

The Faithful Promiser (31 Day Devotional)

by John MacDuff

John MacDuff's sermon explores the multifaceted nature of God's grace and His promises to believers throughout their spiritual journey.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 33:25, Job 17:9, Psalm 25:10, Psalm 84:11, Psalm 119:49, Isaiah 1:18, Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 60:20, Hosea 2:19, Hosea 14:4, Matthew 12:20, Luke 22:31, John 13:7, John 14:16, John 14:18, John 14:27, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 15:53, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Galatians 6:9, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 10:23, 1 Peter 1:6, 1 Peter 5:4, 2 Peter 1:4, Revelation 1:18, Revelation 3:11, Revelation 3:19, Revelation 14:13, Revelation 21:3, Revelation 21:25

Topics: "Gods Promises", "Faith And Trust"

Description

John MacDuff preaches about the glorious promises of God, highlighting the delight of pleading individual promises at the mercy-seat and the importance of trusting in God's faithfulness. He emphasizes the gracious conference of God offering pardoning grace, the provision of needful grace in times of trial, and the abundance of all-sufficient grace for every situation. MacDuff also discusses the comforting, restraining, restoring, sanctifying, reviving, persevering, dying, and after-grace of God, encouraging believers to surrender to God's love and trust in His compassion and strength.

Transcript

THE FAITHFUL PROMISER

by John MacDuff, 1849

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." 2 Peter 1:4

"He who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

"Remember your promise to me, for it is my only hope." Psalm 119:49

It has often been felt a delightful exercise by the child of God, to take, night by night, an individual promise and plead it at the mercy-seat. Often are our prayers pointless, from not following, in this respect, the example of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the Royal Promise-pleader, who delighted to direct his finger to some particular "word" of the Faithful Promiser, saying, "Remember Your word unto Your servant, on which you have caused me to hope!"

The following are a few gleanings from the Promise Treasury--a few "crumbs from the Master's Table," which may serve to help the thoughts in the hour of closet meditation, or the season of sorrow.

PARDONING GRACE

"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." --Isaiah 1:18

My soul! your God summons you to His audience chamber! Infinite purity seeks to reason with infinite vileness! Deity stoops to speak to dust! Dread not the meeting. It is the most gracious, as well as most wondrous of all conferences. Jehovah himself breaks silence! He utters the best tidings a lost soul or a lost world can hear--"God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." What! Scarlet sins, and crimson sins! and these all to be forgiven and forgotten! The just God "justifying" the unjust!--the mightiest of all beings, the kindest of all!

Oh! what is there in you to merit such love as this? You might have known your God only as the "consuming fire," and had nothing before you except "a fearful looking for of vengeance!" This gracious conference bids you dispel your fears! It tells you it is no longer a "fearful," but a blessed thing to fall into His hands! Have you closed with these His overtures? Until you are at peace with Him, happiness must be a stranger to your bosom. Though you have all else beside, bereft of God you must be "bereft indeed." Lord! I come! As your pardoning grace is freely tendered, so shall I freely accept it. May it be mine, even now, to listen to the gladdening accents, "Son! Daughter! be of good cheer! your sins, which are many are all forgiven you."

NEEDFUL GRACE

"As your days, so shall your strength be." --Deuteronomy 33:25

God does not give grace until the hour of trial comes. But when it does come the amount of grace, and the nature of the special grace required is granted. My soul! do not dwell with painful apprehension on the future. Do not anticipate coming sorrows; perplexing yourself with the grace needed for future emergencies; tomorrow will bring its promised grace along with tomorrow's trials. God, wishing to keep His people humble, and dependent on Himself, gives not a stock of grace; He metes it out for every day's exigencies, that they may be constantly "traveling between their own emptiness and Christ's fullness"--their own weakness and Christ's strength. But when the exigency comes, you may safely trust an Almighty arm to bear you through! Is there now some "thorn in the flesh" sent to lacerate you? You may have been entreating the Lord for its removal. Your prayer has, doubtless, been heard and answered; but not in the way, perhaps, expected or desired by you. The "thorn" may still be left to goad, the trial may still be left to buffet; but "more grace" has been given to endure them. Oh! how often have His people thus been led to glory in their infirmities and triumph in their afflictions, seeing the power of Christ rests more abundantly upon them! The strength which the hour of trial brings, often makes the Christian a wonder to himself!

ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good word and work." --2 Corinthians 9:8

All-sufficiency in all things! Believer! Surely you are "thoroughly furnished!" Grace is no scanty thing, doled out in pittance. It is a glorious treasury, which the key of prayer can always unlock, but never empty. A fountain, "full, flowing, ever flowing, over flowing." Mark these three ALL'S in this precious promise. It is a three-fold link in a golden chain, let down from a throne of grace by a God of grace. "All grace!"--"all-sufficiency!" in "all things!" and these to "abound." Oh! precious thought! My need cannot impoverish that inexhaustible treasury of grace! Myriads are hourly hanging on it, and drawing from it, and yet there is no diminution--"Out of that fullness all we too may receive, and grace for grace!"

My soul, do you not love to dwell on that all-abounding grace? Your own insufficiency in everything, met with an "all-sufficiency in all things!" Grace in all circumstances and situations, in all vicissitudes and changes, in all the varied phases of the Christian's being. Grace in sunshine and storm--in health and in sickness--in life and in death. Grace for the old believer and the young believer, the tried believer, and the weak believer, and the tempted believer. Grace for duty, and grace in duty--grace to carry the joyous cup with a steady hand, grace to drink the bitter cup with an un murmuring spirit--grace to have prosperity sanctified--grace to say, through tears, "Your will be done!"

COMFORTING GRACE

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." --John 14:18

Blessed Jesus! How Your presence sanctifies trial, takes loneliness from the chamber of sickness, and the sting from the chamber of death! Bright and Morning Star! precious at all times, You are never so precious as in "the dark and cloudy day!" The bitterness of sorrow is well worth enduring to have Your promised consolations. How well qualified, Man of Sorrows, to be my Comforter! How well fitted to dry my tears, You who shed so many Yourself! What are my tears--my sorrows--my crosses--my losses, compared with Yours, who shed first Your tears, and then Your blood for me! Mine are all deserved, and infinitely more than deserved. How different, O Spotless Lamb of God, those pangs which rent Your guiltless bosom! How sweet those comforts You have promised to the comfortless, when I think of them as flowing from an Almighty Fellow-Sufferer--"A brother born for adversity"--the "Friend that sticks closer than any brother!"--one who can say, with all the refined sympathies of a holy exalted human nature, "I know your sorrows!" My soul! calm your griefs! There is not a sorrow you can experience, but Jesus, in the treasury of grace, has an exact corresponding solace: "In the multitude of the sorrows I have in my heart, Your comforts delight my soul!"

RESTRAINING GRACE

"Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." --Luke 22:31, 32

What a scene does this unfold! Satan tempting--Jesus praying! Satan sifting--Jesus pleading! "The strong man assailing"--"the stronger than the strong" beating him back! Believer! here is the past history and present secret of your safety in the midst of temptation. An interceding Savior was at your side, saying to every threatening wave, "Thus far shall you go, and no farther!" God often permits His people to be on the very verge of the precipice, to remind them of their own weakness; but never farther than the brink! The restraining hand and grace of Omnipotence is ready to rescue them--"Although he stumbles, yet he shall not be utterly cast down." And why? "For the Lord upholds him with His right hand!" The wolf may be prowling for his prey; but what can he do when the Shepherd is always there, tending with the watchful eye that "neither slumbers nor sleeps?" Who cannot subscribe to the testimony, "When my foot slipped,

Your mercy, O Lord! held me up?" Who can look back on his past pilgrimage, and fail to see it crowded with Ebenezers, with this inscription: "You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling"? My soul, where would you have been this day, had you not been "kept" by the power of God?

RESTORING GRACE

"I will heal your backslidings." --Hosea 14:4

Wandering again! And has He not left me to perish? Stumbling and straying on the dark mountains, away from the Shepherd's eye and the Shepherd's fold, shall He not leave the erring wanderer to the fruit of his own ways, and his truant heart to go hopelessly onward in its career of guilty estrangement? "My thoughts," says God, "are not as your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." Man would say, "Go, perish! ungrateful apostate!" God says, "Return, O backsliding children!" The Shepherd will not, cannot allow those sheep to perish which He has purchased with His own blood! How wondrous His forbearance towards it!--tracking its guilty steps, and ceasing not the pursuit until He lays the wanderer on His shoulders, and returns with it to His fold rejoicing! My soul! why increase by farther departures your own distance from the fold?--why lengthen the dreary road your gracious Shepherd has to traverse in bringing you back? Do not delay your return! Do not provoke His patience any longer! Do not venture farther on forbidden ground! He waits with outstretched arms to welcome you once more to His bosom. Be humble for the past, trust Him for the future. Think of your former backslidings, and tremble--think of His patience, and be filled with holy gratitude; think of His promised grace, "and take courage."

SANCTIFYING GRACE

"I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again." --Philippians 1:6

Reader! Is the good work begun in you? Are you holy? Is sin being crucified? Are your heart's idols, one by one abolished? Is the world less to you, and eternity more to you? Is more of your Savior's image impressed on your character, and your Savior's love more enthroned in your heart? Is Salvation to you "the one thing needful?" Oh! take heed! there can be no middle ground, no standing still; or if it be so, your position must be a false one. The Savior's blood is not more necessary to give you a title to Heaven, than His Spirit to give you a fitness for it. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His!" Onwards! should be your motto. There is no standing still in the life of faith. "The man," says Augustine, "who says 'Enough,' that man's soul is lost!" Let this be the superscription in all your ways and doings, "Holiness to the Lord." Let the admonishing word exercise over you its habitual power, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Moreover, remember, that to be holy, is to be happy. The two are equivalent terms. Holiness! It is the secret and spring of the joy of angels; and the more of holiness attained on earth--the nearer and closer my walk is with God--the more of a sweet earnest shall I have of the bliss that awaits me in a holy Heaven. Oh! my soul, let it be your sacred ambition to "Be holy!"

REVIVING GRACE

"Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." --Isaiah 40:31

"Will You not revive us, O Lord?" My soul! are you conscious of your declining state? Is your walk less with God, your affections less heavenly? Have you less conscious nearness to the mercy-seat, diminished communion with your Savior? Is prayer less a privilege than it has been?--the pulsations of spiritual life more languid, and fitful, and spasmodic?--the bread of life, less relished?--the seen, and the temporal, and the tangible, displacing the unseen and eternal? Are you sinking down into this state of drowsy self-contentment, this conformity of your life with the world, forfeiting all the happiness of true religion and risking and endangering the better life to come? Arise! Call upon your God! "Will you not revive us, O Lord?" He might have returned nothing but the withering repulse, "How often would I have gathered you; but you would not!" "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone!" But "in wrath He remembers mercy." "They shall revive as the corn." "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." How and where is reviving grace to be found? He gives you, in this precious promise, the key. It is on your bended knees--by a return to your deserted and unfrequented chamber! "Those who wait upon the Lord!" "Wait on the Lord; be of good cheer, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!"

PERSEVERING GRACE

"The righteous shall hold on his way." --Job 17:9

Reader! How comforting to you amid the ebbings and flowings of your changing history, to know that the change is all with you, and not with your God! Your spiritual vessel may be tossed on waves of temptation, in many a dark midnight. You may think your pilot has left you, and be ready continually to say, "Where is my God?" But fear not! The ship which bears your spiritual destiny is in better hands than yours; a golden chain of covenant love links it to the eternal throne! That chain can never snap asunder. He who holds it in His hand gives you this as the pledge of your safety--"Because I live, you shall live also." "Why are you then cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? hope in God!" You will assuredly ride out these stormy surges, and reach the desired haven. But be faithful with yourself: see that there be nothing to hinder or impede your growth in grace. Think how little may retard your progress. One sin indulged--one temptation tampered with--one bosom traitor, may cost you many a bitter hour and bitter tear, by separating between you and your God. Make it your daily prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

DYING GRACE

"I have the keys of hell and of death." --Revelation 1:18

And from whom could dying grace come so welcome, as from You, O blessed Jesus? Not only is Your name, "The Abolisher of Death;" but You Yourself have died! You have sanctified the grave by Your own presence, and divested it of all its terrors. My soul! are you at times afraid of this, your last enemy? If the rest of your pilgrimage-way be peaceful and unclouded, does there rest a dark and portentous shadow over the terminating portals? Fear not! When that dismal entrance is reached, He who has the keys of the grave and of death suspended at His golden belt, will impart grace to bear you through.

Death is but the messenger of peace. Your Savior calls you! The promptings of nature, when, at first, you see the darkening waves, may be that of the frightened disciples, when they said, "It is a ghost, and cried out for fear!" But a gentle voice will be heard high above the storm, "It is I! Do not be afraid!" Death, indeed, as the wages of sin, must, even by the believer, be regarded as an enemy. But, oh! blessed thought, it is your last enemy--the cause of your last tear. In a few brief moments after that tear is shed,

your God will be wiping every vestige of it away! "O Death! where is your sting? O Grave! where is your victory? Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Welcome, vanquished foe!--Birthday of heaven!--"To die is gain!"

AFTER GRACE, GLORY

"The Lord will give grace and glory." --Psalm 84:11

Oh! happy day, when this toilsome warfare will all be ended, Jordan crossed--Canaan entered--the multitude of enemies of the wilderness no longer dreaded--sorrow, sighing, death, and, worst of all, sin, no more either to be felt or feared! Here is the terminating link in the golden chain of the everlasting covenant. It began with predestination; it ends with glorification. It began with sovereign grace in eternity past, and no link will be lacking until the ransomed spirit is presented faultless before the throne! Grace and glory! If the pledge is sweet, what must be the reality? If the wilderness table contains such rich provision, what must be the glories of the eternal banqueting house? Oh! my soul, make sure of your saving interest in the one, as the blessed prelude to the other. "Having access by faith into this grace, you can rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" for "whom He justifies, them He also glorifies!"

Has grace begun in you? Can you mark--though it should be but the drops of the incipient streamlet which is to terminate in such an ocean--the tiny grains which are to accumulate and issue in such "an exceeding weight of glory?" Do not delay the momentous question! The day of offered grace is on the wing; its hours are fast numbering; and, "No grace, no glory!"

ANOTHER COMFORTER

"I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever."--John 14:16

Blessed Spirit of all grace! how often have I grieved You! resisted Your dealings, quenched Your strivings; and yet You are still pleading with me! Oh! let me realize more than I do the need of Your gracious influences. Ordinances, sermons, communions, providential dispensations, are nothing without Your life-giving power.

"It is the Spirit that quickens." "No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Church of the living God! is not this one cause of your deadness?--My soul! is not this the secret of your languishing frames, repeated declensions, uneven walk, and sudden falls--that the influences of the Holy Spirit are undervalued and unsought? Pray for the outpouring of this blessed Agent for the world's renovation, and your own. "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh," is the precursor of millennial bliss.

Jesus! draw near, in Your mercy, to this dull heart, as you did of old to Your mourning disciples, and breathe upon it, and say, "Receive the Holy Spirit." It is the mightiest of all blessings; but, like the sun in the heavens, it is the freest of all--"For if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit unto those who ask Him!"

PROVIDENTIAL OVERRULING

"All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." --Romans 8:28

My soul! be still! you are in the hands of your Covenant God. Were all the strange circumstances in your history the result of accident, or chance, you might well be overwhelmed. But "all things," and this thing (be what it may) which may be now disquieting you, is one of these "all things" that are so working mysteriously for your good. Trust your God! He will not deceive you--your interests are with Him in safe custody. When sight says, "All these things are against me," let faith rebuke the hasty conclusion, and say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" How often does God hedge up your way with thorns, to elicit simple trust! How seldom can we see all things so working for our good! But it is better discipline to believe it. Oh! for faith amid frowning providences, to say, "I know that your judgments are good;" and, relying in the dark, to exclaim, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him!"

Blessed Jesus! to You are committed the reins of this universal empire. The same hand that was once nailed to the cross, is now wielding the scepter on the throne--"all power in heaven and in earth is given unto you." How can I doubt the wisdom, and the faithfulness, and love, of the most mysterious earthly dealing, when I know that the Roll of Providence is thus in the hands of Him who has given the mightiest pledge Omnipotence could give of His tender interest in my soul's well-being, by giving Himself for me?

SAFE WALKING

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies."
--Psalm 25:10

The paths of the Lord! My soul! never follow your own paths. If you do, you will be in danger often of following sight rather than faith--choosing the evil, and refusing the good. But "commit your way unto the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass." Let this be your prayer, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths." Oh! for Caleb's spirit, "wholly to follow the Lord my God"--to follow Him when self must be sacrificed, and hardship must be borne, and trials await me. To "walk with God"--to ask in simple faith, "What would You have me to do?"--to have no will of my own, but this, that God's will is to be my will. Here is safety--here is happiness.

Fearlessly follow the Guiding Pillar. He will lead you by a right way, though it may be by a way of hardship, and crosses, and losses, and privations, to the city of God. Oh! the blessedness of thus lying passive in the hands of God, saying "Undertake for me God!"--dwelling with holy gratitude on past mercies and interpositions--these as pledges of future faithfulness and love--hearing His voice behind us, amid life's many perplexities, exclaiming, "This is the way, walk in it!" "Happy," surely, "are every people who are in such a case!" Happy, Reader! will it be for you, if you can form the resolve in a strength greater than you own: "This God shall be my God forever and ever; He shall be my Guide even unto death!"

LOVE IN CHASTISEMENT

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." --Revelation 3:19

Sorrowing Believer! what could you wish more than this? Your furnace is severe; but look at this assurance of Him who lit it. Love is the fuel that feeds its flames! Its every spark is love! Kindled by a Father's hand, and designed as a special pledge of a Father's love. How many of His dear children has He so rebuked and chastened; and all, all for one reason, "I love them!" The myriads in glory have passed through these furnace-fires--there they were chosen--there they were purified, sanctified, and made "vessels fit for the Master's use;" the dross and the alloy purged, that the pure metal might remain.

And are you to claim exemption from the same discipline? Are you to think it strange concerning these same fiery trials that may be purifying you? Rather exult in them as your adoption-privilege. Envy not those who are strangers to the refining flames--who are "without chastisement." You should surely rather have the severest discipline with a Father's love, than the fullest earthly cup without that Father's smile. Oh! for grace to say, when the furnace is hottest, and the rod sorest, "Even so, Father!" And what, after all, is the severest of your chastisements in comparison with what your sins have deserved? Do you murmur under a Father's correcting love? What would it have been to have stood the wrath of an unpropitiated Judge, and that, too, forever? Surely, in the light of eternity, the heaviest pang of earth is indeed "a light affliction!"

A CONDITION IN CHASTISEMENT

"If need be."--1 Peter 1:6

Three gracious words! Not one of all my tears has been shed for nothing! Not one stroke of the rod has been unneeded, or that might have been spared! Your heavenly Father loves you too much, and too tenderly, to bestow harsher correction than your case requires! Is it loss of health, or loss of wealth, or loss of beloved friends? Be still! there was a needs be. We are no judges of what that "needs be" is; often through aching hearts we are forced to exclaim, "Your judgments are a great deep!" But God here pledges Himself, that there will not be one unnecessary thorn in the believer's crown of suffering. No burden too heavy will be laid on him; and no sacrifice too great exacted from him. He will "temper the wind to the shorn lamb." Whenever the "need be" has accomplished its end, then the rod is removed--the chastisement suspended--the furnace quenched.

"If need be!" Oh! what a pillow on which to rest your aching head--that there is not a drop in all your bitter cup but what a God of love saw to be absolutely necessary! Will you not trust His heart, even though you cannot trace the mystery of His dealings? Not too curiously prying into the "Why it is?" or "How it is?" but satisfied that "So it is," and, therefore, that all must be well! "Although you say you cannot see Him, yet judgment is before Him, therefore trust in Him!"

STRENGTH IN THE WEAK

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." --Matthew 12:20

Will Jesus accept such a heart as mine?--this erring, treacherous, traitor heart? The past!--how many forgotten vows--broken covenants--prayerless days! How often have I made new resolutions, and as often has the reed succumbed to the first blast of temptation, and the burning flax been well-near quenched by guilty omissions and guiltier commissions! Oh! my soul! you are low indeed--the things that remain seem "ready to die." But your Savior-God will not give you "over unto death." The reed is bruised; but He will not pluck it up by the roots. The flax is reduced to a smoking ember, but He will fan the decaying flame. Why wound your loving Savior's heart by these repeated declensions? He will not--cannot give you up. Go, mourn your weakness and unbelief. Cry unto the Strong for strength.

Weary and faint one! You have an Omnipotent arm to lean on. "He faints not, neither is weary!" Listen to His own gracious assurance: "Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you with the right hand of my righteousness!" Leaving all your false props and refuges, let this be your resolve--"I trust in the Lord for protection!"

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE DESPONDING

"Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." --John 6:37

Cast out! My soul! how often might this have been your history! You have cast off your God--might He not often have cast you out? Yes! cast you out as fuel for the fire of His wrath--a sapless, fruitless cumberer. And yet, notwithstanding all your ungrateful requital for His unmerited forbearance, He is still declaring, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." Your sins may be legion--the sand of the sea may be their befitting type--the thought of their vileness and aggravation may be ready to overwhelm you; but be still! your patient God waits to be gracious! Oh! be deeply humbled and softened because of your guilt, and resolve to dedicate yourself anew to His service, and so coming, "He will by no means cast you out!" Despond not by reason of former shortcomings--your sins are great, but your Savior's merits are greater. He is willing to forget all the past, and sink it in oblivion, if there be present love, and the promise of future obedience. "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Ah! how different is God's verdict from man's! After such sins as yours, man's sentence would have been, "I will in nowise receive!" But "it is better to fall into the hands of God, than into the hands of man;" for He says, "I will in nowise cast out!"

PEACE IN BELIEVING

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives." --John 14:27

"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You." "Perfect peace!"--what a blessed attainment! My soul! is it yours? I am sure it is not, if you are seeking it in a perishable world, or in the perishable creature, or in your perishable self. Although you have all that the world would call enviable and happy, unless you have peace in God, and with God, all else is unworthy of the name--a spurious thing, which the first breath of adversity will shatter, and the hour of death utterly annihilate! Perfect peace! What is it? It is the peace of forgiveness. It is the peace arising out of a sense of God reconciled through the blood of the everlasting covenant--resting sweetly on the bosom, and the work of Jesus--to Him committing your eternal all.

My soul! stay yourself on God, so that this blessed peace may be yours. You have tried the world. It has deceived you. Prop after prop of earthly scaffolding has yielded, and tottered, and fallen. Has your God ever done so? Ah! this false and counterfeit world-peace may do well for the world's work, and the world's day of prosperity. But test it in the hour of sorrow; and what can it do for you when it is most needed? On the other hand, what though you have no other blessing on earth to call your own? You are rich indeed, if you can look upwards to Heaven, and say with an unpretentious smile, "I am at peace with God."

BLISS IN DYING

"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." --Revelation 14:13

My Soul! is this blessedness yours in prospect? Are you ready, if called this night to lie down on your death-pillow, sweetly to fall asleep in Jesus? What is the sting of death?--It is sin. Is death, then, to you, robbed of its sting, by having listened to the gracious accents of pardoning love, "Be of good cheer, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven?" If you have made your peace with God, resting on the work and atoning blood of His dear Son, then is the Last Enemy divested of all his terror, and you can say, in sweet composure, of your dying couch and dying hour--"I will both lay down in peace and sleep, because You,

Lord, make me to dwell in safety!" Reader! ponder that solemn question, "Am I ready to die? Am I living as I should wish I had done when that last hour arrives?"

And when shall it arrive? Tomorrow is not yours. "Truly, there may be but a step between you and death." Oh! solve the question speedily--risk no doubts and no peradventure. Every day is proclaiming anew the lesson, "The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." Seek to live, so that that hour cannot come upon you too soon, or too unexpectedly. Live a dying life! How blessed to live--how blessed to die, with the consciousness, that there may be but a step between you and glory!

A DUE REAPING

"In due season you shall reap, if you faint not." --Galatians 6:9

Believer! all the glory of your salvation belongs to Jesus--none to yourself; every jewel in your eternal crown is His-- purchased by His blood, and polished by His Spirit. The confession of time will be the ascription of all eternity: "By the grace of God I am what I am!" But though "all be of grace," your God calls you to personal strenuousness in the work of your high calling--to "labor," to "fight," to "wrestle," to "agonize;" and the heavenly reaping will be in proportion to the earthly sowing: "He that sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and He that sows bountifully, shall reap also bountifully!" What an incentive to holy living, and increased spiritual attainments!

My soul! would you be a star shining high and bright in the firmament of glory?--would you receive the ten-talent recompense? Then be not weary. Put on your armor for fresh conquests. Be gaining daily some new victory over sin. Deny yourself. Be a willing cross-bearer for your Lord's sake. Do good to all men as you have opportunity; be patient under provocation, "slow to wrath," resigned in trial. Let the world take knowledge of you that you are wearing Christ's uniform, and bearing Christ's spirit, and sharing Christ's cross. And when the reaping time comes, He who has promised that the cup of cold water cannot go unrecompensed, will not allow you to lose your reward!

AN END OF WEEPING

"The days of your mourning shall be ended." --Isaiah 60:20

Christ's people are a weeping band, though there be much in this lovely world to make them joyous and happy. Yet when they think of sin--their own sin, and the unblushing sins of a world in which their God is dishonored--need we wonder at their tears?--that they should be called "Mourners," and their pilgrimage home a "Valley of Tears?" Bereavement, and sickness, and poverty and death following the track of sin, add to their mourning experience; and with many of God's best beloved, one tear is scarce dried when another is ready to flow!

Mourners! rejoice! When the reaping time comes, the weeping time ends! When the white robe and the golden harp are bestowed, every remnant of the sackcloth attire is removed. The moment the pilgrim, whose forehead is here furrowed with woe, bathes it in the crystal river of life--that moment the pangs of a lifetime of sorrow are eternally forgotten! Reader! if you are one of these careworn ones, the days of your mourning are numbered! A few more throbbings of this aching heart, and then the angel who proclaims "time," shall proclaim also, sorrow, and sighing, and mourning, to "be no longer!" Seek now to mourn your sins more than your sorrows; reserve your bitterest tears for forgetfulness of your dear Lord. The saddest and sorest of all bereavements, is when the sins which have separated you from Him, evoke the

anguish-cry, "Where is my God?"

A SPEEDY COMING

"Behold, I come quickly." --Revelation 3:11

"Even so! come, Lord Jesus!" "Why do the wheels of Your chariot tarry?" Six thousand years this world has rolled on, getting timeworn with age, and wrinkled with sins and sorrows. A waiting Church sees the long-drawn shadows of twilight announcing, "The Lord is at hand." Prepare, my soul, to meet Him. Oh! happy days, when your adorable Redeemer, so long dishonored and despised, shall be publicly enthroned in the presence of an assembled universe, crowned Lord of All, glorified in His saints, satisfied in the fruits of His soul's travail, destroying His enemies with the brightness of His coming--the lightning-glance of wrath--causing the hearts of His exulting people to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Prepare, my soul, to meet Him!

Let it be a joyous thought to you--your "blessed hope"--the meeting of your Elder Brother. Stand oftentimes on the watchtower to catch the first streak of that coming brightness, the first murmur of these chariot wheels. The world is now in preparation! It is rocking on its worn-out axle. There are voices on every side proclaiming "He comes! He comes to judge the earth!" Reader! are you among the number of those who "love His appearing?" Remember the attitude of His expectant saints: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, will find WATCHING!"

EVENING LIGHT

"At evening time it shall be light." --Zechariah 14:7

How inspiring the thought of coming glory! How would we rise above our sins, and sorrows, and sufferings, if we could live under the power of "a world to come!" Were faith to take at all times its giant leap beyond a soul-trammeling earth, and remember its brighter destiny. If it could stand on its Pisgah Mount, and look above and beyond the mists and vapors of this land of shadows, and rest on the "better country." But, alas! in spite of ourselves, the wings often refuse to soar--the spirit droops--guilty fears depress--sin dims and darkens--God's providences seem to frown--God's ways are misinterpreted--the Christian belies his name and his destiny.

But, "At evening time it shall be light"--The material sun, which wades through clouds and a troubled sky, sets often in a couch of lustrous gold! So, when the sun of life is setting, many a ray of light will shoot across memory's darkened sky, and many mysterious dealings of the wilderness will then elicit an "All is well!" How frequently is the presence and upholding grace of Jesus especially felt and acknowledged at that hour, and griefs and misgivings hushed with His own gentle accents, "Fear not! it is I; do not be afraid." A triumphant death-bed! It is no unmeaning word; the eye is lit with holy luster, the tongue with holy rapture, as if the harps of heaven were stealing on it. My soul! may such a life's evening time be yours!

HEAVENLY ILLUMINATION

"What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter." --John 13:7

As the natural sun sometimes sinks in clouds, so, occasionally, the Christian who has a bright rising, and a brighter meridian, sets in gloom. It is not always "light" at his evening time; but this we know, that when the

day of immortality breaks, the last vestige of earth's shadows will forever flee away. To the closing hour of time, Providence may be to him a baffling enigma; but before the first hour has struck on heaven's chronometer, all will be clear. My soul! "in God's light you shall see light;" the Book of His decrees is a sealed book now--"A great deep" is all the explanation you can often give to His judgments; the why and the wherefore He seems keep from us, to test our faith, to discipline us in trustful submission, and lead us to say, "Your will be done!"

But rejoice in that hereafter--light which awaits you! Now we see through a glass darkly; but then, face to face. In the great mirror of eternity all the events of this chequered scene will be reflected; the darkest of them will be seen to be bright with mercy--the severest dispensations, "only the severer aspects of His love!" Pry not, then, too curiously; pronounce not too censoriously on God's dealings with you. Wait with patience until the grand day of disclosures; one confession shall then burst from every tongue, "Righteous are You, O Lord!"

A GLORIOUS REUNION

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also." --John 14:3

If the meeting of a long absent friend, or brother, on earth, be a joyous event, what, my soul, must be the joy of your union with this Brother of brothers, this Friend of friends! "I will come again!" Oh! what an errand of love, what a promised honor and dignity is this!--His saints to share, not His Heaven only, but His immediate presence. "Where I am, there you shall be also!" Father, I will (It was His dying wish--a wondrous addition in that testamentary prayer) that those whom You have given me be with me where I am." Happy reunion! Blessed Savior, if Your presence be so sweet on a sin-stricken earth, and when known only by the invisible eye of faith, what must be that presence in a sinless Heaven, unfolded in all its unutterable loveliness and glory!

Happy reunion! it will be a meeting of the whole ransomed family--the Head with all its members--the Vine with all its branches--the Shepherd with all His flock--the Elder Brother with all His kinsmen. Oh, the joy, too, of mutual recognition among the death-divided--ties snapped asunder on earth, indissolubly renewed--severed friendships reunited--the triumph of love complete--love binding brother with brother, and friend with friend, and all to the Elder Brother! My soul! what do you think of this Heaven? Remember who it is that Jesus says shall sit with Him upon His throne--"He who overcomes."

EVERLASTING ESPOUSALS

"And I will betroth you unto Me forever." --Hosea 2:19

How wondrous and varied are the figures which Jesus employs to express the tenderness of His covenant love! My soul! your Savior-God has "married you!" Would you know the time of your betrothal? Go back into the depths of a bypast eternity, before the world was; then and there, your espousals were contracted: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Soon shall the bridal-hour arrive, when your absent Lord shall come to welcome His betrothed bride into His royal palace. "The Bridegroom tarries;" but see that you do not slumber and sleep! Surely there is much all around demanding the girded loins and the burning lamps. At "midnight!" (the hour when He is least expected) the cry may be--shall be heard--"Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" My soul! has this mystic union been formed between you and your Lord? Can you say, in humble assurance of your faith in Him, "My beloved is mine, and I am His!" If so, great, unspeakably great, are the glories which await you! Your dowry, as the bride of Christ, is all that

Omnipotence can bestow, and all that a feeble creature can receive. In the prospect of those glorious nuptials, you need dread no pang of widowhood. What God has joined together, no created power can take asunder; He betroths you, and it is--"forever!"

A JOYFUL RESURRECTION

"This corruptible must put on incorruption." --1 Corinthians 15:53

Marvel of marvels! The sleeping ashes of the sepulcher springing up at the tones of the archangel's trumpet!--the dishonored dust rising into a glorified body, like its risen Lord's! At death, the soul's bliss is perfect in kind; but this bliss is not complete in degree, until reunited to the tabernacle it has left behind to mingle with the sods of the valley. But tread lightly on that grave, it contains precious, because ransomed dust! My body, as well as my spirit, was included in the redemption price of Calvary; and "those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Oh! blessed Jubilee-day of creation, when Christ's "dead men shall arise"--when, together with His dead body, they shall come; and the summons shall sound forth, "Awake, and sing, you who dwell in the dust!"

All the joys of that resurrection morn we cannot tell; but its chief glory we do know--"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Like Him!--My soul, are you waiting for this manifestation of the sons of God? Like Him!--Have you caught up any faint resemblance to that all-glorious image? Having this hope in you, are you purifying yourself, even as He is pure? Be much with Jesus now, that you may exult in meeting Him hereafter. Thus taking Him as your Guide and Portion in life, you may lay down in your dark and loathsome grave, and look forward with triumphant hope to the dawn of a resurrection morn, saying, "What time I awake, I am still with You!"

A NIGHTLESS HEAVEN

"There shall be no night there." --Revelation 21:25

My soul! is it night with you here? Are you wearied with these midnight tossings on life's tumultuous sea? Be still! the day is breaking! soon shall your Lord appear. "His going forth is prepared as the morning." That glorious appearing shall disperse every cloud, and usher in an eternal noontide which knows no twilight. "The sun will never set; the moon will not go down. For the Lord will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end." Everlasting light! Wondrous secret of a nightless world!--the glories of a present God!--the everlasting light of the Three in One, quenching the radiance of all created orbs--superseding all material luminaries. "My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning!" The haven is nearing--star after star is quenched in more glorious effulgence--every bound over these dark waves is bringing you nearer the eternal shore. Will you not, then, humbly and patiently endure "weeping for the night," in the prospect of the "joy that comes in the morning?" Strange realities! a world without night--a heaven without a sun; and, greater wonder still, yourself in this world--a joyful citizen of this nightless, sinless, sorrowless, tearless Heaven!--basking underneath the Fountain of uncreated light! No exhaustion of glorified body and spirit to require repose; no lassitude or weariness to suspend the ever-deepening song--"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty--the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."

A CROWN OF LIFE

"And when the Chief Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in His glory and honor." 1 Peter 5:4

What! is the beggar to be "raised from the ash-heap, set among Princes, and made to inherit a throne of glory?" Is dust and ashes, a puny rebel, a guilty traitor--to be pitied, pardoned, loved, exalted from the depths of despair, raised to the heights of Heaven--gifted with kingly honor--royally fed--royally clothed--royally attended--and, at last, royally crowned? O my soul, look forward with joyous emotion to that day of wonders, when He whose head shall be crowned with many crowns, shall be the dispenser of royal diadems to His people; and when they shall begin the joyful ascription of all eternity, "Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us Kings--to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Will you not be among the number? Shall the princes and monarchs of the earth wade through seas of blood for a corruptible crown; and will you permit yourself to lose the incorruptible diadem, or barter it for some perishable nothings of earth? Oh! that you would awake to your high destiny, and live up to your transcendent privileges as the citizen of a Kingly Commonwealth, a member of the blood-royal family of Heaven. What would you not sacrifice--what effort would you grudge, if you were included at last in the gracious benediction, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?"

THE VISION AND FRUITION OF GOD

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making all things new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:3-5

Glorious consummation! All the other glories of Heaven are but emanations from this glory that excels. Here is the focus and center to which every ray of light converges. God is "all in all." Heaven without God!--it would send a thrill of dismay through the burning ranks of angels and archangels; it would dim every eye, and hush every harp, and change the whitest robe into sackcloth. And shall I then, indeed, "see God?" What! shall I gaze on these inscrutable glories, and live? Yes, God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; they shall "see His face!" And not only the vision, but the fruition. Oh! how does sin in my holiest moments damp the enjoyment of Him! It is the "pure in heart" alone who can "see," far more--who can "enjoy" God. Even if He did reveal Himself now, these eyes could never endure His intolerable brightness.

But then, with a heart purified from corruption--a world where the taint of sin and the power of temptation never enters--the soul again a bright mirror, reflecting the lost image of the Godhead--all the affections devoted to their original high destiny--the love of God the motive principle, the ruling passion--the glory of God the undivided object and aim--the will no opposing or antagonist bias--man will, for the first time, know all the blessedness of his chief end--"to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever!"

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