your stripes we are healed; that You have been bruised for our iniquities; that You have been made sin for us—that we might have Your divine righteousness; and that all our vile and grievous iniquities, are forgiven and buried in the ocean of Your sin-concealing blood! We are guilty—yet pardoned! We are lost in ourselves—yet fully saved in You!

We pray especially for all our fellow-worshippers. Pardon their shortcomings, even as we beseech You to pardon ours. Give them contrite hearts, even as we seek broken-heartedness for ourselves. Enable them to close this day clinging to the cross, even as we now seek safety and repose beneath its shelter. Hear our cry, too, for all the congregations throughout earth's breadth. Accept and answer the prayers which Your Holy Spirit has breathed within them. You search the hearts and know what is the mind of the Spirit. Let, then, floods of descending grace enrich a

weary world. Your treasury will not be lessened. Your people will be enlarged and cheered. Great will be their gain without decrease in You.

We pray for blessings upon blessings on all the ministers of Your sacred truth, who know nothing among their people but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let not Your word return unto You void. You have kindled the light of life, and set it in the world's gloom. Cause it, with increasing brightness, to outshine all mists of ignorance and superstition. Satan sees it, and trembles. He hates it, and would gladly extinguish it. Defeat his cruel wiles. Show that gospel-rays are far mightier than all powers of darkness. In the riches of Your love You have opened the springs of heavenly knowledge in this wilderness world. Keep the stream pure from the corruption of man's traditions and vain conceits. May every drop sparkle like crystal. May it flow clear and unsullied as mountain-snow. May it refresh as the morning-dew, The prince of this world strives to poison it with mixtures of all kinds of error. We look to You to keep the fountain of Your Word healthful and unadulterated.

Guard with Your preserving care the vine which Your right hand has planted. Do not allow the wild boar of the forest to lay it waste, nor the little foxes to spoil the tender grapes. Add to Your Church daily such as shall be saved. These prayers for ourselves, Your ministers, Your people, we humbly offer in the faith and name of Jesus Christ, and trusting only in His saving merits. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

Holy Father, Almighty God, behold us as a little company on our knees before You. Regard us in tender love—for Jesus' sake. Bend down Your ear—and grant Your smile. Another working week begins. We commence it, adoring You for the refreshment to mind and body of yesterday's rest. All praise be to Your gracious care for replenishing our souls from the storehouse of Your Word. May we now go forth to the duties of our calling strong in the might of Your truth, nourished by the sincere milk of Your gospel. Let Your Word be held fast by us, and may we feast on it, and may it be the very joy and rejoicing of our hearts. Concerning the works of men, by the words of Your lips keep us from the paths of the destroyer. Wherever our feet are set, may our thoughts be high with You—on the mount of meditation. Enable each one of us in spirit to testify, "Oh! how I love Your law, it is my meditation all the day long!" Teach us the happy art of attending to temporal things—with minds intent on eternal things. In all our needful employ, help us to set You, our God, before us, and to walk on earth as seeing Him who is invisible. Grant that all occurrences this day may draw us nearer to our heavenly Father, and bring down more of heaven into our hearts.

We are strangers and pilgrims here. Give us the stranger's indifference. Let our hands hold the pilgrim's staff. Let our march be Zion-ward—watching for our dear Lord's return—listening for the archangel's shout, and the last trumpet's clang—prepared to lift up our heads with joy, knowing that His coming will be the day of our consummated redemption.

O our God, we desire to give our hearts unto You, now, and for this week, without one shadow of reserve. We beseech You take full possession of them. Expel mightily every opposing foe. Crush every rebel lust. Mortify each traitorous passion. Annihilate each earth-born desire. Our hearts are Yours—for You have created them. They are Yours—for You have redeemed them by the most precious blood of Your only begotten Son. They are Yours—because in free love You have renewed them by Your Holy Spirit. They are Yours—because You have conquered them by Your

grace. They are Yours—because we willingly surrender them to You. Claim them, we beseech You, as Your own heritage. Occupy them wholly by Your presence. Exclude every intruding rival. Reign supreme within them.

We would love You now, and forevermore, with all our hearts, and all our souls, and all our might, and all our strength. You are worthy of infinitude of adoration, far beyond what our dull hearts can yield. Is love among men awakened by genius, wisdom, worth, and seeming perfection? You are the very perfection of all perfections. All intellect is derived from You. Our scanty rivulets flow from Your unfathomable fountain. Compared with You—the sun is darkness, all beauty is deformity, all knowledge is folly, the best goodness is most faulty. You, the great Creator, who inhabits eternity, are high above all creatures. So invigorate our love, that it may worthily rise to You and tightly entwine itself around You.

Bless all with whom we shall have interchange of thought. May Christ in them teach us. May Christ in us give grace to them. Thus may we be fellow-helpers to each other's faith. We know not the effect of any utterance. We humbly beg You, that Your Holy Spirit may suggest each word, and sanctify it to the use of edifying. Enable us, as the salt of the earth, to purify and check corruption. Help us, as flowers in the garden of the Lord, to diffuse holy fragrance.

If in our daily matters we shall have contact with the ungodly, worldly, or profane, may we receive no hurtful taint—but may we rather allure them to the more excellent way. If provocations should assail, may we keep our mouths, as it were, with a bridle, and overcome evil with good. We know the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of man's heart. We fear, therefore, lest any evil should lurk undetected within our heart. We beseech You search us thoroughly by Your Spirit, and lead us in the way everlasting.

Bless with especial favor, all who pray for us. Answer their prayers, and recompense them a thousand-fold into their bosoms. Bless those who ask our prayers. Enrich them according as their need shall be. Accept this morning's sacrifice of prayer and praise. It is our bounden duty. We worship in the great Redeemer's name. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

Heavenly Father, by Your Holy Spirit, help us now to pray. We feel our weakness, our ignorance, our deep corruptions. Without You, no thought is good. Without You, our words cannot ascend to heaven. But trusting in Your dear Son—we come to bless and praise You, O You who are the author and giver of all good things, for Your gracious care of us throughout the hours of this departing day. We are vile earth and miserable sinners—but You have magnified Your grace in crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

We thank You for the full stream of temporal blessings which has gladdened our dwelling. We thank You for the sweet air which has refreshed our frames, for the light of Your glorious sun, for the food which has renewed our strength, for the clothing which clothes us, for the dwelling which shelters us. No extreme heat smites us. No extreme cold benumbs us. Things animate, things inanimate, minister to our comfort. Do not allow us to be insensible to these mercies, because they are our daily portion. Enable us to read in each—a Father's love. The withdrawal of the least of these common favors would fill us with misery and distress. If Your providential care should relax—plague and pestilence and famine and all the countless tribes of woe might settle on our

land.

Gathered together this evening, free from all external troubles, secure, at ease, and in peace—we humbly desire to bring the tribute of thanksgiving. We present ourselves, our bodies, all we are, and all that is within us—as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto You, which is our reasonable service. High as is Your hand in bestowing mercies, so high is it in averting evil. In every spectacle of another's woe, may we deeply recognize our immunity, solely through Your distinguishing love. Let every sight of sorrow deepen in us gratitude, for unmerited exemption. When tidings reach us in our sheltered homes of catastrophes and accidents abroad, may our grateful hearts respond, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall dwell under the shadow of the Almighty."

While we thus adore You for temporal protection, help us to raise our voices higher still in recording spiritual support. We thank You that in full warmth of filial faith, we look up this evening and cry Abba, Father. If Your Holy Spirit had withdrawn His cheering presence, darkness and doubts would have obscured our hopes. We might have been sinking in deep waters, where there is no standing. The enemy might have come in like a flood. The night of despondency might have blackened around us. But through grace—we retain our confidence, which has great recompense of reward. This proceeds solely from Your goodness. We render thanks.

We know by sad experience the power, and craft, and malignity of our spiritual adversary. If this day he has not affrighted us as a roaring lion—it is solely because You have restrained him. If he has not laid wait as an adder in our path—it is because of the prevention of Your interposing arm. All the artillery of hell might have been directed against us. What wounds might we have received! Crippled and downcast—we might have gone mourning to our graves. But You have been our shield, therefore we will sing with adoring lips, "The Lord is our rock, and our fortress, and our deliverer; our God, our strength, in whom we will trust; our buckler, and the horn of our salvation, and our high tower." To our praises we add humble prayers. Your mercies are new at evening and at morning. Great is Your faithfulness. May Your guardian-care continue now when night's shadows fall. Help us while we helpless lie. Around our dwelling set angelic hosts to watch. Let no alarms disturb our peace. Let no foes invade our home. Our wearied frames require repose. Grant us sweet rest. Let grateful slumbers close our eyes. While consciousness remains, let our thoughts hold converse with our God. If this night our souls are summoned to depart, may they be swiftly borne to our eternal rest. But if we leave our beds again, may we be renewed to love You more, and refreshed to serve You better. Extend these blessings to all our absent relatives and friends. We commend all to Your tenderest love. May they all close this day at peace with You, through the atoning death of Jesus. May they lie down happy in conscience through the blood of sprinkling. And if they rise tomorrow, may it be to walk before You in newness of life. May these prayers ascend, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

Give ear, O ever-watchful Shepherd of Your flock—lead us, guide us, safely tend us this day. Without Your restraining rod—we shall err and stray like lost sheep. Hedge up our paths, lest we be misled into the unwholesome pastures of the world, and drink of its poisonous streams. Direct our feet, lest we be entangled by some secret snare of the devil, or stumble into his hidden pitfalls. Encircle Your fold by Your protecting power, that the roaring lion may not devour, nor any cruel foe assail. Remember Your ransomed flock. Protect, preserve it as the purchase of Your dear Son's

blood.

O Lord, we beseech You now to defend us, not only from outward adversaries—but especially from ourselves! We have foes which cleave closer to us than our very skin. We cannot escape them. Help us to elude their enticing wiles. In public and in private, when we come in or go out, whether we rise up or sit down—they cling to our side. Deliver us from their constant baits and traps. The old man yet lives within us and is powerful. Help us to nail him to the cross of Jesus. We earnestly desire to put him off with all his foul deeds, and to put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness. If You speak the word—the victory is ours! But our own strength is less than weak. In our flesh there dwells no good thing—it is the vile abode of every corrupt desire. It is the den in which all vile passions lurk. It lusts against the Spirit. Left to ourselves, we fall. But Your Spirit is omnipotent. Oh! then, bid Your Spirit to arise in all His might, and crush indwelling opponents!

How often do we mourn that, when we would do good, evil is present with us. The good that we would do—we cannot do; the evil that we would not do—that we do. We look to You to deliver us from the body of this death. Strengthen us with heavenly aid in the inner man, lest we faint and be weary in the conflict—and yield to our bosom-foes. The enemy is within the citadel! Come with Your almighty power and subdue him. Enable us, therefore, by Your Spirit, to mortify all the deeds of the body. Those who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

O Jesus, we are Yours! Other lords have had dominion over us—but now we are Your willing servants. Come, then, O You who are our Lord, pierce to the death—utterly destroy—abolish in us every particle of carnal self!

O You whom our souls love, we are grieved that Your enemies so widely rule below. We regard Your foes as our foes—Your victories as our victories—Your triumphs as our triumphs—Your glory as our glory. When will Your presence regenerate the earth? When will Your reign of righteousness and purity and peace be established? When will evil vanish before Your bright beams? When will Your descending chariot drive Satan into blackness of darkness forever? We love Your appearing, and we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" But while You are pleased to delay, infuse life into every effort to extinguish vice. Fill with Your Spirit all who sit on thrones of supremacy and might. May they reign as they who own Your higher reign. May they wear the crown as they who seek the crown eternal. Especially bless the Queen who is called in Your good providence to wield the scepter of these realms. Grant to her, and her fellow-potentates, that out of godly hearts they may devise godly measures. Grant also, to all who exercise subordinate authority that their desires may be righteous; their counsels wise; their aims sincere. May they seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness, and thus obtain all other things.

Teach us to yield obedience to them, as to Your appointed ministers. In thrones and principalities may we see Your ordinance for our good. May we show all godly submission, as instructed in Your Word. Thus may our lives be quiet and peaceable in all godliness and honesty. You who hear prayer, hear us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

God Almighty, heavenly Father, at the close of this day multitudes surround Your throne with praises on their lips. None can have cause to exceed us in thanksgiving. Grant that no grateful

fervor may surpass our adoring warmth. Your eye of love has never failed to watch us. But our eyes have turned from You, to countless vanities. We smite upon our breasts before You, and bewail our waywardness and folly. Your gracious hand has ever been extended to preserve us. It is through Your protecting care alone, that we now kneel in safety in Your presence. Every moment, streams of mercy have flowed from heaven. We confess with shame and contrition, that we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the grace which You have granted to us. If our hearts should burn in one bright flame of love—if our lips should utter no sound but glowing praise—if our lives should be one incense of thanksgiving—it would fall short of our vast debt to You!

We pray this night for large outpourings of Your Spirit to kindle worthy love, and to awaken adequate returns of praise. If You should permit us, in the plenitude of Your goodness, to see other days, we pray that they may be passed in closer nearness to You, and deeper devotedness to Your service. May Your glory be the aim and end of every thought and word and work. At every moment let our inward cry be heard, "Lord, what will You have us to do?"

Send Your Holy Spirit to reveal to us Your will. May His voice be heard, "This is the way, walk in it," when we would turn to the right hand or to the left. Through the riches of Your saving grace we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, as the way, the truth, and the life. Help us that we may evermore walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

We know that we have no power of ourselves, to keep ourselves. Our best strength, is utter weakness. Our firmest resolves, are as fleeting as the morning cloud and early dew. Oh! then never leave us nor forsake us. Perfect that which concerns our souls. You have begun in us the good work of faith. Mightily carry it on, that we may be pure and blameless in the great day of Christ. As children of light and of the day, may we not sleep as do others—but may we be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. At the end of another day's march, we humbly wash anew in the all-cleansing blood. Thus we retire to our beds in happy assurance that You no more see in us the spots, the soils, the filth of former iniquities. We retire, too, remembering that another stage in our brief pilgrimage is passed, and that our opportunities of doing good on earth are rapidly fading away. Yet a little while and we go hence, no more to be seen among the children of men. Help us that we may gird up the loins of our minds, and quicken our steps, and speed as if each moment was our last. Give us grace to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. May our sleep remind us of the sleep of death; our beds of the graves which must so soon receive us. While we live may we live unto the Lord; when we die, may we die unto the Lord. Thus may our lives be happiness, and our deaths glory. Who are we that we should ask such things? We know and we deplore our miserable unworthiness. Our only hope is in Your love, in Jesus Christ our complete Redeemer and our all-prevailing Advocate. In His mighty name we thus address You. Hear and answer, for His sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

We lift up our eyes and our souls unto You who dwells in the heavens. Blessed be Your holy name that we, weighed down by countless sins, may fly in spirit to the presence of our Father and our God. Through the multitude of Your unfailing mercies, we see the returning dawn of day. To the

light of nature add, we meekly beg You—the light of Your heavenly grace. O You commanded the light to shine out of darkness, be pleased to shine more and more into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of Your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Vain will be the gift of another day, unless we grow in grace, increase in knowledge, add to our stores of faith, and ripen for the ingathering into Your garner. Help us, then, most mighty God—most mightily from on high. Is it not Your blessed will that we should know You as You are, and love You supremely, and serve You wholly, and adore You in every moment of our time, in every movement of our minds, in every pulse of our affections, in every faculty with which we are endowed? Through grace, our will responds to Yours. But the power to obey is not in us. You in Your free love must work in us to do. Here, then, We present our empty hearts to You. Be pleased to fill them to overflowing with Your choicest gifts. We bring our blinded understanding; chase away all the mists of ignorance and superstition by bright beams from the Sun of Righteousness. We would take our seat beneath the great Redeemer's cross; may healing streams continuously descend, cleansing us from all our filth, pouring sweet balm into every grievous wound, and purging our consciences from dead works to serve You, the living God.

Help us too, to gain strength in the rich pastures of Your heavenly Word. We bless You for the treasure beyond treasures, the open page of Your Holy Scriptures. May we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, until our inner man is wholly molded into gospel-form. From our replenished hearts may there flow forth rivers of living water. Let us minister to others as You have given to us the measure of faith. From all vain words, good Lord, deliver us. We earnestly desire in all things to imitate Christ, who has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Grace ever dwelt on His lips. He did no sin, neither was any deceit found in His mouth. May we be like-minded.

While we thus pray, we remember the unprofitableness and the iniquity of our past words. They arise before us, black in guilt, testifying against us, calling for our condemnation. We would silence their accusing voice, by burying them all in the deep grave of the Redeemer's wounds.

We again praise You and adore You for the gift of Jesus. We feel that without Him we would be utterly undone. We believe that in Him we are eternally delivered from deserved wrath, and saved with everlasting salvation.

We now go forth to the vocations of this day. May we studiously cultivate love to our brethren. Precious is the communion of saints. Those who fear the Lord should speak often one to another. We know that Your ears delight to hear, and that You are writing a book of remembrance. May that book record that holy converse is our chosen pleasure-ground. How rapidly might the spiritual temple rear its head, how brightly might the living stones reflect the rays of heaven—if we gave ourselves to the sweet employ of comforting one another, and edifying one another, and provoking one another to love and to good works!

We restrict not our prayers to our own needs. We look around on the whole family of man. O Lord, add multitudes this day to Your Church even such as shall be saved. Compel Satan to release his groaning captives. Hurl him from his wrongful throne. Enlarge the joyful song of the redeemed. Translate many into the kingdom of Your dear Son. So shall Your glory be increased, and earth sing aloud of Your praise. We add our hallelujah, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

Merciful Father, O God of hope and consolation, visit us now with the abundance of Your heavenly grace. May we realize Your life-giving presence. Holy Spirit, help us to come boldly to the mercy-seat. How great, how inestimable, are our privileges in Christ Jesus. Without Him, we must have stood afar off, as strangers and outcasts. In Him, we draw near, and touch the outstretched scepter of the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the sovereign Creator of heaven and earth. Without Him, how could we dare to lift up our guilty eyes. In Him, we gaze with open face on God, as our Father and most loving friend. Without Him, we must hide our lips in the lowest dust of trembling shame. In Him, we open our mouths loudly in petition and in praise. Without Him, all above us is wrath and consuming fire. In Him, heaven is all love towards us, and the home of our adoring souls forever. Without Him, below us is a gaping hell, and bitterness of anguish without end. In Him, those gates are barred by His most precious blood, so that no redeemed one can be imprisoned there. Without Him, blackness of darkness spreads its horrors in our faces. In Him, an eternity of bright glory is our boundless horizon. Without Him, mountains upon mountains of iniquity fill up our account. In Him, the stream of His blood follows us, leveling all hindrances, and cleansing every vile blot. Without Him, all within us is terror, consternation, and dismay. In Him, every internal accusation is charmed into joy and peace. Without Him, all things external—the earth which we have soiled—its creatures used as instruments of evil—call for our condemnation. In Him, they all minister to our comfort, and are ours to enjoy with thanksgiving. Therefore it is very fitting, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at this time, and at this place, and at all times and in all places, adore You for the unspeakable gift of Jesus, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God.

We loathe ourselves that we do not love You with more intense fervor. We abhor our cold, and dead, and contracted feelings. Take away, we beseech You, the chilly heart of stone—and give us hearts of flesh. Reveal to us to the very full, Your saving love in Jesus, the glories of His cross, and the infinite merits of His finished work. May we gaze on Him until we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus, when we thus sing Your praise, poor and feeble as we are—we can find no measure, and no end. We long for Your abodes above, where no thoughts shall ever wander, and no weary flesh rebels. But while earth is our home, we beg You to grant that we may live striving with all our power to testify our grateful love.

It is our true desire that others now afar off should know You, and be made partakers of our joy. You have put it into the minds of men to establish many societies to labor in this cause. We commend them to Your special grace. Give wisdom to their counsels. Suggest expansive means. May those who direct their work wax strong in faith, in zeal, in hope. May no seeming difficulties deter them. May no disappointments quench their ardor. What are the greatest mountains of difficulties before the might of Jehovah Jesus? They shall be as plains. Go forth with all their toiling missionaries. The fields are white for ingathering, send forth laborers into Your harvest. By their means glean multitudes from the wilderness of the world. Blessed, great, and glorious Trinity, three Persons, one God, hear Your poor servants' cry. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

Almighty Father, without You nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Conscious of our own weakness, trusting only in Your grace and power, we beseech You this day to increase and multiply Your

mercy upon us. We are going forth to tread on slippery ground—may You uphold us. Our march is through a land of which Satan is the prince—may You protect us. Snares at each turn await our steps—may You guide us. We look around—and fear. We look up to You—and take courage. By grace alone can we stand. If Your grace should fail us, instantly we fall. Our earnest prayer is, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

We cherish the sweet assurance that according to Your sure promise, You will keep us unto eternal life. Do not allow the strength of assurance to lapse into the weakness of carnal security. To firm faith, add firm confidence. Stir us up to use all diligence to make our calling and election sure. May we never forget that temptations will pursue us to the very gates of heaven. We know that we may run well and run long, and yet by grievous stumbling, bring dishonor to the name of Christ. In Your holy Word You have erected many warning beacons. May we ponder and beware. Many examples are recorded for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Even angels kept not their first estate—but fell from heaven. Our first parents, pure from inward corruption, sinned in paradise. Judas, by the very side of Jesus, nourished thoughts of foulest treachery. Faithful patriarchs have erred through unbelief. The meekest among men have in passion poured out insulting words. Peter boasts in self-confidence and instantly denies his Lord. We read, and flee unto You for support!

Angels indeed are our ministering friends; but still the accursed spirit is ever near to seduce to evil. The new man is raised up in us; but the old nature still lives, is active, and is strong. Rest is indeed prepared for us in heaven—but we may not rest in our way thitherward. The crown of life and victory is bright before us; but now is the struggle, the conflict, and the fight. Bright are the promises to those who overcome; but there is woe to them who draw back. Bravely we must fight, if gloriously we would triumph. We know that You will never desert us; and we look to You to give us grace that we may never desert You.

Strengthen our hands to cleave to You. Give us persevering might, that having done all we may sit down with Jesus in His throne, even as He overcame, and is set down 'with the Father in His throne.

Thus may we as Christian champions resist the devil, and give him no place. Comfort us with the knowledge that the evil day is very short. Set before us the life of glory, which has no end. May we strive against sin, as if each failure would be eternal woe. Help us to stand firm, knowing that we shall soon tread Satan under our feet. If through shortness of time he is more fierce, through shortness of time may we be more valiant.

Guide us, instruct us, keep us as the apple of Your eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings; so, O Lord, alone—may You lead us. If we are permitted to pass unharmed through all the perils of this day, and to unite again in prayer before Your throne, may we meet to realize that another day's temptations are behind us; and may abundant praises swell from rejoicing hearts. Be with all our kindred, all our friends, all who pray for us and all who ask our prayers. We have sought much—may You give more, through the merits of Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

O Lord God, who inhabits the praises of heaven—to You cherubim and seraphim continually fall down and worship. Turn not from us, who meekly desire to intermingle our adoring songs. For all the mercies known and unknown of this departing day we bless You. From Your free bounty they have freely come. You have given Your angels charge concerning us. Evils have been warded off, and in safety we now kneel.

Amazing love! You have sent Your only-begotten Son to suffer in our place, and to achieve complete salvation. You have added Your Holy Spirit to be our teacher, comforter, and sanctifying guide. You have superadded the ministry of angels to be a wall of fire round about us. Thus all heaven serves the welfare of us poor worms. Keep them, we beg You, ever active in our behalf. We know they rejoice when sinners melt in penitence. May they joy rejoice when grace in us expands. They have befriended us in many perils, and snatched our feet from many snares. Never allow them to rest, until the conflict is behind, and we stand a victorious company on salvation's shore!

Grant that our proneness to all evil, and deadness to all good, and resistance of Your Spirit's motions, may never provoke You to abandon us. May our hard hearts awaken pity, and not wrath. Let not the enemy through our corruption get any advantage. Let it be seen that heaven is far mightier than hell, and that those who are for us are more than they who are against us. If You but speak the word—we are more than conquerors over every temptation. If You smile graciously on us—we are more than beautified with every grace!

Hear then our wrestling cry. Arise to our help, and enrich us with all the blessings which Your covenant provides. Keep us ever feeding in the pastures which contain strengthening food, and ever drinking of the stream which makes glad the city of God. Especially cause the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly, in all wisdom. May we search the Scriptures, intent on finding Christ, the treasure of treasures, the wisdom of wisdom, enriching to eternity, making wise unto salvation. May we turn every promise and every precept into prayer, knowing that it is easy with You to do exceeding abundantly above all that You have said, and that Your grace can help us to walk in the highest heights of Your commandments.

But, alas! with all these true desires—how often do our weak hearts sin. Grant that in every fall—we may fall lower on our knees, and when we rise—may it be to loftier flights of true devotedness. If for our godly discipline You see well to visit our waywardness with a scourge; enable us meekly to receive correction, to bless Your reproving hand, to discern why the rebuke is sent, to repent and do the first works. Teach us to bless You for every chastening, and let all Your fatherly dealings make us partakers of Your holiness. May our every cross be sanctified. May our every loss be our true gain. May whatever You are pleased to give—be a heavenward help, and whatever You are pleased to deny—be a spiritual advantage. If dark days should be ordered for us, may much affliction be lightened by the joy of the Holy Spirit. Put into our mouths, songs in the night of trial. If any trouble should tempt us to distrust; may we be conscious that this is our infirmity, and may we remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

Grant that the falling shadows of this evening may remind us that our earthly day is far spent, and that the night comes when no man can work. If we see tomorrow's dawn, may we arise to gird up the loins of our mind, to quicken our pilgrim steps, to labor in the gospel-vineyard, to leave undone no work to which You are pleased to call us, to use all diligence that we may be found of Christ in

peace.

Give us the constant cry, "Lord, what will You have us to do?" Send Your Spirit to beckon us onward in our appointed path. Enable us to view every circumstance in the mirror of eternity. May we go in and out, with the great white throne conspicuously set before our eyes. May remembrance of coming judgment be ever present. Grant that to us—to live may be Christ, so to die shall be gain.

O God of all pitifulness, fulfill the petitions of Your humble servants, through the merits and intercession of Christ Jesus. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

O God our Father, ever blessed, ever to be adored, the renewed gift of light and life, the restored use of reason and of limb, the recruited faculties of mind and body demand our warmest praise. We bless You that, in the riches of Your love, You condescend to bow down Your ear to our morning offering of thanksgiving.

Send Your Holy Spirit now to kindle anew the flame of gratitude, and to prompt the words of adoration. We ascribe it to undeserved goodness that we have any measure of bodily and mental vigor. Many this morning open their eyes in weakness and in pain, their flesh a burden, and their minds a blank. We are made to differ. Teach us that these our gifts are freely given, and come down from You, the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have—that you did not receive?" 1 Corinthians 4:7. Without Your light—our minds are all darkness. Seeing—we see not. We grope and stumble in the mazy paths of ignorance and error. Without Your regenerating Spirit—our wills are wholly depraved, and resolutely bent to resist the good and to espouse the evil. Without Your distinguishing grace—we would at this moment be afar off from You, vile among the vilest, bond-slaves of the devil, grinding in his mill, earning his wages of eternal woe! Without the visits of Your Spirit our knees would not bow acceptably in prayer, nor our lips gladly utter praise. We ascribe all spiritual blessings to Your sovereign will. You have loved us because You would love. Before we sought You—we were found by You. Before we called—You did answer. Before we knocked—the door was opened. Accept the tribute of our feeble praise. Pity us that our poverty cannot offer more. We groan, being burdened, longing for the perfect day when sin shall no more shackle our adoring spirits.

Let us not withhold praise for the large measure of temporal enjoyments, which gladden our path. We know that we are strangers and pilgrims through a world upset and soiled by sin—but still how much abounds to cheer, to solace, to delight us!

Thanks be to You for the enlivening rays of Your glorious sun, for the starry canopy above our heads at night, for the balmy air which floats around, for the perfume of the summer breeze, for the verdant carpet beneath our feet, for the sweetness of the flowers, the richness of the fruits, the nourishment of the crops, the refreshment of the flowing streams, the melody of the groves. We thank You that such evidences of Your goodness are inscribed upon the face of nature.

We thank You for the roof which spreads its shelter over us, for the table at which we sit to eat, for the beds on which we repose, for our convenient clothing, for our sufficient food, for the happy

endearments of family and of kindred and of friendship, and for such employment as You have been pleased to grant. Surely You anoint our heads with oil. Our cups run over.

Teach us, as recipients of such wondrous bounty, freely to dispense. Help us so to order all our matters—that we may have the luxury of relieving the needs of others. Open our eyes to see in every case of poverty and woe—an opportunity of showing that we are followers of You, our most merciful God. Thus may the administration of our earthly good not only supply the needs of the needy—but be abundant also by many thanksgivings unto You.

Grant that earth may be the better this day, because of Your Spirit dwelling in us. Forbid it that we should be called, converted, enlightened, sanctified, saved—for ourselves alone. So bless our godly example, our watchful walk, our holy converse—that vice may be rebuked, and the slothful quickened, and the thoughtless aroused. By the truth of our lips, may the vain-talkers be silenced, and the sceptics convinced of their profanity. May Christ be now and ever so magnified in us—that many may be allured to His cross, and receive Him as all salvation forever.

We crave these blessings not for ourselves only—but for the whole household of faith. Through our united zeal and prayer, may Your great kingdom come. We humbly place our petitions in the hands of Jesus Christ, our Advocate and Mediator. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in the wisdom of Your tender mercy, You have been pleased to proclaim Yourself as Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! These names are revealed for our peace and joy—that we may acquaint ourselves with You, and find rest unto our souls.

Help us by Your Spirit, entirely to know You according to Your Word. Open widely the eyes of our understanding, that we may fully grasp—the wonders of Your person; the wonders of Your love and grace and power; the wonders which You have already achieved by sin-atoning Your death; the wonders which You are achieving by Your unfailing intercession; the wonders which are yet to come when You shall appear again in power and great glory! Let Your counsels sound sweetly in the ear of our faith, and may we yield humble obedience to Your sacred precepts. To follow You fully is heaven—before heaven is reached!

Pardon us, that with such bright revelations of Yourself in the pages of Scripture—we have been so slow to learn, and so prone to forget. When by this time, we should have climbed the highest heights of spiritual perception. But alas! we are groveling in low depths of ignorance! We are blind—while light shines around! Take away all 'scales' from our eyes. Grind to dust—all remnants of the evil heart of unbelief.

Make it our chief joy—to study You, to meditate on You, to gaze on You, to hold communion with You! Enable us to experience that Your flesh is food indeed, and Your blood is drink indeed. May we be—like Mary—sitting meekly at Your feet; like the beloved disciple—leaning on Your breast; like Paul, counting all things as loss, for the excellency of knowing You; like Peter, appealing to You, who knows all things—that we indeed love You. Let not our faith cease from seeking You—until it vanishes in unclouded sight!

Bless the prayers which we this day have prayed, the praises which our lips have offered, and every godly work in which we have striven to advance Your glory. Hear our cry in behalf of all the great societies which You have established in our land, as instruments to extend Your kingdom. Grant that every Bible sent forth may be mighty through Your Spirit to cast out the evil one, to demolish his strongholds, to give the light of life, to reveal Your great salvation, to comfort mourners, to build up Your saints.

Look in mercy on the distressed lands over which darkness and superstition and idolatry spread their withering pall. Bless the holy missionaries who brave all toils, having You, the stirring motive, blazing in their hearts, and Your pure truth the one testimony of their faithful lips. Visit with Your compassion, our deluded fellow-subjects in the sister-island. Deliver them from the deceits of Antichrist. Illumine their hearts, that they may eschew all dangerous deceits, and in pure faith receive You as all their salvation and all their desire. Cause priest-craft, and formality, and every bewitching error, to wither before the brightness of Your rising.

Ride forth, O King of kings, O Lord of lords, conquering and to conquer. From pole to pole, let Your great name be known. Breathe on dry bones—and they shall live. Our hearts and souls yearn for Your glory. Shortly accomplish the number of Your elect. Take to Yourself Your great power and reign. Rebuke the wrongful usurpers. Cause the Father's glory to be seen in You. Cast not out our evening petition. Answer for Your love's sake. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

Father of heaven, God of all grace and love, help us now to lie low in supplicating cries. We come humbly—because we come as wretched sinners in ourselves. We come boldly—because we come in the mighty name of Jesus. Strengthen our faith, that we may refuse to let You go—until You bless us with all blessings.

We are pained by our graceless hearts. We bewail our prayerless prayers. We know that whatever we ask in prayer believing—we shall receive. It is because of our vile sin—that we are so poor in grace. We are sluggards in the heavenly race, we are grovelers in the mire, when we should be soaring to the heights of heaven, on the eagle-wings of faith! What great things have we lost, because we have not drawn near to take them! What blessings we might have won for our homes, our parishes, our country, and the world, if pleading intercessions had refused to give You rest. Pardon the deadness of our poor hearts. Let future hours witness our importunities at Your throne. On our knees may we be incessant in telling You our needs and our desires. We ask for the very spirit of Your dear Son. His abode on earth was one unbroken communion with heaven. Grant that our life too may be one sweet savor of devotion! In our prayerful hours may we be frequent in asking that Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations. Did Your dear Son wept when He saw Jerusalem in the gall of bitterness and unbelief—and shall our eyes be dry when we contemplate the perishing multitudes of this sin-sick world! Our spirits should be stirred within us, when we reflect that the devil reigns as a tyrant over his enslaved dupes! What present misery! What future anguish! What desolation now! What weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever!

Arise, O gracious Lord God, and turn this darkness into light, these regions of impurity and vice, into fresh pastures of peace and joy. You have been pleased to organise societies to diffuse the

wonders of redeeming love—may You by Your Spirit preside in all their councils, revealing to them Your gracious purposes, guiding their plans as shall most promote Your glory. May You go forth with all their messengers of truth. May the feet of the gospel-heralds be beautiful upon the mountains of the east, amid the snows of ice-bound tribes, and under the burning heat of torrid plains. May multitudes at their voice arise, and cast their idols to the moles and to the bats. Cause the name of Jesus to be as ointment poured forth, and may distant lands glory in the saving cross, and swell the melody of heaven by ascribing salvation to the Lamb. Open our hearts to pour liberal supplies into their coffers. Far be from us the hypocrisy of crying, "May Your kingdom come," and withholding the aid which, by self-denial, we might supply. Deliver us from all covetousness of filthy lucre—but make us avaricious of the praise which comes from You. May we weigh all things in the scales of eternity, and regard all possessions as less than nothing, which have no value in Your sight.

Blessed Jesus, we know that Your glorious return will change the whole aspect of this groaning world. The earnest expectation of the creature, waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. When will You take to Yourself Your great power—and reign? When will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ? Precious promises have come forth as heralds of Your advent. Why does the fulfilling glory tarry? Hasten to remove all that impedes the descent of Your chariot of triumph. By Your Spirit make the mountains a straight way, and the rough places plain. Fit us for that day of gladness. Then may we lift up our heads with joy, and shout exultingly, "This is our God, we have waited for Him. We will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation!" May our life now be life for You—that Your glory may be our glory forever. Take our humble prayers, and present them with acceptance, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our all. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

O Lord our God, we thank You that we are called to the blessing of united prayer. Grant that Your Spirit may so animate our common cry, that it may abundantly prevail. May it fly upwards strong in adoring faith, fervent in expecting hope, fragrant in the Redeemer's merits.

Common need impels us. Common mercies prompt our evening song. In Your kind providence, You have made us inhabitants of one home, and sheltered us beneath one roof. We thank You that You have knit us together in this fellowship of mutual help, so that one renders service, while another is the directing head. May we in all good conscience minister to each other's comfort and real good. Let those who rule—rule wisely in Your fear, remembering their heavenly Master. Let us not forget the day of final reckoning, and do all as unto You, and under the power of that sure word, "You O God, see me!"

Especially make us helpers to each other's faith. In every domestic arrangement let reference to eternity prevail. Let a wise use of time provide our needs—that due time may invite to Scripture-study, calm reflection, and retired prayer. Considering the power of speaking and of silence, set a watch upon our mouths that no word may be unadvised, and let silence reprove—when rash utterance might injure. Blessed Jesus, You have set us an example that we should follow Your steps. Be so perspicuously our life, that for others to follow us—may truly be to follow You.

While thus we pray, conscience trembles at remembrance of our incessant failures. We would do good—but evil is present with us. The good that we would do—we do not do; the evil that we would not do—that we do! We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves. We cannot come unto You—unless You shall draw us. But draw us individually, then collectively we shall run after You. Sprinkle each one of us this night anew with the blood of sprinkling, and may it be our shield against all evil.

Ofttimes have our longing thoughts gone forth to the eternal day—when we shall see You as You are, without one cloud of unbelief, without the interruption of one straying thought, without the downcast look of shame—but when there shall be one bright blaze of glory forever! We thank You that the lapse of another day—has brought us one day nearer to our glorious eternal home! Ofttimes have we panted for fuller knowledge of You, our God. But we have only seen You through a glass darkly. Our besotted faculties are dull to comprehend You; but then we shall see You face to face, and know even as we are known! This evening teaches us that the separating interval grows rapidly less; that the night is far spent; that the day is at hand. To many this night will be the last. It may be so to one or more of us. If such should be Your will—may our entrance be very abundant into our heavenly home.

We look forward to that day when we take our last breath—we shall knock at heaven's gate in the name of Jesus. We shall present ourselves washed from earth's every stain, in His all-cleansing blood. We shall draw near to Your majestic throne, screened entirely in Jesus—the Lord our righteousness.

We come now to You, in the full assurance of faith, that You have redeemed us, O Lord, O God of truth; that Your every promise is very faithfulness; and that You will do for us more than we can ask, or think, or hope. But if a longer pilgrimage is our appointed lot, may refreshing sleep render us apt and active for the duties of tomorrow. If it is not heaven, may it witness our fitting more and more for it.

Prepare all pastors for their more than angelic work; and all worshipers for their service in the sanctuary. May heaven on the morrow be opened wider, and more wide, to receive the upward stream of prayer and praise—and to pour down floods of enlightening and sanctifying grace. How merciful are You to permit us thus to pray. Multiply Your mercy by most gracious answer. And to Your great name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be eternal praise. Amen.

02.02 - Section 2

Section 2

"Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

THIRD WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING.

We give thanks unto You, O Father, for You are good, for Your mercy endures forever! We give thanks unto You, O God of gods, for Your mercy endures forever! We give thanks unto You, O Lord of lords, for Your mercy endures forever! We give thanks unto You, O God of heaven, for Your mercy endures forever!

Especially on this morning, do we encircle Your throne with praises, for while goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life—on this day we are called to the refreshment of public ordinances, and are admitted to proclaim Your mercy in the midst of Your courts. We beseech You, for all Your tender love's sake, to prepare us with the fullness of Your Holy Spirit. May He come with all His mighty power, and wholly occupy our hearts. May He quicken us with newness of heavenly life. Thus may the pure flame of true devotion be kindled, and our understandings enlightened; and may our faith put forth new shoots in Your earthly sanctuary. May the glories within the veil be realized, so that our peace may flow as a river, and our praises be as sweet as the melody of heaven.

Above all, may Your dear Son, our only Savior, be this day more and more revealed to our adoring hearts. We desire to know the breadth and length, the depth and height of His all-surpassing love! Help us to gaze more and more with the eye of faith, on Him crucified, until we are changed into His image from glory to glory. May we learn at His cross—the exceeding vileness and dreadful deceits of sin. We would be taught to measure the infinitude of His tender pitifulness—by the infinitude of His sufferings in our place. We would bring every sin of every moment of our lives—and cast them into the deep ocean of His all-cleansing blood!

We adore You, O God our God, for this gift of gifts. We ascribe this rich salvation to Your exceeding grace, as its true source. You have found this Ransom. You have thus delivered us from going down into the pit. When we had wandered far like lost sheep, You have laid on Him the iniquity of us all. We see how You have loved us, in that You have sent Your Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. And with Him, You also freely give us all things.

Oh then may floods of light this day stream forth from every pulpit! May ministering hands raise high the cross. May every sermon be the testimony of Jesus, and every precept and every exhortation draw their power from His death. May Satan tremble and flee far away. May it be felt that Your ambassadors receive their message from Your courts, and speak only in Your name. In holy fellowship may they be ever climbing up the mount, and bringing down Your precious truths.

Keep them from all undue mixture with worldly matters. Raise up pious helpers to relieve them from the deadening care of earthly things. Thus may they have holy leisure for undistracted prayer and undivided ministry of Your gospel. Bless them, that they may be blessings. Teach them, that they may teach us. Sanctify them, that they may communicate sanctification.

Enrich all assemblies of Your people with Your abundant grace. Enable us with one mind and one mouth to glorify You. May united cries pervade the courts above, as the sound of many waters. May answers descend as the morn's copious dew. May souls be sweetly refreshed, and put forth abundant fruit of every holy word and work. May heaven come down this day—and tabernacle with man!

We do not forget Your servants laboring far from their homes in the wide missionary fields. We bless You, that in Your distinguishing grace You have been pleased to call them to this glorious work. May the brightness and joy of Your presence and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit so fill their hearts, that no loneliness may oppress them. Help them to tread down all difficulties, to triumph over all discouragements, and in the fruit of their toil—may Jesus see the travail of His soul—and be satisfied.

God and Father of the Lord Jesus, fan our faith this day into brighter blaze. May we expand more intelligently into the communion of saints. Open our eyes to see our oneness with the glorious company of all who are saved by the precious blood. Let our minds swell in blissful hope that we shall soon join the white-robed multitude, who adore You in unsullied worship, and cast their crowns before Your throne, saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created!" Hasten Your kingdom, heavenly Lord, according to Your will. We ask all blessings for time and for eternity, in the great name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY EVENING.

Blessed Jesus, through You we have access by the Spirit unto the Father. Through You we now draw near. Ever adored be Your grace for this ready way, opened through the rent veil of Your crucified body. Great High Priest, ever pleading at God's right hand, receive our sin-soiled prayers, cleanse them in Your precious blood, perfume them by the sweet savor of Your merits, obtain acceptance for them. Extend Your wounded hands in our behalf. Behold us in the depths of our need, and pour down blessings on our waiting souls.

Without You all the public services of this day are but as the sound of the tinkling cymbal. But in Your might, they are mighty to prevail. Grant, we humbly beseech You, that all blessings this day sought, may be abundantly ours. Nay, in the infinitudes of Your sovereign grace, give us much more than lips can ask, or thoughts conceive. Fill us with all the fullness of God. Make our bodies the temples of Your Holy Spirit. Consecrate all our lives as a living sacrifice on You our altar. May Your Spirit now and evermore suggest every thought, move in every movement of our minds, beam in our every look, prompt our every word, guide our every step. To us to live—may it be wholly Christ. Mold us entirely into Your image.

We would be swallowed up in You. Mortify SELF in us. Help us that all our will may be absorbed in Yours. It is our deep desire to be spiritually-minded, which is life and peace, and thus to be ever rejoicing at heaven's gate, and shining as consistent examples of godlike life. Grant this desire of

our hearts—for Your great love's sake. How easy for You to replenish us with all goodness! Speak the word—and we are filled.

O God, our Father in Christ Jesus, hear our cry for Your life-giving blessing on all the labors of Your ministers and missionaries throughout the world. They have gone forth to plant and sow; but vain are their efforts—unless You are pleased to give the increase. Grant that their faithful testimony may be mighty to pull down Satan's strongholds. According to the sure word, may Christ uplifted draw multitudes unto Himself. May they spring up as the grass, and as willows by the water-courses. May they fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows. We beg You so effectually to work by the subduing arrows of Your gospel, that Your dear Son may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. May Your Word go forth, conquering and to conquer. Strengthen it as a hammer—to break rocky hearts to pieces. Nothing exceeds Your power. Nothing is too great for You to accomplish. Nothing is too good for You to give. Infinite is Your might. Boundless is Your love. Limitless is Your grace. Magnify, we beg You, Your saving glorious name.

Manifest unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. Let the angelic choir more loudly and more sweetly sing because of—sinners repenting, prodigals restored, outcasts brought in, rebels subdued, backsliders reclaimed, Satan's captives released, blind eyes opened, broken hearts bound up, the desponding cheered, the self-righteous stripped of their vain pleas, the formalist driven from a refuge of lies, the ignorant enlightened, brands plucked out of the fire, Your saints built up on their most holy faith, and fitted for their eternal glorious inheritance!

We pray with especial earnestness for the young among us. May Your Word enter into their inmost souls. May our youths be as the polished corners of the temple. May the power of Your Spirit pervade all the teaching of our Sunday schools. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—may You perfect praise. Cause Your ways to be known upon earth; Your saving health among all nations. Let the wilderness and solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. We ask great things—but we ask of You, who is a great and awesome God. We as all in the name of our glorious and almighty Savior, even Your own Son, Jesus Christ, our infallible Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

Holy Father, Almighty Lord God, listen to the cry of Your humble servants. The return of this morning calls us to return to our week-day work. We see the world before us. We know our weakness, and we are prone to fear; but we look up to You—and we fear no more. If we venture to go forth alone—we stumble and fall; but leaning on our Beloved—we are firm as the everlasting hills. If left to the treachery of our own hearts—we shall bring shame to Your holy name; but enlightened, guided, and upheld by Your Spirit—we shall adorn Your heavenly doctrine.

Hear, then, our prayer, and be our arm to support, our light that we may see, our strength that we may stand, our feet that we may run, our shield that we may receive no wound, our sword that we may repel each foe. Descend on us as refreshing dew. Be our sun to ripen each grace. Thus may this day exceed all past days in fruitfulness, and fit us largely to see Your face in glory. To enrich us unto all fullness—would not diminish Your riches. To supply all our needs—would not detract

from Your boundless stores.

We remember the services of yesterday—and are humbled; but still we remember them—and take courage. Our defilements prove that we are miserable sinners. Your forbearance proves that Your mercy reaches above the heavens. We still live to cling to the cross of Your dear Son. We still live to plead Your promises. We know that they are all yes and amen in Him. Do not allow us to add to all our sins, the sin of being forgetful hearers of Your blessed truth. May it be mingled with faith in our hearts. May it thoroughly leaven the corrupt mass. Give life to the incorruptible seed, that it may take deep root and fructify to Your glory. Help us by Your teaching Spirit, that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom. May it mold and form and shape our whole inner man. Thus may Your presence always abash vice, check worldly-mindedness—and diffuse through us the fragrance of pure godliness.

Assist us, by the lamp of Your Word and the piercing rays of Your Spirit—to search every corner of our hearts. Let no Achan escape detection! Let every Agag be hewed to pieces! Let every idol be stomped to powder! Let every rebel lust be nailed to the Savior's cross! Let "holiness to the Lord" be the language of our lips, the sandals of our feet, and the clear engraving on our brows.

We would be holy, as You, O our God, are holy; and perfect, as You, O our Father, are perfect. And, having all hope in Jesus, we would purify ourselves even as He is pure. But Your power must accomplish this. You have worked in us to will; we beseech You work in us to do. Do not disappoint our craving expectations. Do not shake off our wrestling grasp of You. Give as a gracious God. You are the deep fountain of all goodness—may Your gifts without measure flow. Thus may our walk shine as a heaven-kindled lamp—and ascend as grateful incense to the courts above. May it be seen in heaven and on earth that we are a people made willing in the day of Your power and consecrated to Your great glory.

While thus holding filial communion with You, we think of multitudes strangers to our joy. They are entering on this week ignorant of themselves—and unacquainted with You. We compassionate their wretchedness. You alone, have made us to differ. Be pitiful to them, as You have been pitiful to us. Then happiness on earth would swell as a river; and glory in the highest would shine more gloriously. Good Lord, hasten the time. Your Word teaches us to make prayers for kings and for all who are in authority. In obedience to Your will, we commend to Your especial favor our sovereign Queen—and all the royal progeny. May righteousness be the stability of the throne. When the earthly crown shall fade—may a heavenly crown be won. May the palace be a school of piety and the gate of heaven. With undoubting faith we place these our poor prayers in the hands of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Intercessor. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

Lord God Almighty, Father of mercies, screened from all evil by Your gracious providence, we come to encircle You with grateful praise. The past hours have brought fresh tokens of Your goodness on their wings. Some who went forth as strong as ourselves, in accustomed health and strength, have been snatched suddenly from this earthly scene. Others lie languishing, sorely touched by the hand of malady. Others groan in torturing pains, from unforeseen calamity. Others are weeping bitter tears, because of family disaster. The shadows of this evening, drop a curtain on world-wide woe. But in our hands there is a cup of unmingled blessedness. No evil accident

has darkened our path. No evil tidings have harassed our breasts. We live to bless You—and blessings we now devoutly offer. Above all, we bless You that at every moment the throne of grace has been open—and that the scepter of Your love has been extended to us. Pardon us that our prayers have been so few, so poor, so feeble. While You are always ready to hear, and inviting us to close communion—our souls abide amid trifles, and dally with vain follies. We grovel on earth, when we might ascend to heaven and You. Pity us, good Lord. You know of what we are made. You remember that we are dust. O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us.

We come not in our own name, seeking Your compassionate grace. We bring Your dear Son before You, in the arms of our faith. In whatever we have robbed You of obedience—we offer His blood to pay the debt. Impute to our account:

His worthiness—for our unworthiness;

His sinlessness—for our sinfulness;

His purity—for our impurity;

His sincerity—for our deceit;

His truth—for our deceptions;

His meekness—for our pride;

His steadfastness—for our backslidings;

His love—for our enmity;

His fullness—for our emptiness;

His glory—for our shame;

His perfect obedience—for our incessant disobedience;

His beauty—for our deformity;

His devotedness to Your will—for our waywardness;

His holy life—for our unholy ways;

His perfect righteousness—for our manifold unrighteousnesses.

We hide ourselves in Him. We flee unto Him as our sure city of refuge. We know that in Him—we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins. We rejoice that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Thus we cry, "Abba, Father!" in the name of Jesus, and retire to rest in peace.

While we delight in prayer and praise, we would not forget the multitudes who are now going prayerless to their beds. We would indeed be hard of heart, if we failed to feel for them. You have not been unmindful of them, though they have lived far off from You. They have robbed You of service and of thanks. Let us plead for them, and adore Your patience towards them. Oh! that it might please You to all Your goodness to add converting grace. All instruments obey Your sovereign will. Command means to open their blind eyes, and to bring them as contrite penitents

to their Father's house. Show to them Your love in Jesus. Reveal to them the bleeding Lamb. Thus by Your Spirit melt the rock, and snatch the prey from Satan.

We pray for all Your afflicted children. In You there is cordial for every grief, and balm for every wound. Wipe their weeping eyes, and help them from their hearts to say, "It is my Father's hand—may His will be done!"

We remember too those whose lot on earth is hard. Poverty sits grimly at their table, and they lie down on hard pallets of distress. Give them grace to think of Him, who, though He was Lord of all—had not a pillow for His head. Let faith illumine their cheerless path. May it make them, though poor in earth's lucre—yet rich in saving grace, and heirs of the eternal kingdom. Hear our earnest petitions. Claim earth as Your own, and so banish woe. We ask all the blessings which the everlasting covenant contains. Our trust is in Your love in Christ our Lord. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

O Lord Jesus Christ, whom the heavens have received until the times of restitution of all things—abased in humility we look up to You as exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Your people, and forgiveness of all their sins. Deepen in us, we beseech You, thorough contrition of heart. Confirm in us the assurance that Your blood washes away all guilt.

We desire to walk lovingly with You as our great Redeemer; and humbly, because of our utter unworthiness. May true repentance pervade, as a flood, our souls, even repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. May our hearts be broken for sin, and broken from sin. May we be as slow to forgive ourselves—as we know that You are ready to forgive us. While we gaze on the glories of Your grace, may the sense of our iniquities cast us into the lowest depths of shame. May we walk softly with downcast heads, now that You are pacified unto us.

We bless You for the glorious Word: "Thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity—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." Destroy then, we beseech You, within us every lofty thought. Beat pride to pieces, and scatter it to the winds. Annihilate each clinging shred of self-righteousness. Implant in us true lowliness of spirit. Debase us in self-loathing and self-abhorrence. Open the fount of penitential tears. Thus may our hearts be fitted for the indwelling of our majestic God.

God the Father, take up Your abode within us. Blessed Jesus, come with healing on Your wings. Holy Spirit, descend with all Your sanctifying grace. Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God—inhabit us as temples consecrated to Your glory. When You are present—evil cannot enter. In Your fellowship, there is fullness of joy. Beneath Your smile, there is peace of conscience. By Your side—no fears disturb, and no apprehensions banish ease. With You our hearts shall be fragrant as the garden of the Lord, in which all graces bloom. With You we shall bear fruit unto holiness, as the trees which the Lord has planted. Again then we pray, fit us through repentance, for Your indwelling.

Blessed Jesus, the Lord has anointed You to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty—for ashes, the oil of joy—for mourning, the garment of praise—for the spirit of heaviness. The entire work must be Yours. Break us—and then bind us up.

Fulfill in us Your gracious purpose. Perform in us all portions of Your office. Lead us through the valley of godly sorrow—to the heights of heavenly joy.

Hearken to our cry, O great Intercessor, while for others we now intercede. We look around—and heart-rending is the sight which meets our eyes. This sin-sick world is full of levity and carnal mirth. Men laugh and sport, unmindful of the guilty hearts within them, and of the woeful end ahead of them. They do not think how Your wrath burns against their ungodliness. The day of judgment has no terrors for them. We know that such laughter will soon end in wailing. Gnashing of teeth for ever will be their eternal doom. Oh! that it might please You to convince them by Your Spirit before it be too late; that, feeling their misery, they may flee to their only Help. Today, while it is called today, may they repent and live. May this day witness their awakening, for this day may be their last.

TUESDAY EVENING.

Most gracious Lord, whose name is Love—in love receive our evening prayer. You have called us with a high and heavenly calling. Pardon us that our walk has been so unworthy of all Your tender mercies. Day testifies unto day, and night unto night—how good You are—and how vile we are. Blot out all the transgressions which have soiled our souls since last we humbled ourselves together in Your sight. Our sins are more than the wide sea's sands. But where sin thus frightfully abounds—grace most infinitely exceeds.

Look to the cross of Your beloved Son. Remember the preciousness of His atoning blood. Listen to His never-failing intercession. By Your Spirit whisper to our contrite hearts, "Be of good cheer, lie down in peace, your sins are all forgiven!" We thank You, we bless You, we adore You, we laud and magnify Your boundless grace. It truly reaches unto the heavens! It truly endures forever.

We pray for the world lying in wickedness. Your mercy never wearies in strewing benefits around. How thanklessly are they received! How base is the neglect of senseless ingratitude! The iniquities of earth are loud to awaken Divine vengeance. How justly might the decree go forth, "Cut down the guilty inhabitants; why do they so long cumber the ground!" Hear our cry for the vast multitudes who cry not for themselves. "Spare them, good Lord, spare them. Do not shut up Your loving-kindness in justice. Remember how short their time is, and while space continues, oh! be pleased to give grace!"

They are the creatures of Your hand. You have been pleased to breathe into them the breath of life. Oh! speak but the word, and these dry bones shall live! "Old things shall pass away—all things shall become new. The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briers grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to Your name; it will be an everlasting sign of Your power and love!" You have endowed them with wondrous faculties of intellect, of mind, of body. How capable are they to do You service, and to magnify Your name! Let not their powers wither like a blighted tree. Let nothing be misused in the service of the power of the evil one—the wrongful tyrant of this enslaved world. But especially do we implore especial favors on our own beloved land. You have exalted us in loving-kindnesses above all the nations of the earth. You have placed us on the highest pinnacle of privilege. The sun never sets on the dominion of our influence. We are blessed with the knowledge of Your great and mighty name. We are instructed in the glorious revelations of Your

gospel-truth. We possess the inestimable treasure of the open Bible. We read in the sacred pages, how You have loved us, and sent Your Son to bear our sins on the accursed tree, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seek and to save the lost, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. We are therein taught that it is Your will that none should perish—but that all should come to the knowledge of Your truth, and that Your dear Son never casts out sinners who seek Him in faith and love.

Help us as a nation deeply and duly to ponder our solemn responsibilities. Impress on us that we are gifted with our blessings—to trade with them to Your glory. Show us that if we slothfully hide and bury them, the day will come when abused privileges will burst their graves and call for vengeance on us as unprofitable servants.

Deliver us, good Lord, deliver us, we beg You, from the woe of Chorazin, from the woe of Bethsaida, from the woe of Capernaum! Today, while it is called today, let us tremble lest it be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for us. Let us give diligence to devote ourselves, and all our opportunities, and all our privileges, to the untiring, undivided work of making Christ Jesus known to all the family of man. Hear us, pity us, pardon us, arise to our help, and quicken us to Your work. These prayers are offered in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

Merciful Lord God, Your ear is never weary to hear, Your hand is never shortened to bless. Visit us with all Your blessings this day, we meekly beseech You. Needy and helpless—we cast ourselves on Your unfailing grace. From our inmost souls we profess that we count all things but loss—for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is our all-constraining desire to live growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our precious Savior. Give us then the help of Your Holy Spirit. May He fulfill in us His loving office, and take of the things of Christ and show them in all their fullness, power, and beauty unto us.

Especially may the eyes of our understanding be enlightened to adore Him as the anointed High Priest of Your Church forever. We are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus. Enable us to fix our meditations on this glorious object, to ponder the wonder of wonders, the priestly work in our behalf. May we behold Him, bringing Himself the victim—to Himself the Altar. Deeply engrave on our minds the everlasting truth: that He spared not Himself—but willingly laid down His life, and shed His most precious blood—that we may be spared, that we may live, that our souls and bodies should not perish, that all our boundless debt should be completely paid, that our every iniquity should be purged away, that the mountains upon mountains of our grievous sins should disappear, that the crimson dye of evil in us, should be whiter than the whitest snow. May we now and ever adore our Jesus thus sacrificing Himself. Oh! that our adoration might be warm as His heart towards us! Open our eyes to see our great High Priest passed into the heavens, entering within the veil with His own most precious blood, and sprinkling the true mercy-seat. Open our ears to hear the eloquence of that prevailing plea. It tells that redemption's work is gloriously finished, that every holy attribute is satisfied to the uttermost, and that all Divine wrath is quenched.

"Christ has died" is our answer to every charge. All of His blood-bought people must be saved. Increase in us the faith which is intelligent to hear Christ's never-ceasing intercession. We bewail our cold, our listless and our heartless prayers. Their poverty adds sin to sin. They justly provoke Your anger. If our hope was in them our cry must be, "Woe unto us, for we are undone!" But show us our great High Priest, waving His golden censer, and filling all heaven with its fragrance. Then we shall delight ourselves in prayer, knowing that the worth of Jesus perfumes our feeble breathings, and wins acceptance for them!

We shall require blessings at every moment of this opening day. Great High Priest fulfill Your office, and cease not to pour down streams upon streams of needful grace. Bless us—and we shall be blessed indeed. Bless us in all our employ; when we go out and when we come in; in every thought of our minds, in every word of our lips, in every step, in every deed. Bless us when we ponder Your sacred Word, when we confess our sins, when we seek Your face, when we wrestle with You in prayer, when we uplift the voice of praise.

Blessed by You—may we be blessings to all around. May we be lowly followers of Your bright example. You lived to bless. You died to bless. Blessings fell from Your ascending lips. Blessings ever descend from Your outstretched hands. Imbued with Your mind, may our whole course contribute to earth's welfare.

Heavenly Father, look down on each thus bowing before Your throne. Give sweet sincerity to our desires, intense earnestness to our supplications, burning fervor to our love. Let no unbelief deaden our approaches. May we feel truly that You do hear. May Your Spirit bear witness with our spirits—that we are Yours. May strong faith persuade us that answers, according to Your will, will surely come. Amen, Amen. Through Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, let our evening worship ascend as incense to the heaven of heavens. The name of Jesus is access to Your throne, and in that name we bow the knee. We know that You resist the proud; let, then, no lofty thought find resting-place in our contrite hearts. May there be no hindrance to the uprising of our lowly breathings. May there be no barrier to the outpourings of Your mercy. Who are we, that pride should swell within us! Our original is the mire beneath our feet. Dust we are—and unto dust we soon return. In material, we do not surpass the most detestable reptile. Whatever difference of form and intellect is ours—is freely granted by Your goodness. Our every faculty of mind and body is Your undeserved gift.

Thus low as creatures—we are far lower as sinners. We have times without number trampled on Your righteous law. Sin's deformity is stamped upon us; its hideousness darkens on our brow; its loathsome touch has fixed corruption on us. Shall we, then, flaunt proudly in Your sight? The lowest depths of self-abasement is our due place. We are far less than nothing in Your all-seeing eye. Help us to see ourselves—as we are seen by You. Then pride must wither, and vanish, and decay, and die. Your Word assures us that You give grace to the lowly. Humble our hearts before You—and then replenish them with Your choicest gifts. We know that nature's refreshing streams rest not on the barren summits of the high hills—but flow down to fertilize the lowness of the valleys. May our position ever be the lowliest of the lowly; so may our spiritual riches exceedingly abound.

Enable us to walk on earth even as Your beloved Son walked. He is our only Savior and most perfect model. Let His mind be ever our inward guest. He was meek and lowly in heart. Let His meekness be our all-covering garb. Clothe us entirely with humility. In all our fellowship with others, let no strife or vainglory show a hateful head.

Conscious of our sins against much light, and inward strivings of conscience, and teachings from above, may we always esteem others better than ourselves. Help us thus to manifest that we are born again. Thus may we exhibit conformity to the image of the blessed Jesus, the first-born among many brethren.

Grant the grace which we thus earnestly implore to all Your children throughout all the world. "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." Jeremiah 9:23-24. May our happy place be among the poor in spirit, to whom the kingdom of God belongs. Set us in the gentle ranks of the meek, whose is the inheritance of earth. Thus may we taste and find, that true humility is the heirloom of two worlds. And thus may we fit for the day of glory, when we hope to cast our crowns before Your throne, and sing with prostrate spirits: "You alone are holy, You alone are the Lord!"

Confessing our need, supplicating Your grace, we cannot arise without intermingling most fervent thanks. Unless Your merciful protection had kept us this day under the shelter of Your wings, our lips would have been sealed in silence. Many who saw the morning sun—as strong or stronger than we are—have fallen as a withered leaf. We live to praise You, and praise we fervently bring. If we see the morrow's light, may we more worthily renew our song. If we go hence this night, may we through grace commence the endless hymn of the redeemed. Grant this for the merits of our Lord Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

Most gracious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, You who are enthroned high in the glory of God the Father, grant, we beseech, to come in and occupy the throne of our hearts. We offer, we present them to You. Take full possession and reign supreme. Expel every opposing foe. Lay low every rebellious lust. Let no vile passion resist Your holy sway. Manifest Your mighty power. Make us Yours—and keep us Yours forever.

You are worthy that we should praise You with our every breath, and love You with all the energies of our souls, and serve You in every act of our lives. You have loved us with a free, a full, and everlasting love. When we were loathsome in misery and sin—You have espoused us as Your bride forever; and have received us as Your portion, Your jewels, the lambs of Your fold, the members of Your mystic body. When we were worthless as creatures, vile as sinners, soiled and polluted by countless transgressions—You have purchased us by the price of Your own blood. You have made us Your favored inheritance, the garden of Your choice delights. You have washed us from all our filth. You have covered us with the spotless robe of Your righteousness. You have adorned us with the glories of Your pure obedience. When we were dead in our iniquities, having no eyes to see You, no ears to hear Your voice, no taste to relish Your joys, no mind to know You—You have quickened us by Your Holy Spirit, and brought us as new creatures

into a new world of spiritual perception. You have given us Your Word to be our light, our guide, our solace, and our joy. You have enriched us with a treasure of precious and most cheering promises.

What could have been done more for Your vineyard—which You have not done for us! You have loved us more than Your own life. With loving-kindness You have drawn us. You forgive our daily and hourly transgressions. None of our sinful provocations separate us from Your sympathy. You will never leave us nor forsake us. You preserve us until we safely reach the heaven of heavens, and sit beside You on Your glorious Throne!

Help us then, oh help us, we beseech You, to walk this day worthy of You, and of Your love, and of our hopes, and of our high and heavenly calling. Keep us, we beg You; we cannot keep ourselves. Protect us, that no evil may defile us. Strengthen us to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us. Enable us to run with patience the race which is set before us—looking unto You!

While still journeying as pilgrims upon earth, may we set our minds on things above—and not on earthly things. May we in spirit be always waiting for the glorious appearing of You, our great God and Savior, who will change our vile bodies that they shall be like unto Your glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby You are able even to subdue all things unto Yourself.

Now we would go forth to our appointed work, walking by Your side, leaning on Your arm, holding sweet converse with You. May we be as the salt of the earth—a blessing to all around. Look with Your especial favor on our household, our friends, our country. We commend to Your gracious care, our Sovereign the Queen, the royal progeny, and all who exercise authority in this realm. As a nation, great is our outward prosperity. We pray that we may be greater in inward righteousness. As a people may we fear You, reverence Your ordinances, keep Your statutes, advance Your kingdom. Glory be to You, gracious Redeemer, who reigns one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever! Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

Holy Lord God, omnipotent in creation, unailing in preservation, we would not end this day without calling upon You in behalf of all sorts and conditions of men. We desire to be large in sympathy, even as You are boundless in love. First we pray for kings and princes, and all who are called to exercise sovereign sway throughout earth's length and breadth. Especially we name her who holds in widowed hands, the mighty scepter of this world-wide realm. May her gifts be equal to her varied needs; and where gifts abound—may grace immeasurably super-abound. Loved and sustained by You, may her reign be England's most blessed time. May her highest place, be the inheritance where all are kings and priests to God.

Give right wisdom and integrity to all who frame and administer our laws. Grant that they may seek to establish the holy reign of peace; as professing subjection to the Prince of peace. May they study to be just, as those who must stand before Your judgment-seat. May they love mercy, as those whose only hope is in the riches of Your mercy in Christ Jesus. Impress on their minds Whose ordinance they subserve; and may Your glory be their constant aim.

Diffuse throughout our fellow-subjects cheerful obedience to lawful authority. Teach us that the truest liberty is glad submission to righteous rule. Thus may harmony and concord pervade all

ranks, and Christian love shed happy fragrance round. Where wealth is granted, may liberal hearts liberally devise, and bounteous hands bountifully diffuse. May the rich remember Whose is the silver and the gold, and may they gladly distribute as almoners of Your goodness. Let not poverty murmur at its lowly lot, remembering that Jesus chose the humblest place. May the cottage be ennobled by the truth, that God has chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him.

Look with especial favor on the aged. Smooth their descent into life's valley. Support their feeble strength. Let not the devil get advantage, when powers fail. But lower them to their graves strong in faith, joyful in hope, rooted in love, redolent of every grace.

We commend our young to Your tenderest care. How deep, how abiding are early impressions! While the soil is yet tender, may seeds of godliness be sown. Before Satan with his legion stealthily creeps in, before the world with its bewitching vanities allures, before corrupt examples beckon to destruction's way—do, O blessed Jesus, enter and win their first affections, and mold their pliant wills. Show them in life's dawn, Your beauty and Your glory, the peaceful charms of godly walk, and seal them by Your Spirit as Your own forever.

Solemnize the minds of parents, that they may feel what a treasure is entrusted to their care, even the immortal souls of the offspring granted to them. May children never see in them an unholy look, or hear from them an unholy word. May tender consideration train the tender shoots. May loving prudence educate them, as their strength can bear, for the Christian warfare and the Christian crown. May Your Holy Spirit be the great teacher in all classes of all schools. May our youth be instructed that Christ is the mine containing all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. May they early learn that the fear of the Lord is true wisdom, that to depart from evil is right understanding, and that to be brave for Christ is the noblest heroism. May servants serve as unto the Lord. May masters rule as servants of a heavenly Lord. Thus may every stone, from the foundation to the pinnacle in the social fabric, be cemented in Christian harmony and peace and godliness. In every house may there be a church. May every dwelling be a school for heaven. From every heart may prayer and praise in sweetest fragrance be continually ascending. May our country's glory—be its devotedness to the God of our salvation. Thus may our land bring forth her increase, and God, even our own God, bless us forever. Holy Father, turn not away from the desire of our hearts, humbly presented in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

Grant, we beseech You, O heavenly King, that our morning worship may be pure in simplicity, and earnest in godly sincerity. Truly to know You—is truly to love You. Truly to love You—is truly to serve You. Therefore shed abroad Your knowledge in our hearts.

Cause all ignorance to vanish before the brightness of Your light. You have given us in Your holy Word, large records of Your grace and love. May we feast on them, until our inner man is steeped in their sweetness. Strengthen us with the abiding thought that You have loved us, and given Yourself for us—and that You will love us unto the end. In the manger of Your birth, in the garden of Your agony, in the cross of Your suffering, and in Your never-failing intercession, may we read the meltings of Your heart towards us. Bold in this thought, may we this day defy our cruel adversary, tread down his vile temptations, resist his cunning arts, renounce the world, despise its

vanities, and be valiant for Your truth.

Deepen in our souls a sense of our holy relationship to You. May we know You as the spiritual Bridegroom of Your Church, and may the wondrous truth fill our adoring minds with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We think of You, Jehovah's fellow, one with the Father, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal, God over all, blessed for evermore. We think of angels veiling their faces before You while they worship. We think of Your glory, and our vileness; Your majesty, and our baseness; Your beauty, and our deformity; Your purity, and our filth; Your riches, and our poverty; Your righteousness, and our unrighteousness. We see the amazing distance, the infinite disproportion. Yet we believe that You have looked on us with unchanging and unchangeable love—and have espoused us unto Yourself forever. As You have loved us—so may we love You. As You have given Yourself for us—so may we give ourselves to You. As You have died for us—so may we live for You. May we be devoted to You in every moment of our time, and every movement of our minds, and every pulse of our hearts, in faithfulness, purity, and truth. May we never dally with the world, or any of its defiling allurements. May our walk be closely by Your side. Keep us ever listening for Your voice in the pages of Your Word, ever holding communion with You, ever leaning on Your arm. May we be clothed with every lovely grace, and adorned with the garment of Your righteousness, which is the beauty of Your people.

O You, who have done such wondrous things for us, leave us not, neither forsake us, until we sit beside You on Your throne forever!

Happy in our precious privileges—may our hearts be tender to commiserate the unhappiness of those who are dead in trespasses and sins. We know that it is Your gracious will by the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe. Raise up then, we beseech You, a noble band of faithful men. Replenish them with every grace. Make them wise as serpents, bold as lions, harmless as doves. And put them forth as laborers into Your harvest. Sustain their zeal as a blazing torch—until they return, bringing many sheaves into Your garner!

Especially we beg You to keep our beloved country untainted by heresy and superstition. You have visited us when darkness spread its deadly pall around. When gospel light glimmered as an expiring spark, You lifted on high the banner of the reformation. You endued holy martyrs with heroism, braving all agonies in testimony of Your truth. Enable us to strive, as successors of their zeal—against all deadly error. May we stand as a rock against every approach of idolatry.

Without Your aid, how soon might we relapse! The enemy threatens to come in like a flood. But, may You help us, and we shall be strong. Preserve us, and we shall be safe. Uphold us, and we shall not fall.

Get to Yourself a great name in England as the bright home of truth and righteousness. Unto Your great name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be eternal praise. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that in Your tender mercy You have been pleased to plant us together in the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. Add grace more and more, that we may live worthy of this high and heavenly calling. Safe in our heavenly ark—may we pass through the waves of this troublesome world into the harbor of eternal rest! May we fear no

wreck, knowing that Christ is seated at the helm, that angels are our convoys, that Your Word is our chart, and that our fellow-voyagers are the purchased possession of Your dear Son.

We have undoubting assurance that great is the Lord Almighty in the midst of His Church. Therefore will not we fear though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, and the waters thereof rage and swell. Teach us the inestimable privilege of being portion of the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and for which You have done such wondrous things. Rightly may You require the good fruit of perfect holiness, proportionate to all Your heavenly care. Grant, we beg You, that we may not be barren trees, or laden only with worthless leaves of profession, or vines bearing only wild grapes. Water us with more abundant dews of blessing. Invigorate us with more of Your ripening rays. As members of Your Church we believe that we are the Lamb's bride. As such help us to be true and faithful, chaste and loving, pure and devoted. Suffer no straying affection wantonly to dally with the pleasures of this world. But may we live raised high above the love of things temporal, and always listening for the cry, Behold, the bridegroom comes.

We believe that our beloved Savior, in tender love, gave Himself for us, that He might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the Word; and that He might present us unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—but that we should be holy and without blemish. Accomplish this blessed work in us, good Lord. Here we offer and present our hearts unto You. Come in and establish Your undisputed reign. Come and replenish them with hallowing grace. Come and fit them for Your perpetual home. Come and hold sweet converse with us. By Your Spirit—tell us more of Your love. Cause all Your goodness to pass before us. Enable us with open eye—to gaze on Your beauty and Your glory, until we become wholly conformed to Your likeness. May Your every promise be fulfilled in us. May Your every precept be the pathway of our feet. Thus may we rejoice in the joy of being truly Yours. With such delights before us, do not allow us madly to turn aside to the husks and rubbish of this barren world. We are taught that the temple of God can have no agreement with idols. And are we not the temple of God? And has not God said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people!" Therefore help us to come out from among them, and to be separate, and to touch not the unclean thing.

Blessed Lord, hasten the time when all shall know You, from the least unto the greatest. Speak but the word—and the veil shall no more blind their eyes. Pluck out of them the heart of stone. Expel the evil spirit of unbelief. Give them, according to Your Word, the Spirit of grace and supplication. Turn their eyes to Him whom was pierced for transgressors. Cause them to mourn for Him as one who mourns for his only son, and to be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for the death of his firstborn.

Give us grace never to put a stumbling-block in any returning sinner's way. May we rather entice them, attract them, allure them, win them. Grant that others may see in us, how good it is to sit beneath the cross, and through the reconciling blood to cry, "Abba, Father!" Answer us according to Your rich promises to prayer. Let us not seek Your face in vain. Hear us, for Your great glory in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

Preserved by Your tender care, we live to see, most gracious Lord, the opening hours of another day. Increase and multiply upon us, Your mercy. Your goodness to us has never failed. Past provocations have been no barrier to its constant flow. Your nature and Your name is love.

Through the helpless hours of darkness, You have kept us safe. Helpless in ourselves, we meet this dawning light. But we come to You for help in the name of Jesus. We cling to Your protecting arm. We hide ourselves in You—our fortress and our sure refuge. We take You as our shield and buckler. Fight for us—and our foes must flee. Uphold us—and we cannot fall. Strengthen us—and we shall stand unmoved, immovable. Equip us with the whole armor of God—and we shall receive no wound. Stand by us in the conflict—and we shall tread Satan beneath our feet. Save us—and we shall be saved. Put the song of salvation on our lips—and our mouths shall shout aloud Your praise.

Especially we beseech You to deepen in our hearts, the abhorrence of all evil. May we hate sin with perfect hatred. It is the vile monster which defies Your power, casts off Your yoke, treads down Your lovely law, defiles our nature, spreads misery throughout this earth, brought death into the world, and nailed the spotless Lamb of God to the accursed tree. Teach us to look to Jesus on the cross—and so to estimate its loathsome guilt in Your sight. Could there be no pardon—but through Your dear Son's death! Could no cleansing wash out its filth—but Jesus' precious blood! Could no atonement expiate the evil—but the shame, the agony, the bruises of the incarnate God! We see the boundless price! May we read therein the boundless guilt! In the infinite payment—show us the infinite debt. Thus may we discern the deadly viper in its real malignity, and tear it with holy indignation from our breasts, and resolutely turn from its every snare, and refuse to hold polluting dalliance with it!

Help us, too, to learn in Your all-sufficient sacrifice—Your tender and immeasurable love. May such love kindle mightily the flame of our responding love. May it blaze in our every faculty of heart and soul. May it rule throughout our inner man. May it consecrate our every thought and word and work a whole burnt-offering to Your glory.

Blessed Jesus, at Your cross may we be taught the awful miseries from which You have redeemed us! Without Your rescuing blood we must have been lost forever! Help us to ponder what the word "lost" implies. Your warning Word oftentimes draws back the veil. Send down Your enlightening Spirit to make vivid, the appalling scene. And when we read of fire which never ceases to burn, and indignation and wrath and anguish forever raging, and blackness of darkness forever, and everlasting destruction from Your presence and glory—may we cling more closely to Your cross! May our faith adhere to You with a more resolute and more intense grasp; may our total being be devoted to You; and may our detestation of all sin be as strong as Your love towards us. Work in us, we beg You, this transforming work. Keep us from all iniquity. Purify us unto Yourself, as a holy people. May holiness be the atmosphere in which we live.

Smile too on our beloved country, from the sovereign on the throne to the lowliest cottager, with blessings from on high. Diffuse Your knowledge. Establish the reign of Your faith and fear. Send out Your Spirit to put life into all our means of grace. Let our Bibles be duly studied, and may they vivify our hearts!

Give us intelligent gratitude for the marvelous blessings of our Reformation. Increase our valor for its glorious truths. Arm us with holy resolves never to relinquish our inestimable treasure. Check every backward look to Rome's destructive falsehoods. Hasten the time when the Lord himself shall appear to consume the mystery of iniquity with the breath of His mouth, and to destroy it with the brightness of His coming. We long for the day when truth shall be our unclouded sun, and when the deceits of idolatry shall be as a withered weed. We trust such prayer is Your Spirit's interceding voice within us. Therefore we boldly offer it in the prevailing name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

O God of patience and consolation, grant us as a family, this night, to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify You, even the Father of our Lord and only Savior. Glory be to You, for this throne of grace. Make it ever to us—the chosen pleasure-ground of our souls. May it be the fortress to which continually we flee. Here may we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Here may we see by faith, Your reconciled smile. Here may we rejoice to plead the name of Jesus. Here may we sharpen the sword of the Spirit, anoint the shield of faith, and put on the helmet of salvation. By prayer too may we gather supplies of heavenly manna—even the precious nourishment of Your Word. Thus may we be strengthened for each conflict, nerved for our upward race, and empowered for more than conquest over every foe. We know that Christ is an open channel for all blessings to descend upon us. Help us to beg, until the sluices of mercy widely open, and our souls are so replenished, that there shall be no room to receive more.

We marvel at our cruel folly, that when such enriching favors are within our reach—that we are so slow to extend the hand to take them. Compassionate our deadness for Your great name's sake. Quicken us, arouse us, stir us up, fill us with holy zeal, put strength into us that we may strive with You, and refuse to let You go. It is Your glory to be vanquished by the power of prayer. May Your Spirit within us wrest all blessings from Your yielding hands.

We bless You for Your holy Scriptures—for all their precepts—all their promises—all their light. Forgive our sad neglect of this most inestimable treasure. May we study the sacred pages with minds intent to learn more of Christ, with memories sanctified to retain, with wills resolved to follow.

We confess with shame, past hours wasted in unprofitable reading and other worldly entertainments. Counteract, we beseech You, the evil of a licentious press. Give grace to all to whom You have given the gift to write. May ready pens be consecrated to Your glory. May Your Spirit direct all talent to the grand work of making this fallen world rich in true knowledge, and wise unto salvation.

If other days are ours—guide us that no more time be squandered in vain pursuits. We desire to grow in Your faith and fear and love. We know that when we do not advance—we must backslide. Deliver us from the misery of feeling that we once ran well—but now our course is hindered.

Build us up in our most holy faith. Let us show out of a holy heart—our godly works with meekness of wisdom. May we display gentleness and humility and love to all men. May we ever esteem others better than ourselves. Help us never to be overcome by evil—but to overcome all evil with

good. May we walk humbly, because of much good omitted, and much evil committed. Impress on our minds the shortness of time—the work to be done—the account to be rendered—the nearness of eternity—the misery of lamps expired, when the voice of the Bridegroom is heard. May we never forget that Your eye always sees us, Your ear always hears us, Your recording hand always commits to a book of remembrance, and that all hidden works must be unveiled when the judgment day arrives. May it be our one effort to approve ourselves as faithful servants of the Lord Christ. Above all things—may we seek Your favor! Above all things—may we dread Your frown!

Strengthen us to give You no rest, until You shall reign supreme in our every thought and word and work. Command what is well-pleasing in Your sight, and give us power faithfully to fulfill the same. As we shall desire to appear before Your great white throne—so may we now appear in Your sight—and before all men. Increase in us more and more the gift of that precious faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, works by love, and makes us one with Christ. May Christ be the pulse of our hearts. May He speak in every word of our lips. May He shine in every step of our earthly walk. May we be very temples of the Holy Spirit—a habitation of God through the Spirit. Grant our requests for His dear sake. Amen.

FOURTH WEEK.

SUNDAY MORNING.

O You who hears prayer—unto You we now come. Grant that by the eye of faith we may behold You bending down Your ear of love to receive our feeble breathings. May our cries ascend perfumed with the incense of Jesus' atoning blood, and so be welcomed with acceptance.

We shall prevail, for You have promised. Smiles await us, for Your Spirit intercedes within us. We shall be heard, for Your dear Son pleads for us. May we now be filled to the full with the Spirit of grace and supplication. In public and in private, in the sanctuary and in the closet, may our life be steeped in prayer. We thank You that through Your distinguishing favor our birth has placed us in a land in which Your worship has external reverence, and congregations throng Your courts. We thank You that in the village and the town church-bell sounds proclaim the return of this holy day, and invite to glad solemnities.

Rejoicing in our precious privileges, we think of the multitudes to whom this day brings neither repose nor peace. From the eminence of our hallowed position, we cast our eyes over the wide expanse of heathendom, and we mourn. We feel our duty towards them, and we bring their desolation before Your pitying-eye. Fervent thanks we render—that we have not been left in their cold darkness. We forget not, that the mercy which befriended us—can befriend them. We know that the power which rescued us—can rescue them. There is nothing too hard for You to do! We beseech You, then, to bless them—as You have blessed us. Send out Your light and Your truth to the regions which enjoy not the calm delight and sanctifying mercies of the Lord's day. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.

We pray with more earnest wrestling for those around us, who, in the midst of all Christian privileges, willfully choose darkness rather than light. Gracious Lord, forget them not, while they thus slight You. Manifest the freeness of Your grace by subduing their obdurate rebellion. Reign in the midst of these enemies. Compel them to come in. We tremble, lest the heathen should rise up in the judgment and condemn them for so despising Your proffered mercies.

Grant that the mind of Christ may pervade us. He never wearied in pouring out His heart to You. In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears. May we thus take heaven by storm.

Open Your hands wide to pour down streams of blessing on all who shall publicly teach in Your name. May they stand between the living and the dead, and may the destroying plague be checked. Give them to feel deeply—that eternal interests hang on their lips. May their every word be everlasting truth. May they so labor, that at last they may be welcomed as good and faithful servants. May we not be forgetful that this day may close our Sundays upon earth. The next return, may see our places vacant. May it then be our best. May it find us ready, in Your dear Son, to join the ever-hymning choir. May our devotions in Your house stimulate many. May the thoughtless see in us how good it is to draw near to You, our God. May the formalist be taught by our sincerity, that You are a Spirit, and those who worship You, must worship You in spirit and in truth.

Remember, O Lord, with tender love—the sufferers on whom You have been pleased to lay the hand of detaining sickness. Their feet may not tread Your courts—may You come down and visit them. Let the light of Your countenance shine sweetly in their chambers of languishing. Let Your voice whisper through their souls, "Peace be unto you! It is I, do not be afraid!" May their joyful experience testify that Your presence is not confined to any place. But while our hearts drink deeply of the streams which make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High, multitudes will make this a day of especial sin. Your eye will behold trespasses crying up unto the heavens. Merciful Lord, do not let Your righteous wrath go forth. Spare these captives of Satan. Extend to them longer space for repentance. Above all, touch them with Your converting grace. Magnify the riches of Your loving-kindness. Receive glory—by giving life to the dead, and light to the blind. Thus we present our earnest cries in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY EVENING.

Lord of all power and might, You that are the author and giver of all good things—help us by Your grace to close this day in close fellowship with You. It was the early desire of our hearts to be wholly in the Spirit throughout this day. The review of its hallowed hours causes us to hide our faces in the dust of shame. Our best work is vile and hateful in our own sight! What, then, must it be in Yours! If our purest service is unclean—how must our open transgressions rise in condemnation! Have mercy, have mercy upon us, for Your dear Son's sake. Have mercy, have mercy upon us, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. Have mercy, have mercy upon us, for the great glory of Your great name.

We are heartily sorry for the misdoings of this day. Forgive us all that is past. O Lord, the only begotten Son Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sin of the world—take away all our guilt. You who sit at the right hand of God the Father, receive our prayer. Great Intercessor, plead in our behalf. May we retire to our rest this night, O blessed Savior, in the happy assurance that Your blood cleanses from all sin. We know that You will never cast out the people or the prayers of those who flee to You. To You—we now come. We clasp by faith Your precious promises. We cling to Your saving cross. We desire to wrestle with You in the might of faith, not letting You go, until You bless us.

Bless us by revealing to us more and more of the saving merits of Your passion. Bless us by causing all Your goodness to pass before us. Bless us by lifting up the light of Your countenance upon us. Bless us by speaking peace to our contrite hearts. Help us to bless and praise You now, even as we hope to bless and praise throughout the endless age.

Give us more of the joy of Your salvation. We would be fruitful, as trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Enable us to keep ourselves pure from all the corrupting stains of this world. May we appear among men as the Lamb's bride, clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with the robe of righteousness. This day, the silver trumpet of Your truth has sweetly sounded in countless assemblies. Oh! that Your Spirit may have worked triumphantly. May no word have been unprofitable, because of lack of faith in the hearer's heart. May no grain of precious seed have failed to take deep root. Speak but the word, "Let there be light!" and there shall be light. Say, "Let there be sight!" and opening eyes shall see, and awakened souls shall live.

If in any pulpits this day, darkness has been put for light, and noxious poison for the bread of life, we beg You, of Your sovereign grace, to counteract the evil. "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let those who hate Him flee before Him."

Dissipate all the dark clouds of prejudice and pride and self-conceit. Cast to the winds, the empty husks of formality. Expose to shame, all the flimsy refuges of self-righteousness. Humble the conceit of every proud heart. Let the desperate wickedness of the natural heart be seen, and felt, and hated, and renounced. Let Jesus Christ alone be exalted in the majesty of His person, the perfection of His work, the beauties of His grace, the triumphs of His power, the unchangeableness of His will, the infinitude of His love, the boundlessness of His salvation.

Thus may Your glorious kingdom come. Thus may all Your enemies be crushed. We mourn that Your dear Son should still be the despised and rejected by men, and that His truth should be slighted and trampled under foot. We mourn that many who profess to value Him as the pearl of great price—should so often be ashamed of His saving name. Deliver us from such awful guilt. As with our hearts we believe unto righteousness, so with our mouths may we openly confess unto salvation.

Gracious Father, now go with us to our bedside worship. Draw nearer to us. May we not leave You, until slumber seals our eyes, and forgetfulness lulls our senses. If we should have sleepless hours, give us tranquillizing thoughts of You. May we feel that You are very near, and may Your faithful love be the pillow of our weary minds. If dreams are ours—may they be hallowed and serene. Thus may we arise refreshed to run our upward race. Let our prayers prevail for Your love's sake in Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY MORNING.

Gracious Lord God, at the opening of the first working day of another week, we come to shelter ourselves beneath the covert of Your protecting wings. It is of Your tender mercy—that we now live. It is of Your boundless grace—that we draw near to meet You at Your mercy-seat. Our little barks are now entering on the troublous waves of the restless world. Grant that Your Holy Spirit may sit at the helm and steer us safely. Allow no adverse current—to divert our heavenward course. Amid storms and shoals, if such imperil us, let not our faith be wrecked, or our souls'

concerns receive any damage. Bring us to its close with garments unspotted, consciences unwounded, and no grace bedimmed.

Strengthen us to take a decided stride towards heaven. And may we allure many into the narrow way of life; and lay up rich stores of experience of Your faithfulness and truth.

Write deeply by Your Spirit's pen—the lessons of yesterday upon the tablets of our mind. Soften us as yielding wax. Impress on us Your heavenly image. You are the Potter—we are the clay. By Your preached word, mold us and form us into thorough conformity to the likeness of Your dear Son. May our whole aspect show His lovely lineaments. May all who see us take knowledge of us—that we belong to the household of faith, that we are children of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs of Christ. May our citizenship be above. May we breathe the atmosphere of purity and godly love.

Give especial efficacy to all means of grace. Through them keep us Yours forever. We ask great things. We expect great things. We doubt not, that we shall receive great things. We boldly come to You in Christ Jesus. In Him we trust You, without one misgiving doubt. For we hear the proclamation of Your name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin!" We hear, we believe, we adore!

We venture on You, we venture wholly, we venture fully. We come to our Father's arms. It is our privilege and our joy to recount all that You are to us—and all that You have done for us. While we strive to conceive Your greatness and Your goodness, we find that Your love excels all knowledge. But we delight to sing, "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds! Your righteousness is like the great mountains! Your judgments are like the great deep. Who is a God like unto You—who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage! You do not retain Your anger forever, because You delight in mercy. You will turn again—You will have compassion upon us—You will subdue our iniquities; and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea!"

Tightly clasping these heaven-sent assurances, taking them as our staff and our shield, the light of our countenance, and the very joy of our hearts—we now go forth to our daily duties.

We humbly desire that our contracted hearts may be expanded by Your Spirit—to look beyond our own need, and to embrace in our sympathies, the whole family of mankind. Multitudes throng this earth into whom You have breathed the breath of life. But their souls are dead towards You. They bring no glory to Your great name. The song of heaven swells with no praises from their lips. They wrong You. They defraud You of the service and worship which are so justly due to You.

We are bold and earnest to bring their misery to You, the God of all tender compassion. We name them meekly, knowing that You, the God of the whole earth—are doing right. We know that You are all wisdom—while we by nature grope in blindness. But we trust it is of Your Spirit, that we feel pity for their forlorn and perishing state. Thus we beg You to snatch them as brands from the burning. Raise them to shine above the brightness of the stars, as gems in the mediatorial crown of Jesus!

Bless, O God of love, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all Your missionaries who leave our shores. Give life to all our efforts in behalf of heathendom. Prosper all our desires to advance

the gospel-truth. Hear all our prayers for those who know You not. Accept these humble supplications and these poor praises. We present them in the all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONDAY EVENING.

Gracious Lord God, Your protecting wings have sheltered us during all the perils of this day. For such boundless mercy—we render our united praise. But while we praise, we chide our dull hearts—that they are not one flame of adoring love. We loathe ourselves for all our shortcomings. But no deficiency is more hateful to us than the poverty of our thanksgivings. If angels veil their faces when they stand before You—into what dust of shame should we sink low! But in faith of Your dear Son's most glorious work for us—we look forward to the days of heaven, when no languor shall oppress, no iniquities shall chill, no thoughts shall stray, no mists of unbelief shall dim our gaze. Our hearts throb for the time when zeal shall never tire. Oh! when shall we see You as You are—and offer the pure hallelujahs of perfect love.

How marvelous is Your loving-kindness, that Your faithful promises should spread such prospects before our longing eyes. We are called to regard heaven as our home forever. We feast on the grand words: "Father, I will that those whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me. The glory which You gave Me, I have given them. So shall we ever be with the Lord."

We receive these bright assurances as the stay, the prop, the cheering comfort of our souls. The voyage seems sometimes long. The waves lift up overwhelming heads. The storms are fierce and pitiless. But Christ holds the helm. Your Word secures safe passage. The haven will be surely gained. Free grace bestows on us the mighty pledge. Therefore our vile unworthiness can never hinder. The worthy price of Your dear Son's blood—has bought these heavenly homes. No worth of ours is needed to fill the scales which hold His merits. We rejoice in the seal of Your Holy Spirit, the pledge of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

You have been with us this day. We know that when You begin a good work—You will perform it. None can stay Your hand, or pluck Your people from You. Repentance is hid from Your eyes. You hate 'divorce'. Therefore, without one fear, we trust You, that we shall be with You forever.

Grace prevents, and grace will follow. Not one link of the glorious chain of saving grace can ever fail. It is written, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified." We read, we believe, we adore!

We cling to these promises—as the anchor of our sin-tossed souls. We rejoice, amid all our unworthiness, in hope of the glory of God. In humble confidence we now commend to You ourselves, and all belonging to us for the hours of approaching darkness. If it be Your blessed will to raise us again from our beds of slumber, may we diligently use the prolonged space to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Eschewing all earthly vanities, may we trim our lamps, and shine as lights in the world. May we live as kings and priests unto You, and to Your glory.

If we see future days, may every step cement us more closely to our beloved Lord Jesus, and render us more conformed to His image. Help us in all things to have a conscience void of offence towards You, and towards all men. May we ever grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord

Jesus Christ.

We beseech You also to stand by the beds of those on whom death is now placing its icy hand. Oh! that they might be enabled each one to say: "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace—for my eyes have seen Your salvation!" May each dying whisper be: "Into Your hands I commend my spirit, for You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!" May they die, as we hope to die, when our last hour shall come. Thus may the realms of light be peopled, and others in their place spring up to fight the good fight of faith, and to testify for You on earth. Pour down on us and all Your flock, all the blessings sealed to Your people in the everlasting covenant of grace. Hear us, bless us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY MORNING.

Almighty and eternal God, maker of all things, judge of all—Your covenant, that day and night shall not fail, abides unbroken. May we be thus reminded that Your better covenant of eternal love in Jesus Christ is unchangeableness and truth. In this glad confidence we come as a family this morning to commit ourselves to Your faithful care. We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves. There is no safety for us—but under the shelter of Your protecting wings. Spread their covert around us—so no evil can approach to hurt.

We shall be exposed this day to Satan's malice and attacks—may You by Your outstretched arm repel him. He will desire to have us, that he may sift us as wheat. Hear the prayer of Jesus in our behalf—that our faith fail not. Upheld by You—may we strengthen others.

We confess the treachery of our sin-sick hearts. They are ready to dally with our many foes—and are quick to give admittance. May You be pleased to bar fast the portals, and may Your blessed Spirit fortify their every inlet. Our feet are set in slippery places. Hold up our goings in the everlasting way. May no fall, soil the white robes of our purity. May no backslidings cause dishonor to Your name. This day will bring us nearer to our heavenly home. May each moment witness our ripening for it.

We now go forth, ignorant of the circumstances which may demand attention. Grant that in every transaction our holy consistency may shine before men, and lead them to glorify our Father who is in heaven. May we be wise as serpents—and harmless as doves. May our peace flow as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea. Let that mind be in us—which was in Christ Jesus. Preserve us holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Especially solemnize our hearts. May we live circumspectly, abounding in holy meditation. Give us the skill to convert each circumstance into prayer. Thus may we be shielded against the surprise of unexpected evil.

We know not who may have interchange of thought with us. Grant that those who address us, may be channels of good. May we too minister good to them. Set a guard upon our mouths. Keep the door of our lips. May we bear in mind that eternal interests hang on life's little moments. Let our speech be always with grace. May others have cause to rejoice that they have been brought into contact with us. If we should have interaction with any who are thoughtless and ungodly, so bless our converse that it may win them to the paths of peace. Grant that they may see in us—that religion is a real treasure, enriching with most sacred joy, and ennobling with true nobility.

Especially make us kind and tenderhearted one towards another, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Let gentleness and love be the halo round our path. Smooth every asperity of temper. May we never forget how easy it is to occasion grief, and to inflict rankling vexation. May we rather strive to bind up every wound, to pour oil into every bleeding heart, and to cause the sons of sorrow to change their mourning into gladness.

Thus may the world be the happier and the better, because we live. May our communications sow the good seed of grace all around. Send down the dew of Your blessing and the rays of Your Spirit, that every seed may yield fruit to Your glory. May our tents be always pitched beside the Redeemer's cross. Fix our loving gaze intently on His death and passion. Knowing the iniquity which cleaves to our best efforts and our holiest walk—may we be ever plunging into the fountain which is opened in His side. There may we wash and be clean. May our constant prayer be, "Purge us with hyssop—and we shall be clean! Wash us—and we shall be whiter than snow!" Help and defend us, until from praying ground—we pass to the realms of unceasing praise. We thus beseech You for Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY EVENING.

Blessed Lord God, urged by our need, invited by Your promises, called by Your grace—as a family we enter in spirit into Your immediate presence. We worship You in humble reverence and godly fear. We are filled with awe when we contemplate Your majesty, Your greatness, Your holiness, Your glory. But we take courage, when we remember Your boundless love, Your immeasurable goodness. Each hour of the day now fled, brought tender mercies to our hearts and home. For known deliverances—we bless Your holy name. For unnumbered and unknown benefits—we bring the tribute of our fervent praise.

We feel that every moment records our deep debt in Your book of reckoning. We are all poverty—as well as guilt. We have nothing of our own with which to pay. But we are rich—for Jesus is ours, and we are His. We bring Him in the arms of our faith. We present Him as more than counterpoising all our iniquities. We rejoice in believing that the scales in our behalf weigh down, and that Your justice is more than satisfied. May we this night and evermore be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which we utterly abhor—but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of You, O God, by faith.

We humble ourselves for faculties misused, and many opportunities neglected. Grant, we beg You, that no harm may spring up from our unadvised words. Wherever our example has been amiss, may Your grace erase all mischievous impression. Let not any worthless seed, sowed inadvertently by our careless hands—take root, and bring forth bitter fruit. Pardon our vanity, our levity, our lack of watchfulness, our foolish walking, our inconsiderate ways. May no evil result from fretful temper, unloving walk, or provoking pettishness in us. If by unkindness we have wounded any heart—may You pour in the balm of heavenly consolation. If we have turned coldly from need, and misery, and grief—do not in righteous anger turn from us. If we have withheld relief from poverty and pain, do not withhold Your gracious bounty from us. But by Your Spirit cause our hearts to be an overflowing ocean of tender love and godly compassion.

Give us without measure—that most excellent gift of love which suffers long and is kind, which envies not, which does not boast, which is not puffed up, which does not behave itself rudely,

which seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity—but rejoices in the truth; which bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and never fails.

Thus may we be imitators of You, our ever-loving God, whose name is Love. Thus may we shine as disciples of our adored Lord, who has left us His especial commandment, that we love one another. May the robe of love be our clothing, the reign of love be established in our hearts, and the law of love constrain our words and works.

Good Lord, many of Your servants are laboring to promote Your glory. Bless every word which has fallen from godly lips. Sanctify every visit to the cells of misery, and huts of poverty, and chambers of sickness, and abodes of suffering. Give power to those who are taking counsel to devise more extended schemes of benevolence. Fructify all efforts to send Your glorious gospel to the dark, the ignorant, the perishing, at home and abroad. Visit with mercy the heathen, the Jew, the infidel, the heretic, the formalist, and the idolater. If You but speak the word—what wondrous conversions will ensue! Earth waits for Your blessing. Bless it, O heavenly Father. Bless it, O gracious Jesus. Bless it, O Holy Spirit. Amen.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come—to You all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein. By Your Spirit, tune our hearts and souls to swell the hymn of adoration. Cherubin and Seraphin veil their faces while they worship You. Into what lowliness of shame should we poor sinners sink! We humble ourselves. But still in the name of Jesus—we venture to lift up our eyes. Hear us and bless us for His sake, with all enriching blessings. Sanctify the day, the threshold of which we are now permitted to cross.

We earnestly desire throughout its hours to manifest Your love. Give us power to show to all around, that we are not our own—but Your purchased heritage. May we never forget—that we are bought by the precious blood of the redeeming Lamb. Enable us to live unreservedly unto You. May we magnify Your name, sound aloud Your praise, and advance the kingdom of righteousness and true holiness. Invigorate us to bring forth abundant fruit worthy of our high calling—and Your marvelous goodness towards us.

Apart from Your dear Son, we are nothing, and can do nothing. Left to ourselves, our desires languish, our hearts relapse to deadness, our hands hang down, our efforts wither as a blighted blossom. But leave us not—we meekly pray.

Send to us unfailing support from Your holy place. Cement and intensify our oneness with our beloved Lord. The branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine. Neither can we, except we are engrafted in Him. May we more closely abide in Him. May our faith adhere to Him more immovably. May our love entwine itself around Him more tightly. May we be wholly one with Him. May He be wholly one with us. May His Spirit perfectly pervade us, and be intermixed with every fiber of our inner man. May every pulse of our hearts be Christ!

Interwoven with Christ, the true foundation, may we be built up as living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto You by Him. Empower us thus to advance in all true godliness, until the top-stone of our salvation be brought forth with shouts of,

"Grace to it, grace to it!"

We rejoice that we are very members of His mystical body. We adore Him as our glorious Head. Help us to grow up into Him in all things; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Thus may we promote Your kingdom upon earth, and hasten the time when Your will shall reign unrivaled and supreme. We desire always to be occupied in some distinct object of spiritual concern. Make our feet joyful to seek the abodes of ignorance and vice, that we may be ministers of good. Pour upon our lips the fitting words of counsel and entreaty. May we be studious at every turn to sow the good seed of gospel-truth. Teach us—that we may teach others.

Give us patience, remembering Your marvelous forbearance. Your love to us has never wearied. Strengthen us that we may never weary in well-doing, knowing that in due season we shall reap—if we faint not.

Thus may we be followers of You, our most merciful Father, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto You for a sweet-smelling savor. Grant us grace to draw water with joy, out of the wells of salvation. Established and refreshed, may we run with patience the race which is set before us, and abound in all those good works in which You have before ordained that we should walk. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—hear us and bless us now and evermore. Amen.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

O Lord God, O life of our lives, O Spirit of our spirits, O strength of our strength—You who have spread Your shield around our path this day, help us now, when night's shadows fall, to ascend to You on the wings of faith and prayer. We cannot thank You as we would. But for Jesus' sake, accept the praises which our poor lips bring.

We are indeed ashamed of all our doings and misdoings. With morning's light we offered ourselves to You. Good resolves were warm within us. We look back on the past hours, and we are conscious of broken vows, lack of true service, backsliding steps, and unfaithful words. Crowds of vain thoughts and worthless works accuse us. Enter not into judgment with Your faithless servants.

We confess our manifold shortcomings. For the sole merits of Your beloved Son, cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Cast our sins and our iniquities behind Your back. Bury them in the ocean of Jesus' blood.

O God of hope, all our hope is in You. Enliven our drooping souls with an increase of the most precious gift of hope. Let not our unsteady hearts be tossed about amid storms and billows of doubt and fear. Give us to grasp tightly the sure and steadfast anchor of unfailing hope.

We rest on Your exceeding great and precious promises. Teach us that though heaven and earth shall pass away, not one word of Your lips can ever fail.

We trust in Your boundless love. Reveal to us the unfathomable source from which it springs, and persuade us that it must flow unchanged, unchangeable forever, and forever. We know whom we have believed. Give us unvarying assurance that You will surely keep that which we have committed unto You, against the day of Christ. When we loved You not—You began a good work in us. We do love You now—but, alas! too faintly. We have confidence that now You will carry on Your work with power. You are for us—who, then, can be against us? Our life is hid with Christ in You. You, who have given us unto Christ, are greater than all the powers and principalities of darkness. None can pluck us out of Your almighty hands!

Thus may we stand firm in the fight of faith. May we boldly lift up our heads, invulnerable in the helmet of the hope of salvation. In every conflict may we be more than conquerors, through the sure and certain hope of eternal life, which You the God of truth promised before the world began.

Teach us that You have not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Against all hope in ourselves, we glory in hope that the rock of our salvation is high as the heaven of heavens. We know that tribulations are ordained for our good. When they gather round us, grant that they may work patience, and patience experience. By experience may that hope be strengthened which makes not ashamed. Thus may we live in hope, and work in hope, and sow in hope, and pray in hope, and die in hope, and be saved by hope.

Many are the relatives and friends for whom we earnestly implore all Your blessings. Impart to them everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. We pray for them. And, may You kindle in their hearts the fervent flame of prayer for us. Together may we wrestle for each other's good.

We commit ourselves—we commit them—we commit all the household of faith—we commit all the family of man to Your gracious care for this night. May we lie down without one unforgiving or evil passion rankling in our breasts. May we close our eyes in sleep, as if this earth should meet our eyes no more. But if we wake again as pilgrims here, may it be to walk before You as Your redeemed children. Give this—give more—for Jesus' sake. Amen.

THURSDAY MORNING.

O God the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us miserable sinners. When the earth was without form and void, You moved upon the face of the waters. Then lovely order smiled, and beauty robed the world. Move, we beseech You, in our disordered hearts. Remove the deformities of unruly desire and hateful lusts. Chase away the mists and darkness of unbelief. Brighten our inner man with the pure light of truth. Sow abundantly the seeds of righteousness. Make our souls fragrant as the garden of the Lord. Enrich them with every godly fruit. Beautify them with heavenly grace. Cause them to reflect the rays of the Sun of righteousness.

We humbly put You in remembrance of Your gracious offices. Fulfill them all in us to Your great glory and our great joy. Be our comforter, our guide, our light, our sanctification. May we come behind in no grace, being filled with Your presence.

Especially take of the things of Christ, and show them with enlarged power to our longing souls. May we daily learn more of His love, His grace, His tender compassion, His faithfulness, His beauty. May we delight ourselves in Him with increased delight. Lead us to the cross, and show us

in His wounds—the hateful character of sin. May we see our sins—as the nails which transfixed Him, the cords which bound Him, the sword which pierced Him, the thorns which tore Him, the taunts which stung Him. Help us to read in His cruel death—the reality and immensity of His love. Open to us the wondrous volumes of glorious truth in the cry, "It is finished!"

Increase our faith in the clear knowledge that atonement is forever achieved, and expiation completed, and our debt fully paid, and satisfaction infinitely made, and all our guilt washed away, and all our sins most righteously forgiven. Show us that our persons are redeemed, our souls saved, hell vanquished, the devil crushed, heaven won, and eternity of glory our rightful home.

Holy Spirit, deepen in us these saving lessons. Write them with Your finger on the tablets of our hearts. Thus may our profiting advance. May our walk be sin-loathing, sin-fleeing, Christ-loving, God-fearing. Enlighten our consciences to discern all latent evil. Allow no devices of the devil to beguile or to deceive.

Implant the most tender sensitiveness of conscience. May we shrink from all approach and contact of ungodliness. Store our minds with the texts and doctrines of our blessed Bibles. May we ably wield Your all-conquering sword. Then temptations shall assault in vain.

Especially we beg You to look upon a world lying in the wicked one. He is mighty—but You are almighty. Shatter his scepter. Scatter to the winds his usurped dominion. Speak Your resistless word—and he is cast into outer darkness forever!

It is Your will, by the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe. Raise up then a noble army of devoted preachers. Let their hearts be all zeal, and their words all fire. Arm them with the panoply of truth.

Arise, and let God's enemies be scattered. Let those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

Shine forth, good Lord, in every dark place of this groaning world. Let Your light shine, and darkness shall no more be dark. Let the prayers of Your faithful people give You no rest, until You arise to turn away ungodliness, and to establish the sweet reign of purity and peace. Hasten the time. Do it for Your tender mercy's sake. And to Your name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and dominion, praise and power, now, henceforth, and forever. Amen.

THURSDAY EVENING.

Holy Lord God, give us grace to draw near to You acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Grant that our frequent approach and constant welcome may not induce forgetfulness of Your infinite majesty. Deepen in our hearts—due awe of Your unsearchable greatness. By Your word all things were made. By Your power they are sustained. By Your providence they are ordered. In Your sight, we are less than nothing. Before You, we lie low in dust and ashes as rebellious sinners. Give us, then, the meekest spirit of self-abasement. But raise our devotions from the deadening level of formality. May our prayers be ever the warm outpouring of our hearts. Appear before us as a Spirit, requiring those who worship You—to worship You in spirit and in truth. Fill us, too, with filial confidence. May we fear with love. May we love with fear. May the Spirit of grace and supplication ever breathe in our earnest breathings. Strengthen us with lively assurance, that

faithful prayer in Jesus' name grasps the arm of Your omnipotence, achieves wonders, obtains blessings, and never fails. Thus we believe that this our evening importunity will draw down streams of the most tender mercy. In this full hope, we beseech You to forgive us all the trespasses of the past day. We ask Your pardon; for without it we perish. We ask it with shame; for we are truly without excuse. We fail to watch. We restrain prayer. So iniquities, like the wind, carry us away. Do not allow Your just displeasure to arise. Dash us not to pieces like a potter's vessel. Spare us, good Lord, for Your mercy is great. Spare us, for we are Your own children by the faith of Jesus. Spare us, for the atoning blood sprinkles us. Spare us, for Jesus' cross is our shelter, our refuge, and our plea! Spare us, for we close this day clinging to the horns of our sheltering altar.

Accept our adoring praises for Your precious mercies throughout the past hours. Unworthy as we are, we find that goodness and mercy always precede and follow us. In these gracious dealings we find a pledge that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Strong in that blessed hope we now lie down to sleep. In night's dark hours—may You abide with us. We fear no perils if You are near.

We ask such renovating rest as You shall think most fitting for us. Above all, we earnestly implore that every power of mind and body, which You are pleased to give, may be a thank-offering to Your praise. We know it to be the misery of miseries, when faculties are misused as the instruments of sin. Save us by Your indwelling Spirit from such degrading sin. May our beds ever remind us of our graves. May our uprising foreshadow the joys of resurrection. We glory in the truth, that Jesus died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we shall live together with Him.

Hear us for ourselves. Hear us for others also. It is our privilege that we may spread all need before Your throne. How multiform is the need of earth this night! We have knowledge of some suffering. We commend it to Your alleviating love. There is much unknown to us. But Your eye sees. Oh! may Your pity yearn pitifully over all distress!

We feel for those who are now retiring without prayer and praise. They are not pricked to the heart by sense of sin. They dread not the coming wrath. They are unmoved by the marvels of Your forbearance. May Your goodness lead them to repentance. May Your long-suffering be their salvation.

Some perhaps are this night meditating evil things. Hedge up their devious ways with thorns. Defeat their plots. Cause the tears of penitence to flow. The devil is busy scattering temptations. Turn his foul weapons against himself. May the tempted escape as birds from the fowler's snare. Soothe the sufferings of the sick. Assuage their pains. Give them the comfort of Your presence—then all sorrow will be joy. Surround Your dying servants with the glories of heavenly light. May they depart in peace, rejoicing in Your salvation. Hear us for His sake who died and rose again for us, and ever lives at Your right hand—Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY MORNING.

Almighty Father, help us duly to prize, and devoutly to use, our privilege of access to You. Aid us not only in our united worship—but also in our closet duties. Here we confess common sins, and implore family blessings. There may we diligently try our spirits, and minutely examine our thoughts and lives. Give us faithful boldness carefully to sift our motives, and accurately to ascertain our progress in the life of godliness. The knowledge of ourselves sinks us in the deepest

abasement. How far are we from what we should be! How distant are we from the state of holiness, to which Your Spirit unresisted, would have raised us! But by Your grace—we are what we are. By Your long-suffering mercy—we are here this morning bewailing our miserable shortcomings, and washing in the blood which cleanses from all sin.

We confess, with contrite shame, that our thoughts are quick to wander from You, and to intermingle with the polluting pleasures of the world. Times without number we desert our first love. We forsake You to whom our hearts are pledged. We drink the poison of the sorcerer's cup.

We have not kept jealous watch over traitorous senses. We have left them unguarded, and almost inviting the admission of trains of unholy lusts. The door of our lips has opened readily to send forth words unfaithful to You our God, injurious to our fellow-men, empty of grace, full of folly, dishonoring to our heavenly calling. We turn with downcast eyes, from the contemplation of our walk before men. It has not been high, and holy, and harmless, and without rebuke. It has not been in accordance with the gospel principles of uprightness, justice, purity, and truth. Our light, instead of shining, has been dim. Our salt, instead of being purifying, has been unsavory. Our examples have not allured to Christian sanctity. Our progress has not always been onward, upward, heavenward, straightforward.

Sometimes we have been backsliders. Sometimes we have turned aside into bypaths. Instead of running with patience our appointed race—we have been loiterers, lingerers, taking ease on forbidden ground, looking back to once-loved scenes.

We mourn, too, that Your blessed Book, which You have given as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path—has been neglected and postponed for the frothy childishness of man's conceits. Too often it has been read with lack of reverence. We have not duly heeded Your own voice speaking from Your holy place. The treasure of treasures has been undervalued. We have trodden holy ground with careless feet.

Pity us, good Lord. Pardon us, O our God. We flee unto You, the Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. You will not always chide, neither will You keep Your anger forever. We have full faith that through the precious and all atoning blood of Jesus, You will turn again and have compassion upon us, that You will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of everlasting forgetfulness!

We now go forth to the duties of our vocation, zealous to amend our lives according to Your holy Word. Animate us to quicken our pilgrim-steps, to fight more manfully the fight of faith, and to adorn more faithfully Your heavenly doctrine.

Replenish with Your richest blessings all Your faithful servants. Strengthen them with might by Your Spirit in the inner man. May their godly walk bring glory to Your name. May this day witness mighty triumphs to the cross of Jesus. May Satan be compelled to release many captives. May many liberated feet tread down his deadly yoke.

Bless our beloved country. We commend to Your especial favor our Queen and all her house. May they be as high in heavenly pre-eminence as they are in earthly rank. May Christian virtue be the luster of the crown. Bless all who exercise authority. May they rule in You and for You. Bless our schools. May Your Spirit ever be the teacher in them. When we lie down in the grave, may our

children arise to outshine us in far better service. May they make this land a name and a praise unto You throughout the world. We pray, we praise, pleading the love of Jesus, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

FRIDAY EVENING.

Heavenly Lord God, encouraged by the multitude of Your tender mercies, emboldened by experience of Your unfailing goodness, we hasten to Your throne of grace. When we look back, we see streams upon streams of Your love overflowing our past path. Out of nothing You have made us living souls. We adore You as the God of our creation. When, through our first parents' fall, we were afar from You—You sent Your only begotten Son to bring us back. We thank You for redeeming blood. When we were content to live and perish in the wilderness of the world—You by Your Spirit translated us from ignorance—to knowledge, from darkness—to marvelous light, from the abyss of misery—to the kingdom of righteousness and peace. Thanks be unto You, for our high and holy calling! When we lacked wisdom—You have supplied it from the fountain of light. When we have erred and gone astray like lost sheep—You have recalled our wandering feet. If we have stood firm in the hour of temptation, it was Your arm which sustained us. If after grievous falls, we have arisen again in penitence and prayer—we owe it to Your restoring grace.

We thank You for the ministry of angels, not less real because unseen. We thank You for the precious comfort of Your holy Word. We thank You for the bright cluster of Your cheering promises. We thank You for the ordinances of Your service. We thank You for the teaching of Your Spirit. We thank You for the dear fellowship of Christian friends. We thank You for the recorded annals of holy lives. We thank You for examples sweet to allure—and for beacons sad to deter. In all these provisions, we see Your gracious will that we should grow in grace, and fit for Your eternal presence. Your preserving mercy gives assurance that it will follow us to the end. The gracious beginning is a pledge of glorious conclusion. Our heaven-born faith—gives promise that it will lead to heavenly sight. Our new birth of incorruptible seed—is pledge of never-ending life.

We thus draw near unto You—believing that You will draw near to us. When we asked not, You have given heaven's best gift, even Your only begotten Son. We doubt not that with Him, in answer to our cries, You will also freely give us all things. In the comfort of these thoughts, in the joy of these hopes, in the strength of this gladness, we bless and adore You, O eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now we entrust ourselves to You for the hours of this night. May we prolong our days, if it be Your gracious will. But if our earthly service is now ended, receive us to a heavenly home. We know that Your wise orderings are our best welfare. We would have nothing but in accordance with the counsels of Your grace. May our being now and ever be in You, and for You, and with You.

Blessed Jesus, You who have loved us, and given Yourself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor; perfume our humble breathings. Present them worthy in Your prevailing worthiness.

Heavenly Father, Your tender mercies are over all Your works. Is it not well-pleasing to You, that we should name others at Your throne? Hear us then in behalf of all who are now draining the cup of sorrow. Many widows now feel their loneliness. So fill their hearts that no aching void may crave. May they feel that, with You for their God, they have more than all. Orphan children are

without the parental shield. Under the shadow of Your wings may they find safety. Be their portion for time and for eternity.

Visit this night the many hospitals in which pain and disease keep watch. Wipe weeping eyes. Assuage the sufferings of afflicted bodies. Reveal to the anguish-stricken, the blessed Jesus, who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Give them, without one repining thought, to leave themselves in Your blessed and blessing hands. Be with those who are traveling by land and by water. Teach them that there is no peril when You are near, and that there is no place which Your presence fills not.

Especially be gracious to the beloved friends who are one with us in kindred and affection. May grace cement all our hearts to You, and in You to each other. May we be one now and one forever. Make us fellow-helpers to each other's faith, and partners of each other's holy joys. Pardon all our sins. And save us with Your everlasting salvation, according to Your covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY MORNING.

Holy Father, merciful and gracious, give us Your holy Spirit to help our infirmities in prayer. The worthiness of Your Son is our only plea. But that plea is instant access to Your heart.

Jesus, be the fragrance of our morning sacrifice. Manifest Yourself unto us in this service. Bring us into the sanctuary of Your immediate presence. May Your banner over us be love. Mightily enlarge our faith, that we may fully know the glories of Your grace, and all the wonders of Your redeeming work.

We know that, while we run the way of Your commandments, Your doctrines will become more clear. Strengthen us, then, to obey that we may know, and to know that we may obey. May light prevent, attend, and follow us. May every ray which shines upon us be reflected by us.

We thank You for all the ordinances by which You instruct and feed Your people. Make them spirit and life unto our souls. We have lost much by sad neglect. Let no provocations induce You to shut up Your loving-kindness in displeasure. If You are angry, the fruitful pastures of Your ordained means will become a wilderness and desert to us. If You cease to smile, the heavens will withhold their fructifying dew, and no more drop down their fatness.

Help us to give due heed to Your preached Word, lest faithful pastors be removed, and Your Spirit refuse to teach us.

Excite us to use duly Your throne of grace both publicly and in private. May prayer never become in us formality. May not the door remain closed because we feebly knock. Especially replenish us with overflowing grace when we receive the memorials of Your broken body and Your outpoured blood. Solemnize and gladden us. Humble us in reverential awe. Exalt us in adoring faith. Reveal Yourself to us—as tasting the accursed death in our stead. Open our eyes to behold You hanging for us on the accursed tree. May we see our death in Your death, and our reconciliation through Your blood. Invigorate and comfort our souls by the spiritual meal. May they be strengthened even as our bodies receive strength from bread and wine. Increase our holy trust, that those who thus communicate in remembrance of Your dying love, shall never be the prey of Satan, the devouring lion.

Keep us from all superstition in the use of sacred rites. May outward means of grace, ever unveil You. May they never obscure You. May we worship and adore You in the simplicity of truth, and sincerity of faith. Clothe us with the garments of purity and true holiness. So may we be fit guests at the heavenly table. Let love be our robe, and deep humility our befitting clothing. Thus nourish us to life eternal.

Pity those who have no part or lot in our chief joys. Yet there is room. May Your Spirit call. And may he never cease to work, until penitence and faith subdue the hearts now closed to You.

Go with us, holy Father, to the duties of this day. Whatever is our station or our work, may we rejoice to be where You have placed us, and to do what You are pleased to command. We know that the period of our being, our assigned employment, the companions who are by our side, the people with whom we have converse, are all pre-arranged in accordance with Your counsels. We believe that You order all our matters so as to enable us most to advance the interests of Your kingdom and our souls. Enable us humbly to walk in Your paths, and never to seek our own honor—but Yours alone.

We bewail that we have been such unfaithful and unprofitable servants. We plead the precious blood for pardon of all that is past. We trust in Christ's glorious righteousness as the covering of all our shortcomings. We pray for the perpetual aid of Your Spirit, that no future moment may be misspent. For Your tender love's sake grant that at last we may each receive the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!" We bless You that we may thus boldly supplicate. We bless You for Your promises to answer. We bless You that You are far more willing to hear—than we to pray. Be it unto us according to Your might to save. And to You be all the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

SATURDAY EVENING.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—have mercy upon us miserable sinners. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Son of the Father, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. You who take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. You who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You who sit at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit—have mercy upon us!

Pardon all the sins of this day and of this week, all the sins of all the hours of our lives; our sins of early, mature, and advanced years; our sins of omission and commission; our sins against light and knowledge, and the whispers of conscience and restraints of Your Holy Spirit. Good Lord—hear and save us!

Pardon our sins in private and in the family, and in the busy haunts of men; our sins of lip and life and walk; our sins in the study of Your blessed Word and in the neglect of it; our sins in prayer irreverently offered and coldly withheld. Good Lord hear and save us!

Pardon our sins against our God, our neighbor, and ourselves; our sins in time misspent; our sins in yielding to the tempter's wiles, in opening our hearts to his admission, in being unwatchful when we knew him to be near. Good Lord, hear and save us!

Pardon our sins in vexing Your Holy Spirit, in quenching the heavenly sparks of His grace, in resisting His loving motions; our sins of hardness of heart, of unbelief, of presumption, and of pride; our sins of unfaithfulness to the souls of men, of lack of bold decision in the cause of Christ, and deficiency of outspoken zeal for His glory. Good Lord deliver, hear, and save us!

Pardon our sins of deception, injustice, untruthfulness in our dealings with others; our sins of bringing dishonor on the great name by which we are called; our sins of substance unduly hoarded, improvidently squandered, and not consecrated to the glory of the great Giver; our sins of covetousness, which is idolatry in Your sight; our sins of impurity in thought and word; our sins of light and trifling reading; our sins in study and in recreation; our sins of morose and peevish and angry tempers; our sins against the pure law of universal love. Pardon all our sins, known and unknown, felt and unfelt, confessed or not confessed, remembered or forgotten. Good Lord hear and save us! As a family on bended knees, with earnest cry, in full faith in Your atoning blood, we implore these mercies. We call upon You by Your name Jesus, which tells us that Your property is to save; by Your love without beginning and without end; by Your assurance that salvation's work is finished; by Your gracious call to the weary and heavy-laden; by Your blessed promise that You will never cast out; by all You are, by all that You have done for us, by all that You are doing, by all the glory yet to be revealed—we beseech You to pardon, bless, and save us! But limit not Your mercy unto us. In gracious condescension to our united supplication, may blessings without measure flow down upon earth's sons. Hear us for our Queen, and for all who sit on thrones, for all their families, for all their subjects. Give needful grace, that they who rule may rule for You, and they who obey may obey in You.

Hear us for all pastors of Your Church. Work in them, work by them, that Your gospel may be known, Your name glorified, Your people gathered in, and edified and saved.

Especially go forth with the missionaries who seek Your redeemed people scattered throughout the world. Pity the outcasts of heathen lands. Dispel all darkness by the bright rising of Your gospel light. Be with all who are any ways afflicted in mind, body, or estate. May the dying depart in peace, in full comfort of Your full salvation. May the living live unto You, always ready to depart. Retire with us now to our private devotions. May we lie down in perfect peace—clasping the redeeming cross, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. And all glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God of our salvation, now and ever. Amen.

02.03 - Section 3

Section 3

"Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

SPECIAL DAYS

CHRISTMAS DAY

MORNING.

We will extol You, O God, our King. We will bless Your name forever and ever. But especially on this hallowed morn, we desire to pour forth floods of adoring praise. O our souls, bless the Lord. O every faculty within us, magnify His boundless love.

We bring our thanks for the gift of gifts. Your only begotten Son is born into this world. He is made bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh. The least gift from heaven to guilty earth exceeds all praise. What shall we render unto You—for sending Your own dear Son to take upon Him our nature, and truly to be one of the family of man! Utterance cannot express due gratitude. But accept, we beseech You, the breathings of Your Spirit in our hearts. Mark how fervently we love You, and how we strive to testify thanksgiving.

"Wonder of wonders! The Son of God comes down from heaven—that to heaven we poor sinners may be raised. Our Lord Jesus Christ takes the manhood into God—that we may become partakers of the divine nature. He is born one with us—that we may be one with Him forever.

Herein is love, when we could not rise to Him, He flies down on the wings of grace—to raise us to Himself. Herein is power, that when Deity and humanity were infinitely apart, God has joined them in indissoluble oneness. He has united infinite opposites in one Christ.

Herein is God's wisdom in the highest, that when we were utterly undone by sin, without will to return, without intellect to devise recovery—Jesus appears on earth, able as God to save us to the uttermost, and qualified as man to die our death, to shed sin-atoning blood in our stead, and to work out perfect righteousness in our behalf.

Father, God most merciful, help us to bless You more. In spirit we take our station by the watching shepherds. So we strive to expand our contracted hearts. We hear, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people—for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord!" We hear, we believe, we rejoice, we give thanks, we adore. We bid all fears to flee away. We call upon our consciences to bathe in an ocean of repose. We look up with filial confidence. We see You—our reconciled Father. Separation has ceased. We draw near, because You have thus drawn near to us. We love You—because we have this proof that You have so loved us. A Redeemer is come! We put all our trust in Him. We believe that we are fully and forever redeemed from sin, and all sin's penalties and woes. You have raised up an

horn of salvation for us. We see its all-sufficient might. We embrace it with undoubting faith. We realize that You have saved us. Like Simeon—we clasp the new-born Savior to our hearts. We exult that He is ours, and we are His. We are one with Him. Therefore You are our Father because His Father, and His God because our God.

Father, again we say, help us to bless You for all the benefits of this wondrous birth.

Give us grace, that our lives may praise You better than our lips. Keep our thanksgiving free from every blot. You have given so much for us, that heaven itself could give no more. Here we present ourselves to Your undivided service. Accept us. Preserve us. Rule within us. May Your dear Son indeed be born within us. May His continual indwelling sanctify every movement of our minds. May the good tidings of this day have free course and be glorified throughout earth's length and breadth. Wherever man lives, may he rejoice in the Child born, the Son given.

Hasten the time when He who as at this time came to visit us in great humility, shall come again in His glorious majesty with all His saints.

Holy Father, we offer our prayers and praises in the way which You have ordained—Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

EVENING.

Blessed Jesus, we have this day been especially rejoicing in Your coming to seek us and to save us, when we were lost. Once more, as a family, we assemble to delight ourselves in You. Our gratitude indeed has no bounds. But shackled in these bodies of sin, we cannot thank You as we would. But You know what we are made of. You are touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Regard us therefore in the pitifulness of Your tender mercies. Graciously accept our feeble praise. When You shall be pleased to call us to our heavenly home, You shall receive more fitting adoration.

We have in happy faith gazed on You as a babe in Bethlehem. We have seen the fulfillment of ancient prophecies, and the coming of the Desire of all nations. As we gaze, teach us more and more of the deep meaning of this wondrous advent. May we read in it the breadth and length, the depth and height of Your eternal love. When we see this incomprehensible self-emptying, this concealment of Deity in the rags of humanity, this profound humiliation, this Your readiness to live for a season as a man among men—may we clasp to our very souls the glad assurance that we are indeed dear to You—dear even to the infinity of love. You stoop to put on our lowly flesh, not only because You Seek Your heavenly Father's glory—but because our names are engraved on Your heart. Help us by Your Spirit to love You, according to the boundlessness of Your love toward us.

Gloriously accomplish, we beseech You, all the wondrous purposes of Your coming. O Seed of the woman, crush the serpent's head. Show that You are his mighty conqueror. Allow him no longer to receive wrongful allegiance, as the god of this world. Destroy his usurped dominion. Shatter the scepter of the cruel tyrant. You are manifested to destroy his works. Hasten the time, when in You and in Your name, we too shall bruise him under our feet.

You are come to achieve redemption. May we glory in You as procuring ransom and deliverance to the full. You are born one of our family. Thus You are our proxy, our surety, our substitute. Open widely the eyes of our faith, that we may see all our merited curse, expended on Your unoffending head, and the sword of Divine justice buried in Your heart! You have lived a man on earth to fulfill every demand of the most holy law, and to work out in our nature, perfect righteousness. Enable us to see the glories of that robe of righteousness. May we put it on by the hand of faith. May we rejoice that we are lovely in this Your precious loveliness, and beauteous in this Your matchless beauty.

You visit earth—to be the way, the truth, and the life. Reveal to us Your paths. Ever guide our feet to walk the heavenward walk. Proclaim to us Your truth. May it sanctify us wholly, and make us free from ignorance and sin. Give to us more abundantly, the life of grace, until it issues in the life of glory. By Your birth You are the firstborn among many brethren. You are not ashamed to call us brethren. Do then, as You have said, declare Your name unto Your brethren. Enable us to realize all the joys of this true relationship. May we hold converse with You in all brotherly confidence. While we reverently worship You as the mighty God, may we cling to You as our near kinsman.

You came down on the wings of love, that, as the heavenly Bridegroom, You may betroth Your people unto Yourself forever. Show us the glories of this mysterious union. Reveal to us that You hate divorce, and that You will never leave us nor forsake us.

Thus may we learn in Your manger, that the last Adam more than restores the inheritance which we lost, when the first Adam fell. And may we lie down this night singing in our hearts with all grateful rapture, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men! Amen and amen.

LAST DAY OF THE YEAR

EVENING.

We kneel together, O great God, for the last time in the year, which has now reached its close. May our last united cry be our best—the most glowing in fervor—the most abased in humility—the most fragrant in the reconciling blood—the most hallowed by the interceding Spirit.

We look to ourselves—and we turn to You. Our earthly days roll rapidly away. Our moments vanish while we grasp them. But You change not. Time is not time to You. From everlasting to everlasting Your name is, "I am that I am." Glorious Jehovah, we are astounded at Your unspeakable greatness. We marvel more at Your surpassing goodness. Trusting in Your superabounding grace, we thus draw near.

It befit us at the end of each day, to bring the tribute of thanksgiving for our daily mercies. What shall we render for all the mercies of all the days of the year now fled? Oh that we could gather all into one mass, and meet them with deserving praise! But we cannot count the ocean's sands. How, then, can we calculate Your mercies, which in number are far more! Our thanks are worthless for the least of all Your favors. What are they when weighed against the wondrous whole! We know but a part—but that part surpasses praise. But we ardently desire that the concluding year should bear witness that we bring adorations with overflowing hearts. For all Your personal mercies—for the measure of health with which we have been favored—for the

preservation of our frames from fatal sickness and from evil accident—for the comforts of a sheltering roof—for the sufficiency of food and clothing—for the continuance of mental and bodily power—Good Lord accept the praises of our inmost souls! For Your goodness to us as a family—for mutual support and help—for the sweet delights of domestic harmony and peace—for seats now filled which might have been a vacant blank—Good Lord accept the praises of our inmost souls! For Your distinguishing favors to us as a nation—for the peace which smiles upon our borders—for the plenty of our fields—for the absence of wasting sickness and destroying plagues—for the protection of right laws—for the Bible open to our use—for the continued light and liberty of our glorious Reformation—Good Lord accept the praises of our inmost souls! Enriched with all these blessings, and with countless more, we close this year. We know our privileges. We feel them. We bless Your holy name! But other thoughts oppress us. We blush to lift up our eyes unto You, O God of all grace and love. Shame and confusion of face humble us to the very dust. Wherever You have been boundless in mercy—we have been abundant in sin. We cannot measure our ingratitude. We cannot estimate our vileness. We cannot in thought reach to the extent of our transgressions throughout this traversed year.

Each day has added to our guilt. Each scene has witnessed our straying feet and our offending tongues. What is there in heaven or in earth, above, around, without, within—which condemns us not? The sun condemns us, which has seen our misdeeds; the darkness, too, which hides nothing from You. The cruel accuser justly accuses. How often have Your good angels been provoked to leave us! Your righteous law, Your holy Word, our sin-soiled consciences, our public and our private hours, our neighbors and ourselves—write dark things against us. We make no denial. We frame no excuse. We confess, Father, we have sinned throughout this year against heaven and before You—and are no more worthy to be called Your sons. But still we live! We live to fly as contrite penitents to Your extended arms! We know that You will not cast us off—for Jesus brings us near. You will not condemn us—for Your dear Son died in our place. You will not mark the mountains upon mountains of our sins—for the Savior has removed them all. His precious blood has washed out every crimson stain! His beauteous righteousness, covers all our deformities!

O God, our God, we bid farewell, then, to this year, clinging to His cross, sheltered by His side, hidden in His wounds, cleansed in His blood, covered by His spotless robe, beautified in His salvation. Thus we conclude our last united prayer, blessing You for Jesus Christ. All honor, and glory, and might, and majesty, and dominion, be unto You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God of our salvation, now, henceforth, and ever. Amen.

FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR

MORNING.

We are permitted to see the dawn of another year. Gracious Lord God, we assemble to commence it with You. Length of days is no profit to us—except they are passed in Your presence, in Your service, to Your glory. Therefore as a family we bend the knee, and implore, for Christ's sake, that Your grace may precede and follow us, may guide and sustain us, may sanctify and aid us, through every hour which Your goodness may grant to us.

Grant that we may not be for one moment apart from You. May we set You always before us. Be ever on our right hand—so shall we not be moved. Send Your Holy Spirit to supply our every

thought, to speak in our every word, to direct our every step, to act in our every act, to prosper our every work, and to build us up in our most holy faith. May we live each day with eternity extended before our eyes, viewing all things in its mirror, and ever listening for the chariot-wheels of Your returning Son, for the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God.

Teach us ever to bear in mind that we are not our own. The precious blood of Jesus has redeemed us as Your special possession. Your Holy Spirit has called us to Your free yoke. We have been made willing in the day of Your power. Holy vows bind us to Your service. Here again we renew our vows. Here again we consecrate ourselves to You. Here again we present our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice, on Christ our altar.

We profess that it is our one desire to acquaint ourselves with You, to show forth Your praise, to testify our love, to advance Your kingdom. Fervent gratitude constrains us. Standing on the rock of salvation, arrayed in the robes of righteousness, our hearts throb to testify that we are a people who delight to honor You.

Open our eyes to see our appointed work, and with all steadfastness of resolve to do it. May we never be without some definite plan to promote the good of others, and the glory of Your name. Thus may we launch our barks on the unknown waters of this year, with Christ seated at the helm. And may Your Spirit fill the sails with gales which waft towards heaven.

Many are now entering on their last year on earth. It may be so with some or all of us. May we always be ready with our loins tightly girt, and our lamps brightly burning. If our descending Lord shall knock—may we open unto Him immediately. If death shall come—may we have nothing then to do but joyfully to die!

Out of the fullness of our hearts, we would this morning make large intercessions. Where Your Spirit dwells there is vast liberty of soul. We pray, then, for all the tribes of man scattered throughout the world. May this be a year of superabounding blessing to them. Wherever Your sun shall shine—may the Sun of righteousness arise with healing on His wings. Wherever Your dew shall fall—may showers of grace descend. Distribute far and wide—holy missionaries to tell of Jesus, and salvation through His cross. May the bright tidings dispel the night of sin. May Satan flee before the all-conquering Gospel.

Grant that this year may surpass all others in blessings to our own beloved land. We pray for all sorts and conditions in our midst. We remember with earnest cry Your servant whom You have raised to be our Queen. May Your grace ever sanctify her. May Your comforts ever cheer her. May Your wisdom ever teach her. May Your right hand ever uphold her. Be this year, the Counselor in all the councils of the nation. Preside as the Judge in all our courts. Maintain peace and prosperity and happy contentment among all classes. May the whole fabric of society be cemented by one feeling of harmony. May hearts yearn for mutual and unbounded good. May Your wisdom and knowledge be the stability of our times; and the fear of the Lord our treasure. May righteousness exalt our land, and may all people be constrained to testify that the Lord Almighty is truly with us, and that His glory is great in our midst.

Multiply the triumphs of Your holy Word this year. May multitudes yield to its converting and sanctifying power. Be with Your ministering servants in every sermon and in every visit. Be the teacher in our schools, the healer in our hospitals, and our universal benefactor.

Thus we commend ourselves and all our concerns, and all the world and all its interests—to Your gracious care. Surely You who have not spared Your own Son—but have freely given Him up for us all, will with Him also freely give us all things for time and for eternity. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS

MORNING.

Heavenly Father, deepen in us this day contrition for our vileness, as miserable sinners, in Your sight. We cloak not our wretchedness. Our lips are ready to confess—but our hearts are slow to feel, and our feet are reluctant to amend our ways. We bring our hard hearts unto You. Break them by Your Spirit—and then bind them up by Your grace. Wound them to the core—and then pour in the Gospel-balm.

Such is the blindness of our fallen nature—that we cannot see sin's deformity, except as You are pleased to unmask it. Such is our deadness—that we cannot hate it, except as You shall graciously implant abhorrence. Such is our infirmity—that we cannot flee it, except as Your strength enables. Conscious of all inability, we come to You for light, for help, for strength, for blessing.

We know that sin is the transgression of Your righteous law, and that the commandment is spiritual and exceeding broad. Who can tell then how oft he offends? But sins without number stare us in the face. They are piled as mountain upon mountain. Their height reaches unto the heavens! But their full extent is open only to Your omniscient eye. The burden of our known transgressions weighs us to the dust. But the burden is light, compared to the mass which the scales of Your justice hold. We see but little, because our light is partial and our sight is dim. How must we appear, as seen of You, before whom the very heavens are not clean! You charge Your holy angels with folly. What must be Your estimate of our polluted souls! Humbled for what we see and feel; fearful for what is known only unto You, we meekly cry, "Pardon all our sins—for Jesus' sake!"

We bewail too the mighty aggravations of our felt guilt. How good beyond all thought, have You been to us! How vile are our ungrateful returns! All the faculties, so mercifully bestowed upon us, have been used as weapons of revolt against the gracious Giver. As rebels, we have misused the strength which You have supplied, and the weapons which You have prepared. How often have we yielded our members as instruments of iniquity unto iniquity. Our abilities of mind and body have rendered traitorous service to the foul adversary of Your kingdom. Willful ingratitude darkens our whole lives. We sink low in shame. We cry, "God be merciful to us miserable sinners!"

We bewail our cruel folly. We know that the way of transgressors is hard—that evil paths are surely wretched paths—that departure from You, the source of all joy and peace, is downfall into all distress. Still how often without resistance, have we floated down the stream of evil! We confess our madness. Oh! pity us, pardon us, we beg You!

We see the purity and beauty of Your perfect law—the happiness of those in whose hearts it reigns—the calm dignity of the walk to which it calls—yet we daily violate its precepts, and tread them beneath contemptuous feet. Your loving Spirit strives within us. He warns us in the pages of

Your sacred Word. He speaks to us in startling providences. He allures us by His secret whispers. How often do we choose rather the devices and desires of our own hearts! How often do we impiously resist, and vex, and grieve Him! How often do we provoke Him to abandon us forever! Conscience, too, has loudly rebuked, and in our recklessness we have stifled its faithful dictates. For all these sins we mourn before You, most merciful and longsuffering Father. We smite upon our breasts, as utterly unworthy of the least of Your mighty and unfathomable mercies. Hear now our cry, and work in us by the omnipotence of Your Holy Spirit, more profound and abiding repentance. Give us more and more of that godly grief, which ever fears and trembles, and yet ever trusts and loves—which is ever watchful and prayerful, and yet is ever confident and hopeful. May the remembrance of the sad past—quicken us to walk in entire newness of life. Grant that through the tears of penitence, we may see more clearly the brightness and the glories of the saving Cross.

Oh! blessed Jesus, we flee to You. We cling to You. Our countless iniquities condemn us—but You will wash them all away! Our tears of penitence cannot remove one blot. But Your blood has all cleansing merit. Our prayers can earn no pardon. But Your mercy says, "Your sins which are many—are all forgiven!" The more we loathe ourselves, the more we love You. Our vile demerits—commend Your glorious worth. Lost in ourselves—we live in You. Trusting in You, we shall never be confounded! Hear us, bless us, for Your love's sake. Amen.

EVENING.

"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

Blessed Jesus, we kneel before Your cross, humbly praying that, through Your Spirit, power may come forth from it to show us more deeply the heinousness of our sin. We see You laden with our iniquities. What must iniquity be—if there can be no pardon except You shall thus expire! We see the outgoing of the severity of divine wrath. What must that evil be—which thus requires it! In that crown of thorns, in those pierced hands and feet, in those bleeding wounds, in that bruised frame, in that dying cry—we are taught the enormity of our guilt. We know that Your blood to be the blood of God. Its worth is infinite. Its precious value exceeds all thought. Infinite therefore must be the evil—for which it is the only ransom. Exceeding all thought—must be the guilt which requires such price! In Your death—we see the tremendous guilt of our sins. We see it, and we cast ourselves in the lowliest humility before You.

Sin is the malady which so sorely afflicts us. It cleaves to us as our very skin! It is born in our birth. It lives in our lives. It adheres to us when we lie down to die. It follows us as our very shadow! It intermingles in our every thought. When we go forth—it is by our side. When we come in—it still accompanies us. We are tied and bound by its enslaving chain! At Your cross—we are taught how terrible is the evil of sin. We see how unutterable is the wrath which it so righteously deserves. Laden with our mountains of sins, we especially come at this time to You for refuge.

Looking unto You, and striving to estimate more and more the riches of redeeming grace, we loathe and abhor ourselves as fully sin-soiled and polluted. We marvel that the sun consents to give us light—the air to supply breath—the earth to bear our tread—the fruit nourish us—Your

creatures to subserve our use. Through us the whole creation groans and travails. Justly might all things, animate and inanimate, rise in abhorrence of us!

How much more do we marvel, precious Jesus—that Your compassionate heart yearned over us—that Your love hastened to our rescue—that You endured all our curse, and all our guilt. We bless You—while we hide our heads in deepest shame!

Gracious Savior, may the sight of Your unutterable sufferings excite in us due detestation of this monster! Oh, forbid it, that we should ever dally with that foe—which brought You to such anguish. Forbid it, that we should fondle in our breasts—that viper which stung You to death! Forbid it that we should lightly regard that sin, which kindled the flames of hell, from which nothing but Your dying love could snatch us! May we hate it with unmitigable hate! May we abhor it with abhorrence—only exceeded by the infinite love with which we desire infinitely to love You, our adorable Savior! But while we pray that henceforth we may increasingly abominate all evil—we know that without Your grace, that our traitorous heart will look treacherously back. It has deceived us. It has betrayed us. Bind it now, more closely to Yourself. Never allow it to stray.

You are our only Redeemer. You are our only help. Repentance, and strength, and pardon are the free gifts of Your grace. We adore You that You are exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Your people and forgiveness of sins. Fill us, we beg You, with godly sorrow—even that sorrow which works repentance to salvation not to be repented of. From the depths of our humiliation we cry aloud to the heights of Your mercy. We call upon You in the full assurance of faith. Having died to deliver us from the punishment of our sins, we trust You by Your life to deliver us from their power.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life!" Psalms 139:23-24 Have mercy on all near and dear to us—on all who intercede for us—on all who ask our intercession. Grant that we may meekly walk together in the lowest valley of humiliation because we are sinners. Grant that we may rejoice together in You as all our hope and all our desire. Grant that we may journey together in much tenderness of conscience, because so prone to evil. Grant that at last we may triumph gloriously as heirs of Your great salvation. Hear us, we earnestly beseech You. Amen.

Christ's Death

MORNING.

Holy Father, we worship You in Your great name of 'Love'. The heavens, the earth, and all that are therein, proclaim Your wondrous goodness. But it shines forth in surpassing luster at Calvary's stupendous scene. We desire to adore You. Enlarge our hearts. Pour warmth into our affections. Open our lips. Supply words. And in Your mercy condescend to hear the praises which we devoutly utter. At the cross we see Your heavenly grace removing the tremendous load of our iniquities from us—and heaping them all on Your beloved Son. We see Him standing as a transgressor in our place. We see Him, who knew no sin, made sin for us. We see Him, the all-holy, accounted as a curse. What shall we say unto You, O God of all grace? We can only fall low and cry, "We bless You! We adore You!"

We see Your justice leading the Spotless Lamb to the slaughter, and rigorously demanding the full payment of all our debt. The avenging sword enters into His very heart! The stream of sin-atonement blood flows. Full recompense is meted out. Exceeding satisfaction is made. Justice can ask no more. Charges against us are all obliterated. The debt-book is cancelled. If our sins are searched for, they cannot now be found! For the gift of Your Son as our substitute—for the death of Your Son as our ransom—we bless You; we adore You.

We hear the thunder of Your outraged law. We behold the gathering of the unsparing storm. But at Calvary it all breaks on the head of Him who is accounted the disobedient one for us. The curse descends in all its horrors. He absorbs the whole. We gaze—the darkness passes away. All heaven's smiles beam brightly over us. O our God, we bless You and adore.

We behold, and He is devoted to all anguish—that we may be inheritors of all joy. He is cast off—that we may be brought near. He is treated as an enemy—that we may be welcomed as friends. He is deserted—that we may be received to everlasting favor. He is surrendered to hell's worst—that we may attain heaven's best. He is stripped—that we may be clothed. He is wounded—that we may be healed. He thirsts—that we may drink of the water of life. He is in darkness—that we may rejoice in the glories of eternal day. He weeps—that all tears may be forever wiped from our eyes. He groans—that we may sing an endless song. He endures all pain—that we may rejoice in unfading health. He wears a crown of thorns—that we may receive a crown of glory. He bows His head in death—that we may lift up our heads in heaven. He bears all reproach—that we may receive all welcome. He is tormented—that we may be comforted. He is made all shame—that we may inherit all glory. His eyes are dark in death—that our eyes may gaze on unclouded brightness. He dies—that we may escape the second death, and live for evermore. O gracious Father, thus You spare not Your only begotten Son, that You may spare us. All this transfer Your love designed and has achieved. We bless You; we adore.

Heavenly Father, enable us to show forth Your praise, not only by the fruit of our lips—but also in the fruit of our lives. Shall we see all our enemies crushed—Satan baffled, defeated, and destroyed; all our sins cast behind Your back—all buried in the ocean of reconciling blood; hell's gates closed—heaven's portals thrown widely open, and not exult in joy unspeakable and full of glory? Oh that every breath could be ecstatic praise, and every step be buoyant in delight!

Help us to go on our way rejoicing. Infinite attributes were outraged—but infinite atonement is made. Infinite punishment was due, infinite punishment has been endured. Our disease was incurable by our own resources—but all is healed in the saving wounds of Jesus!

We pray that the glad tidings of this glorious and finished work may be this day loudly and universally proclaimed. Jesus declares that, being lifted up, He will draw all men unto Himself. He has been lifted up on the cross, a spectacle to angels and to men. May He be lifted up in every pulpit. May multitudes flock to Him—as doves to their windows. May preachers know nothing among their flocks—but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. May their message be fragrant in His blood.

Go forth, O conquering Spirit, and show that the cross is mighty to subdue and comfort. Prove that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. Glory be to Your great love, Father. Son, and Holy Spirit! Amen.

Christ's Death

EVENING.

O Jesus, O You whom our souls love, give ear, we beg You, to our evening-worship. The very stones would cry out, if we would fail to love You, who has so loved us. Greater love has no man than this—that a man should lay down his life for his friends. But You have laid down Your life for us, when we were enemies, estranged by nature, and hateful by wicked works!

We bless You for Your cross. Love shines brightly inscribed above it. We clasp the record to our souls. And knowing that You are the same yesterday and today and forever, we believe that You love us now, and will love us to the end.

Thus we come and present our hearts as a willing thank-offering. Accept them, we beseech You. Come in and occupy them wholly. Cast out every opposing feeling. Reign supreme. Let no rival passion interpose. Live in all our affections. Move in their every pulse.

We have this day been standing in spirit beside Your cross. Now let our concluding worship as a family give united adoration. The sight constrains us to the deepest humility. Our vile iniquity—is the cause of Your shame. We cannot fathom the sins which plunged You into such depths of unutterable woe! We cannot estimate the burden of wrath which thus crushed You. We cannot deny that the offences which stain us are evils of infinite malignity, since nothing but Your blood, O You who are Jehovah's fellow, could wash away their guilty stains. As transgressors, we abhor ourselves before You.

While thus we sink into lowliest abasement, we hear Your reviving cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" The voice is heard in heaven. The Father always hears You. The prayer is accepted. You can not plead in vain. Forgiveness is sealed. Forgiveness is ours. Our sins and our iniquities will be remembered no more. The voice of the blood outcries the voice of our condemning offences. We rejoice in the comfort that we may this night lie down in peace, nothing doubting that through Your cross—eternal pardon is our portion!

Blessed Savior, continue, we beseech You, this Your cry in our behalf. Now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, plead Your atoning sacrifice. While we live—we go astray. Each moment testifies that when we would do good—that evil is present with us. Ever extend for us Your wounded hands. Ever renew the prevailing intercession, "Father, forgive them!"

Before we part this night, we would again drink in the wondrous tidings, "It is finished!" Increase our faith to grasp the full extent of the mighty word. May we live with it ever echoing in our ears. May we take it as the strong staff to stay our pilgrim steps. May the precious cordial ever cheer our hearts. May it give us boldness in every hour of trial and temptation. May it drive all desponding fears away.

"It is finished!" What more can we desire? "It is finished!" Of what, then, shall we be afraid? Salvation is finished to the uttermost. We adore You, O blessed Jesus. Heaven and earth shall pass away—but Your glorious work forever stands immovable. Your voice is the truth of God. Your voice declares it.

We mourn the wretchedness of our best services. They are indeed most vile. But no worth of ours is needed to complete what You have infinitely completed. If all holiness were ours, it could bring no addition to Your perfect achievement. Neither can our many sins impair it. Shall we not adore You, O You all-glorious Savior! We do adore You from our inmost souls. But though our doings can add nothing to the finished fabric of Your salvation, we burn with desire by our lives to testify our gratitude. Our hearts throb to show forth Your praise, and to advance Your glory. But we can do nothing without Your Spirit. You must work in us to will and to do. We beg You to put forth Your mighty power to help us. Sanctify us wholly, body, soul, and spirit. Oh! that we might be holy, harmless, undefiled. Oh! that we might walk in purity and love. May we live as the purchased possession of Your blood—the bride whom You have espoused—the partners of Your throne. May we be transformed into Your image. As we gaze on You—may we be changed into Your likeness from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our Lord. Surely You who have loved us unto death, will not deny these earnest petitions of our lips! Jesus, hear, answer, bless! And all glory be to You, now and forever. Amen.

Christ's Resurrection

MORNING.

Heavenly Father, we come together this morning to uplift the voice of thanksgiving. We rejoice before You in the strength of our salvation. Great was the joy of Israel's sons—when they saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. Far greater is the joy of our souls—when we see all our foes crushed in the dust.

O God of peace, You have brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Our hearts would sing aloud Your praise. Glory be to You for evermore!

Jesus strides forth from the tomb, conqueror of death and hell and all opposing might. He bursts the bands. He tramples down all powers of darkness. He shows Himself alive by many infallible proofs. We thank You. Glory be to You, O God most high!

Open our eyes by Your Holy Spirit to see the glories of this grand achievement. May we read in it the full triumph of Your redeemed. May we drink deeply of the streams of its comfort. May we clothe ourselves in the garments of completed salvation.

Jesus lives—who was dead. He is alive for evermore. The gracious surety, who was apprehended for the payment of our debt, comes forth from the prison-house of the grave—free and discharged. Show us herein the proof that His vicarious payment is accepted, that the claims of justice are all satisfied, that no charge remains against us. Teach us plainly in this fact that the devil's scepter is shattered, and his wrongful throne leveled. He held Jesus for a little space. He put forth all his strength to detain Him. But vain were his uttermost efforts. The conqueror shouts, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live! Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever!"

Holy Father, may we be begotten again by the Spirit unto a lively hope by this resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He has purchased a priceless inheritance for His children. It pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay! It is reserved in heaven for those who are kept

by Your mighty power through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Give us the assurance that in Him—we died; in Him—we endured all punishment; in Him—we made full atonement; and in Him we rise again. Give us to know that in His life—we live; in His victory—we are victorious; in His triumphs—we triumph; in His glory—we shall be glorified. Do not allow the fear of death to bring us into bondage. Jesus has destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. He has delivered us from death's chains. He has abolished this last enemy. Give us grace, then, to raise the anticipating shout, "O grave, where is your victory! O death, where is your sting!"

Help us to live as truly one with our risen Lord. May we seek those things which are above. May we set our affections no more on things below, knowing that we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. May we mortify our members which are on earth, constantly looking for the appearing of the great God and our Savior, who will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

O You Holy Spirit, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead—dwell within us, we beg You, in all Your reviving fullness. Quicken us to liveliness in all our holy services. May we feel that because He lives—we live also. We know that Christ being raised from the dead—dies no more. In that He died, He died unto sin once—but in that He lives, He lives unto God. So may we in Him die unto all sin, and in Him live a resurrection-life of righteousness and true holiness. Be with all the faithful ambassadors who are going forth to preach Jesus and the resurrection. Open their mouths that they may speak with all boldness, realizing the glory of their grand message. And may multitudes, now dead in trespasses and sins, and imprisoned in the grave of iniquity, awaken at their call, and arise from the dead and receive life from Christ! Thus may the tidings of the resurrection achieve grand victories this day. We ask all for the sake of Him who died, and revived, and rose again, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christ's Resurrection

EVENING.

O mighty Savior, true and eternal God, this day we have been looking unto You as our living Head. Now again, before we separate, we would lift up our eyes. Meet us in all Your grace, as the author of complete salvation. Visit us in all the brightness of Your reviving glory. May we know more and more—the power of this Your resurrection. By its full belief, may we be raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. In it may we receive assurance that our bodies too shall rise again. In spirit we have this day searched the sepulcher, and are certified that You are not there—but are risen. We have heard the Father's welcome, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten You!" It has been our humble desire to joy in Your joy, to glory in Your glory, and in our praises to crown You Lord of all. And now again we bless You and adore You. We thank You that for our sins—You have died. We thank You that for our justification, You are raised again. We bless You, that in You—we are complete.

How great was Your goodness in undertaking our redemption—in consenting to be made sin for us, and in encountering all our foes! How great was Your strength in enduring all the extremities of divine wrath, and taking away the load of all our iniquities! How great was Your love in manifesting

Yourself alive, that our every fear might vanish—our every doubt might be removed, and that we might know assuredly that Your sacrifice was accepted, and that the remission of our guilt was consummated.

Enable us to go forward during the remaining days of our earthly pilgrimage leaning on You our living Savior. Great indeed would have been our desolation, if we had not been cheered with evidence that death could not detain You. It is because You live—that grace lives within us. May Your life impart strength to us more and more. Be ever by our side. May the light of Your countenance be our joy and support. May the whispers of Your love be heavenly melody in our hearts. May our affections burn within us, while we contemplate Your glorious triumphs for us.

Baptize our souls in the rich consolations which flow from You as the resurrection and the life. Teach us the mighty power of the sure word, "Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us!"

Strengthen us to fight the good fight of faith, in happy knowledge that You have triumphed over all the powers of darkness. May we advance towards heaven, setting our feet on the necks of our enemies laid low by You. May we resist with Your high praises on our lips. As You have prevailed for us—so may we prevail in You. As You have revived for us—live now we beg You within us, and make our hearts Your chosen home!

O source of our life, manifest that You are a risen Lord, by working wonders among the children of men. Go forth conquering and to conquer. Claim Your people as Your own. Wrest them from the devil's cruel grasp. Bring them to the saving knowledge of Yourself. Show them Your hands and Your side. Reveal to them Your precious death and glorious resurrection. May it be seen throughout earth's length and breadth, that Your gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. May the beds to which we now retire remind us of our near graves. May we look towards them with tranquil smile, knowing that at Your voice our bodies too shall rise again. We close our united prayers, adoring You, that You have abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. For all Your work for us—we thank You. For all the joy, with which we rejoice in You—we thank You. For all our means of grace and hopes of glory—we thank You. Glory be to You, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior! Amen.

Christ's Ascension

MORNING.

We approach You, O our God, this morning, with especial praises on our lips. We would join the whole company of heaven in shouting, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lift up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" We laud and magnify Your holy name, that You have exalted Your only Son, Jesus Christ, with great triumph unto Your kingdom in heaven.

Expand our hearts, and cause them to overflow with the joys of the ascension. We bless You for the glorious contemplations to which we are now especially invited. May we draw near in spirit, and see our adorable Redeemer, who for us was lifted up upon the cross, now lifted up to the heaven of heavens. May we see Him who, as the Man of sorrows, was crowned with thorns—now as the Lord of life, crowned with all glory! What could be deeper than Your shame—more bitter

than Your agony—more cruel than Your death! What can be higher than Your exaltation—more triumphant than Your return, more glorious than Your life!

Quicken our faith to see the majestic ascent—the hosts of attending angels—the welcome at the portals of heaven. Enable us with open eyes to gaze on the triumphant entrance, and mark all the enemies of our salvation dragged as captives, fast bound to the victorious wheels. Open our ears to drink in Your words assigning the seat to Him, "Sit on my right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool!" May we gaze on Him—as invested with all authority and power, receiving the government upon His shoulders, and taking the scepter of mediatorial rule.

O blessed day! Happy ascension! We adore You, our Lord and our King, living and reigning to consummate our full salvation. We rejoice to see You, in our nature, seated on Your throne on high. What strength to our faith! What delight to our hearts! What rapture to our souls! You ever live to make intercession for us! Our prayers, then, will be ever heard. May we pray with more undoubting confidence. Our praises will be ever welcomed. May we praise You with redoubled warmth. Daily, hourly do we sin. But our sins are all pardoned; for we have an Advocate in the courts above, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He presents the unanswerable plea of His death. He extends His wounded hands. The hands which were pierced—are the hands which pour down gifts. He withheld not Himself. What, then, can He keep back! We now have assurance, that we shall be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

Blessed Jesus, we acknowledge before all heaven and all earth, that You could not do more for us. You came down from heaven to redeem us. You are ascended that we too should ascend. Your death is our life. Your resurrection is our justification. Your ascension is our hope. Your return will be our eternal triumph.

Holy Father, give wings to our adoring love, that we may also in heart and mind mount to the heaven of heavens, and ever live with Jesus, our exalted Lord. He is our treasure. He is to us the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One! Where our treasure is, where our beloved is, grant that there our affections may be also riveted. While the head is in perfect purity, do not allow the members to grovel in the filth and follies of this sin-soiled earth. While the Bridegroom reigns in glory, do not allow the bride to trifle with this world's polluted pleasures!

O Lord, our exalted King, the heavens have received You until the times of restitution of all things. Oh when will it be! Hasten, we pray, the blissful day. The groaning earth, travailing in bondage, cries, "Come!" The Spirit and the bride cry, "Come!" We this day unite in the fervent cry, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!" But while Your chariot-wheels delay, give us more and more of the joy and strength of Your presence. May we live in spirit with You until we see Your sign in the heavens, and raise the shout, "Lo! this is our God—we have waited for Him, and He will save us! This is the Lord—we have waited for Him; we will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation!" Amen.

Pentecost

MORNING.

Heavenly Father, we beg You by the coming of the Holy Spirit, give ear unto our morning cry. We earnestly beseech You, that we may be very temples of His perpetual indwelling, and that His

graces may wholly replenish our souls. As the sun is full of light, as the ocean is full of drops, as the heavens are full of glory—so may we be filled with His presence!

Vain are all Your purposes of love, vain is the redemption purchased by Jesus, except the Holy Spirit shall work within us. Here then we present our longing hearts to You. It is our desire that they may be His abode forever.

We beseech You that the Holy Spirit may enter in—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding—the Spirit of counsel and might—the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and may He make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.

Oh that we might be entirely regenerated by His power—quickened unto newness of life—created anew after God in righteousness and true holiness.

We know that by nature—we are dead in trespasses and sins. We owe it wholly to His mighty love, if we are begotten again to spiritual existence, and have received eyes to see Jesus in the glories of redemption. It is His free gift if we discern the realities of the unseen and eternal world. If too our ears have been opened to hear the heavenly call, and to respond, "It is the voice of our Beloved!" If our hearts have been warmed with love and throb with adoration—if our feet run with delight in the narrow way of life, it is because we have been visited with His almighty and sovereign grace.

We bring the tribute of devout thanksgiving. But we thirst for more! We supplicate for more. We are not limited in You, O You great and glorious Jehovah. To fill us to the overflowing would not diminish Your inexhaustible riches. Streams ever descending to us would leave Your fountain unimpaired! Give us, then, give us, we beg You, more, much more, of the influence of Your Holy Spirit. He was given without measure to the Head. May He be given without measure to the members of the mystic body.

We bewail our coldness, our poverty, our empty hearts, our selfish desires, our languid services, our prayerless prayers, our praiseless praises. How different are we—from what we desire to be! How different are we from what we might be! Come, Holy Spirit, Your sevenfold gifts impart. Do not allow us, we beg You, to grieve or to resist You. We adore You as almighty God. Put forth, then, the strength of Your omnipotence. Expel every rebellious lust. Take Your holy seat on the throne within us. Reign supreme. Claim us and keep us as Your own forever.

Especially be our teacher. It is Your province to lead us into all truth. We supplicate Your unction, that we may know all things needful for life and godliness.

We bless You for Your holy Scriptures. We receive each word as given directly by Your inspiration. In Your light may we see light. Shine upon the sacred page. Instruct us in the glorious meaning. Write the transforming gospel on our hearts. Mold us in the Bible mold. Make us ever redolent of the Bible truth.

Come too, we implore You, as our comforter. Many are our troubles from without and from within. We often mourn in our prayers and are vexed. We find that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. But give us the joy of Your presence. Cheer us by revelations of Jesus. Keep the glories of the end before us, and we shall endure, rejoicing in Your holy support.

Above all, sanctify us wholly, body, soul, and spirit. May every thought, and word, and work be consecrated to the glory of our God. May it be seen in us that You do work, and none can hinder You; and that You are fitting a people for the kingdom of heaven.

Arise in our behalf. Come forth to our help. Put forth Your strength to bless and save us. And to Your great name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise! Amen.

Pentecost

EVENING.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, whose tender love surpasses thought, we desire to close this day in united praise for all Your goodness. Especially we thank You for adding to all Your blessings—the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. By Him we adore You in the name of Jesus. By Him through Jesus we ascribe all glory unto Your holy name. We bless You for Him—the author and giver of light and life. May His work be more enlightening, more enlivening in our hearts.

We delight in the records of His gracious power. Your earliest word reveals His wondrous agency. When the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep—Your Spirit moved upon the face of the waters. Beauty and order sprang out of unsightly confusion. Oh, that He would now move upon the face of this sin-soiled, this disordered world! Then loveliness would brightly shine, and holiness would wave its peaceful wand, and the spiritual desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose, and the fruits of righteousness would spring up and flourish and abound! Holy Father, cause Your Spirit to introduce a new creation to the praise of the glory of Your grace.

We mark His manifestation to the infant Church. In spirit we hear a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. We see the descent of tongues like as of fire. We hear the gospel preached to men of every nation. We conclude that it is Your will, that the testimony of Jesus should have free course and be glorified. But darkness still shrouds the earth. Multitudes are perishing for lack of knowledge. The feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish peace—are not beautifully seen upon the distant mountains. Gracious Father, send forth Your Holy Spirit to raise up a noble army of faithful messengers. Cause Him to fill their hearts with the love of Your dear Son; to brace them with indomitable zeal; to give them burning words, and courage which nothing can subdue. May He give the Word and bless the Word, and from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, may Your name shall be great among men; and in every place incense shall be offered unto You and a pure offering. Zeal for Your glory constrains us. We beseech You that Your Spirit may hasten the blessed day.

We humbly put You in remembrance, that these are the days of the ministry of the Spirit. We sigh that His presence may be more deeply and more widely felt. We pray especially that our hearts may be His abiding home. May He dwell in us, and move in us, and guide our every thought, and direct our every step, and speak in our every word. May we be wholly occupied by the indwelling God. May our godly and godlike life, evidence the mainspring of our inner man.

We pray that He may entirely fill every preacher and every teacher. May no sound be heard from any pulpit but as suggested by His revealing light. May He be present in every school, and sit in every teacher's chair, and supply the whole instruction.

We pray, too, that His omnipotent power may open hearts to receive the pure testimony. May He cause it to take deep root unto salvation. Unless He arises to our help—all our efforts are but as a tinkling cymbal. Holy Father, hear our cry, and make Your ministering servants effectual instruments in His glorious hands.

We would bring before You the Gospel societies which You have been pleased to raise up. May Your Spirit direct all their counsels, suggest all their plans, give success to all their operations. May He make them wholly spiritual. Thus may they seek nothing but Your glory, and attempt nothing but in meek dependence on Your power. Sanctify the projects which they shall devise, and the means which they shall use.

Thus we lie low before You, praying for Pentecostal blessings. You have given Your dear Son. We thank You. You have promised Your Holy Spirit. We beseech You—do as You have said. Let not our hard hearts resist Him. Let not our ingratitude quench His love. May He magnify His glory by being glorified in us. We earnestly pray in filial confidence, pleading the name and work of Jesus Christ. Amen. The Trinity

MORNING.

We come together this morning to ascribe glory unto You, O heavenly Father; glory unto You, O blessed Jesus; glory unto You, O holy and eternal Spirit. We humbly worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, the God of our salvation. We prostrate ourselves in the deepest reverence before the revelation of this wondrous truth. We seek not curiously to pry into the mystery. But we receive it with entire faith—because Your Word declares it.

We adore You, O Father, as God and Lord. We adore You, O Jesus, as God and Lord. We adore You, O Holy Spirit, as God and Lord. And yet we adore not three Gods or three Lords—but one God and one Lord. But especially we adore You for gracious concurrence in bringing us poor sinners to Your saving knowledge and Your kingdom. O Father, You have chosen and loved us, and sent Your Son to achieve our uttermost redemption. O Jesus, You have loved us; and have assumed our nature, and have shed Your blood, to wash out all our sins; and have wrought out perfect righteousness to cover all our unworthiness. O Holy Spirit, You have loved us, and have entered our dead hearts, implanting spiritual life, and revealing to us the glorious work of Jesus.

Three persons, one God—we bless and praise You for love so unmerited, so unspeakable, so wondrous, so mighty to raise us from the misery of the lost, and to exalt us to the bliss and glory of the saved!

O Father, we bless You that, in the plenitude of Your grace, You have given us to Your beloved Son to be—His spouse, His jewels, the sheep of His pasture, His portion forever. O Jesus, we bless You that, in the plenitude of Your grace, You have accepted us as Your own; that You have espoused us unto Yourself; that You have undertaken to sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the Word, and present us unto Yourself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Holy Spirit, we bless You that, in the plenitude of Your grace, You consent to inhabit our hearts, to subdue our stubbornness, to exhibit Jesus as all our salvation, to implant faith, to bring us unto Him, to make us one with Him forever. All thanks we give that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Father, we hear Your voice in Scripture testifying, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Jesus, we hear Your assurance, that if we open the door, You will come in to us, and will sup with us. Holy Spirit, we are taught that our bodies are the temples which You delight to sanctify and to fill.

We adore the wonders of Your condescending love. We marvel at the high privilege of the true believer. All heaven comes down to dwell within him. He has his abode in God, and God in him. We humbly believe it. Grant us to realize it to the full.

Merciful Father, we thank You that You are ever seated on a throne of grace, giving ear to our prayers. Jesus, we thank You that Your hands are ever extended to receive our feeble petitions, to perfume them with the rich fragrance of Your blood, and to present them as an acceptable offering. Holy Spirit, we thank You that You are ever willing to help our infirmities, to show us our need, to supply words, to strengthen us that we faint not in our supplications. Help us to see how wondrous is the exercise of faithful prayer. All heaven is concerned. In it the Triune Jehovah has employ.

We pray that this day we may be more deeply taught how high and heavenly is our calling; how grand and glorious are our privileges; how sure and bright are our hopes. May we walk worthy of You. May we duly ponder what manner of persons we ought to be—in all holy living and godliness. May we truly live as they who have been baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May we renounce all that You forbid. May we diligently follow all that You command. Thus may the blessing of the Father, the blessing of the Son, the blessing of the Holy Spirit—be our rich inheritance. Hear us, O our God, when this day we acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity; and, in the power of the divine Majesty, worship the Unity. Amen and Amen.

Communion Meditations

MORNING.

Heavenly Father, accept our thanksgivings for all the means of grace which Your mercy has provided. They are the joy and strength of our souls. We see in them Your loving purpose. It is Your will that spiritual life should flourish and abound within us. Help us by Your Holy Spirit to use them all duly, devoutly, gratefully, to Your praise and our exceeding profit! This day we would especially magnify Your goodness for the ordinance of the body and blood of our beloved Lord. Truly Your Word is fulfilled, that You will prepare for Your people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.

We confess that we are utterly unworthy to gather up the crumbs under Your table. How unworthy then are we to sit down as guests at this heavenly table. But we come not trusting in ourselves—but wholly relying on the merits of Your dear Son, and hiding all our unworthiness beneath the robe of His glorious righteousness. We hear the tender invitation. We marvel at the wondrous grace. We cannot hesitate. In faith and love we come. Give us a gracious welcome. Refresh and strengthen us with the rich bounties of this feast.

We draw near to behold marvelous things. By Your Spirit enliven our faith rightly to discern, duly to appreciate, spiritually to apprehend. Thus may we richly grow in grace.

We reverently look. Bread is broken. Wine is poured forth. Write deeply on our hearts, the precious meaning. Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified before us. In the broken bread we spiritually

see His broken body. In the poured out wine we spiritually see the shedding of His blood.

While we humbly gaze, may we anxiously ponder, "Why, blessed Jesus, why did You thus die?" May the precious answer sound through every part of our hearts and souls, "I die—that you may not die. I lay down My life—to purchase your life. I present Myself as a sin-offering to—expiate all your sins. My blood thus streams—to wash out all your guilt. The fountain is thus opened in My side—to cleanse you from all impurity. I thus endure your curse. I thus pay your debt. I thus rescue you from all condemnation. I thus satisfy divine justice for you!" See in these elements My body given unto the shame and sufferings of the cross for you.

Father, we know that this table is ordained to exhibit these precious truths. May we tightly grasp the breadth and length of this glorious purpose. May our faith expand, and strengthen, and grow mightily. May all fears and doubts be slain. May delighted assurance pervade us. May we truly believe, that full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, are forever made. May we glory more and more in Christ our everlasting salvation. But we are called to draw nearer yet. We hear the voice of our great Lord, "Eat, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" We gladly come forward to obey. We extend the hand. We take the bread. We receive the cup. We eat. We drink.

Thus we humbly testify before all heaven and before all earth, that we do personally and for ourselves, gladly, in faith, and reverence, and love, receive our blessed Jesus to be the life, the strength, the nourishment, the joy, the delight of our souls. We profess that we feed on Him and Him crucified, as all our hope, salvation, and desire.

Blessed Jesus, at Your table may all the benefits of Your cross and passion, may all the glories of Your accomplished redemption, be sealed to our souls. We do all that Your ordinance prescribes in remembrance of You.

We remember Your eternal love. We remember Your boundless grace. We remember Your infinite compassion. We remember Your agony and bloody sweat. We remember all that You have done for us. We remember Your call to this most hallowed ordinance. And we pray that You will remember us. As we participate, may we truly feel that we are one with You, and You are one with us. As the outward elements nourish our bodies, may Your indwelling presence invigorate and bless our souls. Thus feed us until we hunger no more. We look to the day when You, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, shall feed us and lead us unto living fountains of water! Hear. Answer. Amen.

Communion Meditations

EVENING.

O You Lord and Savior of our souls, in obedience to Your gracious calling, we have this day partaken of the holy bread, and drank the holy cup. We thank You that on the same night in which You were betrayed You did institute this holy ordinance, ever to exhibit Your dying love. We thank You that You have revealed that in it Your people shall show forth Your death until Your return. We thank You that the high privilege has been ours of thus gazing on You as making atonement for us on the cross.

Hear our prayer, that all the blessings of this sacred service may be sealed to our souls. May our faith be mightily revived, our hopes invigorated, our souls strengthened for more devoted work. Send richer and larger supplies of Your Holy Spirit, that we may keep constantly in devout remembrance, what solemn vows are ours, what high profession we have made. Increase our watchfulness. Stir up more vigorous diligence. Grant that all who see us may take knowledge of us—that we have been with Jesus. May conformity to His image be our conspicuous stamp. May it be seen in us that Your ordinances are mighty means of grace; that You do indeed visit the souls of all who partake in faith; that Your presence is truly granted to their longing hearts; and that the flame of adoring love is largely brightened.

Help us in our future days, if future days are ours—to ponder the holy spectacle of this sacred rite. We have seen the greatness of the price whereby You have redeemed us from the torments of the lost, from the vengeance due unto our sins, and from the curse of the infracted law. May we never forget that we are not our own—but that we are bought by Your most precious blood. May we ever glorify You in our bodies and in our spirits, which are Yours. By the clear eye of faith—we have looked to You, sealing us unto the great day of redemption. We have received the assurance of pardon, of adoption, of joint-heirship with You, of heaven, of eternal life, and of participation in all the glory which the Father gave to You. May we live henceforth as those who have thus received the pledge of the everlasting covenant. Forbid it that the follies, the trifles, the baubles of this polluted world, should occupy our minds or captivate our affections. May our walk be high and heavenly, even as our pledged inheritance.

We have this day renewed a most solemn covenant. Feeding on the memorials of Your broken body, we have avouched God to be our God, and we have bound ourselves to serve Him in faithfulness, sincerity, and truth all the days of our lives. As Your obedient children, may we fashion ourselves no more after the course of this evil world—but according to the strictest rules of Your blessed Word. We know that all Your promises You will surely keep and perform. May all our promises to You be also kept inviolate.

We have this day, looking to the cross, bewailed our hateful sins. We have confessed their number, their magnitude, their aggravations. We have testified that the remembrance is grievous, and that the burden is intolerable. Arm us with holy resolve to fight more valiantly against them, and never to look back to the paths which we have so solemnly forsaken.

We know that our walk must still be amid the wily snares and constant assaults of the devil. His hatred is most keen against those who avow themselves to be Yours. After Your most holy baptism, he approached You with his deadliest arts. May we be on our guard. As You conquered, so may we conquer—using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Blessed Lord, hear our sacred prayer. Draw nearer, oh, draw nearer to us. Enable us to walk worthy of You—Your love—Your death—Your promises. May we live answerably to all our pledges and our vows.

Preserve us as Your portion, Your spouse, Your treasure. And unto You, who are able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of Your glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SICKNESS

We bring before You, merciful Father, in the arms of our faith, that beloved member of our household on whom You have been pleased to lay the hand of sickness. In their chastening—we are chastened. In their sufferings—we suffer. Give us tender sympathy—to watch and to alleviate. In the sick chamber—may we be gentleness and love. Grant Your blessing to all the remedies, which, trusting in You, we use. If it is Your gracious will, arrest the malady, and may the voice of health and gladness again gladden our dwelling. Especially give patience in all pain and languor, and may the sufferer humbly bless Your heavenly will, knowing that You do all things well.

SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

Hear us in behalf of our beloved one, whom we humbly surrender unto You. We read in the increasing malady, Your sovereign will to take whom You will, to Yourself. We meekly cry, "May Your will be done!" We bless You for all Your goodness to our beloved one, during the days of earthly pilgrimage. Draw nearer now when heart and strength fail. May Your last mercies upon earth be Your richest. Do not allow Satan to molest. Whisper sweet peace to the departing spirit. May Your rod and Your staff comfort, and grant an abundant entrance into Your heavenly kingdom.

DEATH In this hour of grievous trial and affliction—we flee unto You, our God. You gave—we thank You. You have taken away—give us grace to bless Your holy name. In this death may we see the fruit of sin, and may we loathe it with deeper hatred.

Help us to remember that Jesus has abolished death, and may we love Him more and more. May we hear the rod, and You who has appointed it. Write deeply on our hearts the lessons which this solemn event is loud to teach. Send Your Spirit to search our inmost souls, and to sever us from every evil way. May the loss for which we weep be our everlasting gain.

BURIAL This day we bear the remains of our beloved one to the grave. Blessed Jesus, if we weep, we would remember that at the grave You shed tears of sympathy. We would remember too that in the grave for our salvation, You have lain. But You rose again. We know, therefore, that this our our beloved one shall rise too. But oh, how changed! Therefore, while we sorrow, we rejoice and bless You. Fill up, we beg You, the vacancy in our hearts by granting more of Your comforting presence. May we forget the sorrow of this day—in the glories of the bright future.

RECOVERY

We believe that all Your dealings towards us are love in Christ our Lord. Your faithful Word declares that You kill, and make alive; You bring down to the grave, and bring up. Your Word is truth. We cried unto You in behalf of one whom sickness had laid low. But sickness is gone, and health again makes glad. We thank and bless You. Grant that the strength renewed may be wholly consecrated to Your service. May lengthened days be lengthened praise to You. In the restored life of one so dear to us, may we see Your tender love. May our devoted lives render due praise. May we adore You more as a God who answers prayer, and who in the midst of judgments remembers mercy.

DOMESTIC ANXIETY

O Our God, it is our high privilege to cast all our cares upon You—for You care for us. You have sent Your dear Son to bear not only all our sins—but all our burdens too. You know the trouble which now weighs down our hearts. We spread it before You. Give us grace to bear it with humble submission to Your sovereign will. Supply us with wisdom to endure this trial, so that our souls may prosper. May it work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Allow no murmurings or impatience to disgrace our heavenly calling. Enable us to keep looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. If there is bitterness in the cup—may we drink it without repining. If there is perplexity in our walk—may we seek Your guidance, believing that all things shall work together for our good.

JOURNEY

Guard, we beg You, all who travel this day by land or by water. Especially hear us for those whom kindred or friendship bind to us. Preserve them from all the perils of the way. May Your protecting wings be spread around them. May the pillar of Your presence precede. May Your mercies surround and follow them. Grant that every journey may remind us that we tread this earth as strangers and pilgrims. May we keep our loins girt, our lamps burning, our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, ever ready to take our last step below.

RETURN TO HOME The return in safety, this day, of the beloved members of our household calls for especial praise. O God, You have been with them in their going forth and coming in. From every danger You have been pleased to screen them. Many accidents might have imperiled or destroyed their lives, or filled them with disabling pains. Sorrow might now have been our bitter cup. But with joy we welcome them as preserved by Your watchful care. Accept the thanks which we devoutly bring. May this arrival remind us that soon we shall rest from all departures and returns. When life's short day is passed, give us to sit down forever amid the glories of Your redeemed.

PUBLIC SICKNESS

O Our Father, we humble ourselves in deep contrition before You, acknowledging our manifold iniquities as individuals and as a nation. Wrath is gone forth. We confess that our sins have justly provoked You. The destroying angel has brought grievous sickness on our guilty land. We tremble and we flee to You. Pardon, we beseech You. Arrest this fearful pestilence. Recover those on whom its hand is resting. Preserve from its touch those, who are still escaped. O Jesus, stand between the living and the dead, that the plague may be stayed. Bring back the voice of health and gladness. So will we bless Your sparing and restoring love forever and ever.

CIVIL COMMOTION

Gracious Lord, troubles and rumors of troubles fill us with dismay. The voice of murmurings and discontent affrights our land. Turbulence has banished our happy tranquility. We tremble lest civil disasters should sadden our homes. Arise to our help and save us, O our God. Defeat the evil designs of ungodly men. Give especial wisdom to those who guide our nation. Make them firm to resist, intelligent to devise the needful remedy, and patient to endure. Allay all angry passion. Calm all ruffled minds. Speak the word, and sweet calm shall then return. Fill us with that righteousness which exalts a nation. Grant that Your people may dwell in peaceable habitations, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. O God of peace, give us peace always by all means.

DISTRESS OF WEATHER

Father of all goodness, we bless You for every circumstance which teaches us our entire dependence on You. May all things prosperous and adverse, draw us more closely to Your side. We acknowledge that if our sins should be the measure of Your dealings—the heavens over our heads would be brass and iron, and our fields would be locked up in barrenness. But You are rich in mercy. Be pleased, we beseech You, to send us bountiful seasons. Withhold not Your showers, when refreshing rain is needed. Give the ripening rays, when the time for the ingathering of our crops has come. Let not adverse weather hinder our labor, or diminish our plenty. Give us seedtime and harvest according to Your Word.

HARVEST

Father, we adore You. Your tender mercies are over all Your works. You crown the year with Your goodness. Your paths drop fatness. You have given Your blessing to the ingathering of our crops. Our garners are enriched with store. Abundant provision is our portion. How good are You! How undeserving are our hearts and lives! But melted by such loving-kindness, may we devote our lives, which are Your gracious care, to Your undivided service. May the rich harvest of our fields, quicken us to pray for the harvest of immortal souls. The spiritual field is wide. Send forth laborers to gather in. May we always be looking to the end, when the angels shall be the reapers. Fit us. Bless us. Receive us as Your own forever.

RELIGIOUS MEETING This day we trust, by Your good hand upon us, to meet to testify the desire of our souls, that Your name may be hallowed, and Your kingdom advanced among the children of men. Give Your especial blessing to the great Society, the cause of which we shall strive to advocate. Send Your Holy Spirit to warm and sanctify the hearts of all who shall be present. May thought of self be absent from each speaker. May the name and truth of Jesus be exalted and made very high! May heavenly-mindedness be the pervading tone. May we hear, may we give, as unto the Lord. May the sweet fragrance of a holy meeting cheer and elevate our hearts.

03.00 FORGIVENESS OF SINS

FORGIVENESS OF SINS By Henry Law, 1875

"But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him."
Daniel 9:9

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03.000 Preface

FORGIVENESS OF SINS By Henry Law, 1875 "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him." Daniel 9:9 To the congregation worshipping in the Cathedral Church of Gloucester. Dearly beloved in the Lord,

On stated days your expectation looks to me for teaching. To perform such duty is to every minister of Christ the joy of joys. Beyond all doubt the pulpit stands the highest post of man to appear as ambassador of the King of kings, and to proclaim the way of life, is a privilege which angels might ambitiously desire. I strongly feel this--no words can tell my estimate of this grand work. This hallowed exercise requires vigor, and energy, and strength--in its discharge every faculty should put forth power. But when the weight of many years depresses, these qualities must cease to bloom--decay will follow in the footsteps of declining life. It is now mine to feel this common lot of old age, and hence I seek some substitute for public service in so large a church. To supply then this absence of oral address I venture to present this volume to you.

Thus the pen strives to take the place of voice. Instead of looking on you congregated around me, I seek to sit beside you in your homes. At fixed times your attendance may be reluctant, and your thoughts may stray; I thus come when leisure gives me welcome. Without intrusion I solicit some vacant moments. You shall not complain of wearying lengthiness; your averted look is my dismissal. But while you read, I have a willing flock--and while you read with prayer, I teach to profit. This mode, also, of address may have especial use. Days may arrive when the pulpit may not be sought by you--your feet may be unable to tread the hallowed courts; age, or infirmity, or other suffering may keep you from the familiar seat. These pages then may find attention; and when the public springs are closed, these private drops may bring refreshment.

If this approach should win you to be wholly Christ's, my public silence will be your immortal gain. To promote this union in season and out of season is ministerial duty. Let me distinctly warn that without Him this world is utter nothingness--as boldly let me aver that to receive Him into the heart is every treasure won. Separate from Him, the public service is a casket with no jewel; religious forms are a mere skeleton; external rites are lifeless perfunction; Scripture is a dead letter; sacraments seal not the title-deeds of heaven. Religion not framed in Gospel-mold gives neither peace nor hope--its course is joyless, and its end is woe. This deep conviction prompts me thus to write.

It may be said this book repeats the truths which constantly I preached. From the pulpit it was indeed my aim to point to Christ, and woe would be to me if now I gave other direction. Another Savior or another Gospel is a fiction beguiling to sure ruin--it is better to be mute than gratify a craving for the conceits and fallacies of man. A Christless bauble glitters only to destroy--such trifling is, I trust, far distant from these pages. Their instant substance is to urge you to seek forgiveness of your sins, and every benefit of Christ's passion at the Atoning cross. Turn not from the humble effort because no eloquence or novel views attract--my yearning is not to excite vain feelings, but eternally to save. It matters little what I think--it matters much what Christ's revelation

says. I trust it is our common prayer, Let Christ increase, let man lie low. Your devoted servant in
Christ Jesus,

Henry Law, Gloucester, Oct. 30, 1875

03.01. The NEED of Forgiveness (part 1)

The NEED of Forgiveness (part 1) "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him."-- Daniel 9:9

Such is the utterance of prophetic lips. Daniel here speaks, wrestling with God, and valiantly refusing a repulse. The words sparkle as a bright gem in his diadem of prayer. Their testimony has this exceeding value--in brief space they reveal our God as glorious in mercies and forgivenesses, and show in terrible contrast the rebel character of man. Thus the blessing of blessings--the essence of the glorious Gospel of our God--the forgiveness of sins, appears in bold relief.

It is superfluous to state that this proclamation is not limited to supplicating Daniel--it pervades the book of Revelation as fragrance the sweetest garden. Echoing texts reverberate the note that our God is "ready to pardon." Witness the answer when Moses prayed, "Show me Your glory." The glories of His name resound; but the bright chain was incomplete without the link, "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:7.)

Thus the ambassadors of Christ repeat the call, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts--and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7.) And again, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins--and by Him all who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39.) Our sublime services, also, insert this truth in a most touching prayer--"O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions." And worshipers are taught individually to profess, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

It is not irrelevant here to state that the noble Reformer of Germany was fast bound in the dungeons of doubts and fears, sinking in the mire of despondency, and stumbling in the deepest gloom of darkness, when an experienced friend reminded him of this frequent avowal. Then light and peace enlivened his soul, and he went forth rejoicing and achieving wonders. He found God in Christ and triumphed in the strength of recognized forgiveness. To this grand subject attention is now invited. May our forgiving God, by His enlightening Spirit, suggest each thought, supply each word, and grant a blessing according to His gracious will! To estimate forgiveness rightly, its must be distinctly seen. It will be poorly prized, unless its value be weighed in balances of truth. It will not be sought, as surpassing all worlds in worth, until there be adequate knowledge of the miseries which it averts, the wounds which it heals, the joys which it kindles, the wrath which it quenches, the rescue which it achieves, the depths from which it raises, the heights to which it exalts. When sickness comes, a remedy is valued--shelter is entered, when storms impend.

What then is forgiveness as appertaining unto sin? What is the blessing implored in the petition--"Forgive us our trespasses"? It is remission of due penalties, the obliteration of incurred guilt, the withdrawal of just displeasure, the blotting out of accusing handwriting, the burying all

offences in oblivion, the hushing of the loud thunder of the law, the canceling of its tremendous curse, the consigning to a sheath the sword of justice. It is the frown of Jehovah softening into eternal smiles. It encounters sin, and strips it of its destroying power.

Hence evidently forgiveness implies that sin has preceded. It can only effect its wonders in the element of transgression--there must be sin before there can be remission. Where no offence exists, no pardon can be needed--they cannot be restored whose feet are always in right paths.

Thus we reach the fundamental position that sin gives occasion for forgiveness. Sin is the need which calls for its intervention. Let then this monster now be boldly faced; let its hideous features be narrowly scrutinized; let it be stripped of its deceiving mask; let the cheating tinsel disappear; let it be viewed in its naked deformity; let its essence and character, and work, and guilt be traced unsparingly.

I. SIN'S ESSENCE. What constitutes its character? No unanswerable question is here asked as to the parent of its birth--here is no search into its originating cause. The simple inquiry is--Where is its sphere of work, and what is its distinctive nature? Supreme authority replies. Scripture states in terms intelligible and incontrovertible, "Sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4.) Violation then of God's holy rule introduces sin--it breathes in the province of transgression.

God, as supreme in all His universe, fixes His mode of government. Accordingly He issues His commands--if these be outraged, the outrage is sin. Its essence is disobedience to God's law. This essence appears in frightful enormity, when the purpose of this law is viewed. The sum of its requirements is worthy of the great Lawgiver. In divine simplicity it only requires Love. Its statute book enforces Love. It demands that the heart should beat in one pulse; the affections flow in one channel; the will be bound by one fetter; the desires burn in one flame; the actions move in one path--Love. The whole inward man must be bright in one complexion--Love. Any deviation from this course constitutes sin. This sublimity brightly shows the origin of the law to be divine. As a mirror it reflects Jehovah's excellence--it is the transcript of His glorious being; it is holiness on its highest throne; it is purity in its loveliest form; it is perfection without one alloy. How abominable then is that principle which hates and resists such code, and strives to crush it beneath insulting steps! How incontrovertible is the position that they need forgiveness who fight against God under the banners of this monster!

It follows that the need of forgiveness is universal, for sin exercises a sway co-extensive with all human life. It grasps each mother's son in its vile arms, and stops not its assaults while time endures. It moves with the mind's first movement--in the cradle it begins to stir. It grows with man's growth; it walks beside him in his every path; it adheres as the very skin, and lingers in each dying chamber. There is no lofty dwelling and no lowly hut which it frequents not. There is no period of day or night which can repel its step. It is a universal and life-long plague; for where is the man whose career is not continual deviation from the rule of love? Hence the need of forgiveness of sins is world-wide. Hence is the preciousness of the testimony, "To the Lord our God belong mercies;" in the plural, "and forgivenesses;" in the cumulative, "though we have rebelled against Him."

II. This need becomes more apparent, as advance is made from SIN'S essence to some of its DEVELOPMENTS. Here it appears a many-headed hydra, a fiend of various forms. Its outbreak

towards God, towards the soul within, towards the world around, betray it.

(1) Let diverse instances show its conduct towards GOD. Its feelings may be thus classed.

Alienation. Whatever departs from God's rule departs from Himself. Contrariety to His law separates from His mind. Disinclination to His will moves altogether in an adverse course. It flees His face--it establishes an opposing interest. Far as the east is from the west, so far it is estranged from all that is divine. Sin is such alienation. They who are its slaves need to be forgiven, before they can see God's face and live.

Hatred. "The carnal mind,"--and every mind is such in which the Spirit dwells not--"is enmity against God--for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7.) By nature's instinct the secret chambers of imagination swarm with thoughts tainted with dislike of God, His name, His nature, His perfections, His cause, His people, His Word, His scepter, His kingdom, His Christ. Sin has strong inclinations, and they all are arrayed against His righteous ways. It has ungodly bias towards the abominable things which God hates. Surely the victims of this passion need to be forgiven, before they can be one with God.

Contempt. With haughty look it sneers at sacred precepts. It scorns them as weak precision. It spurns the restrictions of godly walk as derogatory to man's liberty. In the swellings of pride it tramples on the barriers which heaven has erected. Except forgiveness comes, the consequence is appalling woe.

Defiance. It raises an insulting head. It braves God's displeasure. It ridicules all penal consequences. It mocks at the thunder-bolts of threatened wrath. It regards the right hand of the Lord as impotent to strike. It boldly asks, "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him?" Unless forgiveness intervenes what will be the doom!

Rebellion. It shatters the yoke. It breaks restraining bands. It ignores submission. It boasts, "We will not have this man to reign over us." If power were equal to the will, it would invade the heaven of heavens, and hurl God from His throne. If forgiveness lingers, how terrible must be the end!

Treason. It enters into conspiracy with all heaven's foes. It joins hands with every adversary. It combines with all dark plots. It betrays the citadel of God's government. It opens the portals to admit all traitors. Without forgiveness, vengeance will be sure and just.

Robbery. God, as Sovereign, has a right to exact obedience. Sin defrauds Him of this due. It refuses payment of just demands. It withholds the allegiance of rightful service. It wantonly misuses every talent entrusted to its care. If not forgiven, how can it escape!

Such, and many more, are the developments of sin in reference to God. Thus the position is established, that vast is the need of vast forgiveness. How enchanting, now, is the sweetness of the words, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him!"

(2) The picture darkens when the developments of sin in reference to the SOUL are seen. It changes this garden of the Lord into a waste howling wilderness. Fragrant flowers cease to bloom; thorns and briars usurp their place. It dims the noblest jewel of God's creation. It tears away its robe of righteousness, and casts it forth to face the world naked, impoverished, impotent--without

one sheltering rag--with no possession but ignominious shame. It weakens every spiritual faculty. It so blinds, that the eye sees as through a glass, most darkly. It so impairs the ear, that the voice of truth is not discerned. It cripples every energy. The feet are powerless to climb the upward path of life. It infuses moral leprosy. It renders earth a spiritual charnel-house--men live the tabernacles of dead souls. Behold this fair vessel a wreck on evil's rocky coast, and then ponder the work of sin! Will not the cry ascend--What need of forgiveness for such wrong! Will not the tidings be prized--"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him!"

(3) The case assumes more frightful hue when sin's inroads on the WORLD around is added. Doubtless sin is inborn. It is a hereditary disease--the seeds of every evil are innate in each heart. Unaided by contagion it would universally exist; but yet by contact, influence, example, it multiplies, and becomes more rampant. A spark from without kindles the dry stubble--bad men wax worse by bad fellowship. As Christ's disciples never move towards heaven alone, so evil beckons and decoys a multitude. Sin is a ready teacher, and has ready pupils. Let it be repeated, that each natural heart is from the cradle a hive of sin; but through evil suggestions and evil associations, evil broods swarm abroad on quicker wing. Tempted Eve becomes a tempter. Of Achan we read, "that man perished not alone in his iniquity." (Joshua 22:20.) Jeroboam the son of Nebat is branded, as the man "who made Israel to sin." Hence reproaches will embitter the miseries of the lost. Children will loathe misleading parents; companion will revile companion, as the first to lure to headlong fall. When sin is contemplated running its infectious course--sowing universally the seeds of woe--ruining individuals, nations, generations--spreading a fatal plague--it cannot be denied that its course is ruinous. Perilous is the condition of man infected by it. Forgiveness must come, or sure and dreadful consequences ensue.

Why is this dark picture thus exhibited? There is no intent to leave any trembling, dismayed, cast down, fast-bound in shackles of despair. The true desire is to show in lovelier form the Gospel's smile--and to win readier acceptance for the tidings, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him."

Let it be repeated, that none can claim exemption from sin's grasp! "All we like sheep have gone astray." "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." Sin's vile brand is upon all--but to all the Gospel comes, with cheering voice. It sweetly proclaims, the case is not hopeless--to perish is not inevitable--deliverance is provided--remedy is at hand--rescue opens large arms. God extends a cup overflowing with forgivenesses. A way is opened, in which, without infringement of any holy attribute, He can pardon, restore to favor, and remit sin's curse. Full, free, complete, everlasting forgivenesses have come forth from the courts of heaven. They stand ready to spread their saving mantle round the sons of men. Who will not bless God for His revealed and unalterable property--"But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him." Let no one rest until he can say, "I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalms 32:5.)

03.02. The NEED of Forgiveness (part 2)

The NEED of Forgiveness (Part 2) "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him."-- Daniel 9:9 To the forgiveness of sins attention now reverts. The subject justly claims large share of pious thought. This mercy showers saving blessings from its wings; it blots out transgression and hides all iniquity in its sheltering arms. Hence no words can fully tell its worth.

Angels may gaze and marvel, but they have no experience of its joys; for none of that pure company exult in pardon. It is solely the heart-felt property of the redeemed. It will be the hymn of heaven; but its first notes must be learned on earth. To learn it well, there must be commencement in the rudimentary volume of its need. Portions of this dark book have been perused--sin's essence and its main developments have passed in review; and at frequent pauses the dreadful need was solemnly deduced. This need is prelude to the tidings--"But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him." The subject pursued leads to (1) sin's guilt; (2) sin's final doom.

I. SIN'S GUILT. Guilt is that property of sin which links it to God's wrath. It constitutes its criminality, and forbids immunity. That sin has this property is clear--it stands confessedly a convict. It is undeniably a transgressor of the law of heaven. It cannot plead that it is guiltless; therefore avowedly it merits punishment.

Thus in reference to GOD it has been proved to be alienation, hatred, contempt, defiance, robbery, treason, rebellion. Can such be its guilty state--can it evidently work havoc throughout all creation, and shall God sit indifferent, as though He saw no evil? The very thought strips Him of the glories of His holiness, and misrepresents Him as erecting a platform on which sin shall have free scope to act rebellion, and then be spared as innocent. Holiness ceases to be holy, except it inflict on sin the penalties of its guilt. Righteousness is no more righteous, if it withholds the righteous condemnation. Truth lies low in ignominious shame, if the words be not fulfilled, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23.) "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Galatians 3:10.) The arm of Omnipotence is a broken reed, if it wield no sword to vindicate the honor and the majesty of God's kingdom. Thus the guilty cannot be screened as guiltless.

Doubtless God is rich in mercy--His mercy endures forever--His mercy reaches unto the heavens. "To the Lord our God belong mercies." If compassion were not a bright beam in heaven, there could be no remission of offence, no substitutionary offering, no transfer of guilt to a Surety, no Gospel, no Christ, no cross, no reconciling blood. But mercy cannot annihilate the attributes which sit as compeers on the glorious throne. It lives co-equal with them. Its delight is to exalt, to magnify, to glorify them. Patience may wait long, until settled purposes are fully ripe; forbearance may forbear, until the cup of wrath at last overflows; patience may endure, until the extremest limit be attained; but their honor must be maintained, and guilt not screened in Christ must encounter the just woe. The interceding voice, "Let it alone" at last will cease. God can by no means clear the

guilty. Guilt then must receive its penal wages, unless some scheme be found to intercept the terrible result. Who now can fail to feel that the guilty sinner needs mercies and forgivenesses?

Let the page of EXPERIENCE be next read. It is written throughout with testimony that tremendous indications of divine displeasure pursue guilt. Amid sweet rays of mercy striving to break forth, big drops of wrath often descend. The present appearance of earth is mournfully significant--the whole creation groans and travails together. What is inscribed on all the tears and travail? These dark evidences proclaim that sin has polluted earth, and that guilt is the accompaniment of sin, and that penalty adheres to guilt.

Tears and sighs and anguish in multiform misery tell what sin has brought into this earth--sufferings and agony point to their prolific parent. Mourners ever mourning, the afflicted ever wailing, the bereaved ever disconsolate, sickness ever weakening, pains ever torturing, death ever doing its relentless work, graves insatiable, loudly tell that God has a controversy with earth. Thus the wide spread of misery proves that the guilt of sin awakens just displeasure.

Mark, next, the terrors of CONSCIENCE when aroused from apathetic slumber by the Spirit. See the man awakened to the real perils of his guilty state. He is brought into a new world, where all is dismay. He perceives that his feet totter on the brink of a terrific precipice. He sees an abyss yawning in his path. He trembles, lest the next step may plunge him into bottomless perdition. He looks back, and shudders at his past career--he looks above; the sight is blackness of darkness--he looks onward, and hopelessness affrights him. All within stirs up remorse--all around is terror. The past cannot be recalled--the present must move onward--the future cannot be escaped. In what mirror are these terrors seen? Surely in the mirror of sin's guilt. Conscience, in the Spirit's light, convicts of sin. Guilt is its inseparable companion--vengeance from heaven closely follows. The awakened conscience knows this and quakes.

Annals of the past confirm this statement--they exhibit terrific outbreaks of divine wrath. Let the old world tell its dreadful tale. Its wickedness exceeded all that is denounced as wicked--its trespass grew up unto the heavens. Enormity of evil cried aloud, and enormity of vengeance slumbered not. God opened the sluices above, and called the waters from their lowest caverns; billows upon billows swelled; one vast flood cleared the polluted earth, with the exception of one family. Each drop of that overwhelming deluge proves that sinful earth is guilty earth; and guilty earth cannot but call down wrath.

Let another instance lend corroborating aid. Omitting the cities of the plain--a smoking furnace, a flood of flame--let the miseries of Jerusalem in her final siege be pondered. Where can horrors be found like unto those horrors! The sword, the pestilence, the famine, the fire, the signs in the heavens, the wails of earth, surpassed all former prophetic indications. Vengeance sharpened its every fang to mangle and to torture. Jerusalem drank a brimful cup, and drank it to the very dregs. Whence comes this unparalleled anguish? Sin stands out as the guilty cause. Enormous guilt brought down enormous wrath.

Here let a shuddering glance look INWARD. Is not every child of man deeply immersed in guilt? "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6.) "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) How then shall the guilty escape, if no forgiveness hold back the arm of wrath! How precious now are the tidings--"To the

Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him."

Thus far the guilt of sin has been viewed, as exhibited in time, and as endured on the little space of this passing scene. But sin's results end not with earth's brief moment. Here is only the opening of the sluice--the stream flows onward into the ocean of eternity, and there the billows find no shore, no bottom.

It requires no small effort to proceed; but to pause here would leave the subject only on the threshold of its magnitude. Progress must be made--time's flimsy veil must be withdrawn; realities beyond must be distinctly faced.

II. SIN'S FINAL DOOM now meets us. Scripture abounds in warnings--their plainness is only equaled by their awe; their terrors are all faithfulness and truth. They speak loudly that men may ponder and escape. Blessed be the Holy Spirit for this arresting voice! He uncloaks the approaching day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God--"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ--who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.) Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are denounced on every soul of man that does evil. (Romans 2:8-9.)

There is no negative in this catalogue of woes. It is the aggregate of every form of positive endurance. Who can gaze with firm eye on the pictures of the Apocalypse! But they are portrayed for our admonition. Behold! He who is announced as the Word of God appears treading "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:15.) Here the omnipotence of God is exhibited not only mighty in wrath, but fierce in wrath, infuriate to execute vengeance. What must that vengeance be!

Tremendous terms exhaust the powers of imagination. The voice thunders, "Depart from Me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Again the sound is heard of "blackness of darkness forever;" "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;" "the worm that dies not, the fire that is not quenched." No drop of water cools the parched tongue, and these torments are to endure forever and forever. No hope of deliverance sustains the lost. No respite ever relieves. Intermission never brings a momentary ease. No glimpse of dawn gives prospect of a better day. What was, still is, and forever shall be. It is all pain without release, all misery for everlasting ages. It is the woe of an eternal night.

Such is the endless end of sin. Such are the penalties to which its guilt is righteously consistent. Such is its sure condemnation. This picture is no fable; no fiction; no hyperbole. No color is inscribed too darkly. These are the true sayings of Him who is the Truth. But pictures, however vivid, fail to give exact idea. The painted flame shows not the sting and biting pungency of fire. They know little of the angry ocean's swell--of the agonies of a wrecked crew--of the strength of the infuriate lion--of the devastation of the volcano, who only see these images portrayed on canvas. As heaven to be really known must be attained, so sin's wages must be received before the fruit of its guilt can be conceived.

It will be happy if through this dreary passage a glorious prospect is attained. It will be so to all who now clasp to grateful hearts the good news--"To the Lord our God belong mercies and

forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." Let then the reviving truth now have free course and be glorified. A remedy is provided. A refuge is erected. A fortress of escape is near. A rescue is at the door. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19.) Christ comes to the blessed work in obedience to the heavenly call, and the dictates of His love. He vicariously endures all these penalties. Hence "repentance and remission of sins are preached in His name among all nations."

Let the tidings be devoutly prized, "Christ has suffered the just for the unjust." In Him all manner of sin is forgiven to the children of men. This forgiveness of sins is the corner stone and glory of His Gospel. Gaining validity through Christ's blood, it remits all penalties to the believer, abrogates all demands, relaxes all bonds, cancels all debts, blots out every accusing charge, silences all threats, blunts every weapon of wrath, extracts the sting of vengeance, averts all miseries, removes all apprehensions, opens the prison-doors, loosens all chains, closes hell, makes a straight path to heaven, and crowns an innumerable multitude with blessings of celestial favor.

Let men be wise to seek in an accepted time this inestimable gift. Let them, the Spirit helping, secure this prize, and turn not from the Father of all mercies, heaping on Christ the outpourings of His wrath, that He may heap infinities of bliss and glory on pardoned guilt.

Let not the only hope be slighted. It shines in Christ and in Christ alone. He is the treasure-house in which forgiveness is stored. Let not the multitude, or magnitude, or heinousness of transgressions deter. "A fountain is opened for all sin and uncleanness." They who cast themselves therein are whiter than the whitest snow. Their blessed experience may truly testify, "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him." "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1.)

03.03. The Originating CAUSE of Forgiveness

The Originating CAUSE of Forgiveness

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."-- Ephesians 1:7

Forgiving mercy abounds in aspects which only vary to increase delight. These aspects are ever fresh joy in the days of earthly pilgrimage. They will not weary throughout eternity. What will prompt the ascription of glory and dominion "unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood"? (Revelation 1:5.) Surely it will be a realized pardon. To swell this chorus will be pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, and happiness in its fullest flow, and bliss on its highest pinnacle, and delight in its supreme perfection. The more this song is practiced now, the more will earth assimilate to heaven, and fitness ripen for eternal and divine worship.

Let then this theme be now contemplated from another stand-point. By gradual steps a position has been reached from which the expansive plan of forgiveness may be largely and intelligently surveyed. With this purpose the valley of humiliation has been entered--the urgent need has been portrayed. With open eye the truth has been contemplated that guilt is linked to sin, and guilt awakens God's wrath. The fact, also, has been established that this tyrant enslaves each child of man and entwines adamant fetters of condemnation. What condition can be more appalling! Sinners are righteously obnoxious to God's vengeance and must eternally endure the penalty, unless some way be found for the entrance of forgiveness. But while the death-knell sounded, the reviving note was heard--"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." "In Christ Jesus we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." The question now occurs, Whence springs forgiveness? Where is the birth-place of this friend to sinners? Here the Word gives distinct reply--"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Precious and abundant is the revelation--a full cup of mercy is presented to our lips; Christ's blood is announced as the purchasing price; God's grace is added as the originating source. Let thoughts of the price at present be postponed; the origin and fountain-head claim first attention; and may the God of all grace send out His light and truth to guide and teach! For as the sun is only seen through solar light, so grace cannot be visible except grace lends enlightening rays. To exclude misapprehension, it is well at the outset closely to scan GRACE. In its objective sense, as a heavenly attribute, it exhibits God in loveliest view. It is a bright jewel in the crown of His glory; it sits high on the throne of His perfections; it is love flowing in the deep channel of freeness. It finds its sphere of action not only in compassionating misery, wretchedness, distress, anguish, agony, woe; it looks tenderly on such sufferers in their most repulsive condition of undeserving and guilty; it yearns with pitying eye over the extremities of demerit--over those who are obnoxious to His wrath--under just condemnation--utterly without the slightest ray of excuse--righteously doomed to penal vengeance.

Misery may exist with no fault as its occasion--mercy may hasten to soothe and to allay it; but grace is more than mercy; it melts with pity over sinners in the lowest cells of guilt. It flies to avert execution when just sentence has gone forth. When no cause exists to soften, when every motive seems to steel the heart, grace freely loves, because it will love. Such is grace in Scripture statement; such is grace as the originating cause of the forgiveness of sins. When the Spirit lends illuminating aid it is evident that unless grace had thus intervened no sinner could escape the wrath denounced. That this conclusion may be more deeply impressed let thought confront earth's final day. This day comes on apace. All who have ever breathed the breath of life must meet it. Suppose the great white throne to be now fixed, the judgment to be set, and the books opened. What do they show? Page upon page appears black with recitals of transgression. When the record of daily life is publicly proclaimed, who among the children of men can lift up the head and boldly aver--These doings are not sins? Immunity is their due. This cannot be said. Truth now reigns. Fallacies have vanished; self-deceit no longer blinds; the light of heaven has dissipated all mists. "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world must become guilty before God." (Romans 3:19.) No flesh can seek acquittal on the plea of innocence. But while guilt is acknowledged, are there pleas which can restrain the merited penalties, or can avail to win forgiveness? Let the examination advance as if the tribunal were some earthly bar, and the proceedings were conducted "after the manner of men." Shall it be said--These sins are small in magnitude and trifling in importance? What, is not every deviation from the perfect law of love an offence of infinite amount? It must be so when measured by the majesty of the infinite Lawgiver. There is no little sin, because there is no little law, no little God. Can that be small which is allied to eternal wrath? No plea is valid which ignores the nature of offence. Shall any plead the scanty number of their sins? Be it so, that in some cases through short time or restricted opportunities sins are comparatively few. There will be stripes more, and stripes fewer. But in what instance have they not been commensurate with the moments of life, and as swarming as the multitude of thoughts! Let it never be forgotten that if there were only one sin, it would be violation of the law, and as such would call for penalty. It must obtain forgiveness or wrath must be outpoured. Shall thoughtlessness and ignorance be pleaded? Perhaps awakened conscience may disdain such weak excuse; but if it be made it cannot extenuate, but rather it aggravates the guilt. Is thoughtlessness, with eternity at the door, no fault? Is ignorance excusable, with the Bible in the hand or within reach? Is not the Gospel within hearing? What more could God have done to awaken, to instruct, to guide? Account is due, not only for what is known, but for the knowledge within grasp. Escape is vain when based on willful blindness. Where now shall the guilty flee? Shall penitence, contrition, shame, and tears be offered in arrest of judgment? What is their worth when weighed against God's just demands! Besides, when penitence, contrition, shame, and tears are real, they are evidence that grace exists. They are divinely genuine only in the territory of experienced pardon.

Such reasoning might be extended until imagination's inventions failed. But enough has been said. No ingenuity, apart from Christ and irrespective of God's grace, can fabricate one bar to check guilt's punishment. No urgency, no potency of pleas can claim remission. Is then the sinner's case beyond all hope? Far otherwise. It is bright as the brightest rays of heaven. "But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him."

Whence then springs this reviving light? No reply except from heaven can satisfy. But the Word announces that from the fountain of free grace streams of forgiving mercy flow! "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Blessed be God, forgiveness flies swiftly from the heaven of heavens, speeded by the wings of grace. It makes large strides to blot out sin, but every step moves in the path of grace. On every feature in the scheme of forgiveness the lineaments of free grace beam.

(1) Investigate the first conception of pardon. Here steps must move with meekest reverence. No advance can be safe except in the footsteps of the Spirit's teaching--but Scripture is not silent concerning counsels of grace. It is written with unmistakable intent, "He works all things after the counsel of His own will." Thus forgiveness is the result of deliberate resolve. The purchasing blood is declared to be "the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Hebrews 13:20.) Jesus is announced as the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24); and among the articles of this better covenant it is stipulated, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Thus forgiveness emanates from deliberate eternal counsels in which free love reigns. In accordance the sound is heard of "God's great love with which He loved us, when we were dead in sins," and again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." These counsels consult for the sinner not as pardoned and restored, but that he may be pardoned and restored; not as extricated from the pit of guilt, but as lying helpless in its mire. Thus forgiveness originates from grace.

(2) Next, the prominent feature in the scheme of forgiveness manifests free grace. This feature is willingness to accept a substitutionary payment, to inflict vicarious punishment, to transfer guilt from the personally guilty to one capable to represent them. It consents to regard those in whose stead the Surety stands, as liberated, absolved, acquitted, justified, blameless, innocent. Hear the grand announcement, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him,"--His beloved Son, our Surety--"the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6.) A glorious note confirms the truth, "He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Our God takes off sin from the actual perpetrator, removes the crushing burden, transfers the guilt, and consequently the penalty and wrath. But nothing of merit on the sinner's part, nothing out of Himself moves God to this act. Grace calls and grace accepts a Substitute. Thus again, forgiveness springs from grace.

(3) What but grace induces Christ to undertake the Surety-place? Grace leads Him so to humble Himself as to put on the prison garb, and to represent the vilest prisoners. He, the all holy and all just, presents Himself as responsible for all iniquity, and appropriates to Himself all guilt. With no reluctant step He ascends the altar of the cross, He lays bare His heart to bury the sword of justice. He receives as His own due every vial of God's wrath, and drinks them to the very dregs. No merit in the sinners, for whom He thus endures, could move Him. In them everything is most vile, unlovely, repulsive--they are laden with abominations most abhorred. It is vain then to seek any moving cause, but free grace. Let then the song of praise be heard--through grace His people are vicariously punished; through grace they are most graciously forgiven.

(4) It is most pertinent to add that this forgiveness only works in the sphere of Christ. It is the property and privilege of those only who are one with Him, the members of His mystic body, the spouse of His heart, the branches of the true vine, the living stones annexed to Him the true

foundation. The link which constitutes this union is FAITH. Faith sees Christ in all His beauty, glory, power and willingness to save. It recognizes Him as wholly suitable, supremely capable, divinely sufficient, infinitely willing. As such it flees to Him, embraces Him, cleaves to Him and becomes identified with Him forever. Whence arises this faith? Scripture decides, "therefore it is of faith, that it might be BY GRACE." (Romans 4:16.) Faith is a free-grace gift. The Holy Spirit in love descends, bringing this seed from heaven, and implants it in the heart. Without faith there is no forgiveness through the work of Christ--and without grace there is no faith. Hence forgiveness is interwoven with grace.

(5) The Spirit in the plenitude of His love preserves, guards, waters, nourishes this plant, until mortality is swallowed up of life, and the headstone of redemption's pyramid is brought forth "with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." (Zechariah 4:7.) Thus from foundation to completion every stone in the fabric of forgiveness is laid and cemented by free grace! "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace."

It is thus apparent that the scheme of forgiveness is heaven-born and worthy of its Author. It seats God on His high throne, and crowns Him with His eternal glory. It sinks man into the depths of his own nothingness and exhibits him as fast bound in fetters of helplessness; exposed to storms of wrath and unable to devise a shelter. It kindles in the redeemed heart flames of adoration praise and love. It awakens the only motives for grateful service and holy living. They who would work out their own forgiveness work as slaves, and fail and perish. They who work because they are through grace forgiven, work as happy and beloved sons. They fit to reign with Christ in glory forevermore.

03.04. The PRICE of Forgiveness (part 1)

The PRICE of Forgiveness (part 1)

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."-- Ephesians 1:7 A retrospective glance promotes intelligent advance. The need of pardoning grace has been established. Sin appeared a grievous, an appalling, a universal malady, spreading wide infection--it held Adam's family in iron grasp, and branded them as criminals awaiting execution. No lip could qualify the truth--"All the world is guilty before God." (Romans 3:19.) The province of nature and of self disclosed no hope. On one hand there was no help; on the other there was no refuge. Above, righteous anger frowned; below, perdition yawned. Despair seemed ready to engulf when the fair fields of grace arose to view, and a tender voice resounded--"But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him."

Next the inquiry was probed, "How can forgiveness acquire life?" In such matter no unsubstantial answer can give peace--anxious feet refuse to stand, except upon a solid rock. Scripture quickly removed all doubt--grace is proclaimed as the fountain-head of pardon. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Thus a scheme of forgiveness gains birth--it springs from the deep source of grace--it flows on in this channel, ever widening, expanding, and thus swells into the ocean of eternal glory. The word stands as a bright pyramid--"By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves--it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8.) But trembling sinners may still be tossed by ebbs and flows of fears. Sins continually start up in affrighting forms. Conscience drags them to light, as multitudinous as ocean's sands, as terrible as an army of giants. A dreadful book of account contains within and without unanswerable indictments--it shows charges of debts to God's justice, rebellion against His rule, robbery of His due, defiance of His authority, insults to His majesty, estrangement from His service, hatred of His holiness, contempt of His law--perpetrations all abominable in His sight. How then can grace, yearning to confer forgiveness, erase reckonings so countless, so black, so great! God is just, as surely as He is gracious. Grace cannot trample upon righteousness; holiness cannot be ignored. "God sits upon the throne of His holiness." (Psalms 47:8.) "Holiness becomes His house forever." (Psalms 93:5.) Truth too, demands that its every word shall be magnified and honored. How then shall grace bring in forgiveness? Such tremblings haunt many breasts.

Here the Scripture in our front gives sweet reply. Its lovely light dispels these darkening clouds, and fills the skies with rays of peace. Let emphasis rest on its central clause--"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Grace originates forgiveness not arbitrarily, not in disregard of holy claims, not in violation of His co-equal attributes; but in fullest recognition of Jehovah's unity. Just payment must be made; and it is made by the atoning God-man. A wondrous stream flows from the wondrous cross--its value is infinite, because He who renders it is infinite. Its inherent boundlessness merits, earns, procures

boundless remission of guilt--there can be no limits to its excellency; therefore there are no limits to its efficacy. As far as the east is from the west, its reach extends; therefore far as the east is from the west, it removes transgression from God's sight. It is unfathomable as the ocean's depth; therefore it buries all guilt in caverns beyond Omniscience's sight. Oh, scheme divine! It is surpassing ecstasy to ponder and adore it.

Sin might be punished without effort on the part of God. Let Him speak the word, and the armies of heaven issue forth to bind the tares in bundles for the burning. Let the restraining chain relax, and the inexorable jailer drags the condemned criminals to his cells of torment. Men left to their own ways will quickly people hell. It requires no intervention to destroy; but to introduce forgiveness demands the energies of heaven. This grace can gain no existence but through the death of God's co-eternal Son. Because He dies, forgiveness lives--all who are screened by forgiveness are cleansed and washed in blood. It is distinctly written, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." But this remission is secured; for Jesus gives the assurance--"This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28.) Thus the sacramental cup commemorates the full price paid, and echoes the words, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Let now water be drawn from the deep wells of these glad tidings. Let the price be considered as covenanted, foreshadowed, sufficient. Other properties will present food for after-thought.

I. It is a COVENANT price. The everlasting covenant has exact terms--among them the price of blood is foremost. Let thanks be given for such a covenant, in all things ordered and sure. Let thanks be given that the Holy Spirit draws back the curtains of heaven's council-chamber, and shows some glances of the scene. Let the privilege of pondering these mysteries be gratefully and reverently used.

Here is a field in which no idle curiosity may sport, or sceptic speculation place unhallowed foot; but, traversed by faith, it leads into rich pastures. Revelation then discloses a covenant framed before the foundation of the world. The eternal Father stipulates with the co-eternal Son that Jehovah's glory shall be magnified in the accomplishment of salvation. To Christ belongs the main concernment--He is the substance of the whole--He is so intertwined in every part that He is emphatically called the Covenant itself. It is the Father's voice--"I will preserve You, and give You as a Covenant to the people." (Isaiah 49:8.) He is the "Surety" of it. As such He is pledged for the performance of its every term. He is the "Messenger" of it. As such He publishes its sure mercies. But especially He affixes to it the seal of blood. To accomplish this He takes man's nature, becomes bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and thus is qualified to pay the price. In foresight of this expiating death the prophet proclaims, "By the blood of Your covenant I have sent forth Your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." (Zechariah 9:11.) The Apostle re-echoes the same--"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work." (Hebrews 13:20-21.) Thus the covenant of eternal origin demands blood--forgiveness must be purchased by this price.

Peter, gazing with rapture on the scheme exclaims, "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.

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake." (1 Peter 1:18-20.) Thus line upon line confirms the glorious truth that blood is the covenanted price of forgiveness. The Apocalypse in varied terms gives repetition. In its visions "the Lamb slain" appears. The countless multitude are arrayed in robes, "white in the blood of the Lamb." The rebels against God are described as they "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8.) The victim dies--conditions are fulfilled. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, who will not bless You, who will not adore You--that You did covenant in eternal counsels to shed Your most precious blood to purchase forgiveness, and in time did redeem the pledge!

II. The price of forgiveness is not only covenanted and fore-ordained, it is also FORE-SHADOWED. What grace arranged before time was, grace quickly testifies when time begins. Thus, before the cross was raised, its shadow cast its length over preceding ages. Before the price was really paid, foresight of it breaks forth in types, in visions, in prophecies, in promises. Heralds' voices proclaimed that He was approaching who would pay down the ransom. Let Eden's garden commence the proof. There sin enters and guilt is contracted. Punishment must follow. The woman's seed is announced as coming to avert this woe. The tempter shall bruise His heel, but He shall bruise the tempter's head. Here are the intelligible tidings that a Deliverer should expiate by suffering. But in the garden more than this promise is given. The skins of beasts are used to form a clothing--natural death touched not these animals; no conclusion can be held but that they died in foreshadowing sacrifice. Thus the covenanted price assumes the distinct form of 'shed blood'. This typical blood flows on in never-ceasing stream--it continues its teaching at every patriarchal, every Jewish altar, in every sacrificing priest, in every reeking knife, in every dying victim, in the temple, on the great day of atonement, before the mercy-seat. Has this uniformity of blood no voice? Truly it anticipates the blood of Calvary for the forgiveness of sins. The elders of the family of faith clearly saw its purpose--they rejoiced in sight of the foreshadowed price. Here was the essence of their peace, the strength of their hope, the power of their prayers. Such is the constant pleading at the throne of grace, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Shall we, who can go back to Calvary and behold the price there paid, scruple to rejoice in the finished work, and to sue out its benefits? Rather let our trust in the accomplished work exceed the confidence of those who saw it only through the vista of long distance. We who live under the beams of the mid-day sun, should not be less joyous than those who saw through a dim twilight.

III. It is a SUFFICIENT price. Vain would have been the covenant, vain the foreshadowing, if the price had failed in worth. But it is all-sufficient. The vastness of the demands indeed exceeds all thought. Satisfaction is due for all the injuries done to all divine requirements. The law requires perfect love at every moment of time, in every movement of the mind, in every thought, and word, and work. Every deviation, every shortcoming subjects the transgressor to the inexorable curse. O sinners, carefully view the debt of your sin! Pile mountains upon mountains until heaven's summit be overpast--the pyramid of your iniquities raises a far higher head. Count all the sands which ocean's bed contains--the multitude of your iniquities is an outnumbering mass. For each offence the uttermost due must be paid, or the dreadful sum remains, and no door is opened to admit forgiveness--but the God-man brings price sufficient. Let justice now present its scales--in the one scale let sin be heaped; in the other scale let Jesus place His meritorious blood. It instantly and

infinitely prevails. Justice can ask no more. Infinite worth is its inseparable adjunct--it is paid by Jehovah's fellow. This offering is greater homage to God's attributes than all earth's ruin--it brings more glory to Jehovah than the endless punishment of all who ever sinned. Their never-ending endurance could never have reached the end of the demand; but the blood of boundless value at once liquidates the whole. Where sin tremendously abounds, the price most gloriously superabounds. Let the thought give comfort. Forgiveness thus comes not only most graciously, but most righteously. No holy requirement is relaxed--God is inflexibly and unchangeably just, while He freely justifies. It is a grand word, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) Thus all obstacles are removed; the gates are widely open; the portals give free way. Forgiveness has clear path; it may enter every home and every heart, blotting out all sins, and bringing back the sons of faith to the bosom of a reconciled Father. But one phrase of the text must not be overlooked. It is written, "In Him we have redemption." In Christ, in Christ alone, forgiveness dwells--He is the sphere, the element, the home, the condition, as He is the price of it. It is the exclusive portion of those who are in Him, who dwell in Him, are engrafted into Him, are cemented into Him, are united to Him, are one with Him, buried in His wounded side, risen with Him to newness of life, seated with Him in heavenly places. Apart from Him forgiveness has no place--there is only a fearful looking for of judgment to come; therefore Scripture cries, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near;" "Return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy, and to our God for He will abundantly pardon."

03.05. The PRICE of Forgiveness (part 2)

The PRICE of Forgiveness (part 2)

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."-- Ephesians 1:7

Forgiveness of sins still sparkles before our eyes as purchased by a wondrous price. The immensity of the claims against the sinner has shown a giant form--except these claims be fully satisfied forgiveness has not free course. The avenue is closed--it cannot fly to earth. But satisfaction is rendered--thorough price is paid. Jesus presented His blood. Its worth prevailed--all demands are cancelled. This price has been already viewed in some of its aspects. It has been pondered as a COVENANT price, pledged in everlasting counsels, set forth from the foundation of the world. It has been seen as FORESHADOWED; announced in no ambiguous shape by types of multiform variety, and heralded by a long train of prophecies. It has been proved to be SUFFICIENT--it reached to the length and breadth, the depth and height of every requirement. It entirely silenced each opposing adversary--it enabled every holy attribute of God joyfully to concur in pardon. Thus forgiveness strides forth arrayed in conquering garb. But the properties of this price are not yet exhausted; indeed they are, in every sense, inexhaustible. Let it suffice to add (4) it is accepted; (5) it is peace speaking; (6) it stands alone, without a colleague. May God, the Holy Spirit, supply each word! May He send forth the Gospel sound! May willing hearts receive it!

IV. It is ACCEPTED of God. The soul which has groaned beneath the load of sin, and trembled under apprehension of divine displeasure, and been scared by the thunders of the broken law, and seen hell gaping in the front, cannot easily be persuaded that forgiveness removes all peril. It dwells among startling fears, and trembles as on haunted ground. The willingness of Jesus to bear all guilt may be allowed; the infinite worth of His offered blood may be readily acknowledged--but misgivings may arise as to the acceptance of the offering. May not the price be rejected? If so, the guilt remains uncanceled, and punishment is not averted. May not justice turn from surety-payment? May it not inexorably require personal redress for personal offence? But these tremblings quickly vanish before Gospel-statements. The evidence is absolute that the price is graciously accepted. Grace plans the saving scheme and grace receives it. The main proof comes from Jesus' resurrection. At Calvary He dies, and the price of blood is paid. If here the scene had closed, and Jesus had lain hidden in the tomb, the balance might have trembled between hope and fear. Optimistic hope might have maintained that such wondrous blood must certainly prevail; but fears might have whispered--There is no evidence of success--perhaps some difficulty has intervened. But when it is seen that death is impotent to detain the Substitute, that the shackles are relaxed, that the prison bars fly back, that the grave restores the victim whose blood had flowed, that the Surety returns, that He who was dead appears alive--then the evidence is complete, that the price is accepted, and full acquittal is obtained. Jesus by showing Himself alive by many infallible proofs sets to His seal that perfect success crowns the gracious work, that all the stipulated terms are fulfilled, that the price is accepted, and forgiveness granted.

Faith revives and triumphs when contemplating this blessed fact. Let thought fly back then to the resurrection day. Behold Jesus standing in the midst of the disciples. Here is no imaginary vision. Here is no phantom. He appears in a body of flesh and blood. The same body which had been consigned in lifeless weakness to the tomb is now re-animate with all the faculties of life. His living voice utters words of comfort--"Peace be unto you." But what peace could guilty sinners take, if their forgiveness had not been achieved? Therefore when He had so said, "He showed unto them His hands and His side." The visible wounds prove that the payment of blood had been paid; but the wounds are exhibited by 'Jesus restored to life'. Here is proof that the payment was accepted, and the Surety was in consequence released.

Yet further apocalyptic vision opens to view the courts of Heaven. One stands in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders. He bears the form of "a lamb, as it had been slain." What is the significance of these marks of death? The signs prove that the extremest penalties of sin have been undergone--that the Lamb has died as an atoning victim. But death has not detained Him. He is alive--alive in heaven, alive before God. The Lamb who was slain is liberated and absolved, and exalted to all heaven's glory on the right hand of the Majesty on High. Perfect is this assurance--bright is this manifestation of accepted price! Where can doubts now show their face! They vanish as mists before the orb of day. The price is indubitably accepted--sins are forgiven--blood-bought souls are fully redeemed.

V. It is a PEACE-SPEAKING price. Peace between heaven and earth--peace in the conscience--flows entirely from the work of Jesus. Remove this work, and an angry God wars against rebellious man. Obscure it, and ceaseless terrors rack the troubled mind. But Jesus has paid a price which introduces perfect peace. Hence peace is a title which He condescends to bear--the Spirit testifies, "He is our peace." Ambassadors go forth, "preaching peace by Jesus Christ." God "makes peace by the blood of His cross." That this price secures reconciliation is sufficiently apparent from the fact of its acceptance. Let then this peace flow like a river through the soul, and exert its due influence in the courts of conscience. Let all the family of faith be wise--let them not wrong their souls, and act as enemies to their chief comfort. Let them not take part with those who plot man's misery--let them not deny to the accepted price its legitimate province of speaking peace--let them not turn from their heaven-sent privileges. It is far worse than folly to sit trembling in the shade of fear, when God opens the banqueting-house of joy. It is affront to Him, that when He so forgives, His children should mistrust His goodness. It is dishonor to the blood of Jesus, that He should effectually obliterate transgression, and the pardoned one should mourn, and sigh, and weep, as though His blood had not flowed on the accursed tree, or flowed inglorious in worth. It is unthankfulness to close the door when He is willing to enter, waving the banner of peace-speaking blood. Let the accepted price be tightly grasped, and all its benefits be enjoyed. When SATAN reminds you of sins, and uses all devices to terrify, let this price be shown. It blunts his every weapon and silences his every charge--he flees dismayed at the sight, and peace is undisturbed. When STRENGTH declines and sickness weakens, let support be sought in the accepted price. Languor smiles when the prospect shows 'heaven opened'--all must be calm and bright when assurance whispers that sins are washed out. When the foot of DEATH falls heavily beside the bed, it comes as a welcome friend to lead to Him who paid the price. When THE GREAT WHITE THRONE is set, "Christ died" is a plea which truly will prevail. Let it be presented, and heaven's portals will fly open, and admittance will be granted to mansions of eternal peace.

When faith thus acts on the accepted price, the Lord of peace Himself will give peace always, at all times, by all means. Nothing can disturb the peace of him who fully knows that God is reconciled, and heaven purchased, and glory won!

Let men hear and believe. "He who is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins," has sent forth His voice, yes, and that a mighty voice. To the loving penitent He proclaims, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you--go in peace." Expatriate in the wide domain of peace, repose under the shadow of the peace-speaking cross, glory in the accepted price!

VI. It is the ONLY price. There can be none other--a lesser payment could not avail; a greater could not be found. This conclusion is instantly apparent from the acknowledged case. It has been clearly seen that the debt is of infinite magnitude, and therefore demands an infinite equivalent. To wipe out such stains infinite sufficiency must be found. No price then can be sufficient which involves not Deity. The blood of Jesus has this inherent--and this full price has been fully paid.

Let it not be said--But sins are wrought on earth; and what earth has forged surely it may remove--debts here contracted may here be paid. It cannot be denied that earth is the scene of sin's birth and cursed course. But transgression acquires its dreadful character because it assails, and insults, and defies God. Atonement therefore must deal with God, before forgiveness can be granted. But nothing framed on earth can negotiate with heaven--earth cannot produce a heaven-reaching price. The only price must be divine in origin and essence. The question may be asked--Can heaven present no other price but the God-man's blood? It is inhabited by a countless host of angelic beings, beauteous, holy, shining in robes of pure perfection. Is not compassion for man the glowing inhabitant of their breasts? Are they not willing to undergo all suffering to rescue the guilty from just wrath? Will not their society offer price of forgiveness?

Let the case be supposed of such willingness and such offer. It must be vain. Their collected multitude must fail to present adequate merit--they cannot rise in excellence above created beings--they cannot expand beyond the finite. If they could be permitted to assume our nature, and so to obtain blood to shed; still it would be created blood, and therefore its worth would be enclosed in small limits, and insufficient to pay infinite price. Thus neither heaven nor earth can give other price than Jesus. The Father calls Him, Him only, to the work. He comes--He comes alone! "He treads the winepress alone--of the people there is none with Him." The conclusion is obvious, "Neither is there salvation in any other;" because no other hands hold the required price.

Such is the PRICE PAID for the forgiveness of sins. It is covenanted, foreshadowed, sufficient, accepted, peace-speaking, and there is none other! What wondrous lessons are inscribed on this display of grace! It tells what it alone can fully show--the terrible character of sin. The wail from miseries on all sides, and in all forms, and from all ages, speaks in dreadful terms. The shrieks from a drowning world--from the furnace of the cities of the plain--from the anguish of pain-stricken multitudes--from agonies of conscience, proclaim in notes of woe the fearful fruit of sin. But the cry from the Blood of the Cross is louder and far more significant. What must sin be, if no speck of it can ever vanish except when sprinkled with this expiating blood of Jesus? Let this be pondered, and the monster will be abhorred which ruins earth and peoples hell. Let this be pondered, and surely the offered pardon will be prized. The need cannot be denied--the danger is evident.

Let then the blessing of blessings, full forgiveness, be sought where only it can be found. Let all other hopes and pleas which are none, and worse than none, be totally resisted. Other course leads headlong to perdition, and rivets more tightly sin's crushing burden. Plausible cheats too often mock the world--let them be shunned, or they will lead their victims to misery's cells. Thus flowing tears may tend to effect ruin. It is indeed true that without repentance none can live; but weeping eyes buy no remission. Where is the penitence which would not awaken shame? Where are the tears which need not tears to wash them? Where are the washings which need not to be washed anew?

Outward sins may be forsaken, and life reformed, and warm desires may burn for fellowship with God. But careful walk cannot recall the past. Doubtless "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14); but the strictest service is but the bounden duty of each day. Obedience, even if perfect, has no excess of merit to overbalance previous faults.

Thus it must be granted that there is no pardoning efficacy, but in the one appointed remedy. This price is a stream from heaven flowing by each side--all who plunge therein join the blessed company, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered." They are the accepted of Him "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

03.06. The COMPLETENESS of Forgiveness (part 1)

The COMPLETENESS of Forgiveness (part 1) "Who forgives all your iniquities."-- Psalms 103:3

Forgiveness of sins has been reviewed in relation to its NEED, its SOURCE, and its PROCURING CAUSE. Attention now rests on its COMPLETENESS. At the outset let it be stated, that here it eludes full grasp and exhausts description. It presents itself as a boundless ocean without shore--as a depth unfathomable by human line--as a sky without horizon--as an expanse ever widening as steps advance. He who has fled for refuge to a Savior's wounds, looks out from his high watch-tower, and limitless forgiveness spreads before him. He who washes in the fountain opened in the Redeemer's side, retains not the shadow of speck. His career, once so black, now vies with the whitest snow in purity. The rapturous song is on his lips, "Who forgives all my iniquities."

It is a charming exercise to traverse the path which leads to this conclusion. The completeness of the forgiving act is apparent from the essence and character of Him who forgives. This grace proceeds alone from God. All His acts are steeped in heavenly infinity. When then He forgives, He forgives like a God--fully, without measure, without restraining boundary. When forgiveness smiles from heaven, it smiles forever and never darkens into avenging frown. The procuring price, also, proclaims complete forgiveness. Payments demand equivalent remission but this payment is infinitely worthy; therefore there can be no bounds to the recompense obtained. It must be entire--perfect.

Let it be granted that sins overtop the heights of heaven; forgiveness soars unspeakably above their summit. Let sins exceed the sea's innumerable sands; forgiveness outnumbers the total mass.

Moreover, the payment is made to secure heaven for a multitude which no man can number. But heaven can receive no inhabitant stained with one speck of evil. If one dark spot remains, its shining portals refuse admission. Hence, if forgiveness be only partial, the gracious purpose of the Savior's death is frustrate--heaven could not receive a white-robed multitude. But the many mansions will be all filled. The corollary is sure--forgiveness is complete. But in the believer's journey to his heavenly home many sad days darken. Trials in various forms assail him; languor, disease, weakness, and pain, bring him into the gloomy chambers of depression; the spirit faints; the pillars of strength totter; the mind is feeble to grasp inferential proofs; mental vision will scarcely read aright the largest letters of argumentative conclusion. Our wily adversary is skilled at these seasons to infuse a train of fears and doubts.

Hence the Spirit in His tender love has provided abundant support to counteract. He presents strong consolation for the heirs of faith. He has erected secure fortresses into which they may flee and rejoice. These fortresses are the positive assurances of God's Word--that glorious testimony of His mind and will--that seal of His faithfulness--that record of His immutable decrees--that treasure-house of delights--that garden of most sweet refreshments. In frequent phase, in

diversified forms, in copious images, the announcement re-echoes that the believer's forgiveness is forever complete. The glorious theme is, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." God forgives all their iniquities.

Minds are well garrisoned which have these precious declarations prominent in memory, and ever ready for relief. Let it then be a glad task to meditate on some sayings of our God, planted by the Spirit in the paradise of truth. Their purpose is eternal consolation. Their power keeps the heart from sinking amid billows of despondency. They strike the key-note of unending hallelujahs. They present a cup overflowing with true joys.

I. Here the Scripture which introduces this section of the subject stands foremost. It is an assertion so simple, that none can misapprehend; so large, that it defies addition. David in rapture of devotion is ardent to enumerate His mercies. He chides his flagging soul--he strives to rouse his inner man. He exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits." When he proceeds to unfold the catalogue, what mercy outstrips others in claiming primary praise? What heavenly dealing takes the topmost place? It is forgiveness--forgiveness godlike and complete. Hear the announcement--"Who forgives all your iniquities."

Let believers learn the happy art of using this word expertly, intelligently, with undoubting faith. Satan will often strive to bring our sins to remembrance. They readily appear in frightful mass, in vast accumulation. They swarm in all periods of life--in childhood's dawn--in blooming youth--in the prime of manhood--when the shades of declining age cast gloom. Offences crowd to light, openly committed or allowed in secret--acted in every condition and relationship of life--at home, in the family, abroad, in solitude, in the busy haunts of men, in the sanctuary, in the closet, in prayer uttered or neglected, in ignorance, in clear intelligence, when conscience slumbered, and when its voice gave warning, amid misgiving and in daring audacity, in defiance of convictions, in disregard of resolves and vows! Who can count the hideous spectres which are ready to revive and terrify the conscience? But when all sins in all their aggravations threaten, the multitudinous array may be confronted with this relieving word--"Who forgives all your iniquities."

Let the emphatic monosyllable "all" be prized. It is not said some, or few, or many--but "all." God so completely pardons that not one iniquity remains unpardoned. Thus forgiveness gloriously shines in splendor of completeness. Let believers beseech the Spirit so to increase their faith that they may clearly see and clasp to the heart this blessed article of salvation.

Sometimes the idea occurs that Bible-statements fail in general and universal design--that they are the peculiar property of the special speaker. Thus the doubt may arise whether the word of David extends beyond his own persuasion. Paul appears to dissipate misapprehension; he gives this comfort to the Church--"You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Colossians 2:13.)

Thus the assertion of David is adopted by Paul--what the patriarch states the Apostle re-echoes. Let all believers admit the wide assurance, and place the foot of faith on all their sins obliterated by the Redeemer's work. Let them embody among their chief joys the truth so strikingly repeated, and shout--David's word and Paul's repetition are alike from heaven--"Who forgives all your iniquities." He has "forgiven you all trespasses."

Paul in this Scripture not only proclaims the completeness of forgiveness--he enforces it by illustration. He thus continues--"He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross." (Colossians 2:14.)

First, the guilt is significantly portrayed--there is the record in antagonistic force. It is against to us as a fearful adversary. This record is the law's inexorable decree. But vain is this opposition--it is blotted out, canceled, thoroughly expunged, completely wiped away. Let the condemning record of ordinances be searched for--it cannot be seen--it is blotted out. To the believer, then, the law is no more an opponent fierce in threats--it is decked with smiles, as a calm and sweet rule of life. The next announcement adds, "He took it and destroyed it." He has so removed it that it can no more obstruct the road to heaven. The gracious mode of removal is also expressed. Consolations are multiplied.

Christ took it and destroyed it, "having nailed it to His cross." That which is nailed to the cross cannot but expire. When Christ is thus nailed the condemnatory power of the law is also transfixed. By the flowing blood the penalties are completely paid--therefore the claim against us is completely abrogated, annulled, extinguished, death-stricken, crucified. In Christ uplifted on the accursed tree judicial wrath receives extinction. Let these expressive terms be duly weighed. They witness that forgiveness is complete--they swell the note, "Who forgives all your iniquities."

II. The pregnant meaning of the term, "blot out," demands still further thought. The Holy Spirit again and again selects it to express COMPLETE ERASURE. Isaiah gives confirming witness--he sweetly sings, "Pay attention, O Israel, for you are my servant. I, the Lord, made you, and I will not forget to help you. I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free." (Isaiah 44:21-22.)

Here is the same expression heard from Paul's lips. The interpretation changes only to enlarge and deepen the assurance of complete forgiveness. In the mind of the Apostle sins appear as a debt registered in a book of reckoning; in the mind of the Prophet they are represented as thick clouds hanging in black folds in the skies. In each case they are blotted out. Let the Prophet's image be considered. Suppose the skies to be overcast; let the canopy above be as the curtain of night; then let the sun dart forth its piercing rays--where now is the obscuring mass? It is dissipated--dispersed--scattered--obliterated. Evanescence has absorbed it--no trace is left--the vault above is fair in brightness. In like manner, when the hand of grace exhibits the blood of Christ, the darkness disappears--appalling shade is chased away--the believer realizes complete forgiveness, and rightfully adopts the strain, "Who forgives all your iniquities." The Holy Spirit deepening this truth adds line to line, and multiplies reduplication. In the catalogue of prophecies the same image had before occurred--"I even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25.) The fact of complete extinction is thus again announced, and free grace shines brightly as the originating cause. Let faith be acted on the glorious word, and let joy have free course.

III. David presents another image worthy to be cherished. A grand note sounds in verse 12 of this Psalm--"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." The figure pictures immeasurable distance--it represents space too vast for step to traverse or for eye to scan. Let a traveler move from the west striving to reach the east--the distance mocks the

effort; as advance is made, the horizon continues as quickly to recede. In this picture is seen the infinite removal of transgressions. Legal vengeance never again can overtake offence--it disappears in undiscoverable regions. This blessing is the achievement of redeeming blood. It places impassable expanse between the offender and avenging pursuit--it completely, entirely, everlastingly liberates, relieves, rescues. They who believe the record may sing aloud, "Who forgives all your iniquities."

IV. Other images display the truth. Hezekiah in the joy of pardon pours forth his soul in praise. His words are worthy to be often and deeply pondered. Let his ecstatic utterance be heard--"You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption--for You have cast all my sins behind Your back." (Isaiah 38:17.) Expressive is this picture. It is obvious, that objects "behind the back" cannot be before the face. The eye no longer can discern them--they are as completely hidden as if their existence had ceased. Thus our gracious God no longer fixes an avenging look on sins forgiven. Omniscience is His attribute; but omniscience fails to view them. Let this glad assurance be among the believer's treasures. Let him renew the strain, "You have cast all my sins behind Your back." "He forgives all my iniquities."

V. The mind of the Spirit which pervades Scripture again appears in Jeremiah's proclamation--"In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare." (Jeremiah 50:20.)

It is here supposed that search for sin is made but the investigation fails. Sin is declared, in reference to wrath against God's people, to be a nonentity. They who prosecute the scrutiny are constrained to confess they "cannot be found." Let this grand comfort be fully embraced. Let the song be prolonged, "He forgives all your iniquities."

VI. Again--when Micah ends his prophecy, in high glow of rapture he exclaims, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:18-19.) The whole passage is bright as the mid-day sun in tidings of complete forgiveness. Let the last words only be noted. Where will all our sins be cast? Not on the surface of the waves--then they might float, be grasped, and brought again to land. No! they shall be deeply buried in ocean's lowest caverns, in the abyss of mighty waters, in the profundities of unfathomable depths. No more can any line extend to their concealing grave--no toil or skill can any more upraise them. They lie utterly beyond recovery--extrication is impossible. Thus the Apocalypse describes utter destruction--"A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." (Revelation 18:21.) Is all the fruit now gathered from Scripture's tree of complete forgiveness? No--abundance yet remains. Laden branches still drop their golden treasures--but at present enough has been said to awaken the full flow of gratitude. Are there any who feel that they cannot sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities"? The warning against such is fearful. They claim no portion in forgiveness! If they are unforgiven, what is their present condition--what their future doom? Let not the warning be unheeded. There is a broad path leading downwards to a prison-house where forgiveness never comes.

03.07. The COMPLETENESS of Forgiveness (part 2)

The COMPLETENESS of Forgiveness (part 2)

"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."-- Isaiah 43:25 The Holy Spirit in the plenitude of His love seems never to weary in multiplying statements to console, enliven, and strengthen the children of faith. His abundant evidence of the completeness of forgiveness is proof. We are not left to the partial light of slender rays of hope--to constructive arguments from obscure premises--to a fabric of conclusion resting on unstable foundations. We are not sent to extract soul-ease from weak and ambiguous terms. Much is so strongly and so exuberantly said, that the beaming cup of instruction on this point can scarcely hold more. The pastures of this truth are green and spacious and refreshing--the river of this comfort flows on in broad and deep channels. Whoever are wise will largely use this full provision. Let them listen to the cry, "Eat, O friends, drink--yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." They will not grieve the Spirit by refusing to be cheered, when He so strives to cheer.

Let minds now revert to a precious statement on the completeness of forgiveness. Casual reference has already been made to it; but it stands out in proportions so grand and noble that it demands enlarged attention. Let it be heard again--"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."

Thought here contemplates--(1) the Speaker, "I"; (2) the repetition, "I, even I"; (3) the completeness "that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins"; (4) the moving cause, "for my own sake."

I. The SPEAKER. Whose voice thus proclaims obliteration of transgressions? "Hear, O you heavens, and give ear, O earth;" hear, you sons of men, and all who breathe the breath of life. A silver trumpet thus introduces the word--"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." Jehovah speaks from His high throne--our God announces this complete remission. If other lips had thus addressed offenders, the word might have been empty, worthless, vain, and even worse--it might have relieved no doubts--healed no wounds--diffused no peace. Sin is terrible, because it is an offence against God. The offended One alone, can remit its penalties. There is sound intelligence in the question, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" "To the Lord our God," and to the Lord our God alone, "belong mercies and forgivenesses." It is rich mercy that the sole Dispenser of forgiveness here speaks. He whose hands alone contain the gift, opens them wide to scatter the blessing; He who only holds the key, unlocks His treasure-house of pardon.

II. The REPETITION. "I, even I, am He." The Person who forgives, twice shows Himself. This reduplication cannot be without strong cause--weighty motive must impel the Speaker; for there are no superfluous words from divine lips. It is at once apparent that our God, in the riches of His grace, desires thus to awaken attention, to rivet thought, to banish apprehension, to deepen confidence, to inscribe the truth deeper on the heart, to engrave it vividly and indelibly. Hence the

timidity of doubt assumes the aspect of impiety--incredulity becomes insult. Here not only simple repetition appears; it appears with super-added emphasis--"I, even I." I, whom so many provocations have outraged; I, on whom your every movement has heaped affront; I, to whose happiness your salvation is not needful; I, whose justice would gain everlasting glory from your endless punishment--"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions." This important view is powerfully established by the context. Let it be heard in illustration of forgiving grace. The preceding verses exhibit Jehovah arrayed in robes of majesty. As Creator He claims service from the creatures of His hands; He demands the due revenue of adoration--"This people have I formed for myself--they shall show forth my praise." The scene then changes; and He confronts them with appalling charges. In these, as in a mirror, the vileness of the human heart is seen. Worship is not rendered; prayer is withheld; communion is shunned and avoided.

"But you have not called upon Me, O Israel." Here is the sin of utter disregard--proud indifference cares not to seek communion. Here is the haughty language--Who is the Lord that I should seek Him? When such disregard prevails, service will be regarded as intolerable burden--it will be felt as an oppressive yoke. Hence the next words utter the reproach--"But you have been weary of Me, O Israel." Dreadful indeed is the state of alienation, when the worship of the Most High is shunned as irksome drudgery! It follows, "You have not brought Me the lambs of your burnt offering, neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices." The picture of irreligion darkens in frightfulness--all appointed ordinances are neglected; all due observance is withheld.

God then condescends to reason with these children of impiety. He shows that His demands imposed no burden--on the contrary, they were light and easily discharged. "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense." But though requirements gave neither cost nor difficulty, they were contemned, and parsimonious neglect evinced. "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money; neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." The reproach is next adduced, that not only honor, reverence, service, worship, were withheld; indignities were also heaped on God, and masses of sins were piled upon Him. He is weighed down--He is crushed--He is buried beneath the grievous load. "You have made Me to serve with your sins--you have wearied Me with your iniquities."

Such is the picture of man's hardness, ingratitude, and contempt of God. Much might most justly have been expected--provocation is the only return. Can a poor worm of earth thus venture to scorn Jehovah--to wrong Him--to tread Him beneath insulting feet? But it is so. The charge is unanswerable. What can the consequence be? Will patience cease to forbear? Will wrath arise? Will indignation blaze? Will fury stride forth? Will heaven's thunder peal, and lightnings tear, and the gaping earth devour? Will plague and pestilence do their worst? Will the broom of destruction sweep such offenders into the abyss of ruin? The sentence follows. "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." What exquisite pathos--what melting tenderness--what marvelous grace! How godlike--how unlike the utterance of man! Can eye behold and not overflow with tears? Can heart hear and not melt? Such is our God--such is our Gospel. Can we marvel that it triumphs and wins souls! Thus the Gospel is the proclamation of free, complete forgiveness; and thus it goes forth, conquering and to conquer. "I, even I; am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."

III. Thus the focal luster of the word is reached--the completeness of forgiveness. God ordains forgiveness absolute, unbounded, unrestricted, unlimited, unfenced by boundaries, unconfined by barriers. He erects a lofty throne, on which this grace supremely reigns. This lesson is inculcated by the often repeated term, "He blots out." The Spirit again and again draws attention to the significant expression. David, out of penitential depths, pleads with God for entire remission of his guilt. This is his chosen phrase "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness--according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Again "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities." Agonizing for complete forgiveness, his wrestling cry adopts the term "blot out."

It is true that the word has different shades of meaning, according to its context; but its main and general significance is neither vague, nor obscure, nor indistinct. It generally places sins in the most formidable light as registered and recorded debts. It displays them as written in the pages of a book of reckoning, rigidly--exactly--without extenuation; and then leads to the fact that they are completely erased--obliterated; expunged. Not merely crossed-out, for then they might be read again, and subsequent demand be made; but so eradicated that no trace can be discerned. The reckoning page no longer holds a single charge--no letter recording a claim remains. This general message is beyond dispute--one confirmation will suffice. Moses prays, "Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I ask You, out of the book which You have written." And the Lord said unto Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." Hence blotting out imports obliteration from the pages of a book. The term thus expresses complete erasure from condemning records. To stamp reality on the picture of complete forgiveness, to fill to the brim the cup of grateful joy, let thought go forth to meet the Great White Throne. Behold, the books are opened; the register of sins disclosed. Where can condemning entries be found? Doubtless, innumerable charges had been noted; no violation of the Law had been overlooked. Expectation now looks for accusations to be certified; for sentence to be pronounced; for condemnation to be inflicted; for the mandate of execution to issue. But where is the charge? No statement of sins appears--omniscience finds them not. The accuser is baffled, foiled, and silenced. Proof fails. No evidence remains on which to base his charges. But where are the sins? Without controversy they were perpetrated and recorded. They are "blotted out." By whom? Whose hand can reach and touch that book? I, says the Almighty God--"I, even I, have blotted out your transgressions for My own sake." I have sprinkled the page with obliterating blood; I have cleansed it with the purifying merit of a most precious death. Thus all indictments vanish. Thus justly, righteously, gloriously is the believer absolved--thus he is completely, utterly, everlastingly pardoned. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1.) Can believers desire more? Are they not more than satisfied? Is not the heart swelling and breaking with adoration? Will they not renew the song--"Who is a God like unto You, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Will they not exultingly reiterate, "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto the children of men"? But while called to such exuberant delight, gloom may occasionally cloud the brow. The believer may realize that all his sins are pardoned, and erased from accusing documents; that condemnation cannot touch him; that reconciliation is his purchased treasure; that smiles of favor beam around him; that heaven's bliss and glory shall be his everlasting portion. But the vexing thought may intrude, that God's memory will continually recall his many and his mighty sins. He tremulously may reason, If I cannot forget, will not God remember too? Amid all tokens of divine love, will not my mind revert to

former scenes, and be downcast? I shall see, or think I see, amid heaven's smiles, a reminder of my sinful course on earth.

Let such thought be cast into oblivion's lowest depths. It is unscriptural--it is derogatory to the glorious Gospel of free grace. Mark how the word contradicts it--"I will not remember your sins." This forgetfulness is a bright article of the Covenant of Grace. It is there clearly announced--"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34.)

Let none say, How can this be? Let it not be objected, such mental process is contrary to all experience--it is alien to the properties of retentive thought. Let it be remembered that we are now dealing with God--His ways are not our ways. It is impious to limit Him to human incapacity--what is impossible to the creature is possible to Him. The question is--Has He thus spoken? If so, it must be true, and will be realized to the full extent. The immutable word is, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." No reverting look will ever recall the believer's guilt--the smile of bright, eternal forgiveness cannot be clouded. Forgiveness is complete.

IV. The moving cause may not be overlooked. The Holy Spirit again gives it prominence. God's glory is the ultimate design of forgiveness. Man reaps eternal benefit; but the spring from which the blessing flows is high in heaven. Man and man's deeds are universal provocation--in him there is no moving merit. If God did not originate forgiveness for the glory of His name, no sin could have been blotted out. But God's glory is His final end; therefore He blots out transgressions "for His own sake."

Thus He maintains a glorious name. Thus heaven shall re-echo with His praise, and eternity prolong, the grateful hallelujah. Thus all His attributes shall be displayed in one blaze of light. Mercy, tenderness, love and patience; shall not be eclipsed by justice, holiness, and truth. One portion of perfections shall not gain priority; but all shall sit harmoniously on one throne. Therefore, for His own sake, He opens a door for this complete forgiveness to go forth. Who will not now pray with David, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." And with Daniel, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Your own sake, O my God." (Daniel 9:19.)

03.08. The BLESSEDNESS of Forgiveness (part 1)

The BLESSEDNESS of Forgiveness (part 1) "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."-- Psalms 32:1

Scripture exhibits many portraits of the blessed man--each abounds in lovely charms, and claims devout attention. In all there is a common feature--amid much diversity one similitude prevails. None rank among the blessed ones, who have not received forgiveness of sin. Apart from realizing views of pardon, there is no blessedness; for there is no abiding joy in the heart--no glowing beauty in the life--no solid hope in the future prospect. Let forgiveness be withdrawn, and what is man? A brand blighted by curse--a withered branch fit only for the burning--a wretched outcast in a wilderness of woe--a convict awaiting just execution. Scripture rejects such from its worthies. Blessed only is he "whose transgression is forgiven." The subject has now advanced to this point of blessedness. But what expanded thoughts can grasp this glorious theme! What fervent words can adequately paint the bliss! Can temporal mercies be named in comparison? Their whole assemblage multiplied and magnified to all excess, is dim before this treasure. Without this adjunct their fullness is utter emptiness--their satisfaction is a mere blank--their sweetest cup holds no refreshment. The sun may brightly shine--the breezes softly fan--wealth may fill the coffers--domestic joys may happily abound--friends may caress, health may be in firmest vigor; but amid these, and more than these delights, the unpardoned soul is empty, downcast, and forlorn. Such benefits in themselves are shadows with no substance. They cannot command continuance--a trembling hand holds them insecurely. Separation is near--soon, very soon, they may depart. An angry God looks angrily on all; and in His anger there is disconsolation, apprehension, dismay, misery. Nothing really smiles beneath God's frown; and this frown looks sternly on the unforgiven. Can angelic blessedness compete with this enjoyment? Doubtless angels live and shine in supreme happiness forever--their wings expand in heaven's sunshine; but they come short of the ecstatic joy of reading reconciliation in a Father's face. They cannot sing, "Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us, and bought us with the most precious price of His most precious blood." They cannot extol forgiveness springing from the heart of God, and flowing to them through the pierced side of the Lamb of God. There is, then, a blessedness which exceeds theirs--it is the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is thus forgiven." This blessedness now invites review. It comes with two-fold aspect. It has an EXCLUDING hand, driving away all misery--it has an ADMITTING hand, bringing in all joys. It firmly banishes all affrighting foes; it erects a strong barrier against heart-trouble; it releases from the grasp of threatened woe; it slays disquietudes; it stands conqueror over tormenting apprehensions; it spoils all terrors of their sting; it sits in triumph over all causes of soul-anxiety. Collect all the enemies which terrify the heart--their weapons are blunted by forgiveness. In this fearful group the most prominent are, (1) the wrath of God, (2) the curse of the Law, (3) an accusing conscience, (4) the fear of death, (5) the dreadfulness of eternity. Let the several links of this appalling chain be marked in order.

I. GOD'S WRATH appears. Its form is DREADFUL; it justly comes to execute just vengeance. It is RIGHTEOUS; it is righteously aroused to vindicate His outraged rule. It is MIGHTY; it has

unlimited command of every instrument by which misery can be inflicted. No human arm can resist. Where can the guilty hide from it? Let now the sinner meet it with forgiveness in his hand--instantly the avenging sword is sheathed, the thunderbolts of fury fall harmless! Why? The provoking cause is gone; therefore anger ceases--it dies at the feet of the forgiven man. The shipwrecked mariner on a rock of safety smiles upon the waves, the tempest, and the winds--their fury is escaped. Thus the forgiven survey the threats of wrath, and tremble not--no commission goes forth against them. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

II. Next, the CURSE OF THE LAW rolls terrifically. Its voice is indeed the thunder's inexorable roar. It has no heart to melt into relentings--its stern frown cannot relax into compassion. It is charged to fall with all its weight upon each violator of its decrees--it must do this work unsparingly. An immitigable proclamation precedes it--"Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them." Nothing but forgiveness can defy this curse. But the forgiven man calmly meets the uplifted arm--with thwarting plea he arrests its fury. He can truly say, "I am no more subject to such penalty--I hold absolute immunity. Christ, on Calvary's cross, endured my total curse--for me my Surety has exhausted this vengeance." In the Ark the rescued family marked unmoved the swellings of the engulfing deep; in Zoar's shelter Lot looked upon the fiery deluge, and felt that he was safe--so the sinner, sheltered in forgiveness, hears undismayed the blasts of legal threats. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

III. Next, CONSCIENCE is a restless troubler. Conscience is privy to the most secret movements of the mind; its eye is keen to mark all deviations from right course--its hand fails not to record; its memory refuses to forget. It cannot but be an adversary to sin; its voice is active in recital of past deeds--it shows in fearful array long trains of thoughts, and words and acts which no oblivion can bury. These are ready to re-appear at the judgment-bar; and they are justly liable to wrath. This conscience, as a cruel tormentor, often haunts the terrified offender. How can it be shaken off? Where can escape be found? Let now 'forgiveness' appear. It meekly confesses the truth of every charge--it extenuates no guilt; but it points to the book of remembrance, and shows every transgression erased--all iniquity blotted out. Then the conscience is lulled into sweet peace. The debtor no more turns pale at the creditor's approach, if he holds a discharge earned by the payment of a sufficient surety. The rebel flees not from the officer, if he can show the royal seal of pardon. So the sinner, who has received obliteration of every offence in the vicarious blood, peacefully produces his acquittal, and silences all threats of this accusing monitor. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

IV. DEATH to the unpardoned is an enemy clad in armor of terrors. Death comes on with step which never pauses; with hand outstretched, and ever nearing, to bear its victim from this short-lived scene. Its touch will soon extinguish mortal life, and perhaps most suddenly. Then reprieves are ended--the last sand of God's forbearance falls through; the worn-out thread snaps. Hiding-places no more can shelter--all fabricated refuges crumble away. Death is commissioned to dissipate all groundless hopes. Death bears the sinner from earth to meet the judgment-bar, at which delusions vanish, and all is the reality of solemn truth. Hence life-long apprehensions torment. But 'forgiveness of sins' changes the whole prospect--it deadens death's sting. This sting is sin--but forgiveness expunges sin, and so destroys the sting, and leaves the foe spoiled of his destroying weapon. The captive fears not the jailer's step, when he knows that he comes only to release. The forgiven can deliberately say, Jesus is my Friend, who purchased pardon for me; and

death is my friend, who bears me to His arms. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

V. But to the unforgiven man ETERNITY is the most terrifying prospect. He cannot extricate himself from everlasting existence; he cannot extinguish the torch of never-dying consciousness--he must drag on a never-ending day. He may sigh, "Will no night come?" The answer is, "Time is no more." Millions of years bring no end nearer--millions upon millions of ages, do not change the unchangeable expanse. Misery must be misery forever. The worm ever gnaws--the furnace never cools. Oh! what a marvel is it, that a sinner not delivered from eternal wrath can be free from agonizing fear! But forgiveness dispels all these forebodings. What shall he fear whose sins are all washed out? Eternity's long day will not revoke forgiveness. It is as ever living as its Author, "I am that I am."

Such the blessedness of him "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," when viewed from the negative position of excluded terrors. It is high ground of happiness, and truly blessed are they whose feet stand firmly on it. But the whole is not yet told. The hill of forgiveness has a more SUNNY side--the lips of the forgiven sing a sweeter song; pardon brings yet more ecstatic joys. Into the deeper flood, the Lord willing, our barks shall shortly launch. But here a pause is made, with an appeal to shivering souls, strangers to this precious blessedness. Such is a sad condition--and it is voluntary, self-bound misery. Can more have been done by our gracious God to encourage sinners to enter upon this region of blessedness? Let the workings of His love be pondered--let Him be seen from all eternity arranging counsels of peace, sending His well-beloved Son to shame and agony, accepting His blood as full satisfaction for iniquity--and doubts must vanish as to His readiness to pardon. Let His long forbearance and His patient tarrying be marked. Is it not proof that He desires not the sinner's death, but rather is waiting to give welcome in the blood and mediation of His Son?

All out of hell, are within reach of pardon. Witness His faithful volume, so full of assurances, promises, calls. Could He have written more clearly, more largely, more lovingly to testify His delight in mercy? In His Gospel-ordinances forgiveness is the foundation-stone. They all are nothingness and mockery, unless God abounds in pardons. Is there no truth in the testimony of saints in all ages, who have tasted and found this gift of gifts? Are inviting calls a cheat? They surely testify that all who draw near to Him in Christ undoubtedly obtain forgiveness. Clinging to Him in prayer, in Scripture, in ordinances, in holy, watchful, self-denying, God-fearing walk, they exclaim--His forgiving goodness and pardoning grace exceed all thought. Glad experience confirms, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

03.09. The BLESSEDNESS of Forgiveness (part 2)

The BLESSEDNESS of Forgiveness (part 2) "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."-- Psalms 32:1 The blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven presents fresh topics of happy thought. Advance will be more intelligent, if his state is rapidly reviewed. By the light and power of the Spirit he has discerned forgiveness springing from the depths of God's heart, provided by the infinitude of God's wisdom--flowing in the channel of the blood of Jesus--extending to his utmost need, and effectually cleansing his soul from all pollution. He gives thanks for this gracious gift dispensed in the harmonious concurrence of every Divine attribute. He welcomes and recognizes it as holy, just, and good; alike suitable to his ruined case, and bringing glory to God who wills, and plans, and bestows. Therefore, fleeing from every vain refuge, renouncing hollow confidences, he has embraced the sin-expiating cross, he has washed in the all-cleansing stream, and so has entered the blessed region of the pardoned. Such is his spiritual state--a state interwoven with all blessedness.

Hitherto the view of his blessedness has been negative. It has been exhibited as a barrier beating back all the waves which drown peace. Let the scene now change--let the positive benefits appear. The former aspect was calm, because of the banishment of ruffling fears--this latter is far more joyous, because of the overflowing of all delights. Let us proceed then to sit down on the sunny side of redemption's hill, to bask beneath heaven's most invigorating rays, to roam in the richest pastures of God's choicest mercies, to draw water with joy from the very depths of salvation's well. Here is a spiritual paradise, where trees abound laden with richest fruit, and flowers diffusing sweetest fragrance. Here are groves of heavenly melody. At every turn hearts cannot refrain from singing, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." This positive blessedness invites attention from various points. It evidently includes (1) filial contemplation of God; (2) happy communion with Him; (3) bright views of providence; (4) alleviation in sickness; (5) comfort in death; (6) acquittal at the judgment-bar; (7) glory throughout eternity.

I. FILIAL CONTEMPLATION OF GOD. The forgiven man is bold to lift up his eyes and calmly to gaze on God. No clouds, no darkness intervene--no mantle shrouds the Father's face. Ready smiles sweetly look down. The light of His countenance clearly shines. His throne is in heaven, but it is a throne of grace--His seat is lofty, but it is a mercy-seat. His hands are full, but they dart no thunderbolts of wrath--they hold blessings for His adopted children. Glory is the encircling halo, but it is the glory of parental love. The forgiven man looks upward, and such is the sight which cheers him. He seeks God's face, and fears not. He acquaints himself with God, and is at peace. He studies God, and rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Is it not true, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven"?

II. HAPPY COMMUNION WITH GOD. Can the forgiven man thus lift up his eyes and not seek communion? The beauty and the grace mightily attract. He approaches--nothing forbids free access; nothing separates God from man but sin. But this dividing barrier is removed--this obstructing partition has been leveled--this intervening gulf has been bridged. Forgiveness has

swept away all hindrances. He holds in his hand the blood which opens the gates. Thus washed he comes to the very presence--to the audience-chamber, to the bosom of His God. With filial love he cries, "Abba, Father." He hears in reply, "My son." He is bold to pour forth floods of petition, to tell out all the secrets of his heart. Loving ears receive--loving lips reply. Sweet is this communion--hallowed is this fellowship. He dwells in God and God in him--heaven is frequented in spirit before earth is left. The forgiven flies upward and finds this welcome. It must be conceded, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

III. BRIGHT VIEWS OF PROVIDENCE. To him all providential dealings are the visits of a friend. In days of alienation their look was obscure, perplexing, or frowning. Now they are recognized as issuing from the council-chamber of parental wisdom--they are received as angelic guests, dropping blessings from their wings. They have on their front one common inscription--"God is love." They all are charged as David's captains--"Deal gently, for my sake, with my son."

Sorrows in manifold form may come, but they bring no bitterness. Burdens from many quarters may press, but they never crush. The whole tribe of losses may in turn impoverish; but they take not God away. His presence still remains, and then the cup is full.

Outward enjoyments may seem to retire; but the Author of all joy still abides. Chastenings may be many and severe; but they all whisper, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." (Revelation 3:19.) They all testify--He chastens for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Paul's thorn in the flesh was doubtless sharp; but the keen point was blunted when the gracious design was seen to keep the sufferer in the lowly valley of humiliation. Grief is not grief, where there is no curse. The furnace harms not, if it refines the ore, and only consumes dross. Bereavement leaves not friendless, if it brings the chief Friend nearer. Trials do not destroy comfort, if they multiply the everlasting consolation.

Prosperous circumstances are now prosperity indeed, because so sweetly hallowed--the true enjoyment is now mixed in every cup of blessing. Health, domestic comfort, competence, friendships' delights, success in plans, are gilded by the rays of the heaven from whence they come. They are more joyous by awakening the joy of pious thanksgiving--they are elevated by the upward flight of reasonable gratitude. They cause the heart to burn in the rapturous praise, "They all come from my Father! See how He thinks of me--see how He delights to aid me--His eye is on me--His power works for me." The pardoned see this brightness in the face of every providence. Who can deny, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven"?

IV. ALLEVIATION IN SICKNESS. Forgiveness is a downy couch for hours of declining health. Earthly bodies are open to many invasions of disease. Sickness is often at the door waiting to gain entrance. Let then the strength decay, and pains give anguish, and days drag wearily, and nights prove strangers to repose; still the inner man revives when the Spirit reminds of everlasting pardon. Patience smiles, while faith whispers, "These sufferings lead not to eternal death; they waft the frail bark on its course to the land where the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick--the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isaiah 33:24.) He is not depressed by malady, who has Jehovah-rophi smoothing his bed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

V. COMFORT IN DEATH. Forgiveness whispers sweet comfort to the dying ear. Death comes without a frown when it walks hand in hand with assured pardon. Hard indeed is the couch when

the past days record sin upon sin, with no blood to obliterate, with no Savior to redeem, with no Spirit to speak peace, when the eye dares not to face the prospect, and turns in anguish from the retrospect. Oh, the agony of departing when unpardoned sins haunt the sinking soul! But when forgiveness lends its solid rod and its supporting staff the worn-out pilgrim quickens his last steps, and springs forward to intermingle with the glorious company of the saints in light. He has long reckoned death among his dearest treasures. The Spirit has taught him the truth, "All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 3:22-23.) He can say, To me to live has been Christ, therefore to die is gain. But death only can disclose the greatness of this gain. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

VI. ACQUITTAL AT THE JUDGMENT-BAR. This tribunal must be met. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27.) But there are no terrors here for the forgiven man. Condemnation fastens only upon sin--but all his sins have been condemned in Jesus. Their full desert of punishment was paid when Jesus, on the accursed tree, drank to its dregs the penal cup. The vultures of destruction can find no prey. This is the morning of his proclaimed acquittal; this is the day of his coronation before all heaven, all angels and all men. He often sang on earth, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." Now the reality, the welcome, the full redemption have arrived. The King's voice goes forth--"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" "and the righteous shall go into life eternal." Is not the conclusion just--"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven"?

VII. GLORY THROUGHOUT ETERNITY. The everlasting reign succeeds. Death, and hell, and all not written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire. Then the consummation and the bliss shall be fully experienced. The forgiven shall follow the Lamb wherever He goes. He shall see the King in His beauty; he shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. In God's presence he shall exult in the fullness of joy--at God's right hand he shall receive pleasures forevermore. He shall be enriched with all the delight which God can give; he shall be enrolled with all the glory which God can confer. Why? Because no stain of iniquity remains. He has "washed his robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This sketch but scantily displays how blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Heaven must be reached and eternity exhausted before the full blessedness can be known! A solemn inquiry springs quickly from this glorious view. All men should inquire--Is this blessedness ours? Are we among the company of the forgiven? They are thus happy who by the Spirit's guidance have accepted the Gospel-provision, and have truly fled for refuge into the extended arms of Jesus. They are thus happy who, seeing the coming flood of wrath, have entered the only ark of salvation; and under a deep sense of imminent peril, of desperate sinfulness, have renounced self as a pit of ruin, and have trampled down all the rubbish of man-invented remedies, and have from the inmost soul, and with sincere faith, and with devout thanksgiving, embraced the full remission which God has decreed, which Jesus has bought, and which the Spirit lovingly proclaims. Let such as meekly, adoringly avow that the renunciation and the reception have been transacted; that they have thus turned in shame and loathing from self; that they have thus closed with Jesus, not turn from a brief word of exhortation.

Go in peace--your sins, which are many, are forgiven. But go and evince more and more by holy walk your utter abhorrence of all evil, that deadliest murderer of souls. Do not again take into your

bosom again the viper whose venom caused the death of Him who bought this blessedness. Do not again fondle the monster who drove the nails into the Redeemer's hands and feet. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2.)

Go, also, and meditate more and more on the grace and worth, and work of Jesus, the source of this blessedness. Meditate until your enraptured souls become one flame of love. To you who believe He is justly precious--all preciousness. The forgiven should be always chiding their souls to draw nearer in faith, in love, in praise. Hear the voice of the Church--"Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed--I am sick with love." "My beloved is the chief among ten thousand; He is altogether lovely." "Whom have I in heaven but You--there is none upon earth whom I desire beside You."

Go likewise and tell others what blessedness you have found. Compassionate the miserable whose sins remain, and on whom wrath abides; labor by the many means within your power to call them from their fearful state, and bring them to your inestimable bliss. The forgiven enjoy not forgiveness alone--the blessed strive to communicate and extend their blessedness; the saved seek to enlarge salvation's ranks; the heaven-bound seek to journey heavenward in joyful companies. They individually pray, "Draw me--and we will run after You." They continually invite, "Come with us." "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered."

03.10. REPENTANCE, the Path to Forgiveness

REPENTANCE, the Path to Forgiveness

"God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel."-- Acts 5:31

How wondrous is the revelation of this verse! It unfolds a heavenly scene. In the center Jesus appears, made in position "higher than the heavens," exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and thus advanced by distinct exercise of the Father's power. It specifies two offices which He is thus glorified to discharge. As a PRINCE He shall wield the scepter of universal rule; as a SAVIOR He shall dispense eternal blessedness. It displays Him as, in consequence, bestowing two main gifts--repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Such is an outline of this vast Scripture. On the full expanse, however, gaze must not tarry; the present theme restricts thought to the union of repentance and forgiveness of sins. These are precious blessings from the hand of Jesus--but He does not grant them separately; they co-exist, as flowers of one stem--as songsters from the same nest. Is forgiveness given? Repentance precedes. The heart which has not been thus melted will not rejoice in pardon. If it delightedly basks in this sunshine it has reached the eminence through the low valley of repentance. The rich harvest follows seed sown in tears--the cheering rays shine after previous gloom. Heavenly wisdom places repentance in this station; thus a troop of fallacies is dispersed, and many an ensnaring net of Satan is totally destroyed.

Sometimes the enemy whispers to the awakened conscience, How groundless are all fears! God is love--He will not cast off creatures whom His will has formed--His boundless mercy forbids it. Thus Satan strives to retain souls in undisturbed impenitency, and lulls them to sleep on pillows of false hope.

Here it cannot be too strongly stated that God is rich in mercy, and that His mercy endures forever. But mercy is not the total of His mind. Let not the impenitent be deceived--unconditional forgiveness is a groundless phantom. Let none who neither feel, nor hate, nor shun iniquity, beguile themselves with expectation of immunity. Where is it written that pardons bless irrespective of the recipient's state? Flowers grow not on a rock. If mercy alone can arrest due punishment, none can be lost, and hell becomes a fiction.

Again, Satan is wily to use even the death of Jesus as a means of ruin. He artfully employs the cross so as effectually to check real access to it. He sometimes allays soul-trembling by reminding that there is a fountain ever near, potent to cleanse--he strives to induce ease by insinuating that the precious blood hides all iniquity. Atonement free and boundless is indeed the glory of the Gospel. Let it ever be adoringly maintained that the stream from Jesus' side obliterates the crimson stains. But is it true, that His blood falls, without distinction, on transgressors? Look within the precincts of pardon--a vast multitude appears, all beauteous in purity; but each is marked with the stamp of penitence and faith--each has wept for sin, and fled in contrition to the cross. Such is

the Savior's testimony--studiously He frames connecting links. "He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations." (Luke 24:46-47.) Repentance precedes forgiveness; forgiveness closely follows.

Peter on the day of Pentecost sounds the same note. Full of the Holy Spirit, he had denounced appalling guilt on the consciences of the crowd; he pointed to their hands, stained with the Redeemer's blood; he boldly added, "God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36.) Then instantly he showed repentance as the direct path to obliterate their crimes--"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins." There is pardon through the Crucified, pardon even for His murderers--but it must be sought in the appointed way of penitential grief.

Once more, the same Apostle chides the amazed crowd in Solomon's porch. He cloaks not their frightful deed--he charges them with the sin of sins. "You denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life." (Acts 3:14-15.) But away with despair. There is hope, bright and sure; there is all hope even for such guilt--but it shines only in the pathway of repentance. They who stifle consciousness of the evil, perish; they who confess and bewail it, live. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19.)

Such is the voice of heavenly truth--such are the inspired tidings. Hence the ambassador of Jesus is privileged to beseech--O you sons of men, loathe your polluted course; let tears of penitence attest your broken spirits. Come, smiting upon your breasts, to the atoning cross, and you shall be welcomed, and your sins all purged away, and no sight of them again appear. Be wise then--"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." (James 4:10.) "He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13.) But when repentance is thus commended, its essence should be accurately stated. Cheats may assume fair form--all sorrow is not godly sorrow. Many may acknowledge the plague of sin with no true feeling of contrition--even tears may flow without heart-weeping. Weeds have semblance of sweet flowers--tinsel may glitter like the purest gold. Hence it is well that a discriminating glance should survey the features of Gospel-repentance. Let then its properties be tested--thus error's downward slopes may be escaped, and counterfeits be detected. It is possible to perish with a lie in the right hand.

Genuine repentance is a threefold cord. Three ingredients compose the cup--three rays combine to form the picture. The following phases are united.

I. Contrition--which writhes under deep pain. II. Confession--which humbly pours forth the bursting agony. III. Abhorrence--which flees the hated cause of this distress. When these deep feelings meet, repentance lives, a gift from heaven. From these standpoints let this grace be now surveyed.

I. CONTRITION. This is no shallow, superficial, transient emotion. It is not a slender reed, a summer brook, a morning cloud, the early dew. It penetrates the lowest recesses of the heart, and shakes the fabric with a giant hand. It causes a very earthquake in the inward man--it beholds with horror the blackness, filth, and heinousness of sin--its rankling sting is keenest misery. It is not

content with reviling sin as injurious to fair fame, as a blight on temporal prospects, and as the parent of reproach and shame--it discerns it, as rebellion against God. It beholds sin's impious hand uplifted against a loving Father--it loathes its character, as dark in ingratitude, treachery, impiety, and heartless hardness. The thought is torment that this monster has been so embraced. Contrition is thus an awakened anguish for indwelling and outbreking sin--its acts evince its depth. Is not this prominent on the prophet's picture--"Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died." (Zechariah 12:10.) Here is a melting image! We see the writhing misery of the broken spirit.

Let it here be added, that when such godly sorrow rends the soul, relief is near; for a blessed promise closely hastens to console--"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1.)

Next the graphic instance of repentant Ephraim gives light. Contrition strains his very heart-strings. God in His sovereign grace had put forth a chastening hand--the agony of the smitten spirit soon wails. Mark the record--"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, You have chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Then prayer goes forth, "Turn me, and I shall be turned--for You are the Lord my God." Let the result be noted. The contrite heart thus mourns--"After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth." (Jeremiah 31:19.)

Another view of this agony is supplied by Peter. He miserably falls, and Jesus turns and looks upon him. In that piercing eye there was reproach which broke the heart--and love which bound it up. He felt the heinousness of his iniquity. No restraint could cloak his contrition--"He went out and wept bitterly."

It is sweet digression to observe how mercy flies to raise the downcast. The morning of the resurrection comes. At the sepulcher the angel bids the amazed women to be the messengers of glad tidings; but Peter is especially remembered--"Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter, that I am going ahead of you into Galilee." And as that blessed day advances, the risen Savior seeks the trembling disciple in his lonely shame. For when the two hastened back from Emmaus they found the eleven gathered together, and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Peter." This contrition is an essential ingredient of repentance, and this godly sorrow ever hastens to nestle in redeeming arms.

II. CONFESSION. Can this beaming cup not overflow? Can the wounded heart thus smart, and out of the abundance no utterance burst forth? The burdened spirit cannot pine in silence--contrition in its lowest depths looks upward to the mercy-seat. It lingers not, but hastens to God's footstool--there in tears it relates its misery. Sorrow gives wings--the very burden quickens speed. It is conscious that God is not ignorant, but it seeks relief in telling its woe. Daniel gives example. Thus he testifies--"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. I wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled myself with ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: 'O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and keep your commands. But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations.'" (Daniel

9:3-5.) He opens the sluice of confession, and casts off his load in keeping nothing back. Mercy hears and joys to comfort. "I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sins of my people, pleading with the Lord my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain. As I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice." (Daniel 9:20-21.)

There is similar instance in the heart-smitten prodigal. He feels his crushing wickedness--his heart is full and must find vent. "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 pardoning love prevents him--"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." Contrition must confess, and forgiving tokens are pressed on the confessing lips.

Such, also, is the testimony of David--"I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalms 32:5.)

Let, also, the tender notes from apostolic lips be heard--"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) Thus contrition writhes, and confession sobs, and pardoning mercy calms the breast.

III. ABHORRENCE. To compete the lineaments, hatred of and resolute abandonment of sin, must be added. Natural emotions may bewail iniquity; truth may confess its prevalence while the heart remains a stranger to utter loathing, and looks with lingering fondness towards its customary ways. Thus Pharaoh, terrified by appalling judgments, mourns, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I beg you, my sin only this once." (Exodus 10:16-17.) But the lament was as a flitting shadow--it swiftly passed away. The heart was unmoved--evil as evil was not hated.

Saul, in momentary relenting, assumes the penitential garb, while his deadly passion was unslain. The fearful picture of the Psalmist is still life-like--"When God killed some of them, the rest finally sought him. They repented and turned to God. Then they remembered that God was their rock, that their redeemer was the Most High. But they followed him only with their words; they lied to him with their tongues. Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant." (Psalms 78:34-37.)

Seeming repentance then may make unreal show. But when the Spirit implants this grace, loathing abhorrence of sin takes deep root. The whole heart is steeled in stout aversion--its every faculty and power arise in irreconcilable enmity--the whole inward man commences warfare without truce, and tramples it down beneath detesting feet, and hews it to pieces with unsparing severity. It wars not only against some forms of evil; it entirely, absolutely, universally loathes sin's every shape and semblance. It hates it in its very essence, as the enemy of God, as execrable in itself, as the misery of the world, as the viper which drank the life-blood of the Savior. It has been wisely said, "In true repentance every affection of the soul turns away from sin--love says, I will embrace you no more; desire says, I will never long after you more; delight says, I will never take contentment in you any more; hatred says, I will never be reconciled to you any more; fear says, I will watch, lest I be surprised by you any more; grief says, I will mourn and lament because the

soul has been beguiled by you; hope says, I will look to Christ, that my poor soul may at length get victory over you." Thus true repentance flees from all sin.

Such is the essence of this grace. They who are wise will anxiously inquire whether it is their established inhabitant.

How much hangs on the decision! It is beyond dispute that without repentance there is no forgiveness, and without forgiveness wrath must abide forever. Perhaps the search leaves some disturbed with doubt. They may sigh--Would that genuine repentance gave indubitable signs! But why this shivering in a cheerless region? Doubtless no human efforts can create a heaven-kindled flame; but what are the offices which Jesus ever lives to execute? "He is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Let prayer plead with Him--He will answer, and pour down this blessing, and carry on the holy work, until in thorough brokenness of heart and humble confession, and firm departure from all evil, the peaceful realms of pardon are attained.

03.11. FAITH, the Means of Obtaining Forgiveness

FAITH, the Means of Obtaining Forgiveness

"He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."-- Acts 10:43

Here precious tidings direct the anxious soul to peace. Can the fainting sinner hear the glad assurance and not revive? Can he welcome it, and not rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Blessed be the Father of mercies, that His word contains it! Blessed are they whose hearts through the Spirit savingly embrace it. Their life is high in grateful bliss--they revel in the riches of forgiveness.

It has been fully shown that countless sins stain Adam's race. Without forgiveness endless misery is the universal doom--God's frown repels and heaven is barred--the transgressor is shut up in hopelessness--his feet tremble on the abyss of ruin. But this Gospel is a message of forgiveness, and points to the road by which it is approached. All who believe in Christ, whatever their wretched course may have been, are uplifted from the depths of guilt, and raised to salvation's heights. Trumpet-tongued is the proclamation, and everlasting is its echo--"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"--"whoever believes in Him shall receive forgiveness of sins."

Forever this word is settled in heaven. Truth perishes--Holy Scripture loses its fairest charm--revelation is not an unerring guide--there is no sure path and no firm prop, if faith in Jesus grasps not forgiveness. This grand position is now reached. It is a sequel to the preceding topic. The holy link which connects forgiveness and repentance has been marked. The Gospel-warning has been heard--that none sit down at the rich banquet of the pardoned, but lowly penitents, with hearts bleeding for sin, and lips humble in contrite confessions, and feet fleeing every evil way. But now the kindred truth appears. The pardoned not only walk in the low valley of penitence; they moreover mount upward on wings of faith. The graces of repentance and faith may not be separated. Where the Spirit plants one, He surely adds the other--where one lives, the other thrives. If one be absent, the other has no place--they lead in concert to forgiveness.

Let this essential grace, then, now be viewed. It is from heaven and heavenly; it craves forgiveness and it surely gains; it seeks and truly finds; it knocks and the door yields--it extends a hand which instantly is filled, and closes to retain the prize. It bends an adoring head, which gloriously is crowned, and in the crown this bright jewel sparkles--"through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins."

I. The NECESSITY of faith claims foremost place. As Christ alone can efficaciously accomplish salvation; so faith alone can instrumentally appropriate salvation. It is undoubted that all pardon results from the work of Christ. He alone earns it--repetition of this truth can never weary. On His cross He purchases it; by His blood He gains it; by His death He secures it. Every attribute of God beholds the mighty victim, and is infinitely satisfied. Justice surveys sinners sprinkled with this stream and testifies--'It is enough'. No claims and no demands remain--wrath allows that its fury is

extinct, that every vessel is drained, and no drop left. Thus the work of Christ is the full price of pardon. Iniquity is obliterated by it, and is no more found. Sins are covered, and they disappear--forgiveness finds at the cross open door for its full exercise. But how is interest in this efficacious work obtained? Who can claim Christ's death as their rescue, and His blood as their redemption? Who can, in clear conscience, realize beneficial portion in the finished work?

Participation in all Christ's merits is the exclusive privilege of those who are members of His body. If any are not one with Him, His work to them is as a severed branch--a thing of nothing. His sufferings are in vain where no vital union can be shown. None outside the Ark were saved. None escaped the avenger of blood, unless within the gates of refuge. Bread gives no nourishment unless received into the system. Remedies only heal when rightly used. A sinking mariner who spurns the life-boat courts a watery grave--none reach their home who stray in a wrong path; so none gain pardon but the sheltered in Christ's fold.

Now faith is the 'connecting' grace. It is the eye which sees Him, the heart which longs for Him, the mouth which feeds upon Him, the foot which runs after Him, the hand which grasps Him, the strength which holds Him, the holy boldness which cannot be restrained. It ventures to His arms, and hides itself in His wounds, and washes in His blood, and resolutely refuses to be parted from Him. Thus faith unites, connects, cements. Thus possession of the Savior is obtained. No other tendril twines around the stem. Love delights in Him and adores; hope sees the riches of the promised inheritance and rejoices; patience waits long and is not weary; zeal toils and thinks all labor light; prayer brings each need to Him, and wrestles until it gains reply; praise sounds the glories of His name, and thrives on earth that it may thrive the more in heaven. But these graces separately and collectively, do not win a saving interest in Jesus--faith alone effects this union.

Hence as Christ is indispensable to procure forgiveness, so faith is necessary to gain oneness with Him; therefore every true minister cries, "Through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." Hence solemn warnings raise a checking hand--"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) The Baptist uttered words of unchanging truth--"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36.) It is added by the faithful and true witness, "If you do not believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins." (John 8:24.)

II. FAITH'S ACTINGS next demand attention. It is a stirring principle--it kindles a burning flame, and gives sure proof of life; it is vigorous, and it works with vigor; it is energetic, and it puts forth energies. The seed from which it springs, the sap which invigorates, are alike divine. Therefore it grows, expands, exhibits blossoms, and bears fruit.

It sees the vanity and emptiness and worthlessness of human works to merit salvation. It knows that self brings ruin, but cannot repair the ruin; it is conscious that man can add sin to sin, and pile up mountains of transgression, but is utterly weak to remove one atom of sin. It allows that eternal condemnation is deserved, and that the guilty can construct no extricating plea. Therefore it flees from self as from a plague-spot--it rejects it as a crumbling reed; it seeks not remedy from what is poison. Thus in thorough self-aversion it speeds directly to the sure refuge.

It has enlightened JUDGMENT. It forms right conclusions--it adjusts all helps and means with wise discrimination; it seeks a fabric which has firm walls and bulwarks; it knows that many graces sweetly adorn a pardoned soul, but that not one holds saving merit--it feels that repentance will mourn, and wail, and weep, but that no flowing tears obliterate one speck of sin. It looks to Christ, and Christ alone, to wash and cleanse from sin.

It knows that LOVE will brightly burn and rapturously adore, and constrain the willing feet to run with joy the heavenward path; but it invests not love with power to gain forgiveness. It looks to Christ, and Christ alone, as the one efficacious source. It delights in HOPE, as a cheerful comrade mounting with glad wing to the heaven of heavens, and viewing with open eye the riches of the glorious home, and listening with anticipating ear to the ceaseless hallelujahs, and foreseeing the ages of eternal bliss; but it rejects it as the price of the expanded blessedness. It looks to Christ, and Christ alone, as earning the many mansions and the weight of glory.

It has keen relish for the WORD. In those rich pastures it finds sweet food--from those deep wells it draws refreshing draughts; in that clear mirror it beholds enchanting sights; in that divine school it learns transporting lessons; but it regards it only as a passive instrument used by the Spirit to convict and teach. While then it incessantly traverses the precious pages, it never trusts to them as the source of life. It looks to Christ, and Christ alone, of whom the sacred volume is the witness, and whose saving truths it wondrously reveals.

It listens especially to GOSPEL-INVITATIONS. They are many, precious, tender, full of constraining love. It receives them as calls to flee the world and all the transitory things of sense. But while it thus prizes this treasure, it gives it no wrong place. It heeds the voice, and hastens to Christ as the one home to which they point.

Similarly it luxuriates in the wide field of the PROMISES. It expatiates in their illimitable range--it blesses God for their varied richness and immeasurable extent. It sees that they give pledges of all blessedness, and proclaim the Triune Jehovah as the believer's enriching portion. It thus receives the title-deeds of heaven, and rejoices in the pledge of the coming glory. But while it receives such rapture from the promises, while it trusts them as "Yes and Amen in Christ," it seeks not pardon in this assemblage of delights--it knows that they contain no efficacious help. Christ and Christ only can deliver--from Him alone it draws prevailing pleas.

Again, faith uses with high expectation all means of grace. It often seeks audience at heaven's throne--it doubts not that answers will come, and strength be obtained and mercy granted; its very breath is PRAYER. It obeys the precepts--"Pray always;" "Continue in prayer;" "Pray without ceasing." It finds, also, constant calls to PRAISE. Thus it encircles the high throne with adorations--in the house of its pilgrimage it begins the undying chorus of thanksgiving. It devoutly joins also, in public rites--it goes gladly with the holy flock to the appointed house of prayer; it is a foretaste of heaven to unite with worshiping crowds in confessing sin, and supplicating aid, and uplifting the melody of grateful joy.

It thus delights in public service; but above all it finds hallowed food in the sacramental feast. There, in consecrated elements, in the broken bread and outpoured wine it realizes Christ's saving sacrifice. In these signs and seals it gazes on Him hanging on the accursed tree, laying down His life, shedding His blood, purchasing pardon. But while it thus revels in the means of grace, it fully

knows that they are the shell and not the substance, the pathway and not the end. Its eye intently rests on Christ, and Christ alone, as procuring, meriting, deserving, obtaining, buying, winning the forgiveness of sins. Thus the actings of faith always tend to Christ--it turns to Him as the needle to the pole; it never pauses until this rest is reached. Are any elate with hope that this inestimable treasure is their own? Deep self-examination must precede assurance--faith is impersonated by many counterfeits.

Let men beware of mere intellectual notions, which dwell in the head, but pass not beyond this vestibule. How many readily bow before the revelations of Scripture--they confess that they are sinners; they see clear evidence that the cross has been erected, and that Jesus died thereon, and that its province is to bring salvation. But here they pause--they only give historic credence to indubitable facts; with no advance beyond this, there is no real possession of Christ's benefits. The devils know all this. The heart, the affections, the spirit are not here enlivened; there is no close personal reception. Such intellectual belief mounts not to the faith which grasps forgiveness.

Let emotions be suspected which for a while flutter and soon expire. In times of sickness and distress, under the lively teaching of the earnest preacher, when awakening providences speak loudly, many melt and weep, and extol the preciousness of Christ, and express admiring delight. Such is the company of the stony-ground hearers--the soil is scanty; no root sinks deep; no fibers cling to Christ. There is no indissoluble cement--trials, temptations, scoffs, ridicule, and reproach assail--this seeming faith then vanishes as smoke before the breeze. Such feeling is not the faith which secures sin's pardon. Such temporary movements stir only to subside.

Some advance further. They know their need; they see Christ's worth; they take some steps towards Him; but they cast not themselves wholly on Him. They embrace Him with divided love--they only take in part His sacrificial offering. They are ready to rejoice in all His dying work; but they cannot unbar every bolt of the heart, and admit Him to REIGN absolutely, universally, unreservedly. They cannot bring every thought into thorough captivity to His obedience. Some darling sin must still be fondled; some holy precept must be slighted. But saving faith is an honest grace--it follows Christ fully; surrendering every feeling and desire to His will, consecrating every faculty of mind and body to His service. No partial reception secures forgiveness.

There is, also, an indolent, inert faith, which springs not to life-long labor. Faith knows its obligation, and strives by works of love to testify its gratitude. The constant cry is, "Lord what will You have me to do?" In paths of ardent zeal it presses towards the prize of its high calling. Energetic faith alone is bound up in the bundle of forgiveness.

There is, also, a profession which never grows. True faith at first may be a tiny plant; it may rear but a slender head--but if it be of heavenly seed, dews from above will nourish it, and ripening rays will make it fruitful. The heirs of this inestimable gift should live blessing God that He has so enriched them. They should incessantly ponder the grand truth, "Through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." They should love and work as children of God through faith. And that they may ripen in this joy, they should wax stronger in the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith."

03.12. JOY, the Fruit of Forgiveness

JOY, the Fruit of Forgiveness "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"-- Matthew 9:2 The tree of forgiveness, shaken by the hand of faith, pours down rich fruits. From the showers of descending blessings let holy joy be now selected. This bright inhabitant of the believing heart quickly springs from the glad tidings--"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven." Joy is the product of this sweet assurance of forgiveness--it is among the rays which sparkle from the absolving work of Christ. The cavilers who first heard the wondrous words, "your sins are forgiven," rightly reasoned, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But He who thus speaks is the mighty God; Deity is His inseparable property--He usurps nothing beyond His own prerogative when with authority He dispenses pardon. As God He purchased, and as God He gives. Pardon is a myth, except it be divinely given; it is like the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But when faith gains this resting-place joy must ensue; doubts, fears, hesitations flee. All the black clouds of terror, anguish, and dismay vanish; beams of bright light shine joyfully around--thanksgiving and the voice of melody dwell on rejoicing lips; sweet echoes repeat, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!" To animate faith let the scene of this utterance be visited. The spot was Capernaum, the place in which Jesus often rested, as His adopted home. The name suggests warnings, which it would be omission not to heed. In privileges, advantages, opportunities, this city was exalted unto heaven; nevertheless it was brought down to hell. Blessings within reach were spurned; the day of grace was unimproved--therefore the voice of condemnation thunders, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Let all take notice--their state is fatal to whom the Gospel comes and works no saving change.

Here Jesus was unfolding His glorious truths--as a prophet He was revealing the way of life, the only remedy for sin. When He taught, multitudes thronged to hear; but seldom was concern more earnest. Luke relates, that "there were seated around Him Pharisees and doctors of the law out of every town of Galilee, and Judea and Jerusalem." Mark adds that the concourse was so excessive "that there was no room to receive them--no, not so much as about the door."

These eager listeners won great reward. Not only did they receive lessons mighty to save, they moreover witnessed a miracle of mercy; they heard, also, the announcement of sin forgiven, and witnessed the resulting joy. "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"

Here is encouragement to seek with diligence all means of grace. Divine power is accessory to the words of life. A preached Gospel is the channel in which the Spirit flows into hearts with converting, reviving, sanctifying might.

Attention is now attracted by a strange appearance. Four men advance bearing on a bed a palsy-stricken friend. Their desire is obvious, their motive is not hidden--they are intent on reaching Jesus; they are eager to place an afflicted comrade at His feet. They had received news that Jesus was able and willing to relieve; that He wielded power to dispense all cures--this persuasion prompted their intrepid steps. But now an obstacle threatens to defeat their zeal. The

thronging crowd forbids approach; no avenue is open through the dense mass. But ardent faith cannot be baffled. This grace labors and wearies not--it has wondrous skill to invent and persevere; it scorns to succumb, and thus proceeds to triumph. This narrative is a conspicuous proof. All approach is choked--be it so--the roof may be reached. It is not easy with such a burden to ascend; but these friends surmount all difficulties--they stay not, until the top is gained. They discover the spot where Jesus stands; they force an opening through the covering; they lower the pallet, and thus the palsied sufferer lies before Jesus.

Misery is now prostrate before mercy; infirmity is now admitted to the presence of the great Healer--the sick is now at the feet of Jehovah-Rophi. (Exodus 15:26.)

There is no statement that the paralytic uttered an imploring word--but there was eloquence in the speechless spectacle; and Jesus read the language of the act, and understood the supplicating look. Large is the promise to those who ask--they who seek find, and often receive beyond their warmest hopes. But sometimes before the lips speak He gives. It is so here. Jesus addresses him--"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"

He knew that the root and core of malady is sin; He read the real anguish of the afflicted heart; His omniscience discerned the deep-seated pain; His skillful mercy applied the true remedy. He gave assurance that the oppressive evil was removed, and He bade the sufferer to take the full joy of pardon. He knew that bodily recovery with a soul unhealed could bring but evanescent joy. What is the worth of an undiseased frame holding a sin-sick soul? He saw, also, that the palsied man now lying at His feet had well-grounded expectations of healing--He pities the unhappy case; He honors the manifested trust; He blesses the undaunted effort. He freely dispenses pardon--"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"

Oh, precious assurance! happy hour! blessed man! How rich is the harvest here reaped by faith! What joy would bound when this voice of mercy reached his ears! What love and gratitude would kindle!

All is bright and lovely while Jesus is prominent--the scene darkens when eyes turn to man. "He is fairer than the children of men--grace is poured on His lips." Evil also, frequently pollutes the sons of earth. Here is sad proof. Certain of the scribes now say within themselves, "This man blasphemes." They heard Him claim the power of forgiving sin; they knew such gift to be the sole prerogative of God. Their eyes were blinded--the light shone in darkness. They recognized not the divine Person in their midst.

Jesus perceived in His spirit their evil surmises. He proceeds to shatter their vile unbelief, and to manifest the glory of His Godhead. He asks "Whether is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise and walk?"

Let it be observed, He institutes no contrast between the comparative facility and difficulty of forgiving sin and dispelling sickness. Each act is far beyond the power of man; each work requires omnipotence. The outward pretension is the matter of present inquiry. Jesus proceeds thus to meet the cavil. It may be regarded as an easy thing to say, "Your sins are forgiven," because forgiveness is an act consummated in the invisible world, in the court above, far beyond man's faculties to discern. If the pretension be empty boast there is no power to detect and to expose. But it is no easy thing to say, "Arise and walk." This claim is subjected to clear view--a failure

convicts of undue assumption, and shows intention to impose. But if the latter power be evidently displayed the former can no more be questioned. He then triumphantly maintains His claim--"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." Let the scene be closely watched. If there be failure, if the helpless continues helpless, Jesus' power to forgive is wrapped in doubt. If success follows, if malady freshens into health, then doubts vanish, assurance stands firm, persuasion is established--it is indubitable that Jesus on earth can forgive sins, and is mighty and eternal God. The issue puts the crown on Jesus' head. Mark relates--"Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all." Jesus' power shines forth as the sun in his strength. He stands victor over prostrate doubts--He manifests ability to forgive sins. The palsied instantly is whole--the wasted sinews are braced; the trembling limbs are clothed with renovated strength--he takes up the bed on which he recently was motionless. The marveling, the amazed, the awe-struck multitude open a path for him; and he so recently carried, because he could not walk, now strides as a strong man, carrying his bed. Who can fail to be convinced! Who will not give praises and adore! Jesus is able to forgive sins, and He is Jesus still--His never-failing property is power and willingness to blot out transgressions. The miracle is ended. Without controversy Jesus grants forgiveness according to His will. Let the corollary be received, that the sense of sins forgiven will fill the heart with holy joy. A sweet train of confidence and peace will follow the assurance--"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven!"

It may be boldly asked--Where the sense of this forgiveness is seated in the soul, what can trouble or dismay? What blessedness short of heaven's realities can exceed the conscious happiness? The man thus cheered looks upward--no clouds, no darkness hide his Father's face; no chill discourages; no frown repels--paternal smiles beam graciously. Every aspect speaks reconciliation, adoption, favor. It must be so; for the cause of alienation has disappeared. No sins remain to provoke wrath; no barriers check the stream of overflowing love. Shall he not sing, "I am of good cheer; my sins are forgiven!"

Holy confidence may now confront the attributes of God--not one can press a charge against him. JUSTICE brings no more demands--it grants full acquittal. The LAW no more rolls its tremendous thunderings and forks its bolts to dash into perdition. Its menaces are only fierce against sin; but the pardoned man no more provokes. Shall he not boast, "I am of good cheer; my sins are forgiven!" He enters boldly into the court of CONSCIENCE, and fears not to commune concerning the transgressions of past days. The faithful monitor accuses not--it is at ease, because these sins are blotted from the recording tablet. He exclaims, "I am of good cheer; my sins are forgiven!"

SATAN, also, is spoiled of his terrific weapons. He cannot bind the blood-washed one, nor drag him to the fiery cell. Shackles are broken; he has lost his power to enchain. Sins are removed by pardoning grace. The happy song is heard--"I am of good cheer; my sins are forgiven!" When SICKNESS comes, its presence calmly announces speedy deliverance from the burden of the flesh. When DEATH displays its dart it has no terrors--its commission is to bring the pardoned spirit into the presence of the King in His beauty. The judgment-seat will be the scene of final acquittal; eternity will be the cloudless day in which delights will find no end. The true believer counts this joy his own. Hence it is no presumption to adopt the enraptured song, "I am of good cheer; my sins are forgiven!" But there are some who may not thus exult--they have no title to this assured joy. It is sole the property of those who have embraced Jesus as their full redemption, and

who count all things but loss for the excellency of His knowledge. Let those who hitherto have stood apart seek a saving interest in Him without delay. He waits to be gracious. Let hesitation no more detain--weak resolves often perish. Hell is peopled with Satan's irresolute and procrastinating dupes!

03.13. LOVE, the Fruit of Forgiveness

LOVE, the Fruit of Forgiveness

"A certain immoral woman heard he was there and brought a beautiful jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them."-- Luke 7:37-38
"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."-- Luke 7:47

These words occur in a Gospel story. The narrative is exquisite in pathos and exuberant in charms of writing; but it is mainly precious as enforcing lessons of eternal truth. It belongs only to Luke. Let it be approached with adoring gratitude to the Holy Spirit for guiding the pen of this Evangelist to record it, and with humble prayer that in His love He may apply it to promote salvation. The prominent features teach that a realized sense of pardon kindles the flame of fervent love. It must be so, for the knowledge of much forgiveness cannot fail to fan affections into ardent blaze. The pathway to this main improvement leads through pastures of refreshing incident. (Ver. 36.) Simon, one of the Pharisees, "invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table." That sect, as a class, regarded Him with suspicious enmity; but here a liberal mind shrinks not from hospitality. He calls Him to his table. Happy are they who honor Jesus--He will honor them. Happy are they who welcome Him to their hearts and homes--He comes the bestower of blessings.

Jesus complied--"He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat." He is ever ready to draw near when called. If He is absent from our bosoms the fault is ours--we fail to open the door, and crave His entrance.

(Ver. 37.) A startling approach now amazes the assembled guests. The circumstance is heralded by "Behold!" Observe--mark--ponder! Who is this stranger? A woman comes, infamous in the city as a sinner. Her name is not recorded--but her conduct shows her spiritual condition. The unknown is of the heavenly family--her name is in the Lamb's book of life!

It is error to identify her with Mary of Magdala. The appearance of the Magdalene in the next chapter forbids such thought; and no evidence shows that the Magdalene, though grievously tormented, was vile in degrading sin. This stranger was a native of the city in which Jesus was now a guest, and there she was notorious for polluted living.

Tidings had reached her that Jesus sat at table in Simon's house. The narrative records no previous interview with Him; but the account compels the conclusion that she was no stranger to Him--that she had acquired knowledge of His grace and power--that her heart was warm in hope of rescue from the mire of sin and unclean slavery--that she looked through Him for pardon and salvation--hence her affections glowed, and love blazed brightly. Her conduct manifests this state. Let her acts be noticed. Her heart was breaking with desire to testify her gratitude, and openly to honor Him. She could not resist the torrent of her feelings. She must draw near--she is deterred by no fear of obstacles; she disregards the charge of violating the world's proprieties. She took,

perhaps, the best of her possessions--probably procured for personal embellishment--her alabaster box of ointment; she passed the door; she reached the guest-chamber--she saw her Lord; she rushed to the object of her love; and as He reclined on the couch before the table, she took her station behind Him. Can she see Him and be thus near, and emotion not overflow? No--her heart melted. Tears flowed so copiously that they bedewed His feet; with her streaming hair she wiped away the fast-falling flood, and then in the fervor of her holy love she pressed these feet with her lips, and perfumed them with the fragrance of her balsam. The picture vividly proclaimed how she loved Jesus. But whence this mighty glow of love? Her heart thus burned because her soul had received hopes of forgiveness. No other answer satisfies. Did Jesus forbid her, or repel her? They little know His heart who doubt that He tenderly views tokens of love, from those whom He loved before the world began. At this point it requires some violence to turn from the affecting view, and to fix our eyes on the host. He watched, and was offended. He reasoned--Can Jesus allow the touch of one so fallen and impure? He concluded that her character was undetected by Jesus--he suspected that a prophet's penetrating knowledge could not enlighten Him. He thought within himself--No man of God would have permitted such loving expressions from one who is notoriously a sinner.

Such notions prove utter ignorance of the heart of Jesus. The reproach of the Pharisees and Scribes is the glory of His Gospel--"This man receives sinners, and eats with them." Happy are they who can gratefully respond--This witness is true; delighted experience endorses it.

Jesus now shows that He is a prophet in high sense; that He could read the workings of the heart, and knew how to apply seasonable instruction. Replying to the inward feeling, He said, "Simon, I have something to say unto you." He then delivered a simple parable, and added a question which touched the core of the whole scene. "There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pieces of silver, the other fifty." Thus both were deeply indebted; but the debt of the one exceeded that of the other in tenfold degree. "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Who can hear this, and not with adoration recognize the Gospel-scheme? We are all deeply in debt--we are utterly bankrupt--we stand convicted at the bar of God. But we are not cast into prison until we pay the uttermost farthing. Free forgiveness is within our reach.

There may be vast difference of outward guilt; but every sin is a debt, for which no culprit can make satisfaction. The least offender is incapable of canceling his obligations--the greatest and the least are equally insolvent. The least cannot enter heaven without free forgiveness from sovereign grace; the greatest is admitted by the same door.

Jesus asked Simon, 'Which of them will love the most?' The Pharisee replied, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." The conclusion is right--love will be in proportion to the amount of the felt benefit. Jesus approved the judgment; and then, with touches of tenderness and power, contrasted the ardent love of the pardoned intruder with the cold reception of the host. He pointed to the woman at His feet--"Simon, do you see this woman? I entered into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet"--she has sent forth streams from the fountains of her eyes; she has washed them with her tears, while her towel has been the hair of her head. How little was your love! How great was the feeling of her heart!

"You gave me no kiss"--your lips never pressed My brow; but this woman, from the time I came in, beginning from the first moment and never pausing, has devoured My feet with kisses. How cold was your affection! How warm was hers!

"You did not anoint My head with oil." You did not bring the cheapest perfume for My head; but she has anointed My feet with aromatic balsam, with costly myrrh. How scanty was your gratitude! How profuse was hers!

He then touched the mainspring of her conduct--He disclosed the deep spring of her rapturous affection. This fervent emotion arose from mighty motive. She loved thus largely, thus intensely, because much had been forgiven her. She had grasped pardon--she believed that her many sins were all forgiven. Her much love gave evidence.

Perception of much pardon never fails to awaken such rapture. Grace covering immensities of evil begets immensities of grateful manifestation. He who is raised from the lowest depths mounts on loving wings to the highest heights--the greater the burden removed, the swifter do the wings fly upward. Jesus added--"To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." The heart, conscious of but little relief, warms with scanty love. The debt seems small; the release is requited by small gratitude. The reproach conveyed to the Pharisee is keen, though tenderly expressed. Coldness of love results from pardon poorly prized. No blaze of gratitude breaks forth, because no burning obligation has been felt.

Let not the erroneous thought intrude, that this penitent was forgiven because of her love. Love is not the cause, but the effect of forgiveness. It precedes not, but it surely follows--it produces not, but it is the certain result. This woman loved not, until she knew her large, her full, her unmerited pardon; but then love, as the sun emerging from a cloud, shone in full splendor.

Thus the Gospel subjugates the heart. "We love Him because He first loved us." The believer realizes, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Responsive love breaks forth, "My heart, my soul, my body, all are His."

There is rich gain in this devoted love. Let the scene be again visited. The penitent retired not before Jesus gave a smiling look and cheering word--He now spoke with all authority, and sealed her pardon. Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven!" In her service she won assurance; in her work of love she earned a harvest of abounding comfort. Jesus imprints on her heart that her sins were all behind His back, and blotted out of the book of remembrance. But He dismissed her not without pointing to the instrumental cause of her success--"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." She had heard His words; she had been persuaded; she believed, and doubted not--she may now go to her home to repose under the shadow of assurance, and to live in the calm serenity of reconciliation. All peace was now her heritage--she had right to enter on the tranquil domain. Such the narrative. The APPLICATION of this touching scene shall be brief.

I. This woman was abominable in guilt. She had wallowed foully in sin's mire. But she heard of Jesus--she obeyed His call. Sense of vilest evil formed no barrier; it urged her forward--she cast herself on Him, and was saved. This case, which is no solitary gem in the Gospel-casket, loudly encourages. Oh, sinner, though your sins be as scarlet, come to the Savior, and they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, come, and they shall be as wool; though they be piled as mountains upon mountains, His cleansing blood, His covering righteousness, shall hide

all! Are you as full of malady as the notorious leper? A persecutor, a blasphemer, an injurious one, as Paul? As occupied by Satan, as Mary of Magdala--as thoroughly abandoned, as Manasseh--as dishonest as Zaccheus? Only come! He is pledged to cast out no suppliant. Come, and you shall be welcomed. All who look to the cross, as the smitten Israelites to the uplifted serpent, shall be healed. They who cry to Him in the faith of the dying thief shall enter Paradise.

II. All who can truly testify that they have accepted the Savior, and have looked with penitence and faith to Him, and have plunged into the open fountain, and have wrestled with Him for mercy, and are clinging to Him with embracing arms, should bless God for His grace toward them. Let them emulate the example of this grateful woman and show forth their love. Let them manifest it with the lip, and encircle His throne with the melody of constant praise, and chide their dull souls--"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits--Who forgives all your iniquities." It should be exhibited, also, in unremitted self-dedication. "Here we offer and present unto You, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto You."

All the means entrusted to their stewardship should be laid on Him, their altar. Especially they should labor to advance His kingdom among the sons of men, whether they be the ignorant at home, or the perishing in heathen-wilds. This is the test of love which Jesus asks--"Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" again, "Do you love Me?" and again, "Do you love more than these?" "Feed My sheep." "Feed My lambs." It is doubtful love which toils not in proclaiming Christ.

III. Abundant love reaps abundant harvests of delight. This loving servant gained the authoritative assurance, "Your sins are forgiven." So they who labor devotedly for Him advance far into those sweet gardens of joy, where the light of His countenance casts bright beams around--where the pure breezes of the Spirit bring inward health and freshness--where flowers of precious promises diffuse fragrance--where laden trees drop fruits of peace--where melody continually sings of safety, security, full redemption, eternal salvation. They who love Him most, and work most for Him, most frequently receive the tidings, "Your sins are forgiven!" This assurance is worth ten thousand worlds. It gives so much that more can scarcely be desired. It makes every step on earth a sure and rapturous advance to the strong city of which salvation is the walls and bulwarks, and forgiveness is the open gate.

03.14. Filial FEAR, the Fruit of Forgiveness

FILIAL FEAR, the Fruit of Forgiveness "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."--Psalms 130:4 In the train of feelings which issue from the forgiveness of sins, filial fear now claims a place. A brief introduction will pertinently bring out this point.

Gospel-truth is ever armed with mighty power. It is an instrument of wondrous force--it enters the heart, as leaven into dough. It cannot be otherwise; for it is nothing less than an all-conquering weapon, framed and wielded by the Holy Spirit. It is a voice from heaven, and cannot speak in vain. As it proceeds from God, so to God it tends. It stirs the soul to fly aloft--it detaches it from debasing commerce with mere earthly matters; it reveals celestial objects. This sight always transforms--"We all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18.) It wins to that communion which by sure process restores the heavenly likeness, and establishes the predestined conformity to the Son of God. When the Apostle, in burning fervor, speaks of Christ loving the Church and giving Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water, he emphatically adds that the accomplishment is "by the Word." (Ephesians 5:26.)

It cannot be too frequently enforced that this Word thus triumphs because it is not of earthly origin. Its birthplace is not the human mind; it owns not human reason as its parent--it springs directly from the courts above. It is like the stream of the Apocalypse--"He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1.) And as water mounts to its own level, so Zion's streams seek Zion's heights; as rivers rest not until they reach the ocean's bed, so God's own truth rolls surely to the upward home.

Happy are they who delight to breathe the atmosphere of revelation--souls thrive which are invigorated in this immortal climate!

It is folly to spend money on that which is not bread, and labor on that which profits not--rather let the enriching nutriment of this food be sought. One result instantly follows--such students advance in faith, in holiness, and every godly grace. If this were fit opportunity, how easily might the dark converse be exhibited. Who are they who stray and guide into vicious and licentious life? These misleaders are the pupils of the school of ignorance--the proud despisers, or bold impugners, of the Bible. It must be so. If truth be banished, the Holy Spirit has no sphere; and if He be absent, Satan undisturbed rules his benighted captives. When light is excluded, darkness has unmitigated sway; then steps stumble in paths of peril. Hence exclusion of truth is the sure parent of a blind progeny, who show the lineaments of their father the devil. This position might be largely amplified. The connection of ignorance with floods of sin is traced with ease. Similarly a patent link connects spiritual intelligence and true nobility of life. But the subject directs to one exemplification. The Scriptural sense of forgiveness creates filial fear of God.

I. To help elucidation, let an unreal hypothesis be made. Let it be supposed, in opposition to all fact, that forgiveness exists not. Let God be placed in a character immeasurably alien; for a

moment let Him be imagined, as stripped of His inseparable attribute, and known only as an unreality.

It is painful to fabricate such position--the pious mind shrinks from its sight.

It is supposed, then, for the sake of clearer reasoning, that forgiveness is an imaginary notion; that unmixed wrath is God's one feeling towards all sinners; that His heart is one abode of vengeance; that His look darkens with unvaried frowns; that His hands wield only weapons of destruction; that His breath fans no flames but torment; that He knows no relentings; that tender compassion is a stranger to His heart; that mercy is not seated on His throne; that His illimitable resources only act to vindicate His honor, and to pour down impartial requital upon transgressors. For a moment let this supposition be admitted, remembering always that it is untrue.

What would be the frightful result? What feeling would surely rage within the conscious sinner's breast? He is not ignorant of his countless provocations; he knows that Omnipotence is justly his enemy; he sighs, 'Can mercy give no aid!' But on this hypothesis mercy has no existence. There is no forgiveness in the courts of heaven--therefore hope instantly withers. There can be nothing in prospect "but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." There is no door of escape, no refuge, no covert from the impending storm, no hiding-place from the near tempest. The sinner is doomed to brood over utter hopelessness. In apprehension of inevitable woe, the heart would harden into very stone. Every feeling would be frozen into ice; every affection would congeal. If there is no loving Father in the world above, there can be no child-like reverence on earth. God would only be dreaded as an inexorable Potentate, reigning to inflict misery. Hence there would be one wide-spread feeling of SLAVISH HATRED. The hopeless sinner would reason, "What profit can arise from seeking to please Him? No devoted service can melt or turn--there is no ear open to receive cries; there is no eye to regard devoted efforts. Why should man seek favor, when all study would be vain?"

Thus malignant rancor would hold unchecked dominion; every evil passion would riot unrestrained; all barriers would be removed, and defiance would unfurl its standard--bold and reckless rebellion would savagely prevail. Hence, if there be no forgiving God, sullen hardness would make earth a foretaste of hell.

II. Let a curtain drop on this unreal scene. "There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." What proclamation can be louder? "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." Let His voice be heard--"I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me." (Jeremiah 33:8.) And again--"None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him." (Ezekiel 33:16.) Our God is a God ready to pardon. He multiplies to pardon. Forgivenesses, in ever-flowing streams, roll down from the deep springs of His eternal love. His treasure-house is full of pardoning grace--the sinner, pleading the name of Christ, may enter in, and revel in the abundance of forgiveness. These mercies never fail--they never can be exhausted. They are large as Deity itself--they extend to every form and mode of iniquity. No mountain of transgression is so lofty that forgiveness cannot over-top it; no ocean of iniquity is so vast that forgiveness cannot exceed it. The heart of God, in Christ, ever beats with this forgiving love--His hands are ever open largely to dispense it. From everlasting His wisdom formed the scheme which gives free scope to

this overflowing mercy.

Mighty hindrances opposed this grace. These obstacles have already had much thought; but Scripture teaches to add line upon line. Let summation then proceed. The majesty of the holy kingdom must be kept inviolate--it must be magnified, exalted, and raised very high. This result is gloriously secured. Sin is punished; wrath is inflicted; vengeance receives all dues. But the person of the sinner is exempt--a Surety, a Substitute is found. This Surety is strong, no almighty, to endure, and wholly qualified to represent. God's well-beloved Son--His Fellow by eternal generation, man's brother by the assumption of man's nature--undertakes to expiate--"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." In Him every hindrance is swept to immeasurable distance; in Him every plea for pardon is supplied. The contrite sinner may fly to the mercy-seat, and bewailing his iniquities, may plead, 'Jesus died for these transgressions.' In the garden, on the cross, He presented Himself a full, and perfect, and sufficient atonement. In testimony that every debt is paid, He rises again, and shows Himself infallibly alive. To perfect salvation He enters as triumphant Conqueror into the courts of heaven, and sits as unceasing Intercessor on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus pardon may be humbly craved as a blessing purchased, earned, merited, deserved, decreed. Forgiveness thus implored knows no delay--it descends, filling the heart with joy and the lips with praise. A loving voice thrills through the soul--"Son, be of good cheer; your sins, which are many, are forgiven." "Go in peace. Your faith has saved you."

Sweet is the result. The joy is so real, that even the reality of heaven can scarcely augment. Let the happy recipient be viewed. He tightly grasps forgiveness as his own--a deep conviction fills him that iniquity shall not be his ruin; that his many transgressions shall not sweep him to perdition; that no condemnation threatens him; that he stands before God spotless and clean, through the sprinkling blood, and bright and beauteous in the robe of undecaying righteousness. He realizes that--God is his reconciled Father; Jesus his complete Savior; the Holy Spirit his indwelling light, and guide, and consolation; heaven his promised abode; psalms of victory and songs of triumph his heritage forever. Can a happier change be felt! Darkness is gone, and the true light shines; tumultuous passions calm into the reign of holy peace; tremblings have ceased; dread of God has fled. "The desert rejoices, and blossoms as the rose." "Instead of the thorn, comes up the fir tree; and instead of the brier, comes up the myrtle tree." "The ransomed of the Lord return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads--they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away."

Filial fear has banished slavish trembling. The pardoned believer realizes his adoption into the household of faith and family of God. He is no more afar off--his desolation as an outcast is exchanged for citizenship with heaven, and fellow-heirdom with all saints. He exclaims, "This God is my God forever and ever!" This God is my Father while eternity rolls on! "I love Him because He has so loved me." With every faculty of mind and body I will serve Him, and show forth His praise. I will shun, as a viper, departure from His ways; I will reject offence as a poisoned cup; I will watch my every thought, lest any root of bitterness should arise; I will guard the portal of my lips, lest any evil sound should issue forth; I will strive to walk even as Jesus walked, and to abound with fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of His name. Thus he who lately trembled as a slave, warms into the loving child; and the criminal who sought concealment, now craves closer union. His ear is ever listening for directions; his lips continually cry, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" His loins are girt for daily service; his feet are shod with preparedness for work; his one pathway is

sincere obedience.

Thus the sense of forgiveness melts, and softens, and converts. The sweet captivity of love prevails. A reconciled Father is adored, whose guiding eye is always sought. Others may abstain from evil, through selfish fear. The disgrace, the reproach, the loss of fame and friends may deter; but the pardoned soul sees a loving Father in every command, and vile ingratitude in each transgression. He feels with David--"Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." He reasons with holy Joseph--"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" He realizes His amazing mercy, and love constrains him to make God's will his chief delight. He knows that grace purchased pardon for him; so he lives as one bought by a price, and bound to glorify God with his body, soul, and spirit, which are no more his own. The truth is thus incontrovertible--that the full reception of the Gospel leads to filial fear of offending his Savior. He is the saintliest man who most entirely embraces the glad tidings of complete remission.

Hence the wisdom of constantly striving "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The continuous charm of life should be to gaze on Jesus, and to study the full achievements of His work; the daily position should be beside His cross. Increasing knowledge of the purpose, aim, end, fruits of His dying love, should be the mind's pursuit.

Thus assurance would flow like a river through the soul. The first voice from the cross should be ever resounding in enraptured ears--"Father, forgive them," bestow the mercy which this blood procures.

Blessed, indeed, are they who rejoice in evidence that their iniquities are forgiven and their sins covered. They go from grace to grace; they enter on paths of joyous service. Theirs is the fear that loves, and the love that fears.

03.15. A Model for Imitation

A MODEL FOR IMITATION

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."-- Ephesians 4:32

Divine forgiveness is here commended as a pattern. High and heavenly is the prescribed walk. Precepts from God admit no lower standard--His children must ever strive, the Spirit helping, to be holy, as He is holy; to seek perfection, as their Father is perfect; to purify themselves, even as Christ is pure. This molding in celestial likeness is mainly formed by study of the Word. The sacred truths, to which thoughts there are led, produce resemblance--this is a general position. The present subject points to especial instance. The art of forgiving will be best learned by gazing on God, set forth in Scripture as the glorious Model. The students in this school will be conspicuous on the stage of life--forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them. Let the example first be viewed--the duty will then take a clearer form.

1. THE EXAMPLE. Grace has been seen as the deep SOURCE from which forgiveness springs; the cross has been uplifted as the procuring PRICE; representative atonement has shone forth as the central luminary of the Gospel-system--the surety-death has been exhibited as its axis of rotation. God, acting in the element of Christ crucified, acquits the sinner. His anger subsides; the torch of wrath is quenched; remission is won; pardon waves an olive-branch of peace. Thus God forgives, and stands forth as a Model for instruction.

(1) Is it asked, To WHAT does forgiveness deal such mercy? It is replied--To every form of evil; to sin in its every phase; to every violation of the law; to vile omissions and to worse commissions; to boundless provocations; to repeated insults; to irritating affronts. It forgets the ingratitude which repays kindness with ill-treatment; it remits the debt of ten thousand talents; it wipes out robbery, and sacrilege, and wrong. Hateful is this spectacle; but forgiveness overlooks the total mass.

(2) Is it further asked, On WHOM does forgiveness look with rescuing eye? The answer is--It smiles on creatures who have daringly defied the great Creator, and trampled on His gentle rule; on children requiting their parents' love with enmity, and wounding their breasts with shafts of hate; on subjects warring against their rightful King, and harboring foul plots of treason; on servants withholding obedience from their Master, and wasting goods entrusted to their care; on men striving to seat Satan on the throne of God. Such is a picture of graceless man. From these forgiveness takes the filthy garments, and in their place gives heavenly robes!

(3) The inquiry follows, What moves God thus to forgive? No inducement from the side of man appears; no streaming tears persuade; no penitence, no contrition, no shame, no confession of iniquity, no acknowledgment of guilt, no downcast heads, no stricken hearts, urge melting pleas; no promises of change besiege the mercy-seat; no vain excuses strive to avert just wrath. Why then should criminals be spared? It is a fruitless task to seek a cause from earth--there is no motive but the heart of God. Grace reigns. Grace forms the scheme in which forgiveness works.

Through the atoning blood, through the obedience of the Son of God, a heaven-high fortress is erected, in which the sinner may find sheltering mercy--in this fabric every stone is laid by grace. Thus God freely pardons, moved by the impulse of His love. When man deserves all woe, pardons dispense all blessings. Such is heaven's example. It is as bright as the eternal day; it is perfect as its Author; it is glorious as God.

II. THE DUTY. Those who rejoice in forgiveness are exhorted to emulate the grand Exemplar--"Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." The precept thus to act assumes that opportunities will occur. The story of each day gives melancholy proofs. While Satan is at large, evil will not be dormant--at every turn its hateful image will be seen. The moral picture of this earth is sad. Love exerts not universal sway; kindness breathes not as an encircling element; tenderness flows not as a perennial stream; truth spreads not as pervading atmosphere--on the contrary--a swarm of provocations buzz with irritating sting.

Let direct acts of cruelty, injustice, wrong, not now be named--let the lesser excitements of the day be marked. A fly may tease, an insect may disturb--thus peace is ruffled without flagrant deeds. How often are pure motives mis-represented--the rightful fact distorted--calumnious reproaches circulated--disparaging reports diffused--unjust suspicions entertained--base charges whispered! Hearts are wounded by the poisoned shafts of slander; and fair fame blasted by whispered insinuation, or the untruth of suppressed reality. Thus the causes of vexation are a prolific brood--rare is the day which knows them not. Hence angry feelings will be prone to rise; indignation will chafe against restraints; fretfulness will suggest that to resent such treatment is alike befitting and praiseworthy.

Let not such feeling nestle in the mind--let it expire before it can gain birth. Resentment grows not in the Gospel-garden--it is a weed of heathen wilds. Reproach is not the language of the school of Christ. Evil must not meet evil, nor sin compete with sin--such conduct reflects not heaven's rays, nor shows the features of the great Exemplar. Such erring steps stray widely from the heavenly rule. The unforgiving spirit may sometimes frame excuse. It may be said that provoking conduct has been cruel, undeserved, and often-repeated--that much pain has been inflicted, and much loss in fame and character and property sustained. Doubtless there is aggravating cause, or no vindictiveness would rise. Waters are calm when no wind blows; the viper stings not unless touched; if no fire burns, no smoke ascends; the engine moves not without steam. When the irritating cause is great, the door is widely open for Christian principle to stalk forth. Circumstances may render rebuke most easy; the offenders may be powerless to escape; the injured hands may hold the rod. These advantages give large opportunity for Godlike spirit to shine brightly--the Model shows all power forgiving utter weakness. A secret thought will sometimes lurk, that such precept is beyond the power of man; that human shoulders are too weak to lift such loads. Doubtless unaided man is a frail reed. But why is he ever without aid? He who commands is ever near, and ever able to brace the nerves and to supply all strength. A child sinks not beneath a weight when the parent lends supporting arm; a weak man on a giant's back can do grand work; Moses called to face a mighty monarch, shrinks not when assured, "Certainly I will be with you." The hosts of Midian were mighty--how can Gideon repel them? He heard the word, "Go in this your might;" and again, "Surely I will be with you." The promise was sure. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" gained the victory. The timid fleeing on the battlefield are often wounded in the back--the brave march on and tread down foes. Jonah seeks escape from duty, and meets the

storm and prison in the sea. He, who obeys the call from heaven, finds to obey is strength. Is it not written, "He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might He increases strength"? (Isaiah 40:29.) And again, "He that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, and as the angel of the Lord before you." (Zechariah 12:8.)

He spoke what he had found, who said, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me." (Php 4:13.) They who strive to "forgive one another, as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them," will find the mandate to be ability.

He understands machinery best who sees it in its work. Let instances then appear, in which grace helped believers to forgive. Are any smarting under cruel usage, worn down by savage and relentless hate?--Stephen's dying scene gives counsel. Could death be more unmerited and more inhuman? He stood the saintliest of the saints of that day; the Holy Spirit dwelt in him in abundant measure--it was his joy and constant work to preach Christ Jesus and to call sinners to the way of life. But malice thirsted for his blood. Amid the shower of crushing stones, reproach stains not his lips--there is no call for retribution to avenge his cause. "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep." (Acts 7:60.) Grace triumphed over nature's impulse. God's precepts through God's help, can be obeyed. Sweet is the word, "Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you." (Proverbs 20:22.)

Paul brings corroborating proof. He stands accused at the imperial bar--he is denounced as seditious, and causing peril to the state. No friend appears to intercede in his behalf, to testify his innocence, to bear witness to his blameless course. As with his Lord, so it is now with him--all forsook him and fled. But his Lord's own Spirit strengthened him. Christlike, he gently writes, "At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Strong was the provocation to complain and to resent; but he was enabled to imitate heaven's Model, and to forgive, as God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven him. Thus in the effort there will be success.

Let it be added that Christian profession implies a forgiving spirit. What is the heaven-taught prayer? What is the constant utterance in public, in the closet, on the knees?--"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us." Is this reality, or mockery? Let not hypocrisy insult the mercy-seat--let not the plea be false on which forgiveness is implored; let not untruth arrest the wings of mercy. Here let it be noted that when the lesson of prayer is ended, forgiveness is the point to which our Lord reverts. Solemn are the concluding words, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Let not the warning be in vain. The thought then is untenable, that to forgive is to surmount impossibilities. The apostles when exhorted to this grace, conscious of insufficient power, prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." (Luke 17:5.) Let help be similarly sought. The hand which held the sinking Peter is near to aid. Difficulties will vanish--duty will become delight. Smooth is the path in which feet often tread.

03.16. Condemnation of an Unforgiving Spirit

Condemnation of an UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

""This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."-- Matthew 18:35 The parable of a man, alike a debtor receiving mercy, and a creditor showing none, thus ends. The words impress the main lesson of the picture; they unveil its prominent feature; they exhibit the important point on which the eye should rest; they awaken the echo which should reverberate from the perusal. The warning shows that unforgiveness from God is the doom of those who forgive not heartily, gladly, universally, unreservedly, every offending brother his every offence. To withhold forgiveness from offending man is proof that there is not forgiveness from the offended God. "Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you." Such is the inference. It is most distinct. May an expository review of the story instructively impress it. At the entrance a caution may not be ill-timed. The parable teaches that the unforgiving shall not find forgiveness. Such is the appalling truth. But misapprehension must not here delude. It would be grievous error to infer that forgiveness on man's part constitutes in any sense the originating cause, and moving spring of divine pardon. God is not thus actuated. But still none have a saving interest in His absolving grace whose hearts are stern in unforgiving hardness.

Let discrimination analyze the case. The fountain of forgiveness of sin is grace--the purchasing price is the God-man's blood; the recipients are the children of eternal love--the flock given to Christ in counsels of eternal wisdom. They are loved, because God willed to love them. They are forgiven, because Christ's blood has paid the total of their debt. They have washed in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, because the Spirit has made them willing in the day of His power. They have, also, forgiving hearts, because the same Spirit has softened, melted, hallowed them, and established His reign of gentleness and love. This forgiving spirit is sweet evidence that they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of the heavenly inheritance. Without Him, there is no scriptural warrant for joying in the remission, which belongs only to the family of faith. He, who forgives not from his heart his brother all his trespasses, bears on his front those unrelenting features which exclude from fellowship with the forgiven.

These thoughts lead to the graphic lesson of the parable. Let advance be made with eyes fixed on the focus to which the rays tend, and only pausing to gather warrantable improvement from the embellishing circumstantialia. The scene thus opens (ver. 23)--"the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him." The reflecting mind instantly turns to our heavenly Father, arrayed in all power--the sovereign Ruler of the universe--who distributes to his servants their several talents, arranges their opportunities, and is about to institute the scrutiny of final reckoning. They are wise who walk and speak and live and work as they who know that they must be made manifest before the judgment-seat, and that everyone "must receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad."

(Ver. 24.) "When he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought unto him who owed him ten thousand talents." Enormous is the amount. Astounding is the debt. It almost surpasses calculation. A terrifying thought arises--All men are debtors to God's justice, and who can reckon the inconceivable immensity of the obligation? Illustrations fail to span infinity--no words can paint a boundless magnitude. Count all the stars which sparkle on the breast of night--count all the sands which form the ocean's bed--count all the drops which constitute its billows--super-abounding sins exceed. Pile them, and the pyramid overtops the highest summit of the heavens. Let the ten thousand talents of transgression be estimated, and terror must petrify all hearts. Despair must sink into the lowest dust.

(Ver. 25.) "Since he had nothing to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." The sinner's condition is utter insolvency. In himself his only property is sin. Darkness cannot create light; sin cannot cancel sin; debt cannot liquidate debt--therefore, if justice takes its course, irretrievable ruin must ensue. The sentence is just--"Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."

(Ver. 26.) "The servant therefore fell down and begged him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." In agony the debtor is prostrate on his knees. He urges no denial--he makes no excuse; he pleads no extenuating circumstances. His importuning language is confession. He prays for respite. Seemingly bereft of reason, he promises an impossibility--even full restitution. Let the sinner learn hence to sink into the depths of contrition, and to utter only cries for mercy; but let him shun the notion that he can make any repayment by his own efforts, and in his own person. Such error may not be inferred from this portion of the pictorial scene.

(Ver. 27.) "The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go." The narrative sweetly manifests pity, forgiveness, liberation. It is an exhibition of the Gospel of free grace. Our heavenly Father is rich in compassion--mercy is His precious attribute. It constitutes a grand portion of his essence--it reaches unto the heavens--it endures forever. It provides means in Jesus through which the chains fall from the sinner's hands, and the prison-cell is not his doom. An obliterating decree expunges the whole claim. But the servant's enormous debt was brought clearly to his view, before he sought or could esteem remission. So by the Spirit's power the sinner must be taught to feel his hopeless, lost, and ruined state, before he will extend the hand of faith to grasp the free-grace pardon, or can value its full blessing. The scene now frightfully changes. Surely the debtor thus graciously forgiven, will be melted into one flood of tenderness! Surely all his thoughts, and words, and acts will now flow in placid streams of gentleness!

It is far otherwise! The story thus proceeds (ver. 28)--"The same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred pence." He goes out--Happy are they who ever abide in closest fellowship with God! In keeping near is safety, happiness, and holy living--in the slightest departure is peril, temptation, downfall. This recipient of such goodness met a fellow-debtor who owed an hundred pence--an evanescent sum compared with his own debt just remitted--it scarcely amounted to a millionth part. Offences towards our fellow-men, though very grievous and most vile, have pigmy form beside our giant-sins against our God.

(Ver. 29.) "And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that you owe. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."

He hears the entreaty which he so recently had urged. He had prevailed. He is now supplicated by the like petition, and he miserably hardens. The heart of unrenewed man appears in odious colors--the nether millstone is of softer material.

(Ver. 30.) "And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt." Unrelentingly he consigns his fellow-servant to the dungeon more justly merited by himself--he sternly inflicts the penalty so tenderly remitted to his prayer. Unmelted by a sense of his free and full pardon, he freezes into icy cruelty.

(Ver. 31.) "So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done." Many eyes look watchfully around, and pitiless obduracy even here awakens indignation. Many Christian hearts, in meek complainings unto God, call down attention to surrounding misery, and pray Him to put forth His mighty hand to check all evil and redress all wrong.

Now the final scene is reached. (Ver. 32.) "Then his lord, after he had called him in, said unto him, O you wicked servant." For the first time reproof goes forth. "I forgave you all that debt because you begged me; should not you also have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on you?" If the mercies of redemption, and the tenderness of the God of all grace fail to produce meek, loving, gentle, forgiving temper, the evidence is clear and sad, that the Spirit who uses the Gospel as His conquering power is not present. In such case the unsubdued heart has not been allured into the arms of Jesus. To receive Him is to become partaker of His love--to abide in Him is to abide in heavenly-mindedness. The unmerciful are not fitting through grace for heaven, where the congenial song is praise for forgiveness without end. Is not the warning plain?--"He shall have judgment without mercy that has showed no mercy."

(Ver. 34.) "And his lord was angry, and delivered him unto the tormentors until he should pay all that was due unto him."

Such is the dreadful conclusion. Let its solemn message sink deeply into pondering thoughts.

(Ver. 35.) "So likewise;" in like measure, and the measure is torment until all is paid, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Unrelentings will fall on the relentless--they who spared not will not be spared--there is no pity for the pitiless.

It should not be wholly omitted that one occurrence here has raised perplexity. An inference has been wrongly sought, exciting some clouds of doubt. It appears that the mercy granted to the unmerciful servant was subsequently revoked. It has hence been imagined that a sinner forgiven today may through aggravated sin, be subsequently condemned. It is sufficient to reply that such fears are wholly in opposition to the whole tenor of Gospel-teaching. When God forgives, He forgives wholly, and forever. "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "He hates divorce." "Repentance is hid from His eyes." Let it be added that this injurious inference is drawn not from the main lesson of the parable, but from its descriptive dress. The circumstantial drapery of a parable brings into clearer light a main lesson, but it never may be unfairly pressed to establish any doctrinal position.

Let none then cavil, but let all hold fast the rightful lesson. Let honest inquiry penetrate the heart, and see if any traces of enmity, malice, resentment, still linger. If so, let humble prayer ascend for increase of grace, that we may forgive the pounds due to us, and so may rejoice in evidence that God has forgiven our ten thousand talents. He may trust that God has forgiven him who feels that he can forgive all injuries. Mercy to others is reflection of mercy from above.

Here the thought can scarcely be repressed, How perfect is the Gospel-rule! If it had sway, the breast would resemble the ocean in repose--no storm would ruffle; no angry passion would disturb. Peace would walk hand in hand with joy, and every pulse be love. The promised scene would dawn--"Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Revelation 21:3.)

03.17. Eternal Glory, the Ultimate Cause of Forgiveness

ETERNAL GLORY, the Ultimate Cause of Forgiveness

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."-- Revelation 7:9-10

The worth of forgiveness will not be fully known until time swells into eternity. To enliven hope and to encourage, strengthen, and embolden faith, the Holy Spirit withdraws the veil, and presents a prospect of the endless raptures which will then become reality. To this scene revelation here invites. Let revering hearts now intermix, and reap some first-fruits of the harvest which forgiveness will then surely reap.

I. THE TIME. When shall this bliss commence? It dawns when the endless age shall have arrived, and Jesus shall have "delivered up the kingdom to God the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." (1 Corinthians 15:24.) When the peaceful sway of the millennial prelude shall have brightened into fuller, richer perpetuity; when "the great white throne" shall be removed, because its work is finished; when death and hell, and whoever was not found written in the Lamb's book of life, are swallowed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14), and the righteous shall have passed into life eternal. (Matthew 25:46.) This day is surely coming. Let us in spirit meet it, and ask, 'Will it find us in the rejoicing throng, whose sins are pardoned through the blood of Christ?'

II. THE NUMBER. "Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." How blessed is the sight! During the earthly state the redeemed appeared to be a little flock--a tiny speck in a dreary waste, a rare flower in a weedy desert. The solitary pilgrim often sighed, "I, I alone, am left." But now how changed is the scene! The collected throng baffles enumeration--to count the happy hosts eludes all power; numbers are impotent to reach their expanse; no vision can embrace them--their horizon has no bound. On the right hand and on the left they stretch beyond all gaze--in the front and in the rear their vastness spreads beyond all measure. They are "a great multitude, which no man can number." They all on earth had sins as countless as their countless throng; but all their sins are now forgiven!

How wondrous is the blood of Jesus! How matchless is its worth! The result is worthy equivalent of its expenditure. All the efforts of the revealing Spirit, all the labors of ministers who agonized in prayer and toil, all the devotedness of missionaries and martyrs who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, were well spent to promote this end. Amid this vast assemblage shall we have place? We cannot fail, if we tread the appointed way. This great multitude found pardon at the cross.

III. WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? Once they were sinners upon earth, but now they are gathered safe around the throne. They come from every part and portion of our globe; out of every

nation, and all tribes and people and tongues. The Gospel-trumpet sent forth a world-wide note--"Their word went into all the earth, and their sound unto the ends of the world." The word cannot go forth in vain--"it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Here is fulfillment of the promise--here is the illimitable crop gathered from earth's wide field. Let, then, the faithful missionary, whether in the obscurity of distant climates, or under tropic sun, or amid the savage inhabitants of the northern snow, be bold and fear not. He is gone at heaven's bidding, to do heaven's work--his message will triumph; the cross will conquer. The Spirit through the Word will give life, and souls will be born again, unto forgiveness, and join the happy throng. The call has reached us--at the bidding have we fled to Christ?

IV. THEIR POSITION. "They stand before the throne, and before the Lamb." Distance no more intervenes--separation's barriers have fallen. Sin once spread veils between the sinner and God's smile; ignorance interposed mists, and unbelief wrought blindness. But sin no more obstructs. Thus forgiven multitudes stand in the very presence of their God and of the Lamb. They have reached the grand consummation of all their holiest hopes; they enjoy fulfillment of their most wrestling prayers; they gaze fully, clearly on the face of God, and live. The rays of His glory shine upon them, and they endure the blaze, and perish not--rather they bask exultingly in His light. They read the expression of all His love; they ponder the open volume of His heart; they know even as they are known. Shall we stand among them and thus see God? It will be so, if we are sprinkled with the redeeming blood.

V. THEIR ROBES. "They are clothed in white robes." Sin had stripped them of the garb of innocence, and polluted them with filthy garments; but sin is all forgiven, and no defilement remains. But how is their clothing thus beautiful? "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They plunged into the cleansing stream. In faith they hastened to the remedial laver--its power was supreme. Through its virtue the scarlet stain became white as snow, and the crimson dye became white as wool. Shall we thus shine above the brightness of the sun? Have we thus washed?

They saw, also, by faith, the glorious obedience which Jesus in man's nature achieved. They put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a covering fit for the marriage-supper of the Lamb. They utterly shunned all merit of their own, and they received Him, and rejoiced in Him, and gloried in Him, as the Lord their righteousness. Shall we be similarly clothed? There is no doubt, if our shelter is in Christ.

VI. WHAT IS UPLIFTED IN THEIR HANDS? They wave palms. This emblem proclaims triumph and joy. Heaven is the place in which warriors rest, and the rejoicing sing. In the world numerous foes arose against them--their struggles were many; their conflicts were fierce; the battle was long; the fight was incessant. But now victorious feet tread on the neck of every enemy. Sin never can again assail--the tempter can no more allure or threaten. Death has done its worst, and now they live securely in repose; the conquered grave has given up its prey; hell has no power to harm--enemies are swallowed up in victory. In token of this triumph they wave palms. Shall our hands hold these pledges of successful combat? Good hope is ours, if we are fighting the good fight of faith, and are overcoming by the blood of the Lamb. But the shout of triumph is a shout of joy, and palms express exuberant delight. The sin-forgiven drink deep indeed of the ever-flowing

river of boundless bliss; but at present no tongue can tell, no image can depict, no heart can realize their full pleasures. They have all the happiness which God can confer; they have all the delights which the infinite capacity of glorified bodies and glorified spirits can contain. How wondrous is the amount! Who can estimate the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore! It is all theirs--all theirs forever. They feel it--they know it--they avow it--and in full realization every hand of all the innumerable multitude raises high its palm. Shall we be happy in this happiness? The promise is sure to us, if the expiating blood has cleansed us from sin's polluting stain.

VII. THEIR SHOUT. Open the ear of faith and hearken. "They cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." When the assembled company of the redeemed thus fill the many mansions, what is the first sound heard? Salvation! Every voice is raised to cause the glorious home to echo and re-echo with the cry--Salvation! They all realize, We are saved; we are saved forever! Salvation is ours; we have reached salvation's shore; we have entered salvation's realms; we have obtained salvation's prize. "Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Ofttimes in the world thanksgiving was upon their lips--grateful notes were their frequent song; they delighted to ascribe praise. But now, for the first time, 'realized salvation' is the sum of the ascription to their God. All their gratitude and all their joy is concentrated in this grand shout--"Salvation!"

They know what they possess, and they know, also, how they obtained it. Is there thought of self, and human merit, or man-earned heaven? The thought is abhorrent to a saved soul. It is far otherwise. All salvation is of free grace. "Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." The Father decreed it, willed it, planned it. His love chose every one of that vast gathering in His Son; His grace gave the whole number to be His bride, His jewels, and His crown; His wisdom contrived the mode by which they should be cleansed from every stain, and gloriously enrobed in righteousness; and by the Spirit's power be purified, fitted, sanctified. Every stone in salvation's beauteous fabric was selected, prepared, placed by a loving Father's hand. "Salvation to our God!" The chorus adds, "and unto the Lamb." Salvation unto Jesus--the appointed, the expiating, the satisfying, the accepted Sacrifice. By His blood He purchased, by His sufferings He won, by His cross He earned, by His passion He procured salvation. To Him, and to His dying love and atoning merit be the praise. Without His death they must have died; through His death they live. Without His cross they must have passed into perdition; through His cross they hold salvation. Salvation is rightly ascribed to Him, for salvation is from His finished work. Hence sounds the melody of their grateful hearts. Befitting is this music for the redeemed to pour forth, for heaven to hear, for the Father and the Lamb to receive!

Here is the consummation of the bliss of the redeemed--here is the consummation of the work of forgiveness. God is glorified. All praise to His free grace! "Grace to it; grace to it!" is the universal and heaven-wide, heaven-long tribute.

Others indeed are present, who have no share in this forgiveness--even all the angelic hosts. Can they thus witness the joy of the forgiven, and hear this glory ascribed, and be unmoved? No--they fall before the throne on their faces, and worship God, saying, "Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen." Is not forgiveness a blessed gift? Are not they happy who have gained it? Until we reach this rest of glory, while still we toil and struggle, while still we bear the pilgrim's staff--let us love

and praise, and give glory to our God and unto the Lamb. Let our heaven begin before this earth is passed. Let faith exult before sight dawns; let hope take realizing flight; and let the constant feeling of our inmost souls be, "Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

04.00 Gleanings from the Book of Life

Gleanings from the Book of Life By Henry Law, 1877

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04.000 Preface

PREFACE

Inattention to the 'semblance of religion' is not the failing of the present day. The Church and its affairs occupy large space in thoughts and writings and discourse. While luxury, love of pleasure, the pride of life and selfishness in all its multiple forms, as rank weeds, overrun the surface of society, they choke not lively interest in spiritual concerns. Notwithstanding the chilling blasts of infidelity, and the enervating malaria of superstition, zeal for 'forms of devotion' conspicuously holds its ground. To look around gives proof. Is money solicited to multiply and enlarge churches and schools, to endow districts, to embellish fabrics, to deck protrusive choirs in emulation of dramatic orchestras, abundance generally responds to the appeal. It must be allowed, then, that unprecedented liberality excludes the charge of cold indifference in sacred matters.

Hope, ever joying in bright prospects, gladly marks these demonstrations, and trusts that England is advancing to fulfill the prophetic rapture, and to be a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God." (Isaiah 62:3) But a truth here cannot be wholly checked. In nature early appearances often raise fallacious hopes. Vernal blossoms may promise more than autumn yields. Means do not constitute the end. Steps may enter the right path, and still no home be ultimately reached. The application of this thought is obvious. Edifices may exhibit architectural skill in full perfection. Beauties of stone and marble may delight the beholder. Flowers and fruit may decorate the scene. The officiating minister may be splendid in attire. Services may be as ornate as ingenuity can render them. Singers in conspicuous dress, and in conspicuous place, may sound enchanting melody. But after all, the benefit may not extend beyond the charmed eye and ear.

Let it be fully granted, that so long as such elaborations transgress not the chaste proprieties of Reformation-rule, suspicious distrust should not interfere. But there is peril, lest the signs of life be mistaken for realities. Shadows are not substances. Tinsel is not pure gold. Hence, when these signs exceedingly abound, caution will become more vigilant, and wisdom not slumber in its watchtower. No folly ever yet denied, that religion avails not, if it evaporates in moments of emotion. The long procession and the crowded pew are not necessarily the strait gate and the narrow way. Trivialities make triflers. Solid food gives strength. The current then of modern propensities loudly warns, that the mind preoccupied by 'mere external show' cannot admit essential verities. Is it not beyond all controversy, that apart from living faith in Christ, there is no pardon for sin, no cleansing from iniquity, no reconciliation with our heavenly Father, no access to Him, no welcome to the sacramental feast, no peace of conscience, no hope of heaven, no escape from hell! Is it not as indisputably true, that outward means are not the link which join the soul to Christ, and that the senses gratified are not the heart converted, and salvation won! We are infallibly taught, that the proclamation of the Gospel is the heaven-appointed instrument to minister such blessings. No substitute can take its place. If Christless sermons fall on Christless crowds, allured by music and bewitching show, the lifeless will remain lifeless, and the bubble burst in woe.

This is no new conviction to the writer of the following pages. Long experience and extensive observation have often awakened the sorrowful lament, that, amid much laudable exertion in the cause of religion, the only remedy for sin is miserably neglected, and well-meaning men expend their energies in sowing chaff. He has heard many complaints of ministerial defect, but few acknowledgments that the main fault is pulpit shortcoming. He sees, that "Christ is All" in the scheme of Redemption, and therefore should be all in the messages of His ambassadors. Hence in former days he humbly strove to exhibit Christ as All in the pages of the Pentateuch. He concludes this work by selecting scattered passages to show that the same truth pervades the sacred volume. No defense is made for them, who study not all reverence and decorum in the accessories of public worship. All circumstances should excite the feeling, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:17) But surely greater faults belong to those who place externals on the throne of Christ. If elaborate ritual engrosses thought, and rather diverts from Christ than raises to Him, soul-ruin must be the result. Enlightened wisdom always keeps forms and rites, as the unobtrusive handmaids of things spiritual. The faithful pastor burns with desire to have saved souls as his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. Music and vestments will not be joy and glory in that day.

04.01. Angel of the Lord

1. ANGEL OF THE LORD

"The Angel of the Lord appeared to him...And Moses hid his

face; for he was afraid to look upon God."— Exodus 3:2-6 An avenue of sacred story leads to this wondrous scene. The prelude is awakening which introduces the grand subject. In the foreground Moses is seen. Forty years had run their course since he fled from the court of the Egyptian king. His burning zeal and patriotic spirit had flared too high. The fears of a suspicious monarch had been roused, and the safety of the reputed grandson necessitated flight. His refuge was the land of Midian. Here he long dwelt in peace, as a shepherd among shepherds. His calm employ would give abundant leisure for communion with heaven. Reflection would review past days. Thus profitable training schooled him for his destined course.

God frequently ordains that early obscurity should lead to most distinguished work. Dark hours precede the break of day. Joseph rises from prison to sit beside the king. From the sheepfolds David is called to occupy the throne. The set time has now arrived. The deliverance may no longer tarry. The discipline has ended, and the prime instrument is prepared.

Moses, now seeking refreshment for his flock, leads them to Horeb, the mount of God. As he journeyed, his eye is attracted to a bush. Great indeed is his amazement as he surveys this sight! It was bright with fire; but though it blazed, it still retained its substance. Each branch, each fiber, was wrapped in flame; but the flame was harmless to destroy. Each leaf was clasped in the fangs of a devouring element, but still each leaf remained as if untouched. The fiery fury seemed to be in sport. The bush defied the attack. It stood uninjured, as if incapable of losing verdure. The gazing shepherd would indeed be rapt in wonder. But amazement deepened into awe, when in the bush he saw the form of "the Angel of the Lord." A voice too addressed him, "Moses, Moses." He replied, "Here am I. And the Angel said, Do not come any closer: take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5)

What constitutes the sanctity? Why is the rash approach of mortal foot forbidden? Surely one more than man must now be revealed! Present Deity must hallow the spot. It was so. The voice continued: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." (Exodus 3:6)

We here learn that Jesus is "the Angel of the Lord." The voice announced, "I am God," and the appearance exhibited a human form. Who can be both God and man but Jesus? The Father never appeared as man. The Holy Spirit never thus condescended. But the blessed Jesus, anticipating the time when earth should claim Him as its child, not infrequently assumed our form. Therefore, without hesitation, we receive "the Angel of the Lord" as Jesus the incarnate God.

Here let a pause be conceded, which without digression asks, What brings Jesus to the burning bush? What feelings actuate His heart? The reply lingers not. We hear the voice: "I have surely

seen the affliction of My people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." (Vers. 7, 8) Exquisite tenderness melts in these words. Assurance of compassion is most sweetly stated. Let no believer faint in the hour of trial. His feet may travel in affliction's road. He may be called to lie on the hard couch of sorrow. Troubles may roll over him as wave upon wave. But the eye of love ever watches him, the heart of love ever throbs sympathetically for him, the ear of love ever listens to his cry, the hand of love will in due season be outstretched to help him. The patient sufferer will sing with David, "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me." (Psalms 18:19) Thus comfort to the sorrowing is an early lesson from the "Angel of the Lord" appearing in the burning bush.

It is, too, scarcely a digression to note, that this appearance was deeply engraved on the patriarch's mind. His course throughout the wilderness was not external ease. Hard were his toils, and grievous his afflictions. But in his trials thought would fly back and take solace from this scene. The recollection of his Lord's appearance would check desponding fears. Strength would revive, refreshed by these sweet memories. Thus it is wise to erect Ebenezers in the course of Christian pilgrimage. The closing scene shows this appearance to have been a life-long comfort. Forty years again rolled on, and the man of God reached the conclusion of his earthly career. Before his lips are silenced, a legacy of precious gifts, brilliant with prophetic luster, is invoked. The treasures of earth are ransacked to find suitable gifts for the tribe of Joseph. But the crown of desired mercy is, "the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush." (Deuteronomy 33:16) Thus, when ready to depart, Moses remembers "the Angel of the Lord," and he recalls Him as the source of blessings to the sons of men. Here let the ready prayer ascend, Good Lord! give us grace ever to bask under the sunshine of Your good will; Your favor is life; Your smile is deliverance from all woe! The vestibule is now passed, and we are prepared to seek general instruction from this title.

I. It is obvious that the name mainly denotes that Jesus is the channel of communication between heaven and earth. There was a time, but it was very brief, when communion with God was free. In Eden's happy hours charming communion was maintained. A loving child drew near, a loving Father given a welcome. No barrier intervened; no separating obstacle presented checks; access was unimpeded. The garden was the open door of heaven. But sin comes, and instantly a breach is made. Illimitable distance now parts God and man. Can that distance be removed, and converse be again established? "The Angel of the Lord" appears, and in His mission there is full reply.

Restoration to this blessed communion springs directly from His wondrous person. Jesus, as both God and man, brings heaven to earth, and raises earth to heaven. Thus the mountains upon mountains of obstacles are swept away, and intervening seas are annihilated. Thus a ladder is constructed, resting on earth, and soaring above the skies.

Let each aspect of our Lord's person now be pondered in confirmation of this truth. It cannot be kept too constantly before the mind, that He is very God—co-equal with the Father—His partner in majesty, in dignity, in power, in glory, in all preeminence. For a moment imagine Jesus displaced from the throne of Deity. The whole fabric of salvation crumbles into dust. No expiation can be made, no sin pardoned, no soul saved. But on all His acts on earth the impress of Deity is inscribed. His footprints are Deity. The echo of His voice is Deity. The whole gospel-story resounds, "Behold your God!" Of all the truths of revelation, none more brightly shines than that "the Angel of the

Lord" is Himself God over all, blessed forevermore. What God is, He is. What God knows, He knows. What God wills, He wills.

If He were only God, the separating distance would still check communion. But all praise to His unbounded love, in the plenitude of overflowing grace He becomes an inhabitant of earth! Without ceasing to be God forever, with no diminishing of essential Deity, He enters the family of man. Without the capability of sin, He is as truly man as any woman-born can be. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." (Hebrews 2:14) He humbles Himself to be "the first-born among many brethren." (Romans 8:29) As God, He is one with God; as man, He is one with man. On each His hand is placed. In Him as a center they can meet. The link is perfect, an unobstructed way unites our earth to heaven.

II. But as "the Angel of the Lord," He especially reveals God to the sons of men. He visits earth, not only that He may live our life and die our death, and suffer our sufferings, and pay our every debt, and bear our every curse, and make atonement for our every sin, and redeem us from all iniquity, and work out for us a heaven-deserving robe. This is indeed His glorious work, as the Savior of His people from their sins. But He came, moreover, on a sweet embassy—to open out the Father's heart, to tell us the Father's will, to shine before us as the express image of His Father's person.

Let a kindred title here give light. Jesus is announced as "the Messenger of the Covenant." Almost the concluding words of prophecy in the ancient Church proclaim, "Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 3:1) It is faith's privilege to know, that before time was, an everlasting Covenant secures salvation. In all its terms Christ has essential part. He stipulates to God for man. He speaks to man for God. But not only is He its Surety, He is also its Messenger—its Angel. He reveals its mysteries, and opens out its wonders, and invites to the contemplation of its grace. Let no doubts here intervene. Let all mists of hesitating ignorance disappear. Hear the grand word, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." (Hebrews 1:1-2) Through Him, the Eternal Word, the counsels and purposes of heaven are announced. We are invited to draw near and give heed. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." (Matthew 17:5) We are called to receive the message, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money: come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isaiah 55:1-2)

Sweet promises, also, cheer obedient hearers. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29) And again, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20) Rich is the heritage of the listening Mary. She sat at the feet of Jesus to hear His voice, and received the full assurance, "She has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42) Is not the same access open to us now? May we not at all times and in all places cry, "Speak, Lord, for Your

servant hears?" "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) And the gates of this storehouse are never closed. He has come, a light into the world, that those who follow Him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. Never is the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed. It is faith's chosen pleasure-ground to come apart from lesser luminaries, and to revel in the rays of this unclouded sun, and to rise above schools of nature, science, philosophy, and to drink lessons from celestial springs of truth. Are our souls athirst for God, for the living God, eager to know Him as He really is? In this ardent desire we may fly to "the Angel of the Lord." He replies, "Look unto Me." "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father." (John 14:9) He is the light of life, and on this brightness we may gaze. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Here we may study, written as with a sunbeam, all the Divine attributes. If we seek such discoveries from this world's school, how blighting is our disappointment! If we ask, "What are the feelings of God's heart?" The world presents a fearful roll, written within and without, with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezekiel 2:10) Misery stalks up and down the earth, wretchedness sits beside each hearth, tears are ever flowing, sighs are ever heaving, pain is a constant visitant, apprehensions are ever banishing repose, earthquakes and storms and floods and famine, and wars and rumors of wars, move on with desolating speed. These dark spots affright, and we ask, Can these be offshoots of benevolence?

"The Angel of the Lord" appears, and all is bright. He gloriously shows that "God is love." The proof is His own mission. "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) "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) "The Angel of the Lord" exhibits Himself as sent by the Father, to rescue immortal souls from misery, to crown them with eternal bliss, to wash out in His blood their every sin, to robe them with unfading righteousness, to fill them with all the fullness of God, to make them sharers of all the glory of heaven forever. Thus He illustrates the glorious truth, "God is love."

Similarly He commends every attribute. All are conspicuously glorified in Him. Justice is honored; all that is asked is fully given; not one debt remains uncanceled. Much is demanded. Jesus paid all. Truth sits triumphant on its highest throne, not one word from its lips fails, not one promise is unfulfilled, not one threat is put aside. It is declared that without holiness no man can see the Lord; that none but the sanctified can sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. "The Angel of the Lord" assures us, that for all this blessedness there is full provision, that a new creation shall be established in the hearts of the redeemed, that "old things shall pass away, that all things shall become new." Thus "the Angel of the Lord" is the channel of communication between heaven and earth, and gives full manifestation of the Father's essence.

Angel of the Lord! who will not adore You as the way to heaven, and the source of all saving light! We beseech You to enlighten us more and more, to sanctify us daily by Your truth; "Your word is truth;" to fulfill in us Your blessed declaration, "O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it; that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:25-26) When other teachers would perplex, mislead, beguile; shine forth in all

the luster of heaven's own light! From our inmost souls we profess, Angel of the Lord! "we know that You are a Teacher sent from God"—to none other will we go; "You have the words of eternal life."

04.02. SUN

2. SUN "The Lord God is a Sun."—Psalms 84:11 The sun, the noblest object in the material works of God, is here enlisted to represent our Lord. In its beauty and in its effects, whether seen by the eye, or felt in its results, it teaches largely. It shines not in vain on the terrestrial globe. May it not shine in vain, as spiritual instruction! Arise, O Sun of Righteousness! abundant source of joy and gladness, and enlighten our minds by the inspiration of Your rays.

I. In the firmament above, one sun meets our view. From the day in which the Creator's hand hung out this lamp of light, it has admitted no equal or compeer. Lesser luminaries have indeed glittered, deriving their luster from this center; but its seat has always been supreme. No competitor disputes its reign. To this day it rules unrivaled. And the same sun, which gladdened our first parents, shall display its brightness to the last descendant of the race of man.

Thus, in the scheme of redemption, there is but one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. "As there is one body, and one Spirit, as we are called in one hope of our calling, so also there is one Lord." (Ephesians 4:4) "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) Vast is the family of adopting grace; many sons in faith cry "Abba, Father." Through union with the Lord of Life many are made "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" but Jesus alone sits on salvation's throne. The truth is gloriously established: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) A world of lost sinners has one need; one Savior comes rich to supply. Much is required; one is granted in whom sufficiency abounds. Jesus is the one. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

Let enraptured thought expand. Contemplate the multitude of the redeemed around the eternal throne. They are very many; no stretch of mind can count them. They all were once transgressors upon earth, stained by innumerable sins. Now they are all whiter than the whitest snow. How has their loathsome blackness vanished? They have all washed in the one laver of cleansing; they are all pure by the application of the one blood of the one Jesus. Their filthy garments are all removed, they are arrayed in fitness for their high abode. Where was this lovely apparel won? They drew near, and by the hand of faith put on the righteousness which Jesus alone wrought. They all sing one song; it is ever new, it can never weary. It is thanksgiving, honor, praise, and power, unto God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

While one sun shines to robe the world with light, can men be found so senseless as to exclude the entrance of its rays? Can they deliberately doom their dwellings to the perpetuity of darkness, or grope only by the feeble flickerings of 'candle twilight'?

Such infatuation exists not in things temporal. But in things spiritual far greater madness effects ruin. How many turn from Christ, the one only light of life, and seek to walk by their misguided reason, or the figments of their folly, or the inventions of dark superstition! Let such heed the

warning, "Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow." (Isaiah 50:11) O Jesus! may we never draw back from You, the one, the only "Dayspring from on high." (Luke 1:78)

II. Of all material works, the sun confessedly commands preeminent admiration. Its resplendent orb is the firmament's grand ornament. Such is its dazzling splendor that no eye can long endure the gaze. In beauty it rises in the eastern chamber, in beauty it pursues its course, in beauty it sinks into the western bed. It shines in day-long perfection. No words can justly delineate its surpassing charms. If thought should endeavor to suggest improvement, vain would be the effort. No skill can picture more embellishment. Thus it shines a fit emblem of the blessed Jesus.

True it is that when He appeared as man, no pomp or parade marked His unobtrusive course. The splendid palace was not His abode. Stately equipage and gorgeous retinue attended not His steps. He moved the lowliest among the lowly, the meekest among the meek. In this sense He had "no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2) But to the eye of faith how different was the view! To those who believed, His every aspect was preciousness. Through the thin covering of mortal flesh they "beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." The Spirit exhausts terms to set forth His praises. "He is fairer than the children of men." Is not the Father gloriously arrayed in every attribute of perfection? Jesus is His perfect exhibition. As the impressed wax shows the image of the signet, so He represents the Father.

It is delightful exercise to meditate on the glowing raptures of the Song of songs. The charms of earth are called to picture the heavenly Bridegroom. He is "the chief among ten thousand. He is the altogether lovely One." (Song of Solomon 5:10, Song of Solomon 5:16) Who can portray the beauties of His person, character, and work! He appears as humanity robed in Deity. How enchanting is the tenderness of His heart! His pitifulness and compassion refuse all counterpart. His walk among the children of men was to do good—to cheer, to solace, to dispense blessings. As the sun's rays traverse the vilest hovels of filth uninjured by the contact, so Jesus sojourned in the regions of pollution untainted and unsoiled. His every look reflected heaven. His every word was God's own voice. How glorious in beauty must He be who is thus the very embodiment of God! We praise the sun, as the luster of the skies; so we praise Jesus, as the luster of heaven's glory. To the eye which gazes on the sun, surrounding objects disappear. Thus to all who gaze on Jesus, the charms of worldly things are dim.

III. The sun rises, and darkness flees. What would earth be, if the heavens gleamed not with this light! What would be man's abode, if one dark pall were spread around! If surrounding objects were no more visible, if human features were unseen, if creation's beauties were no more apparent, life would be monotony of woe. Terrified imagination shrinks from the bare thought. "Blackness of darkness forever" pictures the miseries of the lost. But the sun comes forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and robes the world with gladness. Mists vanish from the mountain's brow. Vapors no longer darken the low valleys. The world is bright, and shining objects captivate the senses.

Faith is here taught to see an emblem of its beloved Lord. It is His province to dispel the misery and gloom of ignorance. He is the Light of the world. His faithful followers no longer walk in

darkness, they delight in the light of life.

All saving knowledge results from His teaching voice. As the sun is seen by its own light, so Christ is shown forth in Himself. He reveals what nature never could discern—the real character of sin; its filth, its vile pollution, its deluding frauds, its malignity, its demerits, its frightful course, its dreadful end. Men grope in darkness until this light shines; and then the awakened soul sends forth the cry, Who will deliver me—how shall I escape—is there no refuge? Thus it discerns the natural condition, and loathes and abhors itself.

What raptures abound when the day-star from on high presents Jesus in the boundless radiancy of His eternal love! The joy is unspeakable and full of glory when Jesus shows the redeeming wonders of the cross. The streaming blood is then discerned as the payment of every debt, the satisfaction of all claims, the obliteration of all stains. The work of atonement is seen as wholly finished in His life and death. Heaven's glories blaze as a purchased possession, and the soul revels in the brightness of the Gospel-hope. As the sun gladdens earth, thus Jesus gives exhilaration. Faith often sings, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." (Psalms 130:5-6) The morning surely comes, and no disappointment chills the enlightened children of Christ's grace!

IV. Earth owes fertility to the genial influence of the sun. If fields are green and meadows are clad with verdure, if trees put forth their leaves and blossoms bud, and fruits hang down in plenty, and crops ripen and luxuriance fills the gardens, if food abounds for all earth's inhabitants, if seasons in turn cooperate to bring plenty, we owe this multiplied luxuriance to the effects of light. The sun looks down and earth responds in varied produce. Sterility departs, abundance takes its place.

Such is the vivifying work of Jesus. How cheerless and how barren is man's heart until celestial visits fertilize. In nature's soil no grace appears, no fruits of holiness enrich and gladden. But Christ's enlivening presence turns the wilderness into the garden of the Lord. Then precious faith springs up and grows exceedingly. Then hope raises its lovely head, and looks onward to the fullness of delight. The soul flourishes as a well-stocked garden. Beauteous flowers emit enchanting fragrance, and trees of righteousness are richly-laden. The believer under this influence is like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit in due season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." (Psalms 1:3) "He is as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:8) The description is spiritually realized, "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob; how lovely are your homes, O Israel! They spread before me like groves of palms, like fruitful gardens by the riverside. They are like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters." (Numbers 24:5-6) Behold in contrast the multitude who are strangers to the power of this Sun. They are "like the chaff which the wind scatters away." He is the fruitful Christian who ever pitches his tent on the sunny side of Zion's hill.

V. Warmth is the glad offspring of the sun. How changed is nature's face when shivering winter frowns, and the sun's course is brief, and indirect rays fall powerless! Chilling is the mantle which is spread around. Vegetation droops. The groves are silent. The babbling brooks are mute in icy chains, and dismal dreariness pervades each scene.

How often is the soul subject to cold seasons! It is prone to relapse into pristine hardness. When the presence of the cheering Lord is absent, duties are inertly performed, prayers freeze on the lips, former lusts exert their deadly influence, indifference checks the flow of spiritual exercise, ordinances no longer nourish, vigor for work is bound by wintry fetters.

Such is the effect when the Sun of Righteousness withholds His visits. Christ only can relax the hardness, and recall refreshing glows of joy. His converse is the summer warmth. Hear the avowal of the disciples: "Did not our hearts burn within us, when He talked with us by the way?" (Luke 24:32) The sun obscured and the sun's blazing warmth, shows the contrast between Jesus withdrawn and Jesus present. Those who dread these benumbing seasons should never cease the prayer, "O Lord, quicken me according to Your Word."

VI. It has been said that healing efficacy resides in the sun, and that diseases are banished by its rays. The Spirit seems to endorse this notion when He depicts the Sun of Righteousness arising "with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2) But if doubt veils this healing quality, the cure of spiritual maladies beyond all controversy is exercised by Jesus. Heed His title, "I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:26) Heed the well-known words, "Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." (Psalms 103:3) How thankful should we be that there is this "balm in Gilead, this Physician there." For grievous ailments are man's doom. The hereditary evil of inborn corruption, and the long train of maladies received by infection and connected with pollution, besiege our bodies. Truly "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isaiah 1:5-6) But why should our souls thus groan and languish! In Jesus there is remedy for every pain. Is it written in vain that in the days of His ministry on earth "as many as touched the hem of His garment were made perfectly whole?" (Matthew 14:36) Let then the cry approach the mercy-seat, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; for You are my praise." (Jeremiah 17:14) The answer will not linger, "I will bring health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth." (Jeremiah 33:6)

Many and obvious are the improvements from this teaching emblem. Suffice to add, those who are animated and cheered and warmed by the bright shining of this Sun will surely reflect His rays. They will obey the invigorating call, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." (Isaiah 60:1) They will cause their "light so to shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." They will show that "children of the light and of the day" is no unmeaning title. (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

04.03. FRIEND

3. FRIEND "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."— Song of Solomon 5:16

Such is the language of the rapturous spouse. After enumeration of the charms of the spiritual Bridegroom, the boast cannot be restrained, "This is my Friend!" This is He whom my heart loves, my chief delight, my joy, my glory, my all. The utterance of the collective body expresses the feeling of each component part. Every true believer exults in this happy portion, "This is my Friend." The very name of friendship sounds as a melodious note. To hear it, is to receive pleasure. It is a theme which has awakened the poet's sweetest song; and on it moralists have instructively enlarged. The glowing pen has rapturously extolled it as the charm of life, the solace of the earthly pilgrimage, the balm of sorrow, the delight of early days, the prop of declining age, the unchanging joy in every changing scene. It is a true saying, Happy is the man who has a friend. He possesses what wealth could never purchase, what prosperity could never really win. What then shall be said of his supreme felicity who can in truth aver, My Friend is Jesus, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" "God over all, blessed forevermore;" "the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One"—the Lord who has all power in heaven and in earth, who wields the scepter of universal sway, in whom is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" who loves with an everlasting love, who hates divorce! This is the believer's privilege. Without presumption he can boast, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

Let this grand truth be now approached by an analysis of some PROPERTIES OF FRIENDSHIP.

I. Mutual knowledge. This feeling can only breathe in the region of thorough acquaintance. It cannot live in hearts estranged and unfamiliar. We may take interest in strangers, and view them with respect and kindness; but friendship requires far nearer fellowship. To cement this union, heart must hold converse with heart—freely, fully, and unreservedly. Mind must have access to mind, and hold the key of intimate communion.

Such is the blessed oneness between Jesus and His friends. His lips declare, "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." (John 10:14) This knowledge must be His, because omniscience is His property. The Psalmist truly says, "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my down-sitting and my up-rising. You understand my thoughts afar off. You compass my path, and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether." (Psalms 139:1-4)

Surely shame must fill the heart, and confusion must depress the head, when reflection shows our natural condition. The penetrating glance of Jesus surveys the whole. "His eyes are as a flame of fire." (Revelation 1:14) Daily provocations bid Him turn with abhorrence from the chief of believers; but He knows, and still He loves. How can this be! The answer is the Gospel's glory. He loves because He will love. His nature and His name import that He is love. No moving cause can be discerned, but in the depths of His own heart, and in His purposes to redeem and save. While His

thorough knowledge tends to alienate, He still loves. But His all-seeing eye observes not only evil's course, He notes the tears which bedew the cheek of penitence. He hears each sigh from the sin-stricken heart. His ears are open to every wrestling prayer. Each sound of praise flies swiftly to His ear. Every cry for pardoning mercy, every confession of guilt, each supplication for help, each call for guidance, each avowal of need, ascend to His mercy-seat. Job utters the consolatory truth, "He knows the way that I take." (Job 23:10) Each epistle to the Churches (Rev. 2) commences with the assurance, "I know your works." The movement of the believing heart is spread as an open page before Him. The budding, the bloom, the ripening, the fruit of every grace, the origin, the advance of every good word and work, are clear before Him. It cannot be otherwise, for all are the planting of His hand, the produce of His will and power.

Thus He knows His people. They, also, in part know Him. Now, indeed, they "see through a glass darkly; but then face to face." (1 Corinthians 13:12) Now their faculties are dim, but "when He shall appear, they shall be like Him; for they shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2) But by the enlightening rays of the Holy Spirit He has so revealed Himself, that the believer may profess, "I know whom I have believed." (2 Timothy 1:12) Faith clearly sees the glories of His person, the tenderness of His heart, the plenitude of His unchanging grace, the accomplishment of His finished work, the power of His unceasing intercession, His sufficiency and willingness "to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25) Believers daily grow in this knowledge. The book which portrays the lineaments of His features and the transcript of His character is their constant study. Thus is the knowledge strengthened which is the basis of true friendship. Realizing this mutual acquaintance, the believer professes, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

II. Friendship requires congeniality of tastes. The friend must love what the friend loves, and dislike what the friend dislikes. "How can two walk together, except they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3) It is true that by nature there is immeasurable alienation, infinite discrepancy, boundless estrangement between heaven and earth's inhabitants. The natural heart is conceived in sin, and shaped in enmity to God. But Jesus, by His Spirit's power, takes the stony heart out of the flesh, softens the rocky hardness, melts the obduracy, converts the ice into a glowing furnace. He creates a new heart. He infuses a right spirit. He forms a new being, lovely in righteousness, radiant in true holiness, modeled after the image of God. Light succeeds to midnight-darkness. Beauteous order smiles where chaos once frowned. The new-born believer is no more his own. Christ sits on the throne of his affections. His conversation is in heaven. His delight is in the law of his Lord; its righteousness is his main pursuit. His every desire is intermixed with Christ. His inner man is in consonance with Christ's will. Thus entire oneness rules. Hence a grand ingredient in friendship is established, and the believer truly boasts, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

III. Community of interests. This is a requisite of friendship. A friend is interwoven in his friend's concerns. What treasures of delight are contained in the truth, that Jesus and all He is, and all He has, is the sure property of His people! His abode on earth was theirs, that He might be their Surety, their Proxy, their Substitute. He died that they might not die eternally. He lives forever, that endless life may be their heritage. He reigns on high, that all things may be ordered for their good. His power is theirs to guard and to defend. His angels are theirs to encamp, as a garrison around. His throne is theirs, that they may sit forever by His side. Thus the believer realizes, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine:" (Song of Solomon 6:3) As the bridegroom endows the bride,

so Jesus calls His friends to share His every possession.

So, also, the believer's interests are centered in Christ, and in Christ's kingdom. This all-absorbing feeling burns mightily. When Christ is magnified, honored, glorified, the joy of His friends is at its height. When Christ is scorned, vilified, neglected, crowned again with thorns, and crucified afresh, their spirit is depressed. To them truly "to live is Christ." (Php 1:21) It is their labor and delight to make known the glories of His name, and to bear witness to His praise. Their lips are warm to call sinners to His cross. Their steps are glad to seek the abodes of ignorance and vice, that they may allure, invite, and win to the service, which is perfect freedom and overflowing bliss. By all the means within their power they help the missionary cause. By self-denying efforts, by incessant prayer, they strive that Christ may be "known on earth, His saving health among all nations." Thus they testify, "This is our beloved, and this is our Friend." Our cause is His, His cause is ours. Our prosperity and peace and joy are the objects of His care. His glory is our main concern.

IV. Confidence. Between friends there is firm trust. This is preeminently true of Christ and His people. The believer trusts his Lord in all things for time and for eternity. Is it said of our heavenly Father, that "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) This is the believer's confidence. Christ gave Himself for me, how shall He not also freely give me all things?

We may not deny that man is born to trouble; the path through life is strewn with thorns. Believers reach heaven through much tribulation, and the thought will sometimes perplex: If I am His, why am I thus? His over-ruling hand could avert all sorrow, and crown me at each moment with loving-kindness and tender mercies. But these mists of doubt soon vanish. The deep and abiding persuasion is settled in the soul, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job 13:15) There is no real apprehension that trials are evidence of desertion. The truth is engraved on the tablets of the mind, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you." (Isa. 54:7) The Spirit's voice echoes through the heart, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37)

Unwavering is this confidence. It is founded on the immovable rock of the Word, on the vast roll of precious promises, on the review of happy experiences, on the recording pillars which gratitude has erected along the route of past days. There could be no firm friendship without this confidence; but bold in this confidence, the believer shouts, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

Other properties of friendship might be viewed. They would all appear in lovely train, consolidating the truth that Jesus is the "Friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24) The believer, knowing this well, cherishes among his richest treasures the assurance, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) The contrast cannot be hidden. How dreary and cheerless is the path of life unsolaced by a friend! But sadder far is that man's state who knows not Jesus as his own. His life is as the day which has no sun—as weakness with no sustaining staff—as sorrow with no sympathy—as solitude with no relief. But why should any pine without this Friend! Behold! He stands at the door and knocks. His constant

cry is, Open to Me; I am waiting to come in. Friendship may be cemented which no circumstances can impair or change. Distance or countless hindrances may part earthly friends. In sickness or in trouble the sigh may swell, Oh! that a visit from my friend might cheer; but impossibilities may intervene. Jesus is a Friend ever near. His presence may ever soothe the aching breast, and be a downy pillow for the dying head. Other friends may prove inconstant, or even false. Too many have been as the summer brook or early dew. Death may tear the loved one from our side. But Jesus ever lives and ever loves. Is it not happiness to boast, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!"

04.04. FOUNTAIN

4. FOUNTAIN "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters."—Jeremiah 2:13 No one familiar with Bible-teaching can doubt that Jesus is here set forth. He speaks, and adopts the Fountain as fit emblem of Himself. Faith hears, and hastens to seek improvement. The well is deep; the surface only can be slightly touched.

I. A Fountain is pure. Its waters bubble from a bed which no pollution can approach. Free from infection, they can convey no injury. Their element is healthiness. The river and the brook may receive tributary flowings. Thus noxious refuse may defile. Contaminated soil may introduce poison.

Jesus corresponds as the very purity of truth. From His lips and in His Word no taint of error can find place. His teaching never can mislead. It comes clear from heaven, and to heaven it clearly guides. Other teaching may be soiled by countless fallacies. A mis-personated Christ is often preached. A vitiated Gospel often poisons souls. Man's misconceptions may adulterate the Word, and thus impure streams prove deadly to the flock. It is the part of wisdom to seek refreshment from the Fountain of living waters. How can they thrive in health who turn aside and rather choose a tainted stream? They drink and perish: for the reproach is true, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life." (John 5:40)

II. A Fountain is full. Its vast supplies are buried in low depths. They cannot be drained by human hand, or checked by human effort. They equally defy the summer heat and wintry frost. They are secure from emptiness. Cisterns may leak and soon be dry. In times of drought, rivulets and brooks may show exhausted channels. Through many causes reservoirs may fail. It is not so with the fountain. It boasts perennial flowing. A Fountain ever full is type of Jesus. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19) He is full of love, with no beginning and no end; of mercy, which endures forever; of grace, which is co-equal with Himself; of merit, which is as exhaustless as His Deity; of righteousness, which never can decay; of power, omnipotent from age to age; of intercession, lasting as His life in heaven. None can seek Him and fail to find supply at all times. He is heart to pity; ear to hear; hand to help; might to save. In every age, in every climate, sinners have drawn near and found a Fountain always flowing with streams of salvation. He is a Fountain ever ready and ever full. Those who pitch their tents beside deep wells can never take up the lament of Jerusalem: "They came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." (Jeremiah 14:3)

III. A Fountain has cleansing properties. Its pure stream has beneficial use. Uncleaness appertains to fallen earth. Corruption is its very atmosphere. Everywhere the leper's cry resounds, "Unclean, unclean." The dwelling, the clothing, and all things around, require perpetual cleansing. For this the fountain lends its purifying aid. Let fountains cease, and filth would be earth's poison. There is no remedy but washing; there is no washing but by water.

Uncleanness is the common type of sin. It defiles the total man. It renders him loathsome before God and all creation. The foul tempter is emphatically "the unclean spirit." But the Scripture points to relief: "In that day there shall be a Fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1) That Fountain is the blessed Jesus. He, and He only, can completely purify. His atoning sacrifice removes iniquity. How precious is the familiar word, "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." (1 John 1:7) His meritorious righteousness is the robe in which no accuser can detect a blemish. Is it not written, "Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of clothing." (Zechariah 3:4) His Spirit so elevates the heart, that miry paths are shunned, and purity is the chosen walk. How teaching is the scene of Jesus washing His disciples' feet! How solemn is the warning, "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me!" How blessed is the response, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." (John 13:8-9)

IV. A Fountain relieves thirst. To thirst is common to the sons of earth. Its cravings are extreme distress. The feeling is fomented by feverish malady, by scorching heat, by laborious work, by countless excitements. To this suffering the fountain gives relief. The peasant drinks and is refreshed for work. The sick man drinks and finds repose. The panting deer drinks and flees with fleet speed. Thus precious is the fountain's recruiting boon.

Here Christ appears. The warrior in the fight of faith is often faint and weak. The Savior brings the refreshing of His presence. Thus the arms are braced and the combat is renewed. The pilgrim is exhausted in the heavenward race. Jesus supplies some Gospel-cordial. Strength is restored; the feet recover speed. The sick believer is parched and languid. The Savior draws near, and heavenly help cools the parched spirit. David's sigh is repressed, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (2 Samuel 23:15) The spiritual Fountain is ever near. The children of Israel "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) That Rock still follows in full stream. The cry still sounds, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink." (John 7:37)

Woe, woe to them, who choose rather the unhealthy puddles of this world's vanity. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14) Thanks be to God for the thirst-slaking "Fountain of living waters!"

V. A Fountain fertilizes. Its waters flow not forth in vain. It sends a trickling stream throughout adjacent lands. Crops raise their heads, and verdure robes the fields. Rich is the district in which fountains abound. Great is the contrast between the watered valley and the dry mountain-top. Achsah's request was wise: "You have given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs." (Joshua 15:19) The Gospel here shines forth. The curse which fell upon the soil of earth fell heaviest on the heart of man: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." (Genesis 3:18) In Christ Jesus the curse relaxes into blessing. The promise to the vineyard is precious: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment." (Isaiah 27:3) Is it not written, "From Me is your fruit found?" (Hosea 14:8) Is not the believer to be a tree of righteousness, richly laden with luxuriant fruit, to be holy and pure, even as his great Exemplar! This luxuriance is the work of Jesus by His Spirit. The living principle can only

come from Him who is "the Life." If no sap flows, the branches wither. If no warmth melts, the ice continues hard. Without steam the engine moves not. If no breeze blows, the sails cannot expand. The child unfed expires. So without irrigation there can be no fruitfulness. But Jesus is ever ready to revive and fructify. His presence implants grace, and causes it abundantly to thrive. The believer thus visited becomes like "a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:11) "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:13) The holiest man on earth is the happiest; and the holiest is he who is most watered by "the Fountain of living waters."

VI. A Fountain is precious. Its value baffles description. Unsearchable are its benefits to animal and vegetable life. All creation joys in its use, and gives testimony to its worth. In lands where wells were scarce, they were the cause of constant altercation. "Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away." (Genesis 21:25) Repeated and angry was the strife between the herdsmen of Isaac and of Gerar for these blessings. If they should fail, what misery would ensue! Death and drought would show grim form.

Here thought quickly flies to Jesus. "To you who believe He is precious." (1 Peter 2:7) What mind can grasp, what thought can conceive, what intellect can measure, what tongue can tell, what eloquence can state, what pen can portray, what figure can represent, the immensity of His preciousness? The Spirit testifies that His riches are "unsearchable." (Ephesians 3:8) Let earth exhibit its treasures in multitudinous array, let art bring all her triumphs, let science and philosophy be ransacked for their noblest works, let all the beauty which has ever graced this world be gathered into one focus—all is nothingness, when placed beside the preciousness of Christ. What is dark night compared with tropic sun! So Christ outshines all brightness. To descant on this preciousness is a charming task; but to unfold its fullness is beyond all power. Who can conceive how precious is Christ's person! He is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and one with man as touching His manhood! Who can estimate the preciousness of His work on earth, redeeming countless souls from endless misery, and exalting them to heaven's eternal bliss! Who can strain sight to gaze on Him on the right hand of the Majesty on high, ever living as an Advocate to plead, as an Intercessor to obtain mercy, as a Surety to represent! Who can depict the brightness of His near return, the glories of the millennial reign, the triumph of the final surrender of the kingdom unto God! Who can adequately speak of His love! It "passes knowledge." (Ephesians 3:19) His enchanting promises, so exceeding many and precious, have no measure and no end. He is precious in health and sickness, in every moment of time, in the hour of death, at the day of judgment, throughout the ever-rolling days of eternity. Who will not cry, Thanks be to God for the precious "Fountain of living waters"!

VII. A Fountain is open. It was early custom to protect by stones the well's mouth. Laban's sheep could not be watered until the obstruction was removed. (Genesis 29:8) Fountains avail not if they are blocked up. The fountain to be used must be open to approach.

Such is the blessed Jesus. No hindrances bar access to Him. No flaming sword prevents free passage; all may approach and find Him open. "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isaiah 55:1) "Whoever wishes, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) Invitations and calls are free as the very air of heaven. The monarch from his throne may come and partake

until his soul can take no more. The poor man from his lowly hut finds equal welcome. The feeble need no strong arm to roll away all hindrance. To the aged and the young easy access is allowed. But while He is open to all the thirsty upon earth, the heart of man is the closed door. Therefore He cries, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20)

VIII. A Fountain is generally obvious to view. Unperceived, it can confer no benefit. Hagar consigns her child to death because she saw not the near well. (Genesis 21:19) Thus Jesus is open to all sight. Moses descending from the mount, puts a veil upon his face. (Exodus 34:33) Jesus hides not His luster. No concealment eludes discovery. It was not so to the elders of the family of faith. Types taught strikingly. Prophecies rolled in majestic flow. Heralds announced the coming Savior. But the revelation was not unclouded. The teaching was not the meridian sun. Obscurity enveloped the clear horizon. It could not be said, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines." (1 John 2:8) But Jesus is now manifest, the truth of every type, the response of all prophetic strains, the consummated fullness of patriarchal hopes, the substance of all teaching images, the fulfillment of the vast promises. The inquiry is now superfluous, "Who is the prophet talking about?" (Acts 8:34) The sigh of Job is causeless, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23:3) Prophets and kings desired to see what we may see, and did not see them. "The Fountain of living waters" is freely opened. Blessed are the eyes which see, and the hearts which love, this spring so obviously conspicuous! But the reproach chides: "You have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and dug for yourselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Can any folly be more foolish? Can any madness be more mad? The cry is still heard, "Not this man, but Barabbas." (John 18:40) Men still "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." (John 3:19) The power of darkness tempts poor blinded men to choose sickness rather than health, the dungeon rather than a palace, slavery rather than freedom, deformity rather than beauty, ignorance rather than knowledge, blindness rather than sight, gloomy forebodings rather than fair prospects, the storm rather than the haven, things fleeting rather than things eternal, the quicksand rather than the rock, the company of fiends rather than the saints in light, hell rather than heaven, Satan rather than God. Thus miserable is the choice of those who "forsake the Fountain of living waters, and dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." From such willful destruction, Good Lord, deliver us!

04.05. DEW

5. DEW "I will be like the Dew to Israel."—Hosea 14:5 The book of Nature is both rich and large. Its study is exhaustless profit. When much is read, much still invites continued contemplation. One object here is often replete with diverse teaching. It is so with the Dew. When the bright morning calls to the garden or the field, how glittering is the sight! From leaves, from flowers, from grass, innumerable drops are pendant. Each has a voice to tell variety of truth. Let a few instances be noted. The words of life borrow description from it. The Spirit writes, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distill as the Dew." (Deuteronomy 32:2) As the Dew works, so works the Bible's teaching.

Again, the blessed influence of godly men is thus portrayed. Micah proclaims, "The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many people like Dew from the Lord, like showers upon the grass, which do not wait for man, nor linger for mankind." (Micah 5:7) The true believer spreads extensive good. His godly walk and his bright example allure to paths of piety and peace. The holy remnant may be small, but its effects are mighty. It averts judgments, and calls down blessings. Ten righteous men would have delivered Sodom. Such Dew would have saved the plains from fire. Ah! if the world knew the value of the praying seed, their feelings would no longer hate, but gratefully invoke their presence. May truth long flourish in our land, as this protecting Dew!

Once more, when the Lord sends the rod of His strength out of Zion, converts spring up. The image of our text shows their multitude and beauty. "You have the Dew of Your youth." (Psalms 110:3) As the Dew sparkles resplendent in the early sun, so a goodly company shines in youthful faith.

Yet further. The Dew is soon absorbed. It vanishes when rays grow strong, then it quickly disappears. Thus vain professors make a transient show. For a while their look is pleasing. They seemingly reflect celestial light. But trials assail, temptations allure, persecutions affright, and they are gone. Scripture finds their portrait in the Dew: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early Dew it goes away." (Hosea 6:4) But as stars fade before the rising sun, lesser similitudes must now give place. The Lord appears and claims this emblem as His own. He thus proclaims, "I will be as the Dew unto Israel." What evidence of condescending grace! There is no holier bliss than constantly to gaze on Him. Therefore He selects as His image these tiny drops, obvious in every place, familiar to each eye. The lordly owner of the spacious park, the humble inhabitant of the hut alike may see, and equally may learn. Let Gospel-lessons now be sought. Let us consider the properties of Dew, and mark its mode of visiting the earth.

I. Dew moistens. It falls in penetrating drops upon the surface of the soil. When the ground is dry and parched, it is not ready to admit the seed, or quicken it to life. But hardness relaxes when thus sprinkled from above. Then softened beds give nurturing shelter. The birds of the air no more can bear the grain away. The opening soil gives a protecting covering. Thus the Dew causes vegetation to commence.

What is man's heart by nature? Is it not harder than the nether-millstone, and more obdurate than adamant? Is it not more congealed than ice, more unimpressible than iron? Hence, if not touched by softening influence, it will resist the entrance of the Word. What multitudes are thus unmoved! They may frequent the house of God; they may listen to the voice of faithful pastors and enlightened friends; Christ may be set before them in all the glories of His person and His work; glad tidings may sound around, telling of pardon and of peace through His atoning blood. His perfect righteousness may be displayed, beauteous as our covering. The brightness of the eternal day and all the pleasures at God's right hand may be announced. Thus the good seed may abundantly be scattered. But without saving grace no saving entrance will be made. The heart of stone will continue to be stone. Earthly passions will rage unsubdued. The world will still be loved and God be shunned. There will be no vital change. Darkness will remain dark. The chains of Satan will not be broken. Christ will be still ignored.

Such, alas! is the picture too often seen of man not softened by grace. But when Christ by His Spirit works, there is preparedness to receive the Word. Hardened conscience ceases to resist. Obduracy rejects not the need of pardon. Christ is admitted as all-sufficient to redeem and save. Faith takes root. The seeds of salvation vivify in the heart. The Word no longer falls upon a resisting surface. The melting Spirit has prepared the soil. Heavenly Dew has infused moisture. Thus, as Dew softens the arid earth, so Christ by His Spirit melts the stony heart.

II. Dew invigorates. The seed may sink into the yielding soil, and quickly show some signs of life. But vegetation will not thrive if plants or herbs rise on a hardened bed. The infant plant requires nurturing care. It must be helped to become vigorous and strong. The Dew by constant watering works this result. Hence shoots are strengthened, vigor becomes more vigorous, and growth is secured. But if Dew falls not, the infant crop will droop. Its absence leads to sterility. David, when he would banish blessedness from the spot where Saul and Jonathan were slain, thus calls down barrenness: "You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no Dew, neither let there be rain upon you." (2 Samuel 1:21) Absence of moisture prevents all growth. When Elijah in dreadful mission appears to tell of Israel's coming woe, he thus predicts the misery of the land: "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be Dew nor rain these years but according to my word." (1 Kings 17:1) Unless the clouds drop fatness, leanness settles on the earth. Unless the Dew gives growth, pastures soon lose their verdure.

It is so with the soul. Incipient life may commence favorably. But at first it raises a slender head. Its weakness needs refreshing nourishment. But every grace, aided by congenial influence, will rapidly expand and grow. The tiny child may gradually become a full-grown man. The early dawn may brighten into midday light. The little rivulet may swell into an overflowing flood. How earnest should each believer seek to be enabled thus to put forth strong shoots! The prayer is placed upon his lips, "Lord, increase our faith." (Luke 17:5) Of the Thessalonians it is testified that their "faith grew exceedingly." (2 Thessalonians 1:3) Love, at first cold and weak, may warm into a perfect blaze, pervading every word and work. Hope, whose prospect may at first be limited, may stretch into full assurance, and bring all heaven before enraptured gaze. The weakness of young converts may advance with strong stride to the "perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) But where this growing power? It is the result of Christ by His Spirit giving energy. "Your fruitfulness comes from Me." (Hosea 14:8) His invigorating presence causes this fertility. Let then His presence be the one desire of the soul, and the little sapling will "grow as

the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Hosea 14:5-6) The head shall tower as the giant oaks of Bashan. The fruits shall cluster as the grapes of Eshcol. Christ gives fertility to the soul, as the Dew to Israel.

III. Dew revives. Fields sometimes languish. Winds may be keen. The sun may scorch. The vegetation is blighted. The plants show downcast heads. The freshness of the leaves declines. The meadows are swept with desolating blast. But sweet is the change if refreshing Dew falls copiously. Then vegetation re-assumes its beauty, and lovely verdure again robes the fields.

Thus is it with the fields of grace. Instances of decline abound. The holiest men are not above temptation's reach. An artful snare may be laid. They stumble and fall. A sudden dart may be aimed, and a rankling wound be given. Conscience accuses, and spiritual power dwindles. The case is wretched, until the grieved Spirit re-visits the heart. In deep depression David cries, "Renew a right spirit within me; restore to me the joy of Your salvation." (Psalms 51:10, Psalms 51:12) There is no peace or comfort until the liveliness is restored by the Spirit's renovating power. Then freshness re-visits the soul. Through lack of watchfulness, restraint of prayer, neglect of ordinances, infrequent study of the Word, the soul may become barren. Internal dreariness prevails. There is no help but from the stores of heaven. When celestial windows open, and streams of blessing come, revival cheers, and sweet fertility returns. Sometimes the believer walks in darkness, and has no light. Bright shinings of God's smile are withdrawn. This is a season of disconsolate distress. There is no remedy until heavenly Dew descends. "I will be like the Dew to Israel" is the sole relief.

Many apprehensions sometimes vex the soul. Fears of desertion cause alarm. The feeling, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" is not uncommon. (1 Samuel 27:1) Death in prospect shows a relentless hand. Then terrors trouble, and peace is banished, until the Spirit whispers, "Fear no evil; my rod and my staff shall comfort you." (Psalms 23:4) "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isaiah 43:2) The fainting soul speedily revives when Jesus comes as the Dew. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41:17) They "shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:11) "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He who has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them." (Isaiah 49:10)

IV. Its descent. Dew falls before the shades of night depart. Its period is earth's gloom. When daylight dawns, it descends no more. So when the everlasting day shall dawn, the work of Christ shall cease. Souls shall no more be born again, and quickened and revived. The manna ceased when there was no more need; and grace shall terminate when glory shines forth.

Dew moves on noiseless wing. No boisterous wind, no strife of elements, no pelting sounds are harbingers of its visits. Unconscious earth receives insensibly its presence. It feels the influence, but hears not the approach. It is refreshed without perception of the soft arrival.

Such often are Christ's visits to the soul. He conquers without force. No battle rages, but the field is won. Without resistance a willing captive yields obedience. Doubtless He is not limited to any mode of dealing. All creatures own His power and fulfill His will. Sometimes a sudden hand arrests the sinner in his maddened course. Saul of Tarsus lies prostrate under an astounding shock. The jailor at Philippi suddenly is convinced, and in terror cries for guidance to salvation. The dying thief is conquered with no earthquake of the soul. In one moment he looks, and sees the Savior, and prays to be remembered. He begins to die a criminal, and death lands him in Paradise. But Christ's usual entrance is gentle, sweet, and noiseless. Thus it is said, "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation." (Luke 17:20) It is written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." (Isaiah 42:2-3) Lydia's heart opens to gentle touch. Faith gains admission with an unconscious effort, and without struggle conquers all for Christ. Thus many become Christ's by power working with no crude assault.

It is sad, that when the Dew so plenteously falls, the heart is often as the parched sand. It may be that hindrances check the fertilizing work. Obstructions may interpose. If some covering is spread across the lawn, the soil beneath receives no moisture, and the softening Dew descends in vain. When neighboring fields show freshness, the covered spot is dry. Gideon's fleece may lack what falls around it. Neglect of Christ, ungodly passion unrestrained, cares of the world, the lust of earthly things, may ruinously impede. Thus when fruitlessness prevails, the cause should be most diligently sought, and the prayer be frequent, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalms 139:3-4) Let it be remembered that Dew comes only from above. In times of earthly drought prayer should crave the descent. So in spiritual need, on the bended knee refreshing streams of grace should be implored. "Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain." (Zechariah 10:1) If there should be delay, let prayer grow stronger, and let not hope fail. "The husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." (James 5:7)

04.06. REFINER.

6. REFINER.

"He shall sit as a Refiner."-- Malachi 3:3.

Simple is the process of refining. Its purpose is clear. It purifies from dross the ore submitted to its test. A furnace is prepared. The metal is placed within. Fire is strongly applied. The action of the overpowering heat produces liquefaction. The worthless parts, which before were intermixed, are thus separated. Impurity is disentangled. The Refiner gains his object. He has parted the precious from the vile. Unadulterated ore remains. This process is a mirror to show Christ. It is a page of Gospel-lessons. May it be our special joy to mark and learn with profit! To infer that Christ is here exhibited is no conceit of vain imagination, no dream of fancy. It is the sound conclusion from clear Scriptures. The Spirit speaks to us in the sacred page. In it we read, "He is like a Refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." And again, "He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver--and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Malachi 3:2-3.) Can this be other than the Lord? To Him Isaiah pointedly refers, "I will turn My hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin." (Isaiah 1:25.) Faith hears, and gladly receives Christ Jesus as the Refiner. To Him and to His work attention is now sought.

Let it be noticed that the Refiner places valuable metal in his melting forge. Believers are marked by this similitude. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" (Lamentations 4:2.) "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried--they shall call on My name, and I will hear them--I will say, it is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zechariah 13:9.) Job testifies, "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10.) How grand, too, is the assurance, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." (Isaiah 43:4.) Believer, realize the comfort! As gold is valued upon earth, and counted as most precious treasure, so Jesus esteems you as His riches, and ranks you as of inestimable price.

Let us proceed to mark--I. The need of refining. II. The mode of refining.

I. THE NEED of refining. Gold's origin is earth, and earthy accumulations long cling to it. Hence the refining-pot is needed, and fire must dissolve and separate. Similarly vile corruptions cling long to the earthborn seed. Their luster is often tarnished. Their savor is not always heavenly. Their robes are soiled with filthy spots. The sinews of their strength suffer decline. Their step totters. Their wings refuse to fly. The workings of corruption in those who have received renewing grace are too apparent. Their bodies are indeed the temples of the Holy Spirit. They differ from their former selves as light from darkness, as the sweetest flower from the vilest weed, as the brilliant jewel from the rubbish of the quarry, as the sparkling fountain from the muddy ditch; but by the side of grace evil still shows its hateful head. The snake is injured, but still it trails its wounded

length. The 'old man' is suspended on the cross of Christ, but in its writhings it shows life. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" (Romans 8:3) but still the final execution has not taken place. Holiness is loved and sought, but still the constant lament is heard, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. The good that I would I do not--but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7:21, Romans 7:19.) "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh--so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17.)

Corruption long continues to afflict. Mark how unbelief still shows existence in the holiest saint. He has been taught the glorious truths of the Gospel of the grace of God. He has delighted in their beauty. He has adored the work of the Triune Jehovah--the Father's love and covenant of grace--finished work of the blessed Jesus--His blood, His righteousness, His uttermost salvation--the Spirit's enlightening and comforting and sanctifying presence. But still how often he lives in sad forgetfulness of his calling and his privileges. The case of Peter is re-acted. Before the assault of temptation he trembles and lies as one who knows not Jesus. He is not bold to vindicate the truth. He is not valiant in the cause of Christ. Unbelief prevails, and he gives proof that the best believer may quiver as a shivering reed. The stirrings of original nature often appear in lingering love of the world. This artful foe may have been manfully renounced, its fascinations may have lost enslaving charms, its gilded baits may have been rejected with enlightened scorn, its downhill leadings to perdition may have been discovered, and a bold attitude of defiance may have been assumed. But still the seeds of worldly-mindedness may retain life. Lot's wife advances towards Zoar. But thoughts of former pleasures move in her heart. She pauses, and looks back. Demas forsakes Paul because he yet loved this present world. Frequent indeed are the backslidings from yielding to this reawakening foe.

Many swarms of evil passions are long lurking in the secret places of the heart. A fit occasion calls them forth in fearful troops. How often words of wrath and passion show the remnants of the fallen nature! How often lustful desires pollute the inner man! How often thoughts wander, even in most sacred exercises! How often the knees totter while dalliance with impiety is rife! Let the believer honestly examine the thoughts and feelings of each day. What must the result proclaim! Surely the frequent movements of old nature must be detected. Sins of commission and omission--against light and knowledge, and the remonstrances of conscience, and the checks of the Spirit--must force the sad conclusion, that in the most holy heart sin yet lives--in the most saintly man corruption often struggles to recover mastery.

II. THE MODE of Refining. The eye of Jesus marks those struggling motions of reviving evil. Is He indifferent? No; as He "forgives all their sins," so He "heals all their diseases." The process of correcting may be painful, but still a gracious hand will firmly apply it. The furnace must be used, and the precious metal placed within. The needful heat must not be withheld. The instrument for this purifying work is aptly termed the "furnace of affliction," (Isaiah 48:10.) The term is large, and comprehends a long train of searching trials. These all obey the mighty Savior's bidding, and proceed to execute the salutary cure.

Foremost appears SICKNESS. The strength of health declines. Vigor ceases to be strong. Pain racks the limbs. The nights are wearisome. The days move heavily in languor and distress. This is the time for deep searchings of heart. Apart from busy whirl, the patient reviews his course. He

has leisure to inquire, Why am I thus afflicted? Why am I placed within this furnace? Departure from his God may be detected, and repentance may lay him low in dust and ashes. He will resolve to work again his first works. He will abhor the foe which has seduced him. Thus the furnace accomplishes its purifying use, and the Refiner exercises restoring power.

Sometimes POVERTY forms the furnace. Grievous is this trial. Loved ones look for support. The coffer ceases to supply. The cruse of oil is exhausted. The brook no longer flows. Sources of sustenance are dried up. What anxious thoughts will now investigate the sufferer's heart! Awakened conscience will probably accuse of scanty thanks for former mercies, of boastful reliance on self-efforts. The swellings of self-trust will drop their disguise. The furnace will warn to return in deep humility to God, from whom alone all sufficiency of means for the necessities of life proceeds.

Sometimes BEREAVEMENT is the furnace. Some lingering malady or unexpected casualty removes a loved one from the side. The charm of the domestic circle receives a blight. This stroke of misery is very keen. The lonely mourner may now be taught that he had made an idol of God's gracious gift, that he looked for happiness not solely to his God. The furnace reveals the ungrateful reaction, and places God again as the sole monarch of the heart.

Similarly the whole tribe of TRIBULATIONS might be reviewed. Their forms are almost countless. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." (Psalms 34:19.) "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22.) Is it in wrath that the heavenly Refiner thus heats the furnace? Is the purpose to put forth destroying vengeance? Far otherwise. Sharp may be the process, but the motive is love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." (Revelation 3:19.) "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope--and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." (Hosea 2:11, Hosea 2:15.) "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail." (Psalms 89:30-33.) Let not the believer faint, nor be dismayed; let him not fear that the furnace indicates the hiding of loving-kindness in displeasure, or is a sign that he is cast off forever. The Refiner chastens "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." (Hebrews 12:10.)

It is said, and the sweet thought claims notice, that the Refiner with anxious gaze watches the melting ore until his image can be seen. The purifying process has then attained its end, and the fire is extinguished. Thus Jesus keeps His metal in the heat of trial, until His lineaments are established, and conformity to His image brightly shines. Blessed, indeed, are they in whom the features of the Elder Brother soon appear! And blessed is the trial which tends to make His children pure as He is pure, and holy as He is holy, and beauteous as He is beauteous!

It must not be omitted that He who thus refines His subjects, and cleanses them from impurity and sin, will soon appear to consummate a final, universal separation. "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:31-32.) "But who may abide the day of

His coming, and who shall stand when he appears? For He is like a Refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." (Malachi 3:2.)

Reader, rest not, until full assurance pervades your heart, that enlightened faith has found all pardon at His cross, all justification through His blood and righteousness, all renovation through His Spirit, and all purification through His refining work. To be brought into this happy state is present peace, and will be future glory. The end will come; it is at the very door. They who retain corruption "will go away into everlasting punishment--but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:46.)

04.07. TREASURE

7. TREASURE "The kingdom of heaven is like Treasure."—Matthew 13:44 Of the kingdom of heaven Jesus is the King. On Him as the foundation it is based. In Him the fabric rises. His is the scepter, and His the subjects. He frames the laws, and He claims homage. Without Him it never could have birth. Without Him it never could survive the assaults of foes. He is its origin, its power, its guide, its glory, its all. Is this kingdom then a Treasure? Pre-eminently so is the anointed Head! How warmly will each Christian heart respond, He is indeed the Treasure of treasures! Compared with Him all other objects are emptiness and dross. Before His brightness the sun is dark. Balanced against Him all the mines of silver and of gold are worth nothing. Beside Him learning sinks into glittering folly, and all the boast of intellect hides its head. Survey all that the world contains of riches, wealth, and treasures; the sight may dazzle, but it dwindles, fades, and disappears when Jesus is discerned. But who have minds to grasp, or thoughts to estimate, or tongues to proclaim, or eyes thoroughly to scan this Treasure of treasures? 'Holy Spirit! we need the power of Your grace to withdraw the veil. Come mightily and illuminate, and expand our view, and give fitting words of praise!'

Let us enter now the treasure-house, and survey the accumulated preciousness. For all our needs we behold treasures of supply. Our sins are many as the sands of ocean's shore. They are black as the deepest dyes of hell's abyss. They all are liable to God's extremest vengeance. They all call loudly for the thunderbolts of wrath. But Christ appears, a Treasure of redeeming worth. His precious blood flows as a stream infinite to cleanse. Such is its value, as issuing from the God-man's side, that sprinkled over the vilest, it makes them whiter than the whitest snow. Is not the blood a Treasure, which obliterates every speck of evil from every one of the vast multitude of the saved? We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are a Treasure of redeeming merit!

Washed from sin, we escape just wrath; but we need more than the absence of guilt to constitute a claim for entrance into the purity of heaven. In Jesus we have a Treasure of righteousness. In our nature, as representative of man, He thoroughly obeyed the law, and fulfilled to the uttermost its requirement of perfect love. This work is perfect, because wrought by the God-man, Jesus. In it He arrays the whole company of the redeemed. He is the Lord their Righteousness. In His work the piercing eye of omniscience can discern no flaw. It is pure as God is pure. It is bright as the eternal day. It is glorious as the heaven of heavens. And it is "unto all and upon all those who believe." Is not such righteousness a Treasure? We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure to us!

We need grace to help in every moment of our earthly course. Our Jesus is a Treasure of abundant aid. By His Spirit poured down from His high throne, He renews our nature, restores the likeness of our heavenly Father, subdues the countless hosts of our iniquities, implants faith to embrace Him as all salvation and desire. He watches over the incipient spark and fans it into bright flame. He braces our loins to wrestle with our God in prayer, and to tell into His ears our every sorrow and distress. He awakens the notes of adoring praise, so that thanksgiving is our chosen

pleasure-ground. He leads into the rich pastures of Bible-study, and makes us to lie down beside the still waters of refreshing truth. He causes hope to cast enlivening beams on distant prospects. Thus by the constant working of His grace He fits us for our home above. 'We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure of superabundant grace!' By nature we are blind and ignorant, and prone to err. The Word announces, that "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) In His school He teaches by His Spirit lessons of saving truth. He opens our eyes to see the vanity of earthly things, and the value and sublimity of the eternal world. He gives skill to balance the present troubles and the eternal weight of future glory. He points out the straight path in all perplexities and doubts. He guides by a right way to a city of eternal habitation. While poor worldlings stumble and fall in many windings of tortuous delusion, His scholars clearly see the upward road. Those who follow Him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure of wisdom and knowledge!

Some general thoughts here call for notice. This Treasure has enduring worth. Other riches make to themselves wings and fly away. Today the owner exults in his overflowing coffers, in his hoards laid up for many years, in his possessions to enrich successive heirs. Tomorrow he may pine in poverty. But he who has interest in Christ is rich forever. Rolling years will bring no diminishing. Eternal wealth can never see an end. In this world the inheritor of vast abundance may contract expensive tastes, and indulge in ruinous pursuits, and open the sluices of draining profligacy. Thus reckless extravagance may lead to poverty's cold grasp. It is far otherwise with this Treasure. No expenditure can squander the possession. The more we have, the more we spend. The more we spend, the more we gain. In spite of watchful care the thief may stealthily creep in, and bear away man's treasured store. The morning light may show the emptied chests and ransacked hoards. But of the heavenly Treasure it is true, that "neither moth nor rust does corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." (Matthew 6:20)

Satan doubtless plies every art to rob and to destroy; but Christ is hidden in God, high in heaven, above this spoiler's reach. 'We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are a Treasure above the robber's reach!'

Those who have gained this Treasure are not only thus enriched, they also enrich others. It is a grand word, "He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) From their full supplies they communicate abundance to all around. The rays of light which fall on them are reflected, so that others benefit from the celestial brightness.

He who has discovered this mine of wealth will have the grand desire to proclaim his full delight. He will deeply pity the poverty of the masses at home, and throughout the wide expanse of the heathen world, and his constant prayer and unremitted efforts will yearn over the perishing multitudes who know not this enriching Treasure. Thus how charming are the annals of missionary life! Those who are rich in faith, with hearts all blazing with the love of Christ, delight to exhibit to the benighted worshipers of stocks and stones the true riches. It will always be, that those who own the Pearl of great price will so display it, and so commend its worth, that others will be stirred to long for the same jewel. The inquiry now comes with craving urgency, "Where can this Treasure be found? How can it be obtained!" Blessed be our gracious God! we have near access. We are not sent to traverse distant lands, to investigate obscure paths, to trace all the intricacies of

laborious intellect, to pass days and nights in painful study, to descend into the depths of the earth, to ascend into the heights of heaven, to take the wings of the morning in early flight, to outwatch the stars of night in scrutinizing thought, to consult the wisest of the sons of men, to take counsel with the famed students in the realms of erudition. The Treasure is hidden in a field, outspread at our very feet. A brief step places us within its precincts. At any moment entrance may be ours. This field is our blessed Bible. In its pages the unsearchable riches of Christ are treasured. Those who dig here shall find. Persevering efforts will have sure success. Can we then sufficiently prize this boon? Can we adequately bless God the Holy Spirit, that in His condescending love He thus places the Treasure within our reach? Can we give worthy thanks that our hands hold this volume? To what multitudes is this mercy not given! What tribes, what countries never heard its name! How many in our favored land are barely conscious of its nearness! Can we too warmly express gratitude that we are made to differ, and that amid the needful cares of life we have such intervals of leisure for its perusal? Can we too devoutly study it, diligently watching to redeem time for deep searchings in the open field?

We have too clear instruction as to the right mode of laboring in this field. It is plainly written, "which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." (Matthew 13:44) The Treasure, when discovered, is so prized that jealous fear arises lest the happy finder should be dispossessed. Therefore he uses all precaution to secure it. He conceives all plans, that no spoiler shall rob him. He therefore hides it in the stronghold of his memory; thus it is safe. He deposits it in the secret places of his heart; so no schemes of the foe can touch it. He lays it up where no craft of envious man, nor open assaults of the powers of hell can reach it.

It follows, "for joy thereof he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." He rejoices with exceeding joy. He now has gained a Treasure which will enrich through all the ages of never-ending worlds.

It is added, "He sells all and buys." But what can be given in exchange! Can earth present a compensation! Can thought suggest an equivalent! Impossible. If all earthly treasures could be offered, they would in comparison be insignificantly small. If all the hoards of all earth's misers could be presented as a purchasing price, they would be rejected as insulting rubbish. No! this Treasure is obtained "without money and without price." Christ is a free-grace gift. No one ever merited or earned the Savior. The blessed receivers obtain, because in His mercy He bestows Himself. But still the hand which receives Christ must retain no other treasure; the heart which He enters must be swept; the eye which sees Him must be single; the lips which praise Him must be sanctified; the feet which follow Him must be washed. There must be full surrender of all other things before the Treasure can be truly possessed.

What, then, must be surrendered? To be brief, all that is adverse to Christ—all that opposes His complete and universal reign—all that raises a rival head, or breathes competition. The love of every sin, the fondness for transgression's miry paths, the fondling of the polluted pleasures of the world, must be abandoned with resolute rejection. There must be no backward look to the ways of the degraded cities. The thought of dallying with sin must be abhorred. The very touch must raise indignant writhing. Thus sinful self must be hewn to pieces, and scattered to the winds. No shred of ungodly desire may be spared. So too self-righteousness must crumble into dust. The thought

of merit, or of self-constituted claims, must be renounced as impious delusion. The cry must be, "Nothing in my hands I bring." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Php 3:8)

Thus all that self has made or self can bring must be abandoned. What an exchange! That which is really nothing is cast away. That which is really all is grasped.

Rich indeed are those who have found Christ as this gift of gifts. Where their Treasure is, there will their hearts be also. They will love Him with daily increasing love. They will make their boast of Him as soul-enriching and eternal wealth

04.08. FREEDOM

8. FREEDOM "If the Son shall therefore make you free, you shall be free indeed."—John 8:36 A precious text here offers comfort to the sons of faith. It flies from Jesus' lips on a glad mission. It proclaims Freedom as the portion of His happy people, and the contrast is obvious, that apart from Him each soul is locked in cells of bondage.

Slavery is the lowest depth of degradation. It is the extremity of woe. It is man's worst condition. How sad is life to him, who trembles in constant fear of tyrannizing cruelty! It is misery indeed to hear the lash, and bear the chains of an exacting master. Israel's children, in their Egyptian thralldom, present the type of anguish. Their wretchedness is stated as the moving cause of heaven's compassion. "The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." (Exodus 3:7) The direst form of misery is found in Samson—deprived of sight, bound in fetters of brass, and grinding in the prison of the Philistines. (Judges 16:21) Let the truth be faced, that the state by nature of our race is spiritual captivity.

I. Each mother's son first breathes as a bond-slave. Satan exerts his overpowering sway. He says, "Go," and the slave obeys—"Do this," and submission yields. Freedom indeed smiled in Eden's lovely garden. But its peaceful reign was short. The tempter came. His are prevailed. Man surrendered liberty, and placed his neck beneath the tyrant's feet. From that day each child is born in slavery's bonds. Satan reigns the master-tyrant over subjugated man. He has imposed an universal yoke. He sways the will, the heart, the affections, the desires. He gives no respite and no rest. His ceaseless work is to impel to rebellion against God, to violation of His righteous law, to disregard of His holy will, to contempt of His majesty, to treason against His rightful rule. Resistance, if it be ever made, is vain. The unregenerate man willingly obeys the devil. But from this thralldom Jesus liberates. "When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils." (Luke 11:21-22) Satan indeed is a giant in strength, but Jesus is omnipotent. He enters into direct conflict with the vile usurper. He hurls him from his throne. He wrests the scepter from his accursed hands. He tramples it beneath His conquering feet. He throws wide open his prison-doors. He bids the prisoners to come forth. He calls them to breathe liberty's pure air. He delivers them from the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into the regions of new life. Satan no more is their tyrannic lord. They are no longer under the law, but under grace. We read the blessed words, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2) This deliverance is effected by the blessed Jesus, and the grand word is fulfilled, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18) The Spirit convinces believers "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11) Believer! rejoice in the truth that you are striding to victory over the neck of a vanquished tyrant, and that you too will "tread Satan under your feet shortly." (Romans 16:20) You may exultingly profess, "The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed."

II. Freedom from the devil's power is also freedom from sin's penalties. How is it that Christ brings this deliverance? He presents Himself to bear the full descent of merited wrath, and to drink to the very dregs each vial of decreed punishment. Here is the glory of substitutionary atonement. Here is the perfect liberation of the redeemed. Jesus suspended on the cross makes satisfaction to every outraged attribute of Jehovah. He there endures the full amount of suffering due to His people's sin. They see, and they believe. They believe, and shout, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." "The Son has made us free, and we are free indeed."

III. Death affrights as king of terrors. It is invested with most solemn awe. Its image is appalling. It belongs not to man's original constitution. It is the terrible offspring of sin. With sin it entered. "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17) It quickly commenced its subjugating course. Adam soon saw his Abel lifeless at his feet. From that day its scythe has never rested, and generation after generation have yielded to its stroke. No rank is spared. No intellect can gain exemption. The infant in the cradle dies. Old age must soon succumb. Thus it exerts uninterrupted sway, and begets universal dread. Where is the breast which thinks unmoved of death! It conveys to a world from which there cannot be return. It closes the earthly course. It puts an end to all the hopes and prospects of this transitory scene. It bears to the immediate presence of our God. It is the prelude to the judgment-seat. It leads to the final doom and the unchanging sentence. Thus solemn is the view of death. But still to the believer there is no abiding fear. Jesus has made him free, and he is free indeed. It is grandly said, Jesus "has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 Timothy 1:10)

Death is mainly appalling as conducting to the execution of just wrath; but if all wrath be utterly effaced, the annexed fear must also cease. The believer feels, death surely comes, it quickly comes; it comes with constantly advancing step, but it will bear me to the presence of my Lord. To be absent from the body is to be present with Him. Can any who have faith in Jesus shrink from seeing His face, and being forever by His side! Thus death is the believer's friend. The Spirit assures, "All things are yours: whether life or death." (1 Corinthians 3:21-22) And again, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

Moreover, the believer rejoices in sure trust, that when dissolving nature sinks, Jesus will grant especial presence. Therefore he sings, "I will fear no evil; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4) Thus the fear of death departs, and he is free indeed.

IV. The world, also, forges chains. It is confessedly the enemy of God. The word is true, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James 4:4) The exhortation is clear, "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) The power of this tyrant is mainly in its fascinating arts. It coaxes, it entices, it allures. It presents attractive baits. It shows its votaries decked in enchanting guise. It presents goblets filled to the brim with intoxicating draughts. It points to the merry laugh and noisy revelries of its infatuated crowds. It uses ridicule and scorn to deter those who venture to prefer another path. But in its schemes and pursuits, where is God? He is excluded. His name is treason against its godless laws. The rule which governs its proceedings ignores His will, His Word, His

very being. Frightful are its triumphs. How many have fallen slain at its feet! How many throng the cells of hell, enticed and ruined by its fascinations! From this enemy Jesus makes the believer free, and he is free indeed. He sends His Holy Spirit, and then the enslaving chain is broken. He tears the deceiving mask from the world's features, and shows its native hideousness. He exposes its hollow insipidity, its utter emptiness, its thorough insufficiency to give real peace. The believer sees that all its ways lead to disappointment and to shame. He mourns the folly of ever yielding to its poor fallacies. He flies to Christ for pardon and deliverance, and soon sings, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14) Thus the believer is made free, and he is free indeed.

V. Sometimes the fear of trouble in advancing days embitters life. The present may be joyous; but the present is borne onward by the stream of time, and uncertainty conceals the future. Early morn smiles in sparkling brightness, but clouds and storms may wrap the evening in gloom. The spring blooms in copious blossoms, but frost and blight may introduce a fruitless summer. Thus sad anticipations of future distress may check enjoyment of the passing day, and show distressing phantoms in the dim horizon.

These apprehensions have no right place in the believer's heart. Jesus expels them. His Gospel tells that "things present and things to come" are the believer's heritage. He gives the promise which can never fail, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) Thus He makes free, and there is Freedom indeed. This Freedom is not mere immunity from bondage. It gives a title to the grandest rights. The believer is a freedman to our heavenly Father's courts. He may approach and ever find a welcome. He pleads the name of Jesus, and paternal smiles await him. As one of the household of faith, he is at home with God. When transacting needful matters in the valley of earth, his conversation is above. The slaves of Satan cannot thus draw near: access is the privilege of the happy company whom the Son has made free. They draw near to God, and God draws near to them. They have admission at all times and in all places to the throne of grace. The golden scepter is extended to their touch. They open out the recesses of their hearts. They tell their sorrows, and make known their cares. They lay down their burdens and return relieved. Oh! how blessed is this privilege! It makes earth a foretaste of heaven: and thus believers pass through a lower heaven to their eternal rest. Such the Freedom of those whom the Son makes free. The believer claims the promises as his allotted portion. Jesus bids him to walk up and down in the luxuriant garden of the Word, and to pluck the soul-reviving fruit. Many indeed and precious are these delights. They are suited to every state of need. They cheer in adversity. They add new relish to prosperity. They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1:20) The believer, also, has right to the sanctifying joys of public ordinances. He meets God in "the assembly of the saints." (Psalms 89:7) His prayers and praises are not dull formality, or merely the outward homage of posture, or the soulless utterance of holy words.

Happy are you, if you can truly say, The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed. But take heed that you "stand fast in this liberty." (Galatians 5:1) The enemy will try to spoil you of your treasure. Exchange not this blessed state for his slavish routine of outward rites, and forced observance of unsubstantial show.

04.09. SHEPHERD

9. SHEPHERD "I am the Good Shepherd."—John 10:11

Rural objects seldom fail to charm. To gaze on nature's beauties is never-wearying delight. But no scene is more attractive than when on the mountain-brow, or in the sheltered valley, the Shepherd is seen tending his flock.

Here Scripture lends abundant aid to multiply the interest. Shortly after the fall, the gates of Paradise fly open. Who is the first to enter? It is righteous Abel, a keeper of sheep. David is called to sit on Israel's throne. What was his early occupation? It is written, "God took him from the sheep-folds: from following the ewes great with young." (Psalms 78:70-71) Who are the first to hear from an angel's lips good tidings of the Savior's birth? They "were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8) Thus sacred thoughts exalt the shepherd-life. But deeper instruction must now be sought. Here is the chosen title of the blessed Jesus. Paul's eye gazing upon Him extols Him as "that Great Shepherd of the sheep." (Hebrews 13:20) But who can declare His greatness? In every sense it is unsearchable. In every attribute He is great as God can be. Peter speaks similarly. He exhorts the under-shepherds to "feed the flock of God;" and he adds, "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." (1 Peter 5:2, 1 Peter 5:4) He is indeed "the chief among ten thousand." (Song of Solomon 5:10) He is high above His ministering servants as the heaven of heavens surmounts the earth. How precious are Ezekiel's words, "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David. He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:23) To His people Christ indeed is all. He alone is all-sufficient for their every need. In Him all power resides. In Him they have superabundant help. But when He would display Himself to His beloved flock, He points not to His greatness, His preeminence, His power, His majesty, His glory—He rather shows His loving heart, His tender care, and sums up all in the sweet word, "I am the Good Shepherd." Good indeed He is. How good, eternity alone can show! Faith is thus encouraged to draw nearer, and behold the Lord in the office of the Good Shepherd.

I. A Shepherd knows his sheep. His knowledge almost exceeds belief. His constant watchfulness imprints each face on His retentive mind. Observation makes Him marvelously familiar with them.

Thus Jesus knows each member of His flock. They are His portion by His Father's gift. "They were Yours; You gave them to Me." (John 17:6) The possession consists of an innumerable company of immortal souls. Can such a treasure, so bestowed, not thoroughly be known?—They are His crown. "Come out, you daughters of Zion, and look at King Solomon wearing the crown, the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day his heart rejoiced." (Song of Solomon 3:11) Where is the monarch who knows not his crown?—They are His spouse loved with an everlasting love. Where is the bridegroom who knows not his bride?—They are His children, the creatures of His will, the new-born of His Spirit, the adopted of His grace. Where is the Father who knows not his sons?—He has the mother's tender heart. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you. (Isaiah 66:13) "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast? Though she may

forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15) Maternal instinct knows her offspring.—Where is the brother who knows not the loved ones of his home?—Where is the friend who reads not a friend's heart? Jesus is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24)

Thus every tie conspires to imprint on Him the knowledge of His sheep. The sheep are dispersed in every age and every climate. They are limited to no period and no place. They extend from Abel to the last-born of earth. They inhabit cities and wild deserts. They are found in torrid plains and ice-bound tracts, in isles of the sea and mountain heights. They belong to all nations, kindreds, people, tongues. But on each the eye of the Good Shepherd ever rests. They are as Canaan—"The land which the Lord your God cares for: the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even to the end of the year." (Deuteronomy 11:12) In the wilderness Hagar is seen. "She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me.'" (Genesis 16:13) Nathaniel is told, "When you were under the fig-tree I saw you." (John 1:48) From the tree's branches Zaccheus is called down. No darkness hides, no prison-cell conceals, no crowds prevent discovery. Each believer may always rejoice in the truth that his image never fades from his Lord's sight. He knows the way that he takes. This knowledge is protection. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) His knowledge never slumbers, sleeps, or errs.

II. A Shepherd feeds his sheep. It is his daily care to lead them to the pastures where the best food abounds. He guards them from unwholesome fields, in which herbage is rank, and weeds might injure, and thorns and thistles mock the hungry mouth, and poison lurks in a beguiling form. Thus he nourishes, and the flock thrives. The prophet takes up the image, and exclaims, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." (Isaiah 40:11) They need nourishment, and largely He supplies. Their appetite is spiritual, and spiritual is their regalement. He brings them to the fertile meadows of the Word, and says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song of Solomon 5:1) Bodies retain not life except through food, and sheep would perish without pasture. But the Word supplies abundantly. Around the camp of Israel the angels' food fell only in the morning dew; but at all times the Word is near. The power of the Word to strengthen and revive consists mainly in its revelations of the Savior. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." (Revelation 19:10) Here the hungry soul is cheered by gladdening views of His wondrous person, His everlasting love, His tender grace, His willing sufferings, His atoning death, His rising power, His ascending glory, His interceding might, His coming kingdom. Invigorated by views of their ever-present, ever loving Lord, they are strong for toil. They renew their strength in His appointed ordinances, and mount with wings as eagles. In the congregation of the saints, in united prayer and praise, they brace their nerves and gird up their loins. They see their Lord uplifted in His courts, and they return "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." (Psalms 19:5) A table is prepared before them in the house of their pilgrimage—even the sacramental feast. Here is much-loved refreshment. In these green pastures they lie down with great delight, and the food is sweet to their taste. Thus tender is the heavenly Shepherd. Thus nurtured is the happy flock. They feed and sing, He is indeed "the Good Shepherd!"

III. A Shepherd protects his sheep. Many and mighty are their foes. In themselves they are weak and tremulous as a broken reed. The wild boar out of the forest marks them as his prey. The roaring lion watches to devour. Savage dogs would mangle. The wind, the rain, the tempest, threaten to destroy. The Shepherd knows these perils, and protects from all.

Thus Jesus screens His flock. "Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; You surround them with favor as with a shield." (Psalms 5:11-12) It is superfluous to state that Satan is the arch enemy of the flock. For strength he is a lion, for fierceness he is a dragon, for twisting deviousness he is a serpent. His might almost reaches almightiness. His many vassals, as legion, are an universal swarm. His vigilance never slumbers. His skill is barbed by world-long experience. His wrath is vehement, because his time is short. He wars with desperation because a hopeless doom is near.

How is it that faith is not extinguished by his efforts? How is it that the sheep are not all driven to his prison-cell? There must be a Shepherd almighty to protect. He who delivered David "from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear" (1 Samuel 17:37) is the same rescuing Lord, "yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) Paul seemed to be in the jaws of ruin, but he testifies, "The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, and I was delivered from the lion's mouth." (2 Timothy 4:17) In direst extremity let the believer cry, "Rescue me from the mouth of the lion; save me from the horns of the wild oxen." (Psalms 22:21) A protecting arm will speedily be outstretched. A barrier is erected which has salvation for its bulwarks. At the command of Jesus angels encamp around and deliver them. Thus His sheep "never perish, and no one can snatch them out of His hands." (John 10:28)

IV. A Shepherd heals the ailments of the sheep. His heart is tender love. It is, moreover, skillful care. The flock is subject to variety of ills. Inclement seasons bring disease: contagion may be contracted; injuries from accidents occur, and sickness from many causes weakens. The well-trained Shepherd knows how to use the suitable relief. He watches anxiously, he diligently tends, he wisely nurses, he administers right remedies, and so effects a cure. It is his pride to have a healthy flock.

Here the Good Shepherd cannot be hidden. Jehovah-Rophi—"I am the Lord who heals you"—is His chosen name. (Exodus 15:26) Is it not written, "Who heals all your diseases." (Psalms 103:3) And again, "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." (Psalms 147:3) In the kingdom of grace the lament is never heard, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?" (Jeremiah 8:22) Over His flock the Sun of Righteousness ever "shines with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2) When He came to procure for His people everlasting health, miracles of bodily healing were foremost in His credentials. His reply to the disciples of John is, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." (Luke 7:22) At His word all maladies took flight. No case was too inveterate or too severe. As many as touched the very hem of His garment were made perfectly whole. So, also, He heals the sickness of the soul. His present kingdom is a spiritual Bethesda. "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isaiah 1:6) Each believer is in himself loathsome, as the man "full of leprosy." (Luke 5:12) But let the cry ascend, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." "Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved for You are my praise." (Jeremiah 17:14) The Good Shepherd will put forth His power, and spiritual health shall be restored.

V. A Shepherd shears his sheep. At times excessive wool would be a burden. There may be profit in the fleece; but without such thought the sheep must be relieved. Unburdening process must be

undergone. The Shepherd perseveres amid resisting struggles, and soon sees lightness and health exulting in the fields. The Good Shepherd similarly gives freedom from obstructing weights. He calls His followers to the good fight of faith. They need unburdened arms. They must nimbly run the upward race. They need unshackled feet. They must fly heavenward on the wings of hope; their wings must not be pinioned to the earth. Their hindrances are many and diversified, and must be all removed. Some are adhesive as the very skin. Some are cancers deeply rooted in the body. The excision is painful, but it must be endured. Thus an agile flock is fit for the appointed work. The Good Shepherd spares not, and the result is vigorous life.

VI. A Shepherd enfolds his sheep. When the shades of evening thicken, the scattered flocks are gathered to their fold. They wander not amid pitfalls, nor are left an easy prey of roaming beasts. Convenient shelter is their night-long home. Together they lie down, guarded and secure. The Church is the present fold of Jesus' flock. "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47) Here they are housed during the dark days of time's continuance. They repose together waiting for the dawn of the perfect day. Under-shepherds watch around. The storm may pelt, but they are not exposed. They may hear the howling of the hungry foe, but they cannot be reached. This fold is but the prelude to the endless home. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God." (Psalms 84:7) "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." (Genesis 12:5) "There shall not a hoof be left behind." (Exodus 10:26) "So it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." (Acts 27:44) In the "Father's house are many mansions," and they shall all be filled. Of all the children given by God, not one shall be lost. All the sheep shall be securely and forever folded. They never more shall hear the storm. They never more shall dread the foe. The Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep, shall be among them as "a Lamb that had been slain." (Revelation 5:6) They shall follow Him "wherever He goes" (Revelation 14:4); and He "shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." (Revelation 7:17) In prospect of this fold, let believers "gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope unto the end." (1 Peter 1:13) Let them rejoice, give thanks, and sing. Let them clearly show the Good Shepherd's marks. They are marked in the ear, because they hear His voice; marked in the foot, because they follow Him; marked on the brow, because "Holiness to the Lord" is there inscribed. The motto over the earthly fold is, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack." (Psalms 23:1) Over the heavenly house letters of glory shine, "Never again will they leave it." (Revelation 3:12)

04.10. RESURRECTION

10. RESURRECTION "I am the Resurrection."—John 11:25 Whose lips proclaim this mighty word? Who is the speaker claiming such authority? Is it on earth that this announcement sounds? Can it be the calm utterance of sober mind? Is attention due to it as emanating from One who spoke what He well knew, and testified an indubitable truth?

Let all doubt vanish, as morning mists before the orb of day. Let reverence give heed. Let adoration meekly bow. Jesus here appears in the character of the true, "the faithful Witness." The Word, the eternal Word—He who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all; He who cannot deceive, and cannot be deceived—thus testifies. He in whom "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" gives this sublime revelation, "I am the Resurrection." Jesus the speaker, of Himself thus speaks—to Himself He points, exclaiming, "I am the Resurrection." The question now occurs, What is the import of the term? What is its main significance? Accurate definitions lead to accurate conclusions. The end will not be reached, when first steps move in a wrong course. The target should be seen, before the arrow flies.

Doubtless the word is often used in figurative sense. It lends expressive aid to exemplify various occurrences. When wintry sods relax, and hardened fields assume again their verdant carpet; when flowers bloom, and buds expand, and renovated beauty clothes the earth, Nature is said to put on her resurrection-dress. When the soul has felt the absence of heavenly dew, when grace has languished, and no gracious breezes from above have nourished spiritual shoots, when after this cold period the Spirit revisits the heart, and renews the joys of holy communion, a metaphor speaks of the resurrection of the inner man. Other revivals might be characterized as resurrections. But there is no figurative meaning in these words, "I am the Resurrection." The context at once claims literal acceptance. Let thought now realize the scene of utterance. The lifeless frame of Lazarus had recently been carried to the grave. Jesus seeks Bethany, to comfort the weeping sisters. Martha hastens to meet Him. In reply to her impassioned grief, He gives her the assurance, "Your brother shall rise again." The mourner acquiesces in the truth. She knew that her brother's body should not lie always in the grave. She assents that it again shall be arrayed with life, and again shall possess all properties of being. It is in connection with this assent that Jesus sublimely cries, "I am the Resurrection."

We here learn that Jesus speaks of the Resurrection of the body, and that this marvel shall be accomplished through the direct exercise of His mighty power.

Let grateful joy now revel in these wondrous tidings! When death opens the cage, the spirit flies to separate existence. It leaves the deserted tenement to crumble into dust. But the soul, alive without the body, is not entire and perfect man. It is but one portion of the total being. For man to be complete, the body must again resuscitate. The component parts must live, co-partners of one tenement. A re-animated frame must receive the ever living soul. Then man is man again. How delightedly, then, should we drink in the heaven-born assurance, "I am the Resurrection."

We rely not on utterance alone for this grand comfort. Indeed, if Jesus had but once thus spoken, faith would possess sufficient ground for solid standing, its feet would rest on a firm rock; it could confront a world of doubters, and trample down all sneering fallacies. But to fill the believing heart with confidence, Jesus adds demonstration to His word. Few moments are allowed to pass, when at His word a dead body lives again.

He asks, "Where have you laid him?" They guide Him to the grave. "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." He orders its removal, and having lifted up His eyes to heaven, in supplication to His Father, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." There is no delay. Instantly death withdraws its hold. The body "that was dead came forth." Thus Jesus by undoubted fact established what His lips had recently declared—"I am the Resurrection." Had this fact only been exhibited, faith would rejoice in perfect confirmation. It would rightly exult and sing, Jesus is "the Resurrection." His voice declares it. His deed corroborates it. But this is not the only instance where Christ manifests His power to loosen the grasp of death. Let thought review the early days of His ministry. Jairus, high in Jewish rank, with supplicating urgency implored that death might not remove his little daughter. He asked much, and he obtained more. What an encouragement to bold and earnest prayer! The youthful sufferer expired. Great was the lamentation! Jesus hastened to the spot, and entered the chamber of the lifeless child. He takes her hand, and speaking with all authority, as "the Resurrection," cries, "Little girl, I say to you, get up." (Mark 5:41) He displays His re-animating power. "Immediately the girl stood up, and walked around."

Jesus multiplies evidence, that faith may with stronger grasp cling to Him as "the Resurrection." In His journeyings He approaches Nain. According to the pre-arrangements of His will, when He reached the gate, "there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and those who bore him stood still." And now He, who is "the Resurrection," speaks: "Young man, I say to you, get up." The word goes forth, almighty in authority, and arrayed with the strength of Omnipotence. No opposition checks obedience. No foes in earth or hell can stay the mandate. Instantly the corpse resumes its former life. "The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." (Luke 7:11-15) Thus assurance towers to the heavens that Jesus is "the Resurrection." The most notable evidence still claims attention. On the accursed tree at Calvary, Jesus lays down His life. To pay the penalty of transgression, to make entire satisfaction to all the outraged attributes of God, to drink to the dregs the cup of wrath, to fulfill all predictions, and to buy His ransomed heritage, He hangs a lifeless body upon the cross. To the grave He is consigned. The appointed morn arrives. Will He still lie among the dead? Vain are the watch, the stone, the guard; vain is all the precautionary vigilance; vain is all the power of the grave and hell; Jesus comes forth the mighty Conqueror of death. Hear His subsequent words to the beloved disciple, "I am He who lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore." (Revelation 1:18) He who raised others now rises Himself. He who raised others will raise us too. Reader! adore Him!—the Lord, "the Resurrection."

Further instruction is graciously imparted by the Holy Spirit. It is His desire that our hearts should overflow with consolation. He would not leave us deficient in any knowledge which could enlighten and delight. He therefore with loving hand withdraws the veil, and exhibits the main wonders of the Resurrection-day. He bids us now in spirit to intermix in events in which we surely shall have part,

and which the flight of time brings on apace. The Apostle writes that when the set time is fully come, and all the decrees of salvation are accomplished, the blessed Jesus will rise from His high throne, and again in person hasten to this earth. We read, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-angel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Other branches of His work He has entrusted to commissioned hands. Prophets and apostles have proclaimed His Word. Enlightened ministers have called sinners to His faith, and have toiled to place spiritual stones in the spiritual house of God. All His angels have been sent "forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation." (Hebrews 1:14) But here is work which so intensely fills His heart that it can be entrusted to no other agent. The raising of the bodies of His sleeping saints shall be accomplished by Himself alone. The Spirit, with a herald's voice declares, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." The angels' assurance is now verified, "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." (Acts 1:11) Will He come back in silent pomp? Oh, no! He descends with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel. Angels and authorities, and powers, who are made subject unto Him, obey His call. All heaven hears, and re-echoes the mighty shout. All earth hears, and trembles through its length and breadth. But what is the shout? Conjecture may with reverence surmise, but it finds no certainty. We may suppose that His voice summons all the hosts of heaven to bear Him under the canopy of their glittering wings, and all the ransomed spirits who had left their bodies in the graves of earth, fly to cluster around Him in His glorious return. To the Archangel's voice there is the adjunct of the trumpet of God. Paul, when treating of the wonders of this day, omits not this accompaniment, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) It is wisdom's employ to live listening for this trumpet's sound.

What is the effect of this world-shaking note? Behold with faith the first occurrence. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Every grave which holds the body of a sleeping saint shall open its cold portals. Each inhabitant shall rise from the couch on which it has reclined. If any slumber in ocean's deep caverns, they shall uplift the head. From the four winds of heaven they shall stand again in living form on earth. Oh! what a mighty army! All whoever fell asleep in Christ, from Abel to the last who died in faith, shall re-appear. But how changed are now their bodies! how perfect, how beautiful, how glorious! They shall put off their death-clothes for bodies like Christ's glorious body. In what condition was the body consigned to its parent earth? It was "sown in corruption"—tainted by decay, soiled by all which is most loathsome; but now, "it is raised in incorruption," blooming in pure loveliness, incapable again to know pollution's touch. It was "sown in dishonor." It was hidden as a revolting object from all sight. Its home was among the worms and reptiles of the ground. Now, "it is raised in glory." Its brilliancy surpasses the sun in midday splendor. All brightness is eclipsed by its surpassing rays. It was "sown in weakness." It lay in feebleness, without power to move, or exercise the least prerogative of life. "It is raised in power." We know the might of angels: more than angelic activity is now worn. Suffice, it was sown an heir to all the imbecilities and nothingness which cling to the earth-born. "It is raised a spiritual body." The term is easily uttered. Its full import must be unknown until the grand reality is reached. But the Resurrection of the sleeping saints is accompanied with the change of all the bodies of the Lord's flock who meet that day in tenements of clay. All this Resurrection-glory shall be theirs. They thus transformed shall be caught up in one collected mass to join the risen saints; they shall

together "meet the Lord in the air," and together reign with Him forever. This is the consummation of the work of Jesus, "the Resurrection." Who will not cry from his inmost soul, All praise to Him who said, "I am the Resurrection!" Blessed day! The espousal of the Church to the Heavenly Bridegroom is now complete. He had wooed and won her in her time-state. Mighty voices now shout: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7) The enraptured Apostle "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2) We bless You, O Lord, our Resurrection!

Blessed day! It witnesses the coronation of all who have washed in Jesus' blood, and by faith have put on His righteousness. The promise of a crown was freely given, and now is gloriously redeemed. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." (2 Timothy 4:8) Thus the Bride's head receives the crown of life—"the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1 Peter 5:4) We bless You, O Lord, our Resurrection!

04.11. WAY

11. WAY "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me."—John 14:6

Here let the Way be first considered. Jesus claims it as an emblem of Himself. The object is familiar. No depth of learning, no elaborate skill, no ingenious reasoning, are needed to explain it. We cannot move from place to place except our feet travel in some way. A road facilitates communication. Without a path access is impeded. Thus to make truth perspicuous, Christ shows himself, as the Way by which the Father can be reached. He is the Mediator between God and man. In musing on this emblem obvious thoughts occur.

I. Christ is an appointed Way. Sin raised impassable obstructions to God's presence. It formed a chasm infinitely wide, immeasurably deep. The separation knew no limits. Man cared not to return. The desire had expired. And if the longing wish could have arisen, no thought could have contrived, no power could have constructed, an open Way. Angelic intelligence could have devised no help. But God in His free mercy ordained a pathway of return. He appointed Jesus to be the Way. The design has origin sovereign grace. In Eden's garden God's own hand first drew the plan. In eternal council, before the foundation of the world, the scheme of reconciliation was ordained, and Jesus called to execute its requirements. He accepted the mediatorial office, and undertook the appointed work. Thus "Christ glorified not Himself" to be made the Way; but He who said to Him, You are my Son, today have I begotten You. To testify its completion He exclaims, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." (John 17:4) Here anxious souls find copious streams of peace. The decree is gone forth, "Cast up, cast up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." (Isaiah 57:14) No obstacle impedes. Christ is given as the Way to the Father. All who draw near through Him find that God draws near to them. (James 4:8) The happy believer sings, I have believed in Christ Jesus my Lord, and I walk in Him as the Way appointed by the Father.

II. He is the only Way. It is a well-trodden path. What multitudes of saints have traversed it. By no other route have any reached the rest of heaven. Abel's feet first trod it. The patriarchs followed in the self-same track. The prophets in their glowing terms proclaimed it, and what they showed to others, they themselves adopted. The apostles stood as heaven's own sign-posts, pointing to this road, and gladly did their feet pursue it. In every age, in every climate, the saved have walked herein; and the last pilgrim who shall pass the shining portals shall have followed in this line. One Way is not allotted to the wealthy, another to the poor. One invites not the learned, another the illiterate. One is not framed for the crowned rulers of the world, another for the lowly subjects. As there is but one remedy for sin, one ransom for the lost, one robe for the celestial throng, one release for the sin-bound, one Gospel for all the dwellers upon earth, one faith, one Christ, one heaven, and one God, so the Way to the Father is only one. Wherever the enlightened preacher speaks, in the city, in the village church, in visits to the whole, in the chamber of sickness, beside the dying bed, the essence of his message is only one—Look to Jesus, follow Him; so only can

eternal woe be escaped, so only can eternal life be gained. Throughout the field of missionary work—from the Equator to the Poles, amid all classes of wilderness life, amid all slaves of superstitious worship, in all varieties of climate and race—one only are the saving tidings. This is the substance. There is one only Way to everlasting bliss—Jesus Christ, the appointed and the only Savior. Jesus! we walk in You, the one Way to the Father.

III. He is a new Way. Doubtless this Way is as old as the birth of sin. It was early mapped out, when the Seed of the Woman was proclaimed. Our first parents and the elders of the family of faith were called to walk in it. But midday light did not shine on it. It was dimly traced through types and shadows, and prophetic teaching, and various sacrifices, and symbolic rites. But now the darkness of the early days is dispelled by the Gospel's fullest rays. Christ stands clear as the orb of day in all His power and willingness to save. New glory illumines the Way. The old intimations now give place to full revelations of the Lord. In prospect of the new heavens and the new earth, He who sat upon the throne declared, "Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5) So in devout thanksgiving for the light of Gospel-days, the believer shouts, A new Way is before my feet. So rejoicing in expectation of unclouded knowledge, the Psalmist cries aloud, "O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things." (Psalms 98:1) Jesus! we walk in You, the new Way to the Father.

IV. He is a sure Way. None whose feet are planted in this Way fail to reach the heavenly end. Sometimes the pilgrimage seems very long, and weary travelers sigh for repose. But as Abraham's company "went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came:" (Genesis 12:5) so all who choose this blessed course finally attain the promised land. All whose names are in the Book of Life reach finally the home of Life. Those who have received real faith in Christ never draw back to perdition. They "believe to the saving of the soul." (Heb. 10:39) "He who begins a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Php 1:6) Jesus will at last "present them faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude ver. 24), with the avowal, "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none." (John 17:12) Let all, then, who through enlightening grace are thus journeying heavenward, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Let them "gird up the loins of their minds;" let them "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Every step brings them nearer to the "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10) Jesus! we walk in You, the sure Way to the Father.

V. He is a secure Way. The road is indeed beset with perils. It lies through the country of the arch-foe. His evil eye is ever on each pilgrim. He hates the progress, and is ever watchful to impede. He knows that he must check, or there will be escape. From Abel's day he has seen multitudes thus moving from his grasp. This knowledge intensifies his wrath, and impels him to unwearied attacks. Long experience, also, has taught him wily arts. His armory, also, yields countless weapons. Not one of these instruments is left untried. Each pilgrim, from first entrance on the Way to the end, is constantly and vigorously assailed. But all these efforts are in vain. Each humble traveler is girded with armor mighty to resist. Fiery darts may fly, but the ready shield of faith can quench all. Murderous thrusts may be directed against the heart, but the true breastplate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, avert the blow. Sometimes, indeed, through lack of vigilance or languid faith, a wound may be inflicted; but the good Physician is at hand with remedies to heal. The balm of Gilead soon allays all wounds. He

who forgives all their sins, heals all their diseases. (Psalms 103:3) Thus believers closely following their Lord, and walking in His path, "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter 1:5) "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God." (Psalms 84:7) Securely guarded they reach their home. Unfailingly protected, they tread on the necks of all opposing enemies. They pass the gates of heaven with shouts of victory, through the preserving Lamb. Jesus! we walk in You, a secure Way to the Father.

VI. He is a holy Way. The Spirit proclaims, "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." (Isaiah 35:8) All who thus journey have on their brow a conspicuous inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." They are all born again by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. They are all new creatures in Christ Jesus. They have all "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and are renewed in the spirit of their mind; and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24) They are enabled to be holy even as God is holy. Backslidings are indeed not rare. Sometimes reviving sins entrap. But then, what tears of penitential sorrow flow! what smitings of the breast! what deep confessions! what cries for pardoning grace proclaim that though fallen they still live. What vows of increased watchfulness of walk! what supplications for more upholding and directing aid besiege the mercy-seat! Thus apparent blight, issues in more abundant fruit, and a holy company advances in holy path to the fair land where holiness is the unclouded sky. Jesus! we walk in You, a holy Way to the Father.

VII. He is a joyful Way. There is sweet rapture in the shout of Moses: "Happy are you, O Israel! who is like to you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency!" (Deuteronomy 33:29) The cup of joyous bliss is placed in believers' hands. They have chosen the good part, and the Way of pleasantness. Observe the votaries of this transient world. Amid the dance, the laughter, and the song—in all pursuits of wealth, and honor, and applause, there is no inward peace, no calm delight, no settled ease of conscience, no heavenly converse with rejoicing comrades, no hopes full of immortality. The broad road is indeed crowded, but disconsolation darkens it. The past accuses, the present gives no rest, the future is dread anguish. Turn to the enchanting contrast. Zion's pilgrims "sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord." (Psalms 138:5) Joy is their portion. They are called to rejoice in the Lord, and again and again to rejoice. With grateful hearts they cheerfully obey. They "bless the Lord at all times: His praises are continually in their mouth." (Psalms 34:1) What happier employment can thought conceive or heaven present? They praise Him for having "brought them up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, for having set their feet upon a rock, and established their goings." (Psalms 40:2) He snatched them from the broad way, and placed them in the path of joy. They bless Him for the loved companions of their march. How sweet is their holy communion! how charming is their exercise of prayer and praise! What blissful confidence uplifts their hearts! They are wafted along streams of happiness to the eternal home, where there are pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Thus happy, thus gloriously happy is this Way. Jesus! we walk in You, the happy Way to the Father.

VIII. He is a narrow Way. It is not an open plain, in which wandering feet may widely stray. Strict boundaries define its course. Devious wanderings are interdicted. Gospel-precepts hedge it on the right hand and on the left. At the strait gate SELF-WILL is utterly abandoned. In the narrow Way

no PRIDE may flaunt, or SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS swell, or SELF in any form seek to gain indulgence. The humble cry is in each pilgrim's heart, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth, and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day." (Psalms 25:4-5) "O send out Your light and Your truth: let them lead me, let them bring me to Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles." (Psalms 43:3) There are no gaps through which the half-hearted followers of the world may find an opening to seek the noxious waters of vanity, or pluck the poisoned berries of loose living. Wholesome restrictions guard from such injury. No eyes can see, no eyes can find, forbidden fruit. A narrow Way leads to a blessed end. It is an elevating joy to contemplate the charms of a truly Christian life. As the believer has "received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in Him; rooted and built up in Him, abounding in faith with thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:6-7) His every step is Christ, and thus conformity to His likeness, which is the foretaste of heaven, is wrought out.

Let it be added, that a tender feeling beats in these pilgrims' hearts. They "have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the Way." (Hebrews 5:2) They would not enter heaven alone. They remember the misery of their early days, and hence they strive to "turn sinners from the error of their ways, and to save souls from death, and to cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20) They address others with the moving entreaty of Moses to Hobab, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord has said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." (Numbers 10:29) The blessed thus scatter blessings, the happy promote happiness, the saved, through grace, augment salvation.

04.12. TRUTH

12. TRUTH "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."—John 14:6

Truth next invites attention. The very term commands respect. At once it calls for reverence. It is a noble plant; but it is not indigenous to earth. Here ignorance and fallacies, and falsehoods are the wide-spreading weeds. Truth lived at first, but it was soon slain by sin. Then untruthfulness came in—"You shall not surely die." (Genesis 3:4) Multitudinous has been its progeny. The history of this earth presents a frightful picture of the miseries which follow in the rear of falsehood. It extinguished light, and darkness cast its wretched pall around. It banished peace. It raised a barrier between God and man. It barred the gates of heaven. It constructed the prison-walls of hell, and kindled its unextinguishable flames. But Christ came, the remedy of all evil. As such, He re-established the reign of Truth, and shines as its perfect embodiment. Let us bow before His proclamation, "I am the Truth." This subject is most large. It presents expansive views, and extends through Creation's wonders and Revelation's glory. Let thought glean profit in each field.

I. When Creation's beauties were arranged, it seems that Christ was the deep signification of the work. Statements are distinctly made, as hints to be expanded into fuller intelligence. Thus those who read Nature's book, looking for Christ, perpetually find feasts of joy. At every turn they see objects which reveal the Lord. Here indeed erratic fancies must be checked, and due bounds must restrain imagination's flights. But it is both duty and delight to follow where the Spirit leads, and He plainly tells that Christ is the true end of our earth's fabric. Let a few instances guide to this improvement of things visible.

Light shines the earliest wonder of the world. Who can depict its beauties and its properties! But it is more than nature's charm and earth's benefit. It is a treasure of Gospel-truth. Its lovely rays show the more lovely image of the Lord. It is written, "That was the true light which enlightens every man who comes into the world." (John 1:9) Jesus, also, selecting it as a typical mirror, cries, "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) The prophet, anticipating the rising of the true "Dayspring from on high," sweetly sings, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2) Thus from early morn to evening's close we are encompassed by an atmosphere, the Truth of which is Christ.

Again—our meals require the staff of life. Costly viands may abound. Luxuries may be multiplied by culinary art. But if bread be absent, the food is incomplete. Thus bread is an essential article at our tables. But it affords much more than nourishment. While we eat we gain instruction. It is an emblem of our Lord. His own lips declare, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." (John 6:32) Thus whenever we receive this necessary nutriment, our souls should see and feast on Jesus. He adds, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (John 6:51) And again, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35) Thus the lifeless material proclaims the Savior, who is alive forevermore. (Revelation 1:18) Material bread not only sustains life—it sets Him forth who quickens the soul with never-ending life. Our tables would be sanctifying schools, if in the main nutriment Christ was discovered. Animal life indeed would thrive, and spiritual vigor be

replenished.

Again—in rural scenes the vine is often present to our view. It is not limited to the glassy shelter of the rich man's home. It spreads its far extending tendrils and its luxuriant clusters around the humblest dwellings. Its stem indeed is lowly, and shows no form, nor strength, nor beauty. But it abounds in branches of extensive growth. Each branch is laden with rich clusters, and each cluster swells with grapes, and each grape is bursting with delicious juice. What plant then can compete in value! As Jesus walks attended by his chosen band, this plant attracts His notice. Quickly He deduces a spiritual lesson. He exclaims, "I am the true Vine." (John 15:1) The plant was an emblem of the blessings which He came to give. Whenever the vine is viewed, let pious thought ascend to Christ.

It belongs not to this design to trace at length the full similitude. Let it suffice to note most briefly that the lowly stem prefigures the lowly birth, the lowly life, the lowly walk of Jesus. No pomp, no show, dazzled the eyes of men. He grew up "before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2) He did not "cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." (Isaiah 42:2) But His preciousness surpasses thought. All eloquence is dumb before such theme. His fruit exceeds all praises. Well might the Church exclaim, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song of Solomon 2:3)

Behold His death! It is the atonement of all the sins of all who trust in Him; it pours forth the richest exuberance of peace. What multitudes extract from it transporting sense of pardon for each offence, expiation of all iniquity, reconciliation with God, cleansing from all vile stains, adoption into the heavenly household, all peace, joy unspeakable and full of glory, and hope of the inheritance of the saints in light! Survey the countless multitudes of the redeemed. Mark their rapture, listen to their endless hymns. All their ecstasy is derived from the fruit of Christ the true Vine.

Mark, also, its expanding boughs. Verily they traverse the universe. Where man lives, the vine presents its reviving clusters. Wherever the vine claims notice, or the mantling goblet invites taste, let thought ascend to Christ, and feast on the delights of all His benefits.

Thus significantly the blessed Jesus points to objects in creation's field, as showing some especial picture of Himself. He intimates that they unfold the volumes of His worth. Behold the light, the bread, the vine—they are but shadows: the substance is in Him. He is the true light, the true bread, the true vine. Their Truth is Christ.

These instances supply a clue for wide investigation. They lead to a fertile field, and unlock the gate. They place the foundation for much superstructure. They teach that Christ is the Truth of Creation's book. Thus, in rambles through the verdant fields, by the flowing stream, beside the babbling brook, in uplands, in the valley—thus, when summer glows, when wintry frosts invest the scene with snow—we are encouraged to search for exhibitions of Gospel-truth. There is much spiritual delight in this constant looking for Him who is "chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely One!" (Song of Solomon 5:10-16) There is sweet rapture in these discoveries of His image! Thus things terrestrial help the believer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him, whom to see is heaven begun.

II. But it is in Scripture's page that Christ shines forth in glorious brightness as "the Truth." He guides to this conclusion. "Search the Scriptures, for in them you do you think have eternal life,

and they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39) To the disciples journeying to Emmaus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27) Hence we know that all the Scriptures abound in disclosures of Him as "the Truth." It pleased God that through the Church's infancy teaching should be much in partial show. Pictures, signs, and shadows, passed in long train before the early fathers. But in them the substance was not fully unveiled. The Truth of each was Christ; but He was seen through long vista.

Among the types the foremost place is justly given to sacrifice. It is the first-born of this school. Its birth was concurrent with sin's entrance. In Eden's garden the first victim bled. The coats of skins which clothed our parents when they were cast out into a dreary world, is clear proof. These victims died prefiguring the Woman's Seed who would bruise the serpent's head. From that time until the Cross of Calvary, how many altars were upraised! What streams of blood flowed in unceasing current! How often did the priest lift up the sacrificing knife! No morning dawned, no evening closed, unmarked by sacrificial type. But from every victim a distinct voice was heard. It cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Every death on every altar pointed to Him who in the fullness of time should die to atone for sin. Of every sacrificial victim Christ was the Truth. Needless would have been the expenditure of life, except each death had been herald of the coming Savior. But the bleeding victim was only one in a vast volume of instruction, one link in a long chain, one tree in a forest of spiritual lessons.

Let the wanderings in the wilderness be surveyed. In long array Christ was proclaimed by some types. With morning light in the dew the manna fell. It gave supplies of food; the tribes had only to gather and to eat. But its main value was its spiritual import. In diverse ways it showed forth Christ. He was its Truth. It fell to image "the true bread."

Again, the smitten rock sent forth a stream always flowing in their rear. The tribes had not to toil in digging wells, or in long search for springs. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) He was the Truth of this unfailing water.

Amid all the wilderness-types the brazen serpent claims prominence. Israel's sons were in deep misery. As a punishment for their grievous sins, fiery serpents darted through the camp inflicting deadly stings. God removed not the plague, but He commanded Moses to raise a brazen serpent on a pole. To 'calculating reason' this would seem to be a mockery of their woe. What healing virtue could issue from this figure! But God ordained that whenever a bitten Israelite fixed his eye upon this form, the poison would cease to act, the sting would abate, and health return. But more than bodily recovery was here. Jesus Himself declares that of this type He is the Truth. Marvelous are His words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14-15) What hearty thanksgivings should this type call forth! What multitudes in every age have been led by its teaching to turn the eye of faith to Christ its Truth, and thus to win eternal life!

How prominent in Israel's story was the High Priest! View his splendid robes. Examine each part of his significant apparel. See on his heart and on his shoulders the names of the twelve tribes. Mark his passing the veil, and entering into the Holy of Holies, not without blood, and burning incense in the sacred place, and sprinkling the mercy-seat, and returning to give blessings to the people. The Truth of every part of this dazzling appearance is Christ. He came, "a High Priest of good things to

come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Hebrews 9:11-12) How precious, how enlightening, how cheering, is the Old Testament record, when in every sign, and semblance, and type, we see the glorious Person, and the gracious acts of Christ, the Truth! But Jesus is pre-eminently the Truth, as the grand revelation of the Father. Apart from Jesus, God's face is hidden; more than Egyptian darkness conceals Him. Mists and impenetrable gloom envelop His character, His purposes, and will. The sages of old, boasted much mental culture. Vast were the resources of their intellect. They probed science to its core. But the world by wisdom knew not the true God. (1 Corinthians 1:21) When Jesus came, the darkness passed, and "the true light" shone brightly. Hence the Spirit gives Him the designation, "the faithful and true Witness." Hence the Apostle was guided to pen, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) So that He truly says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

How precious is this Savior! With what intense desire should we study Him! He is the true mirror which reflects the Father's glory. He is the true volume, in which we read, as in the light of heaven, the Father's attributes, and see as in a collected focus, His righteousness, His justice, His holiness, His love. Thanks be to God for this manifested Truth! Has Truth thus come down from heaven to earth, and shall not men most diligently, most earnestly search for it! Shall they not employ their time in seeking to be possessors of this treasure! It enriches for time and for eternity. It is useful for every moment, and in every state. It makes free from every bondage, and from all debasing ignorance.

It is sown in the field of Scripture. Let no day pass without deep digging in this mine. Dig, also, with wrestling prayer for the Spirit's aid. "O Lord, send out Your light and Your Truth; let them lead me." (Psalms 43:3) Let the love of the Truth reign in our hearts. Sweet is the exhortation of the prophet, "Love the Truth and peace." (Zechariah 8:19) Fearful is the doom against those who "received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:10) Who can resist the charms of Truth! It contains every attraction to awaken and to rivet affection. Especially let us walk in Truth. It is a solemn injunction, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." (Colossians 2:6) The Apostle had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in Truth. Christ should be the Truth on which the eye should ever gaze, the way by which our feet should move, the arm on which we should lean coming up out of the wilderness. Thus earth will be an infallible passage to the bright world, in which unclouded Truth forever shines.

04.13. LIFE

13. LIFE "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."—John 14:6

What thought can grasp the full import of Life! It animates the body, the soul, the spirit. It begins in time. It has being throughout eternity. As to the earthly tenement, its limits may be brief. As to the inner man, its expanse is limitless. Thus the analysis of Life is food for boundless meditation.

Life may be considered as bodily, as mental, as spiritual, as eternal. But whatever view be taken—whether of body, soul, or spirit, whether of time, or timeless period—the truth is clear, Christ is its essence.

We owe this knowledge not to speculation, or research, or theory. No mortal power could devise a probable conjecture as to Life's origin and continuance. But the infallible Word reveals it. The lips of Jesus give authoritative announcement. His simple statement conveys the intelligence: "I am the Life." Paul re-echoes, "When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4)

I. Bodily Life. Where do we obtain these living frames, so curiously, so exquisitely formed? Where springs this animal activity? What is the origin of this marvelous mechanism? The reply is before us. Christ is the Life. The Spirit, in the records of creation, gives clear information. In that history we are taught, that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." (Genesis 2:7) But Jesus was co-partner with the Father in this life-giving act. It is written, "By whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:2) And again, "One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Corinthians 8:6) And again, "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities; or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." (Colossians 1:16)

Hence Jesus claims adoration as the author of all the powers of the living frame. The composition, the arrangement, the vitality, are the work of His celestial skill. On every part His hand of power is inscribed. This truth receives but scanty recompense of gratitude. When the eye revels in delightful contemplation of the beauties and the wonders which on all sides gratify the gaze; when every sense is refreshed with endless varieties of charms; when the pores open to receive the genial warmth of summer, or the cool fanning of the vernal breeze; when the limbs put forth their energies in exhilarating exercise—in short, in every joy which results from Life in the body, the blessed Jesus should be seen and adored as one with the Father in these gifts. It should not be forgotten that in this sense He is our Life. But Jesus not only calls these powers into being, their preservation hangs on Him. The Spirit testifies that "He upholds all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews 1:3) And "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17) The world is crowded by barren trees, and the stern voice of justice is ready to exclaim, "Cut it down, why should it use up the soil!" But the destroying hand is stayed. An interceding cry prevails, "Let it alone." (Luke 13:7-8) If justice had obtained its course, if mercy had not sweetly interposed, what child of man would at this moment tread the earth! The checking voice proceeds

from Jesus. Continuance in Life results from His guardian care. Here again we acknowledge Him to be our Life.

II. Mental Life. Bodily powers, vast and wondrous, are shared by all the tribes of brute existence. Exquisite construction and activity of motion belong to them all. They possess the gift from Him who is our "Life." But in man there is the separated gift of mental and intellectual vitality. Endowed with this superiority, he can reason, reflect, calculate, conclude, and put forth prodigious powers of speculation and invention. On the wings of intellect he can scale the heights of the skies above, and count the radiant orbs, and trace their course, and weigh their magnitude. He can descend into the depths of earth, and mark the various strata, and estimate their gradual formation. He can traverse the surface of the globe from pole to pole, and scrutinize its multitudinous produce, and examine the properties of all, from the lofty monarch of the forest to the tiniest herb upon the wall. But far more than this. He can unlock all the stores of learning, and write and read large volumes of erudition. Here we pause to bless our God in Christ, who is our mental "Life."

III. Spiritual Life. If bodily and mental Life were alone imparted, the real worth would have but small endurance. A living case is provided for a dead soul. The outside semblance may be very fair, but within is misery, and filth, and death. "Whited sepulchers, may indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Matthew 23:27) There are fabled trees, whose fruit presents a captivating show, promising delicious juice, but beneath this inviting garb is rottenness and dust. But to the heirs of promise, the soul, dead in sin, is quickened to newness of Life. Such renovation consists in the entrance of divine being into the desolate tenement. It is a heavenly work, which heaven puts forth its energies to accomplish. It is display of the mighty acting which restored Life to the body of Jesus sleeping in the tomb, and raised Him to the throne of glory. Hear the Spirit's testimony. He ascribes this quickening to "the exceeding greatness of God's power, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, 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." (Ephesians 1:19-21) No inferior power could create afresh a dead soul. But Jesus speaks, and the soul which was extinct revives, and puts forth spiritual energies. Divine perceptions flourish. God, before utterly unknown, is now intelligently seen and loved and served and honored. Christ is received in all His power to redeem and save. Living comprehensions estimate His everlasting love, His gift of Himself as an expiating ransom, His robe of spotless righteousness, His sacrifice on the accursed tree, His conquest of death and hell and Satan, His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the constant prevalence of His unfailing intercession, the unceasing outpouring of blessings on His people, the near approach of the millennial reign, the final judgment, and the surrender of the kingdom to the Father, "that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Such is a brief and scanty summary of the light out of darkness which shines throughout the soul when spiritual Life is restored. The main employ is now in spiritual exercises. God is now the all pervading Life. There is union to the Three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. Heavenly communion is free, constant, and sweet. Prayer was once a cold and formal drudgery, addressed to an unknown God, and never rising above this earth's region; now it is an intelligent and warm delight. The soul flies up to God as to a reconciled Father, it seeks and enjoys filial communion, it is free and bold to tell out its every need and desire, it wrestles with indomitable energy until

answers come, it prevails because Life pleads within.

Similarly it revels in the luxury of praise. What motives urge! What an expanse of topics calls! It feels that if every breath should extol the Lord, the debt of gratitude would be unpaid. In every circumstance of time it finds occasion to give thanks. Thus spiritual Life is heaven begun, and the eternal hallelujah will but perpetuate the hymns first sung on earth.

Constant delight too is now gleaned from the study of the Word. The sacred Book was once a maze of perplexity and darkness. Its truths were enveloped in mists and obscurity. Its revelation revealed nothing. Its teaching left the drowsy ponderer uninformed. The ignorant read, and remained ignorant. Now how great the change! How charming are the lessons! How delightful are the hours of perusal! Newborn spirits search the page, and expand in growth. In this school of Scripture spiritual Life thus strengthens. "The sincere milk of the Word" gives invigorating nutriment. Jesus is found to be the Bread of Life. "His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed." (John 6:55) By faith the gracious verities of all His work are received as power and vigor unto salvation. Thus Christ cherishes and maintains the spiritual Life which He has quickened. At the beginning Adam was endowed with this Life, and the preservation of it was entrusted to his own vigilance. But he was soon dispossessed! The devil came. His crafty arts prevailed. Our first parent yielded, and was bereft of this inestimable boon. This Life is no more left to mortal custody. The second Adam undertakes to hold it in sure keeping. "Our Life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3) Thus His sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hand. The believer rejoices in Life nourished and securely guarded.

IV. Eternal Life. Let it here be added, that the full blessedness of spiritual Life is its eternal duration. It has the seed of never-ending being. What is grace, but glory in its birth! What is glory, but grace in its consummation! The gifts differ, doubtless, but they differ only in degree. The one is weak and tender as the bud; the other is strong and expanded as the full-blown flower. The one puts forth the slender ray of the morning dawn; the other is resplendent as the mid-day sun. The one is a little rill issuing from a hidden spring; the other swells into an illimitable sea. The one is as the gentle spring relaxing the fetters of stern winter; the other is as the established summer, decking the earth with verdure, the fields with golden produce, and filling the groves with melody, and the meadows with rejoicing flocks. The one is as the infant smiling in the mother's arms; the other is the stalwart man, mighty in brawny strength. The one is as the outline-sketch of some great architect; the other is as the glorious edifice which labor has industriously raised. But where the first begins, the other surely follows. Life in the soul on earth is Life in heaven forevermore. The redeemed are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. (1 Peter 1:23)

If spiritual Life could ever become extinct, if the arts and malice of the devil, the seductions of this evil world, the teaching of the unstable heart, or countless enemies could prevail, then heaven might at last be devoid of inhabitants, and the precious blood of Christ might have been shed in vain. The shadow of such thought is folly. A great multitude, which no man can count, shall fill the many-mansioned home. All shall have been renewed with spiritual Life on earth, and so inherit eternal Life above.

Thought is weak to comprehend this blessedness. What will it be to realize that time is no more—that all trials, temptations, sufferings, conflicts, are behind, never again to harass or

disturb—to feel that heaven's portals are passed, and safety is obtained forever! The joy of the saved is briefly expressed in the assurance, "They shall never again leave it." (Revelation 3:12)

If the joys of salvation could ever reach an end—if night, however distant, could ultimately extinguish light—the thought would render heaven an abode of sad anticipation. Present happiness would be no happiness, because of its contemplated cessation. But the realized delights receive augmented ecstasy from the knowledge that rolling time brings no conclusion. The present joys will be joys in the future days of an inexhaustible eternity. And surely eternity will not be too long for all the bliss of the redeemed. The Life eternal which results from the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3), will be occupied in ever-deepening, ever-expanding, views of Deity. To know God, even as we are known, to see Jesus as He is, will be employment which never can find exhaustion, because the objects of study are lessons of infinity. The happiness of time is to make progress in this school—the happiness of eternity will still be to advance. It is sweet to sip these streams below. What will it be to draw water without ceasing from the fountain-head!

Christ is this Life. He bought it. He procured it. He bestows it. He maintains it. He preserves it. He consummates it. Sinners never could have earned it. We easily destroy ourselves. He only is the Author of renewal. While thoughts of our inability depresses us into the very lowest dust of shame and humiliation, they should fill us with adoring views of His love, His grace, His goodness, His super-abundant mercy, His unfailing power. The Life bestowed by Him should be devoted to His praise, His service, and His glory. When we feel decay of spiritual life, how earnestly should we cry, "Quicken us, good Lord! according to Your word." The prayer would surely receive reply. Fresh grace would re-animate the inner man; and redoubled efforts in Christ's cause would go forth in recruited strength. Herein would Christ be glorified, that His people would "bear much fruit." (John 15:8) Lively branches would prove union with the Tree of Life. Living stones should shine a living structure cemented into the true foundation, which is Christ our Life. He is "come that we might have Life, and that we might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

04.14. WISDOM

14. WISDOM

"It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God."—1 Corinthians 1:30

Admiration never wearies in commending Christ Jesus. Every perfection claims preeminence in Him. He is the beauty of all beauty, the luster of all luster, the wonder of all wonders, the excellence of all excellency. The eye of faith luxuriates in gazing on Him. The sight is the transport of transports, and renders present meditation a very foretaste of heavenly reality.

One jewel in His diadem now calls for notice. The Holy Spirit again and again exhibits Him as Wisdom. He is proclaimed—I. As Wisdom in Himself. II. As the Source of Wisdom to His people.

I. Wisdom in Himself. Behold the wonders of Creation. Christ sits as co-equal on the Father's throne, calling each creature into life, originating each faculty of mind and limb, arranging all the stores which form the riches of the universe. Scripture confirms the truth, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! in Wisdom You have made them all: the earth is full of Your riches." (Psalms 104:24) Again, we read, "The Lord by Wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding has He established the heavens." (Proverbs 3:19) Let blind arrogance ascribe this symmetry of order to the whims of chance, or the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, or the unintended combination of accidents! How pitiable is such childish folly compared with the teaching of the Word! In Creation Christ rides forth in the chariot of Wisdom. His will is Wisdom. His voice is Wisdom. All things start into being as the formation and result of Wisdom.

Next, see Christ is Wisdom in Redemption's scheme. On every stone of the glorious fabric Wisdom is inscribed. Christ undertakes and consummates this work. In this how grandly is Wisdom displayed! He alone had power to encounter and to triumph over countless difficulties. In Him alone the might resided to tread down the principalities and powers of darkness, to snatch the scepter from Satan's hands, to endure the penalties of the outraged law, to satisfy to the utmost all the violated attributes of Jehovah, to uphold His people in the perils of their earthly conflict, and to make them more than conquerors unto the end. All is accomplished by Christ as Wisdom. The Gospel page teems with displays of His Wisdom. It is apparent in its every provision. Sinners are made righteous by faith through grace, and not of works. Hence redemption is secured without the risk of failure, and all honor is given to mercy in the highest: every part of the law is magnified, and man's boasting is excluded: sin is abhorred and righteously condemned, and yet the sinner is loved and saved: ungodliness is pardoned and the ungodly raised to glory. This, also, is accomplished by Christ as Wisdom.

Thus the Spirit proclaims, that "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God." (Ephesians 3:10) We marvel not that wondering "angels desire to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:12) Worthy is the ascription, "O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways

past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) Hence we see how blessed are the children of Wisdom! They revel in the contemplation of wonders achieved by Wisdom.

II. Christ is the Source of Wisdom to His people. He contains all the treasures of Wisdom and knowledge, not for Himself alone—not as His exclusive heritage—but for His people's well-being, that he may impart and largely communicate. He enriches indeed with all true riches. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 3:23) But the present subject is restricted to His gift of Wisdom. His entrance into the heart brings new understanding. Not only do believers dwell in Christ, but He also dwells in them. "If a man loves Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23) The brightness of this presence chases away the mists of ignorance, and opens the eye to clear discernment of all truth. As in creation's day, He said, "Let there be light, and there was light," so in the day of grace, He says, Let the light of truth shine forth, and all is bright.

Let some of his illuminating lessons be now produced.

1. He teaches what unaided man could never learn—humbling lessons of man's darkness and need. He reveals our lost and ruined state, as we stand by nature in God's sight. He exhibits sin in all its hateful features, as rebellion against God; hatred of His holy rule, defiance of His power, the enemy of His glorious law. He brings us to feel that sin is the inborn inherent of our constitution, corrupting every faculty of mind and body, bringing the whole man into vilest bondage, awakening God's righteous wrath, forging the chains by which Satan binds his prisoners, kindling the flames of hell, and driving its slaves to receive the wages of their woeful service. These are truths which never can be learned in reason's school. There the self-complacent pupil boasts, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17) Jesus imparts this Wisdom to each disciple. Hence He is made unto them "Wisdom."

2. He is made unto them Wisdom by the clear revelation of Himself. He unveils Himself in all the glories of His Person, His character, His attributes, His work. He shows Himself as very and eternal God—as invested with all the power, and majesty, and greatness of Deity—as thus possessing all strength and ability to consummate redemption. He manifests Himself as condescending to assume our nature, and thus to become qualified to become man's substitute, to bear our every penalty, to pay our every debt, to shed blood in our behalf, to bear what man should bear, and do what man should do. Thus He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and sympathize with our need and sufferings. He teaches that while He is able to atone as God, He is capable to feel as man. He thus presents a key to unlock the treasure-house of Wisdom.

III. Those who thus learn Christ truly feast at Wisdom's table. They read in bright colors all the significance of His finished work, and delight in clear understanding of each part of salvation's scheme. They are enlightened to scan the cause of all His doings and all His sufferings. Their expanded intellect knows with what intent He became man and shed His blood, and now makes intercession on the right hand of God. They can explain the mysteries which baffled the mental powers of the sages of this world. They read in Wisdom's school all the purposes of redeeming love. They can estimate the unspeakable value of the blood, efficacious to wash out every sin. They adore Him as reigning on high, that He may bless His people with all blessings in heaven

and in earth, and bring them in safety through all earth's perils to their home above. Such is a small glimpse of the Wisdom which Christ by His Spirit sheds abroad in the heart.

IV. He exhibits, also, the overflowing riches of His grace and love. Every page of the Gospel-story teaches the feelings of His heart. Radiant manifestations of His character abound throughout. In love He receives His people as His own. Before the world was framed, He inscribed them on the tablets of His heart. In love He undertakes their cause, and espouses them as His bride. In love He works out in their person a righteousness so bright, so perfect, so glorious, that Jehovah's eye can find no flaw, no spot, no blemish in it. In love He beautifies them with His shining robe, and fits them for the banquet in the heaven of heavens. In love He guards them from every foe, and makes them more than conquerors over all the hosts of darkness. In love He makes all things to work together for their good. In love He leads them to lie down in the rich pastures of Bible truth, and instructs them in the Word which is "able to make them wise unto salvation." (2 Timothy 3:15) In love He will come again to receive them to Himself. In love He will present them pure and blameless to His Father with exceeding joy. In love He will dwell among them through the ages of eternity. All these truths, and many more, are distinctly revealed by Him. Thus He is made Wisdom to them.

Wisdom in the mind soon becomes Wisdom in the will. The enlightened intellect leads to determined action. Illumination in the thoughts is not dormant and inactive. It rouses Wisdom's sons to put forth energetic conduct. The sinner who has been taught Wisdom's ways no longer slumbers on the pillow of indifference. He lies no longer groveling in the mire of filth and impurity. He dwells no longer content in the regions of gross darkness. He is no longer willing to grind in the prison-house of Satan. He no longer hugs the chains of vile captivity. He is widely awake to his misery and peril. He sees a pitfall yawning in his path. He fears that each step may plunge him into the abyss of endless woe. He knows his danger, his wretchedness, his helpless state, and thus is all anxiety for escape. His earnest cry is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24) The Wisdom which thus awakens to the sight of peril also shows the City of Refuge, the ark of safety, the fortress of deliverance, the fortress whose gates and walls are salvation and praise, the munition of rocks, which is high above all billows, the door of hope, the abode of blessedness and peace. Jesus stands before the awakened sinner with salvation in His hand, and cries of inviting love issuing from His lips. He shows His pierced side into which the sinner may flee, and be secured from every foe. The convinced man cannot rest until he reaches the sheltering arms of Jesus. No hindrances, no obstacles can impede. Through seas of difficulty he works out a way. Over obstructing mountains he strides valiantly. He never rests, until he clasps the Savior to his heart, and intelligently shouts, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." (Song of Solomon 6:3)

Thus Wisdom strengthens the sinner to embrace the Savior, and to cling to Him as all salvation and desire, and to sing aloud, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." (Psalms 73:25) Thus Christ is made to His people saving Wisdom.

He also places balances in their hands in which they truly weigh the value of surrounding attractions. He enables them to discern things which differ. He strips off the tinsel which conceals the emptiness of mere temporal objects. He tears away the delusive mask which hides features of real deformity. Earthly honors and distinctions, human titles and applause, the glitter of pomp and

parade, fade before the scrutiny of this Wisdom; and nothing is regarded as a lasting treasure which has no reference to the eternal world. Thus Christ becomes to His people discriminating Wisdom. This Wisdom implants desire for increase of knowledge. The more we gain, the more will be coveted. Each ascending step in this scale shows higher eminences which eagerness will strive to reach. All earthly knowledge sinks into insignificance in contrast. Paul, learned in all the acquirements of the age, "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." (Php 3:8) His all-constraining desire was to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death." (Php 3:10) His constant aspiration was, that he might know the love of Christ, which he confessed to surpass all knowledge. (Ephesians 3:19) Thus rich delights will charm the pupils of true Wisdom. New revelations will outshine the previous light. A study will commence which will continue throughout the ages of the endless world. Eternity will be the never-ending lesson of Christ Jesus. Thus no day will come in which He will not be made Wisdom to His people.

Alas! there are some who choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. "They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd." (John 3:19-20) Who will not pity this blindness! Who will not strive to rescue them from such willful ruin! Those who fail to be made wise by Christ in time, will learn their folly when no Wisdom can enlighten. What misery can be like the misery of "blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13) What joy can be like the joy of expanding in Wisdom forever!

04.15. RIGHTEOUSNESS

15. RIGHTEOUSNESS "Who of God is made unto us Righteousness."—1 Corinthians 1:30

It is gainful employment to analyze the term Righteousness. The study instructs and elevates the mind. All knowledge is dignity and power; especially knowledge of true Righteousness. The meaning, though exceedingly grand, is not obscure. It expresses exact rectitude, undeviating adherence to right line, uncompromising conformity to given law. It is not a halting, stumbling, or backsliding quality. It is not a vacillating yes and no. It is the bright shining of faultlessness without a cloud. It is as water clear from a mountain-spring. This definition is general, and belongs to Righteousness in its abstract sense. But when we enter the Gospel-region, Righteousness assumes a far more glorious aspect. It is then perfect adherence to that law of God, which is the transcript of His essence, the manifestation of His image, the embodiment of His perfections. It closely follows that this Righteousness must be the property of all who would see God's face in glory. It must invest and ennoble all who bask in His smile, and listen to His voice, and sit at His table, and have fellowship with His family in heaven. If any should seek that abode whose garments exhibited stains of sin and were not resplendent in purity, dismay would startle the bright home, eyes would be abhorrently averted, serenity would cease to smile, the intrusion would excite a thrill of horror. The climate of heaven is perfect holiness; none can dwell there who are not purged from all iniquity, and clad in clothing of celestial brightness. There must be absence of all trace of evil, there must be the presence of all the beauties of unsullied Righteousness. The multitude of the redeemed are cleansed from all iniquity, and have put on a change of clothing. Thus they shine in loveliness divine, and God, who sees the guests, counts them worthy of His own abode. The position then admits not a denial. Those who would enter heaven must be righteous as washed from all sin, righteous as arrayed in all obedience.

What a momentous thought now rushes to the front! We see that Righteousness is essential to salvation. Without it, hell gapes, and heaven is closed. Without it, misery unalloyed glares in the prospect. Without it, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Romans 2:8-9) are the decreed portion forever. Without it, every step moves downward to the abyss of agonized despair. Can the cry be checked, How can this Righteousness be won? Where can this blessing come? From what quarry can this gem be raised? In what garden can this flower be plucked? By what efforts can such happiness be wrought?

Scripture announces that this Righteousness is the Righteousness of God. Here is the reply to the vain hope that human merit could procure it, or human hands elaborate it. If the whole race of man from Adam to the present hour had combined in one effort to work out God's Righteousness, the toil must have been utterly in vain—it would have steered the vessel to hopeless wreck. The subject is so infinitely important, that further elucidation is not superfluous. Man's every day is stained with countless sins, each hour sees violation of God's law. The wandering thoughts stray into forbidden course. Thus the garments are bespattered with the mire of ceaseless transgressions. But each transgression is direct antagonism to Righteousness, and is an infinite

offense infinitely hateful to our all-righteous God. Each must be obliterated, or God's smile cannot beam lovingly; each must be hidden from His omniscient search, or just hatred and wrath must exist.

Here is man's miserable need. The stains of sin are crimson-dyed. No human effort can erase them. Regard our best works. If they could be perfect, they would but be the duty of the moment. They would only satisfy the present claim. They would leave all behind them unobliterated; the scarlet would be still scarlet; the guilt would be still guilt. But such is our misery, that imperfection cleaves to our holiest works. Our repentance needs to be washed with repenting tears, and therefore in itself has no expunging power. If fast-falling tears bedew our worthlessness, those tears themselves need cleansing, and therefore cannot purify offense. Contrite weeping is faulty, and therefore cannot mitigate a fault. Shall we present their aid to cover sin! Where is the man who turns not with shame from praying hours! They testify of wandering thoughts, of hateful intrusions, of unreal professions, of lack of reverence for the Majesty of heaven. Who has not often cried, Oh! save me from my guilt in prayer! Shall alms-giving present itself as a cloak to hide iniquity? Beneath its slender texture what motives appear! How often is the thought prominent of man's applause! How often is the real object to gain commendation for poor self! In the same way all man's doings might be examined and found to be only some phase, at least, of imperfection. Evil cannot atone for evil, sins cannot expiate sins, transgression cannot undo the past. Iniquity cannot constitute Righteousness. Thus man's constant lament must be, Unrighteous! unrighteous! Can the angelic hosts upraise us from this miserable state? Pure indeed is their nature; holiness is their essence; compassion is their tender feeling. But still they cannot soar beyond the limits of created power. Their works could never rise to infinite efficacy. Hence evil could never be removed by them. They might commiserate, but they never could bestow a justifying Righteousness. But now let our eyes be turned from man, and all man's misery, from angels, and all angelic inability, to the blessed Jesus. Instantly the scene is changed. The prospect brightens. The clouds are raised. Hope flies to banish despair. All dismal fears give place to heavenly brightness. Joy claps its hands and loudly utters praise. "Jesus Christ the Righteous" shows His all-saving form. "He of God is made unto us Righteousness." He is the rich treasure-house of the supplies which we require, and of His fullness we may receive. His hands extend the gift, without which we are undone. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) Hence He condescends to bear the comforting title, "The Lord our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:6) It is the very joy of joys to gaze on Him removing all unrighteousness, and working out and confirming all Righteousness. Thus He justifies, thus He rescues from hell, thus He gives title to Heaven.

Let thought now separate the distinct portions of this redeeming work.

It is a grand truth, that Jesus came commissioned from on high to consummate eternal salvation, and to people heaven with a multitude all worthy of such bright abode. With such design He stoops to wear the garments of humanity, and takes upon Himself man's total nature. As man, He receives by the Father's appointment the burden and the guilt of all the sins of all His people. Hear the assurance, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) And again, "He was made sin for us"; (2 Corinthians 5:21) and weighed down under this oppressive load, He sighs, "My iniquities have taken hold upon Me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of My

head." (Psalms 40:12)

It is a comforting thought, that the sins thus removed from the guilty and transferred to the guiltless, leave the real transgressor relieved from the weight of evil. Thus unrighteousness is removed. "The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Jesus thus laden with iniquities, endures all that sin merits and the law denounces. He approaches the altar of the Cross. He there presents Himself the willing victim. He there lays down His life, the all-sufficient sacrifice. He there sheds His blood, worthy to make expiation and to give total satisfaction. Wrath pours out on Him all its vials: justice sheaths in His heart its avenging sword: the law pours on His head its total curse: He endures to the uttermost all that justice required. Where now are the believer's sins? That which is blotted out can no more be found. God is satisfied, and therefore "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) "God is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:26) Thus Jesus is made unto us Righteousness. None who are washed in His most precious blood can be borne off to hell. Satan claims sinners as his own. He can offer no charge against those on whom no sin is found.

Again—Jesus lives and moves and works as very man on earth. But what is His earthly course? It is as pure as He is pure in heaven. His Father's will is His delight. His heart is perfect holiness. He fully exhibited exact compliance with every demand of the glorious law. Undeviating love is its requirement. Jesus' life was love in its perfection. Scrutinize His every word and work. Probe every movement of His heart. They are the image of pure Deity. He was diligently watched, but no vigilance of malicious men, no craft of the arch-foe, could ever find a flaw in Him. In Him love never waned or had eclipse. Thus He is "Jesus Christ the Righteous." (1 John 2:1) But why was this Righteousness achieved and manifested? He lived not to acquire Righteousness for Himself. He moved on earth as the accepted representative of His people. It was for those who He thus lived, for those who He thus obeyed, for those who He thus brightly shone. He wove this spotless robe that it might be the wedding garment of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." (Revelation 21:9) Hence the Spirit testifies, "Righteousness is to all, and upon all those who believe." (Romans 3:22) It is to them as placed to their credit in the Book of Life; truly theirs, as much as if their own performance had achieved it. It is upon them as an entire covering, as bright as heaven is bright, and as glorious as God is glorious. Thus Jesus is "the Lord our Righteousness." As the believer escaped hell by the plea, "Christ died," so he enters heaven by the plea, "Jesus lived." Christ's death places him as though he had never sinned. Christ's life places him as though he had always obeyed. Here lips are silent. We would adore, but language fails.

Let it be briefly added, that the application of this Righteousness is entirely through grace. We read, "It is therefore by faith, that it might be by grace." (Romans 4:16) Hence it is termed "the Righteousness of faith." Christ becomes our Righteousness by uniting us to Himself. He makes us thoroughly one with Himself, so that "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17) The uniting link is Spirit-wrought faith. This was early exemplified in the case of Abraham. "He believed God, and it was credited to him as Righteousness." (Romans 4:3) By the eye of faith he saw the day of Christ, and he was glad. By faith he received the testimony of God, and believed in the coming Savior. This faith made him one with Him, and "heir of the Righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7) Similarly all who believe in Him are the children of faith, and the heirs of Righteousness. Hence "the promise is sure to all the seed." (Romans 4:16) They all rejoice in Him, "who of God is made unto them Righteousness."

How wondrous is this Gospel-truth, how evidently Divine in origin and significance! It springs from heaven as evidently as it bears to heaven. Let us begin on earth all adoration to Him through whom unrighteousness is obliterated, and sin washed out, and Righteousness imputed. And blessed be the Holy Spirit for the gift of faith, as the connecting and appropriating link.

04.16. SANCTIFICATION

16. SANCTIFICATION "Who of God is made unto us Sanctification."—1 Corinthians 1:30

How many texts, as overflowing cups, bring comfort to the believing heart! Varied and excessive is the sinner's need. By nature he is destitute of all grace, and by practice laden with all iniquity. He lies in the deep abyss of helplessness, utterly powerless to devise escape. Among his countless miseries, the tendency to evil holds a sad place. But here an exuberant scripture administers relief. It reveals Jesus as appointed to supply this aid. "He of God is made unto us Sanctification." To this grand mercy attention is now invited. Let us explore the favored state of the recipients of this grace. The Holy Spirit, willing to elevate the soul, and to multiply strong consolations, gives copious illustrations of this work of Christ. A vast picture is spread before us, exhibiting in diverse forms and varying colors its beauteous nature and supreme blessedness.

Sanctification is portrayed as "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24) It finds us as far from God as sin could drive us; as unlike Him as darkness is to light; as far estranged as hell from heaven; with features hideous, loathsome, and disgusting; with pollution soiling every word and work, and look and step. It enables us to discard concerning the former conversation this old man. By its transforming power it renders us "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4)

Wondrous is this renovation! It is not a transition from one earthly state to another. It is not the construction of another fabric from old materials. Such a patched edifice might be effected by earthly means. It is rather the introduction of heavenly life into the heart. Heavenly aid therefore must put forth energy to accomplish this exaltation to God's own likeness. The language of the text announces the mighty means of the translation. "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification." Our perception of the superhuman work is further aided by the image of new birth. The necessity of this marvel is stated by the lips of Jesus. "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again." (John 3:7) We must be translated into a state of being antithetical to that which by natural birth we brought into this world. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." (John 3:6) And we know that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:8) But no motion of our will, no effort of our power, can originate our birth into this world. Much less could earthly means regenerate us to spiritual condition. The new creature is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) A heavenly voice says, Live, and we live to God. Thus again the truth appears, "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Another image expressively describes this change as a resurrection from the dead. "He has quickened you, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1) We are here taught the nature of such revival. Sin entered, armed with murderous weapon. Ruthlessly it slew the life of God within. The soul, originally the abode of God, became godless desolation. The torch of life was totally extinguished. The spring, at first so pure, became the source of only noxious streams. The human race presented the picture of Ezekiel's "valley full of bones, very many, and very dry."

(Ezekiel 37:1-2) We ask, 'Can these dry bones again be animate?' No human power could raise them from their incapacitated state. The breath of the Lord alone could quicken them. But when that breath passed over them, "they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army." (Ezekiel 37:10) So, when the voice which called forth Lazarus from the tomb utters the resurrection-mandate, the soul comes forth in newness of fresh life. Here again we welcome the truth, "Christ is made of God our Sanctification."

Conversion is a term employed to add vivid colors to this picture. Significant is this illustration. By nature our course of life is wholly downward. Every step is deviation from the ways of God. The back is turned to heaven and heavenly things. This world, with its polluting pleasures, its empty vanities, its unsatisfying shadows, its deceitful pomps and honors, is sought with blinded zeal. The daily movement is descent towards hell. But Sanctification turns the soul completely around. Objects once shunned are now desired. That is now loved which once was hated. Former pleasures retain no relish. The mask which hid the hideous features of the world has fallen. The other lords which so long exercised dominion are now renounced as cruel tyrants; their yoke is broken, and their scepter shattered. The warning is solemn, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3) Earnest is the call, "Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19) But the exhortation does not imply that man thus has power of himself to turn. As easily might the descending river with returning stream seek again its native spring. As easily might the sun's seeming motion turn again and seek at evening an eastern bed. The power of God must stride forth mightily. Ephraim in this consciousness supplicates, "Restore me, and I will return, because You are the Lord my God." (Jeremiah 31:18) And Zion prays, "Restore us to Yourself, O Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old." (Lamentations 5:21) We find the answer in the Gospel-truth, "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Other illustrations press forward to portray this renovating grace. It is beauty from deformity, strength from helplessness, health from disease, clothing from nakedness, riches from poverty, sight from blindness, activity from decrepitude, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from filth, peace from anxiety, joy from sorrow, smiles from tears, songs from sighs, the oil of gladness from the spirit of heaviness, the glorious liberty of God's children from the captivity of Satan's slaves, adoption into God's family from wandering in the world's waste wilderness. But no multiplication of words can fully show the change effected by "Christ, who of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Let us advance to mark the means employed by Christ. A renovation so vast and so complete requires the power of Deity. Such power lends its aid. The Holy Spirit is the all-conquering Agent. He changes the wild desert of the soul into the paradise of God. He broods over the chaos of confusion, and establishes the loveliness of order. Under His renewing rays, the soil so rank with weeds blooms with fragrant flowers, and branches before laden with poisonous berries bend with luxuriant fruit. The breast, which was the highway of every unruly passion, becomes the way of holiness. Transformed by His subduing scepter, the scene, once so hateful and repulsive, assumes the charms and beauties of peace and love. Satan is driven from his old domain. One far stronger than this mighty tyrant expels him from his usurped dominion.

He alone who had power to create, can put forth energy mighty to renew. But what He undertakes, He is able to complete. Thus salvation's perfect scheme receives no check. The Father loves, and sends His Son to save. Jesus loves, and takes on Himself the full accomplishment. The Spirit loves, and rides in conquering chariot to change the heart, to introduce the reign of Christ, to sanctify to the uttermost. All glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit! The work is gloriously finished. The Bride is fitted for the marriage of the Lamb. In producing these grand effects, a mighty Agent uses a mighty instrument. This is the blessed Word; the proclamation of God's truth; the revelation of His will; the transcript of His character; the announcement of His purposes; the mirror which reflects His attributes; the weapon "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"; (Hebrews 4:12) "a light shining in a dark place"; (2 Peter 1:19) "better than thousands of gold and silver"; (Psalms 119:72) "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"; (Psalms 19:10) "a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces"; (Jeremiah 23:29) the "leaven which leavens the whole lump"; (Galatians 5:9) "the rain which comes down from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud"; (Isaiah 55:10) "the speech which distills as the dew"; (Deuteronomy 32:2) This is the conquering instrument which the Sanctifier uses to effectuate renewal. This Word is conquering, whether sounded from the pulpit or diligently studied on the knees and in the hour of calm retirement. It stands high among appointed means. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21) We are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23) It is our Lord's assurance, "Now you are clean, through the Word which I have spoken to you." (John 15:3) When the Word enters as a ray from heaven, it shows sin in its abominable filth, as the vile monster which the Lord abhors, and thus creates most righteous hatred. It reveals Jesus in the plenitude of His redeeming grace, and kindles the flame of fervent adoration. The love of Jesus produces love of His will, and transformation into His glorious likeness.

Thus Jesus, through the Spirit's blessing on the Word, becomes our Sanctification. The most saintly man on earth is he who lives steeped in the Bible, whose every desire is framed after Gospel-mold, who reflects the rays which sparkle through the sacred volume. There is much teaching in the prayer, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your Word is truth." (John 17:17) Error defiles, pollutes, and leads to viciousness of life; but it cannot exist in the soil which truth has consecrated. Hence Jesus by His teaching sanctifies the whole man.

It is scarcely necessary to press the obvious truth, that without Sanctification no fitness for the heavenly home is gained. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14) The pure in heart are those who shall see God. (Matthew 5:8) Sin loved and fondled is absolute exclusion from the realms of light. Impossibilities may be supposed, but not the possibility of an unsanctified man in heaven. How could he join the pure communion of the saints in light! how could he sing their rapturous songs! how could he swell the chorus of their ecstatic praises! how could he sit down at the table of their choice delights, and give blessing for the salvation which he had never welcomed, and extol the blood in which he had never washed, and testify that he was clothed with the righteousness which was most alien to his choice! None but the sanctified could gain admission, none but the sanctified could join the throng. To others every sight and every sound would be discordant. In heaven the unsanctified could not be happy; in hell, their proper

home, they must be miserable forever.

Hence the blessedness of learning the lesson, that through Jesus Sanctification may be obtained. Let each day then be regarded as a blank in which no advance in this knowledge is made. This study is a heavenly pursuit. It dignifies and ennobles every thought and every desire. It kindles the radiant flame of peace and joy.

Sanctification is, also, the correlative of happiness. As grace is incipient glory, so Sanctification is incipient heaven. Here we see the delusion of those whose impiety sneers at the doctrines of our Gospel, and defames them as loose and licentious. It is Satan's falsehood, that to receive salvation as the bestowal of free grace, breaks down the barriers of holy living, and gives allowance to unbridled passions. How different is the real case! The truth of Jesus is after godliness. (Titus 1:1) Where Christ is absent, there is no check to evil. With the indwelling Savior the fruits of holiness abound. "He of God is made unto us Sanctification."

04.17. ROCK

17. ROCK "That Rock was Christ."—1 Corinthians 10:4

It is a truth which cannot be too dearly prized, or too industriously brought into use, that the field of nature is a volume full of Christ. On every side abundant objects picture Him. Piety looks around and learns Gospel-lessons. Thus meditation is supplied with edifying stores, and from familiar view gleans spiritual delight. While the unenlightened see a bare prospect, the true believer finds an illustrative Bible in Creation's wonders. This statement is verified in the Rock. To casual observers, it frowns a hard, impenetrable mass. It presents a stern front, devoid of verdure, and barren of all charms. But to faith it gives instructive lessons, and opens out some teaching images. Let us draw near and reverently ponder; and may the Spirit which announced, "that Rock was Christ," direct us to wise views!

I. The Rock is a hard substance. It is firm and strong. It melts not like snow beneath the sunny rays. It yields not as wax to outward pressure. It is not as soil easily indented by the spade and harrow. It defies each rough assault.

These properties are emblems of Christ's person. Doubtless He is very man. He has assumed our nature, and will forever wear it. In heaven He shows glorified humanity. But He is marvelously more. He is God of God, and very God of very God. Therefore He is strong in the might of omnipotence, and firm as Deity can be. Let faith rejoice in every help to this assurance. In each Rock let it behold Christ's strength.

II. The Rock stands out immovable in stability. Vast piles of sand may be removed by art and industry. But what skill, what mechanism, can prevail against the fixedness of the Rock! The waves may lash, but all their fury beats in vain. The storm may hurl its fierce bolts around, but the Rock totters not. The mass never shakes, nor tumbles, nor succumbs. No object more exhibits resistance to all attempts to move it. In this stability Christ is apparent. We know that all the hostile powers of earth and hell combined against Him. Satan assailed with bold effrontery, but was baffled and repulsed. Our Rock firmly stood unmoved. The arch-enemy excited evil men to ply their utmost efforts. But futile was their enmity, and vain their machinations. On the Cross he showed all-conquering might. By death He destroyed him that had the power of death. When all which diabolical hatred could excite had burst upon His head, the Rock stood invincible. Let faith give thanks, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. The Rock on which it stands never can be moved.

III. The Rock presents a sure foundation. Jesus in His heavenly teaching speaks of the "wise man which built his house upon a Rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a Rock." (Matthew 7:24-25)

Believers are represented as coming to Jesus "as to a living stone, and as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5) Strong, indeed, are those who are thus cemented into Christ. The union renders them one in firmness with the divine foundation. As it can never be

removed, so they endure in undisturbable stability. Doubtless they will be sorely tried. Satan, who assailed the Head, will use his every weapon against each member. But as he failed to move our Rock, so will he fail when he assails the building. The foundation cannot be destroyed: and no stone of the building can be subverted.

IV. The Rock pours forth streams in the desert. When Israel panted in a dry and thirsty land, the Lord gave them refreshment, not from some cavern or moist valley, but from a rocky fissure. The people at Rephidim were sorely distressed. Water failed. They and their cattle had no supplies to quench their thirst. Their impatient threats drove Moses to the throne of grace. This refuge never fails. The Lord replied, "Behold, I will stand before you there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the Rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." (Exodus 17:6) The yielding Rock sent forth the needful help: and throughout the lengthened march abundant water trickled in the rear. The Spirit helps us to discern our never-failing stream. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4) That Rock is ever near, ready to refresh the thirsty flock. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41:17) It is forever true, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psalms 46:4) This river is the Spirit, the gift of Jesus. This the apocalyptic seer beheld. "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1) Let, then, the parched and weary in all hours of need flee to their Rock. Supplies will flow. They who seek to this Rock for reviving grace, are "as a well-watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:11)

V. The Rock affords refreshing shade. Isaiah, with enraptured eye fixed on the coming Savior, cries, "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." (Isaiah 32:2) Lively images here show the excellency of our Lord. In every need He is a solace and a sure refuge. But the subject confines our thought to the Rock diffusing shade around. Imagine, when a noontide of sultry heat oppresses, and fields are parched and dry, and unmitigated rays assail the earth with fiery power, that a great Rock invites to cool retreat. With eager step the traveler, the shepherd and the flock move towards it, and stretched beneath its shadowy arms obtain relief.

Such is the shelter of the blessed Jesus in the heat of the scorching day. The Church found this defense, and rejoiced beneath the partial covering of the branches of a tree. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song of Solomon 2:3) A gourd was great delight to the fainting Jonah. The pillar of cloud by day warded off oppressive rays from the wayfaring camp. Much more welcome is the covering shade of our beloved Lord. In our journey through earth's wilderness, we are exposed to burning trials. Satan's darts are barbed with fire; persecution is inflamed with fury; temptations are as a heated furnace. The menaces of the law are as the forked lightning. But Jesus calls us to repose by His side. He gives the tender assurance, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." (Psalms 121:6) This shade gives not only comfort, but fertility. Thus guarded, the fruits of grace thrive vigorously. It is written, "Those who dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." (Hosea 14:7)

VI. Birds seek shelter in Rocks. In these heights they safely build their nests and rear their young. In the Canticles the Church is addressed, "My Dove in the clefts of the Rock!" (Song of Solomon 2:14) Here the fowler can lay no snares. Here the archer can direct no arrows. No climbing rustic can invade the secrecy. Thus the Rock affords a shelter which no enemy can reach. The soul, exposed to many terrors, is safe in the cleft side of Jesus. In this position it enjoys security. "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Romans 8:33-34) The Savior, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, conceals from all the fury of divine displeasure. The sword of vengeance is in Him sheathed. There is therefore now no peril to those who are in Christ Jesus, who nestle in the fissures of the Rock. The Church rejoices in the knowledge that her "place of defense is the munitions of Rocks." (Isaiah 33:16) When fears alarm, she flees to the Rock which is higher than all foes, and gladly sings, "You are my hiding-place." (Psalms 32:7) Believer, realize your happy state. Look out from the clefts of your Rock, and smile at baffled foes.

VII. It is supposed that hives sheltered in a Rock give sweetest honey. They are safe from exhalation of damp soil. Moses, enumerating the choice blessings bestowed on Israel, adds, "He made him to suck honey out of the Rock, and oil out of the flinty Rock." (Deuteronomy 32:13) When it is stated that no good thing would have been withheld from an obedient people, it is added, God "would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the Rock would I have satisfied you." (Psalms 81:16) Thus Jesus supplies His people with rich joys. His word is a very hive of exquisite food. The invitation goes forth, "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song of Solomon 5:1) The Spirit testifies, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalms 19:9-10) Who can express the exuberant happiness, when the King "brings His beloved to the banqueting house, and His banner over them is love." (Song of Solomon 2:4) Every promise, also, is replete with sweetness, and they are exceeding many, great and precious.

Reviving power also issues from honey. Of Jonathan it is stated, that "he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened." (1 Samuel 14:27) Thus vigor and strength are renewed to those who feast on honey from their Rock.

VIII. The Rock stands not only as a refuge, and a spot where waters flow, and in which rich stores are hived: it also affords solemn warning. Falls from its heights, resulting from incautious steps, are destruction.

Thus those who make profession of the faith of Jesus, and desert their first love, encounter fearful fall. The Spirit warns, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." (2 Peter 2:20-21)

Alas! such cases are not rare. Stony-ground hearers too often show a blighted form. With joy they hear the Word, but there is no steady step, no firm advance. The path is slippery, the head becomes dizzy, some trial assails, the hold on Christ relaxes, a grievous fall ensues, and mangled limbs proclaim a terrible catastrophe. Many run well, and have good prospect of reaching the

summit, but their end is to perish at the base. Demas loves the world, and falls. Lot's wife looks back, and stands a warning to the tottering professor. It is better never to have seen the Rock, than to commence ascent, and stumble into ruin.

IX. Another warning speaks terribly. To some Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offense, even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient." (1 Peter 2:8) The pure, the holy walk of faith, imposes a yoke which worldly shoulders will not bear. To renounce the world, to flee its vanities, to tread down its cheating pleasures, to scorn its painted baubles, to reject its poisoned goblet, is an effort which the unstable refuse to endure. Then the end comes. The Rock falls on them, and grinds them to powder. "Those enemies of Mine, who did not want Me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of Me." (Luke 19:27) To stand on the Rock is everlasting life; to reject it is eternal woe.

04.18. HOPE

18. HOPE "The Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Hope."—1 Timothy 1:1

"We are saved by Hope." (Romans 8:24) Such is the pinnacle on which the Spirit seats this grace. Without it, the soul would never steadfastly adhere to Christ, it would yield to doubts and fears and ultimate despair. Without this anchor, it would make shipwreck on some dreary coast.

It is a delightful task to tell how Hope diffuses the sweetest joy throughout life's course, and lifts a smiling head in trouble's hour, and gilds each prospect with bright hues. Such grace is not of the earth, and earthly: it is from heaven, and heavenly. It is implanted in the soul by the working of the loving Spirit.

Let it be promised that our heavenly Father adds Hope to His titles: "O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble." (Jeremiah 14:8) And again, "Now 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." (Romans 15:13) But to Jesus, at present, our eyes are mainly turned. O Lord, You are our Hope, for truly You are our "All." Every supply of grace, and help, and blessing, abounds in You! You are the inexhaustible storehouse of all treasures for us. No lack remains to the children of Your love. Come, then, and shine forth as "our Hope."

It is decreed that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22) Trials and troubles are as numerous as the surrounding air. "Now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials." (1 Peter 1:6) Heaven's inhabitants have traveled through a land of sorrow. We read that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revelation 7:17) Therefore, in life's sad days, weeping must have been their lot. Often the storm was fierce, raging, violent; the wind assailed with fury; the waves uplifted threatening heads; rocks and quicksands were ready to destroy; the yawning deep gaped as an inevitable tomb; no harbor offered a retreat. But still despair was weak to crush the heir of faith.

How could this be? Hope whispered, Fear not, for Christ is near. It pointed to Jesus, ready to lull each storm, and to say, Peace, be still. The sons of Hope "looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." (Psalms 34:5) O Lord, be our constant Hope! The page would find no end which portrayed all the region in which Hope sweetly works. But let some of the diseases be slightly specified in which this balm presents relief.

Sometimes means of support are diminished. Need shows a ruthless visage. Poverty approaches with a cruel step. Anguish broods over an impoverished family. This is Hope's season to sustain. It discloses Jesus having all resources at His command. It recalls instances of marvelous rescue from the grasp of ruin. It shows that His fullness never can be drained. It reveals Him as the God of Elijah by the brook Cherith; as the widow of Sarepta's stay; as ever the same in guardian care. Thus confidence is implanted, that "God will supply all His people's needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Php 4:19) O Lord, our Hope, we look to You in every hour of need.

Sometimes the fear of death weighs heavily. It is granted that "goodness and mercy have followed during all the days of life:" that no good thing has failed of all the abundance which rich promises have held out as our portion: but still apprehension trembles, lest help may fail when the feet tread the dark valley. The strength must fade, and vigor be exhausted, and mental energies droop, and decrepitude totter. But these prospects no more distress, when Hope draws near. Its hand contains a bright supply for this especial need. It displays in glowing colors the assurance, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isaiah 43:2) In quick succession it exhibits a long train of similar cordials. The dying saint clasps them to his heart, and brightness illumines the passage by which earth is left. Death has no more a repulsive look. It is welcomed as a friend, which leads to the longed-for home. O Lord, we look to You! Be our Hope in the hour of death! This grace not only cheers the believer's dying bed: it is his prop, his stay, his support, his strength, his enabling power, in every circumstance of life. Sometimes all earthly help seems utterly to fail. On the right hand there is no friend. On the left menacing foes come on. In the rear there is terror and dismay. In the front destruction yawns. Such was the case of David at Ziklag. On his return he found that the enemy had attacked the town, and burned every house with fire, and left the dwellings reduced to ashes. The wives and sons and daughters were carried into captivity. No welcome voices cheered his coming. His eyes beheld one scene of smoking desolation. His own followers were more than bewildered. They regarded him as the cause of all this misery. They were impatient to wreak vengeance on him. In their grief they threatened to stone him. All friends on earth now failed. But Hope survived. The trembler was upheld amid these billows of distress. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Samuel 30:6) He reasoned, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalms 42:11) Thus amid all disconsolations, Hope sings with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"; (Job 13:15) and with the prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:17-18) A grace so bright, so joyous, the parent of such solace, the sweetener of life's cup, the unfailing prop throughout earth's pilgrimage, must rest on sure foundation. This tree of precious fruits must spring from a root deep-seated in a fertile soil. The flame, which many waters cannot quench, must be wondrously maintained. Some giant must uphold the strength which many foes cannot lay low. It must have inherent and abiding vitality. Verily it is so. Christ—and all that Christ is, and all that Christ has done, and all that Christ is doing—is the Rock on which Hope rests, and the source from which it draws supplies. Thus Hope's expectations are bounded by no narrow circle. They are vast, as He is to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. Christ shares the omnipotence of Jehovah. All resources are in His mighty hands. To Him no case beyond relief can occur. There is nothing too hard for Him to do. He speaks the word, and the universe obeys. Hope estimates this power, and thus becomes more strong when outward circumstances seem to fail, and outward prospects are most dark. O Lord, we look to Your omnipotence as imperishable Hope!

Hope knows too that it rests on One who has His people engraved on His heart. It is cheered by the precious word, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isaiah 49:15) It has read, "I

have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:3) Can Jesus thus love His people, and will He not delight over them to bless them and to do them good! Are not their interests His interest—their cause His cause! Is it not His joy when they prosper and are in peace! Thus Hope is verily persuaded that the heart of Christ is always warm with loving desire to avert distress. It doubts not that every issue will be final blessedness. O Lord, we look to Your love as our sure Hope.

Hope is renewed in strength, and mounts up with wings as eagles, when it contemplates what Christ has suffered for His people. He has redeemed them, but with what price! He paid not silver and gold for their ransom. He gave not all the precious things of earth as their equivalent. He heaped not worlds upon worlds and placed them as payment in the balance of God's justice. All such expenditure would have been as unavailing as the chaff. He gave Himself, His life, His blood. He gave so much that He could give no more; and He gave this to bear the extremest curse of God, to endure all the punishment, and all the miseries, and all the anguish which His people must have suffered if they had wailed through all the endless ages amid the torments of the lost. Hope sweetly reasons. He who has done so much, will He not surely give all that His people really need! Therefore it treads down all hosts of doubt, and against all timidities of reason, "laughs at impossibilities, and says, It shall be done!" O Lord, we look to Your suffering Cross as our sure Hope.

Hope too, with piercing glance, beholds the proceedings at the throne of God. There it views Jesus, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. It sees His extended hands, and hears His all-prevailing cry. That cry is ever-living intercession. It cannot go forth in vain. It must succeed. Therefore Hope lifts a joyful head, and sings amid all menacing events, O Lord, Your throne on high is our sure Hope.

Hope too has a field from which it largely gleans. This is the Book of Life, abounding in assurances of support. Each word in this book is true as God can be. The heavens and the earth "shall perish: they all shall grow old as does a garment, and as a vesture You will fold them up, and they will be changed," "but the Word of the Lord endures forever." (Hebrews 1:11-12; and 1 Peter 1:25) Hope sets firm foot on this immovable rock, and fears no failure. O Lord, Your Scriptures are our Hope. The Holy Spirit too in His love, ever seeking the believer's bliss, exhibits this grace in terms of potent teaching. Speaking of the Hope which is set before us, He adds, "Which Hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." (Hebrews 6:19) What the anchor is to a floating vessel, Hope is to the soul. The anchor descending from the ship, grasps by tenacious teeth a solid pavement. Thus it clings to an immovable foundation. The ship cannot drift to rocks or quicksands; it cannot be torn away by tides or billows. It rests in safety amid storms and adverse waves. Thus Hope, fast holding Christ in heaven, within the veil, keeps the soul tranquil amid all conflicts. Christ must vacillate before the clinging soul can be endangered. O Lord, we anchor on You as our Hope.

Again, in the catalogue of the Christian's armor a helmet is named, and the helmet is "the Hope of Salvation." (Ephesians 6:17) As is the helmet to the warrior in the day of battle, so is Hope to the soul. The head thus guarded boldly meets the foe. It is upraised and knows no fear. While this covering is unbattered, no fatal wound can be inflicted. Thus the Hope of salvation gives all heroism in the fight of faith. He who shows the promise of salvation written on his brow, will never

fear that his expectations will be frustrated. O Lord, our Hope, we look to You to be our Helmet.

Believer, cultivate this precious grace. For this purpose, diligently study Christ—His person, work, and love. Each day mount higher on the ladder of heavenly knowledge. The more you know, the more you will trust. Time will thus sweetly find its end, then Hope shall reap its harvest, and be swallowed up in never-ending reality. But caution should be added. Every grace has its vile counterfeit. Many weeds resemble flowers. Tinsel may glitter, but it is not gold. There is a false Hope. It sparkles for a little while, and then expires in darkness. It may be easily detected. Mark the foundation on which this cheat rests. Its foot is placed on some form of self, and on its own doings and deserts. It claims no text of Scripture for its warrant. Christ is not its "All." Therefore its end is hopeless woe.

04.19. APOSTLE

19. APOSTLE

"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."—Hebrews 3:1 The office of Apostle is invested with high sacredness. Let its consideration be approached with eyes uplifted for a ray from heaven.

It now belongs not to the sons of men. Exalted rank, and dignified position, and supreme authority may be accorded. Many succeed to ancestral honors. Ennobling titles may be won by merit. But the Apostolic station cannot now be reached. It ceased with those who held it by heaven's own investiture. To usurp such privilege in this age is ignorance, or a far greater fault. The name is mainly glorious, because Jesus Himself vouchsafes to bear it. On His brow this diadem is placed. Nature throughout her varied realm, art in her rich storehouse of elaborate skill, literature in her learned page, all classes of profession have contributed to give representations of His worth. But other titles fade before the name of Apostle. The Holy Spirit, ever delighting to exhibit Christ, and to enrich our thoughts, thus designates Him, "The Apostle and High Priest of our profession." In meek obedience may we find refreshing profit. The meaning of the term needs little explanation. An Apostle is one 'sent' and charged to execute commission. Jesus is thus sent. He is the Father's messenger from the courts of heaven. It is our privilege to glean much teaching from the copious Scriptures which announce this truth. They flow onward in broad streams, enriching the readers. Their sound is sweet as the resounding echoes of the songsters of the grove. They glitter as the dewdrops of the early morn. A luxuriant garden presents its ready flowers to the hand. A few only can be plucked. A noble passage advances to the front. It not only proclaims Jesus as the Sent or Apostle from the Father; it also unfolds the motive of this act of love. "Here is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10) The avowed message of the Giver is the mercy of mercies. It wills that atonement should be made, expiation offered, sins washed away, transgressions obliterated, satisfaction infinitely secured. To accomplish this Jesus comes the Apostle of Salvation. But no merit on man's part procures this mission. There are no workings of the human heart which awaken pity and excite this condescending grace. The Father's love originates the scheme. In love He sends His Son. Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle. A kindred statement brings corroboration. "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9) Another feature of this loving mission is thus shown. The Apostle comes from heaven charged with the gift of everlasting life. A world dead in trespasses and sins is spread before Him. Death had established its dark sway. Its iron scepter ruled. The Apostle comes with life eternal in His hands. "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) He undergoes the death. He thus annihilates its claims and gives the heirloom of heaven's life to all whom He was sent to seek and save. He not only tells that the sinner's death is slain by His death, but that life forevermore is the purchase of His work. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle.

Similarly in that wondrous prayer—and none more wondrous ever ascended from a fallen world—He testifies, "This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3) The Apostle opens out this knowledge. He reveals the Father, and He reveals Himself. He gives the knowledge which leads infallibly by the sweet path of faith and peace to endless bliss. Such is the grand commission which the Great Apostle executes. It is worthy of the Father who devised the plan; worthy of the Son who executes; worthy of the Spirit who applies. Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle.

Let us advance from Scripture's copious statements to mark that the Apostle comes with no reluctance to this office. He shrinks not from the degradation and the pain. In treading the path of sorrow no murmurs or complaints, escape His lips. This is His testimony, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) He ever joyed in the Apostolic work. He was cheered and refreshed by the thought that He thus obeyed His Father's will, and carried out His gracious designs, and brought glory to His name. As food supports the frame of man, so He found strength and animation in the discharge of His commission.

While it is precious to meditate on the Covenant of Peace, to survey its various terms, and to see an Apostle sent from heaven charged with their execution, so it is superadded preciousness to hear His own assurance, that in this work He found refreshment. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." (Hebrews 12:2) Oh! that we joyed as cordially in accepting salvation as Jesus joyed in earning it!

It closely follows that it should be our main delight to sit as pupils in His school. He teaches as the Father's Apostle. He cries, "My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him who sent Me." (John 7:16) Hence, when He speaks, His words are the echo of His Father's voice. How eagerly should we listen, with what intense delight should we drink in each sound, how fully should we receive, how faithfully should we trust, how reverently should we obey, with what confidence should we place our feet upon the firm rock of His instructions! His title is the Word. He is the Apostle to open out the Father's message. Who will not respond, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears!"

Next, the Apostle shows clear credentials from the Court of Heaven. He exhibits indubitable proof that He comes not unsent. Nicodemus shrewdly reasoned, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him." (John 3:2) The truth shines forth beyond all doubt. He who performs what none unempowered by God can do, must be invested with divine authority. Jesus knew the might of this truth, and thus sets His seal to it. "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." (John 5:36) Faith gathers strength from this decisive evidence. It looks to Jesus controlling all the works of nature, speaking with almighty power, changing the properties of water, stilling the tempestuous billows, rebuking the fury of the winds, making the sea a pavement for His feet, turning all malady into instantaneous health, compelling the strong grasp of death to release its subjugated victims, and rising Himself a conqueror from the grave; and is persuaded, that this Apostle is accredited by God. No doubt remains. Jesus is the Apostle of the Father. And when Salvation's work was fully finished, what home will this Apostle seek, where will He find welcome? Hear His own words, "Now I am going to Him who sent Me." (John 16:5) His work was fully done. He returned to sit beside His Father on His glorious throne. Is He welcomed? The work which He

still performs is sure reply. Every soul brought now by Him to life is evidence. "Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19) But would He be thus exalted if redemption had not been finished? Can we give sufficient praise that Jesus conspicuously reigns as having accomplished His commission as the Apostle sent from God! With what implicit trust should we embrace His revelations! Let unbelief regard His message with cold indifference. Let conceited minds scorn the simplicity of His grand announcements; but let us receive each statement as an utterance from the throne of God. Let us adore Him as teaching what man unaided could not learn—what weak philosophy could never trace—the truths of God. It is not only true that, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," (John 14:9) but He who has heard Me has heard the Father. Mark His words to Pilate: "For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (John 18:37)

He who appeared in person as an Apostle, also commissioned others to high work. In holy prayer He states to His Father, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17:18) But though thus designated and empowered, their office was vastly inferior. They had no power but what was derived from Him. He was clad in all the essential might of His own Deity. As years advanced their strength decayed, and in due time they slumbered in the grave. He is invested with unfading life. No lapse of time can bring decline of energy to Him. He ever lives in all the freshness of undying power. The Spirit indeed dwelt largely in them. They read with open eye the grandest mysteries of heaven. They could impart spiritual gifts to others. But they were but a little rill compared to Him, the boundless ocean. Hear the Baptist's testimony: "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." (John 3:34) He spoke as never man spoke. His words were clothed with the panoply of authority. We may listen with all the fullness of assurance. He cannot deceive. He could not be deceived. Let the command of God be heeded: "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." (Mark 9:7)

Hence the Holy Spirit's charge: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Consider His mission. He comes from heaven to teach, that through His instruction we might become wise unto salvation. With such an Apostle, ever ready to reveal all wisdom, let us not turn aside into the bypaths of ignorance and deceit. Antichrist indeed still stalks abroad, even that impostor: "whose coming will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) How shall we escape, if we choose him and neglect Christ Jesus, the Apostle sent of God!

04.20. EXAMPLE

20. EXAMPLE "Leaving us an Example, that you should follow His steps."—1 Peter 2:21

What searching mind can probe the depth of the familiar verse, "to you, therefore, who believe, He is precious!" (1 Peter 2:7) Precious indeed He is at every moment of time, in every circumstance of life. He is precious, when we traverse in thought redemption's glories, and gaze intently on the cross, and wash in the atoning blood, and realize that all pardon is thus obtained. He is precious, when we put on the garments of His righteousness, the fitting robe for heaven's courts; and when we meditate on the interceding voice, obtaining every blessing; and when we wait for the descending chariot, conveying Him to institute a glorious reign; and when we look onward to the final day, when the kingdom shall be surrendered to the Father, and God shall be all in all. He is precious in the hours passed in meditation on the work planned before time was, and continuing in its effects when time shall be no more. But His preciousness cannot be fully felt until grace ends in glory, and faith concludes in sight.

There is further blessedness to those who revel in the study of Christ. Attention is now invited to it. His work is not limited to redemption. In Him we have more than substitutionary atonement. His walk on earth supplies a model to be copied. His whole career marked a clear track for the believer's course. It is inestimable gain that we possess this wondrous pattern. It is indeed a helpful blessing.

We learn much when the various parts of some machine are viewed and explained. But intelligence expands when we see these parts in motion, and cooperating to produce the purposed end. Thus the precepts and directions of the Bible-page are most impressive lessons. They warn what paths to shun; they teach what mode of conduct to adopt. But immeasurable is the advance, when we behold the God-man in human form, exemplifying each lesson, and walking in the heavenward track.

Jesus presents Himself this blessed Example. Moses was instructed to "make all things according to the pattern shown to him in the Mount." (Hebrews 8:5) So we are exhorted to live and move after the copy thus exhibited by Christ. The Bible-page sparkles indeed with bright displays of brilliant excellence. In turn we see the shining of distinguished merit. Noble qualities illustriously appear. Abraham stands out in all the heroism of full-blown faith. He "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Against hope he believed in hope." (Romans 4:20, Romans 4:18) His faith scaled heaven's heights, clasping a promising God, and refusing to relax the grasp.

Behold Moses. He was preeminent in one lovely grace. Amid high honors from heaven, with much to kindle self-importance and to foster pride, vexed too with provocations keen with every sting of ingratitude, he moved with lowly spirit, the meekest of meek men. His garment was humility. His walk sought the seclusion of the valley.

We see the suffering Job. What afflictions could exceed his bitter agony! Bereft of the children of his love, stripped of his vast possessions, heart-broken and impoverished, he writhes in all the

miseries of disease and pain. What weary nights! What days of anguish! But still in patience he possessed his soul; uncomplaining he endured; submissive he bowed beneath the crushing blows.

Behold David! Such grace was granted to him that he won the glorious title of "the man after God's own heart."

Let admiring gaze be fixed on the beloved John. Love seems to be the very element in which he breathed. It is the very channel in which flowed the utterance familiar to his lips. Other distinguished heroes of exalted life pass as examples over the Scripture-stage. But generally in these one grace outshines all others. All excellences sit not in harmonious union on one brow. All beauteous features concur not in one form. Sometimes too the transcendent grace sustains eclipse. The faithful yields to assaults of unbelief. The meek in angry temper uses hasty words. The patient gives way to fretful murmurs. The loving is tempted to desire fire from heaven to devour the adversaries. Thus in the most noble men we learn that the highest properties may falter, and cause shame to themselves, and call forth sneers in their malevolent observers.

If then fervent thanks are due for models which in their purity retain much dross and shine with flickering light, and exhibit only partial display, how much more thankful should we be for JESUS! His walk exceeds all other steps, as the sun outshines all lesser lights, and Deity transcends humanity. We look to Him and see heaven tabernacling upon earth. He beckons onward in a perfect path, which knows no tortuous bend.

Sweet details attract enchanted notice. But first let a grand principle be established. In all His life on earth one mighty motive reigned supreme. His one absorbing rule was to subserve His Father's glory. "His food and drink was to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) He was ever intent to uphold the majesty of God's kingdom and the supremacy of His law. He lived to illustrate His righteousness, to magnify His grace, to maintain His truth, to assert His justice. He died to glorify His every attribute, and to fill heaven with adoring hallelujahs, sounding Jehovah's praise throughout eternity. This was His all-constraining impulse. Thus when His steps neared their final goal, He testifies, "I have glorified You on the earth." (John 17:4) His concluding utterance is the loud echo of His first recorded words, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) How Godlike is this aim! To what elevation would it raise man's walk! Truly earth would assimilate to heaven, if every thought and word and work and step moved onward in the broad road of devotedness to God's glory.

Let advance be made to show how this grand principle was exemplified in distinct acts. His infancy and early manhood are veiled in much obscurity. He was content to dwell unnoticed in the retirement of a lowly village. He thus wrought the miracle of concealing His essential greatness, and abstaining from seeking admiration and applause. In His lowly home He inculcated lessons which large volumes would have been small to teach. No wayward temper soiled His early days. No petulant resistance of control, no outbreaks of rebellious passion, no fretting violence of self-will, showed hateful features. Meek submission, self-denying reverence, obedient love, was His early life. Thus He lived, "the holy child Jesus," the luster of a pious home, the model of all youth. But when in nature's course He increased in stature, and put on the strength and energies of manhood, He wasted not vigor in indolence and sloth. The first Adam was bid to maintain a garden, and Jesus ennobled work by diligent employment. This truth breaks forth from the inspired

Word, which designates Him as "the Carpenter." (Mark 6:3) It is thereby declared that His hands labored. But why is this record preserved? It implies not that need required thus to be supplied. His will could instantly command resource. The narrative commends all honest toil as dignity and duty. To follow Christ is to adhere with all observance to appointed rites. We read that when twelve years were attained, with ready step He hastened to the Paschal Feast. And when the time came that public ministry should be discharged, He sought the Baptist's instituted ordinance. It must have been humiliation's depth to join the crowd of open sinners, and to profess repentance by ablution's rite. But He obeyed. The Baptist by heavenly instinct checked Him. He knew His supreme dignity, and meekly inquires, "Do You come to me?" Jesus replies—and it is His second recorded word—"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) This example is a strong warning. Away with the proud conceit, that we can live in disregard of enjoined service. What He, who is all wisdom, has appointed, it is our highest wisdom to observe. Our Example gives weapons to resist temptation's darts. These darts fly on perpetual wing. While man lives on earth, he lives thus exposed to Satan's murderous assaults. In Eden's garden he approached pure innocence. He succeeded, and innocence no more was man's. In the dark horrors of the lonely desert, where wild beasts roamed, and all was cheerless loneliness, he daringly approached the Son of God. He plied the arts which never yet had failed. But they recoiled, as waves from the firm rock. The victory is our salvation and our lesson too. What weapons did the Savior use? He might have summoned resources which humanity could never touch. He might have used profundities too deep, and heights too high for our reach. But he plied only the armament of the Bible. He selected weapons open to us, even as they were to Him. He waved "the Spirit's sword, which is the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) "It is written" is impregnable. It shields from every wound, and drives back every foe. Let us then store our minds with these all-victorious implements. Let the Word be hidden in our hearts, and it will be a fortress which the tempter cannot capture. (Psalms 119:11) The example too in lovely colors shows that our path should always be compassion, tenderness, and love. These features are conspicuous in all His works. Doubtless, His miracles were designed to reveal Him as "a Teacher come from God." (John 3:2) But for this purpose He might have selected stupendous marvels, filling the mind with astonishment and awe. He might have shown omnipotence over nature in her every part. Judgment might thus have been convinced, and the crown of Deity have been thus assumed. But He chose rather to prove His commission by healing disease, wiping the weeping eye, calming the troubled breast, pouring balm into the throbbing wound. Thus proving that He was God, He proved too that God was love. Hence we learn that gentle pity should be our constant path.

Mark too His humility. The only mention of His heart declares, that He was "meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29) His mantle was humility. He gave notorious instance when He washed His disciples' feet, and told them that He thus stooped so that they might follow Him. Thus we are taught in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves.

Observe His patience. What provocations were like those which battered Him! But "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." (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." (Isaiah 53:7) Sublimity of grandeur marks His patient sufferings.

Ponder His forgiving spirit. The tide of injuries swept ceaselessly over Him. But never did He "repay insult with insult, but with blessing." (1 Peter 3:9) The first word on the Cross shows His

pervading feeling: "Father, forgive them!" May this lesson sound not in vain. An unforgiving spirit is a graceless spirit, and therefore cannot enter heaven. The question presses urgently: By what efforts can this likeness be secured? The Bible leaves no doubt. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18) As we gaze on Jesus His lineaments are formed in us. As we study the heavenly model, we are exalted to corresponding beauty. Let then each day attest our study of Christ our Example. The view will renovate the heart, and mold it into lovely conformity. But let not the vain thought occur that the mere contemplation will achieve resemblance. Our rough materials need a mighty hand to mold, to frame, to shape. The Spirit is the converting Agent. To Him then let us raise our eyes—to Him direct our cry. On rapid wings He will descend, and working in our yielding hearts, will make them holy as our Lord is holy, pure as He is pure, perfect as He is perfect. Christ the bright Example will have bright imitators.

04.21. ADVOCATE

21. ADVOCATE "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—1 John 2:1

Similitudes of Jesus are indeed an overflowing cup. They sparkle as the starry firmament. It has been fully stated, that nature's varied forms and the treasures of art and science abound with such illustrations. The adjuncts also of regal rule and legal courts add to these stores of teaching. Not only is He the supreme Sovereign, wielding the scepter of unbounded sway; not only is He the Judge, to whom all judgment is committed; not only is He the Counselor and Intercessor; He is exhibited, moreover, as the Advocate. Thus faith is aided constantly to testify "Christ is All." On Him as our Advocate let adoration now be riveted. Let a legal court with its appendages be imagined. The judgment is set. The Judge in solemn pomp is seated. A criminal trembles at the bar. An accuser states the cause. An Advocate, learned in the rules of law, offers defense. Such is a general view.

Let thought now travel to the final judgment-seat, and let a sinner be regarded as the culprit at the bar. Many are the charges pressed against him. Long is the roll of indictment. Grievous are its contents. All belong to one class—sin. All are forms of transgression of the law of God, rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven. Thus they are many as the fleeting particles of time. For as the law demands unsullied love at every moment, and in every movement of the mind, it is incontrovertible that every moment is laden with accusation.

Let it be supposed that the offender is thus arraigned. Are witnesses needed to support the charges? They attend in ready crowds. The comrades of wickedness, the accomplices in crime, the casual beholders, the people who have shared the guilt, give evidence. But the main proofs proceed from conscience, that inward witness whose ever-watchful eye has marked and registered the course of life. Against such evidence denial must be vain. Confession stammers from each lip, These deeds are mine; thus have I acted; these sins belong to me; no charge is exaggerated; in all these points I am a violator of the law of God.

Scripture tells that an accuser calls for condemnation. Satan is truly branded as "the accuser of the brethren;" when his final doom is announced, he is depicted as he "which accused them before our God day and night." (Revelation 12:10) No sacred place excluded his vile approach, no holiness daunted him; his effrontery knew no check. He assailed innocence in Eden's garden. He solicited the Son of God in the wild horrors of the wilderness. He extended his foul touch to convey Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. So now he uses his last effort to effect destruction. Such is his hate, such is his malignant wish to have our race as his victims, such is his unceasing desire to bear them captives to his cell, that he is represented as appearing in court to prevent acquittal, to offer proof that the accused are his, to show that God's truth condemns them, that His righteousness excludes them from the kingdom into which righteousness alone can enter. Oh! that the eyes of men were open to the malignities of this foul fiend! Oh! that they would discern his crafty arts and foul attempts! Could they then lend their ears so readily to his insinuations; could

they so eagerly snatch his baited hooks; could they serve him whose life is to make them wretched, and to fill hell with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! With conscience so condemning, with an accuser so bitter, so fierce, so cognizant of facts, can the prisoners cherish one ray of hope? Must not despair unnerve the heart, and downcast looks await the merited decree? But there is hope—fresh, lively, bright. An Advocate appears able and willing to befriend a culprit so palpable in guilt. But can any undertake a case so desperate? Yes. The Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous." The Father views Him with delight. He sees His Son—His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son, His co-partner in majesty and glory. On earth Jesus said, "I know that You always hear Me." (John 11:42) Reluctant audience will not now be granted. The culprit anxiously turns to view this Advocate. It is his Jesus, who loved him with an everlasting love, who gave Himself for him, who endured all shame, all misery, all suffering on his behalf, who left nothing undone to effect redemption. Surely now He will use all efforts in his behalf! Would not a father plead warmly for a beloved son, a mother for the child of her womb, a brother for the fellow-offspring of his home, a friend for the companion whom he loves as the close inhabitant of his heart, the ardent bridegroom for the partner of his bosom? The believer realizes that Jesus sustains all these relationships. He feels, then, that this Advocate will plead with all energy and zeal and power to save him; that each argument will be urged with constraining might, and all reasoning strive to obtain deliverance. The question next occurs, "Why is this Advocate now present?" It is not a slight motive which impels Him. Every feeling, which brought Him down from heaven and placed Him a willing victim on the altar of the cross, now burns with undiminished fervor. He is urged by zeal for His Father's glory. His Father's honor would be tarnished if one perished who had been entrusted to His care. God's glory is involved in their salvation. For this, then, the Advocate must plead; and if He fails, heaven cannot sound the Father's everlasting praise.

Love, also, for His people warms His tongue. He comes flying on the wings of love, striding in the strength of love, riding in the chariot of love. He feels that those for whom Satan is now striving are the children begotten by His grace, the travail of His soul, the purchase of His blood, the offspring of His agony and death; His sister, His spouse, His beloved, around whom His heart has been entwined before time was, the portion of His Father's gift and of His loving choice; His jewels, His crown, the signet ring on His right hand, the sheep of His pasture, His wealth, His treasure, His delight, the members of His mystic body, the very apple of His eye. Thus Jesus loves them, and in love appears as their Advocate. The Advocate may have all favor in the court, the clients may repose confiding trust in Him, His desire to win the cause may be unbounded, His every energy may be strained to gain success—but insurmountable obstacles may intervene. If the rules and decrees of the court be adverse, justice must prevail, impartial sentence must be given, guilt must be condemned, the statutes of the realm must be inviolably guarded. This the Advocate well knows. All His pleadings uphold the known decrees. He calls for favorable sentence, on the broad ground that the law requires acquittal, and renders condemnation alike illegal and unjust. He demands the statute-book. He turns to the articles of the Covenant of Grace. The principle of substitution is there allowed. It is enacted that a proxy, in every way qualified, may occupy the sinner's place, pay all his debts, endure all his penalties, make full expiation, and render vicarious obedience, and thus avert all punishment. The Advocate maintains that He has worked and suffered as the substitute; that He was qualified, because He had assumed man's nature; that infinity belonged to His every act of merit and of suffering, because He never could be less than

very and eternal God. The sinner boldly awaits the issue. The accuser states the multiplied offences, and establishes that death is due for each. The Advocate presents no contradiction of offence, but forcibly rejoins, The death denounced has been endured; in My person the sinner died on Calvary's cross; he was crucified in Me. Who is he who now condemns! Christ died is full reply to all demands for the transgressor's death.

If the accuser presses that the Law has uttered its inexorable curse against every violation of perfect, pure, unsullied love, the Advocate replies: The total curse has been endured. On Me in fullest measure it has been outpoured. It is written, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree." On the accursed tree I was suspended, and on Me the whole vengeance fell. If the importunate accuser reiterates that justice must have its dues, the Advocate replies, Where is the debt which is not fully paid! What satisfaction is not adequately made!

Thus every charge is met. Justice acknowledges that no more is due. Truth testifies that it is amply honored. Justice would cease to be just if punishment could be twice inflicted, and the sinner who suffered in the person of his substitute could be required himself to suffer. The court is just, and pronounces acquittal on all for whom Christ died. It is forever true, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) Thus the Advocate prevails. Believer, bless Him, praise Him, extol Him, adore Him, more and more, now and forever. He gains your cause. In Him you are eternally acquitted from wrath. This name of Jesus suggests some slighter thoughts which tend to enliven faith and fill the soul with consolations. Advocates in earthly courts may have high fame, and plead with wondrous skill, and rarely fail to win successful a outcome. But invariable victory cannot be presumed. Failure may sometimes blight the man most learned, and the tongue most eloquent. Some adverse pleader may be summoned, more trained in rhetoric, more versed in precedents, more mighty in ingenious reasoning. Thus a cause apparently secure may suffer damage in the end.

Such discomfiture cannot befall our great Advocate. "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) He is wise, the only wisdom. He is the source of all intellect. No genius glows which is not kindled by Him. The tongue of learning is His gift. Thus none can surpass Him. All who commit themselves to Him are sure of victory. O my soul, entrust all your matters to this Advocate.

Earthly advocates grow old, their strength declines, their vigor languishes. The tongue, once so unrivaled, ceases to electrify. Weakened powers no longer command admiring plaudits and unfailing victory. Far other is the case with Jesus. Immortal vigor is His property. Rolling years can bring no change. In all preeminence He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) Can age enfeeble Deity! Jesus is ever fresh in all the powers of immortal being. O my soul, entrust your cause to this Advocate, who ever lives to plead in all the might of Omnipotence!

Earthly Advocates exact large price. Their eloquence is bought by golden baits. The wealthy may command their energies. Poverty seldom obtains help from earthly barristers. Look now to Jesus. Riches have no charms for Him. The poorest applicant from the lowliest hut is regarded with like favor as the monarch of the stateliest palace. His advocacy is granted "without money and without price." All who flee to Him in penitence and faith, all who receive Him as their full salvation, in lowest station and extremest need, may gain unfailing Advocacy from Him.

Happy believer, view your precious Jesus! He is salvation to the utmost. Study Him, love Him, adore Him more and more. Clasp to your heart of hearts the truth, Christ is my Advocate; He is my All.

04.22. KING

22. KING

"He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."—Revelation 19:16 The person who thus gloriously appears is beyond doubt the blessed Jesus. Throughout the context He is indubitably manifest. The names and attributes belong exclusively to Him. From this magnificent array let happy thought now select the royal state, and meekly bow before the King. The title shows the highest dignity, the loftiest supremacy, the most extensive power, the most exalted seat among the sons of men.

Absolute right to all sway, and all homage, is unquestionably our Lord's due; but still He magnifies not Himself to be styled King. The Father speaks, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; Hear O sons of men. The heavenly proclamation sounds, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." (Psalms 2:6) The mediatorial throne is thus assigned to Him. "The government shall be upon His shoulders." "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

None can subvert a kingdom resting upon such foundations. None can demolish supremacy thus fixed by the right hand of omnipotence! Doubtless foes, many and mighty, have assailed it. They have invaded it with consummate skill and with inveterate hate. They have brought against it weapons of prodigious metal, and plied them with incessant fury. But it would be far easier to pluck the sun from the high firmament, or to drive back the ocean rolling in its might, than to dethrone this King, "How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth." (Psalms 47:2) The arch-enemy who still conducts this warfare is mighty in himself, and aided by a legion formidable in power. He commenced his enmity with the birth of man, and never has he laid down his arms, or remitted his attacks. Often has he seemed to approach victory; but yet the kingdom stands impregnable.

Let faith now gather profit from viewing some usual SYMBOLS OF ROYALTY.

I. Crown. Earthly sovereigns display a crown, as emblem of their people's homage. On Jesus' head are "many crowns." (Revelation 19:13) The Father crowns Him, as co-equal ruler of the universe, as fellow-worker in the wonders of creation. All voices cry aloud, "You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created." (Revelation 4:11) He is crowned with a bridal diadem. "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart." (Song of Solomon 3:11) Believers delight to place on His brow the crown of their redemption. This work is wholly managed by His might. To Him the glory must be wholly given. He wears, also, the crown of victory. He ransomed His people on the battle-field. He won them in garments dipped in blood. His brow is entitled to the emblem of hard-won conquest. All His ransomed possess crowns, as made kings and priests unto God by Him. These crowns they cast at His feet, and

crown Him Lord of all.

II. Scepter. This staff is the common emblem of dominion. The sovereignty of Judah's tribe is thus portrayed. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes." (Genesis 49:10) The Holy Spirit hence places a scepter in our King's hand. "The scepter of Your kingdom is a righteous scepter." (Psalms 45:6) Earthly rulers are often swayed by ungodly passions. Injustice, oppression, cruelty, and tyranny rage in their hearts. Their laws are often framed in hardness, and enforced by unrelenting might. Their subjects groan under hard bondage, and are the slaves of wanton caprice. Homes are the scene of trembling, and prisons resound with sighs. How different is the rule of the King of kings. "With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His reins." (Isaiah 11:4-5) All His enactments tend to promote harmony alone. Obedience to His laws is heaven begun. Hearts subdued to His sway are the sweet abodes of peace. His scepter crushes every ungodly passion. His empire is unbroken righteousness.

III. Throne. As on His head are many crowns, so He is enthroned on many thrones. He sits high on the throne of all power, majesty, and supremacy. His voice proclaims, "To him who overcomes I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Revelation 3:21) From this royal seat all events are ordered by Him, and the whole course of providence receives direction. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and the whole universe submits. It is a blessed word, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) And therefore the result is sure, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called, according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) His seat is sweetly styled, also, a throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:16) Here free favor is dispensed. To this His people have access at all times. A ready smile awaits them. Their prayers are heard. Their needs are bountifully supplied. Their sins receive the seal of pardon. They obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Favored subjects are constant as suppliants at this throne. Their privilege exceeds all thought. The King sits to bless them with all blessings.

Another throne demands especial notice. It is the throne of glory. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations." (Matthew 25:31) It is wisdom's exercise often to forecast the proceedings which then shall be transacted. The day is surely coming. Each moment brings it nearer. We must meet it. "Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." (Revelation 1:7) Shall we then lift up our heads with joy, and shout, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9) Those who frequent the throne of grace move onward to the throne of glory. "You are the King of glory, O Christ."

IV. Kings are attended by royal retinue. When they appear, guards in splendid attire precede and follow. All the holy angels bend before this King. Countless is the number of this throng. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." (Revelation 5:11) These attendants announced His first coming, and proclaimed His birth. In the wilderness, in His exhausted state, they came and ministered to Him. In the garden,

when in the bitterness of His agony He sank to the earth, "there appeared an angel to Him from heaven, strengthening Him." On the resurrection-morn, an angel rolled back the stone which closed the rocky tomb. When He ascended, two angels told His sure return. On His appearance, the whole of the angelic host shall bear Him company. Not one shall be absent from the glorious procession. Such are the attendants of the King of kings.

V. Kings were inaugurated by oil poured upon their heads. Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon the head of Saul, and kissed him, and said, "Is it not because the Lord has anointed you to be captain over His inheritance?" (1 Samuel 10:1) Again, "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed David in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward." (1 Samuel 16:13) Jesus, also, is anointed to be His people's King. "God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." (Psalms 45:7) His reign is a reign of gladness. For the joy set before Him, the joy of ruling in His people and for His people, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Similar is the testimony of His lips, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek." (Isaiah 61:1) "The Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him." David, also, speaking of the things which he had made touching the King, declared "Grace is poured into Your lips." (Psalms 65:2) Thus His government is inaugurated by the unction of the Spirit. His name Christ proclaims Him as the anointed One.

VI. Kings are announced by proclamation. Many voices at diverse times proclaimed our King. Hear the prophet's cry, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold your King comes to you." (Zechariah 9:9) Angels cry aloud, "To you is born, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) At His baptism, a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) Again, at His transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." (Matthew 17:5) With what lowly reverence should we bow the head and pay allegiance to our constituted King!

VII. Subjects. There is no kingdom without subjects. The sway of Jesus rules an innumerable multitude of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Psalms 72:8) The blessed company was given to our King in everlasting counsels. "They were Yours, and You gave them to Me." (John 17:6) He loves them with everlasting love, and has inscribed their names upon His heart. He has received them as the jewels of His crown, the signet ring upon His right hand. He delights over them as a bridegroom over his spouse. He knew that another master had obtained usurped dominion over them; He encountered this foe, and rescued them from his cruel grasp. So they became His by conquest. He found them poor and wretched and naked, and He wrought out a glorious robe of righteousness to adorn them for His palace. He knew that their debts were many. He laid down His life and shed His blood to satisfy each demand. He found their hearts estranged from Him, and their affections given to the poor baubles of this fleeting world. He sent His Holy Spirit to create new hearts within them, to win their love, to lead them to choose Him as their all forever. Thus they became His by voluntary surrender. He accepts their offered hearts. He endows them with all He is and all He has. His every perfection is for their enrichment. His wisdom is theirs to guide and teach. His power is theirs to defend. His grace is theirs to beautify. His righteousness is theirs to clothe. His life is theirs that they may live forever. His death is theirs that they may never die. His heaven is theirs as their eternal home. His angels are theirs as their

ministering guards. He renders them great and noble in time, great and noble throughout eternity. Thus His people are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God." (1 Peter 2:9) In His kingdom every subject is a priest and king—a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifice to God, a king to rule over unruly passions and desires.

Well might Moses sing, "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency! and your enemies shall be found liars to you; and you shall tread upon their high places." (Deuteronomy 33:29) The words of Sheba's Queen only faintly shadow the blessedness of His subjects. "Happy are your men, happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and that hear your wisdom." (1 Samuel 10:8)

Though all honor and glory belong to Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords, "we see not yet all things put under Him." But we wait with longing desire, and constant prayer, and eager expectation, for the day when He shall openly take to Himself His great power and reign. "When the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." We sigh, Why tarry the wheels of His chariot! We cry, Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Even so. Amen.

04.23. ROOT AND OFFSPRING OF DAVID

23. ROOT AND OFFSPRING OF DAVID "I am the Root and the Offspring of David."—Revelation 22:16

Countless proofs attest that Scripture is the Word of God. Among them this verse claims lofty place. Volumes of grand truth are here comprised in a brief sentence. Immensities are uttered in a breath. Thoughts which exceed limits are exhibited in microscopic space. The wonder here unveiled is Jesus in His person as God-man. No mortal mind could have conceived this truth. A divine pen could only teach it. "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

Let attention be now fixed on the announcement of Jesus: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." Incredulity is startled, and exclaims: It cannot be! How can one person be alike the parent and the progeny of another! How can He originate and also receive existence! The Root may bear the branch; the branch may germinate from the Root; but they are essentially diverse. The Root and the topmost boughs cannot intertwine. The glacier, which is the cradle of the stream, cannot also be its final bed. Jesus uses this seeming impossibility to silence the cavils of the Pharisees, "If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" (Matthew 22:45) The union of God and man alone can give reply.

View Jesus. As God, He is the Root of David; as man, He is his offspring. We here see the wonders of the Gospel-scheme, the pivot on which salvation turns, the unfathomable ocean whose breadth and length no power of man can scan. Let us sit humbly at the shore, and mark some ripples breaking at our feet.

I. The Offspring of David. When sin upset the world, and man became the bond-slave of the devil, the victim of eternal wrath, an alien from God's family, and the prey of every form of misery; mercy flies on rapid wing to bring a healing balm. A staff is given to support the wretched outcast. A prospect is exhibited on which hope might repose. Recovery is announced. The promise sweetly sounds, that one in human form should repair the breach, and crush the serpent's head. The seed of the woman should restore the fallen culprit to all, and more than all, that had been lost through sin. Thus the first-born prophecy declares that in fullness of time a deliverer should arise, offspring of the family of man. At first the prophecy is general, and specifies only human birth. As time rolls on, predictions assume a more especial garb. Their features become more exact. Intimations speak in graphic terms, and precise pictures are displayed. Heralds of His advent sound distinct preludes. Suffice it to remind that the period of His assuming human garb is clearly told, the very place in which He shall draw the first breath of life is added; the tribe, also, is named, which shall be made preeminent by His birth. But the present subject calls chief notice to the fact that the family is specified which shall boast this grand distinction. The seed of the woman shall be born the Offspring of David. The prophet, from whose lips Gospel-predictions flowed in clear stream, sung unmistakably: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isaiah 11:1) A mark is thus fixed on the parentage of Jesus. The truth too is

annexed, that in this family, when it shall be low in obscurity, and the scepter should seemingly have departed, He shall arise out of the ashes of the smoldering house a bright flame, and shall enlighten the Gentiles, and become the glory of His people Israel. Similarly the same prophet sings, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever." (Isaiah 9:6-7) The seed of the woman shall be born in the house of David.

David, also, himself received the glorious tidings. The great honor of his house was stated to him. The inspired Nathan thus comforted the king, "When your days are over, and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish His kingdom." (2 Samuel 7:12) The memory of this promise lived from age to age, and Paul avowed its fulfillment: "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as He promised." (Acts 13:23)

Other Scriptures specify David as the progenitor of the woman's seed. The riches of redemption are displayed as "the sure mercies of David." A blessed prospect brightens, "They will serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them." (Jeremiah 30:9) The cheering word goes forth, after years of humiliation shall have been their doom, "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their King, and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 3:5) Thus when the Desire of all nations shall appear, His cradle shall be in David's house.

It is a soul-assuring task to contemplate the exact fulfillment. If any word of prophecy should fail, the fabric of salvation falls. But as surely as the word was spoken, so surely in the set time, the angel Gabriel seeks the highly favored Mary, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. She hears that she is to become the mother of the promised Savior. It is added, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33) In accordance, the angel encourages the wondering shepherds: "Fear not! for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) Thus expectations are fulfilled, and Jesus breathes the breath of life as David's Offspring.

What floods of peace and consolation flow from this fact! Jesus verily assumes our nature, as truly man as any mother's son can be, one of our kindred and our race. Thus what man should bear He can bear, what man should do He can do. Is blood required to wash out sin? He has blood to shed. Must death be suffered? He can die. Must the law be rigidly obeyed? As man He can supply obedience. Must each transgression meet inexorable curse? On Him, as man, the curse can fall. Can none enter heaven but in robes of perfect purity? Such garment is wrought out by Christ. Thus David's Offspring is complete salvation to all who, by the Father's decree, are given to Him. By His atoning merits He so cleanses those who no shadow of a charge against them can be found. He so adorns them with the beauties of unsullied righteousness, that heaven's portals open widely to admit them. But His people are not only thus fully saved, but as a man Jesus is qualified to cheer them by His sympathizing love. He has lived and felt and suffered pain as man; therefore He can be touched with all the feeling of our infirmities; therefore "in all our afflictions He is

afflicted." Hence He is skilled by fellow-feeling, and acquaintance with human woe to pour balm into every bleeding heart, to wipe away all tears of sorrow, to calm the troubled breast; "to give to those who mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:3) Thanks be to God for Jesus, the Offspring of David.

II. The Root of David. Jesus is not only the Offspring of David, He also is his Root. Let holy reverence meekly bow, and adoration raise a loftier strain. The Root is that which, hidden from sight, is the spring and origin of life to trees and herbs and countless offspring of the garden and the plain. Thus Jesus is the cause of life to David. But who can be the author of life to man but He who has almighty and creative powers! God only can confer existence. Hence the Root of David must be God. Thus David worshiped Him as Lord, and in frequent hymns adored Him as his God. Let not our lips be backward in ascribing praise to Him as "God over all, blessed forevermore," "the God of our salvation." Can we too often dwell upon the truth, that He alone can be our Savior whose arm wields omnipotence, and who is arrayed in garments of almightiness, and rides in the chariot of Deity? Salvation's work requires Deity, because it requires all infinity. The sins to be obliterated are infinite in number, and each is infinite in guilt, hence infinite must be the value of the atoning blood and of the expiating suffering. Infinite wrath must be appeased; infinite strength alone can bear it. The debt to be paid is infinite, infinite resources alone can liquidate. The enemy who opposes is mighty, adamant are the chains by which his victims are bound; who less than the mighty God can crush this foe, trample down his legion, shatter his scepter, liberate his captives, and sit as conqueror over his demolished empire? But Jesus is God, and therefore is infinitely mighty to achieve this work. By proclaiming Himself as David's Root, He proclaims Himself as seated on the throne of God. Thanks be to God that our Jesus is David's Root.

Faith here delights to behold more than David. When it contemplates Jesus as David's Root, it sees Him too as the Root of all the family of faith. Indeed, He is the Root of their being as men and as believers—the origin and support of all their life, and power, and grace, and hopes. In Him, as God, "they live and move and have their being." He willed, and they received the gift of never-failing existence. They have the breath of life, because He breathed it into them. But small would be the benefit of natural life, unless the soul revived. It would only be a brief passage to eternal woe, the flickering of a sickly candle, even to expire in everlasting night. To live is no blessing, unless we live to God. But Jesus is the Root of spiritual life. He by the Spirit imparts new being to the inner man. Thus He teaches, "I am the Vine, you are the branches." "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." The fertility of the tree depends on the vitality of the Root. This Root is ever lively, strong, incapable of weakness or decay. Christ, strong as Deity can be, thus sustains the being, the vigor, the fruitfulness of His people.

Satan, doubtless, has never ceased to aim malignant blows against this Root. But all his rage and fury have been vain. Christ is secure, inhabiting the bosom of His God; thus "our life is hidden with Christ in God." Let then all fears depart. "His sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hands."

Another thought must not be overlooked. If the Root be holy, even so are the branches. All springing from this sacred source become trees of righteousness, and are richly laden with all holy fruit. Hence true believers give evidence of their holy birth, "shining as lights in the world, holding

forth the word of life." All who see them take knowledge of those who they are one with Jesus. The mark of the heirs of darkness is also visibly displayed. "By their fruits you shall know them." As in these there is no change of nature, so they continue in the fleshly state. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." (Galatians 5:19-21) How frightful is this catalogue! How hideous are the features in which such lines are seen! How dreadful is the condition of all who bear these signs! It is added, "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:21) If the eye of any of this class should rest on this page, may God in the riches of His grace apply the word of warning before it is too late, and the decree goes forth, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still." (Revelation 22:11) The entreaty sounds: Linger not among the branches blackening for the burning. You may yet be broken off from the wild olive tree, and grafted by grace into the stem of salvation. Oh! cry earnestly and without ceasing, O gracious God! deliver me from this fearful state. O blessed Jesus! I implore You by all the love for man which from eternity has filled Your heart, by all the grace which led You to take our nature and endure our curse, by all the precious blood which flowed from Calvary's cross, by all the might of Your never-failing prayer, by all the brightness of Your millennial reign, by all the glories of Your everlasting kingdom, by all the happiness of heaven, make me Yours and keep me Yours forever. Let me hear the assurance, 'I make you one with Myself by transforming grace forever.'

04.24. ALPHA AND OMEGA

24. ALPHA AND OMEGA "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."—Revelation 22:13

Exceeding grandeur marks this designation. The crown fits not a mortal head. The jewel sparkles not on human breast. Infinity is its scope. It stretches from everlasting to everlasting. It cannot belong to less than Deity. The ground is evidently hallowed. Let each step now be taken with reverential awe. At once the echo of Isaiah's voice is heard. When the seraphic seer would sing Jehovah's glory, he sounds this high note, "Who has wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He." (Isaiah 41:4) No fitter words could proclaim Jehovah the eternal God. We listen, and again like terms describe Jehovah's majesty. "Thus says the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6) Again the prophet strikes his harp, and again Jehovah is the subject. But with all language at his command, with choice of imagery as his handmaid, gifted with all the charms of eloquence, he can employ no terms more suitable or more significant. The same sound still reverberates. "Listen to Me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last." (Isaiah 48:12) Such then is Jehovah's chosen designation.

Before the Revelation closes, Jesus claims this title as His prerogative. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The truth then shines forth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners." Jesus is Jehovah. He who is the truth claims Jehovah's glories, takes Jehovah's name, ascends Jehovah's throne, wields Jehovah's scepter, assumes Jehovah's crown, demands the homage which is Jehovah's due. Thus adoration is due to Him as the Creator and Preserver, by whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. He stands before us as "I am that I am." He manifests Himself in all the incomprehensible glory of self-existent and eternal Being.

I. Let some general inferences be considered. Ample fields invite to meditative rambles. But thought must be briefly limited to some especial attributes. As Jesus is Jehovah, all power in heaven and earth is in His hands. Let no fears then depress His people. Let no trembling apprehensions sadden their days. Providence may seem to frown, but smiles will soon break forth. Events may show a threatening form, but they roll on subservient to His ordering. His power stands as a bulwark against all final ruin. The united fury of all satanic foes is as a broken reed against His all-protecting arm. His people shall be surely kept by His almighty power unto eternal life. In His character, love takes essential place. From everlasting to everlasting "I am that I am;" and from everlasting to everlasting His heart is boundless love. Before the foundations of the world He loved, in foreknowledge of all our sinfulness He loved, through all life's sinful days He loves, to the end His love will burn unchanged, unchangeable. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35) The perpetuity of His love is as sure as His protecting power.

Similarly He is the all-wise and the only wise. Wisdom in the highest is His property. His people claim this wisdom for their teaching and their guidance. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Thus the whole expanse of Jehovah's excellencies are the believer's heritage and joy, his portion and his defense, his excellency and his glory. Holy Spirit! accept our fervent thanks for revealing Jesus to us as Jehovah, "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

II. Particular lessons result from these terms. Jesus is emphatically "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," both in creation and redemption.

Contemplate the former work, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-2) The Father is revealed as addressing Him, "You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." (Hebrews 1:10) We thus are emboldened in spirit to listen to His creative voice, calling all things out of nothing. Let vain speculation bewilder itself in mazes of imaginings; let it raise and pull down and re-erect, and again recall systems upon systems of evolution and gradual development. Let us be content to know that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) In this work our Jesus sat coequal on creation's throne—the Alpha, the beginning, the first. It is a charming exercise to hear Him speak, and light shines forth, the source and handmaid of all beauty, and chaos melts into form, and lovely order robes the world, and the sun goes forth, "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." We know that it is at His bidding that the firmament on high is bespangled with innumerable orbs, and glitters seemingly with worlds upon worlds. He is the Alpha, the beginning, the first of earth in all its multitudinous array of beauty and of wonders. Marvel at the earth, now rising high in mountains to the sky, now sinking into lowly valleys, now startling with cataracts of watery fury, now lulling with the gentle streamlet's murmur, mark its verdant carpet, its beauteous flowers, its majestic forests. Mark too the ocean, spreading its expanse of wave, raising the foam of mighty billows and subsiding into unfathomable depths. Behold the earth, the air, the waters, teeming with life! Behold man, also, created after God's own likeness, receiving life that he might be capable of grace, receiving grace that he might inherit glory. Adoring wonder stays its flight and checks its aspiring wings, and blesses Jesus, the Alpha, the beginning, and the first of all created things.

He too shall be the Omega, the end, the last. We read "they shall perish, but You remain: they all shall grow old as does a garment, and as a vesture You shall fold them up, and they shall be changed." (Psalms 102:26) At present we cannot foresee the beauty of this earth, during the millennial reign, and the splendor of "the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness dwells," but we know that all shall be the work of Jehovah Jesus. As in the beginning He was Alpha, the beginning, the first—so in the final scene He shall be the Omega, the end, the last. He is all in the world's birth, its continual progress, and until time shall reach its timeless end. We adore You, O Jehovah Jesus.

Let redemption be next contemplated. Here, Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." He is the foundation, He is the top-stone. The main parts of it are exclusively His work. He is the Alpha, the beginning, and the first before the foundation of the world. In the counsels of the everlasting Covenant, He presented Himself to be the substitute of

His people, to receive all their sins, as truly His own acts, in human form, to make atonement for them, to present satisfaction to every outraged attribute of God, to bear all wrath, to endure the law's total curse, to pay every debt to justice, to meet truth's every demand, to render all obedience to the requirements of perfect love, to invest with this robe all the family of faith. To execute this work He came, He lived, He died. He challenged all heaven to bear witness, "It is finished."

He too shall be the Omega, the end, the last. The day shall come when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and every foe to the eternal reign shall be forever vanquished, and God shall be all in all; and the last stone of salvation's pyramid shall be brought forth with shouts, "Grace to it, grace to it." In contemplation of this glorious work, faith loudly sings, You are worthy O Jesus, to receive blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and might, for You are "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" of redemption.

III. Concluding inferences claim notice. As Jesus is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," to the whole Church, so too He is all in the case of each believer. He begins the good work, and carries it on, until the home of glory is attained. The good Shepherd goes after each of His lost sheep. He finds them straying in the wide wilderness of the world. He lays them on His shoulders rejoicing, and brings them to His fold of peace. By His Spirit He carries on the work of grace, awakening the hatred of all sin, the love of all holiness, the resolute choice of every holy path. He implants unwavering faith in His atoning blood, delight in His imputed righteousness, confidence in His unfailing love. He makes them more than conquerors in every conflict. He never leaves nor forsakes until the valley of the shadow of death is passed, and the last enemy is swallowed up in victory, and welcome is given in the courts of heaven. Thus He is the foundation and the pinnacle of salvation in each individual case. The inference is obvious. If Christ be all for us, gratitude requires that we be wholly His. This thought applies to every state and condition of life, and to every moment of our fleeting time. It embraces each movement of the mind, each word, each step. Mark how cogently it presses on all who are called to the eminence of ministerial life, who are invested with the high honors of being ambassadors for Christ, and who bear the responsibility of watching for souls as those who must give account. In every pulpit, beside each dying bed, in every visit to the sick and whole, in all the teachings of the school, the instruction should be redolent of Him. His work, His grace, His love, should be the all-pervading theme. He should be the opening and the concluding thought. The life should be as full of Him as the sun is of light, the ocean of drops, the garden of fragrance, the groves of melody in spring, the trees of leaves in summer. In all matters of arrangement, whether in the family or in more public matters, all decisions should be cast in one mold—Christ the beginning and the end. We are often called to design, to plan, to project. We are perplexed, and doubt whether to turn to the right hand or the left. How simple would be our course, if the one inquiry should be, Will He, whose I am, and whom I am bound to serve, give His approval? Will His presence accompany? Will His smile bless? Will His Spirit lead these schemes to happy issue? Sometimes we may be required to fix abode, to choose profession, to determine plans for children and dependants. In such cases seeming advantages must give place to the primary inquiry, What is the mind of Christ? What plan most entirely accords with the rules of His kingdom? The career of life would glide in a safe and happy path, if Christ were always made "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the

first and the last " of every thought, desire, and work. This thought applies too to every day. Here let Christ always be "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." When morning dawns, and consciousness returns, and refreshed faculties begin to move, let the mind fly up to Him, let the first thoughts be sanctified by converse with Him. David testifies, "When I awake I am still with You." (Psalms 139:18) As the day advances, let His image be constantly before the eye. Let His word be diligently studied. Let passing hours bring Him nearer to the heart. Let new views of Him be gained. Let devoted consecration be given to His service. Let His praises flow from the lips. Let some testimony to His worth be given. And when evening calls to repose, let communion with Him close the curtains of the couch.

Thus Christ should be "All in All" on earth, as He is "All in All" in heaven. The Father's eye is ever on Him, the holy angels ever worship Him, the spirits of the just ever adore Him. Each day will be as heaven to us if similarly we ever make Him our Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. "O Lord, accomplish this work in us, and to You be all the glory." Amen.

05.00 Importance of Christian Scholarship, The

INTRODUCTION

Modern Teaching "Religious Education"

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR EVANGELISM New Testament Evangelism

Pentecost

Philippi Christ and the Woman of Samaria Paul's Missionary Preaching The Simplicity of the Gospel!

Life Founded on Truth

How to be Saved II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE FAITH The Need for the Defence of the Faith The Importance of Argument The Place of Christian Apologetics To-day Controversy in the Church Prayer and Theological Differences Controversy and Revival The Holy Spirit and Doctrine Positive Preaching! The Method of Defence A Scholarly Defence of the Faith Knowledge of Truth and Error Past History of the Church III. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH The Apostolic Practice Doctrinal Preaching Modern Preaching The Revelation of God in the Bible The Revelation of God in Nature The Need for a Fuller Revelation The Revelation of Man in the Bible What is Wrong with the World? The Gospel Unfolded in Scripture

INTRODUCTION

It seems to me, as I stand here before you to-day, that there is one blessing in these days of defection and unbelief which we have come to value as we never valued it before. That is the blessing of Christian fellowship in the presence of a hostile world, and in the presence of a visible Church which too often has departed from the Word of God. To-day, during the three meetings of this League, in the portion of the meetings which has been allotted to me, I am to have the privilege of delivering three addresses on the subject, "The Importance of Christian Scholarship."

It is no doubt unfortunate that the person who speaks about this subject should have so limited an experimental acquaintance with the subject about which he is endeavouring to speak; but in these days of anti-intellectualism you may be willing to hear a word in defence of the intellect, even from one whose qualifications for speaking on that subject are so limited as mine.

There was a time when the raising of the question as to the importance of Christian scholarship might have seemed to be ridiculous; there was a time when a man who does so much talking as a minister or a Sunday School teacher ought to do, in the propagation of the Faith to which he adheres, would have regarded it as a matter of course that he ought to know something about the subject of which he undertakes to talk.

Modern Teaching But in recent years we have got far beyond all such elementary considerations as that; modern pedagogy has emancipated us, whether we be in the pulpit or in the professor's chair or in the pew, from anything so irksome as earnest labour in the acquisition of knowledge. It never seems to occur to many modern teachers that the primary business of the teacher is to study the subject that he is going to teach. Instead of studying the subject that he is going to teach, he studies "education"; a knowledge of the methodology of teaching takes the place of a knowledge of the particular branch of literature, history or science to which a man has devoted his life. This substitution of methodology for content in the preparation of the teacher is based upon a particular view of what education is. It is based upon the view that education consists primarily, not in the imparting of information, but in a training of the faculties of the child; that the business of the teacher is not to teach, but to develop in the child a faculty which will enable the child to learn. This child-centered notion of education seems to involve emancipation from a vast amount of drudgery. It used to be thought necessary to do some hard work at school. When a textbook was given to a class, it was expected that the contents of the textbook should be mastered. But now all that has been changed. Storing up facts in the mind was a long and painful process, and it is indeed comforting to know that we can now do without it. Away with all drudgery and all hard work! Self-expression has taken their place. A great pedagogic discovery has been made -- the discovery that it is possible to think with a completely empty mind.

It cannot be said that the results of the discovery are impressive. This child-centred notion of education has resulted, particularly in America, where it has been most ruthlessly applied, in a boundless superficiality of which we Americans certainly have little reason to be proud; but it has probably not been confined to America by any means. I wonder when we shall have that revival of learning which we so much need, and which I verily believe might be, in the providence of God, as was the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, the precursor of a Reformation in the Church. When that revival of learning comes, we may be sure that it will sweep away the present absurd over-emphasis upon methodology in teaching at the expense of content. We shall never have a true revival of learning until teachers turn their attention away from the mere mental process of the child, out into the marvellous richness and variety of the universe and of human life. Not teachers who have studied the methodology of teaching, but teachers who are on fire with a love of the subjects that they are going to teach are the real torch-bearers of intellectual advance.

"Religious Education"

Certainly the present view of education is, when it is applied to the work of the preacher and of the teacher in the Church, sceptical to the core. It is summed up in what is called "religious education." I wonders sometimes at the readiness with which Christian people -- I do not mean Church-members, but real Bible-believing Christians -- use that term; for the ordinary implications of the term are quite opposed to Christian religion. The fundamental notion underlying the ordinary use of the term "religious education" is that the business of the teacher in the Church is not to impart knowledge of a fixed body of truth which God has revealed, but to train the religious faculty of the child. The religious faculty of the child, it is supposed, may be trained by the use of the most widely diverse doctrinal content; it may be trained in this generation, perhaps, by the thought of a personal God; but in another generation it may be trained equally well by the thought of an ideal humanity as the only God there is. Thus the search for objective and permanent truth is given up, and instead we have turned our attention to the religious faculties of man. In other words, men

have become interested to-day in religion because they have ceased to believe in God. As over against such scepticism, the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, presents a body of truth which God has revealed; and if we hold the Biblical view, we shall regard it as our supreme function, as teachers as well as preachers and as Christian parents and as simple Christians, to impart a knowledge of that body of truth. The Christian preacher, we shall hold, needs above all to know the thing that he is endeavouring to preach. But if knowledge is necessary to preaching, it does seem probable that the fuller the knowledge is, the better the preacher will be able to do his work. Underlying preaching, in other words, is Christian scholarship; and it is in defence of Christian scholarship that I have thought it might be fitting to say a few words to you to-day.

Christian scholarship is necessary to the preacher, and to the man who in whatever way, in public or in private, endeavours to proclaim the gospel to his fellow-men, in at least three ways.

05.01 For Evangelism

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR EVANGELISM In the first place, it is necessary for evangelism. In saying so, I am perfectly well aware of the fact that I am putting myself squarely in conflict with a method of religious work which is widely prevalent at the present time. Knowledge, the advocates of that method seem to think, is quite unnecessary to faith; at the beginning a man may be a Fundamentalist or a Modernist, he may hold a Christian or anti-Christian view of Christ. Never mind; he is to be received, quite apart from his opinions, on the basis of simple faith. Afterwards, indeed, he will, if he has really been converted, read his Bible and come to a more and more correct view of Christ and of the meaning of Christ's death. If he does not come to a more and more correct view, one may perhaps suspect that his conversion was not a real one after all. But at the beginning all that is thought to be unnecessary. All that a man has to believe in at the beginning is conversion: he is saved on the basis of simple faith; correct opinions about God and Christ come later. With regard to this method, it may of course be said at once that the "simple faith" thus spoken of is not faith at all; or, rather, it is not faith in Christ. A man cannot trust a person whom he holds to be untrustworthy. Faith always contains an intellectual element. A ver little knowledge is often sufficient is a man is to believe, but some knowledge there must be. So if a man is to trust Christ he must know something about Christ; he may know only a very little, but without some knowledge he could not believe at all.

What these advocates of a "simple faith" which involves no knowledge of Christ really mean by "simple faith" is faith, perhaps, but it is not faith in Christ. It is faith in the practitioners of the method; but it is not faith in Christ. To have faith in Christ one must have knowledge of Christ, however slight; and it is not a matter of indifference whether the opinions held about Christ are true or false.

New Testament Evangelism But is this modern anti-intellectualistic view of faith in accordance with the New Testament? Does the New Testament offer a man salvation first, on the basis of a psychological process of conversion or surrender -- falsely called faith -- and then preach the gospel to him afterwards; or does the New Testament preach the gospel to him first, set forth to him first the fact about Christ and the meaning of His death, and then ask him to accept the One thus presented in order that his soul may be saved? That question can be answered very simply by an examination of the examples of conversion which the New Testament contains.

Pentecost

Three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost. They were converted by Peter's sermon. What did Peter's sermon contain? Did it contain merely an account of Peter's own experience of salvation; did it consist solely in exhortation to the people to confess their sins? Not at all. What Peter did on the day of Pentecost was to set forth the facts about Jesus Christ -- His life, His miracles, His death, His resurrection. It was on the basis of that setting forth of the facts about Christ that the three thousand believed, confessed their sins, and were saved.

Philippi

Paul and Silas were in prison one night at Philippi. There was a miracle; the prisoners were released. The gaoler was impressed and said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Did the gaoler believe then and there; was he saved without further delay? I think not. We are expressly told that Paul and Silas, after that, "spake unto him the word of the Lord." Then and not till then was he baptised, and I think we are plainly to understand that then and not till then was he saved.

Christ and the Woman of Samaria Our Saviour sat one day by the well. He talked with a sinful woman, and laid His finger upon the sore spot in her life. "Thou has had five husbands." He said; "and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." The woman then apparently sought to evade the consideration of the sin in her own life by asking a theological question regarding the right place in which to worship God. What did Jesus do with her theological question? Did He brush it aside after the manner of modern religious workers? Did He say to the woman: "You are evading the real question; do not trouble yourself about theological matters, but let us return to the consideration of sin in your life?" Not at all. He answered that theological question with the utmost fulness as though the salvation of the woman's soul depended on her obtaining the right answer. In reply to that sinful woman, and to what modern religious workers would have regarded as an evasive question, Jesus engaged in some of the profoundest theological teaching in the whole New Testament. A right view of God, according to Jesus, is not something that comes after salvation, but it is something necessary to salvation.

Paul's Missionary Preaching The Apostle Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians gives a precious summary of his missionary preaching. He does so by telling what it was to which the Thessalonians turned when they were saved. Was it a mere programme of life to which they turned? Was it a "simple faith," in the modern sense which divorces faith from knowledge and supposes that a man can have "simple faith" in a person of whom he knows nothing or about whom he holds opinions that make faith in him absurd? Not at all. In turning to Christ those Thessalonian Christians turned to a system of theology. "Ye turned to God from idols," says Paul, "to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come." "Ye turned to God from idols" -- there is theology proper. "And to wait for His Son from heaven" -- there is Christology. "Whom He raised from the dead" -- there is the supernatural act of God in history. "Even Jesus" -- there is the humanity of our Lord. "Which delivereth us from the wrath to come" -- there is the Christian doctrine of sin and the Christian doctrine of the Cross of Christ. So it is in the New Testament from beginning to end. The examples might be multiplied indefinitely. The New Testament gives not one bit of comfort to those who separate faith from knowledge, to those who hold the absurd view that a man can trust a person about whom he knows nothing. What many men despise to-day as "doctrine" the New Testament calls the gospel; and the New Testament treats it as the message upon which salvation depends. But if that be so, if salvation depends upon the message in which Christ is offered as Saviour, it is obviously important that we should get the message straight. That is where Christian scholarship comes in. Christian scholarship is important in order that we may tell the story of Jesus and His love straight and full and plain. The Simplicity of the Gospel! At this point, indeed, an objection may arise. Is not the gospel a very simple thing, it may be asked; and will not its simplicity be obscured by too much scholarly research? The objection spring from a

false view of what scholarship is; it springs from the notion that scholarship leads a man to be obscure. Exactly the reverse is the case. Ignorance is obscure; but scholarship brings order out of confusion, places things in their logical relations, and makes the message shine forth clear.

There are, indeed, evangelists who are not scholars, but scholarship is necessary to evangelism all the same. In the first place, though there are evangelists, who are not scholars, the greatest evangelists, like the Apostle Paul and like Martin Luther, have been scholars. In the second place, the evangelists who are not scholars are dependent upon scholars to help them get their message straight; it is out of a great underlying fund of Christian learning that true evangelism springs.

Life Founded on Truth That is something that the Church of our day needs to take to heart. Life, according to the New Testament, is founded upon truth; and the attempt to reverse the order results only in despair and in spiritual death. Let us not deceive ourselves, my friends. Christian experience is necessary to evangelism; but evangelism does not consist merely in the rehearsal of what has happened in the evangelist's own soul. We shall, indeed, be but poor witnesses of Christ if we can tell only what Christ has done for the world or for the Church and cannot tell what He has done personally for us. But we shall also be poor witnesses if we recount only the experiences of our own lives. Christian evangelism does not consist merely in a man's going about the world saying: "Look at me, what a wonderful experience I have, how happy I am, what wonderful Christian virtues I exhibit; you can all be as good and as happy as I am if you will just make a complete surrender of your wills in obedience to what I say." That is what many religious workers seem to think that evangelism is. We can preach the gospel, they tell us, by our lives, and do not need to preach it by our words. But they are wrong. Men are not saved by the exhibition of our glorious Christian virtues; they are not saved by the contagion of our experiences. We cannot be the instruments of God in saving them if we preach to them thus only ourselves. Nay, we must preach to them the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is only through the gospel which sets Him forth that they can be saved.

How to be Saved

If you want health for your souls, and if you want to be the instrument of bringing health to others, do not turn your gaze forever within, as though you could find Christ there. Nay, turn your gaze away from your own miserable experiences, away from your own sin, to the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered to us in the gospel. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Only when we turn away from ourselves to that uplifted Saviour shall we have healing for our deadly hurt.

It is the same old story, my friends -- the same old story of the natural man. Men are trying to-day, as they have always been trying, to save themselves -- to save themselves by their own act of surrender, by the excellence of their own faith, by mystic experiences of their own lives. But it is all in vain. Not that way is peace with God to be obtained. It is to be obtained only in the old, old way -- by attention to something that was done once for all long ago, and by acceptance of the living Saviour who there, once for all, brought redemption for our sin. Oh, that men would turn for salvation from their own experience to the Cross of Christ; oh, that they would turn from the phenomena of religion to the living God! That that may be done, there is but one way. It is not found in a study of the psychology of religion; it is not found in "religious education"; it is not found in an analysis of ones' own spiritual states. Oh, no. It is found only in the blessed written Word.

There are the words of life. There God speaks. Let us attend to His voice. Let us above all things know the Word. Let us study it with all our minds, let us cherish it with all our hearts. Then let us try, very humbly, to bring it to the unsaved. Let us pray that God may honour not the messengers but the message, that despite our unworthiness He may make His Word upon our unworthy lips to be a message of life.

05.02 For the Defense of the Faith

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE FAITH In speaking of Christian scholarship before the Bible League, I am somewhat in the position of bringing coals to Newcastle, but perhaps you will take what I am saying as being an expression of hearty agreement with that scholarly work which your League has been carrying on so successfully for many years. This morning we considered the importance of Christian scholarship for evangelists. The gospel message, we observed, is not brought to a man after salvation has already been received, but it is brought to him in order that salvation may be received; and the fuller and plainer the message is, so much the more effective is it for the saving of souls. The Need for the Defence of the Faith But Christian scholarship is also necessary, in the second place, for the defence of the faith, and to this aspect of the subject I invite your attention this afternoon. There are, indeed, those who tell us that no defence of the faith is necessary. "The Bible needs no defence," they say; "let us not be forever defending Christianity, but instead let us go forth joyously to propagate Christianity." But I have observed one curious fact -- when men talk thus about propagating Christianity without defending it, the thing that they are propagating is pretty sure not to be Christianity at all. They are propagating an anti-intellectualistic, non-doctrinal Modernism; and the reason why it requires no defence is simply that it is so completely in accord with the current of the age. It causes no more disturbance than does a chip that floats downward with a stream. In order to be an adherent of it, a man does not need to resist anything at all: he needs only to drift, and automatically his Modernism will be of the most approved and popular kind. One thing needs always to be remembered in the Christian Church--true Christianity, now as always, is radically contrary to the natural man, and it cannot possibly be maintained without a constant struggle. A chip that floats downwards with the current is always at peace; but around every rock the waters foam and rage. Show me a professing Christian of whom all men speak well, and I will show you a man who is probably unfaithful to his Lord. The Importance of Argument

Certainly a Christianity that avoids argument is not the Christianity of the New Testament. The New Testament is full of argument in defence of the faith. The Epistles of Paul are full of argument--no one can doubt that. But even the words of Jesus are full of argument in defence of the truth of what Jesus was saying. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Is not that a well-known form of reasoning, which the logicians would put in its proper category? Many of the parables of Jesus are argumentative in character. Even our Lord, who spake in the plenitude of divine authority, did condescend to reason with men. Everywhere the New Testament meets objections fairly, and presents the gospel as a thoroughly reasonable thing.

Some years ago I was in a company of students who were discussing methods of Christian work. An older man, who had had much experience in working among students, arose and said that according to his experience you never win a man to Christ until you stop arguing with him. When he said that, I was not impressed.

It is perfectly true, of course, that argument alone is quite insufficient to make a man a Christian. You may argue with him from now until the end of the world: you may bring forth the most magnificent arguments: but all will be in vain unless there be one other thing--the mysterious, creative power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. But because argument is insufficient, it does not follow that it is unnecessary. Sometimes it is used directly by the Holy Spirit to bring a man to Christ. But more frequently it is used indirectly. A man hears an answer to objections raised against the truth of the Christian religion: and at the time when he hears it he is not impressed. But afterwards, perhaps many years afterwards, his heart at last is touched: he is convicted of sin; he desires to be saved. Yet without that half-forgotten argument he could not believe: the gospel would not seem to him to be true, and he would remain in his sin. As it is, however, the thought of what he has heard long ago comes into his mind; Christian apologetics at last has its day, the way is open, and when he will believe he can believe because he has been made to see that believing is not an offence against truth. The Place of Christian Apologetics To-day

Sometimes, when I have tried -- very imperfectly, I confess--to present arguments in defence of the resurrection of our Lord or of the truth, at this point or that, of God's Word, someone has come up to me after the lecture and has said to me very kindly: "We liked it, and we are impressed with the considerations that you have adduced in defence of the faith; but, the trouble is, we all believed in the Bible already, and the persons that really needed the lecture are not here." When someone tells me that, I am not very greatly disturbed. True, I should have liked to have just as many sceptics as possible at my lecture; but if they are not there I do not necessarily think that my efforts are all in vain. What I am trying to do by my apologetic lecture is not merely--perhaps not even primarily--to convince people who are opposed to the Christian religion. Rather am I trying to give to Christian people-- Christian parents or Sunday School teachers--materials that they can use not in dealing with avowed sceptics, whose backs are up against Christianity, but in dealing with their own children or with the pupils in their classes, who love them, and long to be Christians as they are, but are troubled by the hostile voices on every side.

It is but a narrow view of Christian apologetics that regards the defence of the faith as being useful only in the immediate winning of those who are arguing vigorously on the other side. Rather is it useful most of all in producing an intellectual atmosphere in which the acceptance of the gospel will seem to be something other than an offence against truth. Charles Spurgeon and D. L. Moody, in the latter years of the nineteenth century, were facing a situation entirely different from that which faces the evangelists of to-day: They were facing a world in which many people in their youth had been imbued with Christian convictions, and in which public opinion, to a very considerable extent, was in favour of the Christian faith. To-day, on the other hand, public opinion, even in England and America, is predominantly opposed to the Christian faith, and the people from their youth are imbued with the notion that Christian convictions are antiquated and absurd. Never was there a stronger call of God than there is to-day for a vigorous and scholarly defence of the faith.

I believe that the more thoughtful of the evangelists are coming to recognise that fact. There was a time, twenty-five or thirty years ago, when the evangelists regarded the work of Christian apologists as either impious or a waste of time. Here are souls to be saved, they said; and professors in theological seminaries insist on confusing their students' minds with a lot of German names, instead of preaching the simple gospel of Christ. But to-day a different temper often prevails. Evangelists, if they be real evangelists, real proclaimers of the unpopular message that

the Bible contains, are coming more and more to see that they cannot do without those despised theological professors after all. It is useless to proclaim a gospel that people cannot hold to be true: no amount of emotional appeal can do anything against the truth. The question of fact cannot permanently be evaded. Did Christ or did He not rise from the dead: is the Bible trustworthy or is it false? In other words, the twelfth chapter of I. Corinthians is coming again to its rights. We are coming to understand how many-sided is the work of Christ: the eye is ceasing to "say to the hand, 'I have no need of thee.' " Certainly one thing is clear--if Christian apologetics suffers, injury will come to every member of the body of Christ. But if we are to have Christian apologetics, if we are to have a defence of the faith, what kind of defence of the faith should it be?

Controversy in the Church In the first place, it should be directed not only against the opponents outside the Church but also against the opponents within. The opponents of Holy Scripture do not become less dangerous, but they become far more dangerous when they are within ecclesiastical walls. At that point, I am well aware that widespread objection arises at the present time. Let us above all, men say, have no controversy in the Church: let us forget our small theological differences and all repeat together Paul's hymn to Christian love. As I listen to such pleas, my Christian friends, I think I can detect in them rather plainly the voice of Satan. That voice is heard, sometimes, on the lips of good and truly Christian men, as at Caesarea Philippi it was heard on the lips of the greatest of the Twelve. But Satan's voice it is, all the same.

Sometimes it comes to us in rather deceptive ways.

I remember, for example, what was said in my hearing on one occasion, by a man who is generally regarded as one of the leaders of the evangelical Christian Church. It was said at the climax of a day of devotional services. "If you go heresy-hunting for the sin in your own wicked hearts," said the speaker, as nearly as I can remember his words, "you will have no time for heresy-hunting for the heretics outside."

Thus did temptation come through the mouth of a well-meaning man. The "heretics," to use the term that was used by that speaker, are, with their helpers, the indifferentists, in control of the church within the bounds of which that utterance was made, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as they are in control of nearly all the larger Protestant churches in the world. A man hardly needs to "hunt" them very long if he is to oppose them. All that he needs to do is to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, and his opposition to those men will follow soon enough. But is it true, as this speaker seemed to imply, that there is a conflict between faithfulness to Christ in the ecclesiastical world and the cultivation of holiness in one's own inner life? My friends, it is not true, but false. A man cannot successfully go heresy-hunting against the sin in his own life if he is willing to deny his Lord in the presence of the enemies outside. The two battles are intimately connected. A man cannot fight successfully in one unless he fights also in the other.

Prayer and Theological Differences

Again, we are told that our theological differences will disappear if we will just get down on our knees together in prayer. Well, I can only say about that kind of prayer, which is indifferent to the question whether the gospel is true or false, that it is not Christian prayer; it is bowing down in the house of Rimmon. God save us from it! Instead, may God lead us to the kind of prayer in which, recognising the dreadful condition of the visible Church, recognising the unbelief and the sin which

dominate it to-day, we who are opposed to the current of the age both in the world and in the Church, facing the facts as they are, lay those facts before God, as Hezekiah laid before Him the threatening letter of the Assyrian enemy, and humbly ask Him to give the answer.

Controversy and Revival

Again, men say that instead of engaging in controversy in the Church, we ought to pray to God for a revival; instead of polemics, we ought to have evangelism. Well, what kind of revival do you think that will be? What sort of evangelism is it that is indifferent to the question what evangel is it that is to be preached? Not a revival in the New Testament sense, not the evangelism that Paul meant when he said, "Woe is be unto me, if I preach not the gospel." No, my friends, there can be no true evangelism which makes common cause with the enemies of the Cross of Christ, Souls will hardly be saved unless the evangelists can say with Paul: "If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed!" Every true revival is born in controversy, and leads to more controversy. That has been true ever since our Lord said that He came not to bring peace upon the earth but a sword. And do you know what I think will happen when God sends a new Reformation upon the Church? We cannot tell when that blessed day will come. But when the blessed day does come, I think we can say at least one result that it will bring. We shall hear nothing on that day about the evils of controversy in the Church. All that will be swept away as with a mighty flood. A man who is on fire with a message never talks in that wretched, feeble way, but proclaims the truth joyously and fearlessly, in the presence of every high thing that is lifted up against the gospel of Christ. The Holy Spirit and Doctrine But men tell us that instead of engaging in controversy about doctrine we ought to seek the power of the living Holy Spirit. A few years ago we had in America, as I suppose you had here, a celebration of the anniversary of Pentecost. At that time, our Presbyterian Church was engaged in a conflict, the gist of which concerned the question of the truth of the Bible. Was the Church going to insist, or was it not going to insist, that its ministers should believe that the Bible is true? At that time of decision, and almost, it seemed, as though to evade the issue. many sermons were preached on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Do you think that those sermons, if they really were preached in that way, were approved by Him with whom they dealt.. I fear not, my friends. A man can hardly receive the power of the Holy Spirit if he seeks to evade the question whether the blessed Book that the Spirit has given us is true or false.

Positive Preaching!

Again, men tell us that our preaching should be positive and not negative, that we can preach the truth without attacking error. But if we follow that advice we shall have to close our Bible and desert its teachings. The New Testament is a polemic book almost from beginning to end. Some years ago I was in a company of teachers of the Bible in the colleges and other educational institutions of America. One of the most eminent theological professors in the country made an address. In it he admitted that there are unfortunate controversies about doctrine in the Epistles of Paul; but, said he in effect, the real essence of Paul's teaching is found in the hymn to Christian love in the thirteenth chapter of 1. Corinthians: and we can avoid controversy to-day, if we will only devote the chief attention to that inspiring hymn. In reply, I am bound to say that the example was singularly ill-chosen. That hymn to Christian love is in the midst of a great polemic passage: it would never have been written if Paul had been opposed to controversy with error in the Church. It

was because his soul was stirred within him by a wrong use of the spiritual gifts that he was able to write that glorious hymn. So it is always in the Church. Every really great Christian utterance, it may almost be said, is born in controversy. It is when men have felt compelled to take a stand against error, that they have risen to the really great heights in the celebration of truth. The Method of Defence But in defending the faith against the attack upon it that is being made both without and within the Church, what method of defence should be used? In answer to that question, I have time only to say two things. In the first place, the defence, with the polemic that it involves, should be perfectly open and above board. I have just stated, that I believe in controversy. But in controversy I do try to observe the Golden Rule; I do try to do unto others as I would have others do unto me. And the kind of controversy that pleases me in an opponent is a controversy that is altogether frank.

Sometimes I go into a company of modern men. A man gets up upon the platform, looks out benignly upon the audience. and says: "I think. brethren. that we are all agreed about this"--and then proceeds to trample ruthlessly upon everything that is dearest to my heart. When he does that, I feel aggrieved. I do not feel aggrieved because he gives free expression to opinions that are different from mine. But I feel aggrieved because he calls me his "brother" and assumes, prior to investigation, that I agree with what he is going to say. A kind of controversy that pleases me better than that is a kind of controversy in which a man gets up upon the platform, looks out upon the audience. and says: "What is this? I see that one of those absurd Fundamentalists has somehow strayed into this company of educated men"--and then proceeds to call me by every opprobrious term that is to be found in one of the most unsavoury paragraphs of Roget's "Thesaurus." When he does that, I do not feel too much distressed. I can even endure that application to me of the term "Fundamentalist," though for the life of me I cannot see why adherents of the Christian religion, which has been in the world for some nineteen hundred years, should suddenly be made an "-ism," and be called by some strange new name. The point is that that speaker at least does me the honour of recognising that a profound difference separates my view from his. We understand each other perfectly, and it is quite possible that we may be, if not brothers (I object to the degradation of that word), yet at least good friends. A Scholarly Defence of the Faith In the second place, the defence of the faith should be of a scholarly kind. Mere denunciation does not constitute an argument; and before a man can refute successfully an argument of an opponent, he must understand the argument that he is endeavouring to refute. Personalities, in such debate, should be kept in the background; and analysis of the motives of one's opponents has little place. That principle, certainly in America, has been violated constantly by the advocates of the Modernist or indifferentist position in the Church. It has been violated by them far more than by the defenders of God's Word. Yet the latter, strangely enough, have received the blame. The representatives of the dominant Modern-indifferentist forces have engaged in the most violent adjectival abuse of their opponents: yet they have been called sweet and beautiful and tolerant: the defenders of the Bible, and of the historic position of the Church have spoken courteously, though plainly, in opposition, and have been called "bitter" and "extreme." I am reminded of the way in which an intelligent American Indian is reported (I saw it in the American magazine, "The Saturday Evening Post," a few months ago) to have characterised the terminology used in histories of the wars between the white men and the men of his race. "When you won," said the Indian, "it was, according to your histories, a 'battle'; when we won, it was a 'massacre'."

Such, I suppose, is the treatment of the unpopular side in every conflict. Certainly it is the treatment which we receive to-day. Men have found it to be an effective way of making themselves popular, to abuse the representatives of so unpopular a cause as that which we Bible-believing Christians represent.

Yet I do not think we ought to be dismayed. If in these days of unbelief and defection in the Church we are called upon to bear just a little bit of the reproach of Christ, we ought to count ourselves honoured, and certainly we ought not to mitigate in the slightest measure the plainness either of our defence of the truth or of our warnings against error. Men's favour is worth very little after all, in comparison with the favour of Christ. But certainly we should strive to keep ourselves free from that with which we are charged. Because our opponents are guilty, that is no reason why we should make ourselves guilty too.

Knowledge of Truth and Error

It is no easy thing to defend the Christian faith against the mighty attack that is being brought against it at the present day. Knowledge of the truth is necessary, and also clear acquaintance with the forces hostile to the truth in modern thought. At that point, a final objection may arise. Does it not involve a terrible peril to men's souls to ask them--for example, in their preparation for the ministry--to acquaint themselves with things that are being said against the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Would it not be safer to learn only of the truth, without acquainting ourselves with error? We answer, "Of course it would be safer." It would be far safer, no doubt, to live in a fool's paradise and close one's eyes to what is going on in the world to-day, just as it is safer to remain in secure dugouts rather than to go over the top in some great attack. We save our souls, perhaps, by such tactics, but the Lord's enemies remain in possession of the field. It is a great battle indeed, this intellectual battle of to-day; deadly perils await every man who engages in that conflict; but it is the Lord's battle, and He is a great Captain in the fight.

There are, indeed, some perils that should be avoided--particularly the peril of acquainting ourselves with what is said against the Christian religion without ever obtaining any really orderly acquaintance with what can be said for it. That is the peril to which a candidate for the ministry, for example, subjects himself when he attends only one of the theological colleges where the professors are adherents of the dominant naturalistic view. What does such a course of study mean? It means simply this, that a man does not think the historic Christian faith, which has given him his spiritual nurture, to be worthy of a fair hearing. I am not asking him to close his eyes to what can be said against the historic faith. But, I am telling him that the logical order is to learn what a thing is before one attends exclusively to what can be said against it: and I am telling him further, that the way to learn what a thing is is not to listen first to its opponents, but to grant a full hearing to those who believe in it with all their minds and hearts. After that has been done, after our students, by pursuing the complete course of study, have obtained something like an orderly acquaintance with the marvellous system of truth that the Bible contains, then the more they listen to what can be said against it, the better defenders of it they will probably be.

Let us, therefore, pray that God will raise up for us to-day true defenders of the Christian faith. We are living in the midst of a mighty conflict against the Christian religion. The conflict is carried on with intellectual weapons. Whether we like it or not, there are millions upon millions of our fellow-men who reject Christianity for the simple reason that they do not believe Christianity to be

true. What is to be done in such a situation?

Past History of the Church

We can learn, at this point, a lesson from the past history of the Church. This is not the first time during the past nineteen hundred years when intellectual objections have been raised against the gospel of Christ. How have those objections been treated? Have they been evaded, or have they been faced? The answer is writ large in the history of the Church. The objections have been faced. God has raised up, in time of need, not only evangelists to appeal to the multitudes, but also Christian scholars to meet the intellectual attack. So it will be in our day, my friends. The Christian religion flourishes not in the darkness but in the light. Intellectual slothfulness is but a quack remedy for unbelief; the true remedy is consecration of intellectual powers to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us not fear for the result. Many times, in the course of the past nineteen hundred years, men have predicted that in a generation or so the old gospel would be forever forgotten. Yet the gospel has burst forth again, and set the world aflame. So it may be in our age, in God's good time and in His way. Sad indeed are the substitutes for the gospel of Christ. The Church has been beguiled into By-path Meadow, and is now groaning in the dungeon of Giant Despair. Happy is the man who can point out to such a Church the straight high road that leads over hill and valley to the City of God.

05.03 For Building up of the Church

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

We have been discussing to-day the uses of Christian scholarship. It is important, we showed this morning, for evangelism: it is important, in the second place, as we showed this afternoon, for the defence of the faith. But it has still another use. It is important, in the third place, for the building up of the Church. The Apostolic Practice At this point, as at the first two points, we have the New Testament on our side. At the beginning of the Church's life, as we are told in the Book of Acts, the Apostolic Church continued steadfastly, not only in fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers, but also in the apostles' teaching. There is no encouragement whatever, in the New Testament, for the notion that when a man has been converted all has been done for him that needs to be done. Read the Epistles of Paul, in particular, from that point of view. Paul was the greatest of evangelists, and he gloried particularly in preaching the gospel just in places where it had never been heard; yet his Epistles are full of the edification or building up of those who have already been won; and the whole New Testament clearly discourages the exclusive nourishment of Christians with milk instead of with solid food.

Doctrinal Preaching In the modern Church, this important work of edification has been sadly neglected; it has been neglected even by some of those who believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Too often doctrinal preaching has been pushed from the primary place, in which it rightly belongs, to a secondary place: exhortation has taken the place of systematic instruction; and the people have not been built up. Is it any wonder that a Church thus nurtured is carried away with every wind of doctrine and is helpless in the presence of unbelief? A return to solid instruction in the pulpit, at the desk of the Sunday School teacher, and particularly in the home, is one of the crying needs of the hour.

I do not mean that a sermon should be a lecture; I do not mean that a preacher should address his congregation as a teacher addresses his class. No doubt some young preachers do err in that way. Impressed with the truth that we are trying to present tonight, they have endeavoured to instruct the people in Christian doctrine: but in their efforts to be instructive they have put entirely too many points into one sermon and the congregation has been confused. That error, unquestionably, should be avoided. But it should be avoided not by the abandonment of doctrinal preaching, but by our making doctrinal preaching real preaching. The preacher should present to his congregation the doctrine that the Holy Scripture contains; but he should fire the presentation of that doctrine with the devotion of the heart, and he should show how it can be made fruitful for Christian life.

Modern Preaching

One thing that impresses me about preaching to-day is the neglect of true edification even by evangelical preachers. What the preacher says is often good, and by it genuine Christian emotion

is aroused. But a man could sit under the preaching for a year or ten years and at the end of the time he would be just about where he was at the beginning. Such a lamentably small part of Scripture truth is used; the congregation is never made acquainted with the wonderful variety of what the Bible contains. I trust that God may raise up for us preachers of a different type: I trust that those preachers may not only build upon the one foundation which is Jesus Christ, but may build upon that foundation not wood, hay, stubble, but gold, silver, precious stones. Do you, if you are preachers or teachers in the Church, want to be saved merely so as through fire, or do you want your work to endure in the day of Jesus Christ? There is one work at least which I think we may hold, in all humility, to be sure to stand the test of judgment fire; it is the humble impartation, Sunday by Sunday, or day by day, of a solid knowledge not of what you say or what any man has said, but of what God has told us in His Word. Is that work too lowly; is it too restricted to fire the ambition of our souls? Nay, my friends, a hundred lifetimes would not begin to explore the riches of what the Scriptures contain.

What a world in itself the Bible is, my friends! Happy are those who in the providence of God can make the study of it very specifically the business of their lives; but happy also is every Christian who has it open before him and seeks by daily study to penetrate somewhat into the wonderful richness of what it contains. The Revelation of God in the Bible A man does not need to read very long in the Bible before that richness begins to appear. It appears in the very first verse of the Bible; for the very first verse sets forth the being of God: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

We are told to-day, indeed, that that is metaphysics, and that it is a matter of indifference to the Christian man. [Footnote: With what follows compare the treatment by the lecturer in "What is Faith," 1925. pp. 26-66.] To be a Christian, it is said, a man does not need at all to settle the question how the universe came into being. The doctrine of "fiat creation," we are told, belongs to philosophy, not to religion; and we can be worshippers of goodness even though goodness is not clothed with the vulgar trappings of power. But to talk thus is to talk nonsense, for the simple reason that goodness divorced from power is a mere abstraction which can never call forth the devotion of a man's heart. Goodness inheres only in persons; goodness implies the power to act. Make God good only and not powerful, and you have done away not only with God, but with goodness as well.

Very different from such a pale abstraction, which identifies God with one aspect of the universe, is the God whom the first verse of Genesis presents. That God is the living God; it is He by Whom the worlds were made and by Whom they are upheld.

No, my friends, it is altogether wrong to say that the Christian religion can do perfectly well with many different types of philosophy, and that metaphysical questions are a matter of indifference to the Christian man. Nothing could be farther from the truth. As a matter of fact, everything else that the Bible contains is based upon the stupendous metaphysic that the first verse of Genesis contains. That was the metaphysic of our Lord Jesus Christ, and without it everything that He said and everything that He did would be vain. Underlying all His teaching and all His example is the stupendous recognition that God is the Maker and Ruler of the world: and the Bible from beginning to end depends upon that same "philosophy" of a personal God. The Revelation of God in Nature That philosophy ought to have been clear from an examination of the universe as it is; the Maker is

revealed by the things that He has made. "The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Natural religion has, therefore, the full sanction of the Bible: and at the foundation of every theological course should be philosophical apologetics, including the proof of the existence of a personal God, Creator and Ruler of the world.

I know there are those who tell us to day that no such study is necessary; there are those who tell us that we should begin with Jesus, and that all we need to know is that God is like Jesus. They talk to us, in that sense, about the "Christlike God." But do you not see that if you relinquish the thought of a personal God, Creator and Ruler of the world, you are dishonouring the teaching of Jesus from beginning to end. Jesus saw in the lilies of the field the weaving of God: and the man who wipes out of his consciousness the whole wonderful revelation of God in nature, and then says that all that he needs to know is that God is like Jesus, is dishonouring at the very root of His teaching and of His example that same Jesus whom he is purporting to honour and serve.

The Need for Fuller Revelation The existence of a personal God should have been clear to us from the world as it is, but that revelation of God in nature has been obscured by sin, and to recover it and confirm it we need the blessed supernatural revelation that the Scriptures contain. How graciously that revelation is given! When we rise from the reading of the Bible, if we have read with understanding and with faith, what a wonderful knowledge we have of the living God! In His presence, indeed, we can never lose the sense of wonder. Infinitesimal are the things that we know compared with the things that we do not know; a dreadful curtain veils the being of God from the eyes of man. Yet that curtain, in the infinite goodness of God, has been pulled gently aside, and we have been granted just a look beyond. Never can we cease to wonder in the presence of God: but enough knowledge has been granted to us that we may adore.

The Revelation of Man in the Bible The second great mystery that the Bible presents is the mystery of man. And we are not allowed to wait long for that mystery. It is presented to us, as is the mystery of God, in the early part of the first book of the Bible. Man is there presented in his utter distinctness from the rest of the creation: and then he is presented to us in the awful mystery of his sin. At that point, it is interesting to observe how the Bible, unlike modern religious literature, always defines its terms: and at the beginning, when the Bible speaks of sin, it makes clear exactly what sin is. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, if you will pardon an allusion to that upon which your speaker was brought up, "sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God." I do not remember, at the moment, what proof-texts the authors of the Westminster Standards used to support that definition. But they need hardly have looked farther for such proof-texts than to the early part of Genesis. "Ye shall not eat of the tree," said God: man ate of the tree and died. Sin is there presented with the utmost clearness as the transgression of law. So it is presented in the whole of the Bible. Sin and law belong together. When we say "sin" we have said "law": when we have said "law," then, man being what he now is, we have said "sin." At the present time, the existence of law is being denied. Men no longer believe that there is such a thing as a law of God; and naturally they do not believe that there is such a thing as sin. Thoughtful men, who are not Christians, are aware of the problem that this stupendous change in human thinking presents to the modern world. Now that men no longer believe that there is a law of God, now that men no longer believe in obligatory morality, now that the moral law has been abandoned, what is to be put in its place, in order that an ordinarily decent human life may be preserved upon the earth. It

cannot be said that the answers proposed for that question are as satisfactory as the way in which the question itself is put. It is impossible to keep back the raging seas of human passion with the flimsy mud embankments of an appeal either to self interest, or to what Walter Lippmann calls "disinterestedness." Those raging seas can only be checked by the solid masonry of the law of God.

What is Wrong with the World?

Men are wondering to-day what is wrong with the world. They are conscious of the fact that they are standing over some terrible abyss. Awful ebullitions rise from that abyss. We have lost altogether the sense of the security of our Western civilisation. Men are wondering what is wrong.

It is perfectly clear what is wrong. The law of God has been torn up, as though it were a scrap of paper, and the inevitable result is appearing with ever greater clearness. When will the law be re-discovered? When it is re-discovered, that will be a day of terror for mankind: but it will also be a day of joy; for the law will be a schoolmaster unto Christ. Its terrors will drive men back to the little wicket gate, and to the way that leads to that place somewhat ascending where they will see the Cross.

Those are the two great presuppositions of everything else that the Bible contains; the two great presuppositions are the majesty of the transcendent God and the guilt and misery of man in his sin. But we are not left to wait long for the third of the great mysteries--the mystery of salvation. That, too, is presented at the beginning of Genesis, in the promise of a redemption to come. The rest of the Bible is the unfolding of that promise. And when I think of that unfolding, when I try to take the Bible, not in part, but as a whole, when I contemplate not this doctrine or that, but the marvellous system of doctrine that the Bible contains, I am amazed that in the presence of such riches men can be content with that other gospel which now dominates the preaching in the Church. The Gospel Unfolded in Scripture When I think again of the wonderful metaphysic in the first verse of Genesis--"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"--when I think of the way in which throughout the Old Testament the majesty of that Creator God is presented with wonderful clearness, until the presentation culminates in the matchless fortieth chapter of Isaiah--"It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in"--when I think of the way in which in that same chapter the tenderness and the gentleness of that same awful God are represented, in a manner far beyond all human imagining--"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young"--when I think of the wonderful gallery of portraits in the Old Testament, and compare it with the best efforts of men who have sought to penetrate into the secrets of human life and of the human heart: when I think of the gracious dealings of God with His people in Old Testament times, until the fulness of the time was come, and the Saviour was born into the world: when I think of the way in which His coming was accomplished, by a stupendous miracle indeed, but in wonderful quietness and lowliness; when I think of the songs of the heavenly host, and the way in which the infant Saviour was greeted in the Temple by those who had waited for the redemption of Jerusalem; when I stand in awe before that strange answer of the youthful Jesus, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"; when I try to keep my imagination at rest, as Scripture bids me do, regarding those long, silent

years at Nazareth; when I think of the day of His showing to Israel; when I think of the sternness of His teaching, the way in which He pulled the cloak from human sin, the way in which, by revealing through His words and His example the real demands of God, He took from mankind its last hope of any salvation to be obtained through its own goodness; when I think again of the wonderful kindness of the Saviour; when I read how He forgave where none other would forgive, and helped where all other helpers had failed; when I think, above all, of that blessed thing which He did not only for men of long ago, who saw Him with their bodily eyes, but for every one of us if we be united with Him through faith, when He died in our stead upon the Cross, and said in triumph, at the moment when His redeeming work was done, "It is finished"; when I enter into both the fear and the joy of those who found the tomb empty and saw the vision of angels which also said, "He is not here: for He is risen"; when I think of the way in which He was known to His disciples in the breaking of bread; when I think of Pentecost and the pouring out of His Spirit upon the Church; when I attend to the wonderful way in which the Bible tells us how this Saviour may be our Saviour to-day, how you and I, sitting in this house to-night, can come into His presence, in even far more intimate fashion than that which was enjoyed by those who pushed their way unto Him as He sat amidst scribes and Pharisees when He was on earth; when I think of the application of His redeeming work by the Holy Spirit:

"Be of sin the double cure.

Cleanse me from its guilt and power"; when I think of the glories of the Christian life, opened to us, not on the basis of human striving, but of that mighty act of God; when I read the last book of the Bible, and think of the unfolding of the glorious hope of that time when the once lowly Jesus, now seated on the throne of all being, shall come again with power--when I think of these things, I am impressed with the fact that the other gospel, which is dominant in the Church today, preached though it is by brilliant men, and admirable though it might have seemed if we had not compared it with something infinitely greater, is naught but "weak and beggarly elements," and that the humblest man who believes that the Bible is the Word of God is possessed of riches greater by far than all the learning of all the world and all the eloquence of all the preachers who now have the ear of an unfaithful Church.

06.00.1. Meditations on Ephesians

Meditations on Ephesians by

Henry Law

1884

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06.00.2. Preface to this Digital Module

Preface to this Digital Module

I've been using computer Bible study software since the days of MS-DOS - early 1990's. From the first time I did a "CTRL-S" maneuver, I've never cracked open a Strong's again! (And no regrets about that!) As a busy preacher, I've tried to assemble a classic research library inexpensively. Access to the free digital materials included in the Bible study software packages I used increased my study library in amazing ways. The amount of free stuff I've accumulated would have cost a small fortune. Then one day I realized that I owed a debt. So I started looking for public domain resources to convert to digital Bible study modules. Now my personal journey has come full circle: from the excitement of discovering free computer Bible software to the excitement of helping and being a blessing to others.

Thank you, Michelle, Jeremiah, Isaiah & Micah, for understanding my debt and graciously tolerating my near compulsive computer use for hours on end. Thank you, Henry Law, for converting your studies to eternal print. Thanks to the nice folks at Gracegems.org for making this digital text (and lots of other good texts!) available. And of course - most importantly - my thanks to the Lord Jesus who saved my soul for all eternity. This Edition There have been no changes to Law's work, except for the following:

1. Scripture references have been converted to Scripture hyperlinks using the "Format Scripture ToolTip."
2. A few obvious Scripture reference errors have been corrected, as well as some obvious spelling errors.
3. The copy and paste process has unfortunately removed most of the italicized print. While the words have not been changed, some of Law's emphasis may be missing. It is with regret that I have not taken the time to correct this. The sense is still accurate. [By the way - would you understand this paragraph without italics? Of course!] Also, the italicizing of the foreign words have been lost. It is my hope that the reader will be able to follow the flow regardless of these flaws. They - the flaws - are mine, not Law's.
4. I am quite sure my edition of Law's work is rather imperfect. I pray that, nonetheless, it will be productively useful in the study of God's Word.

Finally Feel free to contact me with comments. You can reach me via e-mail at Dave@DoctorDaveT.com

If you convert a classic resource to be used with eSword or TheWord, send me your work! I'd love to utilize it! Also - make sure you stop by www.doctordavet.com - for more digital Bible study modules. May the Lord bless you as study His word.

Dr. David S. Thomason

Florida, USA

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06.00.3. Copyright Information

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06.00.4. Table of Contents

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06.00.5. Preface

Preface

Wide and diversified is the work belonging to the Church of Christ. In the household of God there is no pillow for the indolent. The term, 'an idle Christian', involves a contradiction. It has scarcely more meaning than a rayless sun—a waveless ocean—a noiseless waterfall—a rose without perfume. In this community each member has his appointed place. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the universal rule. The final welcome is, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But my present object restricts thought to pastoral work. The selection of its subject arose from desire to sanctify Family Worship. He is the best of friends who helps his friend to pray. It may be presumed that such worship is an established institution in every Christian household. Countless are the resulting blessings. Its neglect would be grievous shame—base ingratitude—and sad loss. It is scarcely possible to conceive an exercise more sweet—more happy—more edifying. Many and loud are the calls to it. For what spiritual joy can be greater than for the members of a house to unite in offering grateful praise for the common blessings which each morning and evening should commemorate, and to combine in joint supplication for protection from the perils which the day and night may bring. Especial needs will continually occur. Rich is the mercy that we are permitted with united cry to bring such need before the Throne of Grace.

Family Worship is not restricted to prayer and praise. Spiritual instruction should be sought—a portion of the life-giving Word should be read and opened out in simplicity and reverence. The Bible should have its due place. Here is a Book suited for every age and every station. No period can say that there is no further room for its instructions. The AGED have not advanced beyond its sacred teaching. The YOUNGEST should be like Timothy, early instructed in the truths which are able to make wise unto salvation. The RICH may gather here treasures of knowledge surpassing all earthly pelf. The POOR may receive wisdom which may enrich them to eternal life. The highest GENIUS may find revelations which no intellect of man could have devised. The SIMPLEST in mind may learn the story of redeeming love. Ignorance of Scripture is the malady and the misery of this age. It is alike its peril and its shame. The man who is a walking Bible is a grand power. Thus there is no household which does not need Bible-teaching; and there should be no Family Worship in which such is not imparted. This volume is designed to contribute aid to these readings. It is therefore needless to say that its method and arrangement are most simple. It is confined to impressing in familiar terms the grand themes of the text. It strays not into diffuse amplification. It only solicits attention to what the Word declares. All attempts to 'display of learning', if such had been possible, are utterly rejected. Here is no show of erudition; nor controversial discussion of profound doctrines. The main desire is to open out and enforce what God has been pleased to reveal. There may be seeming repetition, but the repetition only reflects the revelations of the text. May the Holy Spirit bless the portion here selected!

06.01. Ephesians 1:1-14. Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:1-14. Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:1. "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Two main considerations meet us in this verse. (1.) The designation of Paul, "An Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." (2.) The designation of the converts whom he addresses, "The saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus." While each is examined may the Spirit by His mighty power and love pour light into our longing souls! Here in the vestibule, a preliminary thought occurs. Scripture here in the forefront places the ever blessed Jesus. In this verse He stands forward as the grand object on which faith should gaze. Of whom is Paul an Apostle? Of Jesus Christ. Who are the saints? The faithful in Christ Jesus. Take Christ from this verse, and the Apostle and the saints alike sink into insignificance. To remove Him would be to blot the sun out of the skies. Let Him therefore always be foremost in our view. Let it be our firm conclusion that apart from Him faith could not live. Without Him we would be without God in the world—without hope—without light—without foretaste of heaven. We begin with PAUL'S DESIGNATION OF HIMSELF. He speaks of his office and of his call to it. (1.) His office. He is an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He was called distinctly and directly by immediate voice from heaven to give himself to the blessed work of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and bearing testimony to the glorious truth that Jesus is sent by God to seek and to save that which was lost. The direct commission from God Himself, without the intervention of human instrumentality, constituted Him an Apostle. Let a brief digression turn our thoughts to our own position. The study of Scripture, without personal improvement, is vain. To grow in grace—to advance in life-giving knowledge, should be our aim in all this study. While we adore God for having thus raised up and enabled Paul to gather in His people and to instruct His Church to the last times, and while we read with reverence his writings as immediate revelations from the Father of Lights, let us bear in mind, that there is a sense in which every believer is called and appointed to be a minister of his God. "You shall be named the Priests of the Lord—men shall call you the Ministers of our God." It is written, "You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Believers are "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ." They are "a chosen generation—a royal priesthood." Jesus has made them "kings and priests unto God and His Father." Let us then walk worthy of our high vocation, and live always ministering at our Altar, who is Jesus Christ. On Him let us present our bodies living sacrifices; on Him let us offer the calves of our lips, hallowed praises; and let our whole life be a proclamation of His truth. (2.) Let us advance now to Paul's appointment to apostleship. He was called by the will of God. He continually insists upon the truth, that he took not this honor upon himself. He was "an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." This will of God is eternal love to the Church. It is the originating cause of the everlasting covenant of grace. It foreordains every blessing which that covenant contains for the heirs of promise. To do this will, Christ came. "By this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." By this will Apostles and Prophets, and Evangelists and

Pastors, and Teachers, are called and qualified and arranged. By this will their word is made effectual, and we receive grace to believe. If we are thus blessed with all spiritual blessings, let us adore that deep source from which these precious streams flow. What volumes of unspeakable comfort are treasured up in the truth that God's will is unchangeable! To the considerate mind it seems almost self-evident that God must be "without variableness, or shadow of turning." This constitutes that infinite serenity which is one of the grand elements of Deity. It is an essential attribute of the Governor of the universe. While mutability, fluctuation, uncertainty, and change miserably appertain to the inhabitants of this fallen world and all their concerns, the inscription over the Palace of the King of Kings is, "I am that I am." It is blessed to know and realize this truth. Happy are the hours passed in giving thanks for the faithful sayings—"I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Ephesians 1:1. "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." We proceed to the designation of those who are here addressed. They are termed saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus. It is highly important to obtain clear views of all Gospel-terms—and not least so of those which describe the state and character of true believers. Ignorance may here lead to fatal self-deception. Many cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" and "feed on ashes, and cannot deliver their soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hand?" May we be delivered from all such error, to the glory of God in us! (1.) The word "saints" imports people who are set apart and consecrated to the service and glory of God. They were fore-ordained from all eternity in the counsels of heaven to this blessed state. Their predestination is the cause of their call in due time by the Spirit of God to come out and to be separate, and to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." When Paul addresses the believers at Rome as "beloved of God, called to be saints," he places the love of God as the precursor of calling. We learn a similar truth from the arranged teaching of the following text. "God, who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Hence it is evident that the heirs of eternal love are partakers of this distinguishing benefit. When the fullness of the time is come, the Spirit of God brings them as willing subjects into the kingdom of grace. We may, without violence to truth, apply to them the prophetic words, "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth-- everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." As this call of God is by the Spirit of holiness, so it is unto a life of holiness. Concerning the former conversation, the old man is put off, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and the new man is put on, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Hence believers are manifested to their own consciences, and to all around them, as the saints of the Most High. They are no more of the world. They reject its hollow and selfish principles—they scorn its debasing maxims—they turn from its ungodly ways—they despise its vain pursuits—they rise high above its mis-called pleasures. It is evident that they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" that their one desire is increasing conformity to the will and image of God. (2.) We now advance to the second term. They are "the faithful in Christ Jesus." Three ideas are here involved. Believers are no more in the Wicked One—no more in the world—but in Christ—engrafted into Him as a branch into the stem of the tree; rooted in Him as the tree in the earth; built into Him as the superstructure into the foundation; one with Him as

the members with the head. They are faithful, inasmuch as they have received the precious gift of faith, and "abound therein with thanksgiving." They look to the atoning blood, and to the justifying righteousness of Christ as the alone ground of their salvation. They are faithful, inasmuch as they no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. They gladly and unreservedly devote their bodies, souls, and spirits to His service. The humble and honest enquiry of each is continually, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Are we saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, according to the scriptural meaning of these terms? Blessed are they who can respond that though miserable sinners in themselves, yet by the grace of God they have this fellowship with His people! Soon shall the saints shine forth in glory, and they who are faithful unto death shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Ephesians 1:2. "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle proceeds to express the desire of his soul for the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. He prays that they may be enriched with "grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the commencement of every Epistle to the Churches; these gifts, therefore, must be of pre-eminent and incomparable value. Though Paul grew in spiritual attainment and experience, still, to his last hour, his aspirations did not rise higher than "grace and peace." It is good to be thus taught what are the most excellent blessings which we should seek for ourselves and others. May the Lord grant that we may give Him no rest until they reign in us and all for whom we utter prayer! Before we examine these gifts separately, it is important to observe the part which the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity bear in them. Though the Holy Spirit is not directly named, He is distinctly included. There can be no work on the soul but by His presence and effectual power. When grace is given, He implants it—when peace exists, He creates it. All spiritual blessings, and therefore grace and peace, are the effects of His inworking. The existence of spiritual life proves the agency of the life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is from Jesus, and from the Father through Jesus; so that in each spiritual gift the love and energies of the Triune Jehovah co-operate. How greatly are our thoughts of grace and peace enlarged, when we reflect that all the Omnipotence of heaven is exerted in their bestowal! (1.) Grace. This is a large term; in its length and breadth it is co-extensive with the infinitudes of the Giver. It comprehends both the source and the streams of salvation. In its origin it is the springing up, in its effects it is the going forth, of free love to bless undeserving, ruined sinners. It is the spontaneous goodwill of God towards the unworthy and undone, manifested by His good work for them and in them. But when we pray for grace, we assume His goodwill towards us, and we mainly desire His good work in us. Rightly to estimate the extent of this work, we should estimate the extent of our need. For instance, we need to have our faith in Christ strengthened and invigorated—we need to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened that we may see the eternal love of God—the preciousness of Jesus Christ—the glory of His finished redemption—His suitableness to our ruined state. We need to have our trust confirmed in His faithful word, and sure promises, and unerring guidance. We need power to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, that we may trample them beneath our feet. We need sanctification in body, soul, and spirit, that we may be entirely conformed to the image of Jesus. We need help in prayer and praise, and ordinances and duties—in the family, in private, at home, abroad, in every hour of our lives, in the solemn period of our dying. Such, and manifold more, are our necessities. For all these there is a supply provided in the Everlasting Covenant, and we ask for this supply whenever we pray for grace. Let us supplicate more fervently, for we have a God of all grace, seated on His throne of grace, waiting to be gracious. If

we open our mouths wide, He will fill them. (2.) Peace. This is the precious fruit which grows on the tree of grace. It is the calm repose of the soul realizing reconciliation with God through the blood of the Lamb, and led forth in paths of righteousness by the constant guidance of the Spirit. Hence it cannot exist among the graceless. It instantly vanishes under apprehensions of wrath and terrors of conscience, or when the outbreaks of iniquity prevail, and it cannot be restored until a voice is heard from the Cross, "Your sins are forgiven—go in peace." Its abode is within the deep recesses of the heart, far beyond the reach of external troubles. "In Me you shall have peace," is an assurance not cancelled by the counter-saying, "In the world you shall have tribulation." Outward distress to the believer is as the raging billows to Noah within the Ark. Paul was serene while pain-stricken in the dungeon, and Stephen was unruffled beneath the crushing stones. It is an eternal truth that there is "joy and peace in believing." Need I warn, that the world knows not this blessing? "There is no peace to the wicked, says my God." Therefore, be separate from the world. Need I warn, that there is a counterfeit? Therefore examine the foundations of your peace. He who cries not in spirit, "Abba, Father;" he who glories not in the Cross; he who abhors not all evil, has not received grace, and is a stranger to peace. Beloved, may grace and peace be with you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The Apostle enters upon the subject of his Epistle through the vestibule of ADORATION. His soul is so filled with gratitude that copious streams of thanksgiving must find vent before other thoughts can have utterance. It is a happy state when each thought of God kindles the flame of holy rapture in the heart. They know not God as the God of their salvation who delight not in Him as their "exceeding joy." This song is heard throughout the kingdom of grace, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us now consider, (1.) To whom; (2.) For what, blessings are here ascribed. May our hearts burn within us while we thus meditate! (1.) To WHOM are blessings ascribed? The answer is ready. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the chosen title, by which God would be known and loved, and addressed, and praised in the Gospel. Our elder brethren adored God as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; the Lord God of their Fathers." Such titles are indeed full of consolation. They speak of Covenant-relationship, of faithfulness, and truth; and they awaken confiding trust. But our title teaches deeper and more precious truth. Our God is announced as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." The God who appointed Him to the Mediatorial work, and sustained Him and accepted Him. Our God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; Father, not by creation, not by adoption, but by eternal generation; therefore Jesus must be one in nature with the Father, and consequently God over all, blessed for evermore; able to deal with God in the work of atoning for all our sins; able to save us to the very uttermost. In addition to these consolations, we know that we are one with Christ, very members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. His God, therefore, must be our God—His Father our Father. And thus spoke Jesus, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (2.) For WHAT are blessings ascribed? Because He "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Oh! for an outpouring of realizing faith, to enable us to grasp tightly this glorious assurance! The believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings. Such is his present portion. As to temporal gifts, such as health, worldly possessions, and distinctions, he may be poor and needy; the absence of these may be the riches of the inner man. But one treasure, even all spiritual blessings, is surely

his. Do you ask, How can this be? The reply is at hand. When God gave the heirs of salvation unto Jesus, He gave Jesus unto them. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." He gave Himself unto them. "This God is our God forever and ever." He gave the Holy Spirit unto them. "Know you not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, who you have of God?" Moreover, He gave unto them all things contained in the Everlasting Covenant of Grace. Is it not evident that he, who has the Triune Jehovah as his property, is blessed with all spiritual blessings? What is his spiritual need? Let him ask, and he has a supply; let him open his hand, and it is filled. But all believers do not realize this. Why? Because their faith is weak; the hand hangs down which ought to be extended to receive. The inheritor of vast estates who will not be persuaded of, or will not use his wealth, is the picture of the man who has all blessings as his own, but wilfully languishes in ignorance and blindness. These blessings are in heavenly places. This expression tells us that our store-house is heaven. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights." The Father is in heaven, in whom they originate; Jesus is in heaven, through whom they descend; the Spirit is in heaven, by whom they are bestowed. They are heavenly-place blessings, because they uplift the thoughts and affections and desires above the filth of earth, and bear them far away to regions of celestial purity. They are heavenly-place blessings, because they fit us daily for the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us." Being thus in heavenly places, they are SECURE. Satan cannot storm that fortress; our own evil hearts cannot betray it to the foe. Oh, my soul, seek you heavenly-place blessings—seek them with the persuasion, that they are your own inheritance. Finally, this blessedness is all in Christ. All salvation, and all appertaining to it, is in Him. Without Christ—apart from Him—there is nothing but misery and the curse. In Him we possess a blessing God, exalting us to a blessed heaven. To Him let us ascribe blessings forever and ever. Happy the day which finds the believer thus employed!

Ephesians 1:4. "According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Deep and copious is the spring from which the blessedness of the saints flows—grand is the tree which yields this fruit. If the question be put, why are they inheritors of all spiritual blessings? an inspired reply is thus given by the Apostle—Because God has chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world. Their eternal election is thus distinctly announced as the foundation on which the goodly superstructure is raised. Believers are blessed because chosen. They are chosen to be blessed. This truth lies at the root of all God's dealings with His people. Let there be no surprise, then, that it receives a prominent place in this Epistle. Similarly we find that Peter's first words tell the Church that they are "Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We are, also, prepared for the bitter hatred of Satan against it, and the violent rage with which the ungodly in every age have assailed it. But how can we account for the slowness of believers to receive it—their timidity in avowing it—their cowardice in frequently surrendering it without defense to ignorant gainsayers? It is a fearful thing to be ashamed of any truth of God. O my soul, do you give to it, in your meditations, this Apostolic prominence—conceal not in a corner what the Spirit places in the first rank of His faithful sayings. This verse states (1.) the doctrine of Election, "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (2.) Its purpose, "that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love." (1.) The DOCTRINE of election is among the deep mysteries of our God—but the meaning of it is as clear and precise as language can render it. God has, from all eternity, before

the foundations of the world were laid, in the counsels of His wisdom and love, selected out of the mass of mankind a portion to be unto Himself vessels of mercy, honor, and glory. It is impious trifling with the words of God, to object that Gospel-election is merely the election of the Gentiles to privileges hitherto confined to the Jews. The passage before us contains the refutation—for here Paul, himself a Jew, speaks of himself as concerned with the Gentile-saints of Ephesus in God's eternal choice. The choice, therefore, must be of certain individuals from among the Jews, together with certain individuals from among the Gentiles, to effectual calling and the glories of heaven. It is likewise a strange folly to maintain that Election is only to national privileges and external advantages. Is it not on the contrary written here, and on almost every mention of the truth, that the choice is unto internal, separating, and distinguishing grace? Are all in Christian lands—are all the members of pure Churches—are all the partakers of divine Sacraments "holy and without blame before God in love?" Far from it. But such is the distinguishing character of the elect. Hence Election is the foreordaining of a definite remnant to be brought through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth unto life eternal. We are chosen in Christ. As Jesus was chosen of the Father to represent Him unto His people, and to represent His people unto Him; so believers are chosen to be the members of His body—the Spouse to whom He is united—to be washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, sanctified by His Spirit, conformed to His image. Thus every thought, and every act of redeeming love, from first to last, centers in Christ. (2.) The PURPOSE of election is "that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love." Holiness is the nature and essence of God. Everything which proceeds from Him must be perfect and unblemished holiness. The decree to save is a decree to make an end of all iniquity, and to beautify with the robe of righteousness. We have then an infallible test by which we may make our calling and election sure. The test is our inward delight in God's law, and utter abhorrence of all evil. If we are not assured that the Spirit of love, which is the fulfilling of the law, reigns in our hearts, we can have no comfortable evidence that we belong to His chosen people. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. If we choose Him as our chief joy, it is because He first chose us as His portion. But if the affections of our souls do not follow hard after Him in love, we have no cause to hope that we have part or lot in His eternal choice. It is only through the links of personal holiness that we can trace our way back to the first link of Election, and onward to the last link of glory. Happy are the servants of the Most High God, who realize that they are holy and without blame before Him in love! Let them receive to their comfort the blessed testimony of this verse.

Ephesians 1:5. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." There is admirable symmetry in the structure of Gospel-truth. The beautiful harmony and connection proclaim the heavenly Craftsman. This is clearly exemplified in the passage now before us. There is no statement in the sentence disjointed or detached—perfect order unites the whole. All spiritual blessings are ours, because we are chosen by God unto holiness, and we are chosen unto holiness because "we are predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." It is evident that predestination unto sonship secures the inheritance of all spiritual blessings, and includes election unto holiness, and blamelessness in love. Here we see the unity of truth throughout this remarkable announcement. Let us proceed then to the grand point of the verse, "predestination unto the adoption of children." Behold our condition when we are born into this world. We are children of wrath, because in the curse denounced against disobedience all the family of Adam is involved. We were in his loins when he sinned, and when the righteous sentence

was passed upon him. Hence we drew our first breath in the prison-house of Satan, awaiting the execution of the holy decree against our imputed sin. And can it be, that we shall be called forth from our dungeons, and the chains shall be removed from our hands, and that we shall be arrayed in royal garments of spotless purity, and be received as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty? Yes, verily, for it has pleased God to predestinate us unto this adoption. Behold again our natural condition. Every trace and feature and lineament of the Divine image in our souls is utterly defaced. Righteousness is expelled, and corruption universally prevails. The inner man is hatred to God and all His ways; it is in vile allegiance to Satan and all his lusts. And can it be, that this old man shall be crucified, and that a Divine nature shall be implanted, and that the likeness of God shall be restored, and conformity to the image of Christ wrought in us? Yes, verily, for it has pleased God to predestinate us unto this adoption. As the result of this eternal purpose, in due time the life-giving Spirit is sent into our hearts, the heavenly nature is conferred, and we are adopted into the family of God. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Again, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." They are predestinated to be sons, and therefore the Spirit takes them under His holy guidance. They, however, must not rejoice in this decree who cannot find in their souls indubitable proof that they are true children of God. The proofs cannot be mistaken. One is FAITH—"For as many as receive Jesus, to them gives He power to become the sons of God; even to those who believe on His Name." Again, "We are all," that is, we are all manifested to be, "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Another is PRAYER—"We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Also LOVE to God, and devotedness to His glory—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." If these lovely features do not shine forth in our souls, let us refuse comfort, and rather tremble exceedingly, lest our sad lot should be in the family of the unbelieving, the prayerless, and the unrighteous. Let us not turn from the warning of Jesus, "If God were your Father, you would love Me—but you are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He who is of God, hears God's words; you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God." But on the contrary, with what unspeakable comfort should they rejoice, who can realize that "the Spirit bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God." Great is the PRESENT privilege—great beyond conception the future exaltation! "Now are we the Sons of God." Therefore in all our infirmities and sins we are pitifully spared. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him." "I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him." Therefore all our prayers for grace and help are answered. "If you, 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." Therefore, we shall never lack. He is an unnatural parent who provides not for his offspring. The Lord, who is our Shepherd, is our Father; need is far from us. Let us cast away all undue anxieties. Our heavenly Father knows that we have need of all these things. Great, also, will be the FUTURE exaltation. "It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Like Him now we are in spirit—like Him then we shall be in glorified body; fit to sit with Him even on His throne. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." May the Lord hasten the day, when He shall come to be thus glorified in His saints, and shine forth amid adoring Hallelujahs, as "the firstborn among many brethren!"

Ephesians 1:6. "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Paul delights to trace every spiritual blessing to its true and only source—the free, unmerited, sovereign grace of God. He is exceedingly jealous of, and zealous for, the honor and supremacy of the gracious Giver. He well knew that man's best righteousness was but a filthy rag—and his holiest thought not better than abomination in the sight of Him who could not look upon imperfection. The highest merits of fallen creatures could not claim more than place among the lost. Therefore he cannot speak of any part of the wonderful work of salvation, without exclaiming "Grace to it! Grace to it!" The present verse affords a notable instance. He has proclaimed our election in Christ before the foundation of the world, and our predestination by Him unto the adoption of children to Himself; but he cannot relinquish these themes without adding, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." Among the many thoughts which instantly spring from these words, let us select the following— (1.) God has made us accepted in the Beloved. (2.) This, as well as every other thought towards the redeemed, is an act of glorious grace. (3.) This grace is entitled to our praise. May the Spirit reveal to us the amazing mysteries! (1.) God has made us accepted in the Beloved. Who is this Beloved? A voice from heaven designates Jesus. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Spirit declares that "God has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son," or 'the Son of His love'. Jesus Himself says, "I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." And again, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." Jesus is the Beloved of heaven, because of His own essential and perfect holiness and oneness with the Father, and also because He is the Mediator of the new covenant, and the Redeemer of the chosen seed. He is also the Beloved of His people. They each exclaim, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." They add, "whom having not seen, we love." They sincerely appeal to Him, "Lord, You know all things—You know that we love You." O my soul! do you love Jesus? He is worthy to be entwined with the cords of love round every fiber of the heart. He is worthy to occupy its every recess, and to move in its very motion. Happy is each one who can add, "Lord, I love You, and adore—Oh! for grace to love You more!" In the beloved Jesus, God makes us accepted. By nature our state calls for rejection. Everything in our original condition is vileness and sin, and deserves wrath and condemnation. If we had power to help ourselves, we have not the will. We hate the light—we love our evil ways, and after them we will go. Such is our condition, when God makes us accepted. Because we are sons in His eternal purpose, He sends the Spirit of His Son to take away the heart of stone—to give the heart of flesh—to convince of sin and need and danger—to show us the preciousness of Jesus—to draw us to the fountain of His purifying blood—to lead us, enrobed in His righteousness, to the arms of our reconciled Father. Can He reject such as approach Him in this Name, and in these merits? Oh, no! Ready acceptance awaits them. He accepts their persons, because they are cleansed and sanctified in His Beloved. He accepts their services, because they are freewill offerings on the altar of His Beloved. He accepts their prayers and praises, because they are perfumed with the incense of His Beloved's merits. By the faith which is given them, they become one with the Beloved, part and parcel of Himself. Therefore they take their place in heaven as accepted children. (2.) This, as well as all other dealings towards the redeemed, shines forth "to the praise of the glory of His grace." What contrived the means of acceptance? What fixed upon the persons of the accepted? What made them willing in the day of love and of power? Say, O my soul, can you discover any other motive which could influence God thus to bring you home to embrace of His acceptance, but the grace

which is His glory? Has not all His work for you, and in you, been to the praise of the glory of His grace? (3.) It follows immediately that this grace is entitled our praise. Let us lift high the voice of adoring thanksgiving. It becomes us to be thankful. God should inhabit the praises of Israel. We praise You, O blessed Lord God, for so freely loving us before the foundation of the world! We praise You for writing our names in the Lamb's Book of Life! We praise You for giving us to Jesus, as His portion and spouse forever! We praise You for accepting His blood as our ransom, and for enrobing us in the garments of His righteousness. We praise You for calling us by Your Spirit, and opening our eyes to see the full provisions of redeeming love! We praise You for keeping us by Your power, through faith, unto eternal life! These blessings are all to the praise of the glory of Your grace, wherein You have made us accepted in the Beloved!

Ephesians 1:7. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." It is a heavenly exercise, under the light of the Spirit, to review the blessings which are freely given to us in Christ Jesus. We thus anticipate the hallowed joys of our eternal home, and are alike refreshed and sanctified in our progress there. The blessing of blessings is before us in our present verse—redemption through the blood of Jesus—the forgiveness of our sins. Let it be opened out by the enquiry (1.) why it is needed, and (2.) how it is obtained. While we advance, may we realize in our souls that the glorious blessing is our own! (1.) Who needs redemption? The reply is "those who have forfeited their inheritance." Is not our inheritance lost? Yes.—As natural descendants of Adam, we are outcasts and aliens from the family of God; our right and title to every spiritual gift, to every heavenly hope, is forfeited. We are the poorest and neediest of all the creation of God—a withering curse has blighted every faculty and power—we live wretched among the wretched for a few days, in the downward course which leads to "the blackness of darkness forever." Thus we need redemption. To understand how we obtain it, we should clearly see how our inheritance was lost. The ruin was entirely through sin. God cannot look upon an unclean thing. His countenance is averted from all who are defiled by iniquity. The sin-soiled cannot enjoy the light of His countenance, nor stand in His presence. Thus it is through sin that we are disinherited. To obtain redemption sin must be removed. This is accomplished by our Redeemer, through the shedding of His blood. The right of redemption belonged to Him, because He is our nearest kinsman—the elder brother of our family—the first-born among many brethren. Thus qualified as bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh, He pays the only price which could avail, His own most precious blood. This blood cleanses the guilt and defilement of our every iniquity—the sins which were as scarlet become white as snow—the crimson-dye becomes white as wool. Thus the redeemed of the Lord have forgiveness of their sins, and regain their inheritance of present and eternal favor. Another illustration is at hand. The question is repeated—Who needs redemption? The reply is, "They who are taken captive by a mightier foe." This foe is the Devil, who has succeeded in casting his iron chains around our whole race. His fetters hold us fast in his prison-house, and we are alike without strength and desire to burst the bonds. These fetters are sin. Sin gives the Devil his power over our souls and bodies. Until this be removed, we cannot come forth from the misery and torment of his dungeon. (2.) Redemption from this bondage is effected by the removal of sins. Again behold Jesus our Redeemer. "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and He has carried the whole load of sin into a land of forgetfulness. Thus the chain is broken by which the Devil held us, and we obtain redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. Let us notice

the holy assurance with which Paul claims this redemption as his own. He knew that God had made Jesus unto the Church "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He knew that he had received the gift of the Spirit, by which he had been translated from captivity into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Hence he could realize that the inheritance of reconciliation and all blessedness had been made his possession. Hence he could rejoice in deliverance from the thralldom of Satan, who no longer had dominion over him; and he could triumph in hope of bruising him under his feet shortly. Oh! that believers would understand the liberty with which the Redeemer has made them free, and live as those who are ransomed unto eternal life, and made more than conquerors over spiritual wickedness in high places. This abiding persuasion would give them a noble exaltation above the paltry trifles of this ruined world, and arm them with heroic boldness against the assaults of an enemy who has lost all power to prevail. Paul cannot speak of this redeeming work without giving glory to the grace of God. He adds, this deliverance is "according to the riches of His grace." How blessed is the thought that God is rich in grace! His throne is a throne of grace. His scepter is a scepter of grace. His covenant is a covenant of grace. His thoughts are thoughts of grace. His ways are ways of grace. His word is the word of grace. His treasure-house is stored with grace. Hence all His gifts and manifestations to His people are results of grace. Grace called Jesus to His work. Grace found the ransom. Grace accepted it. Grace determined who would be redeemed. Grace made them willing in the day of power. Grace keeps them through faith unto salvation. Oh! the riches of the grace of our God! While we have breath let us extol and magnify it. But some dislike and reject the term. Let such consider their need as banished, despoiled, imprisoned sinners. Can they restore or deliver themselves? If not, how can they be redeemed except by grace? There is redemption only through the blood of Jesus, which is according to the riches of God's grace.

Ephesians 1:8. "Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Paul knew that salvation was by grace, therefore he never wearied in proclaiming this truth. It was the work to which he was called, and from which nothing could deter him; a work far dearer to him than life itself. Speaking of bonds and afflictions, he says, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." In our present verse he renews the theme. May we delight in hearing, as he did in speaking—may we feast upon the testimony as the very joy and rejoicing of our souls! Having mentioned the riches of God's grace, he now adds, "Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." Three topics here claim attention. (1.) God's grace is abundant. (2.) We are the subjects of it—it abounds toward us. (3.) Its actings are in all wisdom and prudence. (1.) God's grace is ABUNDANT. This follows directly from His nature. Infinity is His essence. There are limits to every created intelligence. Every object in the universe around us is confined within measure and bounds—but He, who inhabits eternity, is without breadth, and length, and depth, and height. We should divest our minds of all contracted thoughts of God. They are dishonoring to His majesty, and rob our souls of enlightened comfort. We are too prone in our ignorance to measure His love, and mercy, and pardon, and grace, and all His other attributes by what we see and experience in our own sphere. This is a miserable error. We should take the enlarged delight of knowing, that when God loves, He loves like God, infinitely—when He shows mercy, He shows mercy infinitely—when He pardons, He pardons infinitely—when He exercises grace, He exercises it infinitely. He is "abundant in goodness and truth." We read, "there is no searching of His understanding." The

same is true of His grace. Is it not incessantly pardoning countless multitudes of sins in us, and in countless multitudes of our fallen race? If it could be surpassed, would not the hourly iniquities of our lives exceed it? But it is so abundant, that the deep floods of our ungodliness cannot overwhelm it. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. As there is "plenteous redemption," so too, there is plenteous grace. The treasury is inexhaustible—the Giver never wearies in distributing. Oh! that we were never weary in hastening "boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Oh! that we were never weary of meditating on that faithful saying, "If by one man's offence death reigned by one—much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (2.) We are the SUBJECTS of grace; it abounds towards us. The fallen angels are not ignorant of God's grace, but their knowledge only aggravates their misery. They see fallen man freely recovered from the lowest depths of vileness, while they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Christ-rejecting worldlings hear of grace, but they revile the term, and "do despite to the Spirit of grace." The language of their hearts and lives is, 'If salvation be of grace, away with it! away with it! we leave it for the dreaming enthusiast and visionary fanatic.' But the saints of the Most High say not so. Rather, they bless Him who has made them to differ, and they gratefully ascribe every step, from first to last, in their Zionward ascent, to that "grace of our Lord, which is exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (3.) The ACTINGS of grace are in wisdom and prudence. If we would learn the glories of God—the only-wise and all-wise—we must read them in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God. How does God reveal to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom? By His provisions for, and dealings with, His Church. And all these provisions and dealings are in Christ Jesus. Let us briefly glance at a few particulars. The whole theme of salvation is the offspring of Divine wisdom. Not all the intelligence of angels and men could have devised a plan to save the guilty soul, and still retain inviolate, no, greatly magnify, all the attributes of Jehovah. But God in His wisdom called Jesus to the work, who as God and man is able to make full satisfaction for all iniquity, and to bind in harmonious ties justice, mercy, holiness, and truth. In His atonement they all shine forth in redoubled splendor, and each reflects and multiplies the luster of the whole. Let us consider how perfectly the Law is satisfied, and every promise, and every threat established, and we shall see that in Christ Jesus grace abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Divine wisdom also is displayed in the gracious dealings with each individual soul. Man is a very complex machine—made up of countless passions, inclinations, appetites, desires, motives, lusts; the heart is wily and treacherous—Satan at first reigns there with vigilance and power. But when the fullness of the time is come, God in Christ casts out this enemy, and wins this heart, and retains it to Himself. But how great is the wisdom displayed in adapting and applying the means! Providential dispensations, the timely warning, the preacher's voice, the treasures of the Word, the friendly counsel, the affectionate interest—all in order are used to accomplish the end. Thus, under the Spirit, life is imparted and maintained. What saint, reviewing God's ways, will not exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Ephesians 1:9. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." Paul here speaks of the revelation of a mystery which God had purposed in Himself. It is a profitable task first to ascertain the mind of the Spirit in the passage, and then to seek improvement for our souls. Lord! for Your Name's sake, teach us!

The following verse declares, that the will, so long hidden from men, was God's purpose "to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him." The main point here intended is, that the Gentiles should be included in the call to the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ. This truth from of old was plainly announced in the Scriptures, but scales were on the eyes of all the Jews, and they saw it not. The very notion of it seems never to have approached their understandings. Elated with their high privileges and distinctions, they regarded the poor heathen as scarcely partaking of the same flesh and blood with themselves—they believed that God had placed an eternal barrier of separation between them. On the one side were the chosen of Israel—on the other the strangers, foreigners, aliens, outcasts of the Gentiles. They reviled these Gentiles as dogs, and were persuaded that no crumb of mercy could be cast to them. We see the indignation with which the bare idea of Gentile conversion was received, when Paul on the Castle stairs related the Lord's commission. "He said unto me, Depart, for I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." Hear too, Festus, when Paul declared to King Agrippa, "But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen-- that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles." At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." Let us refer to two other passages, in which Paul is particularly emphatic in declaring that this mystery had heretofore been wrapped in impenetrable darkness. "By revelation He made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." Again—"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Hence we distinctly learn the prominent thought in the Apostle's mind, when he wrote, "having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." Can we contemplate this mystery without devout adoration? For who are we by nature? Not the descendants of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; not of the stock of Israel, "to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." On the contrary, we spring from these outcast Gentiles. But, blessed be God, Christ has come, a light to enlighten the Gentiles! We might have been left in the condition of our early fathers, blind idolaters, bowing down to wood and stone; but upon us the true light has shone, and we are called to hear and obey the Gospel of God's grace. Oh! that to the external call might be added the soul-touching voice of the Spirit, so that we might indeed be brought from darkness to light, and translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son! But alas! many who are Christ's followers by name are as dead to the life of God, and the saving indwelling of Jesus, as the worshipers of wood and stone. It matters not that the name is changed, if the heart remains untouched and unenlightened. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Let us not, however, pass from the words, "the mystery of His will," without extending our view to the whole of God's will in the sinner's salvation. Every part of it is a

mystery, before which we should fall in lowly adoration. Wonderful is the appointment of Jesus to be the Surety, Substitute, Representative, Head of His Church. Wonderful is the shedding of His blood for the remission of sins. Wonderful is every provision in the covenant of grace. Wonderful is the sinner's conversion in the fullness of time. Wonderful is the approach of the weary, sin-sick soul to the blood of sprinkling. Wonderful is the change of the nest of every unclean bird into the temple of the Holy Spirit. Wonderful is the preservation of the saints amid all the trials and temptations of this world, the hate and rage of Satan, and the treachery of their own hearts. Wonderful are their consolations and joys amid persecutions, in sorrow, sickness, death. Wonderful is their resurrection from the dead—their investiture with a weight of glory—their eternal position before the throne of God. How great the wonder that these truths should be made known to us! Many hear with the ear, but never apprehend with the mind. What obstacles must be removed, what prejudices vanquished, before the happy believer can testify, "He has made known to me the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself."

Ephesians 1:10. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." We have in this verse a glimpse of that blessed scene which shall be revealed in God's appointed time, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested as the Head of His collected Church, and all the redeemed of His blood shall be assembled in one gathering around Him. Two brief observations seem needful preparatory to this spectacle. (1.) How is this verse connected with the preceding, which declares God's purpose of calling the Gentiles to the knowledge of the Gospel? The link which unites them is not obscure. God had given many out of the heathen world unto Jesus as His jewels, and sheep, and children. The whole body of Jesus could not be complete in all its parts, until these were brought by faith into union and fellowship with their Head. The Gospel must be preached unto the Gentiles, that these might hear the glad tidings of the Savior, and come unto Him. Thus "in the dispensation of the fullness of times, God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him." (2.) It is here said, that God will gather together in one ALL things in Christ. Is the word "all" to be taken in unlimited extent? Does it express that all who ever breathed the breath of life shall be brought into vital oneness with Christ? The dreadful contrary is among the plainest declarations of Scripture. To many will He say in the great day of the Lord, "I never knew you; depart from Me, all you that work iniquity." "Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." "Whoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the lake of fire." The truth, therefore, stands confessed, that multitudes of immortal souls will not be gathered together in Christ, but being strangers to Him in time, will be punished with everlasting destruction, away from His presence forever. The conclusion, therefore, cannot be escaped, that the word "all" is to be taken in the restricted sense of all to whom it was given to believe in Christ; of all who belonged to Him by the Father's appointment; of all who became one with Him by vital, saving, purifying faith. Now, if it cannot be denied, that the word "all" in this passage does not mean universality, it follows that its meaning may be similarly confined in other sayings of Scripture. If the principle of interpretation is clear in one case, it will hold in others also. Instances need not be quoted. From these prefatory observations we pass to the blessed, glorious announcement of the verse. In the dispensation of the fullness of times, God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him. Let us mark what a day is coming! What a gathering will speedily take place! What a gathering there will be of all that is bright, and blessed, and heavenly,

and glorious! One vast, boundless company shall surround the throne of the Lamb. All the redeemed who are now in heaven—all the saints who are now on earth—all the heirs who are now in darkness—all the children of the kingdom who are yet unborn—all the myriads who have interest in the covenant of grace—all the countless multitudes who were bought by Jesus' blood—all the hosts of the angelic choir who have kept their first estate, shall be congregated into one mass of glorified beings. They shall stand extending in circle beyond circle around one center—that center Jesus, blessed for evermore. In Him they found salvation upon earth—in Him they enjoy salvation in the realms above. To Him they looked in time—on Him they look forever. Let each enquire—Will it be MY happy portion to take my station amid this celestial throng? Is a place for me made ready in this family above? Deal honestly with conscience, and the reply is quickly given. Do you love Jesus with all your powers? Do you count all things but loss for the excellency of His knowledge? Do you, abhorring yourself and your own righteousness, look only unto Him for pardon and acceptance? Are you one with Him by regenerating grace, loving what He loves, hating what He hates? If so, bless God, take courage, and look up. These are the features which shine in the countenance of His children. You will soon join this general assembly of the church of the first-born. You will soon sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace which shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." For this joy set before you, think little of the troubles and sorrows of this brief pilgrimage. "Yet a little while, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Then all sufferings will forever cease, and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty, and your voice shall join the universal chorus, ascribing "Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Ephesians 1:11. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." The life and soul of religion is the realization of a personal interest in the things belonging to the kingdom of God. The grand comfort of the Gospel is not to hear that Christ has loved His sheep, and given Himself for them; but to feel privileged to say, "He has loved ME, and given Himself for ME." This truth was well known to Paul. He was not content to see afar off the rich provisions of redemption; he had drawn near and tasted that the Lord is gracious. He knew, too, that the saints at Ephesus participated in the same experience, and therefore after speaking of the general gathering together of the whole church in Christ, he could boldly remind them, "In whom also WE have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." He here speaks in no terms of doubt and uncertainty, but avows the assurance that the inheritance was theirs. He also distinctly adds, that to this inheritance they were predestinated and fore-appointed in the purpose of God from all eternity. On this truth we need not again enlarge. We have already seen its certainty, and the prominent place which it occupies in the revelation of God's will, as the basis of the whole structure, the spring of all the streams which flow down from heaven. Let us therefore proceed to contemplate (1.) The inheritance which believers have obtained. (2.) The grand truth that "God works all things after the counsel of His own will." (1.) The inheritance. We enter upon this blessed state altogether by virtue of faith in Christ. When we thus become united to Him, when our oneness is established, it follows that we are savingly interested in, and inseparably connected with, all that Christ is, and all that Christ has. The Spirit bids us open our eyes wide, and survey our boundless possession. He says, "All things are yours—whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death, or things

present, or things to come, all are yours—and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Again—"We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Let us strive for an increase of faith, to believe fully the glorious blessedness into which we have admission. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." As sons we receive in this present time all that our Heavenly Father knows to be good for us. His eye of love always watches over us. His hand of power always guides and protects us. We journey onward through a waste howling wilderness, amid snares and temptations on the right hand and on the left, but we are encircled by invisible guards—even "the Mahanaim," the Host of God." We are never left; we are never forsaken. It is, alas! too true that we continually stray from our God, and restrain prayer, and remit communion—and sometimes we so listen to the vile suggestions of the Tempter, that we openly transgress and wantonly offend. The smile of our God for a season is withdrawn, and we are brought low into the darkness of desolation, misery, and shame. But our inheritance remains secure. "He restores my soul." The voice is heard, "Return, O backsliding Israel, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you. Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you. Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." The reply is ready, "Behold, we come unto You; for You are the Lord our God." Thus the Lord deals, as most of His true servants can testify; for "He hates divorce," and "with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." But we must look onward beyond this earth, if we would even now understand the extent of our inheritance. It is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away; reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." We do not therefore enter upon full possession until we are admitted into heaven, and this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality—then the saying is brought to pass which is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Then, with spirits perfect, pure, and holy, even as God is perfect, pure, and holy; with bodies spiritual and immortal, like unto Christ's glorious body, we shall see Him as He is; and participating in all His incomprehensible perfections, we shall inherit the glory which the Father gave unto Jesus, and receive the kingdom which He has prepared for us from the foundation of the world. This is "the inheritance to which we are predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." (2.) The grand truth that "God works all things after the counsel of His own will." Let us conclude with seeking comfort from this assurance. God's providential arrangements often seem very mysterious. We are shut out from opportunities which seem favorable to the promotion of His kingdom within and around us—we are deprived of circumstances or associates which seemed needful for our growth in grace—we have sickness, poverty, distresses, reproach, persecution, hatred—when we think we could serve God better in health, competence, ease, honor, tranquility, and love. But we are short-sighted; we are of yesterday, and know nothing. All these things are ordained for us in the deliberate arrangements and counsels of His will. There is neither chance nor mistake in the kingdom of grace. Let us, therefore, not only contentedly acquiesce, but adoringly rejoice in His wise orderings. His good hand is in all our matters. Let us therefore give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:12. "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." Jehovah's glory is the end of all His works. This is the first truth which we are taught by the verse before us. In the preceding, the Apostle tells us that we have obtained an inheritance because we are predestinated; he here adds, we are predestinated for the purpose that, trusting in Christ, we might be to the praise of God's glory. The ultimate design of the everlasting covenant is, that glory

should be ascribed to God. He orders all things, that He may be glorified. Very many are the blessed consequences which flow to us from predestinating love. We trace to this source the gift of our souls and bodies to Jesus—the gift of Jesus unto us—our effectual calling in time—our apprehension of Jesus by faith—the renewal of our hearts—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—our perseverance unto eternal life—and all the joys and triumphs which are reserved for us in the heavenly kingdom. But these consequences, so full of significance and blessedness unto us, seem to disappear as fading stars before the splendor of God's glory, which is so magnified and exalted by our being set apart to trust in Christ. Let us now then draw near to the truth before us, and consider how our trust in Christ conduces to the praise of God's glory. (1.) By trusting in Christ we utterly renounce self. Before a sinner can make Christ and His righteousness the entire stay and confidence of his soul, he must have proved his own insufficiency to help himself. Christ is the last refuge of man. When a man first becomes troubled in conscience, and trembles before God's law, he is tempted to go the round of reformation, repentance, duties, and many external observances, seeking to find forgiveness of sin and rest of soul, in the merit of some self-performance. By degrees and frequent disappointments, he is beaten off from everything of his own devising and doing, and at last he is brought to cast himself unreservedly, with all his good deeds and bad deeds, body, soul, and spirit, for time and for eternity, to be saved altogether by the free grace and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He now pours contempt upon self—all boasting is excluded—he glories only in the salvation of God. Seated beneath the Cross, his song is, "Glory to God in the highest." Hence his trust in Christ is to the praise of God's glory. God only is now exalted. (2.) By trusting in Christ we magnify and glorify each attribute of God in particular. Take for example His JUSTICE. This requires that all be rendered unto Him which is strictly His due. Now we owe Him the obedience of every thought, word, and work. Whenever our thoughts wander from His love, and our words from His praise—whenever our deeds are defiled by self-seeking, or self-righteousness, or ungodliness, we contract a debt which we are utterly unable to pay. But when we fly unto Jesus, and claim His precious blood-shedding as the ransom of our souls, and His righteousness as our fulfillment of the requirements of the Law, we exalt His justice, we acknowledge its righteous claims, and we enter the kingdom of heaven to the praise of the glory of this attribute. The same reasoning applies to His TRUTH. His word is gone forth, that the soul which sins shall die—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—that whoever believes in the Son shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. How are these words, and every word of God, to be glorified in us? Surely by putting our trust in Jesus. In Him we die; in Him we are sanctified; in Him we receive life eternal. Thus when we draw near by faith unto Him, we are to the praise of the glory of His truth. Once more—behold His MERCY. This lovely attribute delights in rescuing from misery, in crowning with blessings, in raising to joys, in doing the greatest good to the miserable and hell-deserving. When we cling to the Cross, mercy has free scope to pour out the whole heaven of loving-kindness into our souls, and to bring us to the whole heaven of enjoyment forever. Hence, trusting in Him, we are to the praise of the glory of His mercy. In the same way, faith exalts every other attribute of Jehovah. (3.) The humble, holy, self-denying, consistent walk of those who trust in Christ, redounds to God's glory. Hence He calls His people "His glory." "I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory." Again, "I will glorify the House of My glory." By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit they are separated from the world, they renounce its vanities, follies, and pollutions; they are exalted far above the children of the Evil one—and all who see them take knowledge of them, that they live as heaven-born. Thus God is glorified in them.

Moreover, with their lips they are continually worshiping and adoring Him, as it is written, "Whoever offers Me thanks, and praise, he honors Me." The incense of gratitude ascends day and night from the altar of love in their hearts. Thus God is glorified by them. When Christ shall return to earth, it will be to be glorified in His saints. And when the end comes, and He delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, then shall the faithful lift up their voices, which shall never cease, and every note and sound shall be glory to God and to the Lamb. Thus we who trust in Christ are to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13. "In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation—in whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." There is an important chain in this verse which is worthy of much observation. Faith in the Lord is here linked to the means which precede it, and to the grace which follows it. We hear "the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation," before we believe; we believe, before "we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Hence we have three distinct gradations—we hear, we believe, we are assured. Let us then examine these truths. (1.) Faith follows hearing. (2.) Assurance follows faith. Lord! send forth Your light and Your truth, that they may lead us! (1.) Faith follows hearing. The proclamation of "the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation," is the Lord's appointed ordinance for drawing souls unto Himself. His parting injunction is, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The preaching of the Cross is indeed unto those who perish foolishness; but unto us, who are saved, it is the power of God. "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." How can we believe in Him of whom we have not heard? Faith only can come by hearing. It is when Jesus is distinctly uplifted; when His grace, and love, and finished work are clearly and affectionately unfolded, that the Spirit draws the enlightened sinner to the wounded side and the pierced hands. Then he, who is perishing under the malady of sin, feels that here is a remedy which is all healing—he who is shuddering under the curse of the Law, finds refuge—he who sees himself nothing but vileness and pollution, discovers a spotless robe of righteousness to conceal his deformity—he who was afar off from God, draws near through the blood of the Cross; he who was blind, sees—he who was dead, lives. Oh! what wonders follow when Jesus is fully uplifted! Dry bones arise to life—the wilderness blossoms like the rose. Jesus is always true to His word, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." We hence discover the cause why Satan is so industriously opposed to the preaching of Christ. This ordinance delivers the captives whom he held bound, and subverts his kingdom. He little cares for the zeal and diligence of the minister who insists only on sacraments, and outward forms and reformatations—he knows such weapons will never injure his cause. But when the Cross is simply proclaimed, he is all alarm, and ceases not to use his devices to stop the testimony. Let us then pray the Lord to arise, and multiply the number of His faithful heralds, and maintain His own cause, and put His soul-destroying adversary to perpetual shame. Even so, "Put on your sword, O mighty warrior! You are so glorious, so majestic! In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe-inspiring deeds!" Psalms 45:3-4 (2.) As faith follows hearing, so assurance follows faith. "After you believed in Him, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." It seems to be very clear that the seal of the Spirit is assurance. It is nothing external to the believer; so they err who suppose it to be the eternal purpose of God sealing His people as His own forever. It is some work accomplished by the Spirit within. It cannot be conviction of sin, nor conversion, nor illumination, because these graces precede faith—whereas the seal of the Spirit is consequent upon faith.

What can this be but assurance?—a deep abiding persuasion of real interest in the covenant of grace—a realizing knowledge of restoration to God's favor—an undoubting recumbency of the soul on the work of Christ for eternal life. The same conclusion follows from examining the term "seal." For what purpose are seals affixed to deeds and documents? Their purpose is to ratify and confirm them, so that they may be acknowledged as valid and unalterable. When we see the seal we have no more hesitation or doubt; we point to it as final evidence that the deed is sure, and can no more be cancelled. Just so, when the Spirit stamps His seal on the heart, the believer is assuredly certified, that he is called, and chosen, and saved. Fears and doubts vanish, and he can say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." He realizes the truth, "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies—who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This assurance is a divine work. Man cannot obtain it for himself. Man cannot confer it on man. It is the deep impression which the Spirit alone can imprint. Hence it must be a holy work, and productive of holiness. Indeed, nothing more conduces to sanctification than this seal. He who lives steadily realizing that he is a child and heir of God, is dead to the world, and raised high above the range of Satan's darts. We never consent to sin except when we forget "whose we are, and whom we serve." Let us, therefore, covet earnestly this high and sanctifying grace. We know it is to be obtained at the throne of grace, by earnest supplication. The Spirit is more willing to seal, than we are to receive this privilege. Oh! that we were wise, and steadfastly purposed to give Him no rest, until the evidence of the seal proves that we are indeed "passed from death unto life."

Ephesians 1:14. "Which is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." In our love to God, and trust in the Lord Jesus, we should greatly magnify the mercies and work of the Holy Spirit. Without Him we would still continue dead in trespasses and sins, ignorant of the blood of atonement, without one ray of comfort, without the power to pray and praise. One portion of His important work is mentioned in the preceding verse, in which He is said to "seal" believers. In the present, He is said to be "the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Let us inquire (1.) In what sense He is the pledge of our inheritance. (2.) What is meant by the redemption of the purchased possession. May He, who only has light, reveal Himself to our souls, and teach us the wonders which He performs for the children of men! (1.) In what sense is He the pledge of our inheritance? This blessed state is not on earth, it is in heaven—we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. It consists of perfect knowledge, purity, peace, joy, and glory in the eternal kingdom above, in the presence of God, our Redeemer, the whole company of the saved, and the angels of light. The pledge of this blessedness is a portion of it already conferred, which is not to be recalled, but which is to continue ours until we receive the full possession, and are admitted to the perfect consummation. Hence the Spirit dwelling in the heart of each believer, is the first dawn or commencement of heavenly knowledge, purity, peace, joy, glory. He is heaven begun, in all the bright and good perfections which heaven contains. Hence heaven will be no new place to the child of God. It will indeed be an immeasurable, and infinite enlargement, expansion, and amplification of the spiritual gifts which he has been privileged to enjoy during his pilgrimage; but it will reveal nothing to him, of which he has not previously had some glimpse and foretaste. Then indeed he will see God face to face, and know even as he is known; but now he knows God in part as his Father and the concentration of all excellence. Then he will see Jesus as He is; but now by

faith "he sees Him who is invisible," and "knows the love of Christ, which passes knowledge." Then he will be pure, even as God is pure, and holy as He is holy; but now he is "a partaker of the divine nature," which "cannot sin, because it is born of God." Then his peace shall never be disturbed by any doubt or any assault of Satan; but now the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps, like a watchful garrison, his heart, through Jesus Christ. Then shall his joy be a vast ocean, which knows no shore; but now he "rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Then he shall be invested "with an exceeding weight of glory," even the very glory which the Father gave unto Jesus before the foundation of the world; but now, the Spirit dwelling in him is the rising beam of all this surpassing brightness. Hence the Spirit of promise, working knowledge, purity, peace, joy, glory in the believer's heart, is a pledge of the heavenly inheritance. How much then might we enjoy of heaven, even while we are pilgrims in the flesh! We are called to be "temples of the Holy Spirit," and to be "filled with the Spirit:" that is, we are called to be filled, even to overflowing, with pledges of heaven. O gracious Savior! fulfill in us Your precious promise, and send the Comforter from on high, that He may dwell in us, and abide with us forever! (2.) We proceed to enquire, what is meant by "the redemption of the purchased possession." The Lord's portion is His people—they were given unto Him by His Father as His jewels—His peculiar treasure. The Church, though it is composed of a mass of vile earth and miserable sinners, is still the possession which Jesus prizes. In the immensity of His power, He might form worlds upon worlds, and people them with beings enabled to show forth His praise; but in His marvelous grace He chooses a collection of poor rebels, and regards them as His beloved possession. Are we His? Let us see to it, that no other lord has any dominion over us—let us reserve to Him the undisputed possession of our souls. Moreover, this possession is purchased. With what a price! Even by the price of His most precious blood. "He loved me," said the Apostle, "and gave Himself for me." Is property valued by its cost? What, then, must be the value of believers in the Lord's estimate! How dear they must be to His heart, if for them He was willing, no, delighted, to endure the extremities of divine wrath, and to stand before God as an accursed thing! O my soul, think how Jesus loved you—think by what costly sacrifice He purchased you, and learn to trust Him more and serve Him better! What is the day of redemption unto which the Spirit seals us? It is that great, fast-coming day, when the Lord, with His mighty power, shall raise our dead bodies from the dust of death, and change them, that they may be like unto His own glorious body. Already we are redeemed from the curse of the Law, the damnation of Hell, and the dominion of Satan; but there remains an enemy, even Death, who for a little while will seem to triumph over us. But he shall be annihilated. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." He must, at the voice of Jesus, give back his captives. Then shall redemption be wholly and finally complete. Then shall be the perfection of redemption both in body and soul, and the shout shall be heard, "O Grave! where is your victory? O Death! where is your sting?" May the Holy Spirit seal us unto this great day! May He be the pledge in our souls until its brightness "dawn, and mortality be swallowed up of life!"

Ephesians 1:15-16. "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you." The preface is now ended, in which thanksgiving has been rendered to God for the wonders of His grace to the Church. Who can ponder these glorious truths without exclaiming, "Oh! the breadth, the depth, the length, the height!" What faith, what illumination of mind is required to embrace their grand reality! Wherefore the Apostle immediately proceeds to declare, that after he knew the Ephesians to be interested in God's decrees, he ceased not to give thanks for them, and to pray that divine teaching might manifest

these things to them. "Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers," and then follows the subject of his petition, "that God would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Without this light from heaven, these truths can never be discerned. We must have eyes to see the sun—we must have heaven-born sight, or God's Word is all darkness. "O Lord! open You our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of Your law." But the subject now before us, is the features of divine life which existed in the Ephesians. (1.) Faith in the Lord Jesus. (2.) Love unto all the saints. Where these graces are not, there is no spiritual life—where spiritual life exists, these are invariably manifested. Let us contemplate them in order. (1.) Faith in the Lord Jesus. This grace justly claims precedence in all the gifts of the Spirit. It is essential to the being of a child of God, and it is the foundation on which all his other graces are laid. Without faith, we cannot know God, or have admission into His family—without faith, we cannot possess any other spiritual attainment. With good reason, therefore, faith occupies the foremost position. It is the captain under whom all other graces range. Hence such glorious things are testified of faith in the Word. It is the adopting grace. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is the justifying grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It is the sanctifying grace. "Purifying their hearts by faith." It is the conquering grace. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." It is the wonder-working grace. Saints "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Time would indeed fail to tell of all its wondrous exploits. Ask the company above how they prevailed, and endured, and overcame, and at last entered heaven. You will have one reply—"By faith in the blood of the Lamb." The faith of God's elect, which is the Spirit's work, has the Lord Jesus Christ for its object. It is the going forth of the soul laden with sin unto Christ, and embracing Him with adoring rapture. It is the whole inner man closing with Christ—clasping and clinging unto Him. It is the eye which sees Him—the ear which hears Him—the hand which holds Him fast—the feet which follow hard after Him—the appetite which feeds on His broken body—the thirst which drinks of the stream from His side—the heart which loves Him—the head which knows Him—the memory which retains Him—the affections which are entwined around Him—the trust which trusts in Him—the hope which hopes in Him. Indeed, faith is the entire man loving Jesus, looking only unto Him, swallowed up in Him, making Him the All in All. How precious is this gift of faith! Lord! grant "that the life which we live in the flesh, may be by the faith of the Son of God!" Lord, increase our faith! May it "grow exceedingly," until the work of faith be ended, and we see You face to face. Let each exclaim, O my soul, "be you faithful unto death, and He will give you a crown of life." (2.) The next feature in the divine life is love unto all the saints. This grace is inseparably connected with faith. More easily could you eliminate light and warmth from the sun, than love from faith. The grounds of their union are obvious. Faith reverences the Lord's word, and renders strict obedience to it. The especial command of Jesus is, "Love one another." "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one towards another." Again—Faith delights in the image of Jesus, wherever that image can be discerned. Every humble believer reflects some rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and this similitude attracts and draws out love. Again—All believers are fellow-members of one body. "You, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Strange would it be for a man not to regard his own flesh; but more so for a saint not to love his brethren.

This love is a grand evidence of spiritual being. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Alas! that in these latter days this grace should be so feeble. In a world where all hate the saints, it is sad that they should not enjoy the comfort of each other's love. O Lord, hasten the time when Your prayer shall be accomplished, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us."

06.02. Ephesians 1:15-23. Thanksgiving and Prayer

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Ephesians 1:15-16. "Wherefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." After mentioning the distinctive features of the divine life, which were conspicuous in the Ephesian saints, and by which they were evidenced to be translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Paul proceeds to declare his incessant exercise in their behalf—"I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." What a noble instance have we here of enlarged, comprehensive love! Without doubt, he gave thanks fervently, day and night continually, for his own marvelous mercies—the incense of adoration would ascend perpetually to God, who had delivered him from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for him. His whole life would be an act of personal praise. But his holy desire was to give God all the honor due unto His name; and great honor was due to Him for His distinguishing goodness to, and life-giving work in the saints; and therefore He carried them in the arms of His love to the mercy-seat; he presented them to the God of their salvation, and he blessed and magnified God for all that had been done in them. Let us hence learn the believer's privilege, (1.) To give thanks for the saints; (2.) To pray for them. May the Lord the Spirit make us diligent and earnest in this exercise! (1.) It is our privilege to give thanks for the saints. Even among the children of this world, it is common for a parent, a brother, a friend, to express thankfulness for the smallest temporal benefit conferred on a member of his family, or one endeared to him by ties of affection. But believers are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Therefore, when one prospers all prosper; when one suffers, all suffer. Hence the blessings poured down upon the collective Church are common family blessings, for which each member is called to utter praise. The saints are the glory of God on earth. "I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory." Is it not the fervent desire of our souls, that this glory should be increased? Are we not therefore bound to testify our gratitude when the saints shine brightly amid the darkness of sin, when they reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and bear witness to the truth of the Gospel, and the love and

power of Jehovah? Do we not desire the subversion of the empire of Satan—the exaltation of the Cross of Christ—the reign of holiness—the increase of spiritual peace? Do we not long for the time when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever?" Each saint quickened to newness of life accelerates the coming of His day—each saint, therefore, should awaken fresh notes of praise. When, too, we bear in mind, that each saint is an immortal soul, rescued from endless perdition, and made a vessel of glory in the kingdom of heaven forever—when we estimate the infinitudes of happiness which each will enjoy—the rapturous Hallelujahs which they will never cease to chant—do we not feel that it is a worthy exercise to give thanks for them? O Lord Jesus Christ, accept our praises for the whole company of Your Redeemed. We desire to bless Your glorious Name for every jewel which sparkles in Your mediatorial crown, for every sheep of Your beloved flock, for every soul for which Your blood was shed. We thank You that there is a remnant among the children of men to whom Your Name is as ointment poured forth. Oh! that "the little one might become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation!" Good Lord, hasten it in Your own time! (2.) It is also our privilege to pray for the saints. The spirit of prayer is never given to a believer for himself alone—it is a great treasure placed in the hands of the Lord's children, to be used and expended for the common advantage of the whole family—it is property conferred by the Holy Spirit, charged with strict conditions, that out of it daily provision should be made for others—if this payment be not made, the property is insufficiently employed. Did not Jesus pray for the whole Church? "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;" and should not the same mind be in us which was also in Him? Surely we never pray more acceptably than when the same Spirit is in us, which was in Him. The duty and privilege of praying for the saints among whom we live and worship may be readily allowed, but should our prayers extend to them who are strangers to us? Behold the example of Paul. He says to the Colossians, "I would that you knew what great conflict," that is agony in prayer, "I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." He could realize, that they were all fellow-heirs, and of the same body, exposed to the like perils and temptations, fighting the same fight of faith, witnessing for the same truth, bought by the same blood, journeying to the same home, and therefore he felt constrained to seek for them the same help and blessings, which he needed for himself. Lord, enable us to be fervent and constant in this duty, and do You hear and answer us; and may many saints rejoice, and thrive, and conquer, because we have wrestled with You in their behalf.

Ephesians 1:17. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Paul proceeds to declare the matter of his perpetual supplications for the Ephesian saints. It is important that we should examine this. Next in order to the sublime prayer of Jesus come the Apostolic prayers. Paul was a holy child of God, filled with the Spirit, praying in the Spirit—therefore, he well knew what gifts were most desirable for the saints, and also what God was most willing and ready to impart. We have, therefore, in these spiritual breathings models of what we should seek for our own souls, and also for the souls of others. One prominent petition stands boldly out in this prayer. It is that spiritual knowledge and illumination might be granted—"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Let us hence consider (1.) The blessedness of the knowledge of God. (2.) The promise of it to the saints. (3.) The Author of it. May He who alone can teach to profit, enlighten the eyes of our

understanding, and give us to see the only true God, in the face of Jesus Christ! Lord grant it; for this knowledge is life eternal. (1.) The blessedness of the knowledge of God. It is sad and dreadful to think what miserable ignorance prevails on this all-important subject. The god of this world miserably succeeds in blinding the eyes of his deluded captives, so that they live and die utter strangers to the real nature of that High and Holy One, with whom they have to do. Some vague notions of mercy and goodness bury out of sight all the other attributes of justice, holiness, and truth. Satan whispers that God is too benevolent to punish eternally the sins committed in time. The poor worldling, ready to receive the lie, is willingly persuaded, and dwells on this picture of Satanic invention—and thus the God of Salvation is never known. Happy are they, from whose eyes this veil is torn, and who see the nature and glory of Jehovah in the brightness of the everlasting Gospel. How insignificant are the discoveries of this fleeting world, compared to the announcement that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. The happiest moments on this side of heaven are those which we pass in contemplating the character of God as exhibited in the Cross of Christ. What lessons do we there read of justice! Payment must be made for every sin of thought, word, and deed, which has defiled us in our flesh—but Jesus pours out His own soul an offering for us, and in His blood, precious beyond all price, He makes perfect satisfaction to our offended God. The believer exclaims, I know my God to be a God of inflexible justice—the sword sheathed in my Redeemer's heart proves it—I know Him to be just, and I know that justice has been fully satisfied. Oh! blessed knowledge—it is worth ten thousand worlds. We pass over the views of holiness and truth which are so conspicuous in the contemplation of Jesus dying—but we must refresh our souls by a transient glance at the eternal verities of love and mercy which are there so brightly effulgent. Ours is no loose, indefinite, unfounded notion of love; we have the most solid proof of its existence, reality, and boundless extent. We see, so to speak, the Father's love for His sinful children manifested in the gift of His holy child Jesus. He spares not His only-begotten Son—He delivers Him up for us all. Peaceful, hallowed rapture pervades the heart while we reason thus—It is clear beyond all doubt, that God loves, and will have mercy on His people. Behold the testimony. Jesus groans upon the tree; we know His nature and His name to be mercy and love, and we know that this mercy and love illuminate our souls. Oh! blessed knowledge—it is inconceivably precious. He who has received this knowledge can reason further, I know that my God will watch over me, and defend me, and provide for me, and bless me, and make all things work together for my good, until my present knowledge is swallowed up in sight. O you wise of this world, where is your boasted wisdom? Come, lay it down at the foot of the Cross; there "acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace." (2.) This knowledge is promised to the saints. It is one of the blessings laid up for them in the everlasting covenant. "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord." Thus we are privileged to come boldly to the throne of grace, and to ask for this blessing as our heritage in Christ, and to urge the irresistible plea, "Do as You have said." The Lord must be true, and the word must be fulfilled, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." Let us hasten early daily to the mercy-seat, that we may be replenished with the knowledge of God. Thus may we follow on to know the Lord! (3.) The Author of this knowledge is the Holy Spirit of promise, here called, "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." How often is He promised as the Teacher of the Church! He teaches to profit. Who teaches like Him? All ignorance and prejudice must vanish before His almighty beams. Oh! that our hearts and consciences may

become chambers of heavenly light—that we may have "an unction from the Holy One, and know all things!" May we "arise and shine, for our light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us!"

Ephesians 1:18. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Paul continues in prayer for the saints at Ephesus. May the Spirit of grace and supplication teach us to pray in the same mind not only for ourselves but also for others! The petition of this verse is similar to that of the preceding. His enlarged heart has just desired for them the knowledge of God in general—he now desires that "the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened," so that they may particularly "know the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Into what a new world of wonders are we introduced, when the Holy Spirit visits us with enlightening grace! We are then indeed translated from darkness to light; and pass from death unto life. We enter upon a new being. Previously sin had fast closed our eyes, so that we saw nothing in the spiritual kingdom of grace. But when He, who said "Let there be light," and there was light in the chaos of nature, says "Let there be light" in the dark chambers of the soul, instantly the scales fall off, and we see ourselves vile and loathsome in the pollution of our sins, and we see that there is One mighty to save us, even Jesus—we see Him in all the beauty of His person and work, chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely; washing out our every transgression in His own most precious blood, and covering our every deformity in the spotless robe of His divine righteousness. Blessed are the eyes which see this enrapturing sight! But our present verse teaches us to look onward and upward, and to fix our adoring gaze on two especial objects—(1.) The Hope, to which God calls. (2.) The richly glorious inheritance conferred on the saints. As by faith we now strive to realize, may we be fitted for the heavenly enjoyment! (1.) The Hope to which God calls. The great ones of earth never call to anything which is common or mean. What then must that be, to which "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" invites His children? It is a possession at present invisible, for "hope which is seen is not hope, for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for." It is nothing less than eternal life, for Paul says he is "an Apostle in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." It is salvation, for we take for our "helmet, the hope of salvation." Its abode is in heaven. Paul gives thanks for the hope which is laid up for us in heaven; whereof we hear in the words of the truth of the Gospel. Hence we learn a little of the nature of our hope. It is the hope of eternal life in heaven; the hope of dwelling with Jehovah forever in the realms of eternal day. Now, we are taught that we should study and contemplate, and familiarize our minds with this blessed hope, so full of immortality. We should continually draw near and realize it. We should hourly ascend from the prison of this base earth, and enter into our own assured home, and take our seats at our Father's board; and look around on our brethren, and listen to and join in their songs of praise. Heaven should be no strange place to us. When shall we know the hope to which God calls us! Let us pray that the wings of our faith may be strengthened, that our constant flight may be to "the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." This is a sanctifying hope—the more we know of it, the more we trample down the paltry pleasures of this sin-soiled scene. It is a sustaining hope—the cares and afflictions of life sit light upon the shoulders, while the head is high in heaven. It makes time fly swiftly. Habituated to this hope, we feel that we are almost in heaven, and we can say, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." It is a rejoicing hope; for it brings all heaven before the eyes, and if that be not joy, there can be no joy. But we must labor to become acquainted with

more than this hope. (2.) Our minds should revel in thoughts of the richly glorious inheritance of the saints. When we become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are entitled to nothing less than all the happiness and glory which our Father can bestow. It is written we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Amazing thought! But it is as surely certain as it is wondrous. "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?" Is Christ now rich, and rich in glory? Just so rich, and just so rich in glory will each poor follower of Him soon become. "The glory which You gave Me, I have given them." God cannot give more; God will not give less. Now we are encouraged to assure our souls of the reality and greatness of our inheritance. Would these glories be revealed, if they were not true? Would they be revealed, if we were not required to believe them? Should we be required to believe them, if the knowledge did not tend to comfort and strengthen our souls? Oh! then let us no more walk with downcast eyes fixed on the mire of this miserable world. Let us gaze on the pure and bright scenes to which we are hastening. If we thus pass much time in this precious study, we shall soon find the love of Jesus burning more and more in our hearts. We are indebted altogether to His blood for all the riches and glory which we shall so soon enjoy. Can we realize this and not adore? It cannot be. Heaven is perfect love; the anticipation is fervent love—heaven is perfect holiness; love is the mainspring of it. Hence the study of our purchased home increases love, and every holy word and work.

Ephesians 1:19-20. "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." Paul continues to desire an increase of knowledge for the saints at Ephesus. Heavenly knowledge is indeed a precious gift. The more we know of God, and of the hope of His calling, and of His work within us, the more we shall love, and trust, and delight ourselves in Him. Spirit of light, give us light! You great Teacher of the Church, come into our souls with all Your teaching energy! Give Your unction from above, that we may know all things! Especially teach us now "what is the exceeding greatness of God's power toward those who believe." This is the point to which our attention is brought. Let us consider what a work that must be, which requires the exertion of "the exceeding greatness of God's power." The work is vast, and embraces many particulars. We will confine our thoughts to (1.) The regeneration of the dead soul. (2.) The preservation of the living soul. (3.) The glorification of the entire man. (1.) The regeneration of the dead soul calls for the exertion of exceeding great power. We are born into this world with dead souls. Our bodies live, but our souls are lifeless. Sin fastened upon the life of Adam's soul, and gave it a death-wound—it utterly expired beneath the fatal blow. From that day all his descendants at first move about this earth as walking sepulchers of expired spirits. And what power can quicken and vivify inanimate souls? Nothing less than Omnipotence can make the body live. But the soul is far more precious than mere earthly matter—therefore the exceeding greatness of divine almightiness is required to call it from the sleep of death. It is indeed a wondrous work to create a living soul—a work far greater than to stud the heavens with countless orbs of brilliant light. What is the sun—what are shining hosts of stars compared to one soul! They soon must hide their heads in darkness, and drop as withered leaves from their lofty stations. But the soul endures forever and ever, its being is eternity, its continuance is endless. Well, then, may the Holy Spirit describe its regeneration in such strong language. It is a "new birth"—a "new creation"—a passing "from darkness to light"—from "death to life." Hence, to accomplish this, God must Himself arise, and gird Himself with power, and stretch forth His mighty arm, and send forth His all-efficient voice.

It is much more than to say to the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise;" or to the entombed brother at Bethany, "Lazarus, come forth." This is the vast power which is exercised in the case of each believing soul. What believer will not say, Have I life? Are mine eyes opened to see the most precious, the most lovely, the most enrapturing of all sights, even Jesus loving me, and made a curse for me? Are my ears opened to hear His constraining voice of gentle affection calling me to Him, and bidding me trust Him forever without one fear? Is my mouth opened to praise and bless Him, and with filial confidence to cry before the mercy-seat, "Abba, Father?" Are my feet strengthened to ascend with gladness the heavenward way, and to run with enlargement in the holy path of God's commandments? Happy, blessed soul! be assured that God has put forth all His almightiness to befriend you—doubt not that the energies of the triune Jehovah have conspired to give you this life. Will not you go on your way rejoicing? Will not you devote all the power which is thus quickened in you, to the one glory of the great Father and Creator of your being? Pray that you may know the exceeding greatness of God's power in thus giving you spiritual birth—and learn that you shall never die. (2.) For this power secures the preservation of the living soul. This needs constant protection. A wily adversary, whose name is Legion, watches for its ruin with deadly and with sleepless hate. He sits down before it with all his troops of temptations, lusts, allurements—he keeps all his poisoned arrows directed against it. How, then, shall the poor soul escape destruction? It seems like the weak lamb in the midst of ravenous wolves. Its preservation is here—"the exceeding greatness of God's power" encompasses it as with a shield. "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield." It is not, I will provide a shield for you; but I, the omnipotent Jehovah, Myself am your shield. Every foe must conquer omnipotence before it can destroy you. Every weapon must pierce omnipotence, before a deadly wound can touch you. The bush may burn, but it cannot be consumed, because the Lord God is in the midst of it. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "The Lord is your keeper." Oh! for grace to realize that we are thus "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." (3.) The exceeding greatness of God's power will ultimately glorify the entire man. The voice which said to the dead soul "Live," will call the dead body from the chamber of the grave. Then, at His omnipotent bidding, this mortal shall put on immortality, and the glorified spirit, re-united to the glorified body, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with all the redeemed in the kingdom of our Father. May we strive to learn more of the exceeding greatness of God's power, as put forth towards those who believe!

Ephesians 1:19-20. "According to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." Paul's prayer closes with the petition that the Ephesians might know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them who believe. But though he ceases to pray he continues the subject. He strives next to show how vast, how wondrous, is the almightiness exerted towards the saints. He points to the Lord Jesus raised again from the dead, and exalted to God's right hand in heaven—he seems to bid us measure and weigh the omnipotence thus put forth, and he proclaims, that power precisely the same, in no degree weaker or inferior, is used to quicken each dead soul. Did God in all His might arise to break asunder the bands of death which enfettered Jesus? Did He extend the right hand of His excellency to uplift Jesus to His lofty glorious throne? The same God uses the self-same might, the self-same right hand of excellency to confer spiritual life to all believers. The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus are the triumphs of omnipotence over the grave. The rising again to newness of life from death in trespasses and sins, is the work of the same strength. Having thus stated the grand illustration, by which Paul exemplifies the subject, let

us proceed to draw comfort (1.) From the might used in our regeneration. (2.) From the fact, that our Forerunner is raised from the dead, and exalted to God's right hand. May the same almighty power teach us! (1.) What comfort is there in the thought of the power used in our regeneration! If we see a man straining every nerve, using every effort to accomplish some object, we justly infer that his heart is set on it—that he esteems it of some great importance to himself. So God must dearly prize that soul in whose behalf He puts forth such energy. The life of that soul must be matter of the deepest interest to Him, or such efforts would not be made. O believer, can you realize what vivifying grace has been imparted to you?—Can you say, One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see—whereas I was dead, now I live? If so, what cause have you to rejoice, and to adore! God has exerted more might to accomplish this work in you, than He did when He made the worlds. What wondrous love therefore must He entertain for you! How dear must Your existence be in His sight! Fear not. There may be storms and trials near you, but "He will keep you as the apple of His eye." Satan may rage and assault, but all is vain—the might which quickened shall preserve you—the ungodly can more readily pull down the sun from his path on high, than injure you. What encouragement have we in this thought to expect more grace—yes, the fullest, richest supplies! There is more difference between a dead soul and a living soul, than between a living soul and a soul in glory. The grand work was to kindle life—it is far less to fan it into the brightest flame. Therefore, hope all things—be not disheartened because your present stock seems small, but go in undoubting confidence to Him in whom all fullness dwells. He is willing and able to enrich you until you can contain no more. We are not straitened in Him. Let us open wide the mouths which He has made, and He will fill them. (2.) Let us draw comfort from the fact that our Forerunner is thus exalted. The might which accomplished this work in Him, has already exalted our souls; and soon, too, it will exalt our bodies. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." As Jesus, our great Lord, bowed His head and gave up the spirit; so, too, our heads must bow beneath the stroke of death, and our bodies must return to the dust, and lie in silence in the darkness of the grave. But, "O Grave! where is your victory? O Death! where is your sting?" Soon shall the Lord, who was dead, but now lives—the Lord Himself, even our exalted Jesus. "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Then shall this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and "the saying shall be brought to pass which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." This great day of God draws near. Each moment which flies—each breath which we draw, hastens it on. In a few more days or hours the number of the elect will be accomplished; this terrestrial scene shall have fulfilled its appointed end, and the resurrection-life shall commence. Let us realize these verities. Let us look on the things around as perishing and almost perished, and shall we set our affections on them? Let us look on the things eternal as even now about to break on our enraptured gaze, and give them the estimation to which they are entitled. Let us live as if this were our stranger-state for a few more moments—and as if heaven were even now opening its blessed portals to receive us. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Ephesians 1:21. "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." May the exemplification which Paul here enlarges conduce greatly to our comfort! May our souls become persuaded, that the same almighty power has been exerted to quicken those who raised Jesus from the dead, and

set Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places; and may the strong consolation, and abiding strength, which this knowledge gives, be ours! This argument and illustration having led Paul to mention the exaltation of Jesus, his ardent spirit seems to soar directly to heaven, and to behold Jesus on the throne of His glory. He sees Him uplifted "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." Very far below Him are the highest angels, the brightest, the purest intelligences which inhabit the courts of heaven. Let us now draw near with all humility, and gaze on the pre-eminence of Jesus, and thence deduce two reflections—(1.) The present security; (2.) The future prospect of the believer. The pre-eminence of Jesus is a glorious sight, of which at present we can see but little; but it is a sight to which we should often direct the eye of faith. The more we gaze, the more we shall comprehend. We know that our beloved Lord is very and eternal God. If the strength and essence of Jehovah had not been His, how could He have endured the wrath of God, and made sufficient satisfaction for our infinite iniquities? But He is God. "In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." For a little while He "was made a little lower than the angels." He veiled His Deity in the poor rags of mean mortality. But the period of humiliation ceased when He arose from the dead. He said in His prayer, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. Now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own self, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." And now has God highly exalted Him, and given Him "a name which is above every name." He who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person, and who upheld all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." He has returned to His own seat—He has resumed the robes of His own Deity—He is enthroned on high, as the Lord God Omnipotent. "which is, and which was, and which is to come." No glory can exceed His. The Seraphim veil their faces while they worship Him. Did He once lay aside all this majesty for you, O believer? Did He so long to redeem you, and to have you with Him forever, that He condescended to divest Himself, and to become a servant, and to be nailed by wicked hands to the accursed tree, and to stand before God as an abomination? Oh! wondrous thought! How unspeakable must have been His love! What returns of gratitude can we make? Let us draw near to Him now on His mercy-seat, and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, lively sacrifice unto Him forever. Two reflections flow from His pre-eminence. (1.) Our security. He holds His people in the right hand of His might, and who is able to pluck them out of His hand? Satan doubtless will strive—we know it—we feel it—but his efforts are all vain. If God be for us, who can be against us? "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is thus exalted, but not for Himself only—He "is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior," and therefore He is able, even as He is willing, to save us to the uttermost. Seeing that He is thus high above all angelic powers, indisputable it must be that He is much higher above all the hosts of darkness. Therefore, let us bless Him, and take courage. He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. (2.) Our future prospect. We rejoice in the truth, that Jesus is gone "to prepare a place for us, and that He will come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also." We know that "we shall ever be with the Lord." His will is, that they who are given to Him, be with Him where He is. The glory given unto Him, He has given unto them. Can it be that such sinful worms shall share all His pre-eminence, and be seated with Him

"far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named?" As truly as He is thus exalted, so truly will He thus exalt us. May we now live worthy of God, who has called us to His kingdom and glory! May our conversation now be in heaven! May the paltry trifles of this world be far beneath our feet!

Ephesians 1:22. "And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church." We are called to prolong our contemplation of the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. The government is upon His shoulder. May the Spirit of the Lord reveal some glimpses of His glory to us, while we consider from the words before us, (1.) That all things are under His feet. (2.) That He is Head over all things to His Church. How truly blessed are they who call Him Lord, and know that they are one with Him forever! (1.) All things are under His feet. The Holy Spirit declares this in Psalms 8, in which these words first occur, and where Jesus is called the Son of Man. Hence it is apparent that this supremacy is assigned to the God-man, our Mediator, our Surety, Christ Jesus. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit thus enlarges on the words, "In that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him." Therefore, O glorious and blessed Savior, You who were made a inhabitant of earth for us poor sinners, and did groan and bleed upon the Cross to redeem us from the curse of the Law, we adore You as supreme and universal Sovereign of all things, as reigning with might, omnipotent over all that is, and was, and is to come! Satan, the great enemy of Your kingdom and our souls, is low beneath Your feet. In the days of Your suffering He was bold to assail You; but it was easy with You to drive him vanquished from the combat. On the Cross he ventured to make a desperate struggle—but how vain! By dying, You did destroy him that had the power of death, and did shiver into atoms the foul scepter of his wretched reign. And now, behold, how powerless he lies! At Your command, he is constrained to let each captive go—his chains fall off when Your word is uttered, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." O Lord, You who have all this power, put it forth, we beseech You, more and more in our behalf—suffer not Your enemy to occupy the least portion of our hearts—permit him not to harass us with hateful temptations, but drive him from us into outer darkness. Hasten the appointed time when he shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and universal holiness shall reign throughout the realms of peace! O Lord, our souls are under Your governance. Be pleased, then, to keep them true and faithful to Your service. Bind Your sweet chains of love around them, and suffer them not to wander from Your rule. O Lord, the world, too, and all within it, is under Your dominion—we pray You, disappoint all adverse designs, frustrate rebellious malice, over-rule all evil desires and attempts, and make all events conduce to the good of Your Church, and the glory of Your holy name. Take to Yourself Your great power—claim the kingdoms as Your own—bring in the longed-for day when shouts in heaven and earth shall proclaim, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" May our feeble voices join in the blessed chorus which crowns You Lord of All! Thus we adore You as having all things under Your feet. (2.) Jesus is Head over all things to His Church. How close is the union which exists between Christ and His people! The Spirit delights to proclaim this reality under many striking similitudes, that the full comfort of it may refresh our souls. Let us welcome it, and feast upon it. He is the foundation—sure, strong, elect, precious—we are the living stones of a spiritual house, laid upon Him, and cemented into Him. He is the Tree of Life, full of vivifying juices—we are the branches, engrafted into Him, and receiving fruitfulness from Him. He is the Bridegroom, full of love and tender solicitude—we are the spouse, whom He has chosen for Himself, and made the partners of His throne forever. He is the everlasting

Father—we are the children whom He has begotten unto Himself by spiritual regeneration. He is the Elder Brother of our family—we are conformed unto His image, and are called to sit down with Him at His board, and to be joint-heirs of His inheritance. Finally, He is the Head; we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. What peace flows from the assurance that He is Head over all things unto us! In every difficulty, the head thinks, and reasons, and takes precaution, and directs—just so, Jesus is always thoughtful for us, and will surely guide us in a right and safe path, until we reach the city of eternal habitation. The head rules every member; each moves and acts in submission to the controlling will—just so, Jesus moves and reigns in each child of grace. The man is esteemed great, whose head is full of wisdom, and prudence, and skill. How great, then, is the believer, who is thus influenced by the all-wise, the only wise God! Jesus! move ever in us, as a head guiding its members!

Ephesians 1:23. "The Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." The saving truths of Scripture are always expressed in the clearest language. There is neither ambiguity nor mysticism. The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. But alas! how few understand and receive the simple declarations! Why is this? The reason is obvious—the truths are spiritual, and therefore can only be apprehended by spiritual discernment. The sun brightly shines, but the blind man is in nothing but unbroken darkness. The Word distinctly speaks, but he, whose spiritual ears are not unstopped, hears nothing. What can be plainer than the saying before us? "The Church is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." But to every natural man this seems a fond and foolish dream, from which he turns either with utter indifference, or the sneer of ridicule. Blessed Spirit of the living God, enlighten our darkness, that we may see and delight in this precious truth, to the exceeding joy and refreshment of our souls! (1.) Believers are the Body of Christ. (2.) They are the fullness of Him that fills all in all. We have already contemplated Jesus as the Head. We proceed to the immediate consequence. (1.) Believers are His Body. May an increase of grace and faith be granted to realize this truth! The comfort which seems most prominent from this assurance, is the persuasion of close union. Wherever we are, under whatever circumstances of distress, or trial, or suffering, we are verily part of Christ. No man can deny or reject his own members, though disease may prey upon them, and deformity disfigure them. Thus sin, with all its leprous pollution, may contaminate; still, Christ will not cast off. He has joined His Church to Himself forever. When any limb is in pain, we know how the head sympathizes. Thus in all our afflictions He is afflicted—and he that touches us, touches the very apple of His eye. It is a groundless fear, that Christ is indifferent to our troubles and anguish. He participates in every pain, and is truly touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We hence learn the true dignity of the child of God. It utterly exceeds all present power to conceive or express. The Lord help us ever to bear it in mind! The contemplation is sanctifying, and has direct tendency to elevate. If all my members are part of Christ, shall I make them instruments of sin? God forbid! Shall my tongue, which is part of Christ's tongue, join in vain and trifling converse? Shall my eyes, which are part of Christ's eyes, look on vanity? Shall my ears, which are part of Christ's ears, listen with complacency to the ungodly communications of the world? Shall my feet, which are part of Christ's feet, carry me to scenes and companies from which my Head is excluded? Shall my heart receive any affection, my mind any impression, which is not full of Christ? Lord, of Your mercy forbid it! I am Your—keep me, use me as Your forever. May all who see me take knowledge of me, that I bear Your image—in every place may I be a living witness to Your truth—may it be seen in me that You have living members upon earth, even as You are a living Head in heaven! Blessed

Lord, grant that Your Body may no more be disjointed and disorganized—may all Your members be knit together as one holy, compact frame—may one Spirit of love animate the whole, and may Your prayer have speedy fulfillment, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us; that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me." (2.) Believers are "the fullness of Him that fills all in all." Great is this mystery. Christ as God is omnipresent. He fills all heaven, and all the universe which His power made. As an indwelling Spirit He pervades the whole Church. He is present in all assemblies, and occupies every heart. But while all things are thus full of Him, His fullness is the Church while all would be one vast vacancy without Him, He would be incomplete without His people. What shall be said to this truth? We marvel and adore. With what love must He have loved us, when He took us into such union with Himself, that He can no more be entire apart from us! Oh! that we might similarly feel, that we cannot live or move one moment without Him! Who can consider these things, and gainsay the truth, that His sheep shall never perish? The absence of one would destroy the entirety of the body, and would render Christ deficient, imperfect. The very thought must instantly be rejected; and we must delightedly embrace the sure conclusion, that all who are His, are His forever. What comforts should fill our souls! what prospect brightens before us! what gratitude should burn in our hearts! what debtors are we to the grace which gave us to Jesus, and Jesus unto us!

06.03. Ephesians 2:1-10. Dead in Sin - Alive in Christ

Ephesians 2:1-10. Dead in Sin—Alive in Christ Ephesians 2:1. "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This verse presents a striking contrast. It exhibits our natural condition, and tells us into what state we are brought by the gracious power of God. (1.) We were dead in trespasses and sins. (2.) We have been brought from death unto life by the quickening Spirit. Heavenly Father, shine now into our hearts, and give us to feel what wondrous mercy has been extended towards us! (1.) We were dead in trespasses and sins. Let us never forget, that in Adam we lost all spiritual life. Satan seized upon his soul, and inflicted a mortal wound. He was created with the light of heaven in his heart, but sin gained entrance, and utterly extinguished every spark. He became corrupt and depraved in every faculty, perception, and power. It is indisputable that Adam could not impart to his descendants that which he no longer possessed. A holy being cannot spring from an unholy; neither a clean from an unclean. Darkness cannot produce light; the grape cannot bud forth from the brier. Thus no descendant of fallen Adam could bring a living soul into this world. All who are naturally born of him must be born dead as to God. How humbling is this thought! What can be more pitiable than to see natural men swelling with haughty pride, and vaunting as if endued with great and noble faculties! Alas! what are they? Fleishy sepulchers of expired souls. There is no life within, and the moving clay must soon crumble into dust. Yet such men will oppose God, and dispute against His truth, and openly revile His new-born children. Such, however, were we; but we are quickened. Blessing and glory be unto Him, who in the multitude of His tender mercies, has wrought a change! But we were not only dead by nature, we were dead also in practice. The life within us, not being the life of God, was the life of the Evil One. Therefore, every movement of the inner man, being utterly apart from God, was only animate towards Satan. Whatever we did, having no reference to God, was sin. All our deeds, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, were evil. Every thought was sin—and, therefore, every word and every work was sin, and that continually. Death to God is life to sin. Every step which we took was in sin towards hell. Every moment which passed over our heads witnessed an aggravation and accumulation of iniquity, and brought us nearer to endless perdition. The dreadful description of the prophet exactly belonged to us. "Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores." Is this our present state? Thanks be unto God! we now live unto Him. "While we were in our blood, He said unto us, live; yes, while we were in our blood, He said unto us, live." (2.) This brings us to our second truth—We have been brought from death unto life by the quickening Spirit. When we had no power to look towards God, or cry unto Him—when we had no inclination or desire to seek His face—He drew near unto us, and raised us from the grave of our iniquities. He caused the dry bones to live. Can we doubt who is the first mover in the work of regeneration? It is our God, in the plenitude of His love. Shall we enquire what motive constrained Him? It could be nothing in us, for we were dead in trespasses and sins—all that we did and had was vileness and abomination in His sight. Nothing moved Him but the love which is His essence. He quickened

us because He loved us—He loved us because He would love us. Let us adore this love, which brought life and light into our souls; and let us love Him, who first so loved us. If He so loved us, while our whole nature was enmity to Him, will He cease to love us, now that He has made us partakers of the divine nature, and has given us new powers to know, worship, and serve Him? It cannot be. He has loved us with an everlasting love, and never will He cast us off. We may now plead with Him, that we are His workmanship, the temples of the Holy Spirit; and we may beseech Him for His glory's sake, to forsake not the work of His own hands—and we may rejoice in the assurance, that He who has begun this good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Let the new-born exclaim, Have we received this life from heaven? Oh! then, let us live as redeemed from the death in trespasses and sins, and as quickened unto the life of God. It is true not of the Jews only, but of all God's children, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Remember what Spirit dwells within you—cease altogether from the world and the flesh—walk in the Spirit—be not carnally-minded, which is death, but be spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Ephesians 2:2. "Wherein in time past you walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Dark and dreadful is the picture which this verse presents. It withdraws the veil, and shows us more distinctly our miserable and lost condition by nature. We have just been told that we were "dead in trespasses and sins." It is now added, "wherein in time past you walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Let us consider these fearful declarations in the following order. While we walked according to the course of this world, (1.) We walked in sins. (2.) We walked according to the Devil, who is called the prince of the power of the air. (3.) Let us ponder the truth, that the Devil is the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. While we advance, may our hearts overflow with gratitude at the thought that the quickening Spirit of God has delivered us from this horrible pit, from this mire and clay, and has set our feet upon a Rock, even our Savior Jesus Christ. (1.) While we walked according to the course of this world, we walked in sins. There are two kingdoms in direct opposition—the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ. We were all born subjects of the former; God's own children are translated in His good time by the power of the Spirit into the latter. The former is all darkness, ignorance, and sin. God is utterly unknown in it—all its laws, and rules, and maxims, and desires have reference to the things of time and sense. The thought of eternity and the invisible world seldom enters, and if it presents itself it is instantly expelled as an unwelcome guest. The prevailing notion in it is the indulgence and aggrandizement of self. While we walk in this world, we do nothing but sin. What is sin, but a violation of the righteous law of God? This law requires, that God should be the object of our supreme love, and should occupy every thought; that self should be completely cast out and annihilated; and that God should reign without a rival in every movement of the soul. But oh! how different from this is the course of this world! Here every step is without God; yes, rather, is against God. How little do the men of this world consider their true condition! They are employed from morning until night in the one work of rebellion against God, their Creator and Preserver; from whose bounty they receive their every faculty and enjoyment. Their seeming approaches to God in outward worship are only fearful mockeries; for they utter what they do not believe; they profess what they do not feel; they promise what they never purpose to perform. Thus they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Hence it appears, that while we live

according to the course of this world, we walk only in sin. But believers "are not of the world, even as Jesus is not of the world." Blessed be God, who through His Son Jesus Christ has delivered us from this present evil world! (2.) While we walked according to the course of this world, we walked according to the Devil, who is "the prince of the power of the air." The world has its king. The Devil is called "the ruler of the darkness of this world." Again—he is "the God of this world, who blinds the minds of those who believe not." Again—Jesus says, "Now is the judgment of this world—now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Hence we learn distinctly that the men of the world are under his vile yoke; that he rules them with his iron scepter; that his chains enthrall them; that they receive their laws and commands from his mouth. What, then, is their boasted liberty? It is abject slavery. They cannot do what they please—as the horse obeys the bridle of the rider—as the ship is moved by the will of the pilot—so these men move here and there as Satan guides them. "The lusts of their Father they will do." What state can be more pitiable, what drudgery more vile! In these chains we too worked in former days; in these chains we would be working at this time, if the Lord had not looked in compassion on us. We knew not our misery, we hugged our fetters, we had no wish to escape from our captivity, when Jesus came and set us free. Shall we allow the prince of the power of the air to regain his sway over us? The Lord forbid. In His name, through His blood, let us resist, and we shall tread down this enemy under our feet shortly. (3.) The verse tells us, that this evil spirit still "works in the children of disobedience." He is a spirit, and therefore can enter into the secret chambers of the heart, and erect his throne, and give his laws in the recesses of the soul. Here he sits, directing the thoughts, and prompting the inclinations, and fanning the embers of corruption into a flame. Hence in all the desires, and plans, and schemes, and words, and works of the children of the world, Satan is the author and originator. O blessed Jesus! restrain this adversary! Trample him beneath Your feet! Cast him utterly out of us! Drive him into outer darkness!

Ephesians 2:3. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Our original state is again represented. Dark and hateful as the picture is, the contemplation is most profitable. It silences all boastings; it utterly strips us of all self-righteousness; it excites self-loathing and self-abhorrence; it loudly proclaims the sentence of just condemnation in our ears; above all, it exalts the glory of God in His free grace and unspeakable mercy in Christ Jesus. May these blessed effects be wrought by the Spirit in our souls, while we fix our eyes on the portrait before us! It exhibits to us "our former conversation:" we "fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind." (1.) Let us consider this truth; (2.) Let us proceed to the fearful consequence, we "were the children of wrath, even as others." Heavenly Father, enlighten our darkness! (1.) We fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Before the Spirit of God enters the soul, the whole nature is carnal and corrupt. The mind, in its various operations, only lusts after evil; the flesh is one mass of depravity, greedy after low and base gratifications. The mind suggests, and plans, and invents; the flesh is eager to obey. The mind is enmity to God; the flesh never can become spiritual. Hence the old man is given to works of unrighteousness. The mind is the nest of every unclean bird—the fountain-head of polluted streams, and the flesh is the instrument of unholy indulgence. In this Epistle, the Gentiles are described as "walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;" and then it immediately follows, that being thus "past feeling, they gave themselves over to work all

uncleanness with greediness." Here we have the mind desiring and devising, and the flesh executing, all evil. Hence the Spirit so continually represents the flesh or carnal nature as the enemy or opposing principle to Christ. "The carnal mind is enmity against God—because it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be—so then those who are in the flesh," or carnal state, who have not received the Spirit, and become partakers of the divine nature, "cannot please God." This is their one conversation—"they fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind." They offer no restraint to their ungodly propensities; they are carried rapidly down the destructive stream of sensual indulgence. Their one desire is to crowd the largest portion of worldly pleasure into the narrow speck of this little life. They know no higher desires—they are ignorant of God—they tremble not at His Word—they are utter strangers to His fear—they are blind to the real character of sin—they are reckless of the dreadful consequences—their eyes are closed to the realities of eternity, the approach of judgment, and the appalling terrors of the wrath to come. Such were we—so we walked, having no holier object than to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. But believers are "renewed in the spirit of their minds," and strive now to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is their privilege to give blessing, and praise, and thanksgiving to God, and to the Lord Jesus, and to the quickening Spirit! We ascribe all inward life, all spiritual power, to the free grace of our God, who loves us and has such mercy on us! (2.) The fearful consequences of such conversation. We were "the children of wrath, even as others." God abhors all evil—it is infinitely repugnant to His holy nature—His wrath burns like fire against it. So while we were thus wholly given to work iniquity, God's pure anger was against our every word, and thought, and work. We were every moment treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. This is the way of all the generation of the ungodly. We differed not from their principles and proceedings, and therefore we were rapidly hastening to the endurance of the wrath to come. But who can tell what that wrath is? Then will it be known, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." But though in ourselves we were thus "the children of wrath, even as others;" yet in the secret purposes of God's grace, we were the children of His love, and given unto Jesus, and appointed not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation. Therefore Jesus came, and drank the cup of wrath for us; and "has delivered us from the wrath to come." Lord Jesus, we adore You! Give us grace to know that no wrath remains for us.

Ephesians 2:4. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us." How beautiful is this ray of cheering light, which breaks in upon the gloomy darkness of the preceding verses! In them man appeared "dead in trespasses and sins;" "walking according to the course of this world;" "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" "the children of wrath, even as others." We beheld the hideous features of Satan's progeny; we trembled at the prospect of the smoke of the torment ascending up forever and ever, which is justly prepared as their portion. But now all is brightness and celestial joy. God appears—not as a consuming fire—not in the garments of fierce indignation and vengeance—but as the God whose name is Love, arrayed in the riches of His gracious mercy. Blessed Lord, help us by Your Spirit, to see and know You as here revealed—the very God of our salvation! Send out Your light and Your truth, to give us light, and to lead us into all truth! The points for consideration are (1.) God rich in mercy; (2.) God loving us with great love. (1.) "God is rich in mercy." Mercy is that tender attribute which looks with compassion

on the wretched, and hastens to their relief. Who is more completely wretched than man in his natural condition? Ignorant of God, he knows no real enjoyment; for all real joy consists in likeness to, and communion with God—a slave of the Devil, he toils throughout all his days in the vilest drudgery; and the wages at the end is the blackness of darkness forever. This is real wretchedness. This is the state which mercy flies to alleviate. Mercy ceases to be mercy, if no efforts are made to rescue these sufferers from perishing. But our "God is rich in mercy." When He proclaimed His great Name to Moses, what a precious train of graces seem pressing for the foremost place! But mercy outstrips her fellows, and the first sound we hear is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Again we are told that "He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy;" that "He is plenteous in mercy and truth;" that "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him." He has said, "Mercy shall be built up forever;" and we are encouraged to trust in "the multitude of His tender mercies." Surely then Mercy will not leave us in our low abyss of misery! It cannot be. See God sparing not His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all; putting Him to shame and grief—being pleased in bruising Him—sheathing the sword of vengeance in His heart; taking of Him the full payment of our countless iniquities; and say, has not mercy yearned over us to help us? God is rich in mercy! Where we abound in sin, He far more abounds in mercy. Let believers put all their trust in God, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." When their sins rise up in dreadful crowds against them, let them think of Jesus, God's mercy of mercies—God's mercy in the highest—and hasten to the fountain opened, and wash them all away. When conscious of infirmity, and terrified by Satan's assaults, let them go quickly to the mercy-seat, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. When conscience accuses, let them go to God, and plead with Him that "He is rich in mercy," and they will find indeed that "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (2.) Next, let us consider God as "loving us with great love." This is the precious truth so inconceivably dear and supporting to believers. Their God is Love. His whole nature, His entire essence, His every feeling, His every dealing towards His people, is pure, unmixed, infinite love. His love gave them to Christ before all worlds; His love gave Christ unto them; His love called them in time; His love sends out the teaching Spirit to enlighten them, and to excite the cry, "Abba, Father," in their hearts. His love keeps them amid their many perils, through faith unto eternal salvation. His love sustains them daily looking unto the Lamb slain, whose meritorious blood cleanses them from all sin. His love sends out His rod to chasten and correct them—to humble them—to keep them low in dust and ashes. His love binds up their wounds, and pours in heavenly consolation, and whispers unto them, "Be not afraid." His love is from everlasting to everlasting. Nothing can separate the believer "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 2:4-5. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ." Such is the full and glowing statement of Paul. It calls for our adoring admiration. We have already considered "the great love with which God loved us." This love is marvelously enhanced by the consideration now before us. Let us (1.) Ponder this truth—He loved us "when we were dead in sins." (2.) Proceed to the result of this love, "He quickened us." (3.) This is said to be "together with Christ;" that is, after the model of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and by virtue of our eternal oneness with Him. May the Spirit of our God be with us! (1.) God loved us when we were dead in sins. There is no fact which seems to be so staggering to faith. Such action is so utterly at variance with all the feelings which

we experience, or witness in others. Our love is excited by what we deem lovely; our hearts are warmed by the charms of extraordinary worth and grace; we turn with disgust from the hideous deformities of vice and iniquity; we loathe and reprobate the dark features of undisguised evil. Who ever loves that which is altogether hateful? Our love lies dead and dormant until aroused and kindled by something from without. Such is the manner of man. How different the manner of our God! He loves us with a great love before one particle of divine grace enters our souls; while we are one mass of loathsome iniquity; while we hate Him and His holy law, and manifest our complete alienation from Him by every word and work. What a wondrous thought is here! Oh, for more grace to see it distinctly, and to realize it abidingly! God has greatly loved us, when we were nothing but sin, when we did nothing but sin. Whence then sprang this love? All in us tended to estrange from it. Whence then did it originate? Surely from nothing belonging to us. It sprang entirely from His own nature, which is Love. "God is Love." He loved us, because it was His will to love us. We may search and reason until all our powers fail, and we shall find no motive or cause out of God Himself. Let us then adore our God, and the freeness and the riches of His love! Who is a God like unto Him, who so greatly loved us, vile, hateful sinners! What an instance of God-like grace! But our God is infinite, and unspeakable, and unsearchable, and inconceivable in His nature! We cannot fathom, or understand—we can only marvel, give thanks, and adore. We should not be content with a general view of this amazing love. Each believer should single himself out of the whole company of the redeemed, and take his seat alone before the light of this truth, and calmly bring it home to his individual case. God has thus loved you, even you, when you were thus detestable and unclean. It is so, it is really so, it must be so; therefore believe it. Lift up the eyes of faith, and see God's eternal love yearning over you, when in the lowest depths of your degradation, misery, and filth, and say, Will not you now love Him? Can you withhold your love from Him? Are you disposed to ask, Wherefore me? What fixed this love on me? Here ignorance must check conjecture. This secret knows no man. But is it not enough to be assured that you truly are the object of His distinguishing favor? To realize this is salvation, heaven, glory. Is not this enough? Be content, then, and let your life be a life of love and praise. For what is the immediate consequence of the freeness of this love? If you were loved when dead, will you not still be loved now that you live? If all the sins of unregeneracy did not prevent love, surely all sins after regeneration cannot quench it. His love is like Himself; therefore it is without variableness or shadow of turning. (2.) The immediate result of this love is our divine birth. Because He loves us, therefore He quickens us. Because we are sons, He sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Hence we have new powers conferred from heaven, enabling us to see, and know, and love, and serve Him. Let no man rejoice in God's free and eternal love of him, who cannot testify from inward experience, I am created anew in Christ Jesus—"old things are passed away; all things are become new." (3.) This spiritual regeneration is "with Christ." We have already seen, that it is "according to the mighty power which God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Our souls are quickened with Christ, being brought from the death of sin by the same omnipotence which brought Christ's body from the grave. Our regeneration is also with Christ, because it is by virtue of our oneness with Him. "Because I live, you shall live also." A living Head must have living members.

Ephesians 2:6. "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We have already considered the words, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with

Christ." Marvelous indeed is this act of grace and unspeakable this goodness. It breathes divine life into our dead souls! But superadded blessings fill up the cluster. The Apostle carries us onward to the contemplation of a wondrous work. "He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Gracious Spirit, magnify Christ before the eye of our faith, while we examine these truths! (1.) We are raised up together with Christ. (2.) We are sitting in heaven together with Him. How can such blessedness be? It is even so, Lord, for it has seemed good in Your sight to make this revelation. (1.) We are raised up together with Christ. Wonderful is the Person of Christ! It not only represented, but, so to speak, it contained all His people. His punishment was their punishment—His sufferings their sufferings—His death their death—His righteousness and obedience their righteousness and obedience. So that each child of God is privileged to say, By virtue of my eternal oneness with Christ, I have in Him suffered all the wrath of God, which my sins deserved—I have in Him fulfilled every requirement of the Law. When He hung on the cross, I hung on the cross; when He rose again from the dead, I rose also; when He ascended into heaven, I ascended together with Him. Christ and my person can never be parted. He received me as portion of Himself forever. This is that blessed truth which explains the language of our text, and tells us that "we are raised together with Him." This resurrection is true mystically in the purposes and counsels of heaven. It will shortly be so in our actual and joyful experience. God now looks upon us as the conquerors of death and the grave. When His Son burst the bands and came forth trampling the chains of hell beneath His feet, God saw the whole Church sharing in the triumph. Shortly shall we realize the victory which is now mystically ours. It is true that our bodies must for a little while lie in the grave; "our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved;" unto dust we must return. But we are one with Him who proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and soon shall the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God be heard, and then "this corruptible shall put on incorruption; and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Then shall be the full accomplishment of the prophecy, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be your plagues—O grave! I will be your destruction—repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Let believers realize this truth—In Christ they have conquered death and the grave—in Christ, God sees them already delivered from this power and clad in the garments of new and eternal life. Let them then cease to tremble at this foe. Let them rather view him as prostrate and subdued beneath their feet—let none of his terrors make them afraid, but let them go on their way adoring their Lord, and singing, "We are raised together with Christ." (2.) We are "sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Our exaltation to glory is as sure as our resurrection from the dead. The union which secures the latter secures also the former. Christ entered into heaven representing the whole company of His redeemed. He took His seat on the throne of His glory, not in His own name only, but also in their name, and as their Surety. Believers may lift up their eyes to heaven, and not only behold Jesus on the right hand of the Majesty on high, but may also see their own thrones already prepared, and their own people already in occupation. Our Proxy has taken possession for us. God sees us in Him established and settled in the mansions of eternal blessedness. Shall we realize this, and not rejoice in the Lord! O my soul, know your real blessedness, and sing, rejoice, and give thanks! Heaven is your, because you are inseparably one with Christ. Care nothing then for the trifles of time and this miserable world—it is neither your home, your rest, nor your portion. Live above it. Look down upon it as being an inhabitant of a heavenly abode. Habituate your thoughts to dwell

on high. Fix them on your true estate. Become more familiar with God, your Father—with Jesus, your Redeemer—with the Holy Spirit, your Sanctifier and Teacher—and with the spirits of the just made perfect, and the whole company of the ransomed, who are your brethren and your associates forever. Learn more and more the language of the better country. Converse more uninterruptedly with the citizens of light. Cease more from the ways and words of the children of darkness. So shall you have the present enjoyment of heaven, and find by experience that you are sitting in heavenly places together with Christ.

Ephesians 2:7. "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Do we enquire for what purpose God is pleased to quicken our souls, to raise us up together with Christ, and to make us sit together in heavenly places? The present verse supplies the answer. "That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." It is the intent of God to display throughout all eternity the amazing abundance of His grace, as evidenced by His work in His people. To this truth let us now direct our thoughts, and may light from above shine into our souls! Our theme carries us beyond the limits of this perishing scene. We are introduced into the heavenly inheritance. What do we there behold? God is manifested in all the plenitude of His glory. He who is "eternal, immortal, invisible, who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen, or can see," is now clearly revealed. Jesus is now seen as He is. Who are they who stand around the throne, and encircle God and the Lamb? They are "a great multitude, whom no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." What is their employment? They cry, "Salvation unto our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." They will never rest throughout all the ages of eternity, in ascribing the glory of their full redemption to the exceeding riches of God's grace, in His kindness toward them through Christ Jesus. This salvation consists in their spirits being made perfectly pure and holy; even participating in the nature of God Himself—in their bodies being redeemed from all the filth and pollution of earthly corruption, and being rendered immortal, incorruptible, bright, perfect, spiritual—exactly in every circumstance similar to our Lord's glorious body, and in their exaltation to sit down with Him on His throne, even as He has taken His seat on the Father's throne. They are glorified in body, soul, and spirit, and they share the throne of God and the Lamb. They well know that they are indebted for all their greatness and joy to God's free, sovereign grace in Christ Jesus—and now with one ceaseless hymn of adoration they laud and magnify its exceeding riches. No other note disturbs the harmony of eternity. One God, by His one grace, in the one Savior, has brought this vast company to their one home—and one song is now heard blessing and praising the freeness and the riches of this grace. Thus it is that by our regeneration, resurrection, and exaltation, God will show "in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." From this explanation of this verse, let us proceed to a few reflections. (1.) We see how God has purposed to display the riches of His glory in the ages to come, and shall we not now commence the song which is so pleasing to His ears? Let us glorify now in the house of our bondage the exceeding riches of His grace. When we draw near to the mercy-seat through the blood of Jesus, let us confess unto God our utter misery, and vileness, and corruption, and pollution, and iniquity by nature—let us strip ourselves of the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and bless God that He has condescended to look upon us in our low estate, and to give us grace and glory. Let us tell Him, that when we merited nothing but hell, He has been pleased to give us freely all things, even

all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Let us never be ashamed to confess before men, that we are debtors to grace for all things. While worldlings boast that they "are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," let us avow that in ourselves we "are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" but that God, in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, has quickened us, and raised us up, and made us to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—and openly declare, that He has so blessed us in the exceeding riches of His grace. (2.) Let us look forward to the ages before us. God's kindness toward us through Christ Jesus is kindness for never-ending ages. Let this thought enable us to rise high above the afflictions and troubles of this brief day. For the endless joy set before us, let us endure these short-lived trials, and "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Let us look less "to the things which are seen; and more to the things which are not seen—for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Let us remember our high calling. God has quickened us, and raised us, and exalted us, that we might be the monuments of His grace throughout all the ages to come. (3.) Let us warn others, who are trusting in themselves, and despising the grace of God. Let us tell those who "merit" is the inscription over the gate of hell; "free grace" over the portals of heaven; that all who enter the latter, enter leaning on the arm of Jesus, and boasting in His righteousness; that they know but one language, and sing but one song—Grace to it! Grace to it!

Ephesians 2:8. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God." The verse before us is one of those plain declarations of God's Word which no sophistry can gainsay. It is sad evidence of the determined infatuation and dreadful blindness of the natural mind, that after reading this faithful saying, difficulties should exist concerning the fundamental truths of our Gospel. Let us draw near to this text, and humbly enquire (1.) What is the originating cause of salvation? (2.) What is the instrumental cause? (3.) What part belongs to man—what part to God? Lord, give us to receive Your truth more deeply in the love of it, and may its sanctifying power more sweetly constrain us! (1.) What is the ORIGINATING cause of salvation? It is grace. This truth has been examined and unfolded in many of the preceding verses. It is the note which sounds aloud in every part of this Epistle. It is the corner-stone which holds the whole fabric together. To write the same things, however—to hear the same things—is not grievous, but rather profitable and pleasant. That is no gracious heart which wearies of contemplating the grace which is the song of the Redeemed, the glory of Heaven, the destruction of Satan. Let us then recapitulate. The plan of salvation is of grace. This plan is wonderful in wisdom and love, and was framed and arranged in the counsels of heaven before the foundation of the world. It was grace which selected Christ as the Redeemer, and called Him to the blessed work. Grace consented to receive His blood as the full and sufficient payment of all the sins of His people, and His obedience as their complete fulfillment of all the law's demands. Grace determined the number and people of the saved, and gave them unto Jesus, and Jesus unto them. Grace united them as one forever. In the fullness of time, grace opens their eyes to see Christ as chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely; opens their hearts to receive Him as all their salvation and all their desire. Grace supplies them through their earthly pilgrimage with all things needful for life and godliness; and when all is accomplished in them and by them, grace receives them to the heavenly inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fades not away. Thus every link in the whole chain, which extends from eternity to eternity, is a link of grace. All believers exclaim, "By grace are we saved." (2.) What is the INSTRUMENTAL cause of salvation? It is Faith. "By grace are you saved, through

faith." Faith is a free-grace gift—it is wrought in the heart by the Spirit. This conveys the soul of the sinner utterly out of self, and leads him up to Jesus, and enables him to discern His worth—His suitableness—His all-sufficiency to save to the uttermost. This gives him power to receive with grateful gladness His offers of mercy, and to repose with undoubting confidence on His finished work. Hence faith is the instrument by which the awakened sinner becomes acquainted with his Lord in all His offices and in all His love, and becomes interested in His work of redemption and intercession. He who is without faith rejects Christ. He who partakes in this precious grace embraces Him, and becomes one with Him forever. Now this instrument comes directly from God—He freely bestows it—consequently, salvation through faith is altogether consistent with salvation by grace. This evidently appears from the next head. (3.) What part has man in the work? He has none. "Not of ourselves." How true is that testimony of the Spirit, "Salvation belongs unto the Lord!" The Lord alone wills it, and bestows it. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Man freely and fully partakes of the exceeding blessedness; but man is utterly excluded from any share in the design or the accomplishment. What part could belong to him? He was dead in trespasses and sins—a willing captive of the Devil, loving his darkness, and the chains which enthralled him. Hence he had no desire for salvation, and therefore could make no effort. But supposing the desire to be kindled in his heart, what power had he? All the angels and principalities on high were weak to hold back the right arm of God's just vengeance, or to rescue a sinner from the iron grasp of Satan. What, then, could impotent man perform? How could he stand against God, or plead and treat with Him as fellow with fellow? The very thought is folly. Salvation is "not of ourselves." Every enlightened and gracious soul will devoutly confess this truth. (4.) The whole is God's; it is His gift. We must not limit the words of our verse, "It is the gift of God" to faith. True it is that faith, like every other grace, is freely given to us of God. But the words refer to the whole work of salvation, in all its parts and provisions. This is an absolute, sovereign, unmerited, unsought gift of God. When we deserved nothing, desired nothing, expected nothing—of His own love and mercy He gave us full and eternal salvation in Jesus Christ. O you saints! will you not love the Lord, and praise and magnify His holy Name? Where are your hearts—where is your gratitude? Live to His glory, who has thus freely given you salvation.

Ephesians 2:9. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The Apostle has clearly affirmed that salvation is the free-grace gift of God. The experience of every child of God confirms this truth. Grace originates—carries on—perfects the whole. From first to last we are debtors to covenant mercy alone. But as this doctrine is of deep importance to the well-being and comfort of the believer, the Apostle proceeds to a negative statement, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." This follows, of course, from the preceding; for if God alone is admitted to the work, man, and all his doings, and merits, and pretensions are excluded. Let us hence consider (1.) That works have no share in procuring salvation. (2.) The cause of their exclusion, "lest any man should boast." Lord, enlighten our understandings and sanctify our hearts! (1.) Works have no share in procuring salvation. "Not of works." All who have received the Spirit of God well know this. They are convinced of sin. They see their whole lives to be one continuous stream of transgressions, backslidings, short-comings. What did they in their state of unregeneracy? This one thing, and this one thing only—they openly and daringly rebelled against God—they trampled His commands beneath their feet—they followed the devices and desires of their own corrupt hearts—they worshiped and served the god of this world. Can a believer bring any work out of all the period of this blind ignorance, on which he can look with complacency? He loathes—he abhors them all. He

sincerely would wash them out in tears of bitter penitence; but knowing that his very tears are not clean, he brings the mass of his former iniquities in the arms of faith, and plunges them in the all-cleansing fountain which issues from the side of the bleeding Lamb. Ask him, Do you rely on any deed of your early life for acceptance? The thought fills him with horror—he cries, Away with them all, they are anguish to my heart, and abomination in the sight of my God—away with them all—nothing but the blood of Jesus can cleanse their crimson dye. Ask the believer, Is this the price with which you hope to purchase heaven? and he confesses, that their just reward is the bottomless pit forever. But it may be said, Is there no merit in works after conversion? Are not believers then guided by the Holy Spirit, and do they not walk before God in newness of life, and is not Christ their very life, and do they not abound in fruits of righteousness to His glory and praise? Supposing these works to be perfect and holy, even as God is perfect and holy; still, not unto man, but unto the Spirit would be all the merit, for He works in the believer to will and to do that which is well-pleasing in God's sight. But will the believer admit that his works after conversion are thus blameless? Far, very far from it. He complains, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." He still smites upon his bosom and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" He daily feels that he is prone to err, and acknowledges with Paul, Of sinners, I am chief. His hourly transgressions seem now to have a darker complexion of evil. There is so much of base ingratitude in them—there is such despite to the Spirit of grace—there are so many wounds inflicted on the heart of Christ—that very heart which bled to save; so that the believer increasingly feels, that he has daily more cause to cling to the cross, and to hide himself in the wounded side. With sincerity he prays "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, O Lord, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." With humility he confesses, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." With thankfulness he acknowledges, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." With gratitude he professes, "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." His boast is, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," "Not of works, lest any man should boast." (2.) We thus come to our second point, the cause of the exclusion of works—"lest any man should boast." If the hand of man added one single stone to the fabric of salvation, he would be able to point to it and say, See what I have done! Some glorying would belong to him, because the entire work would not be of God—it would not have been complete without the addition which he had made, and therefore part of the praise would be his due. But God cannot share His glory with another. "No flesh may glory in His presence." The law of heaven is, "He that glories let him glory in the Lord." The ceaseless hallelujahs of eternity must sound alone the praises of our God and of the Lamb. Where is the believer who would rob God of the honor of redemption? Boasting cannot consist with faith. Bless the Lord, O my soul—be telling of His salvation from day to day—bless you the Lord, O my soul.

Ephesians 2:10. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." In these words Paul concludes his argument in favor of salvation without works, by the free grace of God. Three truths are here announced. (1.) Our new nature is the workmanship of God. (2.) We are created anew, that we might perform good works. (3.) These works are fore-ordained as the path in which we must walk.

After examining these truths, let us observe how effectually they close the door against works as having any share in meriting salvation. May the God of truth for Jesus' sake instruct and sanctify us! (1.) Our new nature is the workmanship of God. We cannot too strongly or too repeatedly contemplate the fact, that by Adam's transgression every spark of spiritual life was utterly extinguished in the soul of man. It became dark, dead, corrupt, alienated from the life of God; entirely given up to Satan and his lusts; in every faculty and power and desire hating God and resisting His holy will. Such were we, when we were born into this world. But a new nature has been conferred; old things are passed away, all things have become new. Who can create a new nature? Surely God alone. This new creation is entirely the work of His power and will. It is the putting forth of the same omnipotence which called this beauteous universe out of nothing into its present being. It is the operation of the same Agent which said, "Let there be light, and there was light." As the dead can neither will nor stir, so lifeless souls can make no effort of their own to obtain spiritual existence. The new-born soul is indeed a grand and lovely fabric, participating in desires and faculties altogether divine—capable of knowing, loving, and serving God expanding in thought even into eternity—and aspiring after the largest perceptions and fullest enjoyments of God forever. But it is not of earth, earthy—it is of heaven, heavenly—it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but absolutely and exclusively the workmanship of God. Happy, blessed, favored are they, who are thus made partakers of the divine nature! How wondrously do they differ from the world around them! How infinitely do they differ from their former selves! How can they adequately adore Him, whose sovereign grace has thus distinguished them! How can they sufficiently love Him who first so loved them! (2.) We are created anew, that we might perform good works. The new nature is the immediate offspring of God, and therefore is divine in essence, principles, and desires. It is therefore holy and spiritual, even as God is holy and spiritual. Hence we read, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And again, "We know, that whoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that Wicked One touches him not." The heavenly workmanship loves good and abhors evil—seeks good and flees evil. The law of God is the rule and delight of the man thus created anew in Christ Jesus. His language is, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But let not this blessed truth dishearten or discourage the child of God, who still finds, and who will always find in this world, "another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members." For the old nature expires not when the new nature is implanted; but in the same person of the one believer they co-exist. The one is of God, and cannot sin—the other is carnal, and cannot but sin. Hence the constant struggle, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." But good works is the path in which the new nature is always striving to walk, the very course along which it pursues its way to heaven. (3.) These good works are "fore-ordained that we should walk in them." He who appointed the end, which is endless glory, appointed the way, which is holiness—and never can we reach the end, unless our feet are set in the only right direction. It is an eternal law of God, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Sanctification as the road is invariably connected with sovereign grace as the cause, and glory as the consummation. He "has chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." "God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. We are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Hence the highest doctrines of grace are the truest incentives to good works; and except we abound in the latter, we can have no assured hope. Our calling and election is made sure by adding to our faith every godly work. The Apostle states that we are thus formed and created in Christ unto the fore-appointed path of holiness, to establish that salvation is not of works. For if God gives the new nature—works the works in us—sets them before us—guides us to them—supports us in them, He is the Author. We are the clay; He is the potter—and to Him must all the glory be given.

06.04. Ephesians 2:11-22. One in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-22. One in Christ

Ephesians 2:11. "Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." The preceding statements of the Apostle concerning God's eternal election in Christ—salvation entirely of free grace, the sovereign gift through faith, and not of works—and the riches of His mercy and greatness of His love—and His quickening power towards those dead in sins, have been of a general character. Such observations are often disregarded. A man may think that they apply to others and not to himself—he may feel no personal address to his heart and conscience. To obviate this deficiency in faith, Paul now bids the Ephesians take these truths home to their own hearts. He would have them single themselves out of the family of man, and come alone and take their seats under the direct rays of these blessed doctrines, and examine closely into their own cases, and see how graciously God had dealt with them. He bids them look to their former state, and realize how dark, dismal, forlorn, dead, hopeless, it was—and then view in contrast their union to Christ, their life and recovery in Him, and their reconciliation through Him to God. The conclusion cannot be escaped. They must each individually feel that God has made them monuments of electing love and distinguishing grace—they must each individually ascribe all glory to Him so rich in love, so great in power. He commences this personal application by saying, "Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands." He says, Call to mind what was your state by birth—you were Gentiles, utterly dark and ignorant of the true God and only way of life—looked upon with scorn and contempt by those who were chosen by God to have knowledge of His law. By realizing this humiliating condition they would be better prepared to estimate and magnify the exceeding riches of the mercies, which had so freely abounded towards them. Let each believer follow the precept of the Spirit—come apart for awhile from the whole Church of God; enter into the secret chambers of solemn retrospective meditation, and under the rays of heavenly light review his former state. Now, through grace, he is light in the Lord; but formerly he was darkness, and how great was that darkness, how thick those scales which covered his spiritual vision! He had no knowledge of God as the Father of mercies and God of all grace. The Book of Life was to him a sealed book. It brought home to his feelings no moving, melting testimonies of redeeming love—the record of the Savior's cross and passion seemed as some idle tale in which he had no interest, and in which, therefore, he took no delight. He did not believe that there was deep and solid reality in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, renew, sanctify, and lead to Jesus. He regarded the humble professions of the saints of God as mere hypocrisy or delusion—neither heaven nor hell excited in him affecting thoughts of hope or fear. Darkness—gross darkness—enveloped all his perceptions of things invisible and eternal. He had no true knowledge of God—of Jesus—of the Spirit—of the Word—of holiness—of sin. He lived only for the things of time and sense; and so was rapidly hurried along the downward stream of time, to meet an unknown God in an unknown world, and to enter upon an unknown eternity. O

my soul, such was your former darkness! How dreadful, how terrible! Forget it not, set it distinctly before you; it will help you to rejoice more in your present light, for the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings. Therefore, arise, shine, and reflect from your bright armor of light the rays which fall upon you. Remember, that in former days not only utter darkness covered you, but that all your ways and works, all your thoughts and deeds, were one unbroken mass of iniquity and rebellion. Paul reminds the Colossians, "You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has God quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." Oh! think seriously of this dreadful state—dead in sins. How humiliating the thought, that in those days, hatred to the holy, gracious God of your salvation filled every corner of your heart—that the ways of vital godliness were deliberately rejected by you—the ways of foul evil were deliberately chosen—that the language of your feelings was, Away with Jesus! I will not have Him to reign over me. Crucify Him! crucify Him! release unto me Barabbas. You joined with the children of Satan, who raised their haughty hands against the God of heaven, and who would gladly have torn Him down from His throne of righteousness. Remember, O my soul, such was your former state. But now you are alive unto God, and loves Jesus, and rejoice in His salvation. How great the change! How great the grace! Give thanks with all the heart.

Ephesians 2:12. "That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The Apostle, from his desire to bring the Ephesians into a deep and grateful sense of their obligations to sovereign grace, continues to direct their minds to the dark and desolate condition from which they had been delivered. He had exhorted them to remember, that formerly they were Gentiles, whose very name was a reproach among the Jews. He proceeds, and bids them remember that "at that time they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." What an dreadful picture of destitution and misery! Here is a state closely bordering on the wretchedness of the lost. Let us make this matter personal. Let us call in our thoughts from the mass of the heathen, or of the world around us, and realize that such was our own condition before God in the riches of His mercy removed the blindness from our eyes, and revealed Christ to us as the hope of glory. Let us take up in order the several points. (1.) We were "without Christ." We had no knowledge of Him beyond the sound of His name, or some common facts of His history. We were utterly ignorant of our need to be cleansed from the filth of destructive sin by the merits of His blood. We knew nothing of His power and willingness to save to the uttermost. We had never heard the sweetest of all sounds on earth, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven you." We knew nothing of the calm delight of sitting down at the foot of the cross, and reading in His wounded hands and feet the blessed assurance that our every debt was paid. We knew nothing of the peace of taking shelter in His pierced side, and realizing that we were safe from the appalling thunder of the law, and the uplifted arm of almighty vengeance. We had never put on the robe of His righteousness, and felt that it not only covered all our impurity and loathsomeness, but was a garment worthy of the admiration of God and all heaven forever. In those days of gloom we had no endearing communion with our beloved Lord. We did not know Him as "a Friend that sticks closer than a brother;" a Bridegroom united to us in loving-kindness, faithfulness and truth; a Surety, to discharge all our dues; an Advocate, ever pleading our cause on the ground of His complete satisfaction; a Shepherd, to watch over us, making us to lie down in green pastures, and leading us beside still waters; we did not delight ourselves in Jesus, as all our salvation and all our

desire—our light and life—our joy and peace—our hope and confidence—the first and the last of our constant thought—and our portion forever. We were without Christ, and therefore joyless and lifeless. (2.) We were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." The people of God form a blessed community. They constitute one family, they are children of the same Heavenly Father, heirs of the same glorious inheritance, fed at the same board of spiritual ordinances and promises, partakers of the same faith and of the same divine nature, called by the same Spirit, bought by the same blood, loved with the same love, and rapidly hastening to the same home. Hence their hearts are knit together in brotherly affection; they feel for each other as fellow-members of one body; they hold sweet fellowship together, and talk one to another of their common Lord, and of His precious redemption, and of His dealings with them and their brethren around. Sweet indeed is this communion—strong these bonds of uniting love. But at that time we were aliens from this commonwealth. We did not seek nor delight in the society of God's children—rather we shunned them as gloomy and morose and forbidding—we were disposed to revile them as hypocrites and deceivers, and to scorn them as the filth of the earth and the offscouring of all things. (3.) We were "strangers from the covenants of promise." When we are brought home to God in Christ, we find Him a God engaged by covenant to bless and save us. We find Jesus engaged by covenant to redeem and present us faultless before the throne of His glory. This covenant contains exceeding great and precious promises, which are all Yes and Amen in Christ. Oh! how blessed to feel that we have a covenant-interest in all these promises—that they are our heritage forever—that we may plead them before the mercy-seat, and cry, O Lord, do as You have said—be it unto us according to Your word. But we were strangers to these promises—we had not tasted their sweetness. God was to us only a God afar off. We only heard the voice of threatening. Consequently we had "no hope." Believers have "a good hope through grace." They have the God of hope as their God forever—they rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Happy indeed is it to be thus saved by hope, and to enter on a state founded on such a covenant, obtained by such a price, extending to such a boundless prospect of happiness. Once we were strangers to this hope—the prospect before us was blackness—no ray illuminated the unbroken gloom—there was a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. To the question, What is our hope? the reply was, We have none. It could not be otherwise, for we were "without God in the world." They who have God, have all things. But God can only be known and appropriated in Christ. There is no other access to Him. Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. Christ is the center in which God and man meet, and become one. We were once without God—now, in Christ, He is ours forever. Oh! joy of joys! mercy of mercies! Grace has made the difference. Let us adore the God of grace.

Ephesians 2:13. "But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ." We now turn from the dark picture of the preceding statement, and are permitted to behold a bright and lovely contrast. "The wilderness and solitary place is glad; the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose; it blossoms abundantly, and rejoices even with joy and singing." "Now in Christ Jesus, you who sometimes were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ." We no longer hear of being without Christ, having no hope, and being without God in the world. The Spirit of God has breathed upon the slain—the dry bones have started up into life—the believers of Ephesus were now in Christ, and as such, by His blood are made near to God. It is impossible for us too often to dwell upon the truth, that the most close and vital and indissoluble union exists between Christ and each member of His flock. They are emphatically "in Christ:" they are truly members of His body—engrafted by the Spirit into Him as branches into the parent stem;

cemented into Him as the building into the foundation. From this union all their life and all their privileges proceed. Believers should often realize that such is their state. Christ has not only called them to His knowledge, and revealed to them His love, and exhibited in them His power; He has, moreover, taken them into Himself. Let them realize this union. Its sanctifying efficacy is great; for who can be persuaded that he is thus part of the holy Jesus, and consent to any sin? Also, its comfort is unspeakable; for this union forbids the possibility of separation. They who are thus united to Him shall be with Him where He is; that they may see His glory, and sit with Him on His throne forever. The grand point, however, of the text before us, is the present privilege of those who are in Christ. They "are made near to God by the blood of Christ." Once they were far off; sin had made a wide breach—a deep chasm of separation parted them. But Jesus by His blood takes away all the iniquities of His people; and thus He opens a new and living way by which they may draw near, and find wrath appeased, justice satisfied, every impediment gone, and God as a God of love extending His arms to welcome them, and bidding them pour out their souls unto Him. Let believers know assuredly that it is their privilege thus to have access to God. He regards them not as aliens and outcasts—as strangers and foreigners—but as His own children through grace—as heirs of His own kingdom. It is not His desire that they should stand afar off. He commands them to draw near, and assures them by every tender and affectionate promise, that He will welcome and rejoice over them. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." How striking are the words which the Spirit sent to Asa! "Hear you me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin, the Lord is with you while you be with Him—and if you seek Him, He will be found of you—and if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." Draw near in constant communion. Our citizenship is in heaven—our thoughts should encircle the throne. Wherefore do we ever cleave unto the dust, and let our imaginations too frequently rove amid the vanities and trifles of this evil world? Why do we not rather mount on high, and enter by faith into the holy of holies, and meditate on the glories of our heavenly home? Say not, I am dull, and heavy, and drowsy, and I cannot ascend—it may be, that by long-continued indolence and inactivity the upward flight is contrary to habit, and the stream may strive to flow on in its customary channel; but make the effort, persevere in it, check each thought which strives to wander, and the Lord will surely help, and yet a little while you will find that the new nature will joyfully and habitually seek its proper home; and the Lord will be your meditation all the day long. Draw near in frequent, earnest prayer. Be diligent to banish far all deadness, coldness, and formality in this exercise. Set God closely, immediately before you—speak as to One bending over you to hear each word—be conscious of His actual presence, and plead as one who is pleading for things of unspeakable value, and pleading with One glorious in majesty, mighty in operation, doing wonders. How fearful is the hypocrisy of men who seem to honor God with their lips, while their drowsy spirits are in the torpor of indifference, or carelessly rambling amid projects of sin and folly! Let the believer in prayer draw near. He has liberty and boldness of access with confidence. Let him use diligently this precious privilege, and great will be his joy and peace. Draw near in the study of His blessed Word. Always remember whose Word it is, and that Jehovah here holds converse with us. The Scriptures are as surely His revelation as if the heavens were now opened over our heads, and an audible voice proclaimed the wondrous truths. Is it not a shame that we should so long have possessed this treasure, and have been so scantily enriched by it? Lord, of Your mercy pardon us—and help us by Your mighty Spirit to draw nearer and nearer, and thus listen with all attention to Your glorious Word! But in all our approaches let us be mindful of the blood of Christ. This clears the way—this is the key which

unlocks the palace-gates of heaven—this is our only title of admission—this secures our welcome. God loves the blood of His Son, and delights to honor it. When He sees it sprinkled over the person of a sinner, He loves that man and can withhold nothing from him. When He sees that blood sprinkled over any of our services, those services are an odor of a sweet smell—a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing in His sight. This blood is ours by the faith of Jesus—we may take it, and use it, and plead it. Holy Spirit! give us power to avail ourselves of our mercies, and to live near to God by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:14. "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." These words declare the union of believing Jews and believing Gentiles in Christ. In Him both are one. They had been far apart. The Jew regarded the Gentile with bitter scorn; he refused all communion; and thought it pollution to partake of the same bread. There was a high wall of partition which utterly divided them. But Christ has removed all external and separating distinctions, and having united each unto Himself, and having made each members of His own body, He has brought them into close fellowship in Himself. This truth is full of instruction. May the Spirit of peace and love teach us to deduce some lessons of profit from it! (1.) Believers are all one in Christ. In this world they are scattered abroad and divided by many external circumstances. Some live in one age, some in another; some in one country, some in another. Some speak one language, some another. Some live under one form of polity, some under another. Some prefer one form of religious worship, some another. But notwithstanding all these external differences, they are all one. They meet and embrace in Christ. In Him as a common center, all the rays from east to west, from north to south, are collected. God the Father loved them all with everlasting love—chose them all out of the mass of mankind—gave them all to Christ as His portion, spouse, jewels, sheep, and body—to be redeemed by His blood from all their iniquities—to be clothed with the pure righteousness of His obedience, and so to be faultless, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The Holy Spirit calls, teaches, strengthens and sanctifies them all. The same Spirit dwells in each, reveals to each the same precious truths, leads each to wash in the same purifying fountain, to sit down under the same cross, to lean on the same arm, to profess the same faith, to glory in the same name, to feed on the same truths. They all are journeying along the same road to the same heavenly rest. They will all soon be brought together to share the same glory, and to sing the same song. In these and many similar particulars, they are all one in Christ. He is their common peace, who has utterly taken away all essential separation and difference. (2.) Believers ought now to live in this unity. Doubtless there are differences of station which God has wisely ordained for the common good of the family of man. Some are called to rule, others to obey—some direct, others serve; and these lines of separation may not be rashly trampled down. The foot may not claim the place of the eye; nor the hand murmur, because it is not the head. There are also differences of gifts. Some have more enlarged outpourings of the Holy Spirit—some are endued with more acuteness of mental perception, or more soundness of discriminating judgment—and hence some are qualified to give a tone to opinion, while it becomes others to hear and to submit. But still one feeling of brotherly love ought to pervade the whole family. Few things are more emphatically enjoined than this unity and godly harmony. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus—that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." "If there

be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affections and mercies, fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind—in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." Many other passages might be added, all enforcing the same duty. May the Lord then hasten the time, when envies and jealousies, and suspicions shall utterly be put away from us, with all surmisings and evil-speakings; and when all Christian hearts shall be knit together in love; and men shall take knowledge of us that we love one another with pure hearts fervently. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (3.) This union would greatly strengthen the cause of Christ. Our blessed Lord, in His divine intercession, declares what gracious effects would follow. "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that You have sent me." The ungodly and sneering world are continually enquiring, Where are the children of God? We discern but little difference; worldliness and divisions seem as common among them as among the professed votaries of pleasure; we see no unity of spirit or of purpose. There is too much ground for this reproach, and much injury results to the cause of Christ. On the contrary, if all believers stood firm in one rank against error and ungodliness, they would be "terrible as an army with banners" against the hosts of Satan. The world could not gainsay their power. It would acknowledge the reality of the truth of their principles, and see that God was with them of a truth. Thus, "they who are of the contrary part, would be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us," and the Word of the Lord would mightily grow, and have free course, and be glorified. (4.) This union would greatly increase the joy of believers. In this world we cannot escape the enmity and reproach of evil men. The servant is not greater than his master. If they called Christ, Beelzebub, and crucified Him, we may not expect kind words or kind usage. Sad, then, indeed, is our outward case, if we have not the love of our brethren. But there is a comfort in their love which solaces in all trials. The Lord grant that this may more abound, and sweeten each bitter cup which He gives us to drink!

Ephesians 2:15. "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Paul in these words further establishes the entire reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Christ (1.) We here learn that the ceremonial law, which he calls the law of commandments contained in ordinances, placed enmity between Jew and Gentile. On this point it is needless to enlarge. It is well known that the ceremonial law contained numerous external rites, which separated the Jews from the rest of mankind. The diversity of observances created an alienation of feeling, and precluded all social communion. Thus mutual dislike existed, and the enmity of which the Apostle speaks produced estrangement. (2.) We next learn that Christ has abolished in His flesh this enmity. These observances had all some reference to Jesus, and were mostly typical of Him. They were ordained to prefigure Him, and to keep the mind of the observer in constant expectation of Him. In the fullness of time He came in the flesh, made of a woman, made under the law, and by the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, and by the shedding of His most precious blood, He perfectly fulfilled everything which these ceremonies had for ages been foreshadowing. Thus the design of the law being answered, its further use terminates. Hence it is abolished in Jesus. These ritual forms being thus removed, the separation ceases, and the believing Jew and Gentile are no more apart. (3.) We learn that Jesus thus makes of twain one new man, and establishes peace. Let us now advance to the contemplation of this reconciling work of our beloved Lord, and meditate on some of the blessings which result from His grace. Each of His children He makes a new man. Old

things pass away—behold, all things become new. A new nature is implanted—the Holy Spirit Himself descends, and takes up His abode in the heart. His people are temples of the Holy Spirit. The promise is fulfilled—He receives gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Oh! the surpassing dignity of a disciple of Jesus! Wherever he moves, He carries with Him the power of the Holy One. How diligent we should be to stir up the gift which is in us! We should earnestly strive to cause the light which is given to shine brightly around. May the Lord grant that the fruits of the Spirit, the evidence of the new nature, may increase, and be more abundant! The fruits are these. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." In this beauteous train, love leads the way. Where God is, there is love; for God is love. Where Christ is, there is love; where the Spirit is, there is love. The truth is realized, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If Christ has made Jew and Gentile one in Him, removing all distinctions—much more should believers of one nation, and kindred, and place, be one in Him. Satan is well pleased—and his work prospers when schism and discord spring up among the saints of the Lord. Such things should not be. They are the offspring of pride, and show that the old man is allowed still to prevail. Let us strive to realize the oneness which pervades all heaven; and this thought will show us the oneness which should reign on earth. Around the throne there is no discordant feeling nor sound. Every pulse beats high with love. The very atmosphere is love. Then the saints realize how God has loved them from all eternity with love free and infinite. They then know how Jesus has loved them, for they fully understand the value of the price which He paid for their souls—the preciousness of the endless glory which He thus purchased for them. They see and feel how the Spirit has loved them; for they see how He strove with them in all patience—taking no denial until He had subdued and softened their stubborn hearts—broke down the barriers of enmity and self-righteousness—and established Jesus as King and Savior on the throne of their hearts. With this clear view of all Jehovah's love, every redeemed one rejoices in the feeling of infinite love; and pours forth the song of ceaseless adoration. When each, too, looks around, and beholds the vast multitude of brethren—loved with the same love, and bought by the same blood, and brought to the same glory—how are they all united in the same blessed bonds! Whenever we see a child of God, let us remember how fervently and eternally we shall love him in heaven, and this will cast out each uncharitable thought, and cement even now our hearts in holy oneness.

Ephesians 2:16. "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Who can conceive the wonders of the Cross of Christ! How amazing is the work accomplished by the dying Savior! Every joy which the believer experiences on earth springs from the blood then shed. All the adoring songs of eternity proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." If Jesus had not died upon the Cross, what would be our present state? No atonement being made—no reconciliation effected—we should be hated and accursed of God; and hating Him, we should be fearfully looking for judgment and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries. But, praise to the grace of God, Christ has died, and has reconciled all His people, whether Jew or Gentile, in one body unto God. Let us consider from these words (1.) The reconciling power of the Cross. (2.) That believers are reconciled in one body, and therefore should realize their oneness. May the Spirit of God hear our prayer, and take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us! (1.) The reconciling power of the Cross. It is unsound doctrine to suppose, that God becomes reconciled to us by the death of His Son. On the part of God there is no enmity to remove. He has loved His people from all eternity with infinite love in Christ. The gift

of His Son to bear our sins in His own body on the tree, is the result and evidence of His love. His giving us unto Him—His willingness to receive His death and sufferings as ours, and to impute His righteousness unto us—are all the results of the same divine attribute. He is all love towards us, but we by nature are all hatred to Him. But by the Cross of His Son He removes our enmity, and effects our reconciliation unto Him. How tenderly and compassionately He implores us by that blood no longer to stand afar off, but to draw near and cast ourselves into the arms of His saving mercy! Hear the Apostle, "All things are of God, who has reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." Let us draw near, and contemplate the reconciling efficacy of this Cross. What tender sounds of mercy issue from it! We there hear in facts, more loud and convincing than all professions, that God is ready, willing, no, most anxious to save us. Hard indeed are those hearts which can resist the moving, melting, winning persuasions which are addressed to us at Calvary! God here assures us that our salvation is dear to Him. I do not desire your ruin, says a mighty voice, I do not will your destruction; far otherwise; I give mine only-begotten Son—my co-equal and co-eternal Fellow—to become a curse in your stead—to make full satisfaction for all your iniquities—to make reparation for all the insults to mine honor—to open a clear path for your return to my presence and kingdom forever. Let us not then hesitate. Let us approach. All enmity is slain. "Fury is not in me, says the Lord." Wherefore should there be reluctance on our part? What more could I have done for my vineyard, which I have not done for it? Come, now, and let us reason together. Could I have opened heaven's gates wider? Could I have sent a more complete redemption? Does not Christ's blood cleanse from all sin? Is not all manner of sin forgiven to all who trust in Him? Is not His righteousness a robe of such glorious beauty that all heaven cannot sufficiently admire it? Does not all fullness dwell in Him; not only fullness to redeem, but fullness to help at each moment—fullness to supply every want, and to present you holy and without blame before me? See what I have given—see what I have done to save you to the very uttermost—and will not you be reconciled unto me? is the language of God's work. When the Spirit of God applies these truths with power, how quickly the opposition of the natural heart ceases! The sinner no longer sees God only as clothed with vengeance, and stern with wrath, and prepared to consign him to the punishment which his sins deserve. He sees Him rather as the God of mercy, grace, and love, in the Cross of Jesus—he sees only His compassionate and endearing smile—hardness no longer continues hard—tears of penitence and love flow from a subdued heart—reconciliation is effected, and he cries, My Father, and My God! Such is the reconciling power of the Cross. Nothing else can make peace. But when the Spirit reveals this blessed sight, the God who has so loved us becomes the God of our boundless love. We now love Him who has so loved us. (2.) Believers being thus reconciled in one body, should realize their oneness. This is the argument that the Apostle is now endeavoring to press. The Gentile as well as the Jew is thus softened, and subdued, and reconciled, and brought home to God. The same Cross allures and saves them both—therefore all strangeness should pass away, and they who both love God as their common Father, should love each other as co-partners of the same benefit. Heavenly Lord! knit together as one the hearts of Your reconciled children!

Ephesians 2:17. "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to those who were near." The Apostle, still prosecuting the argument, that Jew and Gentile should live and love as one, proceeds to add, that the blessing of peace, through the work and mediation of Christ, is equally bestowed on both. The grand subject before us is, that the Lord Jesus is the sinner's peace. There is great emphasis in the expression, "He is our peace." It implies more than to say, He procures, or proclaims, or bestows it. This He might do mediately and instrumentally, and by intercession—but in a far higher sense, He Himself is our peace. In a similar sense He is declared to be our life, our strength, our shield, our resurrection. Now the Lord Jesus is our peace in reference (1.) to God; (2.) to our own consciences; (3.) to the world around us. While we proceed with the enquiry, may the Lord manifest Himself more and more as our peace! (1.) He is our peace in reference to GOD. How dreadful is the state of that soul which is not one with God! But naturally enmity exists. Sin has occasioned a wide separation. God cannot look upon an unclean thing. Every holy feeling of His nature rises in wrath against it, and burns with fierce indignation, and calls for eternal destruction. But by nature we are all sin; every faculty of soul and body is only an instrument of sin—whatever we do, wherever we go, we sin. What a mass of vengeance is treasured up against us! Can we remove it? Impossible. Not all the powers of earth—not all the armies or hosts of heaven—could take away the slightest speck of sin, or make reconciliation to God for it. How fearful the contemplation of this state! The just God—the mighty God—most righteously burns with wrath, and prepares to cast His adversaries into unutterable woe. But Jesus comes and makes peace. How? By removing that hateful thing, which stirs up the indignation of the Most High. He takes upon Himself the sins of His people, and suffers in their stead to the very uttermost all the miseries which were denounced against them. Thus justice, truth, and holiness are completely and forever satisfied. They can allege no charge against any sinner for whom Christ died. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ that died." His precious blood washes out every crimson dye, and renders the soul pure and spotless from every stain of pollution. So the omniscient, penetrating eye of Jehovah can discern no blot; but pronounces the washed sinner to be pure and clean, and unproveable in His sight. Thus the whole cause of the enmity on the part of God disappears. No cause remains why He should not be at peace. He loves the sinner in Christ, and delights over him to bless him and to do him good. Thus the chastisement of our peace is on Christ, and by His stripes we are healed. But other difficulties yet remain. Before peace can be mutual, and love reciprocal, the dark, deep-rooted hatred of God which obstinately broods in man's heart, must be eradicated. Who can effect this? Alas! no human power. Far easier to tear up rocks and mountains, or to bring down the sun from the skies, than to uproot this enmity. He only can accomplish it who can renew and create afresh the heart. But this Jesus wonderfully effects by the Spirit as the Agent, and by the preaching of the Gospel as the means. He sends forth His ministers, who tell of His dying love—of the power of His blood—of the beauty of His righteousness—of the perfect reconciliation effected by it in the courts of heaven—of the willingness and readiness of the Father to welcome all who draw near to Him pleading this saving Name, and casting down the arms of their rebellion before His Cross. The wonders accomplished in the day of God's power are worthy of all admiration. The sword uplifted against God falls from the sinner's hand—the stoutest heart is melted like wax—the hard rebel becomes pliable and easy to be won—tears of penitence are followed by tears of love—cries for mercy are succeeded by songs of praise. Thus Christ is our peace. He removes enmity from God, and enmity from man. God loves, and man loves; and both in Christ are one forever. (2.) Christ is peace in our

CONSCIENCES. When we feel and know that we have sinned grievously against our God—when our many and our mighty iniquities raise up their hateful heads, and each cries for condemnation—when Satan the accuser brings days and years of ignorance and rebellion to our view, and shows us that the very holiest thought of our holiest hour is utter pollution before God, who can prevent terrors, anguish, and dismay from invading the soul? Who can silence the voice that calls for wrath? Who can quench the flames that begin to lay hold of the mind? None but Jesus. He alone can speak peace by assuring that His blood is complete and everlasting pardon for every sin, and His righteousness perfect acceptance before God. When the eye of faith thus sees Him, all is peace. (3.) Christ is peace as regards the WORLD around. Where Jesus reigns as Peace-maker, there love is in full exercise. It is foretold of Gospel-times, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." Where enmity or ill-will appears, Christ is cast out. Rule in us, great Lord, as universal peace!

Ephesians 2:18. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." This verse reveals to us the Three People of the Godhead who are concerned in the great work of salvation, and it specifies the distinct office which belongs to each. Herein indeed we have a wondrous mystery, which at present our limited faculties are weak to apprehend. We cannot understand or explain how Three People constitute one indivisible Deity. But shall we doubt a truth, because it is above and beyond the reasoning powers which God has been pleased to assign to us? Far be such folly and such sin. It would be as reasonable to question the existence of God or our own souls, because they are not the objects of actual vision. It is in wisdom that our present faculties are circumscribed, that we might exercise faith and walk humbly with our God. In all matters it is sufficient for us to know that He has spoken—our only province is to hearken, to believe, and to adore. It would be interesting to collect and examine the many declarations of Scripture which testify of the Trinity in Unity. Such investigation, however, would carry us far from our immediate subject. Let us therefore confine ourselves to this plain record, and consider that access to the Father is (1.) through the mediation of Jesus—(2.) by the instrumentality of the Spirit. And may the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us in teaching love! (1.) The mediation of Jesus. At present we cannot estimate the infinite separation which sin made between God and the sinner. The All-holy could not be approached by the unholy—the All-pure by the impure—the All-clean by the unclean. The High and Holy One dwells in the highest heavens, and no sin-soiled could find admission into His presence. Heaven would cease to be heaven, if sin could enter. God would cease to be God, if He could look upon iniquity. Let the sinner consider this! He bears upon him mountains upon mountains of iniquity, the very least atom of which so firmly bars the gates of heaven that admission seemed to be impossible. But through grace, there is a ready, open, new and living way to God's embrace now, and to His kingdom forever. That way is the blessed Jesus. "I am the way—no man comes unto the Father but by Me." How is He the way? By washing out every stain of iniquity in His most precious blood, and by covering us with the heavenly robe of His perfect righteousness. Sprinkled with this blood, clothed with this clothing, no hindrance impedes our approach. Will God cast out His only-begotten Son? Will He banish Him from His presence? Impossible. Neither can He reject any sinner who draws near in Him. Let the believer realize his privilege, and know his blessed estate. By faith in Jesus, he becomes one with Him. Thus at each moment he may enter heaven's gates, and draw near to the throne of the Eternal. The blood—which is the blood of His own Fellow—His own co-equal and co-eternal Son—must be honored. No slight can be put upon it. All who are sprinkled with it may stand before God. It is

because of the worth of this blood that the believer may ask any blessing according to His will, and cannot be refused. He may supplicate for pardon, and that is a great gift. He may ask life eternal—that is still more. He may ask to sit on God's throne—that is still more exceeding. He may pray for all this, and he shall succeed, for every petition bears the prevalency of Jesus's name—and for every gift the believer pays down a full and sufficient price, even the blood of God. Thus through Jesus we have access. He is the way. He is the Mediator. He is the Arbitrator, who makes both one, and unites God and the sinner forever. (2.) This access is by the agency of the Spirit. By nature, we are blind; how then can we see the way? By nature we are dead; how then can we stir to walk in it? By nature our hearts hate God, and desire anything rather than to return to Him. So then, vain would be the Father's gift of a Mediator—vain the Son's blood opening a direct passage to Him—except our hearts be softened, our eyes opened, our longings for return kindled. This can only be effected by the Spirit. This is His peculiar work, and this He lovingly and omnipotently accomplishes. He takes away the heart of stone. He teaches us our lost and ruined state. He causes us to tremble lest we perish in hell forever. He then sets Jesus in all His love and beauty before the eye of faith. He assures us of His willingness and power to restore us to God. He shows us that all things are now ready. He overcomes our fears and reluctance. He brings us near to Jesus, and through Jesus unto God. Thus the Spirit is the leading, teaching, constraining Agent, by whom through Christ, we have access unto the Father. Yes, it is unto the Father, as our rest, and portion, and delight, that we are thus mercifully brought. To see Him, and to know Him, and to love Him, is our privilege now—to enjoy Him forever will be our heaven—and approaching in the Spirit through Jesus, we find Him all love—forgiving us every trespass—casting behind His back every sin—delighting over us to do us good—and blessing us with all spiritual blessings. Are we thus brought home to our Heavenly Father, through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit? We are saved, then, with an everlasting salvation, through the wondrous work of the Triune God. Ephesians 2:19. "Now therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Paul continues to unfold the blessedness to which the Gentiles were called. We have here again a contrast which cannot be too often pondered. (1.) Their former state, "strangers and foreigners." (2.) Their present privilege, "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." How amazing is the difference! What wonders are accomplished by the free grace of God! May the Lord give us power from on high to profit by the contemplation! (1.) We have to consider their former state, "strangers and foreigners." By nature we are all strangers to God, to the Lord Jesus, and to ourselves. Until the enlightening rays of the Holy Spirit shine into our hearts, we are utterly ignorant of the nature and grace of God. If we think of Him at all, our thoughts stray widely from the truth. Ask the man of the world what he thinks of God, and his vague reply will manifest the most dreadful ignorance. But even if there should be something like head-knowledge, there is nothing like spiritual acquaintance and holy communion. All mankind, except the believers in Jesus, are utter strangers to God as the God of all grace, and mercy, and peace—the covenant-keeping God in Christ—their reconciled Father—the God who so loved them as to take pleasure in bruising His only-begotten Son to make a way for their pardon and acceptance. If they are strangers to the Father, so also they are to Jesus. They have heard that He laid down His life for the sins of the world; but they have had no dealings with Him for the salvation of their own souls—they have never approached Him in faith and love—they have never fled for refuge to His wounded side, or washed in the fountain of His all-cleansing blood. They are strangers to His voice, "Your sins are forgiven you;" they are strangers to the smile which fills with

peace and joy. So too they are strangers to their own hearts. Little knowledge have they of the depths of their corruption—the mountains of their iniquities—the just deservings of their ungodly lives—the sure end of the broad road in which they are walking. In this and many other senses, they may well be termed "strangers." Similarly, they are "foreigners." They have no title to the privileges and possessions of the commonwealth of Israel—they do not recognize Jesus as their King, or pay homage to His laws—they know nothing of the customs and language of the people of God. They belong altogether to a distinct community, even that miserable division of our race who bow before the throne of Satan, and yield obedience to his iron scepter! Mark the difference. When the set time of mercy is fully come, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts—darkness passes away, the true light sweetly shines. They are delivered from Satan's power, and are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now they "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." (2.) This brings us to their present privilege. "fellow-citizens with the saints." The saints can truly testify, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." In this city they dwell under the gracious government of God. He reigns among them, seated on a throne of grace, to which they have access at all times. He ever extends to them the golden scepter of His love, to which in faith they draw near with boldness, and obtain the desires of their hearts. In this city the voice of praise and thanksgiving is continually heard, and all the happy inhabitants are bound to each other with the ties of love. They mutually rejoice and weep with each other. To this blessed citizenship all are admitted who receive the enlightening and adopting grace of God. Such are not only "fellow-citizens with the saints," they are, moreover, of "the household of God." There is something peculiarly endearing in this expression. It represents the Church as one family, over which God presides as a Father. Such is a pleasing and just view—how full, too, is it of encouraging consolation! Does an earthly parent anxiously watch over the interests of his offspring? Does he labor to provide for them? Even so our Heavenly Father, whose will is law through the whole range of nature, orders all things for the real good of His children. It is round His board that they all sit—His smile and blessing they all share. As all the members of one household are bound together in mutual harmony, so should it be on higher grounds among the family of God. They should love as brethren—they should delight to promote each other's interests. What is more distressing to an earthly parent, than disunion in his house? So how justly must God's displeasure be excited when His children bite and devour one another!

Ephesians 2:20. "And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone." The Church of God is here compared to a building, resting upon a foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets, which foundation is Jesus Christ, and having a chief Corner-stone, which also is Christ. Let us consider these two supports—and may the Lord give us enlightening grace! (1.) Jesus Christ is the foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets. Throughout all the ages of the Church there has only been one saving truth, which is Jesus—one only way of salvation, which is Jesus. To Him give all the Prophets witness. From the day when God gave the first promise of redemption, all who have been taught and commissioned of the Father have uniformly delivered the same message. They have proclaimed remission of sins only through the blood of the Lamb of God, and righteousness only through the faith of Him. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and the Lamb preached from the day when sin entered it. The Prophets appear one after the other, and they all point to the same sacrifice, and cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!" The Prophets are

succeeded by the Apostles, and they point to the same Savior, and reiterate the same truth. Thus Jesus is the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. We may rest our souls and all our hopes on Him, for He is appointed by the Father to this especial work. What says Jehovah? "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." What solid comfort do we derive from this truth, when we draw near to Jesus! God, who knew what all His attributes required, selected Jesus for this work. "I have laid help upon One that is mighty—I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is also a tried Stone. He was tried of God, who laid upon Him the iniquities of us all; and He was found able to bear the heavy burden, and to carry it away, so that it can no more be found.—He was tried of the Devil, who assailed Him with every temptation, and brought all his wiles to turn Him from His work. But it was utterly vain—he found nothing in Him.—He is tried of His people. Do not believers continually try His patience—His love—His faithfulness—His sufficiency? And cannot they testify that He is sufficient? He is the only foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Vain men, in their weak imaginings, have devised many foundations on which to raise the superstructure of salvation. Some fancy they can rest for pardon and eternal life on their own deservings or penitence or reformation. These and all similar fancies are but sand and rubbish. When the wind of God's wrath shall arise, and the storm of His indignation shall descend, quickly will they be carried away, and swept into everlasting perdition. Let believers be thankful that God has ordained for them a rock which is strong and high as God Himself—which can never be moved, but abides forever—and let them rest on Him the whole burden of their sins, and the whole weight of their cares. He will support and sustain them. "Truly my soul waits upon God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense, I shall not be moved." All the saints from the beginning have been building on Him, and shall continue to do so until the top-stone is brought forth amid shoutings of "Grace to it! Grace to it! Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (2.) Christ is also the chief Corner-stone of this spiritual building. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." Now the use of this stone differs from the use of the foundation; though it is very important for the security, stability, and beauty of the structure. It holds the sides together, and closely cements and compacts the whole. So Jesus is the bond of union of all parts of the Church. He brings them together, and keeps them one. In Him, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, meet and form one body. Thus we see how Jesus is all to His Church. Without Him it could not stand one moment. Without Him it would part asunder, and fall into disjointed pieces. O Lord, Heavenly King, how much are we indebted unto You! How can we enough adore Your mercies, and show forth Your praise? Give us grace to adhere more closely to You, and to realize our union! May we lean on You, and rest on You; and may no assaults of Satan, no storms of ungodly passions, no undermining insinuations of unbelief, for one moment separate our souls from the Rock of Ages! May we be tightly bound to You, in time and through eternity!

Ephesians 2:21. "In whom all the building, fitly framed together, grows unto an holy temple in the Lord." We know what building the Apostle speaks of. It is the Church of God, which He loved from all eternity, and purchased with the blood of His own Son, and calls and sanctifies with His grace. Concerning this building some important truths are here declared. Let us consider them in order. (1.) The building is fitly framed together. (2.) It is a growing building. (3.) It is designed to be an holy temple. (4.) Its every part is united to the Savior. It is a blessed subject—may it be blessed

unto us! May the Lord, even the Spirit, mercifully teach! O Lord, fulfill Your work, and glorify Jesus before our longing eyes! (1.) The building is fitly framed together. This we are prepared to find, from the skill and power of the Architect. The great Jehovah planned, designed, and elaborates the Church. In the counsels of eternity the whole scheme was arranged, and every separate stone selected—and the grand object is that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Therefore we must expect all the perfection which infinite wisdom can accomplish. It is in time that the work is carried on. All the materials of it lie in the quarry and rubbish of sin, and there Jesus finds them, and thence by His Spirit He draws them forth. The building consists of various parts, and for every place the fit and proper stone must be prepared. Hence the Lord finds at the proper moment the exact material which He requires. He shapes and frames it until it is of the precise dimensions which are needed. He aptly conjoins it to the compartment prepared for it, and orders it so wisely that the whole becomes perfect, and beautiful in harmony. No stone is mis-shaped or out of place—each has the very form and position in which it can best support and adorn the whole. The slightest alteration of a single atom would injure and disarrange the method and appearance of the entire fabric. Let us take comfort from this thought—all things are ordered rightly for us. We are called into being—we are taken out of the filthy mire of nature—at the very moment when there is need of us. Now it is that our places are ready. Now it is that the heavenly Builder executes His design. What, if some of His dispensations are trying and afflictive—they are all designed to fit us exactly for our appointed place, and to give us the face and polish which is needed for the general harmony of the whole. Let us not repine—let us not be disheartened—let us not mistake the dealings of the all-wise Jesus. The file and the chisel may seem to be applied with a severe and unsparing hand, but let us not flinch from them—hard blows of the hammer may be needed, but they will not destroy or shiver to pieces—they will only firmly and fitly fasten us in the spot in which we can best adorn the fabric. Be assured that Jesus is fitly framing the Church together. (2.) It is a growing building. He is an idle builder who suffers his work to stand still. If no progress is made, there must be some want of skill or means. But our Architect has infinite wisdom, and has all resources at His command. Hence the Church never ceases to grow—it daily rises and daily expands. At first it was a very low building, when the martyred Abel was laid as the first stone on the appointed foundation. But from that day it has been surely and steadily increasing. Many souls—for every stone is an immortal soul—have been brought from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. The Ministers of the Gospel, who are the tools and instruments used under the Spirit, are always at work to bring in new materials. And yet a little while, the building will reach its ordained elevation, and the top-stone will be brought forth. Hence we should learn our duty to accelerate the rise of the Church by striving with all diligence to bring stones unto the Living Stone. We should pray the Lord to add to the Church daily such as shall be saved. We should use all endeavors to send the truth to the people sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. And let us remember that each stone in this building grows. Let us, then, see diligently to it, that we are continually expanding and enlarging in every holy word and work. (3.) It is designed to be an holy temple. As every stone in this fabric is beautified by the cleansing blood of Jesus, and adorned by His righteousness, so it becomes a living stone by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All are righteous through the work of Jesus—all are holy through the power of the Spirit. If any be not holy, the heavenly Architect will cast it away as rubbish, and it shall be trodden under foot of man. Let us, therefore, strive to be holy as God is holy. Let us implore the God of peace to sanctify us

wholly, and preserve us pure and blameless unto the day of God. (4.) Every part is united to the Savior. This union is twice repeated. The very existence of the believer depends on his oneness with Jesus. "Without me," says Christ, "you can do nothing."

Ephesians 2:22. "In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The Church is again exhibited as a building. This expressive image teaches us many important truths. Jesus is the foundation—immortal souls are the superstructure—God is the indweller—the Holy Spirit is the effectual agent by whom the stones are brought in and managed. To these last truths our attention is now directed. (1.) The Church is built for the habitation of God. (2.) It is built through the Spirit. Lord, make Your Holy Word quick and powerful unto us! May it work effectually to purify and fit for the heavenly inheritance! (1.) The Church is built for the habitation of God. Will God indeed dwell in the hearts of sinners, such as we are? Yes, verily. It is the throne which He desires, and on which He delights to sit. Oh! wondrous thought! Amazing condescension! Let us strive to think—but we cannot realize—how high and holy is our God. From everlasting to everlasting has His seat been prepared in the heaven of heavens. "He only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto—whom no man has seen or can see." "The heavens are not clean in His sight, and He charges His angels with folly." Alas! how very few of our fallen race have clear and deep views of the infinite wisdom of God! Hence they ignorantly imagine that they may approach Him as, and when, they please. This is a vain fallacy. There is no possibility for the sinner to meet the holy God but in Christ Jesus. "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." In Christ only can there be union. But when, through abundant grace, we become one with Christ, then every obstacle and hindrance is removed. Then constant communion and sweet communion is established. We dwell in God, and God in us. Jesus has given the gracious assurance, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Precious promise! O Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with the love of Jesus, and so write His laws in our inward man that we may be blessed with these heavenly Guests! Jesus and the Father promise to come, not for a few and transient visits, but to set up a perpetual indwelling in the soul. Happy the man, who, wherever he moves, carries with him the King of kings and Lord of lords! who can say with the loving disciple, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Again, Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Can we conceive words which more sweetly and distinctly declare the willingness and anxiety of Jesus to hold the most endearing communion with His children? What more free and unreserved than the converse of friends at their evening board? This is the very intimacy which Jesus seeks with us. Shall we exclude Him? Let us think what joy and peace and pledges of heaven He brings! Shall we not always have His seat made ready—shall we not always be listening for the approach of His footsteps, that we may open unto Him immediately? When the indolent spouse delayed to arise, Jesus, wearied with tarrying, departed. Hear how bitterly she bewailed her folly! "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone—my soul fainted when He spoke—I sought Him, but I could not find Him—I called Him, but He gave me no answer." Beware of this anguish—exclude Him not for a single moment; but rather be always inviting and watching for His coming. There is another word which should not be overlooked in this consideration. We read, "You are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Do we realize this truth? Is God dwelling in us, and walking in us? At all times, and in all places, are we

conscious of His presence? Do we hear His voice, and hold hallowed companionship with Him? If it be not so, there is something wrong and low in our state. We are not exalted to the full privilege and enjoyment which the Lord has provided. Let us not be content so to remain. Let us well mark our holy vocation, and contemplate the enjoyment prepared for us, and never rest until we feel and know that God is dwelling in us, and that we are built for His habitation. (2.) We are reminded that we are thus built through the Spirit. How much we need—how much we are indebted to—the Spirit of God! Without His powerful operation our hearts must have continued all vileness and pollution—the nest of every unclean bird. But when He comes with light and power, and the revelations of Jesus, how marvelous is the change which He effects! He prepares and makes us ready for the indwelling of these heavenly Guests. How diligent, then, we should be in supplication to be filled with the Holy Spirit! Then we should become temples of the Triune Jehovah.

06.05. Ephesians 3:1-13. Paul, the Preacher to the Gentiles

Ephesians 3:1-13. Paul, the Preacher to the Gentiles Ephesians 3:1. "For, this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." We are permitted by our gracious Father to commence another portion of this sublime Epistle. May His teaching presence be mercifully granted to us, that our souls may see more of His great salvation, and be "made vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Lord, hear our cry, and multiply Your mercies towards us! Paul began this letter by designating himself as "an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Thus he would claim attention by announcing his high authority and commission. He reminds those who he is an Ambassador sent from and instructed by the King of kings. It would therefore be daring impiety not to listen with submission and reverence to his words. When he arrives at this portion of his letter, he presents himself to their notice under a different title—"I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." It might at first seem strange, that he, who was called to be an Apostle, no, the chief of the Apostles, should be allowed to be deprived of his liberty, and be manacled, and immured in a jail. But the Lord's ways are not our ways. He leads and guides each one of His children by the right path, though often that path is dark and mysterious, and contrary to our expectations. Among the many lessons which we are taught by a contemplation of Paul in prison, let us consider the following. (1.) The Lord's servants are called to suffering. (2.) In their sufferings they should seek opportunity of glorifying God. (3.) Satan's contrivances against the saints are sure to be defeated. (1.) The Lord's servants are called to suffering. This seems an immutable law of the kingdom of grace. Believe in Jesus, and suffer with Him. Faith and affliction go hand in hand. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. He could not call them brethren without participating in their heritage. The great Master was pre-eminently a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—and His servants must in all things be made like unto Him. Strange would it be for a crucified Head to have members entirely exempt from suffering—strange for the Brow to be pierced with thorns, and spit on, and the limbs to be honored and caressed. Hence "we must go through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." There is no exception; and we generally find that advance in grace, and perfection in the faith and love of Jesus, is proportionate to the heat of the furnace in which we are placed. Whose trials have exceeded those of Paul? "In stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths often." And who, among the saints, have been more dead to the world, and more filled with the Spirit? He could indeed speak of exceeding tribulation, but he could add, "To me to live is Christ." "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And when his earthly trials are brought to their close, he could exclaim, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." Hence we see that the peaceable fruits of righteousness were the result of the chastenings which he endured. (2.) In their sufferings the saints should seek opportunity of glorifying God. Such was the conduct of Paul. We do not find him uttering one word of complaint, or murmur, or making his confinement an excuse for remitting his exertions in the cause of the Gospel. It would have been natural to have reasoned, "I am deprived of liberty; I can no longer go from place to place

preaching the kingdom of God; my commission therefore is cancelled, my mouth closed, my work finished; nothing remains for me but in quiet silence to await my deliverance from the burden of the flesh." But very different were his feelings. He instantly considered what doors were still open through which he might communicate the knowledge of his Lord. He soon found, that though he could not address multitudes by word of mouth, yet still he could by letter make known to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. So he penned in his prison some of those precious Epistles which have been the instruction and consolation of the Church in all generations. To this hour, how many have cause to bless God that Paul was a prisoner! Hence in sufferings the saints may glorify God. Let each believer remember this—and whatever afflictions may be his, let him be careful to consider that some means remain, by which the glory of the Lord may be promoted by him. If he cannot be active, he can endure with such humility, patience, and joy, as will evidence to all around the reality and power of the grace of God. (3.) Satan's contrivances against the saints will surely be defeated. He thought that he almost extinguished the Gospel, when he locked up Paul, even as he thought he annihilated religion when he accomplished the death of Abel. But he is short-sighted and cannot see the end from the beginning. Paul commits to writing the precious truths of the Gospel—these winged and imperishable messengers fly abroad throughout the whole world, and descend through all ages. Wherever they come, Satan's locks are opened, his bars drawn back, and his prisoners made free. Hence Paul's confinement has been spiritual liberty to multitudes. Thus Satan was made to defeat himself.

Ephesians 3:2. "If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." Paul having declared his present condition, as a prisoner of Jesus Christ, subjoins the cause of his being thus bound. It is, he adds, "for you Gentiles." His avowal that the way of salvation, through the mercies of God in Christ, was open to every sinner, whether Jew or Heathen; that the distinctive privileges of the covenant were abrogated by the Cross; and that he was commissioned to call the Gentiles to behold the Lamb of God and live, excited the hostility which deprived him of liberty, and sent him chained to Rome. He here reminds the Ephesians of this fact. "I am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He then adds our present verse. "If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward." We have here another instance of the settled habit of the mind of Paul to ascribe all the Lord's dealings with His people to His sovereign grace. Oh, that more of this mind were in us! All that we have been taught—all that we have received—has resulted from free grace. Our knowledge of ourselves, our faith in Christ, our separation from the world, our desire to glorify God, are all of grace. Every attainment in the divine life, every perception of truth, flows from the same source. We should deeply feel, and we should devoutly confess, "By the grace of God, we are what we are." Paul here especially declares, that his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles was grace given unto him. Let us illustrate this truth by showing that (1.) Grace disposed him. (2.) Grace enabled him. May our meditations be sanctified! (1.) Grace disposed him. What prejudices must have been removed before he could believe that God could regard with mercy and call into His kingdom any except the descendants of Abraham! This exclusive feeling had been imbibed from his earliest years; and the natural ardor and determination of his temper had rendered him especially zealous for all the traditions of the fathers and distinctions of his nation. It would be a marvelous shock to his prepossessions to find that a people, who were called no people, were now to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. He would have to do violence to his cherished feelings before he could go forth to persuade those who they had an interest in the Redeemer's

kingdom. But, as darkness flies before the rays of the rising sun, so the most deep-rooted ignorance vanishes before the teaching of God's Holy Spirit. Have we not experienced this in the case of our own spiritual life? Do we not now clearly see, and warmly embrace, truths which once we bitterly disliked and resolutely rejected? This teaches us how unwearied we should be in making known to others the pure doctrines of our Gospel. We may have to encounter determined prejudice, and the effort may seem foolishness. So indeed it would be, if our arguments or our reasonings were the instruments to effect illumination or conversion. But nothing is to be accomplished by our unaided might or power. The grace of God is the only agent to effect a spiritual change; and this grace which disposed the heart of Paul to preach Christ to the Gentiles, is able to soften any heart, and apply with overcoming efficacy any word. Oh! that this grace would stir us up to more lively interest in the souls of vast multitudes of our race who are perishing in ignorance and sin—perishing for lack of that Gospel which is in our hands, and which we might communicate! O Lord Jesus Christ, behold the expanse of this dark earth, still in captivity to Satan, still ignorant of Your precious, Your saving name. Arise, O Lord, put on Your power, and awaken Your people to be zealous and diligent in diffusing Your knowledge. The grace, which caused Paul to ask, "What will You have me to do?" is still the same grace—all-sufficient to remove each doubt, and to make willing for the mighty work. (2.) Grace enabled Paul. It is a blessed thing to have the will to labor in the cause of Christ—but the will alone is insufficient without the power. Many qualifications are needful; especially patience, resolution, unwearied industry. All these gifts were wrought in Paul. After the example of his great Master, "he set his face like a flint," and was never discouraged by opposition, by persecution, by sneers, by seeming failure, by the falling away of the unstable. He went forward unmoved, immovable. But this was not the fruit of nature, it was the grace of God. Oh! that the same grace might help our infirmities, and strengthen us to work with power and perseverance in our Christian calling! How short our day is! The night is fast coming, when no man can work. How little do the most laborious accomplish! At the close of the longest life who will not bewail unprofitableness and unemployed time! The Lord have mercy on us, and qualify us by His Spirit to trade diligently and ably with the talents entrusted to us!

Ephesians 3:3. "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words." The truth that the Gentiles were to be partakers of God's promise in Christ Jesus is here declared to be a mystery, which had been long hidden in the secret purposes of God, and was now announced to the startled and wondering Jews. It is added, that by revelation God made this mystery known unto Paul. Let us commence our meditation on this verse by examining the relation which is given of this fact. When Paul addressed the multitudes from the stairs of the Castle at Jerusalem, he says, "It came to pass, that when I came again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the Temple, I was in a trance, and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste, and get you quickly out of Jerusalem—for they will not receive your testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those who believed on You—and when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the clothing of those who slew him. And He said unto me, Depart—for I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles." Paul thus relates one of the intimations which the Lord gave to him, that he was called to proclaim salvation in the name of Christ to the heathen world. There is, however, a remarkable passage in connection with the conversion of Paul, in which this truth is mentioned. It is the Lord's announcement to Ananias. He seemed incredulous, and was inclined to oppose, when he was sent to Saul of Tarsus. He replied, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man,

how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name. But the Lord said unto him, Go your way—for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." This is in accordance with what the Lord revealed to Paul when He appeared unto him in the way to Damascus, and which is thus declared in his defense before Agrippa—"At mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and those who journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? it is hard for you to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute. But rise, and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you—delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send You. To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Hence we learn by the statements of Paul himself, that it was not by any man's instruction, but by direct and immediate revelation from heaven, that the marvelous truth was revealed to him, that the Gentiles should hear from him the way of life. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Upon the lands which had been so long lying in darkness and the shadow of death, at last the great and marvelous light was to arise. The wilderness, so long overgrown with briars and thorns, was at last to blossom as the rose. The abodes and habitations of cruelty and every inhuman rite, were at last to resound with praises in the name of Jesus, and adorations of the true and living God. But now, O believer, it is time for you to come apart, and realize your own individual interest in the fact which was thus revealed to Paul. You are not a Jew by nature, but a sinner of the Gentiles. What, then, would have been your case, if the middle wall of partition had not been removed, and the command from heaven gone forth, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel unto every creature!" Admire and adore the riches of God's love in choosing for Himself a people out of the midst of this despised quarry of filth and ignorance! And oh! admire and adore the incomprehensible, the unspeakable riches of this love, which has selected you individually to be a monument of redeeming power, and has brought you into the family of the saints, and has given you a name and a place among the heirs of everlasting glory. How great our obligations to sovereign grace! Oh! for more of the indwelling and constraining power of the Holy Spirit, that we might in every word and work show forth His praise, and testify to all around that we who were dead now live!

Ephesians 3:4. "Whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." The same subject is continued. The call of the Gentiles is the mystery of Christ, of which Paul here speaks. And truly it was a mystery, for it was so utterly concealed from the Jews, that the bare thought had never occurred to them; and it was a mystery of Christ, because it was part of His mediatorial work to redeem them. They were a portion of the inheritance given unto Him by the Father, and by His blood they were purchased, and by His Spirit they were to be sanctified,

and in His faith they were to walk. Hence the call of the Gentiles was a mystery of Christ, in which Paul had knowledge by immediate revelation from heaven, and to which he directs the minds of the Ephesians. But as we have already said much concerning this mystery, and as other verses will bring it again under consideration, it may not be a misplaced exercise to devote this present meditation to other mysteries of Christ, in which Paul had intimate knowledge. (1.) The mysteries of the everlasting covenant of grace through the Spirit were revealed to him. He names this covenant distinctly in that remarkable benediction, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." He knew, then, that from all eternity, ages before the foundation of the world, a distinct covenant existed between the Father and the Son; that a clear, definite scheme of redemption was arranged, to the performance of which each party was pledged. He knew that by virtue of this covenant, God the Father promised eternal life to as many as were given to Jesus for redemption. This he thus testifies—"Paul, a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." This promise, which was antecedent to all creation, could only be made to His own co-equal and co-eternal Son; and therefore this must be one of the promises of the everlasting covenant. Let us pause here. Do we believe in Christ? We reply, through grace we believe. Help, O Lord, our unbelief! Then we have an interest in this covenant, and this promise of eternal life is ours. Before the foundation of the world God included us in this wondrous word. Oh! then, let us rejoice, and realize the blessed prospect which is before us. Who or what can harm us? No storm can destroy the bark which must surely reach the port. No temptation or affliction can destroy us, for it is pledged that we shall reach the land of eternal life. (2.) Another remarkable feature in the mystery of Christ, is His Person. Would that we had more intimate knowledge of this mystery! Well might Paul exclaim, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Jesus is perfect God and perfect man. He is Jehovah's Fellow as touching the Godhead; He is our brother as touching flesh and blood. How wondrous this union! The possibility of it could never have occurred to thought of man or angel. But to effect our salvation, God became man without ceasing to be God, and the manhood was taken into Godhead still continuing to be manhood. Thus Jesus, as being very flesh and blood, was qualified to represent man, to stand as his substitute, and to be his surety—and His Godhead imparting infinity to all His doings and all His sufferings, enabled Him to bear to the very uttermost the unutterable torments due to each transgression. As God-man, He stands between Jehovah and the sinner. He puts one hand on each, and draws them into one in Himself. Let us study to become more acquainted with the glories of the Person of our Lord. Let us make daily and hourly use of Him as qualified to stand in our stead, and able to bear away the iniquity of all our transgressions. Let us make use of Him as mighty to redeem and tender to sympathize. (3.) Let us next advert to a wondrous mystery of Christ which Paul preached—the willingness of the Father to impute to Christ the sins of His people. As individuals we are all debtors to the justice of God. The penalty of disobedience is due from our own people. It is a mere act of grace on God's part to allow Christ to stand in our stead, and to take of Him the payment due from us. Without this mercy, in vain would have been the willingness of Christ to suffer. But hear how Paul proclaims this grace—"All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ—and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed

unto us the word of reconciliation." Thus where sin abounded, grace has abounded much more. It is impossible for thought to conceive, or word express how much we owe to this unspeakable grace! Let us magnify the love of God, which delighted to remove every spot and speck of foul and hateful iniquity from our people, and to transfer them to His own dear Son—and thus finding them on Him, to visit them with the full punishment which they merited. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Ephesians 3:5. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit." Paul here declares that a long period of darkness and ignorance was permitted to envelope the earth, during which the heathen were kept entirely excluded from all knowledge of the true and living God. During this time, the Jews, who had the light of His countenance and the teaching of His servants, regarded all other nations as doomed to eternal alienation, and heirs of death unto death. The notion that an outcast heathen could ever be reconciled to God's favor, and called to His service and delight in His love, had never approached the threshold of their minds. But during this long night of spiritual gloom, the Lord had purposes of mercy towards them, and now in His own appointed time, He revealed this unto the holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit. We perceive that the Jew entirely abandoned the heathen as a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction; but in this judgment he was wrong. A practical lesson of much importance may hence be learned. There is a strong tendency in our minds to pass the sentence of condemnation upon others. We see them living long in total disregard of God, blindly following the devices and desires of their own evil hearts, resisting all the warnings of His word and providence, rebelling against the light which shines around them, and reviling His faithful servants. These indeed are sad and fearful signs. This is the mark of those who are in perilous condition. Much cause have we to tremble for such. But still we greatly err when we exclude them in our minds from all hope of pardon and reconciliation. While there is life, there is hope; for while there is life, there is access to the Cross of Christ, and "whoever believes in Him shall not perish." While there is life, grace may be given to call upon the name of the Lord—and "whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." There are indeed a few notable instances of those, who after a long life of iniquity and unbelief have found mercy. These are sufficient to forbid our despair of any. There is nothing too hard for the Lord to do. The Jews thought it impossible for the Gentiles to be saved. But now, while the natural branches are broken off, how many branches wild by nature are grafted in! The Lord has secret purposes unknown to us. Let us, therefore, in the spirit of lowly, persevering patience, never cease to warn the ungodly to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to provoke Him not by continued impenitence, lest He swear in His wrath "They shall never enter into My rest." Thus doing, we shall sometimes be cheered by finding the withered branch putting forth the blossoms of faith and love, and bearing the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. Paul further declares in this verse, that the mystery of the call of the Gentiles was now revealed unto the holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit. We have here an intimation of a great truth, which we should always keep before our eyes—that the Spirit is the revealer of spiritual light and understanding to the soul. Man, by the natural powers of intellect with which he is endued, may make marvelous progress in the investigation of abstract truth, and discovery of the wonders of science and the phenomena of nature. But here is the limit—beyond this the highest order of mental ability cannot soar. These gifts are all earthly, and they cannot get beyond the narrow region of earth. Spiritual attainments belong altogether to a different class. They are the direct gift of God, by the presence and

operation of the Holy Spirit. No man ever yet learned the true nature of God—the value of his immortal soul—the real defilement and deformity of sin—the preciousness and the beauty of Christ—without the enlightening aid of this Spirit. Hence the Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. Hence of Him it is said, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth—for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, enlighten our hearts more and more, we meekly beseech You, that we may grow in grace, and in the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 3:6. "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." Paul here specifies in three distinct expressions the great blessings to which the Gentiles were now called. They were to be (1.) fellow-heirs; (2.) of the same body; (3.) partakers of God's promise in Christ. Let us humbly consider what important truths are contained in these expressions—and may the Holy Spirit help and teach us, that we may hereby be enabled more fully to appreciate the blessed privileges which are our portion in Christ! (1.) We are "fellow-heirs." What is it to be an heir? It is to stand in a position which legally and rightly entitles us to succeed to the inheritance. But the inheritance which is here meant is no earthly property—no worldly title or distinction—no wealth to be possessed only for the short, uncertain tenure of this fleeting life. It is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away; laid up for us in heaven. It is the inheritance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. It is to sit upon the throne of God's glory; to enjoy the greatness, the pleasures, and the dominion of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Our souls are lost in wonder, when we strive a little to imagine the exalted, glorified state of the Lord Jesus. We know that "He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God—angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Now, great as His glory is, such will be the glory of His saints. His own words are, "The glory which You gave me, I have given them." And "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Thus the inheritance to which the Gentiles are called, is nothing less than to be co-partners for ever with Christ in the happiness and glory of heaven. O my soul, is such your position? Are these the joys before you? Live, then, worthy of this high vocation. Trample beneath your feet the sordid pleasures and worthless vanities of time, and keep looking onward—looking upward—to the fullness of joy, the pleasures for evermore which are at God's right hand. (2.) We are "of the same body." There is a marvelous union among the true disciples of Christ. "We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And again—"We being many, are one bread, and one body." Of this mystical body Christ is the Head. From Him all life proceeds, and is diffused through the several members—and His people being thus connected with Him, become likewise connected and interwoven with each other. This truth teaches us the sympathy and love which we ought to bear towards each other. The hand delights not to injure the foot. The tongue proclaims not the defects of the eye. So believers ought to be tender and compassionate in all their communion with their brethren. "Bear you one another's burdens" is the Gospel-rule—and again, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with those who weep." And the warning is, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed, lest you be consumed one of another." (3.) We are "partakers of God's promise in Christ." The Gentiles being called to union with Christ, and mystical oneness with His body, become entitled to all the privileges of this fellowship. Among these privileges, Paul here particularizes the inheritance of God's promise. We know that God has given us many and

exceeding great and precious promises in Christ. But the promise here especially intended is the promise of the Holy Spirit. We infer this from the parallel passage to the Galatians—"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Jesus commanded His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to "wait for the promise of the Father, which, says He, you have heard of me." This promise God fulfils to His elect among the Gentiles; pouring into their souls this heavenly power, by which they are taught their need, filled with conviction of sin, and brought to the Cross for salvation. All these mercies are communicated through the Gospel. It is through the preaching of the Word that the Spirit descends. Wherever this Word is proclaimed, the footsteps of Deity may be traced. This thought should make us diligent to hear and to propagate the glorious Gospel.

Ephesians 3:7. "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power." Paul recognizes his high vocation. He sees his grand commission. He realizes the glorious work entrusted to his charge. Gratitude and love swell in his heart. But to what does he ascribe the mercy thus given? He feels that he is wholly indebted to free and sovereign grace. His feeling would be, I am a Minister of Christ—but I became so by the effectual working of free and unbounded grace. For all that I am—for all that I have been privileged to do—I bless and adore the God of all grace. Paul knew that by nature he was a child of wrath—a transgressor from his mother's womb—that the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually. He knew, too, that he had been devoted to all the forms and services of a typical creed, which had expired when Jesus hung upon the accursed tree, and the veil of the Temple was rent from the top to the bottom. He knew how great had been his zeal in furtherance of the twilight system—with what hatred he had persecuted believers in the blessed Jesus—how he had gloried in dragging them in bonds to slaughter. But now he counted all things but loss for the excellency of this saving knowledge—now his one delight was to proclaim the finished work of Christ; and to bring sinners to receive Him as all salvation and desire. Now he was bold and valiant before princes and rulers to preach Christ and Him crucified. Whence this change? Whence this marvelous light? Whence these heroic resolves? One only can be the reply—I am a Minister of Christ by the effectual working of God's sovereign power. From the expressive way in which this truth is conveyed, we are led to contemplate—(1.) God's grace in providing Ministers for His Church. (2.) The grace by which they are formed and called and blessed. (3.) The estimate in which Ministers should be held. (1.) We see the gracious love of our Heavenly Father in providing Ministers for His Church. He would not have His people to be wandering and straying in the wilderness of this world without the guidance and the care of shepherds. He would not that they should languish in the maladies and miseries of sin without physicians to tell them of a saving cure. He would not that they should be tossed and imperiled amid storms and billows without some pilot to direct their bark. He would not that they should be harassed with cares and sorrows without some friend to alleviate and bring solace. He would not that they should mourn without someone to sympathize and comfort. Therefore in His mercy he has ordained that faithful pastors should be ever near. Grand and glorious indeed is the pastor's work. The blessed Jesus in His communion with His Father says, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Hence in pulpits they take their station as ambassadors for Christ, to proclaim the mysteries of redeeming love—to be witnesses to the grace of Jesus—to tell of the covenant of

grace—to declare the finished work of Christ. Not only to be in public the unfolders of divine truth; but also in private tenderly to warn of the miseries of sin—its dreadful penalties and its final doom—and to entreat the rebels to lay down their weapons, and with meek contrition to seek life and pardon. But time would fail in all attempt to traverse the whole region of ministerial work. Let it suffice to add, God has appointed Ministers for the edifying of the Church—for the perfecting of the Saints—until the work of grace is wholly finished and the glorious kingdom is complete. While we adore God for His guardian care over His beloved flock, let us mark the instruments employed by Him and fitted for the heavenly work. He sends men to minister to men—men of like passions and infirmities with ourselves—men who have hearts to sympathize with our need, and qualified with intelligence of our burdens. If He had sent Angels from the courts of heaven, trembling and awe would have been our state. Their brightness would have dazzled—their greatness would have overawed—their powers would have alarmed. But the message of love—of peace—of reconciliation is entrusted unto those who come as members of our own race—as brethren unto brethren. (2.) Mark how God enables them. To have a fellow-feeling with us, they must themselves have realized their lost and ruined and wretched state by nature. The Holy Spirit therefore has entered their hearts—mightily convincing them of sin, and causing them to tremble before the wrath of God. But the spirits thus wounded have been mercifully healed. Their eyes have been opened to see the fullness of Christ's saving work—the power of His blood to cleanse from all iniquity—the glory of His righteousness to enrobe them for the courts of heaven—His willingness to receive all who flee to Him for refuge, and to present them faultless before His Father's throne. These precious truths are not regarded by them as cunningly devised fables, nor as a recital in which they have little interest. They have thoroughly embraced them, and therefore from deep experience they can call—invite—allure—strengthen—comfort, and build up. They have a word in season for every member of their flocks. (3.) What is the estimate in which they should be held? They are entitled to all respect as messengers from the courts of heaven, as ambassadors for Christ—to all love, as those who feel so tenderly for us, and devote their lives to promote our good. We should strive in all things to promote their comfort—to arrange that they have leisure and ease for preparation for their work, and earnestly and diligently and incessantly should we pray God to have them in His constant care—to enrich them with supplies of grace—to bless them in all their work. Happy the Minister who has such a flock! Happy the flock that has such a Minister!

Ephesians 3:8. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul's eye continues to be fixed on his high calling to be a Minister of Christ, and on the glorious subject which it was his privilege to unfold. He speaks of himself and of his Lord. His view is twofold. When self appears, he sinks into the lowest depths of humiliation and of shame. When Jesus is discerned, his mind ascends with rapid wing to the heights of unbounded praise. Thus two points are before us. (1.) The Minister as viewed by himself. (2.) Jesus as a treasury of celestial gifts. (1.) Paul calls upon His followers to be clothed with humility. He here shows that this was the clothing in which he was clad. He appears as the follower of Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart. Humility is indeed a precious grace. It thrives not in nature's rank soil. The heathen had no term to depict it. How could they speak of that which to them was utterly unknown! It is a grace which the Spirit deeply implants, when He reveals the misery and filth of indwelling sin. It grows with the growth of faith, and ripens as the celestial home is approached. Paul is a notable example. With what shame he viewed himself when writing to the Corinthians! He says, "I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the

Church of God." When writing to the Romans he humbles himself as the very bond-slave of iniquity. He states that when he would do good evil was present with him. He finds a law in his members bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. In the passage before us he gives precedence to all the people of God, and by invention of a new word in language, he calls himself "less than the least of all saints." Can he sink lower in self-estimation? When his long career of service had reached its close he casts his eye along his life of labor, and humbly bewails that of sinners he is the chief. Far be from us the thought that he did not recognize God's gracious work within. He truly felt, by the grace of God he was what he was, and with ascending step he pressed toward the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. His was no mock humility. He did not disparage self that he might win applause. But the more the light of heaven shone inwardly, the more it revealed the continuance and the vileness of inbred corruption. The more he knew God the more he loathed himself. The branch laden with abundance of fruit bends beneath the load. The barren twigs shoot upwards. Thus Paul deeply felt and humbly avowed that he was less than the least of all saints. (2.) From these depths of humility he uplifts his eyes to Christ. He strives to behold unsearchable riches. What an object here meets our gaze! We approach hallowed ground. Let us take off earthly sandals and approach with hallowed minds. Angels veil their faces when they contemplate the heavenly glory. Into what abasement and reverence should we poor sinners sink! But we are bid to search the field in which Christ the boundless treasure is hid. He is indeed a treasure-house in which all-surpassing wealth is amassed. Who can measure the infinitudes of thought contained in the revelation, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily!" He is great as God can be, He is Jehovah's Fellow; co-equal, co-eternal with the Father—God of God—Light of light—very God of very God. Mark the attributes which are revealed to us. His power is omnipotence. His wisdom is omniscience. His presence—it is everywhere—without center, without circumference. Vain is the imagination which strives to embrace such object—vain the utterance, which would venture to depict it! These riches are indeed unsearchable. But He takes the manhood into God. He humbles Himself and becomes bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh. What motive urges Him to such condescension? It is zeal for His Father's glory, and love for sinners of our vile race. Behold again these marvelous riches! They are verily unsearchable. Shall we think of the merits of His cleansing blood, which obliterates forever the crimson-dye of our iniquity—the beauteous robe of perfect righteousness in which He decks His bride, and presents her faultless in the courts of heaven? Shall we speak of His prevailing prayers which solicit and obtain all the blessings which heaven can bestow? Shall we speak of His coming glory? Vision indeed is dazzled. We can only exclaim, The riches of Christ are unsearchable. But though the search can never reach an end, for while upon earth we can only see through a glass darkly, we should daily strive to advance more and more in the pursuit—to dig more deeply in this field—to draw water more and more from these unfathomable wells. Let too the truth be devoutly pondered that all that Christ is, is for His people—all His possessions are for them—His riches are their inheritance. True is His Word in supplication to the Father, "The glory which You gave Me I have given them." He reveals that His Gospel is for them—that the love with which the Father loved Him, may be in them, and He in them. Such is the subject which Paul was called to preach unto the Gentiles, and which the faithful Pastor is privileged to unfold unto his flock. What a subject is here before us! How vast—how boundless—how limitless—how inconceivable—how inexhaustible—how infinite! Let it not then be thought that matter for the pulpit is scanty and barren. Let not the preacher speak of littleness—of

frivolity—of earthly speculations. Let him preach Christ—Christ only—Christ fully. The theme will be ever new. Hearers will never weary. They will be cheered, and gladdened, and saved.

Ephesians 3:9. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." The eyes of Paul were widely opened to his wondrous call. He deeply felt what mercies had been given unto him. He realized the blessed work committed to his diligence and care. There was a time when he was dead in trespasses and sins; but now he lives unto God. His eyes had been fast locked in darkness; but now he saw Christ in all the glories of His finished work. His heart had been hard with enmity and rebellion; but now he loved the Savior who had loved him before the world began. He realized still higher blessings. He knew that it was his privilege to testify of Jesus to a world lying in the wicked one. Not only the darkness of unregeneracy was past, but the darkness of contempt of the Gentile world. As a Jew he had regarded all other members of the human race as odious, contemptible, vile—scarce worthy of the name of men—the off-scouring of all things. But this prejudice had vanished before the revelation of Gospel-truth. He now knew that the wall of partition was broken down—that an unseen hand had rent the veil from the top to the bottom, and that the Gentiles were admitted to direct communion with God through the knowledge of His Gospel-love. He knew that God from the very stones beneath his feet could raise up children unto Abraham. He knew that all severance had ceased, and that God was the God of the circumcision through faith, and of the uncircumcision by faith. He realized the amazing grace which now commissioned him to cry unto every human being, Look unto Jesus and be saved. Flee unto Him and find refuge. Receive Him, and accept the privilege of adoption. Come unto Him, and be translated from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the happy family of faith. He realized his station as standing between the living and the dead, that the plague might be stayed. Thus he went forth enlightened by super-abounding grace—strong in the Lord and in the power of His might—to call men everywhere to the saving Cross; "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (1.) We see Paul's estimate of his high commission. It leads to a general contemplation of all ministerial work. This is the noblest work to which the faculties of man can be devoted. It is the grandest employment which earth can witness. It is to follow closely in the footsteps of our Lord who said, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them." The pulpit is the highest throne on earth. No monarch has a seat so glorious, or wields a scepter of such potency. The faithful minister of Christ is called to make men see the wonders of the Gospel of God's grace—to remove scales from the benighted eyes—to cause the blind to see the wonders of redeeming love. The ministers of Christ are thus employed by God the Holy Spirit to give light to them who sit in darkness and the shadow of death—to cry in the regions of spiritual gloom, "Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon You. Awake you that sheep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." The means which the faithful pastor uses are very simple though they are omnipotent. It requires little strength to use them—but much strength goes forth from them. The statement of Paul is very clear. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The mandate is "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Success will surely follow. The Word of God can never go forth in vain. It shall prosper in that whereto He sends it. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for

a name—for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Converts shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. They shall fly as doves to their windows. Many an enlightened soul shall testify, I was blind, but now I see. We see then the happiness of those ministers who make the blessed Jesus and His finished work, and all the wonders of redeeming love, and the unsearchable riches of the covenant of grace their main proclamation. They are not called to elaborate new thoughts and invent another Gospel. There is woe, indeed, unto them who practice such folly, and occupy time in searching for man-wrought wisdom. The Gospel is a proclamation. All its waters flow in the broad, deep channel, "Thus says the Lord." It is true indeed that this Gospel has existed from all eternity in the purpose of God. It originated in Christ before the world began. But now it shines forth in ineffable brightness, and men are called with open eye to view it—with open hand to receive it—with open heart to embrace it. It is not their work to fabricate a new sun, but with open eye to gaze on the Sun of righteousness, which has arisen with healing on His wings. Paul sweetly adds when stating that the Gospel was hid in the ages past in the purposes of God, that He created all things by Jesus Christ. We learn hence that He is conjoined with the Father, as Creator of the whole human race. Hence the Ministers of the Gospel cease not their labor of love, but strive to approach every woman-born, and to cause all to hear the glad tidings of salvation. Hence, too, the fervent missionaries go forth into the dark places of the earth, calling the poor benighted heathen to cast their idols to the bats—to turn from them to serve the living and true God—to wash out all their sins in expiating blood—to hide all their iniquities beneath the covert of justifying righteousness, and to receive Jesus as all salvation and desire.

Ephesians 3:10-11. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God—according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The spread of the Gospel may be viewed with sad indifference on earth. It is not so in heaven. Cold hearts may hear of conversions to the faith of Christ, and still may be frozen as ice. It is far otherwise with the angelic hosts. Intently they watch—lovingly they adore. In the verses before us, they are described as principalities and powers in heavenly places. Mark their power—their pre-eminence—their dignity. Such is their strength that one slew in the Assyrian hosts a hundred fourscore and five thousand men in one night. What must be their united strength when their number is innumerable? But with tender interest they view our sinful race, and rejoice when one is brought home to the family of faith. We should bless God for their sympathy and their support. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Do they not surround us as unseen guards encamping around the Christian pilgrim? From what countless dangers do their overshadowing wings protect, to how many blessings does their guidance lead! Over the living—over the dying—they keep anxious watch. But their admiration mainly rests on God's marvelous work in the scheme of redemption. They ponder His wisdom in the arrangement of the scheme before the foundation of the world, and in calling His beloved Son to undertake the blessed work. They marvel at the Son's love in freely consenting to bear our sins in His own body on the accursed tree, and in every step in redemption's path. They marvel when they behold Him on the Cross—when lying in the grave, when rising with all power, when ascending to His seat at God's right hand; and in the foresight of His coming glory. They marvel at God's wisdom in His dealings with every ransomed soul. In these cases there is no circumstance which is not designed by infinite wisdom. Shall Angels admire God's wisdom in the path by which He leads us, and shall not our eyes be open! Let us be assured that nothing befalls us by blind chance. The whole

scheme of the redemption of each saved soul was planned and pre-arranged before time was. Angels see this and admire. Let us pray for enlightening grace that we may see it more and more. So shall we trust and not be afraid. He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ. We are assured that He will perfect that which concerns us. He called Abram from the land of idolatry, and into Canaan he safely came. Angels desire to see God's wisdom in His dealings with the Church. Let each one strive to see too God's wisdom in his own particular case. It is a precious truth that eternal purpose regulates all matters in the Church. The Spirit in His mighty love gives frequent repetition. He would write it deeply on the tablets of our hearts. He would keep it shining brightly before our eyes. Sweet is the comfort which it never fails to give—mighty is the strength which it plenteously supplies. The believer is oftentimes brought into grievous trials—troubles—afflictions. The way seems to be dark, and to be hedged up with barriers. It seems to be long—and weary are the steps. The trembling heart is disposed to say, "All these things are against me." But when faith can see the Gospel-assurance, sweet peace pervades the heart—the tender voice is heard. "It is I—be not afraid." The path was foreordained. It leads safely to the foreordained mansions. Thus they are kept in perfect peace who rest on the unchangeable decree. It is said to be eternal. As it commenced in God, so in Him it constantly abides. Outward circumstances may vary; but in the purpose there is no instability. It is firm as God is firm. It is immovable as God is immovable. It is eternal as God is eternal. Blessed are they who dwell under the shadow of this glorious tree. They are sheltered from all storms. They know that they repose in safety; therefore they repose in perfect peace. In the days of their pilgrimage they can take up the everlasting song of praise. They never weary in the sublime ascription, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" But while we contemplate the glories of the everlasting covenant, let it be ever before our eyes that all arrangements are made in connection with Christ. He is declared to be the substance of the covenant. All the unchangeable purposes are yes and amen in Him.—Let Him then be the sum of our faith—the channel through which all blessedness flows down to us. While we see the glories of the Gospel-scheme, let us see their origin—progress—consummation in the Lord. He will work for His people—He will work in them until the pyramid is wholly completed, and the top-stone is brought forth. Let us pause with blessings on our lips. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Thanks be to God for ordering all things for His glory in us through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:12. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Who can count the mercies which encircle the child of God! Gales of love waft him towards his heavenly home. He floats along a stream of eternal loving-kindness. He is seated high on a throne of blessedness. Time and thought fail before effort to unfold the goodness by which he is encompassed. The days of eternity will be too short to enumerate. Hallelujahs will not exhaust the theme. But the text before us bids us contract our roving thoughts and fix them exclusively on one signal blessing. The believer has boldness and access with confidence to God on His mercy-seat. The gate is ever open. At each moment he may enter, and claim celestial audience. He may draw near unto God, and God will draw near unto him. He may cry, "My Father;" and hear the reply, "My Son." Let us contemplate this wondrous privilege. This is not man's natural birthright. He was not born a member of this happy family. There was a time when he was afar off. Sins and iniquities had raised an apparently impassable barrier. A wide gulf parted him from the gates of heaven. But now the way is cleared. No obstacles block the path. He may come with boldness. He has access

with confidence. How is this? Because he is one with Christ the firstborn among many brethren; because a Heavenly Father is pledged to give ready welcome; because the blood of Jesus has washed him clean from every stain of evil; because a robe of righteousness, in which the eye of omniscience can discern no blemish, renders him a meet inhabitant of the courts above. He may come boldly, because he pleads the infinite merits of Him with whom he is one; because he can plead the unanswerable argument, Christ died; because he brings in his hand the countless promises which are all yes and amen in Christ, and humbly asks, Do as You have said. Fulfill Your gracious word. He may thus come and plead boldly—with no fear of repulse he can reason with his heavenly Father. He can point to God's beloved Son bearing all his sins into the land of everlasting forgetfulness. He can point to justice and can urge that this attribute has no claims against him, because Jesus has given full satisfaction. He can point to truth and maintain that it would cease to be truth if petitions in the name of Jesus were not heard. He can point to mercy and show how tenderly God's mercy yearns over him. He can look to God's honor and glory, and show how they are all magnified in his uttermost salvation. Thus the believer may boldly plead. He is confident of ready access. Heaven's gates are never closed. God's ears are never stopped. Whatever be his need, whatever be his circumstances, he may fly upward, and cast down his every care at the footstool of the mercy-seat. When he is in doubt, he may seek direction—when he is in perplexity he may ask guidance—when he is weak, he may supplicate strength—when his foes sorely press, he may sue for deliverance—when he is prone to faint, he may cry for support. He may ask grace for a living hour, and grace for a dying hour. Who can estimate this privilege of free access to the mercy-seat! Did Sheba's Queen count Solomon's servants happy who were near his throne, and heard his wisdom; and are not believers happy among the happiest, who while they are detained on earth may still live in holy communion—in incessant converse with their God? O my soul! close not your eyes to this grand blessedness. Diligently use your privilege—never be long absent from the mercy-seat. What blessings you may there obtain for yourself, your relatives, your friends, your country, the world! Happy they who realize by experience that they are thus the children of a prayer-hearing God. Happy would be our land if such believers multiplied in number, and waxed stronger in the exercise of their privilege! This text concludes not without distinctly exhibiting the door by which we enter into this boundless region of blessedness. The means of this happy access and this approach with confidence is faith in God's co-eternal and co-equal Son. Faith is that precious grace implanted by the Holy Spirit, by which we become one with Christ, and the new-born children of our heavenly Father. It cannot be too often repeated that faith is the eye that sees Him and all the glories of His finished work; the ear that hears the proclamation of His truth, and all His melting calls; the feet by which we run towards Him, and nestle in His wounded side, and wash in His all-cleansing blood; it is the hand by which we grasp Him, and hold Him so tightly that we cannot let Him go; the heart which welcomes Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and which beats warmly in the ecstasy of love. Faith makes us one forever, and binds us to Him with indissoluble bonds. Faith which thus unites makes us heirs of His kingdom and His glory. By faith we enter, and abide, and never more are willing to depart. How thankful should we be if this precious grace has been imparted to us! With what earnest zeal and unwearied diligence should we cultivate it! It is a growing grace. There are no bounds to its expanse. The more we possess the more we shall gain; and the more we shall realize its power to enter the courts of heaven, and boldly claim communion with our Lord.

Ephesians 3:13. "Wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." An earnest exhortation follows an exhibition of Gospel-truth. Holy precepts should spring from holy teaching. The truths of the Gospel should be the parent of Gospel-walk. As a tree is known by its fruits, so trees of righteousness planted in the garden of the Lord should present branches laden with righteous produce. When good seed is plentifully sowed, a good crop should plentifully spring up. The truths which Paul proclaimed should be prolific in abundant godliness. The exhortation here urges to steadfastness—firmness—unflinching courage—indomitable valor in the cause of Christ. They who draw the Gospel-sword cast the scabbard far away. Fears and timidities should be strangers to the christian heart. They who follow Christ fully march boldly forward. They who flee may be wounded unto death. There is no armor prepared for the back. Believers must stand fast in the Lord. They must quit themselves like men. "Only be you very courageous," is the mandate unto Joshua. Exhortations to heroic walk abound. Jesus concealed not from His followers that as the world had hated Him, so surely it would hate them. To bear this enmity was their calling, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Expect not smiles where Jesus encountered frowns. If He, whose whole life was love, failed to melt hearts, but rather provoked the hostile cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," can His followers expect different treatment? But they are taught to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The prize of their high calling sparkles before their eyes, "Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Paul preceded in the path to which he calls his followers. When it pleased God who had separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace to reveal His Son in him, he was not told of the glories of his heroic course—of the triumphs which his preaching would effect—of the multitudes who would be saved through his word—of the power of his writings throughout all ages—no, rather the blessed Jesus warned him what great things he must suffer for His sake. Did he draw back—did he shrink from the noble work—did he supplicate to be left in the obscurity of ease and peace? Far otherwise! He set his face like a flint—he bravely advanced to encounter all perils and foes. In the service of his heavenly Master he was immovably resolved to bear ridicule, reproach, and shame. His one desire was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. Mark his brave words, "I go unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." And again he enumerates in striking terms the trials and the miseries which he has encountered. The history is a volume written within and without of anguish, persecution, and sufferings of intensest bitterness. He was oftentimes beaten with rods. He was in perils by water and by land—in watchings, hunger, and thirst—by false friends and cruel foes. He was regarded as the vilest of the vile—the most contemptible of the contemptible—the filth of the earth—the off-scouring of all things. Hence he warned, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." Hence he sent to ascertain the steadfastness of the Thessalonians, fearful lest some of them should be moved by the report of his endurances. He reminds those who he had given them previous warning, and that all which occurred was in accordance with premonition. Hence his present desire, that the Ephesians should not faint because he was so tried, and such cruelties beset him. Let us not think that the exhortation has no voice for us. We may not be exposed to the same cruelties—to the horrors of

the Inquisition, or the agonies of the stake—but there is bitter trial in the sneer—in the scoff—in the ridicule—in the contempt to which the cause of Christ has ever been exposed. The offence of the Cross will never cease, while Satan rules the God of this world. But let us look up for help and boldly march onward. Let us fight the good fight of faith. Fierce may be the conflict; many and smarting may be the wounds, but the victory is secure. Paul adds, "which is your glory." Double may be the interpretation. Briefly contemplate each. It is a glorious thing to be firm, and bold, and valiant, even as it is base to be timid and cowardly. Let praise be given to those who never flinch, or flee. "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Let then this unwavering, unhesitating course be always ours. But possibly Paul here points to the issue of his own manifold sufferings. In the multitude of his tribulations he boldly proclaimed the Gospel-truth. Hearers heard the glad tidings. They embraced the gracious Savior. They fled to His wounded side. They became through faith heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. They entered the kingdom of grace, and journeyed onward to the kingdom of glory. Thus the tribulations of Paul became the instrumental cause of their glory. May many see in us that the Lord still has a people—steadfast—unmovable—always abounding in the work of the Lord! May they be led to follow Christ as we do, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

06.06. Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-15. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Paul deeply felt the value of untiring prayer. He highly prized and duly used his privilege of free access to the mercy-seat. Well did he know that never could he sue in vain. If not the exact petition, surely some other blessing would be granted. Here he was a close follower of his beloved Lord. The early morn—the mountain-brow—the solitary hill—the midnight hour—witnessed the communion of Christ with God. His sojourn upon earth was converse with His Father. Thus Paul constantly implored his converts to petition for him. What he asked he largely gave, and gave with wrestling importunity. Mark his words to the Colossians, "I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." When he writes his first epistle his earliest words bear testimony to his fervent zeal. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in my prayers." To quote only one additional evidence, hear his words to the Philippians, "I thank my God on every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." The epistle before us gives repeated proof. May the Holy Spirit by these examples, and by frequent precepts, make us diligent in this heavenly work! To pray is to prosper. But let not prayer be selfish. Let it not be limited to our own need. Boundless is the need before us. Let boundless supplications spread it all before the mercy-seat. In the present passage Paul teaches us that though he drew near with boldness, it was the boldness of the most lowly reverence. He falls humbly in prostration before his God. He bows the knee before his lips make known his requests. Let the like reverence fill our hearts, and make us meek and reverential suppliants. We are permitted indeed to speak—no, to wrestle and cease not. But let us remember that our dealings are with Jehovah on His mercy-seat—the omnipotent Sovereign of the universe—the infinite and eternal God. Paul knew this; and he humbly knelt. But he adds wondrous words descriptive of his near relationship to God. Let us duly ponder them—and may the Spirit render them strength and encouragement in our approaches to a prayer-hearing God! Precious are the calls to this exercise. May we listen to them and thoroughly obey! Precious are the encouragements which assure us of a gracious audience. Let each administer strength and boldness to us in this holy exercise! Among these encouragements none shine more brightly than that which is here exhibited. We are invited to draw near to God as the Father of the blessed Jesus, and as the Father of the family of faith. To whom do we draw near? The Father of the blessed Jesus. Will not He hear those who cry in His dear Son's Name; who plead the merits of His only begotten; who present all their supplications as one with Christ? When we thus cry, Abba, Father, surely His ears will be open—surely a smile of welcome will beam lovingly—surely answers rich in fullness will be granted. Jesus said, "I know that You hear Me always." This truth flows down to all the members of His mystic body. We come as they who are the Father's gift unto Jesus. We come as the bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom—as the members of Him who is the Head of the body—as the sheep of His pasture—as the jewels of His mediatorial crown—as they

in whom He had delight before the worlds were framed—as they whom He will love while endless ages roll. We come as they whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life—as they for whom the blood of God was shed—as they whom celestial righteousness enrobes—as they for whom thrones in heaven are provided—as they for whom Jesus testified, "The glory which You gave Me, I have given them." Thus we approach the Father of the blessed Jesus. Let all fears and doubts and hesitations vanish! God would as soon deny His Son as those whom His Son represents. But in this verse there is a superadded encouragement. We come to God as to our own Father. The expressions in the verse which reveal this truth lose much of their force by the insufficiency of translated language. A name is here given to believers which implies that God is their Father. We trace it in the declaration that believers constitute one family. But there can be no family without a presiding Father. Hence in Christ we are privileged to cry directly to God, Abba, Father. O blessed family! Who can depict their privileges and their joys! This family has existed from all eternity in the counsels of heaven. It will exist through never-ending ages. The elders of this family have already passed through the grave and gate of death to the happy mansions of the redeemed. Their race is run—their fight is fought—their struggle is endured—their victory is won—their triumph is secured. We now are prisoners in the flesh. But soon we too shall be conquerors through the blood of the Lamb, and help to contribute to the blessed company. We shall be presented through our Elder Brother, who will recognize us as given of the Father unto Him. But while we tarry, let us tarry at heaven's gate, daily and hourly crying, Abba, Father.

Ephesians 3:16. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." How precious is the Word of God! how fervently should we give thanks for this inestimable treasure! how devout should be our constant use of it! What lessons are here inculcated to guide us in the upward road, and to fit us for the heavenly home! Not only are we taught the value of prayer, and encouraged in its exercise; but abundant models are set before us to direct our supplicating voice. Jesus heard the petition, "Lord, teach us to pray," and has given a pattern to supply our need. We know not indeed what to pray for as we ought, but in countless models, suitable thoughts and words are suggested. We have a blessed proof in the prayer which now claims attention. The petition which presses to be foremost in the list, is for rich abundance of spiritual strength. Greatly do we need this blessing. Spiritual life may indeed have been revived in our souls—but it is a flickering spark, and we have frequent cause to tremble lest it should be extinguished. It is as the feeble lamb amid devouring wolves. It is as the timid dove beset by cruel hawks. It is as the little bark amid engulfing billows. Many indeed are our perils and our foes—and weak is our own strength to resist our adversaries. We wrestle not only against inborn corruptions, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places. The devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour—as a fierce dragon he watches to destroy. How shall we resist—how shall we escape! We must look upward to Him who is mightier than the mightiest—who can give indomitable support—and make us more than conquerors over all the hosts of darkness. We must pray unto Him, who according to the riches of His glory can strengthen us with all might by His Spirit in the inner man! He is always ready to hear—always able to give needful strength. We have indeed to fight a good fight—to wrestle against mighty foes—and vain would be our efforts if left to our unaided strength. But He who gives the sword will give too the arm to wield it. In all our conflicts He will stand by our side—upholding when we are prone to fall—giving power to the faint, and to those who have no might increasing strength. But not only have we to fight and struggle, we

are called to bear heavy burdens, and to do arduous work. Soon would we be crushed beneath the overwhelming load—quickly should we faint before the constant toil, if we trusted only in our own resources. But He will endue us with patience, and arm us with holy endurance. He will teach us to look upward, and to go on our way rejoicing. How arduous, too, is the work to which we are called! It must be our constant effort to adorn His doctrine—to call men to His faith—to teach the ignorant—to reclaim the backslider—to strengthen the irresolute, and in countless ways to win to the knowledge of the faith and love of Jesus. What gifts—what knowledge—what wisdom—what perseverance are here required! And in ourselves what weakness, and ignorance, and sin! How shall we succeed and prosper except strength be supplied from heaven? The lamp would soon go out except replenished with the needful oil. So we should be soon vanquished except the Lord should strengthen and uphold. But we are taught to pray that He, according to the riches of His glory, would strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man. Let us bless the Lord for the warning—and bless Him for the ready aid—and seek by constant prayer to be thus upheld in the Christian race. The question may arise, Whence is this strength derived? What is the deep spring from which these waters flow; what the tree on whose branches such fruit blossoms? The text supplies immediate answer. God the Holy Spirit, the author and giver of all spiritual life, He maintains, and nourishes, and strengthens, and ripens the power which He imparts. Hence should be the constant prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire! We are assured that this aid is never sought in vain. It is a mighty and a glorious truth, "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!" We are taught, too, what is the field in which this culture is brought. It is not outward and carnal. It is inward and spiritual. It is largely described as the inner man. Hence it comprises all spiritual faculties. The intellect is brightly illuminated, that it may have a clear view of things spiritual and eternal. The mind is strengthened to understand and embrace them. The heart is strengthened to love and adore them. The soul and spirit are strengthened to soar high above all that the world contains, and to become transformed into the very image of God's dear Son. Thus the Holy Spirit strengthens with all spiritual strength. His work, too, is never meager, slender, or in small degree. It is large and mighty, even as the mighty Agent. It is here described as being proportionate to the riches of God's glory. And when similar work is described, similar terms are used to enlarge our faith and to amplify our assurance. Thus to the Colossians, we have the prayer that they may be strengthened according to His glorious power. To the Philippians we have the promise, "God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Measure if you can, the abundance of glory which are the attributes of God. The effort baffles thought. Estimate if you can, the abundance of spiritual strength which the Holy Spirit is ready and willing to impart. The effort fails. But let us be taught, that as there are no limits in the gift, so there should be no limits to our supplications for it, and expectations of it.

Ephesians 3:17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Prayer continues. Grace never ceases to prompt it. The Father ever waits to hear it. Answers are on the wing to come. But what a petition now breaks forth! O my soul! contemplate it—ponder it—use it! What is its purport? Not that we in spirit should fly up to heaven, but that heaven should descend to us. "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." Whom do we supplicate to become this indwelling inhabitant? It is Christ Himself—not in mere notion—not in contemplations of His truth—not in realization of His grace, but in His very person—received in His real though invisible presence. Can it be, that Christ will really come and take up His abode within us! He is the mighty God. He is Jehovah's Fellow.

He appears in the omnipotence of creation. He is co-partner in all God's glory. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. His center is everywhere. His circumference is nowhere. No bounds can limit Him. Angels veil their faces while they worship Him. He charges them with folly. They are all less than nothing in comparison of His might and power and glory. Will He inhabit the heart of man? Marvel of marvels. But we are dealing with Him whose name is Wonderful. Though His throne is in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all, yet His delights have ever been with the sons of men, and His chosen throne is the sinner's heart. Can it indeed be so! Have we faith in His pledged word? Let us then hear it. "Behold I stand at the door and knock—if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." He here professes His readiness and His desire to hold most close and familiar communion with His people. My soul, hear His voice. Throw widely open the portals. Give Him welcome. Implore Him to come in and occupy the seat, and never more to quit it, but to reign supreme amid all opposing foes. In the Canticles how tenderly He chides the reluctant spouse for negligence—indifference—unwillingness to receive Him! "Open to Me my love, my dove, my undefiled. For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." All reluctance is on man's side. He patiently endures our hardness and contempt. He will not depart until admittance be obtained. He warns us that it is in the path of obedience to the Gospel-rule that we obtain His presence. "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 we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Marvels increase. May our adoration similarly swell! He will not come alone. All heaven follows in His rear. The Father quits not His side. If Jesus enters the Father enters with Him. Let us listen to His call. "Come out from among them—and be you separate and touch not the unclean thing—and I will be a Father unto you—and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Thus the believer dwells in God, and God in him. Need I add that the Holy Spirit is not parted from this company? We are told that our bodies are the temples of His constant presence. This text clearly informs us that the heart is the throne on which the triune God is seated. It is not the head—the mind—the intellect. It is no difficult task to obtain correct understanding of the Gospel and its glorious scheme. Many may mentally understand the purposes of heavenly grace, and still be far removed from vital apprehensions of an indwelling God. They may speak boldly but with no fervor—correctly but with no zeal. Christ as a Savior is enthroned in the affections. He is encircled with the ardor of intense love. His dwelling is the heart. "My son, give Me your heart." "The kingdom of God is within you." But the teaching of this text is not yet exhausted. There are more depths in the expression "Christ dwells in the heart." He comes not as the morning cloud, or as the early dew that passes away. He flows not as the summer-brook which is soon exhausted. He springs not up as a tender plant to be dried up when the sun arises. He is not as a wayfaring man who merely lodges for the night. He is not as the stranger who pays a passing visit. When He enters He takes up His abode forever. Other guests may seek admission—but they cannot dethrone Him. He takes His seat in love. In love He steadfastly maintains it. All the powers of darkness may be in league against Him—but they may as easily hurl Him from His high throne in heaven, as from the heart which has once given Him true welcome. The question has been put, "Who shall separate from the love of Christ?" The reply is clear. It is not in the power of all the catalogue of trials—pains—persecutions—troubles, to induce Christ to recede, where He has once reigned as an indwelling God. Oh, that believers would realize their blessings—their dignity—their power—their privilege! In the eyes of the world

they may be base and low—but they are caskets in which all treasure dwells. When trifling thoughts—when frivolous desires—when debasing allurements tempt—when the world comes with all its fascinating baubles, let the reply be, Away—away. This is not your home. There is no room for you here. The throne is occupied, and occupied forever. "Christ dwells in the heart by faith." Here again we see the mighty power of faith. It hears the Savior's call for admission—it removes every bar and hindrance—it opens wide the door—it conducts Him to His throne—it retains Him there. The more that faith expands the more we realize the indwelling Savior. Let then our constant prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith."

Ephesians 3:17-19. "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." Prayer strengthens by exercise. The more we use it, the more the sinews become firm. Indolence ever weakens. What an example meets us in the present petition! Paul prays for his converts that they may comprehend that which is incomprehensible—that they may obtain knowledge of that which passes knowledge. At once we learn that there is nothing too hard for God to do—nothing too great for God to give—and therefore nothing too vast for suppliants to implore. What is this mighty gift for which supplication is here made? It is for advance in the knowledge of Christ's love. But before we proceed to consider this gift, two preliminary thoughts occur. Believers are exhibited as trees and as buildings. "They are rooted and grounded." The tree cannot stand except rooted in a congenial soil. Then it flourishes—puts forth strong branches—and bears rich fruit. It expands in beauty, strength, and usefulness. Thus the believer must have deep roots. The soil in which he grows is the knowledge—the perception—the experience of the love of Christ. The believer here too appears as a building. Weak and tottering is the fabric which has not a firm foundation. We know the weakness and probable downfall of a house, which rests on sand. What then is the believer's foundation? It is the knowledge—the perception—the experience of the love of Christ. Stable indeed are they who rest on this firm basis. Storms may descend—raging winds may batter, but it presents an immovable front. Grounded in Christ believers are built up a spiritual temple acceptable unto God through Him. Paul prays that his converts might partake of this blessedness in company with all saints. This knowledge is their universal glory. They all are taught the preciousness of Him in whom they believe—they all realize that He loved them before the foundation of the world—they all know that because He loved, He died to save them—they all are assured that, because He loves He lives to bless them—they all are persuaded, that because He loves He will return to receive them to Himself. Language is now strained to portray the immensities of the love of Christ. But every effort fails in weakness before the theme. If the vocabularies of earth were thoroughly exhausted they would give insufficient insight. It is enough to fill the endless ages of eternity. But the effort is made to exhibit an object which has four dimensions—breadth—length—depth—height. In the realm of nature no such object can be found—no discoveries of science can reach it—no flights of imagination can conceive such immensity. This love is breadth-infinite—it is length-infinite—it is depth-infinite—it is height-infinite. Let us fall low, and wonder, and adore. We are thus prepared for the concluding assertion, "It passes knowledge." It is not only unspeakable—it is unsearchable—it is inconceivable. But we may know the reality, though we cannot know the fullness. We may know the spring, though we cannot measure the full flood. We may know the dawn, though we cannot gaze on the unclouded sun. We may know in part, though we cannot know in full extent. We may see something at present, though it may be through a glass darkly. But let us daily and hourly

strive to advance in this pursuit. With this object let us search and ponder its records in the Word of Life. Let us meditate on all its evidence in the work of Christ—His assumption of our nature—His birth into our family—His death in our stead—His rising for our justification—His present session at God's right hand on our behalf—His many precious promises, which are all yes and amen in Him—His near approach to receive us unto Himself forever—to enrich us with the glories of salvation—to put us in possession of the purchased inheritance. Let us wrestle without intermission with the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Christ and to reveal Him unto us. He will not be slow to come, in the plenitude of His love, to enlarge our faculties—to enlighten our minds—to add revelation to revelation. O believer, until you shall see Him as He is, grow in this grace and in this knowledge—bathe in this ocean of intelligence—draw water with joy from these deep wells—expatiate in these wide fields—revel in these boundless joys. Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord!

Ephesians 3:19. "That you might be filled with all the fullness of God." Paul had made prayer for his Ephesian converts with earnestness and zeal unlimited. Strength he sought for them to the extent of God's power to give. He well knew that less would not suffice. So many were the foes—so great the obstacles—so less than weak their own innate strength, that the omnipotence of God alone would make them more than conquerors over the enemies of their salvation. Then that the strength might be a never-ceasing supply, He supplicates that the God of all strength may inhabit their hearts, even Christ Himself; that so they might in some measure comprehend His immeasurable love. And in this clause he reaches the climax of all desire, and concludes his petition in the marvelous expression, "that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." The first thought which here forcibly arises, is that the heart must be rendered meet to receive this heavenly occupant. There must be the expulsion of self—the dethronement of Satan—the exclusion of the world.—Have you a longing desire for the presence of Him in your heart, whose coming shall be with satisfying fullness? See to it, that there is no rival to dispute His entrance. Let this be the all-absorbing desire, and then the fulfillment of the Apostle's prayer shall be a delightful experience. The believer shall be filled with all the fullness of God. Let us consider how this blessedness is to be attained, and the dignity and honor which result therefrom. The prayer is not for an impossibility—therefore the fullness of the Godhead inhabiting the heart is attainable. And the method by which it is secured is clearly revealed. The believer in Jesus, who has come to Him in all the simplicity of a living faith—who has heard His voice pleading for admission, has verily received Christ Jesus as his inhabitant. The Lord has taken possession. He has claimed as His property the purchase of His precious blood. He has entered the believing heart, and there abides. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. When He thus enters all Deity bears Him company. "For in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." This is one of the expressions which the Apostle delights to repeat. He speaks of the Church as the fullness of Christ. And he tells us that "Christ is the fullness of Him that fills all in all." Nor is Paul alone in this expressive phrase. The Apostle John too in his Gospel speaks thus of Christ, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And then he adds, "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." God is love—and the fullness of divine love pervades the believing heart. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. The believer is brought out of darkness into marvelous light—the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings. God is Almighty—and the believer is made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. God is

holy—yes holiness in its essential qualities—and the believer through faith and patience and the Spirit's sanctifying influences, is made partaker of His holiness. This is a feeble expression of what is the blessedness of him, who is filled with all the fullness of God.—Receive Christ, and in the reception of Him all is yours.—Faith then is the receiving grace. By believing in Jesus we realize the fullness of the blessedness which the Apostle prays for in this petition. O my soul, have you that living principle within—that faith, which overcoming the world—working by love, and purifying the heart, makes it a fit receptacle of Him who in Himself is God over all, blessed for evermore?—If so, then never forget the dignity and honor to which you are called—Wherever you are, there Deity is present. You are enriched with a presence before which all earth's greatness and splendor fade into nothingness—you are ennobled beyond the rank of the noblest of this world—you are a living temple of the living God; for it is written, "I will live in them and walk in them—and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."—The thought will sanctify—elevate—ennoble.—It will be on earth a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Like Enoch we shall walk with God. Like Abraham we shall be accounted His friends. Like John we shall lean on His bosom—and live in closest communion and fellowship. We shall reflect in our daily conversation some rays of the heavenly likeness here; and in privilege hereafter we shall be nearer than the angels, which dwell in His presence—yes, we shall take our place as the most highly favored of all the creatures of His love. All the longings of the heart too will forever be satisfied when we awake with His likeness. Then shall we realize, as we cannot here and now, the depth of truth in the Apostle's prayer, that we may "be filled with all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:20-21. "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." This sublime prayer ends with sublime praise. Let this example ever guide our supplications. Praise is lovely for the upright. "Seven times a day will I praise You" was the Psalmist's resolve. This exercise will fit for the songs above. When prayer shall be hushed forever—when the necessity for its utterance in the realms of perfect purity shall be no more—the strains of thanksgiving shall still swell. The Hallelujahs of the blessed shall never cease. (1.) Mark to whom adoration is here ascribed. It is to our Heavenly Father. Let praise be given to Him to whom all praise is due. But especially here is He presented to us as the God who hears and answers prayer—and the assurance is added, that however large our requests may be, they will fall short of the infinity of His power to respond. Blessed are they who have this deep persuasion, that he to whom they pray is able to answer not in proportion to the widest expanse of petition and desire—but abundantly—yes exceeding abundantly, above all that they can ask or even think. Vast were the petitions of this heaven-inspired prayer—so vast that apparently more could neither be conceived nor desired—but for our encouragement we are taught that if our prayers were infinitely more comprehensive, they could not exceed the granting power, which exceeds infinity. Proofs might have been multiplied to show how God has exercised His power at the voice of His children's cry. From the beginning such has been His grace. At times when the case of the Church has seemed desperate—and recovery to be hopeless, He has been seen to arise in the greatness of His might, and has gotten to Himself a glorious name. Let the thought of this ability urge us to be more importunate. Alas! too often poor and defective are our prayers. Unbelief clips the wings of supplication. We ask and receive not, because we ask amiss. But answers are promised. Let us then be encouraged. Those who by prayer have prevailed, have been men of like passions with ourselves. The Church in the darkness of unbelief sometimes has

bemoaned, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my God has forgotten me." The wail has often gone forth, "Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be entreated no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever—does His promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious, and in anger has He shut up His tender mercies?" Where is the remedy? The Psalmist gives reply, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Happy is he, who has the assurance that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. (2.) The Apostle adds, "According to the power that works in us." Let no believer rest without the experience of this inworking power. Thus when we are weak, then are we strong. By it difficulties are overcome—temptations are resisted—afflictions are endured, and the profession is made, not in self-complacent pride, but in meek dependence and simple faith, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me." (3.) But mark next, who are they who ascribe praise to God? "Unto Him be glory in the Church." From none others can these notes ascend. The world is silent—the Church only is vocal with thanksgiving. This is the song of every member of the same, "O Lord, I will praise You, though You were angry with me Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me." God has abundantly blessed, and the ultimate design is, that in His Church His praises may abound. Thus He inhabits the praises of His Zion. "This people have I formed for Myself—they shall show forth My praise." They praise the love that bought them—they extol the grace that visited them in the days of darkness, and chased the gloom away. And in their every note there is an intelligent appreciation that all things are theirs through Jesus Christ. Therefore He is the theme of all their songs. Moreover they well know that it is only through His mediation and intercession that prayer and praise are accepted. He is our Great High Priest. For us He has entered within the veil—and in every age and climate, praise makes melody in the ear of God, only as it is perfumed with the incense of His merits. As in the Church below, so in the Church above, His Name is as ointment poured forth. As in time, so in eternity, throughout all ages, world without end, the song shall be forever new, "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."

07.000 Psalms

Psalms By Henry Law, 1878

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07.000a Preface

Preface A brief statement will show the simple purpose of this work.

Christian households will surely be assembled on each day for domestic worship. Piety cannot allow the morning to open and the evening to close without united prayer for common blessings and united praise for common mercies. Religion will cease to be the pervading element in the house in which the inhabitants fail thus to present themselves together at the throne of grace.

It is impossible to overestimate the blessings which may be expected from such family solemnities. They sweetly sanctify the home, and are a holy picture of celestial oneness. Love will then cement the hearts which together seek a heavenly Father's face—together vow obedience to His will—together consecrate their every faculty to His service—together bless Him for their common hope—together adore Him for the gift of Jesus, and all the preciousness of the Gospel-revelation.

It is presumed, also, that a portion of Scripture will have a place in these exercises, and that suitable comments will enforce God's Word. The Book of Psalms will doubtless not be excluded. Its central position as the heart of Scripture—its devotional character as part of the Jewish liturgy—its adaptation to every circumstance of life, rather entitle it to especial consideration.

Survey most superficially its contents. It traverses every condition of man. It roams with the shepherd in the meadows. It sits with the mighty monarch on the throne. It flees with the fugitive on the hills, and hides with him in the caves. It leads the conquering host to victory. It walks with the busy in the crowded haunts, and leaves not the lonely in their solitude. It is a prop for the staggering steps—a guide for the wanderer—a counselor when perplexities bewilder—a pillow for the weary head—a sympathizing hand to wipe the weeping eye—a voice to whisper comfort to the disconsolate. No words more cheer the dying saint. The soul in extremest agony for sin finds here a ready outlet for the bitterest streams of sorrow. Words are here supplied to crave deliverance from wrath. When a saving interest in Christ is realized and joy is in the height of rapture, here are the wings to bear aloft to heaven. But the main glory of this book is its identity with Christ. He brightly shines throughout its varied hymns. He is constantly the speaker, and in these breathings of His Spirit we receive convincing evidence that, without ceasing to be God, He was a perfect man, and preeminently a Man of Sorrows. We here are supplied with a vivid portrait of His character, His work, His love, His sufferings, His glory. It would be no difficult task to construct a Gospel from its prophetic language. It may be regarded as His manual during His career on earth. When, as the expiating God-man, He was uplifted on the accursed tree, and the iron entered into His soul, His misery goes forth in the moanings of a Psalm, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He gives up the spirit uttering its confiding terms, "Into Your hands I commend My spirit." He ascends amid the shouts, "Lift up your heads, O you gates!" He receives the welcome, "Sit on My right hand." In it the history of Israel's Church is shadowed out from its cradle in the iron furnace of Egypt, through its days of light and darkness, through its triumphs and reverses, through its rejection in unbelief, through its long and dreary desertion to its ultimate recovery and

final glory. Prophets, apostles, ministering servants, have gathered flowers from this field. Whenever the Gospel is preached, weighty arguments, convincing proofs, telling exhortations, dreadful warnings, are extracted from its vast mine. Thus wide is the expanse of suggestions for prayer to which the Book of Psalms invites.

I thus reach the unpretending object of this work. It seeks to give some little aid, when in due course the Psalms are opened out. Divisions are made of appropriate length for such exercise, and devotional thoughts are adjoined tending to excite the spirit of prayer and praise. All attempt to elucidate by critical acumen is utterly eschewed. If it had been possible for the writer to introduce conclusions of learning, they would have been rejected as adverse to the plan. Time has not been employed to establish a connection between the speaker's feelings and historic events. When the reference is clear, no notice is needed. When it is obscure, it is more easy to increase than to remove uncertainty. It is enough to know that the Holy Spirit depicts real and not imaginary cases. It is the reader's profit to find identity in his individual experience. He will often be constrained to feel that He who inspired these words knew accurately the secrets of each heart, and presents a mirror thoroughly divine.

It may interest the scholar to investigate the claims of diverse versions for acceptance. But the hour of prayer is not suitable for such research. Therefore the reasoning powers have never been thus summoned to give aid. To help devotion has been the one and only desire. Other works abound in which the gifts of mind have been nobly used to display the wonders of this Book. The one design here has been to make it a vehicle of piety. The object is attained whenever worship is made a real approach of the heart unto God. It is hoped that the frequent appeals to the heart may exclude formality—that enemy to direct communion with God. This observation finds excuse in the growing desire to multiply the objective and the picturesque in places of public worship. Surely attention directed to artistic decorations and mimicry of Rome's showy service tends to divert from close dealings with Heaven. Real prayer is not kindled by extraneous sights. It is the Spirit moving in the inner man. May He, whose glory only has been sought, give His blessing for the sake of Jesus Christ!

07.001 Psalm 1

Psalms 1:1-6

Here two portraits are presented to our view. The godly man appears. His walk is holy, happy, fruitful, prosperous, heavenward—The ungodly is entirely diverse. His course is worthless, and his end is woe. Spirit of God, grant now Your light!

1. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful."

All praise be to the grace of God that in this world of widespread sin some lovely spots are seen. There are the heirs of life. Born from above, to God they live. Abhorrence of all evil is their grand distinction. The godless have their schemes, their pleas, their plots, their evil counsels. In such vile course the blessed ones never walk. They resolutely shun the hateful path. Sinners have their chosen way. How broad! how thronged! what multitudes move down the sad decline! In this the blessed ones have no part. They hate the filth. They keep their feet unsoiled. Wickedness has its topstone. Scorn and derision proceed to mock God's word, Christ's work, and all the lowly followers of the Lamb. Too many love the sneering seat, and impious jests find sympathizing smiles. Such company is counterpart of hell. The blessed man sits not in such fellowship. We here are taught that in sin there is gradation. Let us flee the first step. The rolling stone descends with quickening speed.

2. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law he meditates day and night." The godly man has his delights. His cup is crowned with joy. His table is spread with richest pleasures. The Scriptures are his soul-refreshing feast. They gladden him with views of God as his own God; Christ as his own Savior; the Spirit as his guide and sanctifying Comforter; heaven as his home forever; and all things ordered for his well-being. The morning light invites him to this sacred page. In the day his thoughts cling closely to it. The evening's shadows and night's wakeful hours call to rejoice in this treasury of truth.

3. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

Behold the tree on the brook's verdant bank, whose roots drink constantly the flowing stream! The laden branches bend with plenteous fruit. Unfading freshness decks the leaves. No lovelier object adorns nature's field. It is a picture of the godly man. Deep springs of grace supply his inner life. The fruits of righteousness, which are the Spirit's work, abound. His fertility of holiness is rich, and large, and real. The Lord is truly with him; and where the Lord is, there is every good. Of Joseph it is sweetly said, "The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." Of David we read, "He went on and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him."

4. "The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind drives away." The scene is changed. The ungodly widely differ. Nature shows, also, their picture. The fruitful tree gives place

to chaff—light, barren, hollow, worthless—the refuse of the barn-floor. It yields no profit. It is cast out, the sport of winds. Driven away, it leaves no trace behind. Such are the godless. They minister no grace. They benefit no souls. None gain by conversation with them. Unstable, they are tossed by every changing wind. Temptations drive them headlong. Terrible is their final doom. Jesus comes, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

5. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

Judgment is near. The Judge stands at the door. The great white throne will soon be set. The dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books according to their works. They cannot flee the dread tribunal. There is no escape. No mask can hide their guilt. Their sins are all recorded. No blood blots out the stains. They plead no Savior's merit. They have no interest in the saving cross. No solid ground sustains their feet. They cannot stand. Undefended, they receive the dreadful sentence, 'Depart! you cursed ones!' Thus they are cast far from the congregation of the righteous. May we live ever with this last scene before us, and never rest until clear evidence is ours that we have happy place in "the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven."

6. "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Amid all their trials, sorrows, pains, reproaches, let the righteous lift up rejoicing heads. The eye of God rests on their way. He called them to the narrow road. He upholds their feeble steps. He safely leads them to the glorious end. Unfailing watchfulness surrounds them. But the broad road, with its unrighteous throng, goes down assuredly to hell.

Holy Spirit, give us the portion of the blessed man! May we escape the doom of the ungodly!

07.002 Psalm 2

Psalms 2:1-12 To oppose the kingdom of Christ is utterly vain, because it is established by the Father's power, and by the provisions of the eternal decree. Holy exhortation follows. May faith read reverently the prophetic hymn!

1. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

Pious anticipation might exclaim—Surely, when Jesus comes to bless this earth, adoring welcomes will receive Him. Surely each heart will call Him to its throne; each knee will bow; each tongue will shout His praise; thanksgivings will encircle Him. Those who thus reason little know the devil's power and man's rebellious wickedness. The Spirit's eye foresees the black reality. Among the heathen rage shall be rampant. The favored nation shall plot destruction. How base, how vain is this iniquity! It may well be asked, What prompts this hatred? Why does this frenzy madden?

2. "The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the Lord and against his anointed One."

Those who occupy earth's highest seats are fiercest to oppose Jesus. The Herods and Pilates take determined stand. The council of the priests and elders meet in secret assembly. In the beginning it was so. The same hatred has defiled succeeding thrones and courts. Against whom is this rage? Tremble, O earth, turn pale, you heavens. This fury assails the Lord Jehovah and His beloved Son. The Father sends the Son anointed by the Spirit to be the promised Savior, to execute the all-saving offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, to bless the Church with every blessing. And earth's chiefs combine to tread Him beneath insulting feet. Give ear! this is their frantic cry—

3. "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from this slavery."

Self-will rejects restraint. Pride will not yield to rule. Licentiousness surmounts all barriers. Conceited reason lifts up defiant head. The gentle scepter of Christ's kingdom, His sweet, His light, His easy, and His loving yoke, are hated as chains which restrain and cords which fetter. When Jesus came, earth raised the cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It still resounds. When will man learn that widest liberty is true submission to the Gospel sway? He is a free man whom the Son makes free. He is a slave in whom unbridled lusts and passions rule. But can proud man prevail? Can he drive back the ocean's might with a feather? Can he lift up his puny hand, and bid the sun conceal its rays? Can he with straws bind the hurricane? Can he lay mountains low, exalt the valleys, and change the laws of nature? Can he scale heaven and dethrone our God? Such, doubtless, is his frantic will. But give ear again;

4. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

Let us lift up our eyes to God. He sits upon His throne on high; while earth is all unsettled, wild in mad menace, He reigns in calm repose. The Spirit here takes images from human feeling to depict His unruffled contempt. God laughs derisively, when puny efforts dash their feebleness against overpowering strength. Thus God shows undisturbed disdain of human fury.

5. "Then shall He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure."

God may be silent long; but patience is not impunity. Reprieve brings not release. When the appointed time comes, the floodgates open and wrath overflows. Who can conceive these terrors? What must His displeasure be? Who can endure when His anger issues forth? What weeping, what wailing, what anguish, what gnashing of teeth, when God arises to execute due judgment on His foes!

6. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." In spite of earth's malignant rage, God manifests His King. He called His Son to be the heir of all things. Upon His shoulder supreme government is laid. His hand receives the scepter of universal reign. He announces, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Who can resist? Who can withstand? Our Jesus is God's King—by choice, by appointment, by will, and by sovereign decree. Now He spiritually sits enthroned on Zion's holy hill. He reigns supreme in every true believer's heart. He is invited by rejoicing love. Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, O portals of my soul, and the King of glory shall come in. He enters, and all heaven follows in His train. He enters, and establishes the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This present reign on Zion's holy hill is now open to the eye of faith. But the day quickly comes when Jesus' throne shall be universally conspicuous. The wicked cannot hinder. Their rage can interpose no barrier. God has spoken. It must be. It must soon be. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously."

7. "I will declare the decree; the Lord has said unto me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You."

Oh, wondrous thought! Before the birth of time, eternal councils willed the well-being of man. A covenant of grace was firmly made. We live in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Jesus, in His love for souls, in tender zeal to fill our hearts with joy, and to cause streams of peace to flow, announces the decree. By His Spirit He unfolds it. In His Word He writes the record. Here He displays important articles.

It was decreed that honor should await Him as God's co-eternal Son. For a brief period His deity was hidden. In outward appearance He differed little from the sons of men. Occasionally heavenly rays broke forth; but the sun's brightness was eclipsed. Thus, as man, He suffered and died. The resurrection-morn arrives. He strides forth the mighty conqueror of death and hell. The glorious rising has a glorious voice. With trumpet-tongue it tells the wondering world, Jesus is God's Son! this day removes all doubt! this day unveils Him! The Father has begotten Him—Another morn will brightly shine. Greater manifestations rapidly come on. Amid all glory Jesus will be shown again as God's co-equal, co-eternal Son. Who then can shake His kingdom's firm supports?

8. "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession."

Another article of the covenant is stated. Christ's kingdom shall exceed all bounds. The outcast heathen shall bend the knee. Earth's uttermost extent shall call Him Lord. But this shall be in answer to His prayer. In heaven the Son shall prosecute His entreaty. With supplication He shall urge His claims. His pleading shall recite His part performed—the ransom paid—the kingdom

bought—all hindrances removed. He shall thus ask, and He shall thus obtain. Blessed Jesus, extend Your wounded hands! Let not the Father rest until earth's length and breadth shall own Your rule!

9. "You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The covenant, moreover, states that all Christ's enemies shall lick the dust. Hate may continue. Opposition may oppose. But oh! how vain! Behold His might. A rod of iron is wielded by His hands. It breaks and cannot be withstood. Opposing strength is brittle as the potter's clay. He strikes, and it lies shattered atoms. Thus shall His kingdom trample down all foes.

10. "Be wise now, therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth." But wrath yet lingers. Space for repentance is given. Let it be duly used. A warning voice arrests earth's great ones in their mad career. It bids wisdom to awake, and sit submissively at Jesus' feet. The truest sage is a meek learner in the school of grace. To know Christ truly is the crown of knowledge.

11. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Knowledge leads surely in the paths of service. Gospel-obedience is a blessed walk. It is the happy union of all grace. Strictest submission goes hand in hand with filial reverence. The cup of joy is mixed with tenderest dread of error. Love fears. Fear loves. Joy trembles, and trembling is glad.

12. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

Mercy still warns. It points to Jesus. It exhorts to give Him homage, because it is His due—to worship Him to whom all praise belongs—to love Him who has so loved us as in our stead to die. It forbids delay. Until our hearts be wholly His, we totter on destruction's brink! One spark of kindled wrath excludes forever from salvation's way. What, then, will be their doom against whom wrath in full fury blazes?

Sweet melody concludes this hymn. It speaks of blessedness. It tells where true happiness now and forever dwells. It is in faith. Faith is the saving and the happy grace. It tightly clings to Christ. It trusts Him at all seasons for all things. Oh! may this blessed state be ours. Truly blessed it is!

07.003 Psalm 3

Psalms 3:1-8

Foes without number press upon the speaker. Prayer is his refuge. Calmly he sleeps. His fears are gone. Speak, Lord, that thus our hearts may ever rest.

1. "O Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!" The first scene shows the monarch flying from his heartless son. Absalom advances with rebellious hosts. The outcast father looks upon the swelling billows of foul treason. Increasing numbers hunt his life. He sees, and he appeals to God.

Here, also, our Jesus may be heard. The powers of darkness are combined. Hell and its legions terribly assail. Wicked men do their worst wickedly. On all sides troubles multiply. Many voices cry "Crucify." The servant follows in the suffering path. The true believer often will but moan.

2. "Many there are who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."

Affliction has the aspect of desertion. Many reason that God's favor surely would disperse these clouds—His voice could quickly scatter all the ills. David thus persecuted seems to be cast off. Here is the scoff of Calvary. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him. The thieves also, who were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth."

3. "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of my head." In darkest days faith shines with brightest glow. In the wild storm it looks to God and sings. No weapon can succeed against it. God, even God Himself, surrounds His children as a shield. The shaft which touches them must pierce through God! Welcome, also, reproach and ridicule and scorn. No disgrace can soil their name. They are renowned among the sons of men. Their glory is their God. No billows can submerge them. God, even their own God, lifts up their heads. From deepest waters Jesus rose to God's right hand. Where the Head is, there too shall the members be.

4. "I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill." The voice of the insulting foe may loudly cry; but faith outcries. It has direct admission to the courts above. The blood-bought way is ever open. The interceding Spirit prompts the appeal. The mediating Son presents it. The Father on His throne receives it. Heaven opens, streams of answering blessings flow down. No case is desperate to him whose call can bring almightiness to his aid. Here is our Jesus. In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.

5. "I laid down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." The battlefield and the besieged fort present no downy couch. The alarms of war invite not to repose. But GOD is a pillow to the head of faith! David lies down, His sleep is sweet. He arises with renewed strength. But deeper truth sounds in these words. Jesus calmly falls asleep. The new-made grave receives Him to its bed. On the third day He casts off sleep. He appears and testifies, God did not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. So, also, believers fall asleep in Him. Short is the

night of death. Soon shall they awake and shout, "O grave! where is your victory? O death! where is your sting?"

6. "I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side."

Faith is a fearless grace. It has quick ears to hear the voice of Heaven. It quickly catches the often repeated word, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God." Let man come on, boastful of numbers, and vain-glorious in the arm of flesh; faith meets the hosts, strong in the Lord, making mention only of His name. The victory is sure. Jesus never lost a battle. No follower of His will ever fall.

7. "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for You have smitten all my enemies upon the jaw; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly."

Grace marvelously works. It begets fearless confidence. And confidence begets increasing prayer. Trust knows no fear, and shuns presumptuous indolence. It grows more importunate in prayer. It gives no rest to God. It knows its safety; and therefore it cries, "Save me, O my God." Past experience supplies both arguments and hope. You have brought shame and confusion on all vaunting foes; therefore, now arise and save.

8. "Salvation belongs to the Lord; Your blessing is upon Your people."

Triumphant is the final chorus. It tells of God rich in salvation. Salvation is His property. He willed it. He provided it. He holds it. He gives it according to His sovereign purpose. It is deliverance from every peril. It is exaltation to the heights of heaven. His blessing ever rests upon His people. It gives them all things and never fails. Lord, save us, and we shall be saved. Bless us, and we shall be blessed! Amen.

07.004 Psalm 4

Psalms 4:1-8 This psalm begins with prayer. Solemn admonition and earnest entreaties follow. Then the believer's chief good appears in contrast to the lot of the ungodly. May that chief good be richly ours!

1. "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness; You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

Acquaintance with God brings mighty help to prayer. Strong arguments flow from experience. "You are my righteousness" is a prevailing motive. The believer stands pardoned through grace, and richly robed in Jesus' merits. One with Christ, he appears as free from guilt as God's own Son. He, also, can boldly point to past deliverances. Many had been his difficulties, but the chains were loosened, and God set him free. He thus gains courage for urgent prayers, and he learns the art of winning mercies. He plies it well.

2. "How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?"

True grace is pitiful of sin's mad ways, and seeks occasion to remonstrate. The service of God is glory. The wicked scorn it as contemptible. What folly can be worse! Their hearts delight in this world's empty bauble. They greedily pursue a mocking shadow. Wisdom expostulates, How long! When will such madness have an end!

3. "But know that the Lord has set apart him who is godly for Himself. The Lord will hear when I call unto Him."

There is a truth which annihilates such folly. God has a chosen seed. Eternal destination marks them as His own. They are godly because the Spirit seeks and calls and works most mightily within them. They are severed from the world as wheat from chaff, as gold from dross, as sheep from goats, as jewels from the quarry's dust. They are distinguished with most precious grace, especially with the gift of prayer. They often call, and never call in vain. Know this, O sons of men, and cease your fruitless opposition.

4. "Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

Wise precepts here instruct. Ponder the greatness, the majesty, the power, the glory of Jehovah. Tremble in awe of His almightiness. Let holy dread repress each rebel thought. His arm is raised against all sin. Flee sin, then, as most sure destruction. Search the recesses of your treacherous hearts. Detect their secret whispers. Nip evil in its earliest bud. In still retirement, in night's tranquil hours, become acquainted with yourselves. Thus learn the happy art of checking wicked words. Become expert in silence.

5. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." In worship let all formality be unknown. Outward service is vain show except the heart and all its powers grow warm. Those

who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Do not trust in your holiest acts. Sin soils them all. Your best is worth nothing! No, rather, it is a filthy rag before God's eyes. When all is done, your trust must be in God's tender mercy, in forbearing grace, in pardoning love, in the atoning blood. There is no hope for man but in the work of Christ.

6. "There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." The restless worldling is ever craving and is ever void. Conscious of inward emptiness, he seeks contentment which he never finds. The flowers plucked soon wither in the hand. The sigh is frequent, "Ah! that I knew where happiness resides!" Believers know that all delights are in God's smile, in a sense of His reconciled love, in His abiding favor, in the sight of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the joy of joys, the heaven of heavens. For this incessant prayer should be made. Shine, gracious Lord! Cause darkness to flee far away! Let Your bright beams bring light and floods of peace. May we ever revel in the rich joy of the Gospel's tidings!

7. "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

Let the world scorn. Believers are the happy men. David's experience is their common lot. Their happiness is inward—the heart is its seat—it is implanted by God. It is real, substantial, and abiding. It laughs to scorn the transient merriment which earth's plenty gives. Excitement may follow the abundant harvest; revelry may exult in the luxuriant vintage; but the flare is momentary, and sinks in gloom. It is from earth, and earthly. The joy of the Lord is like the Giver—pure, perfect, and eternal.

8. "I will both lay down in peace and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety."

How sweet is the peace resulting from God's smile! No rage of earth or hell can ruffle it. In all disquietudes it is unmoved repose. What God bestows, no power can disturb. His gift is safety. Safe then are His people. Such is the Spirit's teaching in this psalm. May our hearts be able to respond, 'Our glad experience attests these truths!'

07.005 Psalm 5

Psalms 5:1-12

Faith prays, knowing that wrath will overwhelm God's foes, and mercies crown the righteous. May prayer be thus stirred up in us!

1, 2. "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation. Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for unto You will I pray." By varied terms the Spirit shows the varied exercise of prayer. Sometimes words flow in ready utterance. Sometimes deep feeling finds no vent; the spirit groans but cannot express. Sometimes the voice swells in agonizing cries. But prayer in every form ascends to heaven. May prayer in every form be our delight! Prayer, also, lays hold of God by all His gracious names. These names are all revealed to strengthen faith. Faith is well skilled to use them. Give ear, O Lord. Hearken, my King, my God!

3. "My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up."

Surely our earliest thoughts should rise to heaven, our earliest words should speak to God. Happy the life when every day begins with Him! The First should have our first employ. Let not the world intrude until our God has been reverently worshiped. As arrows from the bow, let early prayers fly swift to heaven. Let, also, watchfulness follow, waiting to catch the accepting smile, and to acknowledge the returning blessings.

4, 5, 6. "O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the slightest sin. Therefore, the proud will not be allowed to stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil. You will destroy those who tell lies. The Lord detests murderers and deceivers."

Let us remember that in prayer we draw near to the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. The court is holy; the unclean may not enter. Ponder the holiness of Him whom praying lips address. Sin in its every form is hateful in His sight. The very angels have no worthiness before Him. Blessed Jesus! we would draw near, cleansed in Your blood, fair in Your beauty, spotless in Your merits, righteous in Your righteousness.

Here, also, we have sin painted in diverse colors. The monster shows most hideous shapes. Words heaped on words describe its utter vileness. Are the ungodly wicked? Sin is wickedness. Is evil to be abhorred? It is evil. Is foolishness meet for contempt? It is folly. Is iniquity most base? It is iniquity. Is murder monstrous? It is blood-stained. Is craft a vice? It is deceit. This catalogue appals. This character is ours by nature. As such we could not rightly pray. Happy if we can add, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

7. "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; and in Your fear I will worship toward Your holy temple."

True worship bends in lowliest humility. It comes crying for mercy to blot out misery, and it sees a multitude of mercies outnumbering the multitude of sins. To count our sins surpasses all our powers. But where sin abounds God's mercy far exceeds.

True worship trembles at the majesty of God, but it is bold. Its eye is fixed on the appointed place where God has promised to come down and meet. This place is our most precious Jesus. We bless You, O our God, for our true mercy-seat, our real throne of grace.

8. "Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness, because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face." The believer knows that hostile eyes observe his walk, malignant to expose each erring step. His refuge is in prayer. He supplicates almighty guidance. He desires a heaven-high course. Lead me in Your righteousness. Help me to see Your way. He would walk on earth as in the courts above.

9. "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue." The picture shows the falseness of this hollow world. Intense iniquity pervades the heart. The mouth is opened to destroy. Their words are deathful darts. They bristle with destruction. The viper's poison lurks beneath their tongues. May we be followers of Him whose lips were grace!

10. "Destroy them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against You."

These words are free from slightest tinge of vengeful malice. Their inmost breathing is divine. The believer sees the coming wrath. He knows God's vengeance will descend. God's honor must be vindicated; God's glory must shine forth in just perdition of rebellious foes. The believer rises into oneness with his God. He exults and triumphs in the final overthrow. Perfect love in heaven will sing, "Just and true are Your ways, O King of saints."

11, 12. "But let all those who put their trust in You rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will compass him as with a shield."

We turn from bitter anguish to joy in overflowing tide. The saints appear in triple phase. They trust, they love, they walk in righteousness. Triple mercy meets them. God is their defense; He makes them rich in blessing; His favor is their all-surrounding shield. A triple exhortation sounds, but all the notes combine in one. Rejoice; forever shout for joy; be joyful in your God. May inward testimony prove our right to rejoice in the Lord always, and again and again to rejoice!

07.006 Psalm 6

Psalms 6:1-10 Here godly sorrow changes into godly joy. May we so mourn that we too may be comforted!

1. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Your anger, neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure."

Seasons recur when sense of sin and bodily distress cast into lowest depths. God's anger threatens to descend in fury. The furnace of displeasure seems to burn terribly. If faith shall fail, despair must overwhelm the soul. But amid terrors faith survives; it knows its refuge and looks above. It doubts not that God still loves. When frowns most darken on His brow it pleads, 'Let not this chastening destroy; let not the flames devour.'

2. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed." The fainting flesh shows sympathy. The anguish preys upon the total frame. Sickness of soul reduces every power. Prayer is redoubled. Incessant cries besiege the throne of grace. Misery calls mercy to arise. Disease implores the heavenly healer's aid. Blessed is the anguish which flees thus to God.

3. "My soul is also sorely vexed; but O Lord, how long?"

Sorrow of soul is sorrow's fullest cup. All other bitterness is light beside it. The mourning days drag heavily; no dawn appears to chase away night's shade. The moan is heard, "How long, O Lord! how long?" He who would read the deepest lessons of these words must go with Jesus to the garden and the cross. By imputation He is made the sin of sin. Mountains on mountains of iniquity meet on Him. Unspeakably tremendous is the load; unspeakably tremendous is the wrath incurred. His own consent received the vicarious guilt. Just anger thickens round Him. He feels the horrors of His place. Prostrate in misery, He cries, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Anguish cries, "My God, my God! why have You forsaken Me?" The curse may not spare Him. Great is the mystery, but it is our salvation.

4. "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; Oh save me for Your mercies' sake." The sweetest joy is holy fellowship with God. It is heaven's foretaste to see His smile and hear the whispers of His love. To realize this oneness is faith's privilege. But when this presence is withdrawn, when mists obscure this sun, the soul can find no other comfort. There cannot be a substitute for God. There is no rest while sad desertion lasts. It is perdition's wretchedness. The sinking soul craves mercy. It agonizes; "Return, deliver, save!"

5. "For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who shall give You thanks?"

There is fear lest sorrow's weight should snap the thread of life. Then means to tell of God's love, to speak of Christ, to sound His praise, to call poor sinners to His cross, to spread abroad His power to save, forever cease. Let us prize and sedulously use continued health and length of days. They are a precious talent. In bringing others to salvation's road, we rise in heaven ourselves.

6, 7. "I am worn out from sobbing. Every night tears drench my bed; my pillow is wet from weeping. My vision is blurred by grief; my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies." The picture of the sin-frightened soul becomes more dark. Outward expressions of deep woe abound; sighs rack the heart; tears flow in copious streams; luster no longer sparkles in the eye; this bitter grief writes old age on the brow. We see how terrible an enemy is sin. When viewed apart from Christ, it is intolerable woe. What must it be in hell! Let us bless Christ with every breath. He is the Lamb of God, who takes it all away.

8, 9. "Depart from, me, all you workers of iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer." The scene is changed. Light brightly shines; the shades of night have vanished. Mercy descends with healing on its wings. The groans are exchanged for songs of joy. We see the all-prevailing power of prayer. In darkest days let it take heaven by storm. It grasps Jehovah's arm. It clings until all blessings are given. Renewed favors strengthen the confidence that foes shall not prevail. Away! depart! you cannot lay me low. No business will I have with you. Answers to prayer stir up resolves to persevere. The suppliants who prosper are encouraged to pray more. Success begets continuance.

10. "Let all my enemies be ashamed and sore vexed; let them return and be ashamed suddenly." The Spirit here gives comfort to all harassed saints. The language is prophetic. It runs through time; it shadows out the final scene. Shame and vexation are treasured up for the ungodly. They sowed the seeds of evil; they must reap the harvest of confusion. It is hard to kick against the goads. The concluding words delightfully reveal our Lord. We see manifestations of His power and triumphs. Before His eye His enemies quail and fall backwards. In His extremest anguish an angel flies to raise and strengthen. Soon will the universe be witness to the mandate, "Depart, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." May we so suffer with Him, that we may reign together.

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