

The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - July

by F. L. Mortimer

Jesus heals a blind man and reveals himself to him, while the Pharisees are accused of willful blindness and compared to thieves and robbers.

Scripture: Luke 15:4-11

Topics: "Repentance And Forgiveness", "Gods Compassion"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son, emphasizing the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, the compassion of the Father towards the lost, and the necessity of repentance and returning to God. The parables illustrate the importance of seeking the lost, the joy of redemption, and the readiness of God to forgive those who come back to Him with a repentant heart.

Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

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

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

JULY 1

John 9:6-23. Christ directs the blind man to wash in Siloam.

There were many reasons that might have deterred the Savior from curing the blind man. It was the Sabbath-day--enemies were watching his actions, in the hope of renewing their accusations against him--the blind man did not ask to be healed, neither did the disciples plead for him. Jesus might have passed on without noticing the poor beggar, but He would not lose the opportunity of glorifying his Father. He knew that the restoration of the blind man would be a miracle that would attract public attention; because it was generally known in Jerusalem that the man had been blind from his birth. The means He used were peculiar to this occasion. The Lord made clay, and put it over the man's eyes, and then bade him wash in a pool. Who could have thought that clay could be used as a means of restoring sight? But God shows forth his power by employing the most unlikely means for performing his greatest wonders. His greatest wonder of all, the redemption of the world, was effected by the most unlikely means--the crucifixion of the Son of Man; and the preaching of the cross, though by some counted foolishness, is to

them that are saved the power of God. But the man was not restored by the clay alone--he was commanded to wash in a pool called Siloam, which signifies Sent. If he had not obeyed the command he would not have obtained the blessing. Neither can sinners obtain pardon unless they obey the command to wash in the fountain of Christ's blood.

When this poor man had received his sight, he did not enjoy the privilege of beholding his benefactor. He did not know where to find him, and if he had met him, he would not have known him.

He soon found himself surrounded by enemies, and standing before the Pharisees to be judged. For what? Because he was a witness of the power of Jesus, whom they hated.

What could this poor man do? There was no one to answer for him; his benefactor was not near to defend him, and his parents refused to say a word in his behalf. How did he behave in these difficult circumstances? With more courage than the apostles showed when first placed in similar peril.

When the Jews inquired, "What say you of him?" he boldly replied, "He is a prophet." Thus he was faithful to the truth as far as he knew it. God has promised "to him that has shall be given." Those who follow the convictions of their consciences shall receive more grace.

How ungenerous was the conduct of the beggar's parents! They showed no gratitude for the benefit conferred upon their son, nor were they willing to run any risk in order to shield their own offspring from disgrace, but left him to stand alone against the host of his enemies. When asked how he had obtained his sight, they replied, "He is of age--ask him." How little they thought those words would be recorded to their everlasting shame! They sought to escape disgrace; but they have incurred the deepest. They feared lest they should be put out of the synagogue; but they considered not the danger of being shut out of heaven. How the heart of the poor blind man must have sunk within him when he heard his own parents refusing to take his part! It is a heavy trial to pious children when their parents hang back, and say nothing in their defense; much more when they join with an ungodly world in reproaching them. At such a moment they have need to think of the words of the psalmist; "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." (Prov. 27:10.)

Many Christians can remember a time in their lives when they were desolate--when they "looked on their right hand, and beheld, and there was no man that would know them." Then it was, they looked to the Lord, and said, "You are my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living."

July 2

John 9:24-34. The Pharisees cast out the man who was born blind.

The conduct of the Pharisees was exactly opposite to that of the man who was born blind. The Pharisees betrayed their hypocrisy in every word they uttered, while the poor beggar evinced in all his replies sincerity. They endeavored to cover their hatred against the Savior by an appearance of religion. They said, "Give God the praise--this man is a sinner." But the single and straight-forward character with whom they argued was not to be deceived by their affectation of piety. He reasoned well; he kept to facts. He said, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." This was a fact, a convincing fact. There are many who can meet all the arguments used against true religion by this declaration--"Whereas I was a dark, ignorant creature, a stranger to God and myself; now I know that he is gracious, and that I am a sinner. I rejoice in the light that his gospel has poured into my mind, and I am persuaded that His word is truth."

Experience strengthens the mind against the attacks of infidels, more than all the philosophy in the world.

The Pharisees became enraged when they found they could make no impression on the poor man's mind. The inquiry, "Will you also be his disciples?" offended their pride, and provoked them to use insulting language. But the beggar betrayed neither anger nor fear. He boldly yet calmly answered, "God hears not sinners." This was a scriptural sentiment--"The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." The prayers of penitent sinners are heard, but not the prayers of those sinners who are pursuing a course of iniquity. If Jesus had been an impostor, God would not have heard him, or enabled him to do miracles. The poor man did not know that Jesus was the Son of God, but he felt assured that he was a true prophet. He believed, as Nicodemus once did, that he was a teacher sent from God. But how much more courageous he was than Nicodemus! The ruler came to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews, his equals in power and authority--the beggar in open day acknowledged Him before his superiors in rank and station. Nicodemus had much learning; he was a master or teacher in Israel; the beggar having been born blind, could not even have learned to read. Yet Nicodemus knew less of the truth than the blind beggar.

God delights in showing his power by exalting those whom the world despises. A simple peasant has often a clearer view of the gospel than a learned, though sincere, inquirer. It is the Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of the understanding, and sometimes he enlightens with his brightest beams the most ignorant. If we would be truly wise, we must pray for His light.

The poor man was not suffered to go unpunished. The Pharisees, after first reproaching him in an unfeeling manner, saying, "You were altogether born in sins," proceeded to cast him out. Though they still permitted him to enter the synagogue, they forbade him to approach any of the congregation. Did no fears oppress his mind respecting his temporal provision? Unaccustomed to work, how could he earn his daily bread? or how could an excommunicated man hope to obtain alms from the passers-by? Thus he suffered the loss of all things for his Savior's sake. He is the first whose name is recorded as openly disgraced for confessing Christ. He is the first of a glorious train, some of whom suffered reproach, others imprisonment, and others death, because they would not deny Jesus. His case was singular, because he knew not the glory of the Being on whose account he was cast out. He knew not that he was the Son of God.

If we, who do know who Jesus is, should be ashamed of him before the world, how would the conduct of this poor beggar condemn us! May the Lord give us grace not to be afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be made as grass; but to fear him who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, even Him who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and will raise us also, if we believe in Him.

For what is man, and what--his smile?

The terror of his anger--what?

Like grass he flourishes awhile,

And then his place shall know him not.

For fear of such an one shall I

The Lord of Heaven and earth deny?

July 3

John 9:35-38. Christ finds the outcast.

Even a human creature, though of an evil nature, is interested in one who suffers for his sake. If we knew of a person, who was plunged into trouble for defending us, would not every generous and compassionate feeling lead us to fly to his consolation!

How much more must the Son of God, who is infinitely good, have felt for one who was suffering for his sake! Did he not show that he cared for the blind man, by seeking him when cast out by his persecutors? It was easy for the all-seeing Shepherd to find the sheep that had been driven away. He had followed him with his eye, and had strengthened him with his grace, even when he appeared to have forsaken him, and to have left him to suffer alone. He who saw Nathaniel under the fig-tree, saw the once blind beggar when insulted by the Pharisees, and when cast out of the synagogue.

We are not told on what spot he found him, but we are told in what manner he spoke to him. Did the poor man recognize his benefactor? Though he had never seen his countenance, surely that voice could never be forgotten, which had pronounced the words, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." It must have filled his heart with delight when he heard that beloved voice again. After all the bitter revilings that had been heaped upon him, how those kind accents must have soothed his feelings! Jesus had sought him, and found him, and he was come to bestow richer blessings upon him than at the first. He was come to manifest Himself to him. He asked, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" The poor man answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" There was nothing but ignorance that hindered this man from believing. The Lord speedily removed it by saying, "You have both seen him, and it is He who talks with you." Then the poor man exclaimed, "Lord, I believe." Not satisfied with declaring his belief, he offered his homage--he worshiped the Son of God.

There are none of us who are in his state of ignorance. We cannot say, "Who is the Son of God, that we might believe on him?" We heard from our early childhood that JESUS was the Son of God. Though we have not seen him, and though he has not talked with us, yet we know that he died for us, and that he is now living to intercede for us, if we come to God in his name. The beggar did not know so much as this, when he said, "Lord, I believe." Yet how hard-hearted and ungrateful we should think him, if he had not believed in the Being who had done so much for him! He knew that every word his benefactor uttered must be truth. Before he had seen him he had loved him, and had suffered for his sake; and when he did see him, and when he knew who he was, he adored him. Do we believe in the Son of God? Do we love him? Are we willing to suffer contempt for his sake? Then our first meeting with him will be joyful. God has promised that we shall behold our Savior, that we shall see him face to face, that we shall hear him speak. What will be our feelings when we actually look upon the glorious Being who died for us? What will be our joy, if he receive us with the same kindness which he showed to the poor beggar! In one moment, that man must have forgotten the reproaches and revilings of the Pharisees. It was worth enduring all their sneers, to obtain one gracious smile from the Lord of glory.

If ever we are exposed to the contempt of our fellow-creatures, on account of our fidelity to Christ, let us reflect on the time when we shall behold His countenance. Had the poor man treacherously betrayed his benefactor in the presence of the Pharisees, how would he have felt when he saw him, and knew that he was the Son of God! He would have desired, as Adam did, to hide himself, that he might not encounter his upbraiding glance.

Jesus will come again, with clouds, and every eye shall see him. And shall every eye beam with gladness when it beholds him? O no! all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. But some among all kindreds will rejoice. "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea." (Is. 24:14.) May we act so faithfully during his absence, that we may be glad when He returns!

July 4

John 9:39 to end. Christ accuses the Pharisees of willful blindness.

We know not in what circumstances the interview between Jesus and the poor outcast took place, whether it occurred when they were alone, or surrounded by Pharisees.

Soon afterwards, however, we find Jesus again addressing his enemies in these words--"For judgment am I come into this world." But did not he come into the world for salvation? Yes, salvation with judgment; that is, with distinction of character. He did not save all, but those only who received him. He came in such a form, and in such a way, that the world would not receive him. Had he come in splendor and glory, then all would have received him; but he came adorned with the beauty of holiness, and not with the pomp of kings. By coming in this manner he tried men's hearts. The aged Simeon, when he blessed the infant Savior, declared, "He shall be a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

The proud and worldly-minded rejected the lowly Savior; the humble and contrite loved and followed him. The man who had just been cast out of the synagogue was one of those whom Jesus came to save. He knew he was a sinner, and that he needed a Savior. The Pharisees who cast him out, thought they were holy, and needed no Savior. The Lord drew the characters of the outcast and of his persecutors in these words--"For judgment am I come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." The Pharisees rightly supposed that the Lord alluded to them in the latter part of this declaration, and they insolently inquired, "Are we blind also?" Jesus returned a mysterious answer--"If you were blind, you should have no sin; but now you say, 'We see;' therefore your sin remains." In one sense the Pharisees were blind,--in another sense they were not blind. They saw not the glory of God--but why? because they willfully shut their eyes.

God will condemn none of his creatures for ignorance which they cannot avoid. "If you were blind," said the Savior, "you should have no sin." But it is an aggravated case when a sinner shuts his eyes against the light, and at the same time declares that he sees. In such conduct, rebellion, and pride, and falsehood are combined. Yet this was the way in which the Pharisees acted. They were determined not to acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God. Whether he cast out devils, or raised the dead--whether his lips poured forth divine wisdom, or his countenance beamed with celestial goodness, they had made up their minds they would not believe in him, and they would hinder the people also from believing. They would never renounce the high character they had obtained among men; they would still persist in saying, "We see." What would be the punishment of such wickedness? It would be this--the eyes they willfully shut would be sealed up in sevenfold darkness.

Those are in a dangerous state who refuse to think of religion; but those are in a much more dangerous state who have a form of religion, and call it true religion. They are the most bitter enemies to the truth. Careless sinners often have a kind of respect for devoted Christians, and express a wish that they resembled them; but those who put their trust in an outward show of piety, despise and hate real

believers. While they willfully close their eyes against the spiritual doctrines of Christ, they confidently assert that they see, and they alone. What will be the astonishment of Pharisees and hypocrites when their eyes are opened, and they behold in another world the believers whom they despised seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, around the throne of God! Devils believe, and, in hell, wicked men believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Truths they would not understand in the land of gospel light, shall be clearly seen in the land of outer darkness, amid the fire that never shall be quenched.

July 5

John 10:1-6. The parable of the good Shepherd.

The Pharisees had understood the meaning of the Lord when he spoke of blindness, but they did not understand the parable of the good shepherd. Had they known that they were represented under the figure of thieves and robbers, how great would have been their indignation! Yet such indeed they were, because they robbed God, for they destroyed the souls of his people by their false instructions. They loved to feed on the flesh, and to clothe themselves in the fleece of the sheep, but they cared not for the flock. They sought their own gain, and their own reputation, but not the glory of God.

What is meant by their climbing over the wall into the sheepfold, instead of entering by the door? The door represents Christ. The Pharisees did not come in by the door, for they did not believe in the Savior. But who is the shepherd of the sheep? How many little children could answer, "Jesus is the good Shepherd!" Some could say, "He is my shepherd." They know He is their shepherd, because they love him.

How did Jesus show he was the true shepherd? By his manner of coming in to the fold, and by his manner of going out. He did not climb over the wall, as thieves and robbers do, but entered by the door, openly declaring that he was the Son of God. "To him the porter opens." Does not the porter represent the prophets? Christ was the Shiloh of whom Jacob had spoken nearly two thousand years before, and the Lamb of God to whom John the Baptist had lately pointed.

He showed he was the Shepherd of the sheep by his manner of going out. He led his flock. He called them by their names, according to the custom of shepherds in the East; when he called them, he went before them. None but the true shepherd could lead the sheep; strangers would have been forced to drive them. It is very interesting to behold an eastern shepherd going before his sheep and leading them to their pastures. His flock know the voice of their own shepherd, and would not obey the call of any other.

Nathanael was one of the sheep of Christ. When Jesus saw him, he said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." Thus he showed he knew him. He was like a shepherd calling his sheep by its name. Did Nathanael hear the shepherd's voice? Yes, he replied; "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." The man born blind was another of Christ's sheep. When the shepherd said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" he soon replied, "Lord, I believe." Have we heard the voice of the shepherd, calling us to follow him to the green pastures? None but his sheep hear that voice. They hear it sounding in the depths of their hearts, saying, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They listen to the voice, and say to their own souls, "Return unto your rest, O my soul." They feel safe while they follow their Shepherd. Each says to Him, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." (Ps. 143:8.) The poor helpless sheep cannot tell which is the path that leads to glory, but his shepherd can. After passing through some dark valley, the sheep says, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, you knew my path." (Ps. 142:3.) The further the sheep goes in the way, the more trust he feels in his shepherd; and when he comes to the edge of the last valley he is able to say, "Though I pass

through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." We know what lies beyond that valley--Mount Zion. It is to that fair mountain the shepherd conducts his flock.

But while other shepherds are of a different nature from the sheep they tend, the good shepherd has taken on him the nature of his flock. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." (Rev. 7:17.) Having fed, and led them upon earth, he will feed and lead them in heaven. We shall never cease to require a shepherd's care. It is a delight to those who love Jesus to think that He will always be their shepherd and they his sheep.

July 6

John 10:7-13. Christ explains the parable of the good shepherd.

We are thankful to the Lord for having explained the parable of the good shepherd. Most parts of it can be interpreted with certainty, because they have been explained by the great Teacher.

Nothing can be plainer than the words, "I am the door of the sheep." Jesus is the gate of the fold. No man can come to the Father but by him. He is the way to God. He offered himself as an atonement for our sins, and by faith in that sacrifice we can be saved. There are other shepherds besides Christ, (for his ministers are his under-shepherds,) but there is no door but him.

What do these words signify--"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers?" Were the prophets thieves and robbers? No! the true prophets bore witness to Jesus; they were his under-shepherds; they entered by the door and fed the flock. This is the promise made to a faithful minister and to every true believer. "By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

But though there are other shepherds besides Christ, there are none like him. None but Jesus could say, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." God only can bestow natural life, and He only can bestow spiritual life. How wonderful are the means by which he bestows it! by laying down his own life.

In order to describe what he came to do for his sheep, He enlarged his parable, and related a circumstance which often occurs in pastoral countries.

"He who is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep."

The Pharisees are called by another name in this part of the parable. They had been compared to thieves, and to strangers, but now they are compared to hirelings. In what did they resemble hirelings? In their want of love to the sheep. How did they betray their want of love? By fleeing at the approach of danger. It is true they could not by dying save the sheep. Why then did they not seek the protection of Him who could? This was their crime--they drove the sheep away from their only Savior, their true shepherd. The Pharisees had tried to drive the blind man away from him, but they had not been able--they had only driven him closer to his shepherd.

Jesus cares for the sheep, and for every lamb in the flock. He found that poor blind man, and gathered him in his arms, and carried him in his bosom. For those who are just beginning to believe in Christ are weak like lambs, although they may have lived many years in the world. We have a shepherd who cares for his

sheep. He knows that many of them have been scattered. There are people at this moment who feel that they are sinners, and long for pardon, but no one has taught them to look to Jesus. The good shepherd knows where they are, and he says, "I will seek out my sheep, and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (Ez. 34:12.) Has this Shepherd sought us, and found us? Can any of us say,

Jesus sought me when a stranger,

Wandering from the fold of God;

He, to rescue me from danger,

Interposed his precious blood?

July 7

John 10:14-21. Christ concludes his discourse concerning the good shepherd.

In the conclusion of our Lord's interpretation of his parable there is no allusion made to the Pharisees. The only subject dwelt upon is the Good Shepherd's love for his sheep. Those who love their Shepherd must take particular delight in dwelling on this part of the Lord's discourse.

When Jesus said, "I know my sheep," he meant to teach us that he knew them to be his sheep, and loved them with parental affection--yes, with more than a mother's tenderness. A woman may forget her babe, but Jesus says to his church, "I will not forget you." And have the sheep any affection for their shepherd? Yes, they return his love. If he knows their names, they know his voice; if he leads them out, they follow him--"I know my sheep, and am known of mine."

The Savior makes use of a wonderful comparison to give us some idea of the intimate union that exists between the good shepherd and his sheep. The sentence would be better understood if read thus--"I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and as I know the Father," (ver. 14, 15.) What proof has the shepherd given of his love for his sheep? The greatest that could be given--"I lay down my life for the sheep."

When the Savior spoke of his own death, what painful scenes must have risen before his view! The agony in the garden, the insults in the judgment-hall, the ignominy on the cross. But with these painful thoughts there was associated an overwhelming joy--the thought of the numbers he should save by his sufferings. When he uttered these words, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," what an innumerable multitude of beloved children must have been present to his mind! for even at that moment he knew them all by name. Those other sheep were the Gentiles--they were then heathens. Thousands were bowing down to idols, slaughtering their enemies, and reveling in sin--and millions were yet unborn; yet the Savior called them his sheep. He knew they would believe when they heard of his love. Did he think of us when he said, "Other sheep I have?" for we are Gentiles. If we are now in his fold, if he is now our shepherd--then we may be assured that he thought of us also, when he said, "Other sheep I have; them also I must bring."

After declaring his own love for his sheep, He revealed the Father's love also. How much the Father must love the flock, if He loves the Son, because he died for them! This is not the only reason of his love for his Son, but it is one reason. He does indeed love the flock; He has proved it by a wonderful act. "The Father

sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.)

The Son also loved us, and was willing to come--for it is written, "Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice to God." (Eph. 5:2.)

Yet this Savior, so full of love, was spoken of by his creatures in this dreadful manner. Some said, "He has a devil, and is mad." How great was the patience of God, to permit those to live a moment longer who had uttered such an expression! It has been recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and will never be forgotten.

But how many since this discourse was written have felt as they read it, "Truly this was the Son of God! How precious are his words! How sweet are his promises! May the heavenly shepherd own me as his sheep at the last day!"

July 8

John 10:22-30. Christ declares that he and his Father are one.

The feast of the dedication was not one of the three feasts ordained by God, but a feast instituted by man, to commemorate the purification of the temple after Antiochus Epiphanes, a heathen king, had defiled it by idols. This feast, however, was observed by Jesus; hence we may conclude that he does not disapprove setting apart days for the remembrance of special mercies.

As it was winter, the Lord taught in a part of the court of the temple that was covered in and sheltered from the weather. His enemies came to him, pretending to desire to know the truth--"If you be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus, however, knew their malicious design. He knew they sought to accuse him of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin. The answer that he made was not that which they expected, for he told them first, not who he was, but what they were. He said, "You are not of my sheep." He did not tell them plainly that they were the thieves, the strangers, and the hirelings, described in the parable; but he did tell them plainly, that they were not the sheep.

Christ knows his own sheep; the world cannot distinguish them from wolves in sheep's clothing, but it is enough, if their shepherd knows they belong to Him. However the flock may be scattered, not one of them shall ever be lost. Jesus knew that great efforts would be made to steal, and kill, and destroy them, but that all these efforts would be vain. He promised, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." The Pharisees had sought to pluck the poor man, born blind, out of his shepherd's hand--to arguments and threatenings they had added insults and injuries; but he had refused to hear their voice, or to follow them.

Do we belong to the little flock? then Satan will seek to pluck us out of the Savior's hand. We know not in what manner he will seek to separate us from our shepherd, for Satan has many devices. In the histories of the saints recorded in the word of God, we find instances of his temptations. Satan attempted to induce Job to forsake his shepherd by severe afflictions--he endeavored to drive away Peter by the fear of man, and to allure Moses by the riches of Egypt; but he never succeeded in plucking one sheep out of the shepherd's hands,--and he never will. In the last prayer Jesus offered up in the presence of his disciples, He said of them, "These that you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." Judas was not one of Christ's sheep; if he had been one of them, he could not have been destroyed by Satan's power.

And why can neither man nor angel destroy one of the sheep? Because their shepherd is God. Jesus is the shepherd, and the Father is the shepherd, and yet there is one shepherd; for Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." The shepherd who gave his life for the sheep is He whom Israel worshiped in days of old, saying, "It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

The glorious Creator is that tender shepherd who carries the lambs in his arms, and gathers them in his bosom.

July 9

John 10:31 to end. The Jews attempt to stone Christ for saying he was the Son of God.

What meekness our Savior showed when the wicked Jews took up stones to stone him! How touching was his appeal--"Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me?" He might make the same appeal to us now. When we neglect, forsake, and disobey Him, he might say to us, "I have bestowed on you many gifts--I have made you many promises--I have passed over many transgressions--for which of these acts of kindness do you thus treat me?" What could we reply? Should we not be obliged to own that we were ungrateful, hard-hearted creatures?

But Jesus, by his affecting speech, did not soften his enemies, and He next used powerful arguments. He alluded to a passage in the 82nd Psalm, in which God speaks to the kings and rulers of the earth under the name of gods. "I have said, You are gods." And why did he give them this name? Because both kings and priests were anointed, and thus made types of Christ, who is the Anointed. The word Christ means "anointed." These earthly princes were placed in authority, and thus also made types of the Son of God, to whom all power is committed. Therefore God spoke to them in these words--"I have said, You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High;" but because they abused their authority by oppressing the poor, these words were added, "You shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

These kings, rulers, and priests, were only types and shadows of the Son of God, who is alone worthy to possess all rule, authority, and power. Now the argument Jesus used with the Jews was this--"If those who only shadowed forth my greatness, were called gods, how much more must I be the Son of God?" Christ called himself one whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world. By "sanctified," he meant "set apart" for the office of priest and king. The Father appointed him to be our priest and king before the foundation of the world, and in the fullness of time he sent him forth. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

But no arguments could convince the Jews that Jesus was the true Messiah, because their hearts were set against him; therefore he went into a retired place beyond the river Jordan, where John had baptized long before his imprisonment.

This spot must have been very interesting to some of the disciples; for it was there that two of them had first beheld the Lamb of God, and had followed him to his own abode. (See John 1:28.) The children of God love the place where first their hearts were opened to receive the truth.

How refreshing the season passed in this retreat must have been to the Savior's wearied frame and harassed spirit! He had the joy of bringing some souls into his fold; for it is written, "Many believed in him there." The preaching of John had prepared the way for the reception of Christ. After ministers are dead, their past labors are often blessed; and they are joined in the world above by souls born again through

their word after their own decease.

July 10

Luke 13:23-30. Christ describes the misery of those who shall be shut out of His kingdom.

Those who lived when the Lord was upon earth enjoyed the great privilege of asking him questions. Who would not wish to share it! It was one, however, that might easily be abused. Many asked the Lord unprofitable and curious questions. This inquiry, "Are there few that shall be saved?" seems to have been made by one who was not earnest in seeking to be saved himself. For the Lord, instead of replying to the question, addresses an exhortation to his hearers--"Strive to enter in at the strait (or narrow) gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." But did not the Lord once say, "Everyone that seeks finds?" This promise applies only to the present time; there is a period when none who seek will find. The Lord described that period in a parable--"When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and you begin to stand without and to knock, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.'"

That period has not yet arrived--the door stands open, the master invites, entreats, implores us to enter, and to partake of his glorious feast. But if we disregard his entreaties, he will suddenly shut to the door, and shut us out forever. Those outside will use arguments to induce the Lord to open the door. Some, who have been his companions upon earth, will say, "We have eaten and drunk in your presence;" and some, who have listened to his discourses in their own cities, will say, "You have taught in our streets." If we die in our sins, it will be of no use for us to say at the last day, "We have lived with holy people; we have been instructed by holy ministers."

There are two circumstances that will increase the anguish of those Jews who will be shut out of the kingdom of God. They will see their own forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their own prophets, sitting down at the heavenly feast. It will seem hard to them not to be admitted into the presence of their own kindred. And will it not seem hard to many other ungodly people, when they behold a father, or mother, a brother, or sister, sitting down at the supper of the Lamb, and they themselves thrust out! On earth they were ever welcome at their father's table, but even a pious father will have no power to gain admission for an unconverted child into Christ's presence.

Another circumstance that will aggravate the disappointment of the unbelieving Jews, will be this--they will see Gentiles whom they despised, flocking from the east and west, the north and south, into the new Jerusalem, while they are forbidden to enter. And will it not increase the disappointment of those who live in this Christian land, if they should see those who were brought up in heathen countries, saved, when they are lost?

When we were little we were taught to pray to God; we heard of heaven and hell; we lisped the name of Jesus, as soon as we could speak. There are many in distant lands who were taught in their childhood to bow to frightful idols, and to delight in deeds of cruelty; yet some of these have turned to God, and will go to heaven; and what if we should not go there! Then, the last would be the first, and the first last. May God of his infinite mercy save us from the great guilt of rejecting his gospel!

July 11

Luke 13:31 to end. Christ replies to Herod's threatening.

The Savior showed his abhorrence of Herod's character by the name which he gave him, "a fox." The manner in which Herod had treated John the Baptist, rendered him deserving of the name of fox. He had once listened to his preaching, and shown him respect; but had afterwards imprisoned and basely murdered him. The different natures that God has bestowed upon the animals are intended to represent the various characters of men. The children of Satan resemble wolves, bears, and foxes, and all manner of voracious birds and loathsome reptiles; while the children of God are like the gentle sheep and the harmless dove.

But the threats of Herod did not alarm the Lord. Though the Pharisees said, "Herod will kill you," yet He who knew all things, knew the tyrant would not kill him. And why not? Because that hour was not the time, nor that spot the place of his death. The Savior knew when He should die. He prophesied that He should live a few days, that is, a short time longer, and on the third day be perfected, or rendered complete. In this mysterious language, He alluded to his death--by death He was perfected, or rendered complete as an atoning priest. In death He offered that sacrifice which atoned for the sins of his people, and with that sacrifice He appeared in the presence of God for us. Jesus knew where He would die. He said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." He did not mean to say, that no prophet had perished elsewhere, but that most prophets had been slain in that wicked city. Did the prospect of his death, with all its attendant horrors, excite angry feelings in his bosom? Instead of expressing anger, He burst forth into the most tender lamentations over the city of his murderers. How touching are the words--"How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

In the Old Testament the Lord compared himself to an eagle, bearing her eaglets on her wings to a place of safety. But in this place He compares himself to a hen seeking to guard her little ones beneath her wings, from the birds of prey hovering in the air. How suitable are both these comparisons! When Israel was in Egypt, God delivered him from his enemies with the strength of an eagle, by carrying him into Canaan. But when Israel was in the promised land, He promised to guard him with the fond care of a hen, from the enemies that threatened to devour him. When we are in trouble, God is like an eagle in delivering us; and when we have been delivered, He is like a hen in keeping us from evil. How many blessings we possess at the present moment! But there are many dangers on every side. If we take shelter beneath the wings of our God, no evil shall overtake us. But if we refuse to come to Him who calls us, then we shall fall a prey to our enemies. Satan and all his angels are like birds of prey hovering in the air, longing to devour us. But Jesus will preserve his people from their malice. We live in a world full of trouble and temptation, but there is a refuge for us. Here is a prayer for a soul that feels its own helplessness, and dreads the power of its enemies--"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusts in you; yes, in the shadow of your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." (Ps. 57:1.)

July 12

Luke 14:1-11. Jesus Christ reproveth the ambitious guests.

The account of the healing of the man with the dropsy reminds us of the healing of the man with the withered hand. It was on the Sabbath-day that Jesus performed both these miracles--but the places in which He wrought them were not the same. The withered hand was healed in a synagogue; the dropsy was cured in a Pharisee's house. On both occasions many of the Lord's bitter enemies were present. But no circumstances could restrain the compassionate Savior from showing mercy to his suffering creatures. Neither did the displeasure He excited by healing the man with the dropsy prevent Him from reproveth the

proud behavior of the company.

In the East, it is still the custom for guests to occupy seats that mark their degree of rank. Each person, as he enters, seats himself in the place that he thinks he is entitled to fill, and often he takes a higher place than the company consider to be his due. But the master of the feast has the power to desire him to move either to a higher or lower place. The Pharisees showed a great anxiety to occupy the most honorable seats. Our Lord openly censured their conduct, and alluded to one of Solomon's proverbs, (25:6,) an authority that they professed to revere. There it is written, "Put not forth yourself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men; for better is it that it should be said unto you, Come up here, than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince whom your eyes have seen."

Jesus exposed the folly of the Pharisees' conduct. It is foolish, as well as sinful to exalt ourselves. Some worldly people put on the appearance of humility, in order to attract notice and admiration. But the true Christian desires not only to appear, but to be humble. After having lain low at the foot of the cross, can he go forth desiring to be admired in society?

What are our feelings in company? Are we highly elated when noticed, and deeply mortified when overlooked? Do we love to be first? Do we envy those who are more regarded than ourselves? This was the spirit of the Pharisees. It is not the spirit of Christ. There are many people who do not openly contend for places of honor, who are secretly thirsting for admiration. The children of God do not indulge this feeling, but strive and pray against it. The rule of their conduct is, "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." (Rom. 12:10.)

July 13

Luke 14:12-14. Christ advises his host to invite the poor.

With what faithfulness the Lord acted towards the Pharisee who had invited him to his house! It appears that the entertainment was splendid, and the guests rich and honorable. But it was not such a feast as the Lord approved. He knew the motives which led the rich Pharisees to invite their neighbors--it was the hope that they should be invited again. This was a selfish and sordid motive. In the East, when an animal was killed, it was necessary to eat it immediately. The covetous invited none to partake of their dinner who would not be able to return the favor; but the charitable often called in the poor and afflicted, or sent portions to their dwellings. Job appealed to God, saying, "If I have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless has not eaten thereof." And Nehemiah on a day of rejoicing said to the people of Israel, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." In this country, many benevolent people, instead of giving feasts to the poor, contrive other means of giving them relief and pleasure. It is the spirit and not the very letter of the counsel that ought to be followed.

But some may inquire, Is it wrong to invite our friends and kindred o a feast? We know that in every part of Scripture the joyful meetings of brethren and neighbors are spoken of without censure.

But no feasts impart so much happiness as those given to the poor. Rich guests often come with reluctance, and depart without thankfulness. But the poor assemble with delight around the well-spread board, and go away blessing the bountiful hand that spread it. They enjoy but few pleasures, and they meet with but little kindness. It is in the power of the rich to cast a beam of light across their dark path, and to make them for a short season to forget their sorrows. To invite the poor is pleasing to the Lord. Among those gathered from streets, and lanes, and highways, and hedges, there may be a Lazarus whom we

shall meet again at the heavenly banquet. It will be pleasant when we meet to feel that we honored him upon earth as the saint of the Lord. There are no doubt wicked people to be found among the poor--but the kindness of the rich often opens their hearts to receive instruction. There are pious rich people who devise means to render the feasts they give profitable to the souls of their poor guests, as well as refreshing to their bodies. That venerable reformer and martyr, Hooper, while he was bishop of Gloucester, entertained a certain number of the poor every day with a dinner of whole and wholesome meats in his great hall; but first he examined them in the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments; nor would he himself sit down to table until his poor guests had been served.

How rejoiced we ought to be at every discovery of the will of God! If the world in general valued his approbation, there would not be so many entertainments as there now are given to the rich, and there would be many more given to the poor. Those words, "You shall be blessed," sound very sweetly in the ear of a true disciple of Christ. This is what he desires--"to be blessed." Because the poor cannot recompense him for the kindness he shows them, the Lord will remember it--even as a father takes upon himself to reward every service rendered to his infant children.

Let us beware of thinking that anything we can do deserves a reward. No, that is impossible. When we have done all, we have done only what it was our duty to do. The excellent bishop, of whom we have just spoken, though he had given his goods to feed the poor, and though at length he gave his body to be burned, was so far from trusting in his good deeds for salvation, that, when brought to the stake, he was heard to pray thus--"Lord, I am hell, but you are heaven; I am a sink of sin, but you are a gracious God, and a merciful Redeemer."

It will be easy for God to recompense his children for all they have done for him upon earth. One glimpse of his countenance will more than compensate for the martyr's acutest pangs. But how shall his saints recompense Him for what He has done for them? He found them poor, and blind, and miserable, and fed them with heavenly bread, even with that living bread which came down from heaven. It is this thought that makes them so anxious to please Him.

July 14

Luke 14:15-24. The parable of the great supper.

Our Lord concluded his conversation at the Pharisee's house by a parable. He had said that those who invited the poor to their houses should be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. This declaration induced one of the guests to exclaim, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Then Jesus related a parable to show how unwilling the rich men were to come to the heavenly feast. This parable was exactly suited to the company present, and was intended as a warning to the Pharisees, and to all worldly-minded people, whether rich or poor.

The man in the parable invited his rich neighbors to a feast. It is the custom in the East to send an invitation some weeks before the time appointed, and when the day arrives, to desire the servants to remind the guests of their engagement. Nothing can be more insulting than to refuse to come after the feast has been prepared, excepting there be some real hindrance. The excuses made by these rich men were of a frivolous nature. Neither sickness nor the death of friends detained them at home. They could not have foreseen those events; but it showed great contempt to purchase land or oxen, or to contract a marriage at the time they had agreed to come to the feast. It would have been far better to have refused at first, than to accept the invitation, and then to make excuses, when the feast was prepared and the master

was waiting.

Like the rich men in the parable, the Pharisees professed to be willing to come to God; but when the blessings of the Gospel were offered to their acceptance, they began to make excuses. They were hypocrites, because they pretended to be religious, while their hearts were set upon this world. Would the insulted master of the feast permit his plenteous provisions to be wasted, or his table to remain unoccupied? By no means. He sent his servants into the streets and lanes of the city, and directed them to summon the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Thus, when the self-righteous Pharisees refused to listen to the Gospel, the Lord encouraged publicans to accept its blessings.

Afterwards the master of the feast sent his servants into the highways and hedges, to gather more guests for the feast. Who are the wanderers in the streets and lanes of the city, and who are those in the highways and hedges? Do not the former represent the Jews, and the latter the Gentiles? For the Gospel was first preached at Jerusalem, but afterwards among the Gentile nations, even among us who live in these northern isles. What were our forefathers doing when Jesus uttered his parable? They were worshiping frightful idols among their forests of oak. But even then the Lord had purposes of mercy towards those poor savages.

But why did the master declare that none of those men who first were bidden should taste of his supper? Had they not refused to come? What need was there to affirm that they should not come? Do not the words seem to indicate, that a time would arrive when those who had made excuses would repent of their folly, and seek to be admitted to the feast? When they saw the poor wanderers from the city and the country, clothed in white robes, surrounding a sumptuous table--when they descried the splendid lights, and heard the joyful sound of music and singing, they would change their minds, and desire to join the glorious company. But they would find the door shut against them. When they knocked, they would hear a voice within, saying, "I know you not." They would not be permitted even to taste the supper, of which they had once been invited to partake.

And is there any despiser of Christ and his Gospel who will not change his mind when he beholds, afar off, the glories of the blessed, in the kingdom of God? Yes, when all his earthly delights are perished, he will wish for a place at the heavenly banquet. But he will find that no place is reserved for him among the happy guests. O what will then be the bitterness of his disappointment, and the agony of his regrets! Let us now obey the Savior's gracious call, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of my wine, which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding."

July 15

Luke 14:25 to end. Christ declares to the multitude that his disciples must encounter great difficulties.

As the Lord Jesus knew all hearts, he could perfectly adapt his discourse to the state of mind of his hearers. We have lately listened to his conversation at a Pharisee's table, and heard his alarming warnings to those who despised his Gospel. Now we behold him surrounded by a different class of hearers.

The multitudes did not openly despise the Savior, they admired him, and many of them wished to become his disciples; but they were not prepared to encounter difficulties, or to make sacrifices for his sake. Therefore the Savior, turning towards them, set before their eyes the great trials which his disciples must expect to suffer. Parents and kindred would persecute them, and rulers would condemn them to death.

How ought they to act when placed in these distressing circumstances? None can suppose that Jesus disapproves of natural affection; the meaning of his declaration is, "Those who would follow me must not yield to the persuasions of their dearest friends, or to the threatenings of the most cruel tyrants, but must be ready to forsake all, and to cleave to me alone." In our days, converted Jews and converted Brahmins have resisted the tenderest entreaties of affectionate mothers and devoted wives, who would have turned them from the faith. And even in our Christian land, there are many instances of children who have endured much unkindness from their own parents, rather than comply with the vain customs of the world.

The Lord Jesus related two short parables to show the folly of setting out in the Christian course, without being prepared to surmount difficulties.

If a man would build a tower, he must first consider whether he has money sufficient to complete the building; and if a captain would meet an enemy, he must first consider whether he has soldiers enough to resist him. It would be better not to begin the tower, than to leave it unfinished--and not to undertake the war, than to suffer a defeat.

It would also be better not to profess to follow Christ, than to turn back after having set out. It would be better--if we can talk of better in such a case. For he who does not set out at SOME TIME OR OTHER in the Christian course, must endure EVERLASTING misery. It will be a poor consolation for him to think that his case would have been still worse, had he turned back after having known the way of righteousness.

Christ never discouraged a sincere soul from following him. But he has given a true description of the nature of his service, so that none can say in the end, "My Lord deceived me, and represented his service to be easier than I have found it." A poor Madagascar woman, who had undergone great persecutions, was once asked whether she was surprised when afflictions overtook her. She replied, "No; from the first we knew it was written, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God; and when our troubles came, we said, 'This is what we expected.'" This poor woman was once shut up, for five months, in an iron case that prevented her moving a single limb; yet, having counted the cost, she proved "more than conqueror through Him who loved her." * See "Madagascar and its Martyrs," a book for the young.

July 16

Luke 15:1-10. Parables of the lost sheep, and of the lost piece of silver.

There is a tenderness in these parables which is not to be found in the discourses we have lately read. When the Savior was at the Pharisee's house, he faithfully reprov'd both the guests and the host; when he was surrounded by the multitude, he solemnly warned them; but when he sat in the midst of publicans and sinners, he uttered the most touching and encouraging words. The Pharisees showed the pride of their hearts, by murmuring because Jesus received sinners into his intimate society. The Lord answered their murmurings by relating several parables. He knew their covetous disposition, and that they would understand the joy of finding a lost sheep, or a lost piece of money, though their hearts were too hard to enable them to understand the joy felt by angels at the salvation of a sinner.

Even penitent sinners themselves can hardly believe that angels should care for them. How many penitents have read with astonishment that there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repents! Could we have conceived that the recovery of one of our fallen race should interest those glorious beings? Why do they care so much for us? The Son of God, whom they adore, loved us and died for us. They know that He cares for each wanderer, and that He rejoices over each soul that he brings back to his

fold. The angels share in the joy of their beloved Lord. They felt with him in his sorrows, and one of them strengthened him in the garden of Gethsemane. They partake also in his joys; they delight to see the fruit of the travail of his soul. But their joy cannot be compared with His. He is an infinite being, therefore his love and joy are infinite.

And if the repentance of one sinner causes so much joy, what will be felt on account of the salvation of all the Church of God! The mind is overwhelmed at the thought of the boundless raptures of that day. Many joyful emotions have been felt since first the foundation of the earth was laid; the birds have rejoiced at every return of spring; children have smiled each opening morn; the saints have tasted higher delights in their sacred assemblies; and angels have made the heavens ring with their rapturous songs; but all these joys are as a drop compared to the ocean of delight that the glorious company of heaven shall feel, when all the redeemed are gathered together into the celestial city.

Are we prepared to taste these joys? Do we now feel any satisfaction when we hear that a sinner has repented? We might discover our own state in the sight of God by this token--what are the events that occasion us most joy? If we are saved hereafter, we shall be the companions of angels. But if our hearts are not interested in the salvation of sinners, shall we be fit company for them? What a contrast there is between a selfish human creature and a benevolent angel!

How delightful it will be, in ages to come, if we are numbered among the saints, to see the angels who rejoiced over our conversion! They will not forget the happiness they experienced on such occasions, and they will feel their joy complete when they see the pardoned sinner, saved from all his enemies, comforted after all his sorrows, and enclosed in the everlasting arms of his Almighty Savior.

July 17

Luke 15:11-16. The departure of the prodigal son.

Though the Pharisees were hard-hearted men, yet they possessed the feelings of parents. The parable of the prodigal son was suited to touch every father's heart. But even if the proud Pharisees listened unmoved to the Savior's representation of the father's generous compassion, the poor publicans must have heard the wonderful history with grateful astonishment. When the Lord described the conduct of the younger son, they were reminded of their own base departure from God. The Pharisees also had wandered far from their Father's house; but they knew it not. They imagined that, like the elder son in the parable, they had always been faithful and obedient. Many people entertain the same false notion of their own goodness, and forget that it is written, "All we like sheep have gone astray."

Every penitent sinner sees his own likeness in the prodigal son. The most striking feature in his character is his ingratitude. Instead of being thankful for his daily bread, and his shelter beneath his father's roof, and for all the comforts and privileges he enjoyed, he claims fortune as his right, saying, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." This is our spirit by nature. Instead of being overwhelmed with a sense of God's wonderful goodness, we conceive ourselves entitled to further gifts.

When the prodigal had obtained his desire, he showed his ingratitude by going into a country a great way off, and there wasting his father's gifts in riotous living. And have we not acted like this prodigal? We need not move from the spot where we were born in order to do this--it is sufficient that shutting up our hearts from God, and banishing him from our thoughts, we seek our gratification in earthly things.

But behold the consequence of this conduct; the prodigal comes to poverty. He has at last spent all. It is well when we discover before death that we have spent all--that we have wasted our hopes and affections upon the world, and have obtained no lasting satisfaction in return. But what will be the despair of those who never discover their poverty, until they are removed to the place where the uttermost farthing is required, but not even a drop of water granted!

Perhaps the prodigal in his days of revelry may have looked forward to the time when he should have spent all, and he may have intended then to enter some service that would preserve him from want. But God defeated his design, and caused a mighty famine to arise at the very moment when he was destitute. Now there were few masters who could afford to hire, and many servants to be hired, so that the prodigal was forced to engage in the lowest service at the lowest wages; he became a swineherd for a less reward than would provide him with a meal of husks, such as the pigs fed upon.

How easily God can disappoint the sinner, and blast all his devices! Many think, "When this enjoyment is passed, I will betake myself to another," forgetting how God can in a moment take away every idol, shut up every way of escape, and dry up every stream of happiness.

The thoughtless companions of his mirth remembered not the prodigal in his distress. "No one gave unto him." Those who had gladly partaken of his riotous feasts, forsook him in his poverty and hunger. Accomplices in guilt are not comforters in sorrow. For what unfeeling creatures the prodigal had forsaken his loving father, and his happy home! O the folly and the madness that sinners show in preferring the society of the wicked to the favor of the ever-blessed God! Can the world console them in sickness? Will the world be faithful to them in old age? Can the world receive them into glory after death? Happy are they who have made this blessed choice, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

July 18

Luke 15:17-19. The repentance of the prodigal.

God greatly blessed the prodigal's afflictions to his soul. While he was employed as a swineherd a great change took place in his mind--"He came to himself." This expression implies, that before he was not himself. A state of sin is a state of madness. When a person is converted he is in his right mind. How could any one indulge in sin, if he reflected on its dreadful consequences! "for the wages of sin is death!" But sinners are like the brutes that perish, and do not consider their latter end.

It is very interesting to hear the reflections of the prodigal when he was come to himself. He saw everything now in a new light. He understood the happiness of his father's house. Once he had abhorred its restraints and longed for liberty, but now he esteemed each servant happy who dwelt beneath that peaceful roof. Unconverted people think religion gloomy, and endeavor to escape from its influence; but when the Holy Spirit visits their hearts, they account the servants of God blessed, and long to be numbered among the saints.

The prodigal now felt convinced of his guilt. He not only lamented his miserable condition, but he traced it to his own sin; he blamed no one but himself. Thus the Spirit convinces of sin, and makes us feel that we have sinned against God, more than against any other being, because He is the greatest and best of beings, and our chief benefactor.

The prodigal felt confidence in his father's mercy. Though he felt unworthy to be called a son, yet he resolved to say "Father." Had he not felt this confidence, he might have been devoured by remorse, and have deemed it useless to return. Doubtless his memory furnished him with numerous instances of his father's love, of his readiness to forgive his early waywardness, and of his patient endurance of the provocations of his youth. He had enjoyed opportunities of knowing his father's character, and it now appeared to him in all its loveliness. Happy is it when the convinced sinner can hope in God's mercy. No child ever had such reason to believe that his father would receive him, as the chief of sinners has that God will in nowise cast him out; for God has so loved us, as to give his only Son a sacrifice for us; and He who spared not his own Son, will he not with him also freely give us all things?

The prodigal made a resolution to return, and openly to confess his sins, to entreat forgiveness, and to implore permission to become a servant, though not a son, in his father's house.

Have we ever made the resolution to return to God? Can we recall the time when we felt we had wandered from the best of fathers, and that we deserved to be rejected? Every true believer has repented of his sins, and has sought forgiveness with weeping and supplications. Nor does he ever cease to seek it while he lives upon earth. The sense of his own sinfulness increases, as he experiences more of his Father's goodness. Daily he says, "Forgive me my trespasses," and daily he feels that h

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