

# The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - April

by F. L. Mortimer

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*Jesus' sermon emphasizes the importance of diligence, poverty, and humility, and warns against the unpardonable sin and the dangers of idle words.*

**Scripture:** Mark 5:1, Romans 5:3, 1 Corinthians 10:11, Revelation 12:12

**Topics:** "Demonic Oppression", "Spiritual Deliverance"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the power of Christ to deliver from demonic oppression, highlighting the malice of devils, the authority and compassion of Jesus, and the wickedness of man. The demoniac dwelling among the tombs reflects the spiritual state devils desire for all, leading to isolation, torment, and destruction. The deliverance of the demoniac demonstrates Christ's power over evil spirits and his willingness to save even the most afflicted souls. The reaction of the swine owners reveals the worldly mindset that prioritizes material gain over spiritual transformation.

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## Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

APRIL 1

Luke 8:1-3. The women who followed Jesus.

In these verses we have a description of our Savior's diligence, of his poverty, and of his humility.

His diligence was unwearied. He went as an itinerant (or a wandering preacher) from place to place. He knew the value of the souls of men, and the danger in which they lay; and being full of love, he delighted in declaring the glad tidings of salvation.

Though all are not called to preach, as he was, all are called to promote the salvation of their fellow-sinners. Yet how many, far from endeavoring to convert others, are themselves content to remain unconverted! They are too slothful to inquire earnestly, "What shall we do to be saved?" though they are often eagerly asking, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

How strange it seems to spend so much anxiety upon a dying body, and so little upon a never-dying soul!

While Jesus was upon earth, there were some women who accompanied him from place to place to hear his word. They were bound to him by ties of gratitude, having been healed by him of various infirmities.

Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala, (the town from which she came, as it is supposed,) had once been possessed by seven devils. We should not conclude from this circumstance that she had been peculiarly wicked. The possession of devils seems to have been an affliction rather than a sin; for we never find that Jesus rebuked the people who were possessed, but only the devils. Many have supposed that Mary Magdalene was the woman who washed the Redeemer's feet with her tears; but there is no evidence to prove this opinion to be true. Yet Mary loved Jesus with the same devoted affection as that poor weeping sinner did; she followed him to his cross, and shed tears at his grave, and had the honor of being the first to behold him after his resurrection.

Another woman, who followed him, was the wife of Herod's steward. The bad examples of Herod, and of Herodias, had not hindered her from embracing that Gospel which her superiors despised. She also continued faithful to Jesus at his death, and at his grave.

Such was the poverty of Jesus, that he permitted these holy women and many others to contribute to his support. "They ministered unto him of their substance." Surely we think it was an honor to be allowed to give to him, who gave them all things. It is an honor that we may share with them. Though we may have little to give, yet, if we bestow that little in a spirit of love upon the least of the saints, we give unto Jesus himself.

Observe the humility of Jesus in accepting alms. That independent spirit, which the world so much commends, proceeds from pride of heart. It is right to desire to work for our own subsistence, rather than to receive charity; but when reduced to poverty, it is wrong to feel pain in accepting gifts from those who are richer than ourselves. Jesus could have turned stones into bread, but he chose rather to receive bread from his creatures. Thus he set us an example of humility.

It is supposed that it was about this time that a circumstance recorded by Mark took place. "They went into a house, and the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself." (See Mark 3:19-21.) It seems probable that Jesus went into this house that he might rest his wearied frame and refresh himself with bread; but the multitude, anxious for his presence, induced him to resume his fatiguing labors. His friends, perhaps his unbelieving relations, (for some of them did not believe on him,) thought that he was mad, because he complied with the people's desire. They knew not his motives, and therefore they thought he was beside himself. When a person acts in a manner for which we can see no motive, we think that person must have lost his reason. If a person were to rush into this room, uttering loud cries, we would conclude he was mad; but if we found that the house was on fire, we would no longer wonder at his behavior, for we would think a house being on fire a sufficient motive to justify his earnestness.

The world are astonished at the earnestness of devoted Christians, because they cannot understand their motives. The believer beholds by faith a glorious heaven, and a dreadful hell; a gracious Savior, and a malicious tempter; immortal souls, and approaching judgment. He must therefore be earnest in attempting to save his fellow-sinners from perdition. The world beholds none of these things, and naturally wonders at the conduct of the Christian. Does the earnestness of devoted Christians astonish us? Do we say, "What is the need of all these exertions? Why cannot people be religious without pressing their opinions upon

others?" If we think thus, is there not reason to fear that we know not the value of souls, and that we believe not in the wrath to come?

April 2

Matt. 12:22-30. Christ disproves the Pharisees' blasphemous accusation.

How dreadful was the accusation which the Pharisees ventured to make against the Savior! They were not able to deny that he had performed an astonishing miracle; therefore they accused him of casting out devils through the power of Beelzebub, (or Satan,) the prince of the devils. We see from this instance, that wicked men will always find some excuse for not believing in God. Sometimes they say that there is not sufficient proof that the Bible is true; but if their objections are answered, still they refuse to believe, and find some other excuse, however absurd, rather than give up their sins, and come to Christ for pardon. But we ought not to be impatient with those that oppose themselves to the truth. We should imitate Christ, who calmly answered the Pharisees. Jesus sometimes spoke severely to them, but never in answer to their reproaches against himself. He always behaved meekly when reviled by his enemies; thus setting us an example, that we should follow his steps.

He gave two reasons to prove that he did not cast out Satan by Satan's help. In the first place, he said that Satan would not assist him to injure his own kingdom; and in the second place, he asked the Pharisees by whom their children cast out devils; for there were certain people among the Jews, called exorcists, who professed to be able to cast out devils, though it is not certain whether they could really do so or not. Sceva, mentioned in Acts 19, was one of those "exorcists." Jesus knew that the Pharisees would never acknowledge that their own children, or friends, cast out devils by Satan, and therefore he declared that it was unreasonable to say that he was assisted by that evil spirit.

Then He related a very short parable to describe the work he was doing in the world. He compared himself to a man come to take possession of a house, and of the things in it. This house was the world, and the goods in the house were the souls of men. Jesus came to rescue these precious souls from Satan's power. He compared Satan to a strong man, who was in the house, and who tried to prevent him from coming in. Jesus came down to earth, and became a man that he might first bind Satan, and then spoil his goods; that is, redeem the souls that had been taken captive by the wicked one.

Jesus is still engaged in releasing captives. He calls upon all whom he has rescued to join in the mighty work. Can there be any so base and ungrateful as to hesitate to obey the summons? Those who hold back are counted by Jesus as his enemies. What an dreadful declaration there is in verse 30! "He who is not with me is against me; and he who gathers not with me, scatters abroad." None can remain neutral; all must be on one side or the other.

Great injury has been done to the Redeemer's cause by not speaking in its favor. When missionaries first proclaimed the gospel in Tahiti, they received this answer from some of the heathens! "Were these things true, would not Captain Cook have told us of them long ago? But neither he nor his sailors spoke about the religion that you teach." Thus we see that ungodly mariners, by not gathering with Christ, scatter abroad.

Some people imagine that if they do no harm themselves, they may go to those places where others speak and act wickedly. But there is a promise to him who shuts his eyes from seeing of evil. (Is. 33:16.) Those who love their crucified Savior cannot stand by and hear his name profaned, and see his laws

broken. Instead of being amused, they feel as Moses did when, coming down from the Holy Mount, he found Israel engaged in the worship of the golden calf.

April 3

Matthew 12:31, 32. He warns against the unpardonable sin.

This is a very dreadful part of our Savior's discourse to the Pharisees. There is a sin which cannot be forgiven, and it is a sin of the tongue. Certain words which may be spoken against the Holy Spirit, are called, "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." There is a mystery in this subject which we would not presume to attempt to remove. Yet we may form some idea of the nature of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, by examining the conduct of those whom Jesus now addressed. The Pharisees seem to have been convinced by the miracles of the Savior, that he was a true prophet; but though convinced, they were determined to reject him, and to set the people against him also. In this dreadful state of mind they accused him of working miracles by the power of Satan, and not by the Spirit of God. Had they really supposed he was assisted by Satan, their sin would not have been so enormous; then they would have sinned, as Saul of Tarsus did, "ignorantly, in unbelief;" but now they sinned against the convictions of their conscience, and with deliberate malice.

That man has reached the highest pitch of wickedness, who, though himself convinced of the truth of the gospel, endeavors to persuade others to disbelieve it. We hope there are not many who act so daring a part. It is probable that infidels are generally deceived themselves, before they attempt to deceive others. Such a state of unbelief, dangerous as it is, is far better than conviction of the truth, accompanied by determined hatred against God. Such is the condition of devils, and of all the lost spirits. They cannot doubt the power of God; but while they believe and tremble, they vent blasphemies against his holy name. Is any soul distressed with the fear lest he should ever have committed the unpardonable sin? let him take comfort. His fears prove that he is not sealed up in final impenitence. At the same time, let us all beware of the deceitfulness of sin. Though every sin is not unpardonable, every sin is dangerous. Many who have never been guilty of the unpardonable sin, will nevertheless die unpardoned. Who can conceive how dreadful it is to feel you are dying, and that you are not pardoned. Some impenitent sinners die resting on false hopes; but others die in despair. Those who have stood by their death-beds, have declared that the sight of their agonies was too horrible to be endured.

Pardon, so little sought for by sinners while they live, is not always obtained when they are dying. The Hon. Francis Newport, an infidel, who died in 1692, in his last illness was heard to say, as he looked upon the fire, "O that I was to lie upon that fire for a hundred thousand years to purchase the favor of God, and be reconciled to him again! But it is a fruitless, vain wish; millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my tortures than one poor hour." This miserable man had not faith to come to the blood of Christ to wash away his sins. The understanding may be convinced, while the enmity of the heart against God is not removed.

April 4

Matthew 12:33-37. Jesus warns against idle words.

Behold an instance of the severe terms in which the meek and gentle Jesus sometimes rebuked sinners. He called the Pharisees a "generation of vipers." Thus he declared them to be the seed of the old serpent, and the children of Satan. They had accused him of casting out devils through the power of Satan, while

they themselves belonged to the family of the wicked one. It is to be expected that the children of the devil should utter blasphemies, even as a bad tree brings forth bad fruit.

Though all have not reached the same height of wickedness as these Pharisees, yet all have by nature wicked hearts, that cannot bring forth really good fruit. If our hearts were in a right state, our words would be good. The tongue was given to man to bless God. David for this reason calls it his glory. "Awake, my glory." The tongue would indeed be the glory of man if his heart were right with God. What a noble use the angels make of their tongues! they unite in a never-ceasing song of praise to God. Adam, when first created, doubtless used his tongue for the same glorious purpose. But since the fall, the tongue has become the outlet of the abominations of man's heart--the evil treasure of his heart--his pride, his malice, his envy, his deceit--flow forth from his tongue. His heart is the black fountain of sin; his words are only the streams. We must be born again before we can utter words acceptable to God.

At the last day our words will be produced as the evidence of our state before God. It is true that many have said, "Lord, Lord," who have not loved God; but will their words be considered proofs of love? By no means; words insincerely spoken will be regarded as crimes. Those who said what they did not feel, whether to God or man, will be pronounced liars, and we know that liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. It is only good words that have proceeded from our hearts that will then justify us, or show that we were born again and washed in Christ's blood. If, then, we feel that we are not fit to stand this test, let us entreat God to bestow new hearts upon us. Then our common discourse will be tintured with the love of God. Just as an affectionate parent is often speaking of his children, because he is always thinking of them; so, when we love God, we shall be disposed to be often speaking of his power, and wisdom, and goodness, because we shall be often thinking of them. The daily duties of life will not interfere with our thoughts of God, any more than they prevent a loving mother thinking of her children. Everything will remind us of our God. The beauties of creation, and the events of Providence, will lead us to think and to speak of Him; for in everything we shall see his hand. What the world calls "good luck," we shall call "great mercy;" and what the world speaks of as unfortunate accidents, we shall own to be "loving corrections." But most of all shall we differ from the world in our expressions concerning the Son of God and his believing people. That Savior we shall call "precious," his people "happy." It is true, those living in a Christian land seldom dare speak openly against Christ, but they show their real feelings by the contemptuous names they bestow on his most devoted servants. Their contemptuous words are noticed and noted down by God in his book, and shall be produced against them another day to their everlasting shame. "By their words they shall be condemned."

April 5

Matthew 12:38-42. He refuses to give a sign to the Pharisees.

It was not with a sincere desire to be convinced of the truth that the Pharisees wished for a sign. They had already witnessed so many miracles that they could not avoid knowing that Jesus was the Son of God. This was their great sin, that when they knew the truth they would not confess it. As our Savior afterwards said, (in John 15:24,) "If I had not done among them the works that no other man did, they had not had sin--but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

The Pharisees were determined not to believe in Jesus. Whatever miracles he might perform, whatever signs he might show, they had made up their minds already; they would not believe on him themselves, nor let others believe on him. It is evident that this was their state of mind from their conversation when

together. (See John 11:47, 48.) "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man does many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Did not these words betray a dreadful state of mind? It was worse than unbelieving; it was malicious. It is in this spirit that Satan himself opposes the kingdom of God.

And what was this sign from heaven for which the Pharisees asked? Probably it was one of those displays of glory that God once made on Mount Sinai, when He spoke from the midst of the fire, surrounded by clouds and darkness, thunders and lightnings. Christ could easily have manifested his glory in the same manner, and he will do so when he comes again to judge the world. But he refused to grant the Pharisees' arrogant demand, and told them that they should have no other sign than the sign of the prophet Jonas. And what was that sign? It was his own resurrection; for Jonah's burial in the midst of the whale was a type of his burial in the heart of the earth; and Jonah's escape through the mouth of the fish, was a type of his bursting the barriers of the tomb.

It may surprise us to know that Jesus would be three days and three nights in his grave, seeing he only lay there from Friday evening to Sunday morning. But the Jews had a peculiar way of reckoning time--they considered a day and night as one period, and they counted a part of this period, as if it were the whole. Therefore, as Jesus was part of three days in the grave, he was there three days and three nights, according to the Jewish mode of speaking.

The Savior well knew that the Pharisees would not acknowledge him to be the Son of God, even when he rose from the dead; and so it proved; for when he did rise, and when the history of his resurrection was repeated to the chief priests and elders, how did they act? They bribed the soldiers who had guarded the tomb to deny the fact, and to say that the disciples had stolen his body away while they slept.

Well, therefore, might Jesus contrast the men of Nineveh with the Pharisees. The Ninevites repented when Jonah declared that in forty days their city should be destroyed. It is remarkable that in forty years from the time of our Savior's resurrection, Jerusalem was destroyed, because the Jews repented not. The Pharisees despised the Ninevites on account of their being Gentiles, yet these Gentiles were far better than themselves.

The Lord then brought forward an instance of another Gentile who acted in an opposite manner from the Pharisees--it was the queen of Sheba, who came from a distant country to receive instruction from Solomon. There have been heathens in later days who have resembled this ancient sovereign in her desire to obtain heavenly wisdom. Some years ago, two natives of Ceylon left their spicy isle, and came to dwell for awhile in our cold climate, that they might learn the gospel of the blessed God. When they were about to return home, a friend presented to them a magnificent mirror, but they refused to accept it. They said to their venerable teacher, Dr. Adam Clarke, "Tell our friend we cannot accept the mirror. We will take nothing home with us but the Bible you gave us and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. To learn that gospel we crossed the ocean, and with it alone will we cross it again."

How unlike these unselfish Cingalese are those who for worldly reasons forsake the preaching of the truth! Whatever may be the advantages for which they give up that joyful sound, they make a poor exchange. Happy are those who can say with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." (Ps. 27:4.)

April 6

Matthew 12:43-45. The parable of the unclean spirit.

It was in this alarming manner that our Savior concluded his rebukes to the wicked Pharisees. We can scarcely call this short history a parable, because it appears to be a literal account of an event that has taken place. Still it is a parable, because it is partly figurative--the heart of a man is likened to a house. And is it really true that unclean spirits make the hearts of men their habitation? How can we doubt what our Savior has so plainly declared?

Sometimes an evil spirit forsakes his habitation. This devil having left his house, traveled far through dry, or desert places, but found no rest. It seems probable that in the course of his wanderings he found no opportunity of injuring souls. Our enemy, we know, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes there is a restraint laid upon him, and he cannot perpetrate the evil that he desires; for he can do nothing without the permission of God. Perhaps this devil had left the man, hoping to make new conquests, and to increase the number of his victims; but when disappointed, he thinks of returning to his old abode. He says, "I will return unto my house, whence I came out." He claims the heart as his own property; he says, "My house." He returns and finds no obstacle to regaining possession of the soul he once inhabited. The house is not the less acceptable to him, because it is swept and garnished, or adorned. Nothing pleases Satan more than a show of piety in a wicked heart. The unclean spirit is not satisfied to dwell alone, but finds seven of his fellows to share his spoil. He selects some more wicked than himself, as his associates. There are degrees of wickedness even among devils, and no doubt pre-eminence in wickedness is their glory. It had been better for this miserable man, if the first inhabitant of his heart had never left it. But O! how infinitely better would it have been for him, if, when the devil had left him, he had opened his heart to the gracious Savior! Jesus is willing to come whenever he is invited; often he stands and knocks, and no man opens the door, and at length he withdraws, no more to return. Then the wretched soul must become the prey of demons. Even as a house forsaken by man soon becomes the habitation of beasts and birds, so does the heart, when Jesus is absent, become the habitation of the spirits of hell.

The greater part of the Pharisees did not profit from the warning Jesus gave them; they grew more and more wicked; they crucified the Lord of glory, and persecuted his apostles. But let us profit from it, and never count ourselves safe, except Jesus reign in our hearts. Saul, the King of Israel, appears to have been such a man as our Savior described in this parable. The evil spirit that once tormented him, departed for a season, but soon returned and rendered him more wicked than before. All the evening of his days was spent in malicious persecutions of the innocent David, until he filled up the measure of his iniquity by consulting the witch of Endor.

Real conversion of the heart is the only preservative from Satan's malice. True believers alone are secure. There are evil days, days of peculiar temptation that come upon them, but neither seven wicked spirits, nor seventy times seven, can harm the heart fortified by the towers and bulwarks of faith. It is written, "He who is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not," (1 John 5:18.) And how does he keep himself? He remembers his Lord's command, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation."

April 7

Matthew 12:46 to end. He describes who are his mother and his brethren.

Such were the gentle words which our Savior added to a discourse containing many severe reproofs and dreadful warnings. The former discourse, recorded in Matthew 11, also ended with sweet encouragement--"Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden." But the passage we have just read is still more condescending! Who can value enough the honor of being mother, brother, and sister of the Lord of heaven and earth! How wonderful it is that sinners like ourselves should be raised to the enjoyment of such a privilege!

What was the occasion on which the Savior uttered the blessing to which we have just alluded? His mother and brethren desired to speak with him, but were unable to approach on account of the crowd that surrounded him. By the term "brethren," we must understand not only those whom we call brethren, but also more distant relations. It is probable that they wished from motives of affection to interrupt his labors, which appeared too severe for his strength. Why would not Jesus comply with their request? Because he saw multitudes of precious souls thronging around him, eager to hear the words of eternal life. Instead of admitting his relations immediately to his presence, he pronounced a blessing on his own disciples; saying, "Behold my mother and my brethren."

We must not suppose that he felt no regard for his mother, or for any of his relations, for we know that he bore to his mother such affection, that when hanging on the cross, he commended her with his expiring breath to the care of his beloved disciple. But by this expression, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" he taught us, that those united to him in spirit are nearer to him than those related to him in the flesh. His mother, indeed, was spiritually connected with him, for she was a true believer. Before the birth of her divine Son, she said, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior;" therefore he loved her both as his mother, and as his own redeemed. But he did not love her alone; he loved all those who did the will of his Father in heaven.

It was to do his Father's will that he came down from heaven; as he said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" (John 6:38;) and he always did it perfectly. On one occasion he declared, "I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." How different is the state of the world! Every one by nature does his own will. Children soon betray their evil nature by striving to do their own, and not their parents' will. When they grow older, and hear the commandments of God, naturally they show no inclination to obey.

As soon as a person is converted, he begins to desire to do God's will. The 119th Psalm shows us how earnestly David sought to please his heavenly Father--"O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes," (verse 5.) "Behold I have longed after your precepts; quicken me in your righteousness," (verse 40.) But why did David utter these prayers? Because he felt that he could not of himself do God's will; therefore he prayed for grace from on high.

The holy apostle Paul could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Yet the sin of his nature troubled him. He said, "I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." All the children of God endure the same inward struggles that Paul and David endured. Each of them can say, "Though I fail, I weep;

Though I halt in pace,

Yet I creep

To the throne of grace."

But though they do not keep the Father's commandments perfectly, as Jesus did, they are comforted by knowing that He loves them.

It must have been delightful to hear him say on earth, "Behold my mother and my brethren!" How endearing was his attitude when he stretched forth his hands, to point out the objects of his love! The day will come when he will enclose his redeemed family in his everlasting arms, and declare, "Behold my mother and my brethren."

April 8

Matthew 13:1-18. Christ relates the parable of the sower, and explains why he spoke in parables.

We have much reason to rejoice that our blessed Savior explained the parable of the Sower; for had he not done so, many different opinions respecting its meaning would have been held, but now the signification is fixed and certain. We will, however, defer the consideration of it until we read our Lord's explanation.

After Jesus had finished his public discourse, he conversed privately with his disciples. In this conversation he declared some truths which have been much objected to by the world. His disciples inquired why he spoke in parables. In his reply, their Master unfolded some of the secrets of his Father's government. Can anything be so interesting as the ways of God towards man! In this passage some light is shed upon them.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." We learn from this declaration that heavenly knowledge is the gift of God. All men by nature are without the knowledge of their Maker, as it is written, "There is none that understands; there is none that seeks after God." When Adam sinned, he lost the knowledge of his God, and all his children are born in this state of ignorance. They are not only ignorant of God--they have no desire to know him. There are many things of which we may be ignorant, yet which we should much like to learn. If a man well skilled in some useful art were to offer to teach gratuitously all who wished to learn, many would flock around him and become his scholars--for we naturally desire to learn useful arts. But though God offers to teach all who are willing to be instructed, very few come to him and say, "Teach me to do your will." Nor would any come and make this prayer, unless God first, by his Holy Spirit, put the desire into the heart. When this desire is felt, then the prayer is made, and the longing soul is taught. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." There is an interesting account contained in a tract called "Jejana," of a little Hottentot girl who earnestly desired to know God. A black man, who knew but little himself, directed her to make this prayer, "Lord, help me; Lord, teach me." This prayer she often uttered when she knelt alone in some thicket. Such was her simplicity, that she added, "For David says you will." The pious black man's name was David. And did God fulfill his promise to this poor child? Assuredly he did. She became known to a faithful missionary, who took her into his service, and fully instructed her in the gospel of Christ.

Such is God's goodness towards those who desire to know him. The Pharisees, far from having this desire, were determined to reject the warnings of the Savior; therefore God gave them up to the blindness and deafness that they loved. Every warning they rejected closed their eyes in deeper night.

How dreadful was their condition! But all are in danger of falling into it, who are not obeying the gospel call. Those who hear the Bible read from day to day--who listen to the preacher's earnest entreaties from

Sabbath to Sabbath--and who yet make no effort to go to Christ, are becoming more hardened and more difficult to be converted. How blessed might our eyes be, for round us the true light shines! Yet how doubly cursed will these eyes be, if we wilfully close them against that light.

April 9

Matthew 13:18-21. The explanation of the former part of the parable of the sower.

There is one circumstance which renders this parable peculiarly interesting. It describes the characters of all people who hear the gospel; therefore it must describe ours. Let us endeavor to discover by the help of God to which class we belong.

First--there are the wayside hearers--these seem to be careless people, whose minds are so trifling that though they hear the words of the preacher, they do not reflect upon their meaning. We know that the seed represents the word of God, whether spoken by faithful ministers and parents, or instructors or friends, or in whatever way conveyed to the mind. But though the seed is good, it does not spring up in every heart. Why does it not? Because every heart is not prepared to receive it. As a beaten path is a soil not prepared to receive seed, so a heart full of trifling thoughts is not prepared to receive the gospel. Such a heart finds religious instruction a weariness, and rejoices when the sermon is over, and the chapter is finished.

It is to be feared that every congregation contains many of these careless hearers, who hear the sermons with little interest; but even on the wayside, a seed might occasionally spring up, were it not for the passers by who tread it down, and for the birds who pick it up.

How can we calculate upon the amount of good that is prevented by those spirits that throng the air! They are all marshaled under one experienced commander, even that old serpent who tempted our first parents. Satan knows how to choose the most favorable opportunities for exerting his power. It is after faithful sermons have been preached that his hosts are on the alert to efface any impression that may have been made. The people who lie most exposed to his attacks are the inconsiderate, who have offered up no prayers for a blessing on the instructions they have received. What havoc is made every Sabbath night and every Monday morning in the paths where the faithful preacher was seen sowing just before! If Satan found people endeavoring to fix the sermon in their hearts by prayer and meditation, he would not have such great success. But is it surprising that he succeeds, when he finds so many who neglect secret prayer!

The next class of hearers appear at first sight more hopeful than the wayside hearers. The seed sometimes falls on stony ground, where there is a little light, though dry earth; it soon springs up, but is soon withered by the heat of the sun.

The stony ground hearers receive the word with joy. When they hear the gospel, they attend, they remember, they are delighted, they determine to be Christians; they begin to do many things that are right, but when they find difficulties in their way they change their minds, and become as worldly as before. What is the reason of this? It is that their hearts were never softened by the Holy Spirit. They never were convinced of sin, they never repented. Repentance is the beginning of religion. Our Savior's first sermon was, "Repent." If we think we can be Christians without repentance we are mistaken. We must be brought to see what ungrateful creatures we have been to our best Friend. We must be led to mourn over such ingratitude, and to entreat for pardon and grace. Paul sat three days after his conversion fasting, before

Ananias came and said, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins." Christians may feel different degrees of grief; but they all grieve. Those who have felt no godly sorrow will easily be induced to return to the world; they will never consent to make any great sacrifice for Christ's sake. They cannot resolve to give up a brilliant prospect, or to lose an advantageous situation, or to forfeit the favor of honorable people. No! they will sooner give up their religious profession, lose their hopes of heaven, and forfeit the favor of the glorious God.

April 10

Matthew 13:22, 23. The explanation of the latter part of the parable of the sower.

Let us now consider the two latter kind of hearers which our Savior has described.

One is the thorny ground hearer--the soil of his heart is not so dry and barren as that of the stony ground hearer. The word sinks into it, and springs up, and blossoms, and buds, and produces fruit; but, alas! not good fruit. What is the reason of this failure? Thorns have grown up with the good seed, and have injured the heavenly plants. The thorns may have appeared very small and insignificant when first the seed was sown, but they increased in strength, and at length destroyed the hopes of the husbandman.

We cannot be at a loss to discover what the thorns represent; for our Lord distinctly declared them to be cares, riches, pleasures, and the lusts of other things. There are some people, who, when they hear the word, are arrested, touched, convinced, persuaded. They acknowledge they are sinners, they see Christ is the only Savior; they feel the value of their souls, and they desire to lead a religious life. But their affections are drawn off from God by worldly things. The stony ground hearers were induced to abandon their profession through fear of persecution; the thorny ground hearers, while they continue to make a profession of religion, are enslaved by the love of the world. They attempt to serve God and mammon. What must be the result of such an attempt? Destruction. "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The world wears many different forms, and tries to win us under various disguises. According to our age, our dispositions, and our circumstances will be our temptations. Pleasure allures the young, and care entangles the old--reputation is the desire of one, ease is preferred by another; but each of these is a thorn, and will prevent the good seed flourishing in the heart. What then can we do to avoid making a fruitless profession? We must apply to God to take the thorns out of our hearts; we cannot do it ourselves, but God is willing to do it for us. He can quench every inordinate desire, he can overthrow every earthly idol; he can come with sovereign power, and reign in our hearts.

No heart by nature is an honest and good heart. "There is none that understands and that seeks after God." Every heart of nature is like the wayside, the stony ground or the thorny ground. God alone can prepare sinners to receive his word. He can plough up the wayside, can take away the stones, and can pluck out the thorns.

There is a gracious promise in the Scriptures that He desires us to remember--"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Let us plead this promise in prayer. There is abundance of good seed scattered all over this land--thousands of Bibles, and millions of tracts. Why are not more souls converted? The hearts of men are unprepared.

Has God graciously prepared our hearts? Have we received the word, and brought forth fruit? If it be so with regard to any of us, to Him be all the praise who softened our hard hearts. Perhaps we can remember the time when sermons made no impression upon us, when holy counsels were disregarded, and even a mother's entreaties despised. And how did God prepare our hearts? Did He make us eat the bitter fruits of our works, until, like the prodigal, we said, "I will arise and go unto my Father?" Or did He subdue us in a sudden manner, as He did Paul, when He stopped him in the midst of his wicked career, ploughing up his heart by the Spirit, as the seed was cast in, "Saul, Saul, why persecute you me?" Or did He lead us by gentle and gradual methods to seek his face, watering the ridges of our hearts, settling the furrows, making it soft with showers, and then blessing the springing of His word? (Ps. 65.)

April 11

Matthew 13:24-30. The parable of the wheat and tares, with the explanation contained in ver. 36-43.

The parable of the wheat and tares in some respects resembles that of the Sower of the seed, but it differs from it in this respect. In the parable of the Sower we heard only of good seed; here we read also of bad seed. While Christ, by his faithful ministers, sows good seed, or the pure gospel, the devil by his servants sows bad seed, or false doctrines.

The good seed, where it takes root and prospers, produces the children of the kingdom, or true believers, while bad seed produces hypocrites, formalists, heretics, and other wicked characters, who are the children of the devil. We here behold the great danger to which we lie exposed, of having bad seed sown in our hearts. If we receive not the gospel, we shall receive some false doctrine. We all must have some kind of religion, and if we do not receive the truth in the love of it, we shall cling to our own foolish imaginations, or to some errors that we have heard; and shall flatter ourselves with the hope of reaching heaven by some other way than the Scriptures have revealed.

The bad seed is sown cunningly by the great enemy. Often he employs people who appear religious to sow it; so that the hearers are deceived, and fancy that they are receiving good seed. But no seed is good but the doctrine of Scripture. How carefully we ought to study the Scriptures! reading them daily, endeavoring to understand their meaning, asking the help of pious people; above all, upon our knees entreating to be taught of God. We ought to believe no doctrine that cannot be clearly proved from the Scriptures; for, if it cannot be found there, it must be bad seed.

We see also from this parable, that the wheat and tares often resemble each other so much, that it is difficult to distinguish between them. For why did the lord of the field forbid his servants to pull up the tares? It was for fear lest they should mistake, and pull up wheat instead of tares. The servants represent ministers; they cannot always distinguish between true and false believers. It is God alone who knows the heart; he knows them that are his, and he alone knows it with certainty. The disciples did not know that Judas was a devil; but Jesus knew it from the beginning. When Saul of Tarsus was first converted, the disciples at Jerusalem did not know that he was sincere, and were for some time afraid to receive him. We should not therefore be too much delighted with the approbation of our fellow-Christians, nor too much disturbed by their suspicions. We should come to God, and entreat him to examine our hearts. Like David, each should say, "Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But though true and false believers may appear so much alike in this world, the hour will arrive when their true characters will be made known. There is really the greatest difference between the character of the

weakest child of God and the most plausible hypocrite. The hypocrite may appear even better than the child of God; but there is a difference in their hearts, which will cause them to be separated from each other to all eternity. God will give his angels wisdom to discern between the righteous and the wicked--they will separate many who have partaken of the same ordinances and lived in the same family.

The wicked shall be bound in bundles. Perhaps this expression is intended to show how they will add to each other's misery by mutual reproaches. The righteous will shine forth as the sun without one spot of sin to darken their brightness. It has been well said that three things will surprise us, if we enter heaven--first, to see so many there whom we did not expect to see; secondly, to miss so many whom we did expect to see; and thirdly, to find ourselves there; yes, ourselves, we who are so unworthy--lifted up from the dust, and exalted to a throne. O! may this surprise be ours! for there is another surprise that awaits many seeming Christians, who will confidently cry out, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Now, therefore, let us judge ourselves, that we may not be condemned with the world.

April 12

Mark 4:21-29. Jesus encourages his disciples to communicate the word.

This is part of a private conversation between our Lord and his apostles. If our minds were in a right state, how much more deeply should we be interested in such scenes than in the worldly trifles that surround us.

What did our Savior say in these confidential moments? He compared his disciples to a candle which he had lighted by his instructions, and was going to make burn still brighter by his explanation of the parables he had related in public. For what purpose did he give them light? that they might conceal it? No! but that they might set it upon a candlestick, and in public proclaim their Lord's secret communications. Jesus said, "There is nothing hidden which shall not be manifested." He hid many holy truths under parables, but these truths were to be made manifest by the apostles' preaching. This command was fulfilled after his ascension. Then the apostles could say, that their sound had gone forth to the ends of the world. Then was fulfilled the prophecy, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings." We hear these glorious secrets--they are contained in the epistles, where the secret counsel of God is revealed. Do we attend to these things? Do we look into them, as the angels do? or are we indifferent? Have we need of the rousing command of our Savior? "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

The Lord encouraged his disciples to preach the truth, saying, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." If they meted out, or gave the truth which they had received, abundantly to others, they should themselves receive abundantly from Christ, spiritual blessings. And so it is now--"He who waters others, shall be watered also himself." In trying to do good to others, we gain a blessing on our own souls.

Our Savior then related a short parable to encourage his disciples still more to sow the seed of the word. He spoke of a man who sowed seed, and who slept and rose night and day; that is, who, after sowing the seed, went about his usual business, sleeping at night and rising in the day; and who, after some time, found the seed had sprung up, but not by his own power, for he could not even tell how it had sprung up. God, who had made it spring up, made it grow also without his assistance, until it was ripe and fit to be cut down.

Thus a minister, after sowing the seed of the word, is obliged to leave the success with God; for he cannot make it spring up in the heart, neither can he even understand how souls are converted; for the manner in

which men are born of the Spirit is even a greater mystery than the way in which the seed is quickened in the earth. Yet the hearts of ministers are often rejoiced by seeing the effects of the words they have spoken. Sometimes, however, the seed they sowed does not spring up until after their death; nevertheless, at the harvest of the last day, souls who heard their words shall be their crown and rejoicing. Now is the time to sow, though in tears, knowing we shall reap in joy.

Let all who know the word seek to sow it also, though it be only in the heart of a little child; for sowers on earth shall certainly be reapers in heaven. But let us remember that the seed sown does not come to perfection immediately--first, the blade appears, then the ear, at last the full corn in the ear. We must, therefore, be patient with young converts. If we ourselves know anything of Christ now, do we not feel that we have been grown very slowly?

It is refreshing to behold a Christian who is like full corn in the ear. Perhaps we have had the privilege of seeing such a person. It may be some poor destitute creature, lodging in a garret, has breathed a spirit that we longed to imbibe, and we have felt, while listening to her heavenly words, "It is good to be here." Do we desire to grow in grace? It is a good desire. The Lord will answer prayer, and give us more faith and love, and every heavenly grace, and then treasure us up in his eternal garner.

April 13

Matthew 13:31-35. Parables of the mustard-seed and of the leaven.

We will now consider several short parables that our Savior related, but of which he gave no interpretation; still we may endeavor from other parts of Scripture to discover their meaning. The seed of the mustard-tree is smaller in proportion to the size of the tree it produces, than any other seed. In eastern countries the mustard-tree has immense spreading branches, which afford a fit shelter for the birds.

The religion of Christ was very small in its beginning. Behold the stable in Bethlehem, and that weak babe sleeping in the manger. From him shall spring a multitude that no man can number, of glorious saints, who throughout eternity shall surround the throne of God. These his spiritual children shall exceed the stars in multitude. Already how wonderfully has the Christian religion spread! though preached at first by twelve poor unlearned men--the kings of many nations profess to believe in it. It shall spread yet further, until men shall not merely profess the name of Christ, but until all shall praise him with sincere lips--until all shall know the Lord from the greatest unto the least.

The next parable, of the leaven that leavened by degrees a large quantity of meal, much resembles the parable of the mustard-tree, and it has been generally supposed to have nearly the same meaning. There is one great difference between the parables; the growth of the mustard-tree is open; the effects of the leaven in the meal are secret. Some people have thought that while the growth of the mustard-tree represents the progress of the gospel in the world, the leavening of the meal shows its influence in the heart. The leaven is generally considered to signify the word of God, which works gradually and silently in the heart, as leaven works in meal.

But a learned writer, Rev. Alfred Jenour, has lately suggested, that as leaven is used in other places to represent wickedness, it may represent it here also. Paul says, in his epistle to the Corinthians, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump." (1 Cor. 5:7.) And Christ once said to his disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees;" by which he meant their false doctrine. (Matthew 16:12.) If leaven represents wickedness in this parable, then we learn from it how artfully Satan

corrupts the pure religion of Christ; just as he sows tares among the wheat, so he mixes falsehood with truth.

By relating parables, our Lord fulfilled the prophecy of the seventy-eighth Psalm--"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old." If we refer to that psalm, we shall find that it contains a history of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and of their passing through the wilderness. Was this history a parable? Yes, it was a parable, or dark saying, for all that happened to Israel had a hidden meaning. The apostle Paul, speaking of the afflictions of Israel, declares--"All these things happened to them for examples; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. 10:11.) There is one event especially that took place in the wilderness, which is full of the richest instruction. That event is the lifting up of the bronze serpent. Few, perhaps, understood at the time what it signified. But we see in that serpent the image of Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh, crucified for our iniquities.

The Bible is full of dark sayings like this. Men naturally love mysteries and wonders. Why do they not love the Bible? Why does it lie neglected, while many foolish and hurtful books are eagerly devoured? Because men love sin, and the Bible speaks against it. Therefore Paul exhorts us to lay aside all malice, and deceit, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, that as new-born babes we may desire the sincere milk of the word. We cannot relish the Bible while we delight in sin.

April 14

Matthew 13:44-46. The parables of the hidden treasure and of the pearls.

We should be much astonished if a man were to show such eagerness to possess a common field, that he was willing to give any price for it. But if we afterwards found that he had discovered in it a mine of precious ore, we should not be surprised at his anxiety to obtain the field, even at a very high price.

Now it is in like manner that the world wonders at the eagerness of the believer to secure heavenly blessings. They see no such attraction in religion as to account for his earnestness, and they are ready to consider him a fool and a madman. But they have not discovered the treasure which he has discovered. Not that he hides it from them, (as the man in the parable did,) but he cannot persuade them to believe his testimony. In vain he assures them that true joy is to be found in Christ alone; they reply that religion is full of gloom and restraint, and that it is only fit for the sick, or the sorrowful. The believer knows well that the favor of God is of infinite value; he buys the field, he secures the treasure, and rejoices in his possession. Now is the time when the field may be bought. That time will soon be past. Dreadful and endless will be the regrets of those who neglected the opportunity of laying hold on eternal life.

In the next parable, a man is represented seeking goodly pearls. By nature we all seek for happiness; but we can never find it, except in the knowledge of Christ; nor can we find it there, unless we are willing to renounce all sinful pleasures for his sake. Augustine, the African bishop, (who lived four hundred years after Christ,) endured many sharp struggles before he would consent to part with his sins. But at length the grace of God subdued his stubborn heart. He cast himself down before the Lord under a fig-tree, and prayed, saying, "How long, Lord, will you be angry? Forever? Remember not my old iniquities. How long shall I say--'To-morrow?' Why should not this hour put an end to my slavery?" God, by whose Spirit this prayer was suggested, answered it and revealed Christ to Augustine's soul. Then this man, once so miserable, could say, "How sweet was it in a moment to be free from those delightful vanities, to love which had been my dread--to part with which--was now my joy! You did cast them out, O my true and

highest delight--and then, O sweeter than all pleasure, entered in their room. How was my mind set free from the gnawing cares of sinful passions, and I conversed intimately with You, my Light, my Riches, my Savior, and my God." Surely this penitent sinner had now found the Pearl of great price. Can we say that Jesus is precious to our hearts? Upon a dying bed we should feel that none but He could comfort or save us--what should we do, if we had not found him then?

April 15

Matthew 13:47 to 52. The parable of the fishing-net.

The parable of the net cast into the sea was calculated particularly to interest the disciples, many of whom were fishermen. They were accustomed, after the toils of the day, to sort the fish they had taken. This employment affords a lively image of the distinctions that will be made at the last day. The net represents the word of the Gospel, which is preached to many, and which many profess to believe. The disciples were shortly to begin the work of preaching it. Great success would accompany their endeavors; but yet that success would be attended by much disappointment. Many to whom they preached would prove hypocrites. Some of these would be detected in their lifetime, but others not until the judgment-day.

Unbelievers have urged, as an objection against the Christian religion, that hypocrites are found among professed believers! But this is rather a proof of its truth, than an objection. If no hypocrites existed, how could we account for our Savior's declaring that they would arise in the church?

A striking instance was afforded of the truth of our Lord's words in the history of seven missionaries who labored many years ago in Tahiti. Would you not have concluded that men who had sacrificed country and friends in order to instruct savages, must have been true Christians? But out of these seven two proved reprobates. The force of temptation brought their real character to light. Had they remained in their own country, it is possible that no temptation might have arisen strong enough to entice them into open sin; but surrounded by savages, they became immoral in their lives, and, it is to be feared, continued impenitent until death. What a lesson does this fact afford! Should it not lead us to examine ourselves, and to call upon God to search us and try us, lest we should deceive ourselves by a mere form of godliness? Such a deception can last but a short time. The great sorting day approaches; then angels will divide the good from the bad, the true believer from the empty professor.

When our Savior had concluded his parables, he asked his disciples whether they understood them; for he had not interpreted them ALL. They replied, Yes, Lord. Then he reminded them of the use they should make of the things they had learned; they should store them up in their minds, that they might have them ready upon every occasion; even as a master of a family provides all things necessary for different circumstances, and produces them when wanted. The teachers among the Jews were called Scribes. The disciples were to become teachers, and would need a great store of truths for the instruction of others. Some of these truths might be called "new" truths, because not known to them before, and some might be called "old" truths, because already familiar to their minds.

We ought to be storing up in our minds the things we have heard, gaining fresh knowledge of the Scriptures and deeper insight into their meaning. We cannot tell how soon we may need them for our own support in trial, or how useful we may find them in enlightening the ignorant, in strengthening the tempted, and in comforting the afflicted. It is very distressing when we see those we love sinking under trouble, to feel that we are not able to give them solid comfort. An affectionate child has sometimes beheld a parent groaning under a burden of woe, and has felt, "I know there are consolations that might assuage her grief,

but I cannot impart them; for I have neglected the word of God." Then let us for the sake of others, as well as for ourselves, store our minds with the holy truths of God, that we may produce them when most needed.

April 16

Mark 4:33 to end. Christ sleeps in the storm and awakes to still it.

It was in this manner that the Lord Jesus ended a day of great labor. His friends in the midst of it had desired him to desist, but seeing multitudes assembled to hear the word, he continued to teach. In order to be seen and heard more conveniently, he removed into a ship. The parable of the sower, and many others, were spoken by Jesus while he sat in a ship on the lake of Gennesaret. (See Mark 4:1.) Afterwards, he had a private conversation in the house with his disciples, when he explained his parables. In the evening he crossed the lake in a ship.

Doubtless he knew of the approaching storm, though it appears that there were no signs of it observed by others, for many little ships accompanied him on his voyage. But he was not deterred by his knowledge of the coming storm from setting out, for he intended by it to teach his disciples an important lesson.

They knew little of their Master's power, and still less of his love. The storm ought not to have alarmed them, because they were with Him. God intended to alarm Jonah by the storm that arose on the way to Tarsus, for the prophet was fleeing from his presence. We must not suppose, because difficulties and troubles arise, that we are doing wrong. Before we take any important step in life, we should examine the word of God with prayer, and ask pious people to help us to discover from the Scriptures, whether it is a right step; and if we feel assured that it is, no difficulties in the way ought to alarm us. Christians have observed that they have met with most hindrances in setting about those works which in the end have been most richly blessed. A vessel laden with missionaries has been captured by the enemy. Was that calamity a sign that God disapproved the holy purpose of his servants? Assuredly not. Those who are walking in the commandments of the Lord, may walk without fear, and say in the midst of troubles, "None of these things move me."

Our Savior was displeased with the disciples' behavior in this storm. He was displeased by their want of faith. They doubted his love, and said, "Care you not that we perish?" Because He slept, they thought he was indifferent to their distress. These are the thoughts that too often arise in our minds. Conscious that we are apt to forget the Lord, we fear that He has forgotten us; for we naturally attribute to others the feelings that we ourselves experience. Now his delivering mercies are intended to remove these unbelieving thoughts, and to convince us of his exceeding power and love. For this purpose, he brings his children into straits, and to the very edge of destruction, that he may appear to their rescue in the last moment, and thus force them to believe in his fatherly tenderness.

This is the meaning of the apostle in Rom. 5:3-5--He says that he glories in tribulations. Why? Because they work patience, and patience, experience. Experience of what? Of God's power and love. And experience works hope. God's deliverances are intended to strengthen our hopes of his mercy, and to convince us that he never will forsake us. And shall this hope be disappointed? No! this hope makes not ashamed; it shall never prove vain.

The stilling of the storm on the lake of Gennesaret is calculated to lead our thoughts to another scene, and to remind us of that storm of God's wrath against our sins which Jesus stilled, not by his word, but by the

sacrifice of himself. If we are enabled to trust in him, as our Savior from hell, we need not fear any storm that can arise. Let us never say, or even think, "Care you not that we perish?" It is a sin to entertain such a thought of Him who endured the cross that we might not perish forever and ever. He cares for us more than we care for ourselves; he numbers the hairs of our heads, and watches over us with unceasing, unwearied love.

April 17

Mark 5:1-20. Christ delivers the demoniac who dwelt among the tombs.

The history of the poor demoniac affords a striking instance of the malice of devils, of the power of Christ, and of the wickedness of man.

How great was the malice of the devils that assaulted this poor man! They led him to dwell in solitary places among the tombs; for in those days tombs were generally made in lonely spots, among barren hills and rocks. Cut off from the company of his fellows, he spent his miserable days in crying, and cutting his own flesh; and when his friends mercifully bound his hands in chains, and his feet in fetters, he burst through these restraints and again escaped to his desolate abode. Thus he became a terror to the neighborhood, and a torment to himself.

This is the state to which devils would reduce all men, if they were permitted to vent their malice. They do reduce numbers to a spiritual state which resembles that of the demoniac, tempting them to flee from God and his saints, to dwell among the wicked, and urging them to resist all attempts to do them good, and make them happy.

Nor is the malice of devils confined to men. They love to torment even the brutes. These devils earnestly desired to enter into the swine, and then hurried them over the precipice, and plunged them in a watery grave. By this act they showed what they would have done to the man, had they not been restrained; they would gladly have hurled him into the pit of eternal destruction. There is not one single soul that could escape perdition, if it were not for the power of Christ. Even the devils were obliged to acknowledge his power. They believed and trembled. They could do nothing without his permission. They saw in him their future judge, who would at last condemn them to imprisonment in the lake of fire. In the mean while they had great wrath, knowing that they had but a short time in which to vent their malice, (as we read in Rev. 12:12.) That short time is shorter now, and Satan continues to be diligent in using this short space in making efforts to enlarge his kingdom.

We see in the conduct of the owners of the swine an instance of the wickedness of man. Untouched by the sight of him, who, lately a spectacle of terror, was now become gentle and peaceful, they only thought of the loss of their property.

Does not the same disposition prevail now? People will often show zeal for religion, as long as it does not interfere with their gains; but as soon as they are in danger of suffering the slightest loss, through the spread of the gospel, they complain, and would sooner let souls perish than become poorer.

Jesus was not astonished at this dreadful instance of human depravity; for he knew what was in man. So great was his compassion for these wicked men, that he bade the poor creature he had delivered, endeavor to reclaim his unfeeling countrymen. With the same compassion ought we to view every proof of man's fallen nature. Have we not ourselves in times that are past desired Jesus to depart from us, fearing

lest he should interfere with our worldly schemes? How patiently has he borne our insults! If now we feel the value of our souls, we are dismayed at the remembrance of those days when we preferred a prosperous earthly lot to heavenly knowledge. And i

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