

The Night Watches (31 Day Devotional)

by John MacDuff

The sermon emphasizes the importance of contemplating the glory of God, trusting in His immutability and omnipotence, and seeking to live a life of holiness in the midst of trials and uncertainty.

Scripture: Psalm 130:6

Topics: "Gods Attributes", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

John MacDuff preaches about the various attributes of God, emphasizing His glory, immutability, omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, holiness, justice, love, grace, tenderness, patience, sovereignty, providence, Spirit, promises, warnings, and chastisements. He highlights the importance of surrendering to God's will, trusting in His faithfulness, seeking His presence through ordinances, relying on His Spirit, clinging to His promises, heeding His warnings, and accepting His chastisements as acts of love and discipline.

Transcript

THE NIGHT WATCHES

by John MacDuff

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." Psalm 63:6

"I long for the Lord more than watchmen long for the dawn, yes, more than watchmen long for the dawn." Psalm 130:6

"Through each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life." Psalm 42:8

1. THE GLORY OF GOD

"Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." Psalm 90:2

O My Soul! Seek to fill yourself with thoughts of the Almighty. Lose yourself in the impenetrable tracts of His Glory! "Can you by searching find out God?" Can the animalcule fathom the ocean, or the worm scale the skies? Can the finite grasp the Infinite- the mortal Immortality? We can do no more than stand on the

brink of the shoreless sea, and cry, "Oh the depth!" "From everlasting!"- shrouded in the great and awful mystery of eternity. Before one star revolved in its sphere- before one angel moved his wing- God was! His own infinite presence filling all space. All time, to Him, is but as the heaving of a breath- the beat of a pulse- the twinkling of an eye.

The Eternity of bliss, which is the noblest heritage of the creature, is in its nature progressive. It admits of advance in degrees of happiness and glory. Not so the Eternity of the Great Creator; He was as perfect before the birth of time, as He will be when "time shall be no longer;"- as infinitely glorious when He inhabited alone the solitudes of immensity, as He is now with the songs of angel and archangel sounding in His ear! But "who can show forth all His praise?" We can at best but lisp the alphabet of His glory. Moses, who saw more of God than most, makes it still his prayer, "I beseech you, show me Your glory." Paul, who knew more of God than other men, prays still, "that I may know Him." "Our safest eloquence," says Hooker, "concerning Him, is our silence, when we confess without confession, that His glory is inexplicable."

And is this the Being to whom I can look up with sweetest confidence, and call "My Father"? Is it this Infinite One, whom "the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain," I can call "My God"? Believer, contemplate the medium through which it is you can see the glory of God, and yet live. "No man has seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." He, who dwells in light inaccessible, comes forth from the pavilion of His glory in the person of "Immanuel, God with us." In Christ, "the Image of the invisible God," the creature- yes, sinners- can gaze unconsumed on the lusters of Deity! Be it yours to glorify Him. Seek thus to fulfill the great design of your being. Let all your words and ways, your actions and purposes, your crosses and losses, redound to His praise. The highest seraph can have no higher or nobler end than this- the glory of the God before whom he cast his crown.

But he has a claim on you, which He has not on the unredeemed angel. "He gave Himself for you!" This mightiest of all boons which Omnipotence could give, is the guarantee for the bestowment of all lesser necessary blessings, and for the withholding of all unnecessary trials. While you are called to behold "His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father," remember its characteristic; it is not a glory to appall you by its splendors, but to win and captivate you by its beauties- it is "full of grace and truth." He is your God in covenant. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." You may compose yourself on your nightly pillow, with the sweet pledge of security, and say, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

2. THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

"You are the same." - Psalm 102:27

What a fountain of comfort is to be found in the Immutability of God! Not one ripple can disturb the calm of His unchanging nature. Were it so, He would no longer be a perfect Being- He would undeify Himself- He would cease to be God! "Change is our portion here." "They shall perish," is the brief chronicle regarding everything on this side heaven. The firmament above us, the earth beneath us, the elements around us- "all these things shall be dissolved." Scenes of hallowed endearment- they have fled! Friends who sweetened our pilgrimage with their presence- they are gone! But here is a sure and safe anchorage amid the world's heaving ocean of vicissitude- "You are the same." All is changing but the Unchanging One. The earthly scaffolding may give way, but the living Temple remains. The reed may bend to the blast, but

the living Rock spurns and outlives the storm!

How blessed, especially, to contemplate the unchangeableness of our Great High Priest, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" True, He is, in one sense, "changed." No longer the Man of sorrows- the homeless wanderer. He is enthroned amid the glories of heaven. Seraphs praise Him- Saints adore Him. But His Heart knows no change. His ascension glories have not obliterated His tender human sympathies. We can think of Him receiving an outcast sinner, or stilling the storm, or standing at the gate of Nain, or weeping tears of pity over a lost city, or tears of sympathy over a buried friend, and write over all these, "You are the same!" The name which He bequeathed by angels to His Church until He comes again is- "that same Jesus!" His own Patmos title is His memorial for all time- "I AM He that lives!" Believer! has He ever seemed to change towards you? Are you even now mourning over the withdrawal of that countenance whose smile is heaven? Are you saying in the bitterness of your spirit, "Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?" The change is with yourself, not with your God. Behind the clouds of your own departure, the Sun of His love shines brightly as ever. "He faints not, neither is weary."

Or, it may be, you are laboring under other trials. The hand of your God may be heavy upon you. The secret thought may be harbored that some tear might have been spared; that your chastisement might have been less severe- that your bereavement, with its dark accompaniment, might have been mitigated or averted. Look upwards and take the Psalmist's antidote as your own, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Think that the same Hand which was for you nailed to the Cross, is now pleading for you on the Throne; ordering and controlling every trial; and over every dark providence writing the unanswerable challenge, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Oh! thus pillowing your head on the Immutability of Jesus, amid the rude buffetings of a changing world, you will be able, night after night, to say, until the dawn of a morning breaks on you, which knows neither night nor vicissitude, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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3. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

"The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" Rev. 19:16

Believer! what can better support and sustain you amid the trials of your pilgrimage, than the thought that you have an Omnipotent arm to lean upon? The God with whom you have to do, is boundless in His resources. There is no crossing His designs- no thwarting His purposes- no questioning His counsels. His mandate is law; "He speaks, and it is done!" Your need is great. From the humblest crumb of providential goodness, up to the richest blessing of Divine grace, you are hanging from moment to moment a pensioner on Jehovah's bounty! But, fear not! "I am the Almighty God!" Finite necessities can never exhaust infinite fullness. "My God shall supply all your needs!"

To You, O blessed Jesus! all power has been committed in heaven and in earth. "all power!" He has in His hands the reigns of universal empire! To "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" has been entrusted the seven-sealed roll of Providence. Whatever be the boon which the poorest, weakest, loneliest, most afflicted of His saints require, if it be really for their good, the "Wonderful Counselor" secures it. "As a Prince, He has power with God," and must "prevail." He combines in His adorable Person all which a

sinner requires. A heart tender enough to love; and a hand strong enough to save. The Elder Brother! the "Mighty God!" How He delights in the exercise of that omnipotence in behalf of His own people- in ruling over their interests, and overruling their trials for their interests! When He prays for Himself, it is "Not my will." When he prays for them, it is, "Father, I will!" May I not well take the motto which He still bears on His breastplate before the Throne, as the ground of support and encouragement in all time of tribulation- "able to save unto the uttermost"?

My enemies are many- their name is Legion. Satan, the great Adversary; the world, and the world's trinity- "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"; heart traitors; bosom sins. But He that is for me, is greater far than all that can be against me. He is "stronger" than the "strong man." "Christ the Power of God." "I, who speak in righteousness, am mighty to save!" Believer, are you in trial, beaten down with a great fight of afflictions- like the disciples, out in a midnight of storm, buffeting a sea of trouble? Fear not! When the tempest has done its work, when the trial has fulfilled its embassy, the voice which hushed the waters of old, has only to give forth the omnipotent mandate, "Peace, be still!" and immediately there will be a great calm. The "all power" of Jesus!- what a pillow on which to rest my aching head; disarming all my fears, and inducing thoughts of sweetest comfort, consolation, and joy! "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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4. THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" Psalm 139:7

The omnipresence of God! How baffling to any finite comprehension! To think that above us, and around us, and within us, there is nothing but Deity- the invisible footprints of an Omniscient, Omnipresent One! "His eyes are in every place;" on rolling planets and tiny atoms, on the bright seraph and the lowly worm- roaming in searching scrutiny through the tracks of immensity, and reading the dark and hidden page of my heart! "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

God, I feel Your presence near,

Everywhere over nature's face;

Wherever I turn my eye,

Your living footsteps trace!

Nothing can sever me from Thee-

Everywhere You are with me!"

O God! shall this Your Omnipresence appall me? No, in my seasons of sadness and sorrow and loneliness- when other comforts and comforters have failed- when, it may be, in the darkness and silence of some midnight hour, in vain I have sought repose- how sweet to think, "My God is here!" I am not alone. The Omniscient One, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike, is hovering over my sleepless pillow. "He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!" O my Unsetting Sun, it cannot be darkness or loneliness or sadness where You are. There can be no night to the soul which has been cheered with Your glorious radiance!

"Lo! I am with you always!" How precious, blessed Jesus, is this Your legacy of parting love! In the midst of Your Church until the end of time- ever present, omnipresent. The true "Pillar of cloud" by day and of "fire by night," preceding and encamping by us in every step of our wilderness journey. My soul! think of Him, at this moment, in the mysteriousness of His Godhead nature- and yet, with all the exquisitely tender sympathies of a glorified Humanity, as present with every member of the family He has redeemed with His blood! Yes, and as much present with every individual soul, as if He had none other to care for, but as if that one engrossed all His affection and love!

The Great Builder, surveying every stone and pillar of His spiritual temple- the Great Shepherd, with His eye on every sheep of His fold- the Great High Priest and Elder Brother, marking every tear-drop; noting every sorrow- listening to every prayer- knowing the peculiarities of every case; no number perplexing Him- no variety bewildering Him; able to attend to all, and overtake all, and answer all- myriads drawing hourly from His Treasury, and yet no diminution of that Treasury- ever emptying, and yet ever filling, and always full!

Jesus! Your perpetual and all-pervading presence turns darkness into day! I am not left unbefriended to weather the storms of life, if Your hand be from hour to hour piloting my frail bark. Gracious antidote to every earthly sorrow- "I have set the Lord always before me!" Even now, as night is drawing its curtains around me, be this my closing prayer- 'Blessed Savior! abide with me, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!' Under the shadowing wings of Your presence and love, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

5. THE WISDOM OF GOD

"His understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5

How baffling often are God's dispensations! The more we attempt to fathom their mystery, the more are we driven to rest in the best earthly solution- "Your judgments are a great deep!" But where sense says, "All these things are against me," faith has a different verdict- "All things are working together for good." This is the province of faith, confidently to lean on the arm of God, and to say, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways." We speak of God "foreseeing." There is no such thing. The past, present, and future are with Him all alike. He sees the end from the beginning. We can discern but a short way, and that short way through a false and distorted medium. In a piece of earthly mechanism we seldom can discover beauty in the incompleting structure. The mightiest works of science, while in progress, are often a chaos of confusion. It is only when finished, we can admire the relation and adjustment of every part to the whole. So also with the mechanism of God's moral administration. At present, how much mystery! But, when in the light of eternity we come to contemplate the completion of the mighty plan, how shall we be brought to own and exclaim, "The works of the Lord are right."

'But patience! there may come a time,

When these dull ears shall scan aright

Strains that out-ring earth's drowsy chime,

As Heaven outshines the taper's light!

Believer, are the dealings of your God at present wearing a mysterious aspect to you? Are you about to enter some dark cloud, exclaiming, "Verily You are a God that hides Yourself"? Do you "fear to enter the cloud"? Take courage! It will be with you, as with the disciples on their Mount of Transfiguration; unexpected glimpses of heavenly glory- unlooked-for tokens of the Savior's presence and love await you! If your Lord leads you into the cloud, follow Him. If He "constrains you to get into the ship," obey Him. The cloud will burst in blessings. The ship will conduct you (it may be over a stormy sea) to a quiet haven at last. It is only the surface of the ocean that is rough. All beneath is a deep calm, and in every threatening wave there is a "needs-be!"

Oh! trust Him, who is emphatically "The Wisdom of God." He is your Counselor- combining the infinite knowledge of God with the experience and sympathy of man. He thus, pre-eminently, 'knows His client's case.' He is pledged to use the discipline most wisely suited for each.

"O You whose wisdom guides my way.

Though now it seem severe.

Forbid my unbelief to say,

'There is no wisdom here.'

Lord, If You bend my spirit low,

Love only I shall see

The very hand that strikes the blow

Was wounded once for me."

Under the blessed persuasion, that a day of disclosures is at hand, when, "in Your light, I shall see light," I will trust the wisdom I cannot trace; and repeat, each night, as the shadows of evening gather around me, until the nights of earth's ignorance vanish before, the breaking of an eternal day- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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6. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

"You only are holy." Rev. 15:4

What a sublime perfection is this! It would seem to form the loftiest theme for the adorations of saints and angels. They cease not day nor night to cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" It evokes from the Church on earth her loudest strains- "Let them praise His great and terrible name, for it is Holy!"

Holy, Holy, Holy Three!

One Jehovah evermore!

Father! Son! and Spirit! we,

Dust and ashes, would adore

Lightly by the world esteemed,
From that world by You redeemed,
Sing we here with glad accord.
Holy! Holy! Holy Lord!"

Reader, seek, in some feeble measure, to apprehend the nature of God's unswerving hatred at sin! It is the deep, deliberate, innate opposition of His nature to moral evil, which requires Him to hate it, and visit it with impartial punishment. It is not so much a matter of will as of necessity.

But what pleasure can there be in meditating on so awful a theme? The contemplation of a God "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"- in whose sight "the heavens are not clean!" Jesus! Your glorious atonement is the mirror in which we can gaze unappalled on this august attribute. Your cross is, to the wide universe, a perpetual monument and memorial of the Holiness of God. It proclaims, as nothing else could, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness!" Through that cross the Holiest of all Beings becomes the most gracious of all. "Now, we can love Him," says a saint who has entered on his rest, "not only although He is holy, but because He is holy."

Gaze, and gaze again on that monumental column, until it teaches the lesson, how vain elsewhere to look for pardon; how delusive that dream; on which multitudes peril their eternal safety, that God will be at last too merciful to punish! Surely, if any less awful vindication could have sufficed- or had it been compatible with the rectitude of the Divine nature, and the requirements of the Divine law, to dispense pardon in any other way, Gethsemane and Calvary, with all their awful exponents of agony, would have been spared. The Almighty victim would not have voluntarily submitted to a life of ignominy and a death of woe, if, by any simpler method, He could have "cleared the guilty." But this was impossible. If He was to "save others," Himself he could not save!

Believer, seek that some faint and feeble emanations from this Divine attribute of Holiness may be yours. Let "Holiness to the Lord" be the superscription on your heart and life. Abounding grace can give no sanction or encouragement to abound in sin. 'His mercy,' says Reynolds, 'is a holy mercy which knows how to pardon sin, not to protect it; it is a sanctuary for the penitent, not for the presumptuous.'

Or, are you tempted to murmur under the dealings of your God? What are the sorest of your trials in comparison with what they might have been, had this Holy God left you to know, in all the sternness of its meaning, how "Glorious He is in Holiness?" Rather marvel, considering your sins, that your trial has been so small- your cross so light. Blessed Jesus! into this sanctuary of "holy mercy" which you have opened for me, I will flee. I can now "give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness." Deriving, even from this august attribute, one of the 'songs in the night'- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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7. THE JUSTICE OF GOD

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your throne." Psalm 89:14

The Justice of God is "His Holiness in exercise." Let us repair to the spot marked out as the scene of its most awful manifestation. In the depths of eternity past, the summons was heard, "Awake, O Sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man who is my Fellow!" That mysterious commission has been fulfilled. The Shepherd has been smitten. Myriads of condemned spirits could not have borne to God's inexorable rectitude so awful a testimony, as when, on the cross of Calvary, One lone voice sent up the wailing cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

Believer, rejoice! Justice, which before had demanded the execution of a righteous doom upon millions lost, can now unite with Mercy in sheathing the avenging sword and exulting over myriads redeemed. The Law which brought in a whole world "guilty before God," can exult with Mercy in seeing its every requirement obeyed, its every demand fulfilled; the Lawgiver Himself become "the Just and yet the Justifier;" unloosing every chain of condemnation, and pronouncing "Not guilty!" "O Law!" says Luther, "I drown my conscience in the wounds, blood, death, resurrection, and victory of Christ."

Wondrous thought!- Justice, the very attribute which excluded the sinner, has become the first to throw open a door of welcome; proclaiming that infinite merit has cancelled infinite demerit- infinite holiness has covered infinite sin! While "justice and judgment" are the habitation of God's throne, provision has been made whereby, in perfect consistency with every principle of His moral government, "mercy and truth" may go continually before His face!

Reader, it is well for you often and devoutly thus to dwell on the inflexible Justice of your God. It will magnify and enhance to you, the riches of His grace, the glories of redemption, the preciousness of Jesus. If the sinner is to be saved, "judgment must be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet!" "The Sinless One must be condemned," says Lefevre, "if he that is guilty is to go free. The Blessed One must bear the curse, if the cursed ones are to be brought into blessing. The Life must die, if the dead are to live!" "In prayer one evening," says Henry Martyn, "I had such near and terrific views of God's judgment upon sinners in hell, that my flesh trembled for fear of them. I flew trembling to Jesus Christ, as if the flames were taking hold of me. Oh! Christ will indeed save me, or else I perish!"

My soul! take hold of that touchingly simple assurance to which Justice has appended its seal, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish!" "Not perish!" and Justice, and a God of justice, proclaiming so great salvation- safety from the terrors of a violated law- rest from the accusations of a guilty conscience- calmness in the prospect of death- Grace here! Glory hereafter! Oh, what more can the sinner need, or the sinner's God bestow! "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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8. THE LOVE OF GOD

"God is love." 1 John 4:16

"The only real mystery of the Bible," says an old writer, "is a mystery of Love." "God so loved the world that He gave His only- begotten Son." What! that for a lost and ruined world, the Prince of Life should leave His Throne of glory, travel down to a valley of tears, and expire by an ignominious death on the bitter tree! Love unutterable! unspeakable! The reflection of the skeptic of a by-gone age, may have formed at times the musing of better minds, "This is far too great- it is far too good to be true." Infinite majesty compassionating infinite weakness! The great Sun of heaven, the Fountain of uncreated light, undergoing

an eclipse of darkness and blood for the sake of a candle that glimmered in nothingness in comparison with His beams.

"God so loved the world." Man never can get farther in the solution of the wondrous problem. Eternity itself will form a ladder- the saints climbing step by step its ascending glories- but, as the prospect widens, each new altitude will elicit the same confession, "the love of Christ, which passes knowledge."

My soul! seek to enter into the secrets of this Love of your adorable Redeemer! Before all time, that love began. We have glimpses of it bursting out from the recesses of a past eternity- "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him!" And "when the fullness of the time had come," though foreseen were all His untold sufferings- nothing would deter Him from pursuing His anguished path- "He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem;"- no, as if longing for the hour of victory, He exclaimed. "There is a terrible baptism ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished!"

Think of that love now! The live coals in the censer of old form a feeble type of the burning ardor of affection still manifested by our Great High Priest within the veil, in behalf of His own people. There He bears the name of each indelibly engraved on His breastplate; loving them at the beginning, He will love them even unto the end. Earthly love may grow cold and changeable; earthly love may die. Not so the love of this "Friend of friends." It is strong as death- surviving death, no, as deathless as eternity! Listen to His own exponent of its intensity- "As the Father has loved He, so have I loved you!" "You see in Him;" says an old writer, "an ocean of love without bottom, without bounds, overflowing the banks of heaven, streaming down upon this poor world to wash away the vileness of man!"

Blessed Jesus! how cold, and fitful, and transient has been my love to You in comparison of Your love to me! Bring me more under its constraining influence. May this be the superscription on all my thoughts and actions; my occupations and my time- 'I am not my own. Lord, I am Yours! How can I love You enough, who have so loved me! My life shall henceforth be one thank-offering of praise for Your redeeming mercies.'

Standing this night on the shores of this illimitable ocean- surveying its length and breadth- every wave murmuring, "Peace on earth and good-will to men," "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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9. THE GRACE OF GOD

"The God of all grace." 1 Peter 5:10

"By the Grace of God I am what I am." This is the believers eternal confession. Grace found him a rebel- it leaves him a son. Grace found him wandering at the gates of hell- it leaves him at the gates of heaven. Grace devised the scheme of Redemption. Justice never would; Reason never could. And it is Grace which carries out that scheme. No sinner would ever have sought his God but "by grace." The thickets of Eden would have proved Adam's grave had not grace called him out. Saul would have lived and died the haughty self-righteous persecutor, had not grace laid him low. The thief on the cross would have continued breathing out his blasphemies, had not grace arrested his tongue and tuned it for glory. "Out of the knottiest timber," says Rutherford, "He can make vessels of mercy for service in the high palace of

glory!"

Toplady writes- "I came, I saw, I conquered," may be inscribed by the Savior on every monument of grace. "I came to the sinner; I looked upon him; and with a look of omnipotent love, I conquered."

Believer, you would have been this day a wandering star, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever- Christless- hopeless- portionless; had not grace invited you, and grace constrained you! And it is grace which, at this moment, "keeps" you. You have often been a Peter- forsaking your Lord, but brought back to Him again. Why have you not been a Demas or a Judas? "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Is not this your own comment and reflection on life's retrospect?- "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me!"

Seek to realize your dependence on this grace every moment. "More grace! more grace!" needs to be your continual cry. But the infinite supply is commensurate with the infinite need. The treasury of grace, though always emptying, is always full. The key of prayer which opens it, is always at hand: and the Almighty Bestower of the blessings of grace is always "waiting to be gracious." The recorded promise never can be cancelled or reversed- "My grace is sufficient for you."

Reader! seek to dwell much on this inexhaustible theme. The grace of God is the source of lesser temporal blessings, as well as of higher spiritual blessings. It accounts for the crumb of daily bread as well as for the crown of eternal glory. But even in regard to earthly mercies, never forget the CHANNEL of grace- "through Christ Jesus!" It is sweet thus to connect every (even the smallest and humblest) token of providential bounty with Calvary's cross- to have the common blessings of life stamped with "the print of the nails." It makes them doubly precious to think, "This flows from Jesus!"

'When with dear friends sweet talk I hold.

And all the flowers of life unfold-

Let not my heart within me burn.

Except in all I You discern!'

Let others be contented with the uncovenanted mercies of God. Be it mine to say, as the child of grace and heir of glory- 'My Father in heaven, give me today my daily bread.' Reposing in the "all sufficiency in all things" promised by "the God of all grace," "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

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10. THE TENDERNESS OF GOD

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isaiah 40:11

How soothing, in the hour of sorrow, or bereavement, or death, to have the countenance and sympathy of a tender earthly friend. Reader, these words tell you of One nearer, dearer, tenderer still; the Friend that never fails; a tender God! By how many endearing epithets does Jesus exhibit the tenderness of His relation to His people. Does a shepherd watch tenderly over his flock? "The Lord is my Shepherd." Does a father exercise fondest solicitude towards his children? "I will be a Father unto you." Does a mother's love

exceed all other earthly types of affection. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." Is the 'apple of the eye' (the pupil) the most sensitive part of the most delicate bodily organ? He guards His people "as the apple of His eye!"

"He will not break the bruised reed." When the Shepherd and Guardian of Souls finds the sinner, like a lost sheep, stumbling on the dark mountains, how tenderly He deals with Him! There is no look of wrath; no word of upbraiding; in silent love "He lays him on His shoulders rejoicing!"

When Peter falls, He does not unnecessarily wound him. He might have repeated often and again the piercing look which brought the flood of penitential sorrow. But He gave that look only once; and if He reminds him again of his threefold denial, it is by thrice repeating the gentlest of questions, "Do you love me?" Reader, are you mourning over the weakness of your faith; the coldness of your love; your manifold spiritual declensions? Fear not. He knows your frame! He will give 'feeble faith' tender dealing. He will "carry" in His arms those that are unable to walk, and will conduct the burdened ones through a path less rough and rugged than others.

When "the lion" or "the bear" comes, you may trust the true David, the tenderest of Shepherds! Are you suffering from outward trial? Confide in the tenderness of your God's dealings with you. The strokes of His rod are gentle strokes; the needed discipline of a father yearning over his children the very moment He is chastising them. The gentlest earthly parent may speak a harsh word at times; it may be, needlessly harsh. But not so God. He may seem, like Joseph to his brethren, to speak roughly; but all the while there is love in His heart.

The 'pruning knife' will not be used unnecessarily. It will never cut too deeply. The 'furnace' will not burn more fiercely than is absolutely required. A tender God is seated by it, tempering the fury of its flames.

And what, believer, is the secret of all this tenderness? "There is a Man upon the Throne!" Jesus, the God Man Mediator; combining with the might of Godhead, the tenderness of spotless humanity. Is your heart crushed with sorrow? so was His! Are your eyes dimmed with tears? so were His? "Jesus wept!" Bethany's Chief Mourner still wears the Brother's heart in glory. Others may be unable to enter into the depths of your trial; He can; He does!

With such a "tender God" caring for me, providing for me, watching my path by day, and guarding my couch by night- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

11. THE PATIENCE OF GOD

The God of Patience." Romans 15:5

There is no more wondrous subject than this- "The Patience of God." Think of the lapse of ages during which that patience has lasted- 6000 years. Think of the multitudes who have been the subjects of it- millions on millions, in successive climates and centuries. Think of the sins which have, all that time, been trying and wearying that patience-their number- their heinousness- their aggravation. The world's history is a consecutive history of iniquity, a lengthened provocation of the Almighty's forbearance. The Church, like a feeble ark, tossed on a mighty ocean of unbelief; and yet the world, with its cumberers, still spared! The cry of its sinful millions at this moment enters "the ears of the God of Sabbath," and yet, "for all this," His

hand of mercy is "stretched out still!"

And who is this God of patience? It is the Almighty Being who could strike these millions down in a moment; who could, by a breath, annihilate the world- no, who would require no positive or visible putting forth of His omnipotence to effect this, but simply to withdraw His sustaining arm!

Surely, of all the examples of the Almighty's power, there is none more wondrous or amazing than "God's power over Himself." He is "slow to anger." "Judgment is His strange work." He "shows mercy unto thousands [of generations]." God bears for 1500 years, from Moses to Jesus, with Israel's unbelief; and yet, as a writer remarks, "He speaks of it as but a day." "All day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." What is the explanation of all this tenderness? "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord!"

Believer, how great has been God's patience towards you! In your unconverted state, when a wanderer from His fold, with what unwearied love He went after you; notwithstanding all your waywardness; never ceasing the pursuit "until He found you!" Think of your fainting and weariness since being converted- your ever-changing frames and feelings- the ebbings and the flowings in the tide of your love; and yet, instead of surrendering you to your own perverse will, His language concerning you is, "How can I give you up?" For a lifetime, your Savior-God has been standing knocking at your door; and His attitude is still the same- "Behold, I stand!"

"But fainter than the pole-star's ray

Before the noontide blaze of day,

In all of love that man can know-

All that in angels' breasts can glow

Compared, O Lord of hosts! with thine.

Unwearied! Fathomless! Divine!"

How should the patience of Jesus lead me to be submissive under trial! When He has so long borne with me, shall not I "bear" with Him? When I think of His patience under a far heavier cross, can I murmur when He murmured not! No, I will check every repining thought, and looking up, in confiding affection, to "the God of all patience," "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

12. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

"Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds." Psalm 36:5

It has been well said, that "the universe around is a parable of grace." "Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds and protects his people, both now and forever." But more stable than even these types of immutability in the kingdom of nature, is the word of a Covenant-keeping God in the kingdom of grace. These mountains (nature's best emblems of steadfastness) may depart, and

the hills be removed, "but," says their almighty Maker, "my kindness shall not be taken from you!" We can look upwards to the stars of night, and see the "faithfulness" of God "established" in the material heavens- "They continue, to this day, according to your plans; for all are Your servants." But these are feeble types and symbols of brighter constellations in the spiritual firmament- the declarations of an unchanging God- "Your word is forever settled in heaven!"

What a gracious assurance amid our own unfaithfulness, "The Lord is faithful!"- that the unfaithfulness of the believer never alters, and can never alter- the faithfulness of God. My soul, anchor yourself on this rock of the Divine veracity. Take hold of that blessed parenthesis which has been, to many a tossed soul, as a polar star in its nights of darkness- "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He loves them in life- loves them in death- loves them through death- loves them into glory!

Are you not at this hour a monument of God's faithfulness? Where would you have been, had not the magnet of His grace kept you, and drawn your fugitive affections towards Himself? From how many temptations has He rescued you- laying hold of you on the precipice, when about to plunge headlong down; employing, sometimes constraining grace, at other times, restraining grace- making this your brief history- "Kept by the power of God," and overruling all- ALL for His own glory, and your own good?

I love to think of Your faithfulness, O "Tried stone," "laid in Zion." You were tried by the Law- by Justice- by the fierce assaults and temptations of Satan- by the mockings and revilings and cruelties of wicked men; and yet You remain faithful! You have been tried in another sense by Prophets and Apostles; by Martyrs and Saints; by youthful sinners, and aged sinners, and dying sinners- and You have been found "faithful," by all and to all; and You are faithful still!

Reader, never suppose, amid the faithlessness of earth's trusted friends, that you are doomed to thread your way in loneliness and solitude. There is more than one 'Emmaus journey'. The "abiding" Friend is still here! He is always the same. "He faints not, neither is weary!" His faithfulness is a tried faithfulness. His word is a tried word. His friendship is a tried friendship. He is always better than His word. He pays 'with interest'!

"Oh! who could bear life's stormy doom,

Did not Your word of love

Come brightly bearing through the gloom

A peace-branch from above!

Then sorrow touched by You, grows bright,

With more than rapture's ray,

As darkness shows us worlds of light

We never saw by day!"

When I think that at this very moment the eye of that faithful Savior God is upon me- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

13. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" Daniel 4:35

How blessed that elementary truth- "The Lord reigns!" To know that there is no chance or accident with God- that He decrees the fall of a sparrow- the destruction of an atom- the annihilation of a world!

The Almighty is not like Baal, "asleep." "He that keeps Israel" can never for a moment "slumber." Man proposes; but God disposes. "You have done it," is the history of every event, past, present, and to come. His purposes none can change- His counsels none can resist.

Believer, how cheering to know that all that befalls you, is thus ordered in the eternal purpose of a Covenant God! Every minute circumstance of your lot- appointing the bounds of your habitation- meting out every drop in the cup of life- arranging what by you is called its "vicissitudes"-decreeing all its trials; and at last, as the great Proprietor of life, revoking the lease of existence when its allotted term has expired!

How it should keep the mind from its guilty proneness to brood and fret over second causes, were this grand but simple truth ever realized- that all that befalls us are integral parts in a stupendous plan of wisdom- that there is no crossing or thwarting the designs and dealings of God; none can say, "What are you doing?" All ought to say, "He does all things well."

We dare not venture, with presumptuous gaze, to penetrate into "those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God." In all that is fitted, in the consideration of this august theme of the Divine Decrees, to impart encouragement and consolation, let us rejoice; in all that is mysterious and incomprehensible, let us with childlike reverence exclaim, "Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back? For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen!"

The contemplation of the Sovereignty of God, formed subject-matter of rejoicing to the Savior himself in His humiliation- " Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight!" And what supplied material for comfort and joy to an Almighty Sufferer, may well dry the tears and soothe the pangs of His suffering people. Oh, how sinners may magnify their God by a calm submission to His will; by seeing no hand but One in their trials; in giving or taking: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.!" "Who knows not all in these, that the hand of the Lord has wrought this?"

"Til Death the weary spirit free,

My God has said, 'Tis good for thee,

To walk in faith, end not by sight.

Take it on trust a little while,

Soon shall you read the mystery right,

In the fall sunshine of His smile!"

Will it not further help to the breathing of the prayer, "Your will be done," when I think, in connection with the Sovereignty of God, of the grand end of His immutable decrees- it is, "His own glory." "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." What more can I desire? "All things." -God's glory and my own good! "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

14. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

"His kingdom rules over all." Psalm 103:19

Believer, try to see God in everything, and every thing in God! Lose your own will in His. Enter on no pursuit, engage in no plan, without Paul's prayer and condition, "The will of the Lord be done." How it would hallow prosperity, and sweeten adversity, thus, in all things, to follow, like Israel, the Guiding Pillar- at His bidding to pitch our tents; at His bidding to depart. Each providence has a voice, if we would only hear it. It is a fingerpost in the journey, pointing us to "the right way," that we may go to "the city of habitation."

Often what a mysterious volume Providence is! Its every page full of dark hieroglyphics, to which earth can furnish no key. But faith falls back on the assurance that "the Judge of all the earth must do right." The Father of all His people cannot do wrong. To the common observer, the stars in the nightly heavens are all confused masses, pursuing devious and erratic courses. But to the astronomer, each has its allotted and prescribed pathway, and all are preserving inviolately, one universal law of harmony and order. It is faith's loftiest prerogative, patiently to wait until 'that day of disclosures', when page by page of the mysterious book will be unraveled, and when the believer himself will endorse every page with, "It is well!"

Providences may even seem to be getting darker- merging like declining day into the shadows of twilight. But, contrary to nature, and to the Christian's expectations, "At evening time it shall be light!" The gathering cloud will then be seen to be fraught only with blessings, which will burst on the believer's head. My soul, be still, and know that He is God! "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." The mysterious "why" you have so long been waiting for, will soon be revealed. The long night-watch will soon terminate in the looked-for, longed-for morning.

"My God! my Father! while I stray

Far from my home on life's rough way,

Oh teach me from my heart to say,

Your will be done!

Then when on earth I breathe no more

The prayer often mixed with tears before.

I'll sing, when on a happier shore,

Your will be done!"

Blessed Lord! my pilgrimage path is studded thick with Ebenezers testifying to Your faithfulness and mercy. I love to think of Your manifold gracious interpositions in the past-God sustaining me in trial- God supporting me in perplexity-God rescuing me when in temptation- God helping me when "vain was the help of man!" "When my foot slipped, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up!" And shall I not take all Your goodness previously manifested, as a pledge of faithfulness in the future? In full confidence that You are a "rich Provider," I shall take no anxious thought for the morrow, but repose in this covenant assurance of a covenant-keeping God- "I will never fail you nor forsake you." "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

15. THE WORD OF GOD

"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

Man's word disappoints- God's word, never! "The Word of the Lord is tried." It has been tried by the sinner; he neglected it and perished. It has been tried by the saint; he has believed it and been saved. What a precious legacy of God to our world! The volume of NATURE, much as it teaches, is dumb on the question of a sinner's acceptance. The Scriptures alone can solve the enigma, "How is God to deal with the guilty?" That question unanswered- in peace we could not live, in peace we dared not die! But glad tidings, O precious messenger from God, have you brought to a doomed earth- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" Were there no more in the Divine communication than that one brief entry, the Bible would still be better to us than "millions in gold and silver."

The Word of God is a vast repository and emporium of heavenly wisdom- free to all- suited for all- intended for all- offered to all. The Word of God is an inexhaustible mine- the deeper you dig, the richer the ore. It has a word in season for rich and poor; for young and old; for the wandering; for the doubting; for the sorrowing; for the believing; for the dying; for the perishing!

Reader, sit at the feet of Jesus in His Word, and with the docility of a little child, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening!" Always approach it as if it met you with the living salutation, "I have a message from God for you." There are differences in every heart-chamber, but this key fits every door! Make it a faithful mirror, in which you see a reflection of yourself! The more faithfully it is held up, the more will the sense of your deficiency and defilement drive you to the atoning blood. In all your difficulties, make it "your counselor." In all your perplexities, make it your interpreter and guide. In all your sorrows, make it your fountain of consolation. In all your temptations, make it your ultimate court of appeal. When venturing on debatable ground, let this deter you- "What does the Scripture say?" When assailed, let this protect and defend you- "It is written!"

Precious at all times, it is especially precious in "the cloudy and dark day." We may do without our lamp in the day; but where are we, without it, in the midnight tempestuous sea? "I would have perished in my affliction," says a sinking cast-away, "but Your Word has quickened me."

"Oft as I lay me down to rest,

Oh may the reconciling Word

Sweetly compose my weary breast;

While on the bosom of my Lord

I sink in blissful dreams away,

And visions of eternal day!"

Be it mine to look forward to that blessed time, when the intervention of that Word, and all other means of grace, will terminate; for, in Heaven, "they need no candle." Meanwhile, pillowing my head on the Word of the eternal God, and with these glorious prospects in view- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

16. THE ORDINANCES OF GOD

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

Isaiah 12:3

A wilderness is your place of sojourn. But Immanuel has provided wells in this 'Baca'- this valley of weeping; for the refreshment of His pilgrims! In merciful adaptation to their weakness and needs, He has furnished means and instrumentality to keep alive the flame that would otherwise languish and decay. These are the golden pipes which convey living water to the soul, fed by Christ Himself from the great cistern of His own grace.

Reader! Do you love the ordinances of God's appointment? Is the Sabbath to you a holy and welcome season? Do you gladly respond to the summons, "Go you up into the house of the Lord"? Have you felt that it is there, "He commands the blessing, even life for evermore"? Or, holier ground still; do you rejoice, as the solemn season comes round, to covenant afresh with your adorable Redeemer at His own Sacred Feast; to record anew your unalterable attachment to Him as your Lord and Master, and commemorate His dying, ever-living love? See that it is not be the reverse of all this. Do the hours of the Sabbath, once a delight, "day of all the week the best" -hang heavily upon you? Is prayer now less a privilege than it was? Is the closet less habitually frequented? Is the fire burning with a sicklier glow on the domestic altar? Have the services of the sanctuary become more matter for the head than for the heart? Be assured these are lamentable symptoms of declension- tokens of a backward and downward state. "You did run well- who hindered you?"

Return speedily to the deserted closet! crucify quickly the deadening sin. Have you not thought of it, over and over, at a communion season? Why allow it again to have dominion over you, robbing you of all your joy- extracting all relish from ordinances- impeding grace- grieving the Spirit? Lose no time in seeking restoration of lost filial nearness. "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

The lost Bride, in the Canticles, found her Lord beside the "Shepherds' tents." You may sometimes have long to wait at the 'Gospel Bethesdas' (one of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years), without any visible blessing; but, be assured, the Angel of the Covenant will, in due time, come down, and show that He "is good to those who wait for Him- to the soul that seeks Him." Wait, then, on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart!

Seek to value ordinances, but do not overvalue them. Put not ordinances in the place of the God of ordinances. They are at best but the pole upon which to suspend the brazen serpent; the scaffolding by which to get up beside the Chief cornerstone. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" It is not "the altar of God," but "God Himself" who is "the exceeding joy" of His people. And thus, even if wasting health and pining sickness should deprive me of outward ordinances, I may look upwards to that God who, though He "loves the gates of Zion," does not forget "the dwellings of Jacob," and say- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

17. THE SPIRIT OF GOD

"Don't take your Holy Spirit from me." Psalm 51:11

"But it is actually best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Comforter won't come. If I do go away, he will come because I will send him to you." How momentous must be the agency of the Holy Spirit, when the adorable Redeemer represented the Church as being more than compensated for the blank of His own departure- the loss of His own presence- by the gift of this Divine Paraclete! "It is the Spirit who quickens." It is He who is the agent in the new birth- "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is He who enables the sinner by faith to lay hold on Jesus, and embrace His salvation- "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." It is He who carries on the progressive work of holiness- we are saved "through the sanctification of the Spirit." It is He who creates anew the lost image of the Godhead- impresses on the soul the lineaments of the Savior's character- "We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Lord the Spirit." It is He who illumines the Divine Record, acting like a telescope to the moral vision, disclosing in the firmament of inspiration "wondrous things" contained in the law, which the natural eye cannot see. It is He who unfolds the glories of the Redeemer's work- the beauties of His person- the completeness of His sacrifice- the riches of His grace- "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." More- the soul of the believer becomes itself a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Oh! with what holy jealousy would the child of God guard every avenue to temptation, if this amazing truth exercised its habitual and solemnizing power over him- "The Spirit of God dwells within me!" How would he avoid anything and everything by which he would be likely to "grieve" this blessed Agent, "whereby he is sealed until the day of redemption." "Behold!" He seems to say, "I make all things new." The initial operation is His- He broods over the face of the spiritual chaos, saying, "Let there be light." The closing and consummating grace is His- He conducts the soul through the swellings of Jordan, until it joins with the ransomed multitude before the throne, in ascribing to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the glories of a completed salvation.

Take not, then, O God! your Holy Spirit from me. In vain are the Word, ordinances, sacraments, sermons, prayers, without Him. All are in themselves passive instruments; His is the omnipotent arm which wields and vanquishes. Our adorable Redeemer- the great High Priest- was Himself anointed with the Holy Spirit. That anointing oil, poured upon the Church's living Head, runs down to the skirts of His garment, anointing, as it flows, all His members. And those that are lowest and humblest- nearest the skirts- receive the most. Reader, if this be your position- at the feet of Jesus- the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, streaming down upon you in copious effusion, sanctifying you more and more, and making you more fit for glory- then you may well say, night after night, until the day-spring of that glory burst upon you- "I will lie

down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

18. THE PROMISES OF GOD

"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in him." 2 Cor. 1:20

God has made a Will, or Testament, in behalf of His people! It is signed and sealed. It cannot be altered- nothing can divest us of our inheritance. The bequest is His own "exceeding great and precious promises." What a heritage! All that the sinner requires- all that the sinner's God can give. In this testamentary deed there are no contingencies- no peradventures. The testator commences it with the sure guarantee for its every jot and tittle being fulfilled, "Verily, verily, I say unto you!" He endorses every promise, and every page, with a "Yes, and Amen." "God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." But, who provided such a rich Promise Treasury? What is the source, where is the fountain-head, from which these streams of mercy flow to the Church? "In HIM." Believer! from Jesus every promise is derived- in Jesus every promise centers. Pardon, peace, adoption, consolation, eternal life- all "in Him." In Him you are "chosen," "called," "justified," "sanctified," and "glorified." You have in possession all the blessings of present grace; you have in reserve all the happiness of coming glory. And "He is faithful that promised."

Your friend may deceive you- the world has deceived you- He never will! Myriads in glory, are there to tell how not one thing has failed of all that the Lord their God has spoken. Rely on this faithfulness. He gave His Son for you. After the greater blessing, surely, for subordinate ones, you may trust Him. And where do these promises beam most brightly? Like the stars, it is in the night! In the midnight of trial- when the sun of earthly prosperity has set- when deep is calling to deep, and wave to wave; when tempted, bereaved, beaten down with "a great fight of afflictions," the spiritual firmament with its galaxy of Promises is brightest and clearest!

"Oh! who could bear life's stormy doom,

Did not Your Word of Love

Come brightly bearing through the gloom

A palm branch from above?

Then sorrow touched by You grows bright,

With more than rapture's ray;

As darkness shows us worlds of light

We never saw by day!"

But do not be deceived; the night of sorrow cannot 'in itself' give you the comfort of the Divine Promises. It may be night, and yet the stars invisible. It is only "in Him" these promises can be discerned in their luster. Reader! if you are "out of Christ," these stars of Gospel promise shine in vain to you; they have, to the unspiritual eye, no beauty or brightness. In the midnight battle of Barak, "the stars in their course fought against Sisera." They shone on Israel, but denied their light to the enemies of God. The guiding pillar, so

lustrous to the chosen people, was a column of portentous gloom to Pharaoh's host. But "in Him," as "heirs of God," you are inheritors of "all the promises." All the promises! Oh! with such a pillow whereon to rest your aching head, you may well resume your nightly song- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

19. THE WARNINGS OF GOD

"I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:7

"He is faithful who promised." Do we bear sufficiently in mind another truth of equal fidelity- "He is faithful that threatened?" Ponder that solemn word, "He will by no means clear!" Remember when that word was spoken it was in connection with a sublime apocalypse of God's majesty. It was as "the glory of the Lord" was passing before Moses. Was not this intended to show, that there is an awful and inseparable connection between the Divine glory and the impossibility of God's clearing the guilty? It was at a time, moreover, when the benignity of God was intended to be more specially manifested. It was when He was declared to be "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness." Then it was, we listen to the awful note of warning, that "clear the guilty," He will not, and cannot.

His law requires- the honor of His throne requires; demands- that the guilty be "not cleared." Reader! are you still clinging to the dream of final mercy? Do you believe in the first part of the Divine proclamation at Sinai, and persist in presumptuous and fatal skepticism with regard to the last? -that boundless in His resources, and infinite in His love, God will, by some means, "clear the guilty?" Do not be deceived. See that you do not incur the woe of him who "strives with his Maker." The Lord, who "is not slack concerning His promises," can be as little slack concerning His threatenings.

Time blunts the wrath of man; and chastens and subdues the turbulence of his passions; but there is no blind impulse- no vacillation in Him with whom "a thousand years are as one day." "God's threatenings," says a writer, "are God's doings!" The law has not one breathing of mercy for you. There is not one cleft in all Mount Sinai where you can escape the vengeance of the storm. Unless you flee without delay to him who has "cleared the guilty" by Himself, the Guiltless One, becoming the guilt-bearer; be assured that through eternity "you will by no means be cleared."

My soul! are you yet in this state of perilous estrangement? still launched on the cheerless ocean of uncertainty; leaving everything to a dying hour; the time to which nothing should be left, but to die! Ponder these living words of unchanging truth- "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape unpunished." The golden chain of grace stretches from heaven to earth, but it can go no further- "Seek the Lord while He may be found." There is solemn warning in that one word. It tells you, there is a day coming, when the Lord will be sought, but will not be found.

"Time's sun is fast setting- its twilight is nigh-

Its evening is falling in cloud over the sky;

Its shadows are stretching in ominous gloom;

Its midnight approaches- the midnight of doom!

Then haste, sinner, haste, there is mercy for thee,

And wrath is preparing- flee, lingerer, flee!"

Reader! cast yourself this night at His footstool; implore His mercy. Rise not from your bended knees, until, with His propitiated smile gladdening you, and the hope of His heaven cheering you, you may (it may be for the first time in your life) lie down with a quiet conscience and a pardoned soul on your nightly couch, exclaiming- "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night watches." -Psalm 63:6

20. THE CHASTISEMENTS OF GOD

"For the Lord chastens (disciplines) those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children." Hebrews 12:6

Chastisement- the family badge- the family pledge- the family privilege- "To you it is given to suffer." "Troubles," says a good man, "are in God's catalogue of mercies." "Afflictions," says another, "are God's hired laborers to break the clods and plow the land." Reader, is the hand of your God heavy upon you? Has He been breaking your cisterns, withering your gour

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