

WRITINGS OF THOMAS GUTHRIE

by Thomas Guthrie

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Thomas Guthrie, compiled for study and devotional reading.

3 Chapters

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S. Gems

Gems from Thomas Guthrie!

Some 175 choice selections from the writings of Thomas Guthrie, 1803-1873 The Bible!

"Oh, how I love Your Law! I meditate on it all day long!" Psalms 119:97

The Bible is . . .

an armory of heavenly weapons,

a pharmacy of infallible medicines,

a mine of exhaustless wealth,

a guidebook for every road,

a chart for every sea,

a medicine for every malady, and

a balm for every wound!

Rob us of our Bible, and our sky has lost its sun!

"This is my comfort in my affliction — that Your Word has revived me!" Psalms 119:50

"Your Words were found, and I ate them — and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart!" Jeremiah 15:16

~ ~ ~ ~

Behold the creeping worm — it is bred in corruption — it crawls on the ground — its food is the coarsest fare.

But in time, it undergoes its wonderful metamorphosis. The wriggling caterpillar — becomes a winged and painted butterfly! And at this change, along with its old skin — it casts off its old habits and instincts. Now, it has a will as well as wings to fly. Now . . .

its bed is the bosom of a flower,

its food is the honeyed nectar,

its home is the sunny air, and

new instincts animate its frame.

The change within, corresponds to the change without. It now spurns the ground — and, as you may gather from its merry, mazy dance — the creature is happy, and delights in the new duties which it is called to perform.

Just so it is in that change which grace works in sinners!

Their nature is now so accommodated to their redeemed state,

their wishes are so fitted to their wants,

their hopes are so fitted to their prospects,

their aspirations are so fitted to their honors,

and their will is so fitted to their work —

that they would be less content to return to their old polluted pleasures — than the beautiful butterfly would desire to be stripped of its silken wings, and condemned to pass its days amid the old, foul garbage, its former food!

~ ~ ~ ~ As if we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness!

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to Heaven — You are there. If I make my bed in the depths — behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea — even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You!" Psalms 139:7-12

We cannot shake off the presence of God! When our doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and all is still, and darkest night fills our chamber, and we are left alone to the companionship of our thoughts — it might keep them pure and holy to say, as if we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness, "You, O God, see me!"

The world called that man mad, who imagined that he saw God's eye looking on him . . .

out of every star of the sky,

and every flower of the earth,

and every leaf of the forest,

from the ground which he trod upon,

from the walls of his lonely chamber,

and out of the gloomy depths of night!

Mad! It was a blessed and holy imagination!

May God help you to feel yourselves at all times in His presence!

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account!" Hebrews 4:13

~ ~ ~ ~

I take my good works and my bad works!

I remember reading the response of a godly man, when on his deathbed, to his friends who spoke of the many good works he had performed.

"Good works! good works!" said the dying man, "I take my good works and my bad works, and cast them into one heap out of my sight, and turn to my only hope — the Cross of Christ!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The varied and rich profusion with which God had clothed His world!

As we looked down on the pleasant scene, we were astonished at the varied and rich profusion with which God had clothed His world.

Nature, like Joseph, was dressed in a coat of many colors — gray, black and yellow lichens clad the rock.

The glossy ivy, like an ambitious child, had planted its foot on the crag, and, hanging on by a thousand arms, had climbed to its stormy summit.

Mosses, of hues surpassing all the colors of the loom, spread an elastic carpet around the gushing fountain.

The wild thyme lent a bed to the weary, and its perfume to the air.

Heaths opened their blushing bosoms to the bee.

The primrose, modesty shrinking from observation, looked out from its leafy shade.

At the foot of the weathered stone, the fern raised its plumes, and on its summit the foxglove rang his beautiful bells; while the birch bent to kiss the stream, as it ran away laughing to hide itself in the lake below, or stretched out her arms to embrace the mountain ash and evergreen pine.

By a very slight exercise of imagination, in such a scene one could see Nature engaged in her adorations, and hear her singing, "The earth is full of the glory of God! How manifold are Your works, O Lord God Almighty! In wisdom You have made them all."

Insects — as well as angels,

the flowers that spangle the meadow — as well as the stars that spangle the sky,

the lamp of the glowworm — as well as the light of the sun,

the lark that sings in the air — and the seraph that is singing in Heaven,

the thunders that rend the clouds — or the trumpet that shall rend the tomb

— these and all things else, reveal God's attributes and proclaim His praise!

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" Psalms 150:6

~ ~ ~ ~ Wherever he turned, the sun was there! The dimness of sin impairs our vision, but were we to see Jesus, as we shall see Him in Heaven — I think it would happen to us as once it happened to a celebrated philosopher:

Pursuing his discoveries on the subject of light — he ventured on a bold experiment. He fixed his gaze steadily, for some time, on the sun — exposing his naked eyes to the burning beams of the

fiery disc.

And such was the impression made on the organ of sight — that wherever he turned, the sun was there!

If he looked down, the sun was beneath his feet;

it shone in the top of the sky in the murkiest midnight;

it blazed on the page of every book he read;

he saw it when he shut his eyes — and he saw it when he opened them.

The sun was the last object which he saw when he passed into sleep — and it was the first to meet his waking eyes.

Happy would it be for us, if we got some such sight of Jesus, and the glory of that Sun of Righteousness were so impressed upon the eye of faith — that we could never forget Him, and, ever seeing Him, ever loved Him!

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

~ ~ ~ ~

It was a serpent, not a Savior — which Eve pressed to her joyful bosom!

"I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord!" Genesis 4:1

Most expositors think that Eve imagined Cain to be the promised seed that would bruise the head of the serpent. (Adam Clarke's Commentary)

Many suppose that Eve thought that this son was the promised seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him, as her words may be read, "I have gotten a man, the Lord!" (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

Eve cherished the hope that she herself would be the mother of the Messiah. Wrung with remorse for her incalculable crime, and eager to see its misery and mischief undone — she grasped at the fulfillment of the promise, but only to be disappointed — to catch only a mocking shadow. It is a common saying, What we eagerly desire — we easily believe.

Our poor mother Eve, hailing in her first-born, the promised seed, clasped Cain to her beating bosom. "I have gotten," she exclaimed, "the man" — the promised man, "from the Lord!" Never was mother so bitterly disappointed! Never more false was the bright happy vision that has floated round many an infant's cradle! It was a serpent, not a Savior — which Eve pressed to her joyful bosom!

Here, in this quiet bower where Eve is singing her boy asleep, he who cruelly shed man's blood to kill — is mistaken for Him who generously shed His own blood to save!

~ ~ ~ ~

I would not live here always!

"Arise and depart; for this is not your rest — because it is polluted!" Micah 2:10

In his best hours, home, his own sinless home — a home with his Father above that starry sky — will be the wish of every Christian. He looks around him — the world is full of suffering; he is distressed by its sorrows, and vexed with its sins. He looks within him — he finds much in his own corruptions to grieve for. In the language of a heart repelled, grieved, vexed — he often turns his eye upward, saying, "I would not live here always!" (Job 7:16)

Not for all the gold of the world's mines;

not for all the pearls of her seas;

not for all the pleasures of her flashing, frothy cup;

not for all the crowns of her kingdoms —

would I live here always! Like a bird about to migrate to those sunny lands where no winter sheds her snows, or strips the grove, or binds the dancing streams — the Christian will often in spirit be pruning his wing for the hour of his flight to glory!

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Php 1:23

~ ~ ~ ~ The less you think of yourselves — the more will you esteem Christ!

I wish you to think little, very little of yourselves. Why?

Because the less you think of yourselves — the more will you esteem Christ.

Because the humbler you are in your own eyes — the higher you will stand in God's eyes.

The guest, who, coming modestly in, takes the lowest place at the table — is called up to the seat of honor.

None are so sure to lie in Jesus' bosom — as those who have been lying lowest at Jesus' feet.

Hence, brought by grace to see sin's vileness, and to feel its exceeding evil . . .

the holiest men — have always been the humblest,

the strongest men — have always felt the weakest in themselves,

the best men — have always thought the worst of themselves.

David, the man after God's own heart, said, "I was as a beast before You!"

Job, the most remarkable character of his own or any age for piety and uprightness, said, as he shrank from his own image, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!"

And Paul, though the greatest of all the apostles, much too great as well as honest, to fish for compliments and depreciate himself that others might praise him — spoke of himself not as the least, but as less than the least, of all saints.

The tree grows best skyward, which grows most downward. Just so, the lower the saint grows in humility — the higher he grows in holiness. The soaring corresponds to the sinking.

The humble man's heartfelt prayer shall be, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to You! I am glad to enter Heaven at the back of the wicked Manasseh, or the immoral woman, or the thief of the cross. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

~ ~ ~ ~ A blind father sits by the dull fire with a blind boy on his knee!

I can imagine few sadder sights than an entire family, parents and children, all blind — a home where . . .

the flowers have no beauty,

the night has no stars,

the morning no blushing dawn,

and the azure sky no glorious sun.

A home where they have never looked on each other's faces; but a blind father sits by the dull fire with a blind boy on his knee — and the sightless mother nurses at her bosom a sightless babe that never gladdened her with its happy smile.

How would such a spectacle touch the most callous feelings, and move to pity even a heart of stone!

But a greater calamity is ours. By nature, the eyes of our understanding are darkened!

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God!" 2 Corinthians 4:4

"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the blindness of their hearts." Ephesians 4:18

~ ~ ~ ~ The journey which our Divine Lover took

The story of Christ's redeeming love surpasses anything related in the pages of the wildest romances. These tell of a prince, who, enamored with a humble maiden, assumed a disguise. Doffing his crown and royal state for the dress of common life, he left his palace, traveled far, faced danger, and fared hard — to win the heart of a peasant's daughter, and raise her from obscurity to the position of a queen!

Facts are more wonderful than fables. The journey which our Divine Lover took was from Heaven to earth. To win His bride, He exchanged the bosom of the eternal Father — to lie, a feeble infant, on a woman's bosom. The Son of God left the throne of the universe, and assumed the guise of humanity — to be cradled in a feeding trough and murdered on a cross!

In His people, He found His bride deep in debt — and paid it all. Herself under sentence of death — He died in her place. A lost creature, clad in rags — He took off His own royal robes to cover her. To wash her — He shed His blood! To win her — He shed His tears! Finding her poor and miserable and naked, He endowed her with all His goods — and heir of all things. Everything that He possessed as His Father's Son — she was to forever enjoy and share with Himself!

"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:19

~ ~ ~ ~

Every groan of your wounded heart; your every sigh, and cry, and prayer!

Were Jesus Christ a mere man — how could He guard the interests, and manage the affairs of His innumerable people, scattered far and wide over the face of the habitable globe?

What heart would be large enough to embrace them all?

What eyes could see them all?

What ears could hear them all?

Think of the ten thousand prayers pronounced in a hundred different languages that go up at once, and altogether, to His ear! Yet there is no confusion; none are lost; none are missed in the crowd.

Nor are they heard by Him as, standing on yonder lofty crag, we hear the din of the city that lies stretched out far beneath us, with all its sounds of cries, and rumbling wheels, and human voices — mixed up into one deep, confused, hollow roar — like the boom of the sea's distant breakers.

No! every believer may feel as if he were alone with God — enjoying a private audience with the King in His presence-chamber! Be of good cheer. Every groan of your wounded heart; your every sigh, and cry, and prayer — falls as distinctly on Jesus' ear as if you stood beside His throne, or, nearer still, lay with John on His bosom, and felt the beating of His heart against your own!

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:16

~ ~ ~ ~ As you tear yourself from the encircling arms of the enchantress!

"She caught him by his cloak and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house!" Genesis 39:12

Let me warn you that such a holy life as the text enjoins, is impossible to all but those who are on their guard against the beginnings of evil. Take alarm at an evil thought, wish, or desire! These are the germs of sin — the floating seeds which drop into the heart, and finding in our natural corruption a fat and favorable soil, spring up into actual transgressions. These, like the rattle of the snake, or the hiss of the serpent — reveal the presence and nearness of danger!

The experience of all holy men proves that sin is most easily crushed in the bud — and that it is safer to flee from temptation than to fight it. Fight like a man when you cannot avoid the battle — but rather flee than fight.

Be afraid of temptation — avoid it — abhor it!

Let your answer, as you tear yourself from the encircling arms of the enchantress, and seek safety in flight — be that of Joseph's: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" Genesis 39:9

~ ~ ~ ~ The greatest fool in the world!

Sin is the greatest folly — and the sinner the greatest fool in the world! There is no such madness, even in the most degraded lunacy.

Think of a man risking eternity and his everlasting happiness — on the uncertain chance of surviving another year!

Think of a man purchasing a momentary pleasure — at the cost of endless pain!

Think of a dying man living — as if he were never to die!

That man is a fool . . .

who, with a soul formed for the purest enjoyments — delights in the lowest pleasures;

who, content with this poor world — rejects Heavenly bliss;

who, surest sign of insanity — hates the heavenly Father, and the Savior, and those who love Him;

who, in love with sin — hugs his chains;

who, lying under the wrath of God — is merry;

who sings and dances on the thin crust that, ever and always breaking beneath the feet of others — is all that separates him from an infinite abyss of fire!

Every Christian looks back upon his unconverted state, and says with Asaph, "I was foolish and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You!" Psalms 73:22

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin is their mother — and these are her hateful progeny!

Men often talk of poverty, misfortune, disease, and bereavement, as evils. Yet there is no radical evil in this world, but sin. If you still persist in calling other things evils, remember that sin is their mother — and these are her hateful progeny!

No sin — no suffering!

No sin — no sorrow!

No sin — no death, no grave, no Hell! In His humblest works!

The British Museum possessed in the Portland Vase — one of the finest remains of ancient art. It may be remembered how — some years ago — the world of culture was shocked to hear that this precious relic had been shattered by a maniac's hand.

Without disparaging classic taste, or this exquisite example of it — I venture to say that there is not a poor worm which we tread upon, nor a sere leaf, that dances merrily in its fallen state to the autumn winds — but has superior claims upon our study and admiration. The child who plucks a lily or rose to pieces, or crushes the fragile form of a fluttering insect — destroys an intricate work, which the highest human art could not invent, nor man's best skilled hand construct.

There is not a leaf which quivers on the trees of the forest — which does not eclipse the brightest glories of the painter's brush or the sculptor's chisel! A simple flower has no rival among the

triumphs of invention, which the silly world flocks to see.

Yes, in His humblest works, God infinitely surpasses the highest efforts of created skill.

~ ~ ~ ~

Flits life through, a painted butterfly, from flower to flower of pleasure!

It is the curse of vice, that, where its desires outlive the power of gratification, or are denied the opportunity of indulgence — they become a punishment and a torment! Denied all opportunity of indulgence . . .

what would a drunkard do in Heaven?

Or a glutton?

Or a voluptuary?

Or an ambitious man?

Or a worldling?

Or one whose soul lies buried in a heap of gold?

Or she who, neglecting quite as much the noble purposes of her being, flits life through, a painted butterfly, from flower to flower of pleasure, and wastes the day of grace in the idolatry and adornment of a form which death shall change into utter loathsomeness, and the grave into a heap of dust?

These . . .

would hear no sounds of ecstasy,

would see no brightness,

would smell no fragrant perfumes

— in the heavenly paradise. But, weeping and wringing their hands, they would wander up and down the golden streets to bewail their misery, crying, "The days have come in which we have no pleasure in them!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The reptile is not dead!

"Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41

Never fear to suffer — but oh! fear to sin. Stand in awe of God — and in fear of temptation.

It is not safe to bring gunpowder within reach even of a spark!

Nor is it safe, however dexterous your driving, to shave the edge of a beetling precipice with your wagon wheels.

Nor is it safe in the best-built bark that ever rode the waves, to sail on the rim of a roaring whirlpool.

The seed of the Woman has, indeed, bruised the head of the serpent; yet beware — the reptile is not dead!

It is dangerous to handle an adder, or approach its poison fangs, if the creature is alive — even although its head is crushed.

Like Samuel, we must hew our Agags to pieces!

~ ~ ~ ~

You are only fattening it for worms!

"For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs!" 1 Timothy 6:7-10

If you are wealthy, you may reside in a splendid mansion — but it is only to leave it one day for the narrow house! You may pamper the body with the costliest luxuries — but you are only fattening it for worms! Nor can the flashing blaze of a thousand diamonds blind our eyes to the melancholy fact that this mirthful, beautiful, charming form shall, stripped of all its luxury, be wrapped in a shroud, nailed up in a coffin — and thrust down into a black hole to rot!

But give me the treasures of redemption . . .

my food is heavenly manna,

my wine is divine love,

my sweet pillow is the bosom of the Son,

my strong defense the arm of Almighty God,

my home is that palace, eternal in the heavens!

~ ~ ~ ~

Sweetly submissive to the will of God — shall it not fare with us as with the pliant reeds which love the hollows and fringe the margin of the lake. Bending to the stormy blast, not resisting it — they raise their heads anew, unharmed by the storm that has snapped the mountain pine, and rent the hearts of oak asunder!

"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but may Your will be done." Luke 22:42

"It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him." 1 Samuel 3:18

"May the Lord's will be done!" Acts 21:14

"It is a very great attainment to lie passive in God's hands, and know no will but His!" (Alexander Smellie)

"Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition." (Jeremy Burroughs)

~ ~ ~ ~

Yet the atheist believes that . . .

A crude heap of bricks upon the ground, was never seen to arrange itself into the walls, stairs and chimneys of a house.

The dust and filings on a blacksmith's floor, have never been known to form themselves into the wheels and mechanism of a watch.

The types loosely flung from the printer's mold, never yet fell into the form of a poem, such as Homer, or Dante, or Milton would have constructed.

The crudest hut of Bushmen, the Indian's simple canoe fashioned from a forest tree, the plainest clay urn — were never supposed to owe their form to the hands of chance.

Yet the atheist believes that . . .

nature's magnificent temple was built without an architect,

her flowers of glorious beauty were colored without a painter, and

her intricate, complicated, but perfect machinery constructed without an intelligent mind.

I do not need to open the Bible to learn that there is a God. It is enough that I open my eyes, and turn them on that great book of nature, where it is legibly written, clearly revealed in every page. God! That word may be read in the stars and on the face of the sun! It is . . .

painted on every flower,

traced on every leaf,

engraved on every rock,

whispered by the winds,

sounded forth by the billows of ocean, and

heard by the dullest ear in the rolling thunder.

That man gave the Atheist a crushing answer, who told him that the very feather with which he penned the words, "There is no God," refuted his audacious lie!

~ ~ ~ ~

How many vile weeds grow there!

We should certainly attempt always . . .

to follow Jesus,

to walk as He walked,

to speak as He spoke,
to think as He thought, and
to mold our whole conduct and life on the pattern that He has left us.

Yet our best attempts will leave us more and more convinced that our only hope for redemption, salvation, forgiveness, lies in the mercy of the Father, and the merits of the Son.

Even after we have been made new creatures in Jesus Christ, the most that we can do — even with the aid of the Holy Spirit — is to creep along the path which the Savior walked, and leave the mark of our knees, where He left the prints of His feet.

Christian, your corruptions have suffered a mortal wound — but they are not dead.

Your affections rise upward to Heaven — yet how much are they held back by the things of earth.

Though your heart turns to Christ, like the compass needle to the pole — how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly it points to Him.

Your spirit has wings — yet how short are its flights, and how often, like a half-fledged eaglet, has it to return to its nest on the Rock of Ages.

Your soul is a garden where Christ delights to walk when the north and south winds blow, to inhale its spices — yet with many lovely flowers, how many vile weeds grow there!

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry!" Colossians 3:5

~ ~ ~ ~

How then distinguish them?

You may know a sheep from a swine, when both have fallen into the same mire — and are, in fact, so bemired, that neither by coat nor color can the one be distinguished from the other.

How then distinguish them? Nothing more easy!

The unclean swine, in circumstances agreeable to its nature, wallows in the filth.

But the sheep — a type of the godly — strives, and struggles to get out of the muck!

~ ~ ~ ~ No cross — no crown!

It is no easy thing to be a Christian! If words have any meaning, there are great and painful sacrifices which are required of those who are willing to take Christ on His own terms:

"If any man will come after Me — let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into Hell."

God does not indeed put all His people to such a trial as Abraham's, saying, "Take now your son, and offer him for a burnt offering," nor does Christ lay on all his disciples an injunction so hard as this, "Go, sell all you have, and give it to the poor." Still the adage holds true as ever, "No cross — no crown!"

To mortify the lusts of the flesh,

to be crucified to the world,

to overcome the devil,

to die daily to sin and live daily to righteousness,

to be meek and gentle and patient and generous and kind and good

— in one word, to be Christ-like, is a work beyond, far beyond our ability! Yet God promises to perfect his strength in our weakness, and is "mighty to save."

~ ~ ~ ~ The first is good — the second is better — but the last is best of all.

"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things!" Titus 2:10

He who so orders his life and conduct as to bring no dishonor or reproach on religion, who gives no occasion to its enemies to blaspheme, nor by his falls and inconsistencies furnishes scandals to be told in Gath and published in the streets of Ashkelon — does well. He may thank God that, amid life's slippery paths, he has not prayed in vain, "Hold up my goings, that my footsteps may not slip!"

He does better still in whose life religion presents itself, less in a negative form, and more in a positive form. For, while it is well to depart from evil — it is better to do good.

Nor does he live in vain who exemplifies by his daily life and conduct the pure, and virtuous, and holy, and beneficent, and sublime, and saving doctrines of God his Savior.

The first is good — the second is better — but the last is best of all.

So to live as to . . .

be beautiful, as well as living epistles of Jesus Christ, seen and read by all men;

recommend the truth to the admiration and love of others — so to live as to constrain them to say, "What a good and blessed thing is true religion!"

to resemble those books which, in addition to their noble contents, are bound in gold, are illuminated and illustrated with beautiful paintings — this is best of all.

~ ~ ~ ~

Tell me your company — and I will tell you your character!

Man is so constituted that, even unconsciously, without either intending or attempting it — he imitates what he is familiar with. We speak, for instance, with the peculiar accent of our native district. Of much more consequence, we learn almost certainly to copy in our lives, the manners

and morals of our ordinary associates.

According to common belief, the chameleon becomes red, blue, or green, with the ground it lies on. Just so, man is endowed with a property akin to this. As to the pleasure people feel in associating with those of tastes similar to their own, we owe the well-known saying, "Tell me your company — and I will tell you your character!" Hence the wisdom of David's practice, "I am the companion of all those who fear You." Hence also, to quote a Scripture adage, "Do not be misled — Bad company corrupts good character!" 1 Corinthians 15:33

~ ~ ~ ~

Look at that cold creeping worm! The playful child shudders from its touch!

Yet in a few weeks, and with merry laugh and flying feet, that same child over flowery meadow, is hunting an insect that never lights upon the ground, but flitting in painted beauty from flower to flower — drinks nectar from their cups, and sleeps the summer night away in the bosom of their perfumes.

If that is the same boy — this is also the same creature. The change most wonderful!

Yet this is but a dull, earthly emblem of the divine transformation wrought on those who are converted by God!

Fallen though he is, man is capable of undergoing a more wondrous change than the insect when, no longer a worm, no longer crawling on the ground, no longer feeding on garbage — it leaves its shell to spend its happy days in sport, flitting from flower to flower; its food their juices and its bed their leaves.

The spiritual change which we call conversion, is not a mere reform. It is a mighty revolution — a revolution greater than the tomes of profane history. Conversion changes the heart, the habits, the eternal destiny of an immortal being!

Conversion does not bestow new faculties. Yet our affections, our temperament, our will, our judgment partake of this great and holy change. Thus, the understanding is enlightened; the will is renewed; and our whole temperament is sweetened and sanctified by the Spirit of God.

~ ~ ~ ~ His cross and His crown are inseparable!

Be assured that, unless you are obeying Christ as a sovereign — you have never yet known Him as a Savior. Your faith is vain. His cross and His crown are inseparable!

~ ~ ~ ~

See what you shall be!

I have seen some pretty but vain, silly woman come with mincing steps and haughty air into the house of God, not to worship, but be worshiped! I have thought it would be well that such people, for once at least, saw what they are to become.

One, when preaching on "the pride of life," fixed his large black eyes on a proud beauty who sat before him, and drove the color off her cheek. Taking a grinning skull from out the folds of his

cloak, he suddenly held it up before her face, and cried, "See what you shall be!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Burn our ships!

The brave old Romans, whom Caesar led, invaded our beloved England after a different fashion. The first thing they did, on landing on British shores, was to burn their ships — doing so in sight of thousands of Britons who were bravely mustering on the heights of England, to defend their homes, their wives and little ones, their freedom and native land.

The Romans' own hands put the torch to the fleet which had brought them to Britain — and, in the event of failure, would have carried them back to Italy. With the glare of that brave conflagration on their banners and serried ranks — we cannot wonder that, with such brave sons to fight her battles — Rome rose from a petty town to be conqueror of the world. Both her destiny and their determination were to be plainly seen in their burning ships. Bringing to the enterprise such an indomitable spirit and such decision of character — unless the stars of Heaven fought against them as against Sisera — how could they fail to conquer?

Such is the resoluteness of mind and purpose the Christian's work requires; nor without some good measure of that, as well as of the grace and Spirit of God, can it be brought to a successful outcome. On engaging in our Father's business — entering on the trials and triumphs of the Christian life, we also are, so to speak, to burn our ships, nor so much as think of retreat! Abandoning forever any idea of returning to sin — we are to leave no way open but that which, though beset with trials and swarming with foes, leads straight on to Heaven!

"He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it!" Matthew 10:38-39

~ ~ ~ ~

Eternity opens the darkest eyes!

"You have eyes — but fail to see!" Mark 8:18

By nature, we are born blind. We are all in darkness until we are converted.

There are animals which, by a strange and mysterious law of Providence, are born in blind. They leave their mother's womb to pass the first period of their being utterly sightless. But, when some days have come and gone, time unseals their eyelids, and they are delivered from the power of darkness.

But not ten days, nor ten years, nor any length of time, will do us such a friendly office.

Oh, how men shall see, and regret in the eternal world — the folly they were guilty of in this world! Eternity opens the darkest eyes, but opens them, alas, too late: "He lifted up his eyes, being in torment!"

He is a madman who braves that fate! Yet it awaits you, unless you bestir yourselves, and, shaking sloth away, seize the golden opportunity to pursue the Savior with the blind man's cry, "O Son of David, have mercy on me!"

~ ~ ~ ~ A bloody, sickening fact!

Look on the horrors of this battlefield! This is no imagination, but a fact — a bloody, sickening fact!

The ground lies thick with the mangled brave — the air is shaken with the most horrible shrieks — every countenance expresses the passions of a fiend! Fiercer than the cannon's flash, shoot flames of wrath from men's eyes! They sheathe their swords in each other's bodies — every stroke makes a widow; and every ringing volley scatters a hundred orphans on a homeless world!

The scene is nothing by rage, revenge, and agony!

I would sooner believe that there was no God at all — than that man appears in this scene as he came from the hand of a benignant Divinity. Man must have fallen — nature, society, the state of the world, are so many echoes of the voice of Scripture. They proclaim that man is fallen — that the gold has become dim, and the fine gold has perished!

~ ~ ~ ~

There is no soundness in us — but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores!

The Bible teaches us to believe that all men, in consequence of sin . . .

are criminals in the sight of God;

lie under sentence of death and damnation;

are dead in trespasses and sins;

there is none that does good, no, not one; and

presenting sin in a totally different aspect from that in which it is regarded by many as a light and little thing — that sin is exceeding sinful!

What terms can express man's degradation, other than those of Scripture: Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight! Or, in figures borrowed from the loathsome leprosy — the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, and there is no soundness in us — but only wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores!

However others may assert man's dignity — we all put locks on our doors, and build prisons, and support police.

~ ~ ~ ~ The peculiar glory of Christianity and grand lesson of the Cross!

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

It is when we bless those who curse us, and love those who hate us, and pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us — that we present the truest image of God, and most clearly prove ourselves to be the children of our heavenly Father. He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and His rain to fall upon the just and unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45)

In His common providence, God makes no distinction between saints and sinners — but distributes His treasures of shower and sunshine equally to both. Thus we learn to embrace all

men in the arms of Christian affection, and, without excluding even our bitterest enemies, to do them good as we have opportunity.

Forgiving our enemies is the peculiar glory of Christianity and grand lesson of the Cross, shines bright in every sunbeam, and sounds in every falling shower.

"You have heard that it was said: 'You shall love your neighbor — and hate your enemy.' But I say unto you:

love your enemies,

bless those who curse you,

do good to those who hate you, and

pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

— that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:43-45

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you — your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins — your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

~ ~ ~ ~

I do all to the glory of God!

Whether I eat or drink, Paul said, or whatever I do:

go to a feast — or a funeral;

make tents — or sermons;

go to the market to sell my work for money — or to the church to sell Christ's free salvation without money or price;

earn my bread with the sweat of my brow — or accept the hospitality of my host;

make tents at Corinth — or fight with wild beasts at Ephesus;

escape from Damascus in a basket — or stand like a lion before Nero at Rome

— I do all to the glory of God!

The glory of God, and not our own, is the end we should have in view in all the plans and purposes, the actions and arrangements of our life.

As well as the seraphs that sing before the eternal throne — those believers glorify God who . . .

kindle a fire,

or sweep a floor,

or guide a plough,

or sit over a desk,

or work at a bench,
or break stones in the quarry —
with a desire to do their work that God may be thereby glorified.

~ ~ ~ The Invisible is visible!

The wind is invisible — but not its effect.

The clouds scurry across the sky,
the trees swing their arms wildly in the air,
waves chase each other in sport across the corn fields,
and the boat, catching the gale in her flowing sheet, goes dancing over the billows.

Just so, although in a sense infinitely higher — the Invisible is visible!

In His works we see a God, who, seeing all — remains Himself unseen.

He is lost, not in darkness — but in light.

He is a sun that blinds the eye which is turned on its burning disk.

Angels themselves are unable to sustain His glory. They cover their faces with their wings, and use them, as a man uses his hand — to screen their eyes from the ineffable effulgence!

~ ~ ~ ~

Holiness to the Lord!

Though grace is slow in its progress — it shall change the whole man early. The motto which flashed in gold on the High Priest's forehead shall be engraved . . .

on our reason,
on our heart,
on our imagination,
on our thoughts,
on our desires,
on our affections,
on our lips, and hands, and feet,
on our wealth,
on our abilities,
on our time,
on our body and soul.

The whole man shall be "Holiness to the Lord!"

~ ~ ~ ~ Our vessels need never be empty!

As with an arch, the grace of God stands the firmer, the more weight you lay on it; its sufficiency, at least, will be the more evident; the more clearly you will see the truth of the promise, "My grace is sufficient for you!" With the well ever full and ever flowing — our vessels need never be empty. Whether, therefore, you want . . .

more faith,

more purity of heart or peace of mind,

more light or love,

a humbler or a holier spirit,

a calmer or a tenderer conscience,

a livelier sense of Christ's excellencies or of your own unworthiness,

more tears for Christ's feet or more honors for his head

— fear not to draw, to hope, to ask, too much.

~ ~ ~ ~ The supplies of His grace and mercy are unexhausted and exhaustless!

Myriads of leaves clothe the forest,

myriads of flowers bespangle the meadow,

myriads of insects dance in the sunbeams,

myriads of birds sing in the woodlands,

myriads of fish swim in stream and ocean,

myriads of stars glitter in the nightly sky —

and every leaf is as perfect in form,

every flower is as beautiful in colors,

every living creature is fashioned with such skill, and

every burning star is guided through space with as much care —

as if it engrossed the entire attention of God, and there was not another but itself within the bounds of His universe!

The number of objects our hearts can hold, or our arms embrace, or our eyes watch, or our fortunes enrich, or our bounty pension — is limited; confined within a narrow range — they are small at the largest and few at the most.

It is not so with Him who is mighty to save, abundant in goodness and truth. The supplies of His grace and mercy are unexhausted and exhaustless! Their type shines in that sun which for six

thousand years has shed its light . . .
on seas and continents,
on crowded cities and lonely solitudes,
on burning deserts and fields of ice,
on palaces and cottages,
on ragged beggars and sceptered kings,
on all countries and classes of men.

and with fires fed we know not how — the sun shines today as bright as ever — his eye not dim,
nor his natural strength abated!

And as this is but an image, and a faint image, of God — then well may his servant assure us, that
there shall be no lack to those who fear Him. None — neither for the body nor the soul; neither for
time nor eternity!

~ ~ ~ ~ Where the grace of God will live and grow

"For the grace of God has appeared . . . instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires —
and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age!" Titus 2:11-12

I have seen a tree crowning a naked rock on the mountain-summit. There it stood — in search of
food sending its roots out over the bare stone, and down into every cranny — securely anchored
by these moorings to the stormy crag. We have wondered how it grew up there, amid such rough
circumstances — how it could have survived many a wintry blast — and where, indeed, it found
food or footing. Yet, despite hardships and adversities, it has grown and lived; it has kept its feet,
when the pride of the valley has bent to the storm; and has kept its green flag waving on nature's
topmost battlements!

More wonderful than this, however, is it to see where the grace of God will live and grow. Tender
exotic! As this plant was brought from a more congenial climate — one would suppose that it
would require the kindest nursing and most advantageous circumstances.

Take two instances.

Look at the thief on the cross. It is from the very edge of the pit, just as he is going over — that the
mighty hand of Jesus plucks him! Who that heard that robber with his fellow and the base crowd
insult a dying Savior, who that saw him nailed to his cross, a daring, despairing, hardened ruffian
— could have believed it possible that a few hours thereafter, he would be singing songs in
Paradise!

Yet the sun of that day had not set behind Judah's hills, before a blaspheming wretch ripe for Hell
was converted, saved, and sanctified — and had taken his flight to Heaven to tell to listening
angels what divine mercy had done for him — how Christ had saved him at the uttermost!

Look also at Paul.

The old bed of the sea laid bare for the foot of Israel,

the dry rock changed into a gushing fountain,

the rotting tenant of the tomb rising at Christ's word, to appear with life sparkling in his eye and health blooming on his rosy cheek — did not attest God's power over dead matter, more plainly than Paul's conversion attests His power over a depraved heart.

What more incredible than that yonder man who, with a fierceness, a firmness of purpose, and an intensity of hatred uncommon to the sincere years of youth, stands glutting his eyes with Stephen's blood — would before long be Christ's greatest and most devoted apostle; and would die, after a life of unparalleled sufferings, a martyr in the very cause for which he sheds the first martyr's blood! Yet so it was!

Paul was a persecutor — and is called to be a preacher!

He was a murderer — and becomes a martyr!

Once, there was no Pharisee so proud — now there is no publican so humble!

~ ~ ~ ~

They cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet which were nailed on Calvary!

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is." 1 John 3:2

We esteem it not the least of the blessings which shall be enjoyed in Heaven, that we shall see Jesus there. We shall see Him as He is! We shall gaze with fond, adoring love, on the very face and form which our faith has so often tried to imagine, and painters of the greatest genius have utterly failed to express.

What a blessed scene Heaven presents! All eyes are fixed on Jesus; every look is love; gratitude-glows in every bosom, and swells in every song. Now with golden harps, they sound the Savior's praise; and now, descending from their thrones to do Him homage, they cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet which were nailed on Calvary!

~ ~ ~ ~ An emblem of the natural heart!

A mass of rock that had fallen from the overhanging crag, had some wild flowers growing in its fissures, and on its top the foxglove, with its spike of beautiful but deadly flowers. Passing by this place, we once came upon an adder as it lay in ribbon coil, basking on the sunny ground. At our approach the reptile stirred, uncoiled itself, and raising its venomous head, with eyes like burning coals, it shook its cloven tongue, and, hissing, gave signs of battle. Attacked, it retreated; and, making for that mass of rock, wormed itself into a hole in its side. Its nest and home were there.

And in looking on that shattered rock — fallen from its original elevation — with its flowery but fatal charms, the home and nest of the adder, where nothing grew but poisoned beauty, and nothing dwelt but a poisoned brood — it seemed to us an emblem of the natural heart, which experience proves is a habitation of devils, and which the prophet pronounces to be desperately wicked.

"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

"Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man!" Matthew 15:19-20

~ ~ ~ ~ The less you think of yourselves — the more will you esteem Christ!

I wish you to think little, very little of yourselves. Why? Because the less you think of yourselves — the more will you esteem Christ; and the humbler you are in your own eyes — the higher you will stand in God's eyes. The guest, who, coming modestly in, takes the lowest place at the table, is called up to the seat of honor. None are so sure to lie in Jesus' bosom — as those who have been lying lowest at Jesus' feet.

Hence, brought by grace to see sin's vileness, and to feel its exceeding evil . . .

the holiest men, have always been the humblest,

the strongest men, have always felt the weakest,

the best men, have always thought the worst of themselves.

David, the man after God's own heart, said, "I was as a beast before You!"

Job, the most remarkable character of his own or any age for piety and uprightness, said, as he shrank from his own image, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!"

And Paul, though the greatest of all the apostles, much too great as well as honest to fish for compliments and depreciate himself that others might praise him — spoke of himself not as the least, but as less than the least, of all saints.

As the tree grows best skyward, which grows most downward — so the lower the saint grows in humility, the higher he grows in holiness. The soaring corresponds to the sinking.

The humble man's heartfelt prayer shall be, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to You, my God — and glad to enter Heaven at the back of Manasseh, or the immoral woman, or the thief of the cross. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

~ ~ ~ ~

To speak the plain truth — but for Christ, we would be suffering Hell's intolerable torment!

What do you owe to your Lord? You cannot estimate that. Therefore . . .

be your money millions or mites,

be your talents ten or two,

be your hearts young and green, or scared and withered

— lay them at a Savior's feet. Let His glory, be your glorious aim!

~ ~ ~ ~

Take up your station near the cruel cross!

Inflame your love, by looking to Christ.

Go often, and, with the shepherds, gaze on the heavenly babe laid on a pallet of straw in the corner of a manger.

With the disciples, accompany Him to Gethsemane, and sit beneath her hoary olive trees to listen in the stilly night, to the moans and groans of the Son in deep soul agony.

Or join the weeping women, and, with the other Marys and His fainting mother — take up your station near the cruel cross, and meditate on these things until you can say with David, "While I was musing, the fire burned!"

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God!"
Hebrews 12:2

~ ~ ~ ~

It is not the tears we shed — but the blood He shed!

Should a mote of dust get into the natural eye — the irritation induced, will weep out the evil. It is just so, with sin in a tender and holy conscience.

But tears — an ocean of tears — wash not out the guilt of sin! All tears are lost that do not fall at the feet of Jesus. But even the tears which bathe a Savior's feet, do not wash away our sins. When tears are flowing fast, we are to remember that it is not the tears we shed — but the blood He shed, which is the price of pardon. Our guilty souls are nowhere to be cleansed but in that bath of blood where the foulest are free to wash and certain to be cleansed!

~ ~ ~ ~ His answers correspond to our wants, rather than to our wishes!

My little child is upset when I pluck a sharp knife from his hands. He doubts his father's love because he does not always kiss him — but sometimes corrects him. Turning away his head from the nauseous medicine, he must be coaxed — sometimes compelled to drink the cup which, although bitter to the taste, is the restorative of health.

Who that sees the child . . .

seek candy — when he needs medicine,

eagerly clutch at tempting but unripe fruit,

prefer play, and go weeping to school,

reject simple but healthful fare for some luscious, but noxious luxury — who, I say, does not feel thankful that God reserves the right of refusal, and makes His answers correspond to our wants, rather than to our wishes?

~ ~ ~ ~

There is no burden too heavy for the back of prayer to carry!

Prayer is the resource that never fails!

There is no evil from which it does not offer escape.

There is no sin of which it may not, through the application of Christ's blood, procure the pardon.

There is no temptation over which, calling in the aids of the Holy Spirit, it may not achieve a victory.

There is no burden too heavy for the back of prayer to carry, nor wound too deep for its balm to heal. It provides . . .

comfort in all the sorrows,

relief amid all the troubles,

~ ~ ~ ~ A very dreadful and deadly sin!

Plants grow only in certain soils, or at certain heights, or under certain lines of latitude. Unlike these, pride is a weed that, springing up in every heart, grows at all elevations — as well in the humblest, as in the highest stations of life; and under every system of religion, the true as well as the false.

Pride is a very dreadful and deadly sin! Has it not proved itself so?

Pride cost Nebuchadnezzar his reason!

Pride cost Hezekiah his kingdom.

Taking root in the hearts of our first parents, pride cost them and mankind, Eden!

Springing up in angels' bosoms, pride cost them Heaven!

"I hate pride and arrogance!" Proverbs 8:13

"The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished!" Proverbs 16:5

~ ~ ~ ~ The print of the nail is on the very hand which waves away the lost into perdition!

Divine Love is not blind. God's love being as just as tender, sinners may rest assured, that out of mere pity to them, God will neither sacrifice the interests, nor peril the happiness of His people.

Love herself — bleeding, dying, redeeming love — with her own hand will bar the door of Heaven, and from its happy, holy precincts, exclude all that could hurt or defile. Stern words these! And when divine Love puts on her armor to fight against him — then what hope for the man who has compelled her to be his enemy? Having armed Love against you, where now are you flying?

Look at this scene of judgment. He who died on the cross, occupies the throne of judgement. Love incarnate presides at that majestic tribunal. The print of the nail is on the very hand which waves away the lost into perdition! The voice which so often invited the impenitent — is that which now condemns and commands them to depart from Him!

"Then He will say to those on his left: Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matthew 25:41

~ ~ ~ ~

He was unfortunate enough to be very wealthy — and so he returned to the embraces of the world!

A young man, liberally endowed with wealth, and, better still, with admirable moral qualities, had, elbowing his way through the crowd, come to Jesus; and sought his counsel — saying, "Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Go!" was the answer, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me!"

He was not prepared for this — for such a complete surrender of all which men hold dear. He longed, and looked, and wistfully looked again — but the price was too high. He was unfortunate enough to be very wealthy — and so he returned to the embraces of the world — "sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Seizing the occasion, and taking His eyes from this youth, as with drooping head and slow, reluctant steps, he disappears in the distance — Jesus turns a solemn, sad look on His disciples to say: "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!" Luke 18:24-25

~ ~ ~ ~

God's variety!

God, while He preserves unity — He delights in variety. A dull, dreary, uninteresting uniformity is quite foreign to nature.

Look at the trees of the forest all presenting the same grand features — what variety in their forms!

Some, standing erect, wear a proud and lofty air;

some, modest-like, grow lowly and seek the shade;

some, like grief, hang the head and have weeping branches;

some, like aspiring and unscrupulous ambition, climb up by means of others, killing what they climb by;

while some, rising straight and tall, with branches all pointing upward, present in their tapering forms emblems of the piety that spurns the ground and seeks the skies.

Or look at the flowers — what variety of mirthful colors in a meadow!

Or look at mankind — what variety of expression in human faces, of tones in human voices! There are . . .

no two faces alike,

no two flowers alike,
no two leaves alike, and
no two grains of sand alike!

In that variety, God manifests His exhaustless resources, and nature possesses one of her most attractive charms.

So why should we insist on all men observing a uniform style of worship, or thinking alike on matters that are not essential to salvation? You might as well insist on all men wearing the same expression of face, or speaking in the same tone of voice. There are as great natural and constitutional differences in the minds of men, as in the bodies of men!

~ ~ ~ ~

Thus it shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honor!

A busy, useful, holy life, is a noble life, though passed in a poor cottage. It is a happy life, though its path is rough and thorny. Such a life was Paul's — he declared himself ready gladly to spend and to be spent for Christ. Such a life was Dorcas — she employed her fingers making clothes for the poor, and, unlike many who die leaving none to miss them — she had a crowd of widows to weep by her casket.

Christ judges those to be the men of worth — who are the men who labor for His Kingdom. May your life then be devoted to His service — to save men's souls from ignorance, and vice, and Hell!

Now for the work — and hereafter for the wages.

Earth for the cross — and Heaven for the crown.

Go your way, assured that there is . . .

not a prayer you offer,
nor a word you speak,
nor a foot you walk,
nor a tear you shed,
nor a hand you hold out to the perishing,
nor a warning you give to the careless,
nor a wretched child you pluck from the streets,
nor a visit paid to the widow or fatherless,
nor a loaf of bread you lay on a poor man's table,

nothing you do for the love of God and man, but is faithfully registered in the chronicles of the Kingdom, and shall be publicly read that day when Jesus, calling you up perhaps from a post as lowly as Mordecai's, shall crown your brow before an assembled world, saying, "Thus it shall be

done to the man whom the King delights to honor!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Troubles turned to blessings!

If the prodigal had not starved by the swine troughs — he would never have regaled at his father's table.

If the widow of Zarephath had not looked with horror-stricken eyes on an empty barrel — she would never have met the Prophet whom she brought to her house to fill it.

If the crimes of the thief had not brought him to the cross — he might never have been brought to Christ.

It is by a blow, that many in the first instance are brought to their knees.

Some never become rich in faith — until misfortunes make them poor.

They are common pebbles, not precious stones — which escape the jeweler's grinding wheel.

They are wild trees, not garden trees — which never bleed beneath the pruning-knife.

~ ~ ~ ~

It is never smooth sailing to Heaven!

What pains Jesus endured, what sacrifices He submitted to for us! Beside, how should it make us take suffering joyfully, to think that it is those who are crucified with Him on earth — who shall be crowned with Him in Heaven! None else.

They win in this game — who lose.

They live in this warfare — who die.

If we are dead with Him — we shall also live with Him.

If we suffer with Him — we shall also reign with Him.

He who loses his life — shall find it.

~ ~ ~ ~

I knew a precious saint of God who was often cast into the furnace — but always, like real gold, she shone the brighter for the fire. Now having left all her sorrows behind her, she has joined the company of whom the angel said, "These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God." The courage with which she met adversity — one trial after another, shock following shock, billow bursting on the back of billow — was as remarkable as the strength with which, though a bruised reed, she seemed to bear it.

Where did her great strength lie? The grand secret of that serene demeanor and uncomplaining patience was a sense of the Divine favor. Her sorrows found a solace, as the peace of God kept her heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~

Imperishable gold is a beautiful emblem of the saints!

"I have purified you in the furnace of affliction!" Isaiah 48:10

Expose water to fire — and it dissolves in vapor.

Expose wood to fire — and vanishes in smoke and flame, leaving but gray ashes behind.

Expose iron to fire — and it is converted into rust.

But fire may play on gold for a thousand years without depriving it of a single degree of its luster, or an atom of its weight.

Imperishable gold is a beautiful emblem of the saints — their trials, like the action of fire on this precious metal, only purify what they cannot destroy!

"When He has tried me — I shall come forth as gold!" Job 23:10

~ ~ ~ ~ No longer the drudge and slave of Mammon!

To say nothing of the divine nobility grace imparts to a soul which is stamped anew with the likeness and image of God — how sacred and venerable does even this body appear in the eye of piety!

No longer a form of animated dust;

no longer the subject of passions shared in common with the brutes;

no longer the drudge and slave of Mammon —

the once "vile body" rises into a temple of the Holy Spirit!

What an incentive to holiness, to purity of life and conduct, lies in the fact that the body of a saint is the temple of God — a truer, nobler temple than that which Solomon dedicated by his prayers, and Jesus consecrated by His presence!

~ ~ ~ ~

Let our life refute it!

When suffering from slander and calumny, it is usually the wisest plan to follow John Wesley's practice, and, without reply from either tongue or pen, to let our life refute it — as he said, "to live it down."

The lie, the foul and false insinuation, which bad men use to destroy the reputation of the good, is like mud. While it is wet — it sticks; but, since to attempt to wash it out often only spreads the stain, it is best to leave it alone; and drying, in a short while it falls off of itself.

"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong — they may see your good deeds and glorify God." 1 Peter 2:12

~ ~ ~ ~

All my inmost being, praise His holy name!

"Praise the LORD, O my soul! All my inmost being, praise His holy name!" Psalms 103:1

It is just as natural for a heart full of joy and God's love to praise Him — as for a thrush, perched in a summer evening on the top of a cherry-tree, to pour out the joy that fills its little bosom in strains of melody.

It is no wonder that when the pure and powerful joys of salvation are poured into a heart which sin had corrupted, and never satisfied — the new wine should burst the old bottle!

~ ~ ~ ~ The first work of God's Holy Spirit in conversion, is to rouse a man from the torpor which the poison of sin — like the venom of a snake infused into the veins, produces — to make him feel his sinfulness, to convince him of his guilt, to make him sensible of his misery. And blessed be the book, blessed be the preacher, blessed be the providence — that sends that conviction into our hearts, and lodges it, like a barbed arrow, there.

~ ~ ~ ~

Fatal, pleasant advice!

Robert Burns, who had times of serious reflection, was once brought under deep conviction of sin. He was in great alarm. The seed of the Word had begun to grow. He sought counsel from one called a minister of the Gospel. Alas, that in that crisis of his history he should have trusted the helm to the hands of such a pilot! This so-called minister . . .

laughed at the poet's fears,

bade him dance them away at balls,

drown them in bowls of wine, and

fly from these phantoms to the arms of pleasure.

Fatal, pleasant advice! He followed it — and "the lusts of other things" entering in, choked the Word completely.

~ ~ ~ ~

How imperfect are even the best works of the best saints! There is foulness enough in the purest heart; and, in respect of their motives, manner, and object, there is sin enough in our best actions — those whereby we do most good and earn most commendation — to condemn us! To speak of us not in our worst, but best state — not of the sins we commit, but of the best services we render — our wine has its water, and our silver has its dross!

And so, abandoning every hope of acceptance with a holy God through our own merits — let us cling to the cross of Christ, as a drowning man to the plank that, embraced in his arms, floats him to the shore! The language of our faith an echo of his who breathed out his life with these words on his lips, "None but Christ! None but Christ!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The enervating influences of wealth, and ease, and luxury!

It is not commonly that from among the enervating influences of wealth, and ease, and luxury — that men come forth to do grand things. It is with them as with birds. Those birds soar the highest — that have had the hardest upbringing.

Warm and soft is the pretty nest where, under the covering of her wings, amid green leaves and golden tassels and the perfume of flowers — the mother bird of sweet voice, but short and feeble flight, rears her tender brood.

Not thus are eagles reared, as I have seen on scaling a dizzy crag. There, their cradle an open shelf, their nest a few rough sticks spread on the naked rock — the bright-eyed eaglet sat exposed to every stormy blast that howled through the glen. Such is the hard nursing of birds that were thereafter to soar in sunny skies, or with strong wings cleave the clouds, and ride upon the storm!

Even so, God usually nurses those amid difficulties and hardship — who are destined to rise to eminence, and accomplish great deeds on earth! Hence says Solomon, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth."

~ ~ ~ ~

Shallows through which a child may wade and walk on his way to Heaven

The doctrines of the Gospel are scattered over the pages of sacred Scripture. When we collect and arrange them in systematic order — how beautifully they fit — doctrine to doctrine, duty to duty; until, all connected with each other, all members one of another, "they rise up into a form of perfect symmetry, and present that very system which, with minor differences but substantial unity — is embodied in the confessions, creeds, and catechisms of Evangelical Christendom."

I have said so far as they are intelligible to us; for it is ever to be borne in mind, that while the Gospel has shallows through which a child may wade and walk on his way to Heaven — it has deep, dark, unfathomed pools, which no eye can penetrate, and where the first step takes a giant beyond his depth.

~ ~ ~ ~

Sir Buxton!

In a letter to his son, Sir Buxton, a great and eminently Christian man, says: "You are now at that period of life in which you must make a turn to the right or to the left. You must now give proof of principle, determination, and strength of mind — or you must sink into idleness, and acquire the habits and character of an ineffective young man. I am sure that a young man may be very much what he pleases. In my own case it was so."

"Much of my happiness and all my prosperity in life, have resulted from the change I made at your age. The longer I live, the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant — is energy, invincible determination — a purpose once fixed, and then death — or victory!"

God gives the opportunities — but success, humanly speaking, turns . . .

on the use we make of them;

on the promptitude with which we seize the openings of providence;

on the weight of character we bring into the field;

on the resolution and energy we throw into our opportunity.

~ ~ ~ ~ In our concern to avoid one error!

Whoever reflects on the spherical form of the earth, will perceive that a traveler going east may continue his journey in that direction until, passing round half the globe, he is on the west of us. He has, in fact, by advancing very so far on one and the same line, exactly reversed his position.

And just as a man, if he goes very far east, gets into the west — so there is always a danger lest, in our concern to avoid one error, we go so far in the opposite direction as to fall into another error! Almost all religious controversies illustrate this fact. The longer they rage, the fiercer grow the passions which they kindle, and the more extreme the positions which the combatants, carried away by their feelings, are apt to assume.

Our tendency to run into extremes finds no less striking and more sad illustrations in the doctrinal positions which good men have allowed themselves to be driven into by the violence of controversy and the natural recoil from error. In their zeal to put down one error, they have often fallen into another — going too far east, they have got into the west!

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed — rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

~ ~ ~ ~

Certainly lost forever!

Be it precious jewels or a living man — whatever, falling overboard and disappearing beneath the ocean wave, is borne by its weight down and down to the bottom of the deep — is certainly lost forever!

Therefore God employs this figure to set forth His full and everlasting forgiveness of His people's sins. Enraptured with the thought, "Who," exclaims Micah, "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

~ ~ ~ ~ When unadorned — she is adorned the most!

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power." 2 Timothy 3:5

The Pharisees have left us, not an example to follow, but to avoid. How does their case warn the churches against attaching much importance to religious forms. It is in the nature of a religion of many forms, to degenerate into one of form. By occupying and indeed engrossing the attention of the worshiper, they prove as pernicious to true piety, as a super-abundance of leaves to the plant, whose sap is spent on feeding the leaf, to the detriment of the fruit. Some churches would be benefitted by a free use of the pruning-knife, with which the gardener prunes away the excess leaves, to increase the crop of fruit.

Let us never forget that religious forms are not true religion, but only its drapery. The fewer forms which religion wears — the more robust she will grow. She will work with greater energy — and, like one of beautiful mold and symmetry, she will walk with more native, queenly, grace. When unadorned — she is adorned the most!

~ ~ ~ ~

He will exact His full tally of glory from every man!

God has two methods of glorifying Himself. He is free to choose either — but by the one or the other way, He will exact His full tally of glory from every man.

In Egypt, for instance, He was glorified in the high-handed destruction of his enemies; and, in the same land, by the high-handed salvation of His people. In the one case He proved how strong His arm was to smite — and in the other how strong it was to save.

He gave Egypt's king — before he was done with him — a terrible answer to his insolent question, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve Him!"

God was sanctified before Pharaoh, when, hurrying to the banks of the Nile, and turning pale at the sight, he saw them filled with blood — blood brimming in every goblet, and blood flowing in every channel.

God was again sanctified before Pharaoh, when, startled at midnight by a nation's wail, and summoned to the bed of his heir and eldest born — he saw him, stiff and dead — smitten by the angel of death!

And God was again sanctified before Pharaoh, when, as he looked along the watery vista — he saw Moses come down in the gray of morning to the shore, and watching the last Hebrew safe on land, stretch his rod out upon the deep, whose waves, roaring on their prey, now rush from either flank on the army of Egypt, and bury pale rider and snorting horse — all that bannered army — in their whirling waters!

~ ~ ~ ~ This ill-proportioned theology!

Now, it appears to us that this ill-proportioned theology — the doctrine that the only motive in redemption was a regard to God's glory — receives no countenance from the Bible.

Does not God "pity us, as a father pities his children"? Taught to address Him by the endearing appellation of Father, oh what affection, love, and loving-kindness are expressed in that tender term!

On seeing some earthly father, whom a child's scream has reached and roused, rush up the blazing stairs, or leap into the boiling flood — it would be wrong, it would be cruel, it would be a shame — to suspect him of being destitute of affection — of being moved to this noble act by no other motive than a regard to his own honor, and by no other voice than the calm command of duty. In the same way, how much more wrong were it to harbor such suspicions of our heavenly Father!

~ ~ ~ ~ The test of the tree

"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire! Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them." Matthew 7:19-20

The fruit is now, as it shall be hereafter, the test of the tree. There is no such thing as faith without works. Without godly works, your profession is a lie, your faith is dead, your hope is a delusion.

The works by which we recommend religion and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior,

the works which spring from love to Christ and aim at the glory of God,

the works by which a holy man blesses society and leaves the world better than he found it

— are the gracious and graceful ornaments of the blood-bought Church. They are the "gold of Ophir," "the beautiful garments" in which His bride appeared as a queen, stands at her Lord's right hand — a lovely form, in a blaze of beauty and of jewels!

~ ~ ~ ~ The new heart opens to receive the beauties of grace!

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone — and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and cause you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws!" Ezekiel 36:26-27

The heart which has received divine grace is endowed with a delicate sensibility, and vibrates to the slightest touch of a Savior's fingers.

How does the truth of God affect it now!

A stone no longer — it melts under the heavenly fire!

A stone no longer — it bends beneath the hammer of the word.

No longer like the rugged rock, on which rains and sunbeams were wasted — it receives the impression of God's power, and retains the footprints of His presence. Like the flowers that close their eyes at night, but waken at the voice of morning — like the earth that gapes in summer drought — the new heart opens to receive the beauties of grace and the gifts of Heaven.

~ ~ ~ ~

Let the world reel and shake,

let powerful banks break,

let sudden changes overwhelm affluence into the lowest depths of poverty,

let convulsion succeed convulsion, until the stateliest fabrics and firmest fortunes are hurled into the dust

— how blessed at such a time to know that Heaven is sure! No tempests sweep its sea of glass.

Up there it is calm — when it is stormy here.

Up there it is clear — when it is cloudy here.

Up there it is day — when it is darkness here!

Nor are those realms of bliss any more affected by the events of earth — than are the stars of the skies are affected by the earthquakes that shake our world, or the thunders that shake our skies.

By considerations like these we should strengthen our minds, and give them that firmness of texture which shall preserve us from devouring cares — as solid, close-grained oak is preserved from those insects that eat out the heart of softer woods.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble! Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging!" Psalms 46:1-3

~ ~ ~ ~ That pit!

"Cast him into the bottomless pit!" Revelation 20:3

It is an awful thought, that pit!

It is awful reality, that pit!

It is an awful abode, that pit!

And this is an awful declaration, "The wicked shall be cast into Hell!"

But over against these stern declarations, and between the pit and you — a high red cross is standing. Mercy descends from Heaven, lights upon its summit, and preaches . . .

hope to the despairing,

pardon to the guilty,

salvation to the lost.

If the longer in prison, the greater the criminal — then the deeper in perdition, the greater the sinner! The dead fruit grows more rotten, and the dead body more loathsome in its change to dust. Even so, those who are filthy shall not only be filthy — but shall be filthy still!

God, indeed, tells us of Hell — but it is to persuade us to go to Heaven! As a skillful painter fills the background of his picture with his darker colors — so God puts in the smoke of torment and the black clouds of Sinai, to give brighter prominence to Jesus, the cross of Calvary, and His love to the chief of sinners. His voice of terror is like the scream of the mother bird when the hawk is in the sky. She alarms her brood that they may run and hide beneath her feathers!

As free as the winds that fan her cheek, as free as the sunbeams that shine on her golden tresses — Mercy invites all to come, opens her arms to embrace all comers, and in a voice that rings like a silver trumpet, cries, "O Earth, Earth, Earth, hear the Word of the Lord!"

"Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?" Ezekiel 33:11

~ ~ ~ ~ The wrath of God is the key!

With his blind eyes turned upward, you see a man approach the edge of an awful precipice; every step brings him nearer — still nearer, the brink. Now he reaches it — he stands on the grassy edge. Oh for an arm to reach him — for a voice to warn him — for a blow to send him staggering

back upon the ground! But he has lifted his foot — it is projected beyond the brink — another moment, a breath of wind, the least change of balance, and he is whirling twenty fathoms down!

You stop your ears, close your eyes, turn away your head — horror has taken hold of you.

Such were David's feelings when he contemplated the sins and fate of the wicked, "Horror has taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake your law. Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they keep not your law, O God." The wrath of God is the key . . .

to David's sorrow,

to an Apostle's tears,

to the bloody mysteries of the Cross.

~ ~ ~ ~

These hands are clean!

Some years ago, on a great public occasion, a distinguished statesman rose up in the presence of assembled thousands, and, in reply to certain calumnious and dishonorable charges, raised his hands in the vast assembly, exclaiming. "These hands are clean!"

Now, if you or I, or any of our fallen race did entertain a hope that we could act over this scene before God in judgment — then I could comprehend the calm and unimpassioned indifference with which men sit in church on successive Sabbaths, eye the cross of Calvary, and listen to the overtures of mercy. Are these matters with which you have nothing to do?

If, indeed, you have no sins to answer for — if before God's final judgement, you are prepared not only to plead, but to prove your innocence — if conscience accuses you in nothing, and excuses you in everything — then sleep on, in God's name sleep on, and take your rest.

But when the heavens over men are clothed in thunders, and Hell yawns beneath their feet, and both God's law and their own conscience condemn them — such indifference is madness!

Beware!

Do not play with fire — least of all, with unquenchable fire!

Do not play with a sharp-edged sword — least of all, with that which Justice sheathed in a Savior's bosom!

Do not dally by the mouth of any pit — least of all, on the brink of a bottomless one, the smoke of whose torment goes up forever and ever!

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin never wove, in hottest Hell-fires the devil never forged — a chain, which the Spirit of God, wielding the hammer of the Word, cannot strike from fettered limbs!

Put that to the test. Try the power of prayer. Let continued, constant, earnest, wrestling prayer be made for those who are chained to their sins, and, so to speak, thrust "into the inner prison" — and see whether, as on that night when Peter was led forth by the angel's hand, your prayers are not

turned into most grateful praises.

~ ~ ~ ~ A mysterious work done by the Spirit of God in the very moment after death!

There is so much imperfection, and so many infirmities which cleave to the best of us — that I sometimes think that a change must take place at the moment of death, second only to that at the moment of conversion. There is much sin to be cast off with this mortal flesh.

If we saw the spirit at its departure, as Elisha saw his ascending master — we might see a mantle of infirmity and imperfection dropped from the chariot that bears it in triumph to the skies.

I have thought that there must be a mysterious work done by the Spirit of God in the very moment after death, to form the glorious crown and capstone of all His other labors; and that, like the wondrous but lovely plant which blooms at midnight — grace comes out in its perfect beauty, amid the darkness of the the moment of death!

~ ~ ~ ~

Idleness is the mother of mischief!

The bird that ceases to use its wings does not hang in mid-air, but drops like a stone to the ground.

By a law almost as certain, he sinks into evil habits, whose time and faculties are not engaged in innocent or wholesome employments. So much is this the case, that though periods of relaxation are desirable, there is danger in unduly prolonging them.

"There are few indeed," says Addison, "who know how to be idle and innocent. Every diversion they take is at the expense of some virtue or another, and their very first step out of business, is into vice or folly!"

The purest water left to stagnate grows putrid. The finest soil left fallow, soon grows a crop of weeds.

Had David, as in other days, followed his army to the battlefield, he may have imperiled his life, but he would have saved his character; escaping a temptation that owed perhaps more than half its power to the luxurious ease and idleness of a palace. Idleness is the mother of mischief; and he who would keep their hands from doing wrong must employ them in doing good.

~ ~ ~ ~

You have neither to change a rag, nor remove a stain!

"So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh." Genesis 41:14

We are told that Joseph shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

I have to tell the lost sinner that, although he lies in a deeper and darker dungeon, although he is covered with fouler and filthier rags, and although the presence of Jesus is infinitely more magnificent, and venerable, and exalted, than that of any mortal king — he stands in no need of preparatory holiness, of even one short hour's delay. You have neither to change a rag, nor remove a stain! He is ready to receive you as you are. Come then, just as you are.

~ ~ ~ ~ A treasure! So men speak of . . .

the child who, like a beautiful flower with a worm at its root, may droop and die;

fame won on a stage, where the spectators who applaud tonight may hiss tomorrow;

riches that, like scared wild bird on the reedy margin of a lake, take to themselves wings and fly away.

But how much worthier of the name "treasure", is

the Friend who never leaves us;

health that never sickens;

life that never dies;

love that never cools;

and glory that never fades!

~ ~ ~ ~ Nor should we so fix our attention on His cross — to the exclusion of His crown

I do not say that we should look less to Christ as a Savior — but we should certainly look more to Him as a Sovereign.

Nor should we so fix our attention on His cross — to the exclusion of His crown.

We are not to yield Him less faith — but more obedience.

We should not less often kiss His wounds — but more frequently His feet.

We can never too highly esteem His love — but we may, and often do, think too lightly of His law.

His Spirit helping us, let His claims on our obedience be as cheerfully conceded as His claim on our faith; so that to our love of His glorious person, and His saving work — we may be able to add with David, " Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying Your statutes!" Psalms 119:5

~ ~ ~ ~ This guilty world is kept from sinking under a growing load of sins!

"He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together!" Colossians 1:17

Those hands which were once nailed to the cross — now hold the scepter of universal empire!

Great is the mystery of godliness! Yet so it is, plainly written in the words, "By Him all things hold together!" By Him . . .

the angels keep their holiness,

the stars keep their orbits;

the tides roll along the deep,

the seasons progress through the year;

kings reign, and princes decree justice;

the church of God is held together, riding out at anchor the harshest storms!

And by Him, until the last of His elect are plucked from the wreck, and His purposes of mercy are all accomplished — this guilty world is kept from sinking under a growing load of sins!

~ ~ ~ ~ Jesus is set forth in Scripture in many attractive ways — to woo a reluctant sinner and cheer a desponding saint!

Am I wounded? He is my balm.

Am I sick? He is my medicine.

Am I naked? He is is my clothing.

Am I poor? He is my wealth.

Am I hungry? He is my bread.

Am I thirsty? He is my water.

Am I in debt? He is my surety.

Am I in darkness? He is my sun.

Have I a house to build? He is my rock.

Must I face that black and gathering storm? He is my anchor sure and steadfast.

Am I to be tried? He is my consolation.

Is sentence passed, and am I condemned? He is my pardon.

~ ~ ~ ~ And although the passage is dark, and the river of death is deep!

The holier the child of God becomes, the more he pants after the perfect image and blissful presence of Jesus. And although the passage is dark, and the river of death is deep — the more holy he is, the more ready will he be to say, "It is better to depart, and be with Jesus!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Like summer birds which come and go with the sun — earthly friends may desert us when we most need their sympathy and support — at the time, and in the circumstances, expressed in the well-known adage, "A friend in need, is a friend indeed."

But such a friend is Jesus Christ!

He is sweetest — when trials are bitterest.

He is kindest — when others are cruelest.

He is nearest — when danger is greatest!

His character is delineated in the words, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity!" And his image is beautifully shadowed forth, in the mother who presses the tender infant closest to her bosom when storms beat and winds blow the coldest.

~ ~ ~ ~

There was one ark in the flood — but one; and all perished but those who sailed in it.

There was one altar in the temple — but one; and no sacrifices were accepted but those offered there.

There was one way through the depths of the Red Sea — but one; and only where the water, held back by the hand of God, stood up in crystal walls, was a passage opened for those that were ready to perish.

And even so, there is but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

~ ~ ~ ~ The ostrich!

It is alleged that the ostrich, when pursued by its hunters, will thrust its head into a bush, and, without further attempt either at flight or resistance, quietly submit to the stroke of death. Men say that, having thus succeeded in shutting the pursuers out of its own sight, the bird is stupid enough to imagine that it has shut itself out of theirs, and that the danger, which it has concealed from its eyes, has ceased to exist.

Just so, to man — rational and responsible man — belongs the folly of closing his eyes to a fate which he may avert, and thrusting his head into the bush while escape is possible. Because he can put death, and judgment, and eternity out of mind — man lives as if there were neither a bed of death, nor bar of judgment!

"Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue!" Psalms 50:22

~ ~ ~ ~

What is out of sight, is very apt to be out of mind!

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18

What is out of sight, is very apt to be out of mind. Let this teach you to take all the more heed to live by faith in invisible spiritual realities. Consider how, with all their glare and show, things seen are paltry, passing, the least of things; and that grandeur and endurance belong to the unseen and eternal realities.

The soul is unseen — precious jewel of immortality, it lies concealed within its fragile fleshly casket.

Hell and Heaven are unseen — the first sinks beneath our sight, the second rises high above it.

The eternal world is unseen — a veil impenetrable hangs before its mysteries, hiding them from the keenest eye.

Death is unseen — he strikes his blow in the dark.

The devil is unseen — stealing on us often unsuspected, and always invisible.

And as is our deadliest foe — so is our best and trustiest, our heavenly Friend. Jesus is our invisible Savior — and Jehovah is our invisible God and Father.

"We live by faith, not by sight!" 2 Corinthians 5:7

~ ~ ~ ~

Divine justice and mercy!

God's attributes of justice and mercy are not contrary to each other, as are light and darkness, fire and water, truth and falsehood, right and wrong. No, like two streams which unite their waters to form a common river — divine justice and mercy are combined in the work of redemption. Like the two cherubim whose wings met above the ark — justice and mercy are associated in the work of Christ. They are the supporters of the shield on which the cross is emblazoned. They sustain the arms of our heavenly Advocate. They form the two solid and eternal pillars of the Mediator's throne.

On Calvary, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other!

Justice is as conspicuous in redemption, as the cross which illustrated it.

Sinners, indeed, are pardoned — but then, their sins are punished.

The guilty are acquitted — but then, their guilt is condemned.

The sinner lives — but then, the Surety dies.

The debtor is discharged — not, however, until the debt is paid.

Dying, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" — Jesus satisfies divine justice for us.

Just as we have seen a discharged account pierced by a nail, and hung to gather cobwebs on the dusty wall — so He who paid our debt, nor left us one farthing to pay — has taken the handwriting that was against us and nailed it to His cross!

~ ~ ~ ~ The kingdom for the meek, and the poor, and the humble!

In your earthly kingdoms — the rich and noble carry off the lion's share. It is high-born men and women that fill high places, and stand near our queen's throne.

But God's kingdom bestows its noblest honors on the humble, the poor, the obscure, the meek, the lowly: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world — to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world — to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him!" 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

More extraordinary than any of these things, is the fact that all the ordinary rules of other kingdoms are reversed in God's kingdom! Here . . .

the way to grow rich — is to become poor;
the path to honor — lies through shame;
to enjoy rest — we must plunge into a sea of troubles;
he who would live — must die;
he who would gain — must part with all that men held most dear!

It is the high-born who chiefly approach the sovereign, enjoy the honors of the palace, and fill the chief offices of the state. Royal favors seldom descend so low as humble life.

The grace of our King, however, is like those blessed dews that, while the mountain tops remain dry, lie thick in the valleys; and, leaving the proud and stately trees to stand without a gem — hang the lowly bush with diamonds, and sew the sward broadcast with orient pearl. This is the kingdom for the meek, and the poor, and the humble! Its King has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!"

~ ~ ~ ~ Would He but consent to their terms!

How many would accept of Jesus as Savior — would He but consent to their terms, and allow them to indulge their lusts, and retain their sins! But be assured that no man will not receive the crown — if sin retains the scepter in his life.

Jesus requires of all who name His name, that they "depart from iniquity" — and, with "holiness unto the Lord" written on their foreheads, that they take up their cross, and deny themselves daily, and follow Him!

~ ~ ~ ~

Many years ago a horrible crime was committed in a neighboring country. It was determined that the guilty man, whoever he might be, as soon as he was discovered and convicted, should die. He had fled — but the eye of justice tracked him to his hiding-place. Dragged from it, he is arraigned at the bar.

Imagine, if you can, the feelings of his judge, when, in the pale, trembling, miserable, guilty wretch — he recognized his own son — his only son! What an agonizing struggle now began in that father's bosom! He is torn between the conflicting claims of nature and duty. The public indignation against the criminal, is lost in pity for the father — as he sits there transfixed with horror, overwhelmed with grief — while his child, with clasped hands and eyes swimming in tears, implores a father's pity.

Duty bears nature down. He pronounces sentence of death; but in passing it on his son — he passes it on himself. Nature would have her own. He rises — he leaves the bench — he hastens home — he lies down on his bed — and never rising from it, he dies of a broken heart.

Just so, God, rather than His holy law should be broken with impunity — He gave up His Beloved Son to suffer die, a substitute for us! Oh, how did the blood which dyed that cross, dye His law in colors of the purest holiness!

~ ~ ~ ~

Thousands have given up all for Him!

The love Christ's people bear for Him is a deeper affection than what the mother cherishes for the babe that hangs helpless on her bosom. It is a stronger passion than the miser feels for the yellow gold which he clutches.

Loving Jesus whom they never saw — better than father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or lover, or life itself — thousands have given up all for Him! Not regretting, but rejoicing in their sacrifices — they have gone bravely for His cause to the scaffold and the stake!

~ ~ ~ ~

Received the fatal shot in her own true and faithful heart!

"Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame!" Song of Solomon 8:6

I look on this mother, who stands with her child on the side of the sinking wreck, to catch the last chance of a passing boat. Lifting her boy in her arms, and imprinting a mother's last kiss upon his rosy lips — she hands him in, and remains behind herself to drown and die.

I look at that maid in old story, who, having caught a glance of the arrow that, shot by a rival's hand, came from the bushes on the other bank — flung herself before her lover, and received the fatal shot in her own true and faithful heart!

I look at these things, and, seeing that love is as strong as death, I urge you to cultivate the love of Jesus, and go in its divine strength to the field of duty, and the altar of sacrifice!

~ ~ ~ ~ The Christian's great strength!

Samson's great strength lay in his hair — shorn of that, he was like other men. The Christian's great strength lies in his love to Jesus.

~ ~ ~ ~ The paternal love of God!

I know a father's heart. I have seen the quiver of a father's lip, the tear start into his eye, and felt his heart in the grasp of his hand — when I expressed some good hope of a fallen child.

I have seen a mother, when her infant was tottering in the path of dashing horses, with foam spotting their necks, and fire flying from their feet — dash like a hawk across the path, and pluck him from instant death!

I have seen a mother, who sat at the coffin — pale, silent, tearless, rigid, terrible in grief — spring from her chair, seize the coffin which we were carrying away, and, with shrieks fit to pierce a heart of stone — struggle to retain her dead!

If we, who are but worms of the earth, will peril life for our children; and, when they are moldered into dust, cannot think of our dead, nor visit their cold and lonesome grave — but our hearts are wrung, and our wounds bleed forth afresh — then can we adequately conceive or measure, far less exaggerate — even with our imagination at its highest strain, the paternal love of God for His

one and only Son!

~ ~ ~ Whom He loves!

I can measure parental love — how broad, and long, and strong, and deep it is. It is a sea — a deep sea, which mothers and fathers alone can fathom.

But the love displayed on yonder hill and bloody cross where God's own Son is perishing for us — neither man nor angel has a line to measure. The circumference of the earth, the altitude of the sun, the distance of the planets — these have been determined — but the height, depth, breadth, and length of the love of God surpasses knowledge. "May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully!" Ephesians 3:19

The sun that shines on you shall set, and summer streams shall freeze, and deepest wells go dry — but not God's love for His redeemed people. His love is . . .

a stream that never freezes,

a fountain that never fails,

a sun that never sets in night,

a shield that never breaks or fails.

Whom He loves — He loves to the end!

The central truth of the Bible, that on which I lay the greatest stress and rest my strongest hopes, is this: that God does not love us because Christ died for us — but that Christ died for us because God loved us! Christ Himself is the gift of divine love, the divine expression of our Father's desire to be reconciled to His people.

The Lord of angels, hanging on a mother's bosom;

the Creator of Heaven and earth, bending to a humble task;

the judge of all, standing accused in the place of common felons,

the Son of his Father's love, nailed amid derision to an ignominious cross, death rudely seizing Him, the dark grave receiving Him — we owe to the love of God.

What love do we owe to Him, who so loved us!

~ ~ ~

Some object we must love!

We are constituted with affections, of which we can no more divest ourselves than of our skin! Be the object which we love noble or base, good or bad, generous or selfish, holy or sinful, belonging to earth or to Heaven — some object we must love.

It would be as easy for a man to live without breathing — as to live without loving. It is not more natural for fire to burn, or light to shine — than for man to love. And the commandment, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is utterly impractical and impossible, except in

conjunction with the other commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind."

~ ~ ~ ~

Leaving schools, and halls, and colleges!

Nothing is more remarkable in the Bible than to see how God, as if to teach us to trust in nothing and in none but Himself — selects means that seem the worst fitted to accomplish His end!

Does He choose an ambassador to Pharaoh? It is a man of stammering tongue.

Are the streams of Jericho to be sweetened? Salt is cast into the spring.

Are the eyes of the blind to be opened? They are rubbed with clay.

Are the battlements of a city to be thrown down? The means employed is, not the blast of a mine, but the breath of an empty trumpet.

Is a rock to be riven? The lightning is left to sleep above and the earthquake with its throes to sleep below — and the instrument is one, a rod, much more likely to be shivered on the rock than to shiver it.

Is the world to be converted by preaching, and won from sensual delights to a faith whose symbol is a cross and whose crown is to be won among the fires of martyrdom? Leaving schools, and halls, and colleges, God summons His preachers from the shores of Galilee. The helm of the church is entrusted to hands that had never steered anything but a fishing-boat. And by the mouth of one who had been its bloodiest persecutor, Christ pleads His cause before the philosophers of Athens and in the palaces of Rome.

~ ~ ~ ~ When most diligent in the use of means

It is with man and God in the production of spiritual fruit — as with the skies and the soil in the production of material fruit. Gathering harvests each successive year from fields whose wealth of fruitfulness seems exhaustless, we say, How bountiful is the earth! The earth, like the widow's meal-barrel, is never empty.

We speak of the fruits of earth, and the flowers of earth, and the harvests of earth; but these, her offspring, have another parent. The heavens claims their sweet juices, and fragrant odors, and glorious colors — as hers, and most her own. To the treasures of light, heat, rain, and dews, poured from exhaustless skies on the dull cold soil — earth's flowers owe their beauty, her gardens their fruits, her fields their golden harvests.

Each, at any rate, has its own part to do; nor would a gardener labor to less purpose under a sunless sky on fields bound hard with frost and buried in perpetual snow — than preachers without the cheering, warming, enlivening influences of the Sun of Righteousness, the dews of grace, and the blessing of the Spirit.

Man's is but a gardener's office — to plant, to water, nothing more. As the apostle Paul himself says, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything — but only God, who makes things grow." 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

And thus, whether we preach, or are preached to, when most diligent in the use of means — let a sense of our inability turn our eyes and all our hopes on God.

~ ~ ~ The salvation of a lost world hangs by a single strand!

God accomplishes great purposes by unlikely means. The Bible is full of such examples. We would have committed the treasure of divine truth to the charge of some mighty monarch, and called the Savior of the world from the loins of a Cyrus or a Caesar — whose family would have been in no danger of dying through famine.

"My ways are not as your ways," says God, "neither are my thoughts as your thoughts."

In Abraham, an obscure Chaldean, an exile, a wanderer, without any home but a tent or property in the soil but a grave — God puts the dearest interests to mankind into the weakest hands. In him and Sarah the hopes of the world are hung on a pair whose bed is childless, and on whose heads time has shed its snows.

And again, when a child is born to them in Isaac, the salvation of a lost world hangs by a single strand.

And again in Jacob's family, it turns on a dream and fortunes as unlikely as any that fill the pages of a romance.

With Abraham in the battle;

with Isaac on the altar;

with Joseph in the dungeon;

with the infant Moses cast on the water;

with Rahab in the beleaguered city;

on the field, where, with two armies looking on, a stripling goes out to meet the giant;

on you plain, where, through the midnight-gloom, we see a mother hurrying with her babe from the swords of Herod and the massacre of Bethlehem

— how often was the light of truth nearly extinguished, the ark that carried the hopes of the world all but wrecked! Never to human sight was good ship more nearly wrecked!

~ ~ ~ The vile wretch who spit in Jesus' face!

If God saves — not because we deserve mercy — but that His own great mercy may be illustrated in saving — ah! then there is hope for you — yes, although you were . . .

an adulterer, a thief, a murderer,

the vile wretch who spit in Jesus' face,

the ruffian who forced the thorny crown deep into His bleeding brow,

that very soldier who buried the lance in Jesus' side, and just returning from Calvary, with the blood of Christ's heart red on the spear head! There is hope for you!

~ ~ ~ ~ To the surprise of angels, from out the ineffable light which veils the celestial throne, a beautiful form steps forth — and Mercy, arresting the uplifted arm, turns its weapon from man — onto her own bared, spotless, loving bosom.

In the Son of God about to become incarnate, she says, "Lo! I come to do your will, O God." Ready both to satisfy divine justice and suffer for them — Jesus interposes for His elect as He did for His disciples, when, stepping in between them and the armed band, He said, "I am He — let these go their way."

~ ~ ~ ~ The affections of the natural man!

"A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." 1 Corinthians 2:14

The affections of the natural man are like the branches of what are called weeping willow trees — they droop to the earth, and sweep the ground — they are all directed earthward.

This world is his god;

his heaven is on earth;

the paradise he seeks is here;

his ten commandments are the opinions of men;

his sins are his pleasures.

And, although no sheeted ghosts rise at midnight and walk the churchyard to scare him — he has, in thoughts of God, of judgment, of eternity, specters that haunt him, and to escape from which he will fly into the arms of sin!

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." John 3:19

~ ~ ~ ~ Are you the vilest of the vile?

From the pardon of redeeming mercy, there are none excepted — unless those who, by refusing to accept it, except themselves.

Are you unjust? Christ Jesus died, the just for the unjust.

Are you sinners? He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Are you the vilest of the vile? He never lifted His foot, when He was on this earth, to spurn the guiltiest away.

He pitied those whom others spurned.

He received those whom others rejected.

He loved those whom others loathed!

Let the vilest, wickedest, most wretched outcasts know that they have a friend in Jesus. A mother's door may be shut against them, but not His. It was His glory then, and it is His glory still

— to be reproached as the friend of sinners. He faced revilement to save them. He endured death to save them. If you are groaning under a load of cares or guilt, of sins or sorrows — Jesus says, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The secret of his strange peace and self-possession!

While undergoing trial before his country for a very heinous crime — men wondered at his strange serenity, and how he could bear himself so calmly. He passed on to the bar without a cloud upon his brow, or an expression of anxiety in his eye, as he looked around him on judges, accusers, the crowd of anxious spectators.

The trial began. His case grew darker and darker — not so his aspect. Witness after witness bore crushing evidence against him — yet the keen eyes of his enemies could detect no quiver on his lip, or shadow upon his brow. Long after hope had expired in the heart of anxious friends, and they looked on him as a doomed man — there he was, looking round serenely on that dreadful array. His pulse beat calmly, while peace sat enthroned upon his placid brow.

When at length, amid the silence of the hushed assembly, the verdict of "Guilty" is pronounced, he rises. Erect in attitude, in demeanor calm, he stands up, not to receive the sentence — which was already trembling on the judge's lip — but to reveal the secret of his strange peace and self-possession. He thrusts his hand into his pocket, and lays his pardon on the table — a full, free pardon for his crimes, sealed with the royal signet!

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Romans 8:1

~ ~ ~ ~

Let it never be forgotten!

The wings of mercy fly swiftly. The hands of justice moves slowly — like the shadow on the sun-dial, ever moving, yet creeping slowly on, with a motion all but imperceptible.

Still let unrepentant sinners stand in awe. The hand of justice has not stopped, although imperceptibly, it steadily advances. By and by, having reached the tenth, eleventh, twelfth hour — the bell strikes! Then, unless you now flee to Christ, the blow which was so slow to fall — shall descend on the head of impenitence with accumulated force! Let it never be forgotten, that although God's patience is lasting — it is not everlasting!

"Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience — not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" Romans 2:4

~ ~ ~ ~ The stoutest timber!

The strongest trees do not grow beneath the glass of a green-house, or in the protection of sheltered and shaded valleys. The stoutest timber stands on Norwegian rocks, where tempests rage, and long, hard winters reign.

Just so, exercise gives health, and strength is the reward of activity. The muscles are seen fully developed in the brawny arm that plies the ringing hammer. Health blooms ruddiest on the cheek, and strength is most powerfully developed in the limbs of him, who — not nailed to a sedentary

occupation, nor breathing the closed atmosphere of heated chambers — but fearless of cold, a stranger to downy pillows and luxurious repose, rises with the day, and hears the morning lark high overhead, and passing his hours in hard work, increases his strength by spending it.

In the same way, the most vigorous and healthy piety, is that which is the busiest.

~ ~ ~ ~

Arrows shot from the heart!

Prayers without affections, are like birds without wings. While the eagle soars away to the heavens — these wingless birds never leave the ground. It is the heart that prays — not the knees, nor the hands, nor the lips.

If you would have your prayers accepted, they must be arrows shot from the heart! None else mount to the throne of God.

~ ~ ~ ~

Prayer has just two limits

Prayer's power is, in a sense, omnipotent. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. It secures for the believer, the resources of Divinity.

What battles has it not fought!

What victories has it not won!

What burdens has it not carried!

What wounds has it not healed!

What griefs has it not assuaged!

Prayer is . . .

the wealth of poverty;

the refuge of affliction;

the strength of weakness;

the light of darkness;

the hand that breaks the fetters of sin!

Prayer has just two limits:

The first is, that its range is confined to the promises. But, within these . . .

what a bank of wealth,

what a mine of mercies,

what a store of blessings!

The second is, that God will grant or deny our requests as is best for His glory and our good. And who that knows how we are, in a sense, but children, would wish it otherwise!

~ ~ ~ ~

It is just as easy for yonder great sea to carry the bulkiest ship that ever rode her waves — as the sea-weed or foam she flings upon the shore!

It is just as easy for that glorious sun to bathe a mountain — as to bathe a mole-hill in its transparent gold!

It is just as easy for this mighty earth to carry on its back an Alp — as a grain of sand; to nourish a cedar of Lebanon — as the hyssop on the wall.

Just so, believer, it is just as easy for God to supply your greatest as your smallest needs — as it was as much within His power to form a universe — as an atom; or to create a blazing sun — as to kindle a fire-fly's lamp.

~ ~ ~ ~

Lying calmly in the arms of Divine Providence!

Why should we not lie as calmly in the arms of God's providence — as we lay in infancy on our mother's bosom?

Having an ever-living, an ever-lasting, and ever-loving father in God — how may we welcome all of His providences. Drawing some good from every evil, as the bee extracts honey even from poisoned flowers — how may we say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

~ ~ ~ ~

It was not until Mercy's arm grew weary ringing the warning bell!

God has long been calling an impenitent world to repentance. Had they no warning in Noah's preaching? Was there nothing to alarm them in the very sight of the ark as story rose upon story; and nothing in the sound of those ceaseless hammers to waken all but the dead? It was not until Mercy's arm grew weary ringing the warning bell, that God "poured out His fury" on them!

"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished!" Numbers 14:18

~ ~ ~ ~ The print of the nail is on the very hand which waves away the lost into perdition!

Divine Love is not blind. God's love being as just as it is tender — sinners may rest assured, that out of mere pity to them, God will neither sacrifice the interests, nor imperil the happiness of His people.

Love herself — bleeding, dying, redeeming love — with her own hand will bar the door of Heaven, and from its happy, holy precincts, exclude all that could hurt or defile. Stern words these! And when divine Love puts on her armor to fight against him — then what hope for the man who has compelled her to be his enemy? Having armed Love against you, where now are you flying?

Look at this scene of judgment. He who died on the cross, occupies the throne of judgement. Love incarnate presides at that majestic tribunal. The print of the nail is on the very hand which waves away the lost into perdition! The voice which so often invited the impenitent — is that which now condemns and commands them to depart from Him!

"Then He will say to those on his left: Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matthew 25:41

~ ~ ~ ~ The admiration of angels and the glory of the universe!

Redemption is the greatest of all God's works. That cross on Calvary, which mercy raised for sinners, cost more love, and labor, and wisdom, and skill — than all the starry universe!

With the earth its emerald floor, its roof the sapphire firmament, the sun and stars its pendent lamps, its incense a thousand fragrant odors, its music of many sounds and instruments, the song of groves, the murmur of the streams, the voices of winged winds, the pealing thunder, and the everlasting roar of ocean — Nature's is a glorious temple!

Yet that is a nobler temple, which, with blood-redeemed saints for its living stones, stands aloft on the Rock of Ages — the admiration of angels and the glory of the universe!

~ ~ ~ ~

Give the title of sons of God to the venomous seed of the Serpent!

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

Observe how this property of new runs through the whole economy of grace. When Mercy first rose upon this world, an attribute of Divinity appeared which was new to the eyes of men and angels. The Infant had a new birth-place — and the Crucified had a new burial-place.

Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, the author of a new testament, the founder of a new faith.

The redeemed receive a new name; they sing a new song; their home is not to be in the New Jerusalem, where they shall dwell on a new earth, and walk in glory beneath a new Heaven.

Now it were surely strange, when all things else are new, if they themselves were not to partake of this general renovation. Nor strange only, for such a change is indispensable. A new name without a new nature would be an imposture! It were not more an untruth to call a lion a lamb, or the rapacious vulture by the name of the gentle dove — than to give the title of sons of God to the venomous seed of the Serpent!

~ ~ ~ ~ That dreadful head rose up and glistened before his eyes!

The tale of the goblet, which the genius of a heathen fashioned — taught a moral of which many a death-bed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup. Coiled for the spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath the ruby wine!

He who raised that golden cup to quench his thirst, and quaff the delicious draught, did not suspect what lay below, until as he reached the dregs — that dreadful head rose up and glistened before his eyes!

Just so, when life's cup is nearly emptied, and sin's last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs — shall rise the ghastly terrors of remorse, and death, and judgment, upon the despairing soul!

~ ~ ~ ~

Think of the joyful alacrity with which those happy, holy spirits hasten to prepare another mansion and weave another crown!

Some wretched and heart-broken creature — the flower which has been trodden on the street where the villain hand that plucked it, had thrown it when its freshness and bloom were gone — one polluted in body and in mind — one lost to virtue and shunned by decency — one for whom none cared but a mother, who clung to hope, and with love burning in its ashes, wept and prayed in secret for her — is converted!

Think of God in Heaven feeling more joy than the mother who on a wild winter's night has opened her door to the wanderer's moaning cry; and while she hastens to tell the glad tidings to humble and sympathizing neighbors — think of God telling them to His angels, and calling them to rejoice with Him that the dead is alive again, and the lost is found! Think of the joyful alacrity with which those happy, holy spirits hasten to prepare another mansion and weave another crown!

"Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate!" Luke 15:22-24

~ ~ ~ ~

It was over a fearful abyss it hung!

When the repentance and salvation even of one sinner is worthy of being published in Heaven and sung to the music of angels' harps! We may be assured that it is from a dreadful doom that the soul is saved; and that it was over a fearful abyss it hung — when Jesus plucked it from the wreck! Angels had not otherwise turned an eager gaze from Heaven on earth, and looked down from their lofty realms to watch the outcome with breathless interest, and feel such joy at the result.

"Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep!' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents!" Luke 15:6-7

~ ~ ~ ~ The whole terrible troop of diseases cast with sin into Hell!

He who saw the rolling waves stand up a rocky wall;

he who saw the water of Cana flow out rich purple wine;

he who saw Lazarus's festering corpse, with health glowing on its cheek, and its arms enfolding sisters ready to faint with joy — saw nothing to match the change the grave shall work on these

moldering bones!

Sown in corruption, they shall rise in incorruption, mortal putting on immortality! How beautiful they shall be! Never more shall hoary time write old age on a wrinkled brow. The whole terrible troop of diseases cast with sin into Hell — the saints shall possess unfading beauty, and enjoy a perpetual youth! A pure soul shall be mated with a worthy partner in a perfect body — and pure holiness shall lodge a holy mind.

"But someone may ask: How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?" 1 Corinthians 15:35

"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;

it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body!" 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

"He will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like His glorious body!" Php 3:21

~ ~ ~ ~

Cast all your righteous deeds away!

"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away!" Isaiah 64:6

Now since God pronounces our righteousness — observe, not our wickednesses, but our devotions, our charities, our costliest sacrifices, our most applauded services — to be "filthy rags" — then do no trust to them. Nor think that the righteousness of the cross was wrought to patch up these; to make up, as some say, for what is defective and lacking in our own merits. Nor imagine, like some who would have a Savior and yet keep their sins — that you may wear your filthy rags beneath this righteousness. Cast all your righteous deeds away, like a beggar who, having got a better attire, flings his rags into the nearest ditch, and leaves them there in their foulness to rotteness and decay!

~ ~ ~ ~ Where the beggar may go in to bathe side by side with a king!

"On that day a fountain will be opened . . . to cleanse them from sin and impurity!" Zechariah 13:1

Yes! there is a a fountain opened to cleanse them from all sin and impurity! Whoever seeks salvation there, may wash and shall be perfectly clean! Jesus has filled that fountain with His blood, and, once bathed there, the foulest become white as snow! Blessed truth! That fountain is free to all — as free as air, as free as light, as free as the waves of ocean — where the beggar may go in to bathe side by side with a king!

~ ~ ~ ~

Make every effort to enter through the narrow door!

Were we to judge of the matter by the conduct of many, we would conclude it to be by no means a difficult thing to be a Christian. They seem to think it almost as easy . . .

to wash one's heart, as their hands;

to change their sinful habits, as their dress;

to admit the light of Divine truth into the soul, as the morning into our chamber by opening the shutters.

In short, that it is not more difficult to turn . . .

the heart from evil to holiness,

from the world to God,

and from sin to Christ —

than to turn a ship around by help of her helm!

How else can we account for many, otherwise sensible people, putting off their salvation to old age — a time confessedly unsuitable for any arduous task whatever — until, reduced to a state of mental and physical prostration, they lie languishing on a bed of sickness, or tossing on a bed of death!

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to!" Luke 13:24

~ ~ ~ ~

Salvation flows from a higher source than Calvary!

Some talk as if we were saved only because Christ paid our debt — representing God's share in the transaction as little else than that of a severe, stern, unrelenting creditor, who takes no interest in His imprisoned debtor beyond letting him out when the surety has taken up the bond.

Is this true? Is it fair to God? It is utterly false! Salvation flows from a higher source than Calvary! It has its fountain, not in the cross of the incarnate Son — but in the bosom of the eternal Father! These hoary hills with their time-furrowed brows, that ocean which bears on its face no mark of age, those morning stars which sang together when our world was born, these old heavens — are not so old as the love of God.

"In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will." Ephesians 1:4-5

~ ~ ~ ~

Busy?

So, in a way, are the children who, when the tide is at the ebb, with merry laughter and rosy cheeks and nimble hands build a castle of the moist sea-sand — the thoughtless urchins, types of lovers of pleasure and of the world — so intent on their work as not to see how the treacherous, silent tide has crept around them, not merely to sap and undermine, and with one deadly blow

demolish the work of their hands — but to cut off their retreat to the distant shore, and drown their frantic screams and cries for help in the roar of its remorseless waves!

From a death-bed, where all he toiled and sinned and sorrowed for is slipping from his grasp, fading from his view — such will his life seem to the busiest worldling. He spends his strength for nothing, and his labor for that which profits not!

With an eye that pities because it foresees our miserable doom, God calls us from such busy trifling, from a life of laborious idleness — to a service which is as pleasant as it is profitable, as graceful as it is dutiful, saying, "Work out your salvation!" Work while it is called today, seeing that the night comes when no man can work.

~ ~ ~ ~

She is casting off her vile, sinful slough!

"And behold, a woman of the town who was an especially wicked sinner, when she learned that Jesus was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of perfume. And standing behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears; and she wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet affectionately and anointed them with the perfume." Luke 7:37-38

"Then Jesus said to her: Your sins are forgiven!" Luke 7:48

Gracious, glorious change! Have you felt it? May it be felt by all of us! You have it here in this woman, who, grieved in her soul, lies a-weeping at the feet of Jesus. She was an especially wicked sinner.

Her condition had been the basest;

her bread had been the bitterest;

her company had been the worst.

She is casting off her vile, sinful slough! She leaves it. She rises a new creature. The beauty of the Lord is on her; and now, with wings of faith and love wide outspread, she follows her Lord to Heaven!

How encouraging the wonders of converting grace! Let us despair of none — neither of ourselves nor anyone else!

~ ~ ~ ~ The only thing man will not accept!

One might imagine that all would desire to be saved. Who will not accept free salvation?

Offer a starving man, bread — and he will take it;

offer a poor man, money — and he will take it;

offer a sick man, health — and he will take it;

offer an ambitious man, honor — and he will take it;

offer a life-boat in the wreck, offer a pardon at the gallows — and oh! how gladly he will take them.

Salvation, which is the one thing needful — is the only thing man will not accept! He will stoop to pick up a piece of gold out of the mire — but he will not rise out of the mire to receive an eternal crown from Heaven! What folly! What infatuation!

May God by His Spirit empty our hearts of pride, and take away the heart of unbelief! Vain here is the help of man. Arise, O Lord, and break the spell of sin, and help us to say with the man of old, "Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief!"

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world — but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed!" John 3:19-20

~ ~ ~ When shall I be holy?

"First a leaf blade pushes through,
then the heads of wheat are formed,
and finally the grain ripens." Mark 4:28

The Christian is an example of gradual development. When our growth is quickest — how slow it is!

As, from some fresh stain, we wash our hands in the blood of Jesus;

as, from the field of daily conflict, we retire at evening to seek the healing of the balm of Gilead;

as, with David, we eye some eminence from which we have fallen, or, looking back on some former period, measure the little progress we have made — how often are we constrained to ask in disappointment, "When shall I be holy?"

How often are we constrained to cry in prayer, "How long, O Lord, how long?" At times it looks as if the dawn would never brighten into day. We almost fear that our fate shall have its emblem in some unhappy flower, which — withered by frost, or the home of a worm — never blooms at all; but dies like an unborn infant, whose coffin is a mother's womb.

This shall not happen with any child of grace! God will perform all things for His people, and perfect what concerns them. Still, although He who has begun a good work in them will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus — all the figures of Scripture indicate a gradual progress. The believer is a babe who grows "to the stature of a perfect man in Christ." "The path of the upright is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day."

~ ~ ~ A lion and a serpent!

Satan is compared to a lion. No emblem could be more appropriate, if you take into account . . .

its cruel nature,

its stealthy approach,

its frightful roar,

its terrible aspect,
its bloody jaws,
its ravenous appetite, and
the death that follows a blow of its paw!

The other most common scriptural emblem of the devil is a serpent. It was in the form of that reptile, that he stole into Eden — with malice gleaming in its fiery eye, poison concealed in its crooked fangs, fascination in its gaze, and death in its spring!

The animal world furnishes no creature that represents so well the deceiver and destroyer of souls — as this hateful, horrid reptile!

~ ~ ~ ~ Not less does our safety depend on constant prayer and watchfulness!

Woe to the man, in these old gladiator games, who allowed his competitor to catch him off his guard. Woe to the man who turned to look on father, mother, wife, or mistress. Woe to the man who lifted his eyes but for a moment from the glaring eyeball of his antagonist — that moment a ringing blow fells him to the earth — he bites the dust!

Not less does our safety depend on constant prayer and watchfulness.

"Be constant in prayer."

"Pray without ceasing."

"Watch and pray."

Ah! you will never have to offer Satan an advantage twice! Should he catch you asleep, as David caught Saul — when he put aside the spear of Abishai that gleamed in the moonlight above the unconscious sleeper — Satan will be sure to harm you!

~ ~ ~ ~ The worst of all heart-troubles!

Like snow when it has leveled the churchyard mounds; and glistening in the winter sun, lies so pure, and fair, and beautiful above the dead who fester and rot below — a very plausible religious profession, wearing the semblance of innocence, may conceal from human eyes the foulest heart-corruption!

The grass grows green upon a mountain which holds a volcano in its inner recesses.

Behind the rosy cheek and soft lustrous eye of beauty — how often does there lurk a deadly disease, the deadliest of all! Internal, but all the more dangerous that they are internal — such diseases are the last to be suspected by their victims, and the hardest to cure.

To other than a skillful eye, or a mother's anxious look — this fair and graceful form never wears bloom of higher health, nor moves in more fascinating charms, nor wins more admiring eyes — than when in a deadly cancer which has penetrated the vital organs, and is quietly sapping the foundations of life.

Like these maladies, sin has its seat within. It is a disease of the heart, and the worst of all heart-troubles!

~ ~ ~ Be sure that your sin will find you out!

A man stands a better chance of escape who violates a physical law of God, than a moral law of God. And why? Just because, in the breach of moral laws, judgment does not, as in the breach of physical laws, follow speedily on the transgression. He who made the laws which govern the physical world — may modify, may change, may even altogether repeal them. He has already done so.

Iron is heavier than water — yet did not the iron axe float like a cork at the prophet's bidding?

Did not the unstable element of sea stand up in walls of solid crystal, until the Israelites passed over?

Did naked foot, when bathed in morning dew, ever feel the green grass cooler — than those three Hebrew young men, when on the floor of the burning furnace, trod at once beneath their feet a tyrant's power, and the red hot coals of fire?

Yes, fire may not burn, and water may not drown. God who gave their laws to those elements — may alter them as He sees meet.

But that moral law, which is a transcript of His own mind and will, is and must be as unchangeable as Himself.

Be sure, therefore, that you cannot sin with impunity!

"Be sure that your sin will find you out!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Washing the dying prayer from his lips!

I knew of one who, while wandering along a lonely and rocky shore at the ebb of tide, slipped his foot into a narrow crevice. Imagine his horror on finding that he could not withdraw the imprisoned limb! Dreadful predicament! There he sat, with his back to the shore, and his face to the sea. Above his head, sea-weed and shells hung upon the crag — the too sure signs that when yonder turning tide comes in, it shall rise on him inch by inch, until it washes over his head.

Did he cry for help? Does any man dream of asking such a question? None heard him. But, oh, how he shouted to the distant boat! How his heart sank as it swung round, and went off on the other tack! How his cries sounded high above the roar of breakers! How bitterly he envied the seagull her wing, as, wondering at this intruder on her lone domains — she sailed above his head, and shrieked back his shriek! How, hopeless of help from man — he turned up his face to Heaven, and cried loud and long to God!

All that God only knows. But as sure as there was a terrific struggle, so sure, while he watched the waters rising inch by inch, these cries never ceased until the wave swelled up, and washing the dying prayer from his lips, broke over his head with a melancholy moan.

There was no help for him. But there is help for us, although captured by sin as fast as that man in the rocks!

"Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon!" Isaiah 55:6-7

~ ~ ~ ~ This court holds its sittings within our bosoms!

"They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them." Romans 2:15

The bar here is one at which we all have stood at one time or another; and where, without regard to rank or office, kings and priests, and purest women, as well as the basest criminals, have been tried.

This court holds its sittings within our bosoms — the presiding judge, God's vice-regent, is conscience; the law is the statutes of Heaven; and each man bears witness against himself.

And though in a sense man himself here constitutes the whole court — being at once prosecutor, witness, judge, and jury, and the trial is conducted under circumstances not favorable to an impartial decision — yet in every case the verdict is, and must be, GUILTY!

~ ~ ~ ~

Within the two covers of the poor man's Bible is a greater wealth . . .

of happiness,

of honor,

of pleasure,

of true peace —

than Australia hides in the gold of all her mines. That gold, for example, could not buy the pardon of any of the thousand criminals whom a country, weary of their crimes, once cast on her distant shores; but here is what satisfies a justice stricter than man's, and procures the forgiveness of sins which the stoutest heart may tremble to think of.

The oldest, truest, and best of books, is the Bible — for the rules it supplies for this life and the hopes it presents of a better one — is adapted to all classes of society, and should be equally valued by all.

~ ~ ~ ~

Gold and silver are the emblems of God's people

Gold and silver are in the rocks, but not of the rocks.

Gold and silver are the emblems of God's people. And as God has separated these emblems from the base and common earth — even so by the power of His grace, He will separate all His chosen from a reprobate and rejected world.

~ ~ ~ ~

Personal Beauty

There is no sin in beauty, nor holiness in ugliness. God adorns all His works, painting even the flowers of the field, and bathing their leaves in delicious fragrance.

Beauty, no doubt, is always a fading charm — and to its envied possessor, in many cases a fatal one. Yet it is a good gift of God; and, whether found in human beings, or in the plumes of a bird, the colors of a flower, or the glowing tints of an evening sky — is a source of innocent pleasure.

I have found a kind, gentle, and most loving heart, under a rough exterior — reminding me of the milk and meat stored up within the coconut's dry, hard, husky shell.

On the other hand, look at Absalom! What winning manners, what grace and beauty, how much of all that in form and features pleases the eye and ministers to the pride of life, are united in that man — to the greatest moral baseness! It is as if God would show us in how little esteem He holds what He threw away on so bad a man; as if He intended to rebuke the silly vanity which worships at a mirror, and feeds on charms that shall feed the worms of the grave! Nor is Absalom the only case where a fair form has lodged a foul heart, and crimes of treachery and murder have stained the hands of beauty.

~ ~ ~ ~

Churches are like gold mines. Some people in the church may be, some certainly are, richer than others in the precious metal — yet we all have our dross and rubbish!

~ ~ ~ ~ A most amazing spectacle is here — the Son of God turns His back on Heaven! He leaves the bosom and happy fellowship of his Father, He bares his own bosom to the sword of justice, and in the depths of a love never to be fathomed — He dies on that accursed tree, "the just for the unjust, that we might be saved!"

~ ~ ~ ~

ENVY is its own avenger

A bad, a base, in every way an unprofitable passion; one that, more than any other, carries its own punishment with it, and makes those who cherish it wretched — ENVY is its own avenger. And yet, so prone are many to regard others with envy, that a man may feel assured that he has begun to rise in the world, as soon as he hears the buzz of detractors, and feels their poisoned stings.

To be envied, is indeed, is a good test of merit — just as we know that to be the finest and the ripest fruit, bears the marks of having been attacked by wasp, or hornet, or other such winged insects.

~ ~ ~ ~

He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live

"From one man God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." Acts 17:26

God has placed men in different circumstances and endowed them with different gifts. Society has its heights and hollows. Such "equality, liberty and fraternity" as the French of last century raved of, and to reach waded to their knees in blood, was a dream.

These are the privileges of Christ's kingdom — and of no other. Slaves whom the truth makes free, are free indeed. Those who love one another as Christ loved them, are brothers — and more than brothers. And the grandest and only attainable equality is that of the grace of God. It raises all who receive Christ, peasants and princes both, to a common but lofty level . . .

redeeming them by one blood,

sanctifying them by one Spirit,

constituting them kings and priests to God, and

calling them all up to the glory which Jesus had with the Father before the foundation of the world!

~ ~ ~ ~

He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things

"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are — so that no one may boast before Him." 1 Corinthians 1:27-29

God calls John Bunyan, the bold leader of village reprobates — to preach the gospel! He calls the blaspheming tinker, to become one of England's best gospel preachers and writers!

From the deck of a slave ship, God summons John Newton to the pulpit; and by hands defiled with Mammon's most nefarious traffic, Newton brings those who are bound, out of darkness — and smites adamantine fetters from the slaves of sin.

God converts Saul, his Son's bitterest enemy — into His warmest friend. To the man whom a trembling church held most in dread — she comes to owe, under God, the weightiest obligations.

~ ~ ~ ~ And there, locked in fond embraces!

Two boys, brothers, started fighting, and in the heat and whirlwind of his passion, the elder struck the younger on the cheek. Brave as steel and quick as lightning, the younger raised his arm to return the blow; but before it fell, he remembered how he had read that morning by his mother's knee these words, "When someone smites you on the one check, turn to him the other also." This simple child, taking Christ's words in their plain and ordinary sense — drops his arm, and turning on his brother eyes where tears of forgiveness had quenched the flash of anger — he offered the other check for a second blow.

It was the elder child's turn to weep now. Surprised, subdued, melted — he fell on his brother's neck; and, kissing him, acknowledged his offence and implored forgiveness. And there, locked in fond embraces, the two boys stood a living proof of this — that our Lord's highest and apparently most impracticable injunctions admit of a more literal obedience than any give them, and than any almost suppose it possible to give them.

~ ~ ~ ~

Inscribed in the blood of Jesus, like red letters on a snow-white background!

Bring out from the dust of six thousand years, the old covenant of Eden, and on that soiled and torn banner, you read the fading motto, "DO and live!"

But what do we read on the folds of this banner, which, defiant of Hell and the world, waves above Calvary, and under which believers march to crowns and victory? The eye of a sinner's hope kindles at the sight of another and better motto; for there, inscribed in the blood of Jesus, like red letters on a snow-white background, we read, "BELIEVE and live." Salvation is the one thing needful for man — and faith is the one thing needful for salvation.

~ ~ ~ ~

Yet did it ever strike you as strange?

Theologians have ventured on a definition of God. According to the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." This is a very comprehensive definition, no doubt.

Yet did it ever strike you as strange, that there is no mention of love here, and that this is a very remarkable omission? It is an omission as remarkable as if a man who described the sky, were to leave out the sun! Or, if an artist, painting the human face, made it sightless, and gave no place on the canvas to those beaming eyes which give life and animation to the features!

~ ~ ~ ~

Deep, dark, unfathomed pools!

"The mystery of the gospel" Ephesians 6:19

It is ever to be borne in mind, that while the Gospel has shallows through which a child may wade and walk on his way to Heaven — it also has deep, dark, unfathomed pools, which no eye can penetrate, and where the first step takes a giant beyond his depth!

~ ~ ~ ~

It does not impart any new faculty

While the grace of God changes all who are brought under its saving influence, it does not impart any new faculty — but works by giving to those faculties we already have a holy bent, by impressing a heavenly character upon them.

It did not give John his warm affections — but it fixed them on his beloved Master, sanctifying his love.

It did not inspire Nehemiah with the love of country — but it made him a holy patriot.

It did not give Dorcas a woman's heart, her tender sympathy with suffering — but it associated charity with piety, and made her a holy philanthropist.

It did not give Paul his genius, his resistless logic, and noble oratory — but it consecrated them to the cause of Christ — touching his lips as with a live coal from the altar, it made him such a master of holy eloquence that he swayed the multitude, humbled the pride of kings, and compelled his very judges to tremble!

~ ~ ~ ~ A Manasseh and a Magdalene, a dying thief, and a blood-stained Saul!

If Divine Mercy stoops to the lowest guilt, oh then there is hope of salvation for me — for a man who has nothing that he can call his own but his misery and sin! I will not sit here to perish; but following a Manasseh and a Magdalene, a dying thief, and a blood-stained Saul — I will join the throng that, called from highways and hedges, are pouring — a ragged crowd — into the marriage supper of the Lamb!

~ ~ ~ ~

O this hard, foul, wicked heart!

"Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man." Matthew 15:19-20

Although the hues of the skin differ, and the form of the body and the features of the face are cast in different molds — the features, color, and character of the heart are the same in all men.

O this hard, foul, wicked heart! My life has been bad, but my heart has been worse! Here lies the inner spring of all these polluted streams! The more we become acquainted with our hearts, the more ready shall we be to describe their desperate and deplorable condition in the words of Holy Scripture, "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9

I do not know a more marked or melancholy proof of the heart's deceitfulness, than that which our light treatment of such weighty matters as sin and judgment affords.

It is a common saying, "As cold as a stone!" But what stone is so cold as man's heart? Cold is the bed of the houseless, who lies stretched on the wintry pavement, and cold is the cell within whose dank stone walls the shivering prisoner is immured; but colder far by nature is this heart of ours to God and Christ. We are born lovers of pleasure — rather than lovers of God. God is not an object of our love, nor do we make any return to Jesus for his warm and fond affection.

Blessed Lord! He had many a cold lodging on this ungrateful earth; his couch was off the open field, where his locks were wet with the dews of night; drenched with the spray of the sea and the lashing rain, his weary frame found sleep on the hard benches of a fisherman's boat; yet on these he lay not on so cold a bed as He would find in the dark, dreary chambers of an unrenewed heart.

~ ~ ~ ~ So unheavenly is our nature!

Unless your heart is sanctified and renewed — what would Heaven be to you? An abhorrent place! The day that took you there, would end all enjoyment, and throw you, a castaway, upon a solitude more lonely than a desert island. Neither angels nor saints would seek your company — nor would you seek theirs. Unable to join in their hallowed employments, to sympathize with, or even to understand their holy joys — you would feel more desolate in Heaven than we have done in the

heart of a great city, without one friend, jostled by crowds, but crowds who spoke a language we did not understand, and were aliens alike in dress and manners, in language, blood, and faith.

By nature, we are all unfit to be received into the kingdom of Heaven. A sinner there would be more out of place than a ragged beggar in a royal palace, where, all gazing at his appearance with astonishment, and shrinking back from his defiling touch — he rudely thrusts himself within the brilliant circle.

So unheavenly is our nature, that unless we were made fit for the glorious inheritance, we would be no honor to it, nor would it be any happiness to us.

~ ~ ~ ~

Later you will understand!

"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7

Once raised to Heaven, we shall understand many mysteries, and solve many questions connected with sin and its sorrows, of which it is best now to say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain!" Psalms 139:6

~ ~ ~ ~

Above all else, guard your heart!

Some professors who carefully cultivate their fields, or their gardens, or their business, or their minds — take no pains whatever to cultivate their hearts!

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life!" Proverbs 4:23

~ ~ ~ ~

Dyed the flowers of Gethsemane with His blood!

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death! Stay here and keep watch with Me." Matthew 26:38

More immeasurable, altogether inconceivable indeed, were the sufferings which, afflicting the Savior's soul, dyed the flowers of Gethsemane with His blood, and wrung from His pale lips the lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"

~ ~ ~ ~

Envy found no way to vent its malice and spit its venom at Him!

It is one of the finest testimonies borne to our Lord's lofty and holy life, that the thirty years which He spent in a small town — where leisure always abounds, and scandal is often rife, and every man's character and habits are discussed in private circles and dissected by many cutting tongues — did not furnish them with the shred of an excuse for whispering a bad word against Him!

His life resembled a polished mirror, which the foulest breath cannot stain, nor dim beyond a passing moment. What a noble testimony to Jesus Christ! Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners — envy found no way to vent its malice and spit its venom at Him, but by a taunt she

drew from his humble origin and poor relatives.

~ ~ ~ ~

Half of His kingdom!

"So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether . . . the world or life or death or the present or the future — all are yours!" 1 Corinthians 3:21-22

The Persian King promised whatever Queen Esther might ask — up to the half of his kingdom. As generous and royal as was his offer — it helps us by its very baseness, as a molehill at the foot of a mountain; as a candle's feeble, yellow flame held up against the blazing sun — to form some estimate of the boundless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Half of His kingdom! He offers nothing by halves. His promise is illimitable. All that is Mine, is yours. Confining His generosity neither to kingdoms, nor continents, nor worlds, nor Heaven itself — He lays the whole universe at a poor sinner's feet. Away then with fears and cares! There is nothing we need, that we shall not get. There is nothing we can ask, that we shall not receive!

~ ~ ~ ~

He was a free man!

Many men of the noblest genius and proudest intellect have crouched, slave-like, before the world — laying their heads in the very dust at her feet.

When Lord Byron, for instance, stood aloft on the pinnacle of his fame — he confessed that the disapprobation of the basest critic gave him more pain than the applause of all the others gave him pleasure. Miserable confession, and miserable man! He was not less a slave though laurels wreathed his brow, and that a star glittered on his bosom.

What a contrast do we see in Paul! He was a free man! Like some tall rock, he stands erect; unmoved from his place, or purpose, or judgment, or resolution, by the storm of a world's disapprobation raging fiercely around him. "With me," he says, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you, or by man's judgment; . . . he who judges me is the Lord. "

~ ~ ~ ~ The generous, kindly, loving disposition

I have no doubt whatever that to the generous, kindly, loving disposition which Joseph possessed, and all should cultivate — he owed not a little of his remarkable success. It won the regards and goodwill of others. Kindness often does men such service, as the arms which a creeping plant throws around a pole does it, when, springing from the ground, it rises by help of the very object it embraces.

~ ~ ~ ~ His delight in the exercise of His pity, love, and mercy

The minnow plays in a shallow pool — and leviathan cleaves the depths of deepest ocean; winged insects sport in a sunbeam — and winged angels sing before the throne. Whether we fix our eye on the one or the other, the whole fabric of creation appears to prove that Jehovah delights in the in the display of His wisdom, power, love, and goodness.

And, just as it is to the delight which God enjoys in the exercise of them — that we owe this beautiful creation; so it is to His delight in the exercise of His pity, love, and mercy — that we owe salvation, with all its blessings!

~ ~ ~ ~

Though plucked from the foulest ditch, and wrapped in filthy rags!

What idea has he formed of God — who expects less of Him than he would expect of any earthly mother?

Let her be a queen. She is a mother; and under the impulse of feelings that reign alike in palaces and in cottages — how would that woman spring from her throne to embrace a lost babe; and, weeping tears of joy, press it to her jeweled bosom, though plucked from the foulest ditch, and wrapped in filthy rags? He knows little of human nature, fallen as it is, who imagines any mother turning from the plaintive cry and imploring arms of her offspring because, forsooth, it was restored to her in loathsome attire.

And he is still more ignorant of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" who imagines that, unless man can make out some merit — he will receive no mercy.

~ ~ ~ ~

They cannot claim originality for this idea!

Some have imagined that they honor God most when, sinking all other attributes in mercy — indiscriminating mercy — they represent Him as embracing the world in His arms — and receiving to His bosom with equal affection both the sinners that hate Him, and the saints that love Him.

They cannot claim originality for this idea — its authorship belongs to the "father of lies." Satan said so before them. It is the very doctrine that ruined this world. The serpent said to the woman, "You shall surely not die!"

~ ~ ~ ~ The poor harlot enters to be washed, and robed, and forgiven, and kindly welcomed!

Saving, gentle, pitying mercy, turns no more aside from the foulest wretch — than the wind that kisses her faded cheek, or the sunbeam that visits as brightly a murderer's cell as a minister's study.

While we see a Pharisee stand astonished to be shut out — mark how, when she approaches, who, weeping, trembling all over, hardly dares lift her hand to knock, the door flies wide open — and the poor harlot enters to be washed, and robed, and forgiven, and kindly welcomed!

~ ~ ~ ~

There is hope for you!

If God saves — not because we deserve mercy — but that His own great mercy may be illustrated in saving — ah! then there is hope for you — yes, although you were . . .

an adulterer, a thief, a murderer,

the vile wretch who spit in Jesus' face,

the ruffian who forced the thorny crown deep into His bleeding brow,

that very soldier who buried the lance in Jesus' side, and just returning from Calvary, with the blood of Christ's heart red on the spear head! There is hope for you!

~ ~ ~ ~ A beautiful picture of the happy bosom into which Heaven and its peace have descended

As I have seen a school-master, speaking with low and gentle voice, hush the riotous school into instant silence — so Jesus spoke. Raising his hand, and addressing the fierce storm, He said, "Peace, be still." The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. No sooner, amid the loudest din, does nature catch the well-known sound of her Master's voice, than the tumult subsides! In an instant all is quiet; and, with a heave as gentle as an infant's bosom, and all heaven's starry glory mirrored in its crystal depths, the sea of Galilee lies around that boat — a beautiful picture of the happy bosom into which Heaven and its peace have descended.

~ ~ ~ ~ The children of God often owe their falls and failings — to their neglect of prayer, and of God's Word, and of other divinely appointed means of grace.

~ ~ ~ ~

Armed with bolts of vengeance, and scowling down from pulpits!

Thundering out the terrors of the law, armed with bolts of vengeance, and scowling down from pulpits — many preachers have stood there as unlike as possible to Him who wept over Jerusalem; and when He saw the multitudes, had compassion on them. By representing God in dark and gloomy colors, with an expression on His countenance of stern severity, and as more prone to punish than to pardon — the preacher's offence is great. He may quench a sinner's hopes, extinguish the light that is dawning on a darkened soul, and repel a poor prodigal whose steps are turning homeward to his father's house.

~ ~ ~ ~

Allowing the pulpit to come in between them and the Cross!

Let any object whatever interpose between me and the sun — and a shadow, more or less cold and dark, is the immediate consequence.

Just so, the deep shadow of a spiritual darkness may be flung over a congregation, who, allowing the pulpit to come in between them and the Cross, think too much of the servant and too little of the Master.

~ ~ ~ ~

Endless misery — the worm that never dies — and the fire that is never quenched — in whatever shape it comes, is a dreadful thought. We cannot think of it without shuddering. Oh, why should any hear of it without fleeing instantly to Jesus — for who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?

I do not undertake to defend God's procedure in this matter. He will defend it Himself, and one day justify His ways, in the judgment even of those whom He condemns. They shall not have the miserable consolation of complaining that they have been harshly and unjustly dealt with. The sentence that condemns them, shall find an awful echo in their own consciences. How they shall blame themselves, and regret their life, and curse their folly — turning their stings against their own bosoms, as the scorpion, maddened with pain, is said to do, when surrounded by a circle of fire!

~ ~ ~ ~ The highest angels do not wear crowns as bright as the thief on the cross!

Since God redeemed men with the blood of his Son, the highest angels do not wear crowns as bright as the thief on the cross, and the woman who was a sinner. In consequence of redeeming love, though in his original position is inferior to the angels, man occupies in the family of God, and in those heavens of which the visible are but the starry pavement — a place nearest to the eternal throne! And by the law that to whom much is given, of them shall much be required — those whom God has most loved — are most bound to love; and those whom He has most glorified — are most bound to glorify Him.

~ ~ ~ ~ The best of mankind are so bad!

Scripture teaches that the purest, gentlest, loveliest, most amiable creature that blesses fond parents, and adorns earth's happiest home — one of nature's fairest flowers — stands as much in need of a new birth, as the vilest outcast who walks these streets!

The best of mankind are so bad, that all have need to be born again.

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again!" John 3:3

~ ~ ~ ~

Give me neither poverty nor riches!

The regions which lie mid-way between the equator and the poles are proved by experience to be most favorable to life and its enjoyments. Just so, those conditions which lie mid-way between the opposite extremes of poverty and riches, are found most conducive to man's spiritual welfare.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread." Proverbs 30:8

~ ~ ~ ~

Look on this robe, and see whether it is your Son's coat or not

Best of all shrouds, may you be wrapped in the "clean linen" of Jesus' righteousness! With that robe around you may you rise from the grave with this your plea, "Almighty God! Of my own works I have nothing to say but this — what is bad in them is mine; what is good in them is Yours. Behold this pardon — look on this robe, and see whether it is your Son's coat or not.

See that by faith you put on that righteousness, even that righteousness of Jesus Christ — in which God sees neither spot, nor stain, nor any such thing!

~ ~ ~ ~

God is mighty to save!

It is equally easy for God . . .

to supply our greatest needs — as our smallest wants;

to carry our heaviest load, as our lightest burden.

Just as it is as easy for the great ocean to bear on her bosom a ship of war with all its guns and crew aboard — as the tiniest fisherman's boat which floats, falling and rising on her swell.

In the most desperate cases of sinners and in the darkest circumstances of saints, when all hope and power are gone, and there seems to be no deliverance — God is mighty to save! Confident in His resources, He says, "Is anything too hard for Me?"

~ ~ ~ ~

"I am perishing!"

"Lord, save us! We are perishing!" Matthew 8:25

Now, to this state, and this very confession, all who are to be saved must first be brought.

"I am perishing!" is a saving word. "I am perishing!" like the cry of a small child — it is the first utterance of a new existence. He who raises his eyes to Heaven to cry, "Lord, save me — or I perish!" has planted his foot on the first rung of the ladder that raises man from earth to Heaven!

~ ~ ~ ~

Wash his heart in the blood of Christ — oftener than he washes his hands in water!

The most advanced saint is never altogether free from sin. The holiest believer carries that about with him, which painfully reminds him of his old condition.

I have seen a noble dog which had broken loose and restored itself to his liberty — dragging the chain, or some links of it, along with him.

I have read of brave, stout captives who had escaped from prison, but who brought away with them, in swollen joints or festering wounds, the marks and injuries of the cruel fetters.

Do not old sins thus continue to hang about a man — even after grace has delivered him from their dominant power? Have you not felt that these called for constant watchfulness and earnest prayer? Who does not need every day and hour to resort to the fountain of cleansing, and wash his heart in the blood of Christ — oftener than he washes his hands in water!

~ ~ ~ ~

Without it, the least of sinners must be lost!

"The blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from all sin!" 1 John 1:7

It is impossible to set too high a value on the blood of Christ. It cleanses from all sin! Washed in it, the greatest sinner shall be saved; without it, the least of sinners must be lost.

To a poor guilty man, suffering the stings of conscience and standing in terror of death and the judgment — it is better than gold, yes, than much fine gold! It is the pearl of great price, for which he would sell all, and, were he possessed of a thousand worlds, would part with them all to buy!

~ ~ ~ ~ More tears are shed in playhouses, than in churches.

~ ~ ~ ~ The new novel is sought more eagerly, and devoured more greedily, the New Testament!

~ ~ ~ ~

If you find yourself loving . . .

any pleasure more than your prayers,

any book better than the Bible,

any house better than the house of the Lord,

any table better than the Lord's table,

any persons better than Christ, or

any indulgence better than the hope of Heaven

— be alarmed!

~ ~ ~ ~

If the world is ever conquered for our Lord, it is not by ministers, nor by office-bearers, nor by the great, and noble and mighty — but by every member of Christ's body being a working member; doing his work; filling his own sphere; holding his own post; and saying to Jesus, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

~ ~ ~ ~ A sunny temperament gilds the edges of life's blackest cloud.

~ ~ ~ ~ As in nature, as in art, so in grace; it is rough treatment that gives souls, as well as stones, their luster. The more the diamond is cut — the brighter it sparkles. In what seems hard dealing with us — God has no end in view but to perfect our graces. He sends tribulations — but tells us their purpose, that "tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

~ ~ ~ ~

Every object in nature is impressed with God's footsteps, and every day repeats the wonders of creation. There is not an object, be it pebble or pearl, weed or rose, the flower-spangled sward beneath, or the star-spangled sky above, not a worm or an angel, a drop of water or a boundless ocean — in which intelligence may not discern, and piety adore, the providence of Him who took our nature that He might save our souls.

~ ~ ~ ~ The Bible, which ranges over a period of four thousand years, records but one instance of a death-bed conversion (the thief on the cross) — yet one that none may despair — and but one, that none may presume.

~ ~ ~ ~

It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, and attain to Christian maturity — but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly and often painfully to mount the ladder that rests on earth, and rises to Heaven.

~ ~ ~ ~ Prayer flies where the eagle never flew.

~ ~ ~ ~ The Christian is not always praying; but within his bosom is a heaven-kindled love — fires of desire, fervent longings — which make him always ready to pray, and often engage him in prayer.

~ ~ ~ ~ The cry of distress lays hold of our Lord's omnipotence. It is as easy for God to supply your greatest needs — as your smallest needs — even as it was within His power to form a system or an atom, to create a blazing sun as to kindle the fire-fly's lamp.

~ ~ ~ ~ The work that is done in love — loses half its tedium and difficulty.

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin! Sin! You are a hateful and horrible thing! You are that abominable thing which God hates. And what wonder?

You have insulted His holy majesty;
you have crucified the Son of His infinite love;
you have vexed His gracious Spirit;
you have defied His power;
you have despised His grace;
and you have trodden under foot His matchless mercy.

Surely, brethren, the wonder of wonders is, that sin is not that abominable thing which we also hate.

~ ~ ~ ~

True religion is . . .
the mortar that binds society together;
the granite pedestal of liberty;
the strong backbone of the social system.

~ ~ ~ ~ The hope of immortality, makes heroes of cowards.

~ ~ ~ ~

Heaven is . . .
the day — of which grace is the dawn;
the rich, ripe fruit — of which grace is the lovely flower;

the inner shrine of that most glorious temple to which grace forms the approach and outer court.

~ ~ ~ ~

You are to earn the eulogy pronounced on the woman, "She has done what she could." Do it now. It is not a safe thing to leave a generous feeling to the cooling influences of a cold world. If you intend to do a base thing — wait until tomorrow. If you are to do a noble thing, do it now — now!

~ ~ ~ ~

Scatter money in a crowd, how they scramble for it; offer bread to the starving, how greedily they seize it; throw a rope to the drowning, how he eagerly grasps it! With like eagerness and earnestness — may the Spirit of God help you to lay hold on Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~ In the spangled sky, the rainbow, the woodland hung with diamonds, the sward sown with pearly dew, the rosy dawn, the golden clouds of even, the purple mountains, the hoary rock, the blue boundless main, nature's simplest flower, or some fair form of laughing child or lovely maiden — we cannot see the beautiful without admiring it.

S. The New Heart

The New Heart A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.—Ezekiel 36:26. As in a machine where the parts all fit each other, and, bathed in oil, move without din or discord, the most perfect harmony reigns throughout the kingdom of grace. Jesus Christ is the “wisdom,” as well as the “power” of God; nor in this kingdom is anything found corresponding to the anomalies and incongruities of the world lying without. There we sometimes see a high station disgraced by a man of low habits; while others are doomed to an inferior condition, who would shine like gilded ornaments on the very pinnacles of society. That beautiful congruity in Christ’s kingdom is secured by those who are the objects of saving mercy being so renewed and sanctified that their nature is in harmony with their position, and the man within corresponds to all without.

Observe how this property of “new” runs through the whole economy of grace. When mercy first rose upon this world, an attribute of Divinity appeared which was new to the eyes of men and angels. Again, the Savior was born of a virgin; and He who came forth from a womb where no child had been previously conceived, was sepulchered in a tomb where no man had been previously interred. The infant had a new birthplace, the crucified had a new burial-place. Again, Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, the author of a new testament, the founder of a new faith. Again, the redeemed receive a new name; they sing a new song; their home is not to be in the old, but in the new, Jerusalem, where they shall dwell on a new earth, and walk in glory beneath a new heaven. Now it were surely strange, when all things else are new, if they themselves were not to partake of this general renovation. Nor strange only, for such a change is indispensable. A new name without a new nature were an imposture. It were not more an untruth to call a lion a lamb, or the rapacious vulture by the name of the gentle dove, than to give the title of sons of God to the venomous seed of the serpent.

Then, again, unless man received a new nature, how could he sing the new song? The raven, perched on the rock, where she whets her bloody beak, and impatiently watches the dying struggles of some unhappy lamb can not tune her croaking voice to the rich, mellow music of a thrush; and, since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, how could a sinner take up the strain and sing the song of saints? Besides, unless a man were a new creature, he were out of place in the new creation. In circumstances neither adapted to his nature, nor fitted to minister to his happiness, a sinner in heaven would find himself as much out of his element as a finny inhabitant of the deep, or a sightless burrower in the soil, beside an eagle, soaring in the sky, or surveying her wide domain from the mountain crag. In the works of God we see nothing more beautiful than the divine skill with which He suits His creatures to their condition. He gives wings to birds, fins to fishes, sails to the thistle-seed, a lamp to light the glowworm, great roots to moor the cedar, and to the aspiring ivy her thousand hands to climb the wall. Nor is the wisdom so conspicuous in nature, less remarkable and adorable in the kingdom of grace. He forms a holy people for a holy heaven—fits heaven for them, and them for heaven. And calling up His Son to prepare the mansions for their tenants, and sending down His Spirit to prepare the tenants for their

mansions, He thus establishes a perfect harmony between the new creature and the new creation.

You can not have two hearts beating in the same bosom, else you would be, not a man, but a monster. Therefore, the very first thing to be done, in order to make things new, is just to take that which is old out of the way. And the taking away of the old heart is, after all, but a preparatory process. It is a means, but not the end. For, strange as it may at first sound, he is not religious who is without sin. A dead man is without sin; and he is sinless, who lies buried in dreamless slumber, so long as his eyes are sealed. Now, God requires more than a negative religion. Piety, like fire, light, electricity, magnetism, is an active, not a passive element; it has a positive, not merely a negative existence. For how is pure and undefiled religion defined? "Pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." And on whom does Jesus pronounce His beatitude? "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And what is the sum of practical piety—the most portable form in which you can put an answer to Saul's question, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" What but this, "Depart from evil, and do good." Therefore, while God promises to take the stony heart out of our flesh, He promises more. In taking away one heart, He engages to supply us with another; and to this further change and onward stage in the process of redemption, I now proceed to turn your attention. By way of general observation, I remark that our affections are engaged in religion. An oak—not as it stands choked up in the crowded wood, with room neither to spread nor breathe, but as it stands in the open field, swelling out below where it anchors its roots in the ground, and swelling out above where it stretches its arms into the air,—presents us with the most perfect form of firmness, self-support, stout and sturdy independence. So perfectly formed, indeed, is the monarch of the forest to stand alone, and fight its own battles with the elements, that the architect of the Bell Bock lighthouse is said to have borrowed his idea of its form from God in nature, and that, copying the work of a divine Architect, he took the trunk of the oak as the model of a building which was to stand the blast of the storm, and the swell of the winter seas.

Observe, that although the state of the natural affections does not furnish any certain evidence of conversion, it is the glory of piety that these are strengthened, elevated, sanctified by the change. The lover of God will be the kindest, best, wisest lover of his fellow-creatures. The heart that has room in it for God, grows so large, that it finds room for all God's train, for all that He loves, and for all that He has made; so that the Church, with all its denominations of true Christians, the world, with all its perishing sinners, nay, all the worlds which He has created, find orbit-room to move, as in an expansive universe, within the capacious enlargement of a believer's heart. For while the love of sin acts as an astringent—contracting the dimensions of the natural heart, shutting and shriveling it up—the love of God expands and enlarges its capacity. Piety quickens the pulse of love, warms and strengthens our heart, and sends forth fuller streams of natural affection toward all that have a claim on us, just as a strong and healthy heart sends tides of blood along the elastic arteries to every extremity of the body. This new heart, however, mainly consists in a change of the affections as they regard spiritual objects. Without again traveling over ground which we have already surveyed, just look at the heart and feelings of an unconverted man. His mind being carnal, is enmity or hatred against God. This may be latent, not at first sight apparent, nor suspected, but how soon does it appear when put to the proof? Fairly tried, it comes out like those unseen elements which chemical tests reveal. Let God, for instance, by His providences or laws, thwart the wishes or cross the propensities of our unrenewed nature—let

there be a collision between His will and ours—and the latent enmity flashes out like latent fire when the cold black flint is struck with steel. In conversion God gives a new spirit. Conversion does not bestow new faculties. It does not turn a weak man into a philosopher. Yet, along with our affections, the temper, the will, the judgment partake of this great and holy change. Thus, while the heart ceases to be dead, the head, illuminated by a light within, ceases to be dark; the understanding is enlightened; the will is renewed; and our whole temper is sweetened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. To consider these in their order, I remark—By this change the understanding and judgment are enlightened. Sin is the greatest folly, and the sinner the greatest fool in the world. There is no such madness in the most fitful lunacy. Think of a man risking eternity and his everlasting happiness on the uncertain chance of surviving another year. Think of a man purchasing a momentary pleasure at the cost of endless pain. Think of a dying man living as if he were never to die. Is there a convert to God who looks back upon his unconverted state, and does not say with David, “Lord, I was as a beast before Thee.”

Now conversion not only restores God to the heart, but reason also to her throne. Time and eternity are now seen in their just proportions—in their right relative dimensions; the one in its littleness, and the other in its greatness. When the light of heaven rises on the soul, what grand discoveries does she make—of the exceeding evil of sin, of the holiness of the divine law, of the infinite purity of divine justice, of the grace and greatness of divine love. On Sinai’s summit and on Calvary’s cross, what new, sublime, affecting, scenes open on her astonished eyes! She now, as by one convulsive bound, leaps to the conclusion that salvation is the one thing needful, and that if a man will give all he hath for the life that now is, much more should he part with all for the life to come. The Savior and Satan, the soul and body, holiness and sin, have competing claims. Between these reason now holds the balance even, and man finds, in the visit of converting grace, what the demoniac found in Jesus’ advent. The man whose dwelling was among the tombs, whom no chains could bind, is seated at the feet of Jesus, “clothed, and in his right mind.” By this change the will is renewed. Bad men are worse, and good men are better than they appear. In conversion the will is so changed and sanctified, that although a pious man is in some respects less, in other respects he is more holy than the world gives him credit for. The attainments of a believer are always beneath his aims; his desires are nobler than his deeds; his wishes are holier than his works. Give other men their will, full swing to their passions, and they would be worse than they are; give that to him, and he would be better than he is. And if you have experienced the gracious change, it will be your daily grief that you are not what you not only know you should be, but what you wish to be. To be complaining with Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me; that which I would I do not, and what I would not, that I do,” is one of the best evidences of a gracious, saving change.

Children of God! let not your souls be cast down. This struggle between the new will and the old man—painful and prolonged although it be—proves beyond all doubt the advent of the Holy Spirit. Until the Savior appeared there was no sword drawn, nor blood shed in Bethlehem, nor murderous decree issued against its innocents—they slept safely in their mothers’ bosoms, Herod enjoyed his security and pleasure, and Rachel rose not from her grave to weep for her children because they were not. Christ’s coming rouses all the devil in the soul. The fruits of holy peace are reaped with swords on the fields of war; and this struggle within your breast proves that grace, even in its infancy a cradled Savior, is engaged in strangling the old Serpent. When the shadow of calamity

falls on many homes, and the tidings of victory come with sad news to many a family, and the brave are lying thick in the deadly breach, men comfort us by saying, that there are things worse than war. That is emphatically true of this holy war. Rejoice that the peace of death is gone. By conversion the temper and disposition are changed and sanctified. Christians are occasionally to be found with a tone of mind and a temper as little calculated to recommend their faith as to promote their happiness. I believe that there are cases in which this is due to a deranged condition of the nervous system, or the presence of disease in some other vital organ. These unhappy persons are more deserving of our pity than our censure. This is not only the judgment of Christian charity, but of sound philosophy, and is a conclusion to which we are conducted in studying the union between mind and body, and the manner in which they act and re-act upon each other. So long as grace dwells in a "vile body," which is the seat of frequent disorder and many diseases—these infirmities of temper admit no more, perhaps, of being entirely removed, than a defect of speech, or any physical deformity. The good temper for which some take credit may be the result of good health and a well-developed frame—a physical more than a moral virtue; and an ill temper, springing from bad health, or an imperfect organization, may be a physical rather than a moral defect—giving its victim a claim on our charity and forbearance. But, admitting this apology for the unhappy tone and temper of some pious men, the true Christian will bitterly bewail his defect, and, regretting his infirmity more than others do a deformity, he will carefully guard and earnestly pray against it. Considering it as a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, it will often send him to his knees in prayer to God, that the grace which conquers nature may be made "sufficient for him."

I pray you to cultivate the temper that was in Jesus Christ. Is he like a follower of the Lamb who is raging like a roaring lion? Is he like a pardoned criminal who sits moping with a cloud upon his brow? Is he like an heir of heaven, like a man destined to a crown, who is vexed and fretted with some petty loss? Is he like one in whose bosom the dove of heaven is nestling, who is full of all manner of bile and bitterness? Oh, let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus. A kind, catholic, gentle, loving temper is one of the most winning features of religion; and by its silent and softening influence you will do more real service to Christianity than by the loudest professions, or the exhibition of a cold and skeleton orthodoxy. Let it appear in you, that it is with the believer under the influence of the Spirit as with fruit ripened beneath the genial influences of heaven's dews and sunbeams. At first hard, it grows soft; at first sour, it becomes sweet; at first green, it assumes in time a rich and mellow color; at first adhering tenaciously to the tree, when it becomes ripe, it is ready to drop at the slightest touch. So with the man who is ripening for heaven. His affections and temper grow sweet, soft, mellow, loose from earth and earthly things. He comes away readily to the hand of death, and leaves the world without a wrench. In conversion God gives a heart of flesh. "I will give you a heart of flesh."

Near by a stone, a mass of rock that had fallen from the overhanging crag, which had some wild flowers growing in its fissures, and on its top the foxglove, with its spike of beautiful but deadly flowers, we once came upon an adder as it lay in ribbon coil, basking on the sunny ground. At our approach the reptile stirred, uncoiled itself, and raising its venomous head, with eyes like burning coals, it shook its cloven tongue, and, hissing, gave signs of battle. Attacked, it retreated; and, making for that gray stone, wormed itself into a hole in its side. Its nest and home were there. And in looking on that shattered rock—fallen from its primeval elevation—with its flowery but fatal

charms, the home and nest of the adder, where nothing grew but poisoned beauty, and nothing dwelt but a poisoned brood, it seemed to us an emblem of that heart which the text describes as a stone, which experience proves is a habitation of devils, and which the prophet pronounces to be desperately wicked. I have already explained why the heart is described as a stone. It is cold as a stone; hard as a stone; dead and insensible as a stone. Now, as by the term "flesh" we understand qualities the very opposite of these, I therefore remark that—In conversion a man gets a warm heart.

Let us restrict ourselves to a single example. When faith receives the Savior, how does the heart warm to Jesus Christ! There is music in His name. "His name is an ointment poured forth." All the old indifference to His cause, His people, and the interests of His kingdom, has passed away; and now these have the warmest place in a believer's bosom, and are the object of its strongest and tenderest affections. The only place, alas! that religion has in the hearts of many is a burial-place; but the believer can say with Paul, "Christ liveth in me." Nor is his heart like the cottage of Bethany, favored only with occasional visits. Jesus abides there in the double character of guest and master, its most loving and best loved inmate; and there is a difference as great between that heart as it is, and that heart as it was, as between the warm bosom where the Infant slept or smiled in Mary's arms and the dark, cold sepulcher where weeping followers laid and left the Crucified. Is there such a heart in you? Do you appreciate Christ's matchless excellences? Having cast away every sin to embrace him, do you set him above your chiefest joy? Would you leave father, mother, wife, children, to follow Him, with bleeding feet, over life's roughest path? Rather than part with Him, would you part with a thousand worlds? Were He now on earth, would you leave a throne to stoop and tie His latchet? If I might so speak, would you be proud to carry His shoes? Then, indeed, you have got the new, warm heart of flesh. The new love of Christ, and the old love of the world, may still meet in opposing currents; but in the war and strife of these antagonistic principles, the celestial shall overpower the terrestrial, as, at the river's mouth, I have seen the ocean tide, when it came rolling in with a thousand billows at its back, fill all the channel, carry all before its conquering swell, dam up the fresh water of the land, and drive it back with resistless power. In conversion a man gets a soft heart. As "flesh," it is soft and sensitive. It is flesh, and can be wounded or healed. It is flesh, and feels alike the kiss of kindness and the rod of correction. It is flesh; and no longer a stone, hard, obdurate, impenetrable to the genial influences of heaven. A hard block of ice, it has yielded to the beams of the sun, and been melted into flowing water. How are you moved now, stirred now, quickened now, sanctified now, by truths once felt no more than dews falling out of starry heavens, in soft silence upon rugged rock. The heart of grace is endowed with a delicate sensibility, and vibrates to the slightest touch of a Savior's fingers. How does the truth of God affect it now! A stone no longer, it melts under the heavenly fire—a stone no longer, it bends beneath the hammer of the word; no longer like the rugged rock, on which rains and sunbeams were wasted, it receives the impression of God's power, and retains the footprints of His presence. Like the flowers that close their eyes at night, but waken at the voice of morning, like the earth that gapes in summer drought, the new heart opens to receive the bounties of grace and the gifts of heaven. Have you experienced such a change? In proof and evidence of its reality, is David's language yours—"I have stretched out my hands unto thee. My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land"? In conversion a man gets a living heart. The perfection of this life is death—it is dead to be sin, but alive to righteousness, alive to Christ, alive to everything which touches His honor, and crown, and kingdom. With Christ living in his heart, the believer feels that now he is not

himself, not his own; and, as another's, the grand object of his life is to live to Christ. He reckons him an object worth living for, had he a thousand lives to live; worth dying for, had he a thousand deaths to die. He says with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." In the highest sense alive, he is dead, dead to things he was once alive to; and he wishes that he were more dead to them, thoroughly dead. He wishes that he could look on the seductions of the world, and sin's voluptuous charms, with the cold, unmoved stare of death, and that these had no more power to kindle a desire in him than in the icy bosom of a corpse. "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

It is a mark of grace that the believer, in his progress heavenward, grows more and more alive to the claims of Jesus. If you "know the love of Christ," His is the latest name you will desire to utter; His is the latest thought you will desire to form; upon Him you will fix your last look on earth; upon Him your first in heaven. When memory is oblivious of all other objects—when all that attracted the natural eye is wrapt in the mists of death, when the tongue is cleaving to the roof of our mouth, and speech is gone, and sight is gone, and hearing gone, and the right hand, lying powerless by our side, has lost its cunning, Jesus! then may we remember Thee! If the shadows of death are to be thrown in deepest darkness on the valley, when we are passing along it to glory, may it be ours to die like that saint, beside whose bed wife and children once stood, weeping over the wreck of faded faculties, and a blank, departed memory. One had asked him, "Father, do you remember me?" and received no answer; and another, and another, but still no answer. And then, all making way for the venerable companion of a long and loving pilgrimage—the tender partner of many a past joy and sorrow, his wife draws near. She bends over him, and as her tears fall thick upon his face, she cries, "Do you not remember me?" A stare, but it is vacant. There is no soul in that filmy eye; and the seal of death lies upon these lips. The sun is down, and life's brief twilight is darkening fast into a starless night. At this moment, one calm enough to remember how the love of Christ's spouse is "strong as death," a love that "many waters can not quench," stooped to his ear, and said, "Do you remember Jesus Christ?" The word was no sooner uttered than it seemed to recall the spirit, hovering for a moment, ere it took wing to heaven. Touched as by an electric influence, the heart beat once more to the name of Jesus; the features, fixt in death, relax; the countenance, dark in death, flushes up like the last gleam of day; and, with a smile in which the soul passed away to glory, he replied, "Remember Jesus Christ! dear Jesus Christ! He is all my salvation, and all my desire." By conversion man is ennobled.

While infidelity regards man as a mere animal, to be dissolved at death into ashes and air, and vice changes man into a brute or devil, Mammon enslaves him. She makes him a serf, and condemns him to be a gold digger for life in the mines. She puts her collar on his neck, and locks it; and bending his head to the soil, and bathing his brow in sweat, she says, Toil, toil, toil; as if this creature, originally made in the image of God, this dethroned and exiled monarch, to save whom the Son of God descended from the skies, and bled on Calvary, were a living machine, constructed of sinew, bone, and muscle, and made for no higher end than to work to live, and live to work.

Contrast with these the benign aspect in which the gospel looks on man. Religion descends from heaven to break our chains. She alone raises me from degradation, and bids me lift my drooping head, and look up to heaven. Yes; it is that very gospel which by some is supposed to present such dark, degrading, gloomy views of man and his destiny, which lifts me from the dust to set me

among princes—on a level with angels—in a sense above them. To say nothing of the divine nobility grace imparts to a soul which is stamped anew with the likeness and image of God, how sacred and venerable does even this body appear in the eye of piety! No longer a form of animated dust; no longer the subject of passions shared in common with the brutes; no longer the drudge and slave of Mammon, the once “vile body” rises into a temple of the Holy Ghost. Vile in one sense it may be; yet what, although it be covered with sores? What, although it be clothed in rags! What, although, in unseemly decrepitude, it want its fair proportions? That poor, sickly, shattered form is the casket of a precious jewel. This mean and crumbling tabernacle lodges a guest nobler than palaces may boast of; angels hover around its walls; the Spirit of God dwells within it. What an incentive to holiness, to purity of life and conduct, lies in the fact that the body of a saint is the temple of God, a truer, nobler temple than that which Solomon dedicated by his prayers, and Jesus consecrated His presence! In popish cathedrals, where the light streamed through painted window, and the organ pealed along lofty aisles, and candles gleamed on golden cups and silver crosses, and incense floated in fragrant clouds, we have seen the blinded worshiper uncover his head, drop reverently on his knees, and raise his awestruck eye on the imposing spectacle; we have seen him kiss the marble floor, and knew that sooner would he be smitten dead upon that floor than be guilty of defiling it. How does this devotee rebuke us! We wonder at his superstition; how may he wonder at our profanity! Can we look on the lowly veneration he expresses for an edifice which has been erected by some dead man’s genius, which holds but some image of a deified virgin, or bones of a canonized saint, and which, proudly as it raises its cathedral towers, time shall one day cast to the ground, and bury in the dust; can we, I say, look on that, and, if sensible to rebuke, not feel reproved by the spectacle? In how much more respect, in how much holier veneration should we hold this body? The shrine of immortality, and a temple dedicated to the Son of God, it is consecrated by the presence of the Spirit—a living temple, over whose porch the eye of piety reads what the finger of inspiration has written: “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

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