

Evening Thoughts - April

by Octavius Winslow

Octavius Winslow's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's nature, the role of Christ in prayer, and living a life reflective of one's faith in God.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Job 36:26, John 1:16, John 14:9, 1 Corinthians 12:26-27, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Philippians 3:20, 1 John 4:20, Revelation 3:1, Revelation 3:17-18

Topics: "Understanding God", "The Role of Jesus in Prayer"

Description

Octavius Winslow reflects on the nature of God and the believer's relationship with Him, emphasizing the importance of understanding God's spiritual essence in prayer. He encourages believers to focus on God's character rather than attempting to comprehend His infinite nature, and to approach Him through Jesus Christ, who embodies the divine. Winslow highlights the necessity of living for God, the significance of love among believers, and the comfort found in God's presence during trials. He reassures that God is always ready to comfort those who are cast down, and that true prayer is a vital connection between the believer and God, facilitated by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

EVENING THOUGHTS, or

DAILY WALKING WITH GOD

APRIL 1.

Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. Job 36:26

THERE is a state of mind often enfeebling to the exercise of prayer, arising from the difficulty of forming proper views of the spiritual nature of the Divine object of prayer. The spirituality of God, through the weakness of our nature, has been felt to be, by some, a stumbling-block in the approach of the soul. "God is a Spirit," is a solemn announcement that meets it at the very threshold, and so completely overawes and abashes the mind, as to congeal every current of thought and of feeling, and well-near to crush the soul with its inconceivable idea. Nor is this surprising. Prayer is the approach of finity to Infinity; and although it is the communing of spirit with Spirit, yet it is the finite communing with the Infinite, and that through the organs of sense. Is it any marvel, then, that at periods a believer should be baffled in his

endeavor to form some just conception of the Divine existence, some faint idea of the nature of that God to whom his soul addresses itself; and, failing in the attempt, should turn away in sadness, sorrow, and despair?

The remedy for this state of mind, we believe, is at hand. It is simply scriptural. That we can enlarge our thoughts with any adequate idea of the nature and the appearance of the Divine Spirit is an utter impossibility. He that attempts it, and thinks he has succeeded, lives in the region of fancy, and opposes himself to the revelation of God Himself, which expressly declares, "No man has seen God at any time." "Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see." This being then admitted, as it must be by all reflective minds, the question arises, "How am I to view God? what idea am I to form of His existence in approaching Him in prayer?" In reply, two things are necessary in getting proper thoughts of God as the object of prayer. First, that the mind should resign all its attempts to comprehend the mode of the Divine existence, and should concentrate all its powers upon the contemplation of the character of the Divine existence. In what relation God stands to the creature, not in what way He exists in Himself, is the point with which we have to do in approaching Him. Let the mind be wrapped in devout contemplations of His holiness, benevolence, love, truth, wisdom, justice, &c., and there will be no room for vain and fruitless imaginations respecting the fathomless and inconceivable mode of His existence. The second thing necessary is, that the mind should view God in Christ.

APRIL 2.

He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father? John 14:9.

IF the mind is baffled and perplexed, as it surely will be, in its attempts to unravel the spiritual nature of God, let it seek a resting-place in the "incarnate mystery." This was one part of the gracious design of God in assuming human nature. It was to bring, so to speak, the Infinite in a direct angle with the finite, so that the two lines should not merely run parallel, but that the two extremes of being should meet. It was so to embody His essential and surpassing glories, as would present an object which man could contemplate without fear, worship without distraction, and look upon and not die. The Lord Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person." "He that has seen me (His own declaration), has seen the Father." Wondrous stoop of the great God! In all approach to God then, in prayer, as in every other kindred exercise, let the eye of faith be fixed upon Him who fills the middle seat upon the throne--the Day's-Man--the Mediator--the incarnate Son of God! How quieting to the mind of a praying soul is this view of God! What a mildness invests the throne of grace, and what an easy access to it presents itself, when the eye of faith can behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" If the mind be embarrassed in its attempt to conceive an idea of His spiritual nature, it can soothe itself to repose in a believing view of the glorified humanity of Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh." To this resting-place He Himself invites the soul, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." And thus, too, He calmed the fears of His exiled servant, who, when the splendor of His glorified humanity broke upon his view, fell prostrate to the earth: "And when I sate Him," says John, "I fell at his feet as dead, and He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

There is no access to God but through Jesus. If there do not be an honoring of Christ in His person, blood, righteousness, intercession, in prayer, we can expect no answer to prayer. The great encouragement to

draw near to God is Jesus at the right hand of God. Jesus is the door. Coming through Him, the poorest, the vilest, the most abject, may approach the throne of grace, and ask what He will. The glorious Advocate is on the throne, to present the petition, and urge its acceptance, and plead for its answer on the basis of His own infinite, atoning merits. Come then, you poor; come, you disconsolate; come, you tried and afflicted; come, you wounded; come, you needy; come and welcome to the mercy-seat; for Jesus waits to present your petition and press your suit. Ask nothing in your own name, but ask everything in the name of Jesus; "ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." The Father may reject you, but His Son He cannot reject.

APRIL 3.

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 2 Cor. 5:15.

How high the obligation to live to God! Are we born again? Can we think of the "horrible pit, the miry clay,"--the "valley of bones,"--the "rock where we were hewn,"--and then remember that if we are born again, we have in our souls, at this moment, the buddings of eternal life?--oh, can we think of this, and not desire an unreserved surrender of all we are, and all we have, to God? Christian! watch over your principles--your daily walk--your communion with the world, and see that the evidences of the new birth signalize every action of your life. The world is a close observer. Narrowly and vigilantly are you watched. It weighs your actions, scrutinizes your motive, sifts your principles, and ponders all your steps, waiting for your halting. Disappoint it! Live out your religion, carry out your principles; they are designed not merely for the Sabbath, but for the week--not merely to be exhibited in the place and at the hour of prayer and social Christian communion, but they are to be carried into Four haunts of business, into your shop, your countinghouse, your study, your profession; you are to exhibit them, not in a spirit of vain-glory, but in "lowliness of mind," in all your communion with a world lying in wickedness. To be born again! oh, it is a mighty work! Let the evidences of its reality in you be such as shall compel the gain-sayer to admire the work, though He may hate the change. Oh, be in spirit--in temper--in life--like Jesus.

What have you not to praise God for, tried and afflicted reader! Born again! Now light are your afflictions, when compared with this! Take the scales, and weigh the two. Place in one your every sorrow. Is it domestic?--place it there. Is it personal--a nervous frame, a feeble constitution, trying circumstances?--place it there. Are friends unfaithful, are saints unkind, does the world frown?--place it all there. Then in the other cast your hidden life--your sense of pardon--your hope of heaven; these outweigh them all. "For I reckon," says Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

APRIL 4.

Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Rev. 3:17-18

SUCH is the fallen condition of the soul--such its poverty, ignorance, and infirmity, it knows not its real weakness and deep necessity--until taught it by the Holy Spirit. This is even so after conversion. A dear child of God (and it is awfully true, without any qualification, of an unrenewed man) may fall into the state of the Laodicean church; a believer may not know his real condition, his absolute need. There may be a

secret declension in his soul--the enfeebling and decay of some spiritual grace--the slow but effectual inroad of some spiritual enemy--the cherishing of some Achan--the feeding of some worm at the root of his holiness, and all the while he may remain ignorant of the solemn fact. And how is he to know it, unless some one teach him? And who is that teacher but the Spirit? As He first convinced of sin, so, in each successive stage of the believer's experience, He convinces of the daily want, the spiritual necessity, the growing infirmity, the increasing power of sin, and the deepening poverty. Overlook not this important part of His work. To go to the throne of grace, we must have something to go for--some errand, to take us there, some sin to confess, some guilt to mourn over, some want to supply, some infirmity to make known, nor would we leave out--some blessing to acknowledge. How is all this to be effected, but by the blessed Spirit? Oh what an unspeakable mercy to have One who knows us altogether, and who can make us acquainted with ourselves!

It is a far advanced step in grace, when we know our real undisguised condition. A man may lose a grace, and may travel far, and not be sensible of his loss. The world has come in, and filled up the space. Some carnal joy or pursuit has occupied the mind, engrossed the affections and the thoughts; and the soul has not been sensible of the loss it has sustained. Thus have many lost the sense of adoption, and pardon, and acceptance--and the graces of faith, of love, of humility, have become enfeebled, until the description of Ephraim may truly and painfully apply to them--"Ephraim he has mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not; yes, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows it not." But the blessed Spirit at length discovers to the soul its loss, convinces it of its departure, makes known its real condition, and in this way leads it to the throne of grace. Dear reader, cherish high views of this work of the Spirit. To have One near at hand, yes, in you, as He is, to detect so faithfully and lovingly, as He does, the waning grace, the feeble pulse, the spiritual decay; to awaken sensibility, godly sorrow, and draw out the heart in confession, is to possess one of the most costly blessings. Honor the blessed Spirit, laud Him for His work, extol His faithfulness and love, and treat Him as your tenderest, dearest Friend.

APRIL 5.

If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 1 John 4:20.

HERE is a test of relationship to the family of God which never fails. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." From this the weakest believer may extract the greatest consolation. Other evidences, beloved, may be beclouded. Divine knowledge may be deficient, Christian experience may be limited, and the question, "Am I a child of God?" may long have been one of painful doubt; but here is an evidence which cannot deceive. You may doubt your love to God, but your love to His people, as such, proves the existence and the reality of your love to Him. Your attachment to them, because they are holy, is an evidence of your own holiness, which no power can invalidate or set aside. Since the Holy Spirit has constituted it as evidence, and since God admits it as such, we press its comfort, with all the energy which we possess, upon the heart of the doubting, trembling child of God.

You may often have questioned the reality of your love to God, scarcely daring to claim an affection so great as this. Your attachment to Jesus, so inconstant, so wavering, and so cold, may often have raised the anxious fear and the perplexing doubt. But your love to the people of God has been like a sheet-anchor to your soul. This you have not questioned, and you could not doubt. You have loved them because they were the people of God; you have felt an attachment to them because they were the

disciples of Christ. What does this prove, but your love to God, your affection to Jesus, and your own participation in the same Divine nature? It were a thing impossible for you to love that which is holy, without a corresponding principle of holiness in yourself. Speaking of the enmity of the ungodly against His people, our Lord employs this language; "If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Now, if there is the opposite feeling to this glowing in your hearts, be sure that, as the hatred of the world to the saints proves that it loves only its own, so your love to the saints places the fact of your union with them beyond all doubt. Try your heart, beloved, by this test. Do you not love the people of God, because they are His people? Is not Christ's image in those who upon which you so delight to gaze, and gazing upon which, often enkindles your soul with love to Christ Himself? Do you not love to cull the choicest flowers of grace in the Lord's garden--growing in what bed they may--as those in whom your soul has the greatest delight--their different tints, their varied beauties and odors, rather increasing, than diminishing, the pleasure which they afford you? Then, let every Christian professor test his religion by this grace. Let him who has been used to retire within his own narrow enclosure ask himself the question, "If I love not my brother whom I have seen, how can I love God whom I have not seen?"

APRIL 6.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1 Cor. 12:26, 27.

IN this exercise of Christian sympathy "the members have the same care one for another." The Church of God is a suffering Church. All the members are more or less and variously tried. Many are the burdens of the saints. It would be impossible, we think, to find one whose lip has not touched the cup of sorrow, whose spirit has not felt the pressure of trouble. Some walk in doubt and darkness--some are particularly set up as a mark for Satan--some suffer from a nervous temperament, discoloring every bright and beautiful picture of life--some are the subjects of personal affliction, pining sickness excluding them from all participation in the songs of Zion and the solemn assemblies of the saints--some are bereaved, sorrowing like Rachel for her children, or mourning like the sisters of Bethany for their brother. Some are suffering from narrowed and exhausted resources; and there may do not be a few suffering even from actual want itself. Ah! how many will say, "You have touched upon every sorrow but mine,"--so extensive is the field of Christian sympathy! But what scope for the play of those heaven-born affections exists in the heart of each true believer! "A new commandment give I unto you," says Christ, "that you love one another." And how is this commandment to be obeyed? The apostle answers, "Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Therefore the bearing of one another's burdens is a necessary effect and proper exercise of this holy love. It will delight to recognize the suffering Savior in His suffering members. It will go and lift the pressure from the spirit, chase the sorrow from the heart, dry the tear from the eye, and supply the pressing need. Or if it cannot accomplish this, it will take its place by the side of the sufferer, sharing the sorrow and the want it has no power to comfort or remove. Is this law of Christ--the law of love--thus exhibited in you?

Christian forbearance is another beautiful exhibition of this feeling. The image of God is but imperfectly restored in the renewed soul. The resemblance to Christ, in the most matured believer, is at best but a faint copy. In our communion with the saints of God, we often meet with much that calls for the exercise of our indulgence; many weaknesses of the flesh and of the spirit, and many peculiarities of thought and of manner. There are, too, diversities of gifts and degrees of grace. Some are more deeply taught than others--some are strong and some are weak--some travel rapidly, and others slowly--some are fearless

and intrepid, others are timid and scrupulous. Now all these things call for the exercise of Christian forbearance. The apostle clearly defines the rule that should guide us here: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

APRIL 7.

I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. Rev.3:1.

IN a land where the institutions and the ordinances of religion are so strictly and so properly observed--where religious training from infancy, the habit of an early connection with the visible Church, and the consequent observance of the Lord's Supper expected and enjoined, are such marked characteristics--would it be overstepping the bounds of propriety and delicacy, if we press upon the professing reader the importance of close self-examination, and of trial by the word of God, touching the great change, apart from which the most splendid Christian profession will but resemble the purple robes and the fine linen with which Dives moved in grandeur and in state to the torments of the lost. Professors of religion!--Church communicants!--office-bearers!--have you the root of the matter in you? Have you Christ in you? Are you temples of the Holy Spirit? Are you walking humbly with God? Are you born from above? Rest not short of the great change--the heavenly, the divine birth. Place no reliance upon your external relation to the Church of God. Do not be deceived by a false semblance of conversion. You may go far in a Christian profession, and even may live to see the Lord come in the air, and yet have not one drop of "oil in your vessel with your lamp."

Have you sometimes trembled under the powerful exhibition of the truth? so did Felix, and yet he never truly repented! Have you heard the Gospel gladly, and under its momentary influence have done many things? so did Herod, and yet he kept Herodias, and beheaded John! Do you show much apparent zeal for the Lord? so did Jehu, but it was zeal for himself! Are you the associate and the companion of good and holy men? so was Demas, and yet he loved this present evil world. Have you been united to the Church upon a profession of faith and by baptism? so was Simon Magus, and yet he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Do you desire to die the death of the righteous? so did Balaam, and yet he died as the fool dies! Oh, look well to your religion. Take nothing for granted. Think less of burnishing your "lamp," than of having a large supply of oil, that when the Lord sends or comes, you may not be found in darkness, not knowing where you go. Without converting grace in your heart, your Church relation is but the union of a dead branch to a living stem; and your partaking of the Lord's Supper, an "eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood (as symbolically represented therein) unworthily." Receive in love these faithful admonitions, penned by one whose only hope, as the chief of sinners, is in the finished work of Immanuel, and let them take you to prayer--to the Word--to Christ.

APRIL 8.

For our conversation is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philip. 3:20.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS can only be maintained by the strictest vigilance. It is a delicate and fragile flower, susceptible of every variation of the spiritual atmosphere. Guard against that which checks its growth. Many are not aware how much great exuberance of spirits, light conversation, foolish jesting, witticisms at the expense of Scripture sanctity, novel reading, carnal music, unfit the heart for communion with God, and lessen the tone of its spirituality. Close communion with mere nominal religious professors is particularly to be avoided. Much more injury to spiritual-mindedness accrues from intimate friendship

with such, than from those who assert no pretensions to a religious character; as with the one we are apt to be less on our guard than the other. Avoid the world's amusements; they will eat as a canker into the very core of your spirituality. "Do not be conformed to this world," is a prohibition--"Our conversation is in heaven," is an exhortation, which should never be absent from the eye of a traveler to the heavenly city.

And why should not our conversation be in heaven? Are not its attractions many and powerful? It is a holy place, and it is the place of the holy. There is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; God the Judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. How rich is heaven! And there we, too, will shortly be. Why, then, should not our conversation be there? It will be recollected that when the high priest entered within the veil, bearing in his hands the blood of atonement and the smoking censer, the eyes of the congregation who stood without followed him to the entrance as the curtain parted, and then veiled him from their gaze. Many a thrilling heart and trembling hope followed him within that holy place, its fervent sympathies clustering around him while he presented the offerings, and made intercession for the people. And many a longing eye intently and fondly watched for his return, when, with uplifted hands, he would bless the waiting congregation. Our great High Priest has passed within the veil. As our Advocate, he fills heaven's high chancery. He loves us--remembers us--sympathizes with us--intercedes for us--and wears our names on His breastplate and His ephod. Soon He will return in person, to bless with the first-resurrection glory all those who "love His appearing." Oh! shall not our hearts be more where our most precious treasure is, where our holiest and dearest hopes center, and where we ourselves shall shortly be? The Lord grant that we may increasingly experience, that "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace;" and in order to attain to this blessed state, we must live upon the Lord Jesus--be filled with the Spirit--be often at God's confessional--and, taking up our cross daily, be pressing onward and upward--"denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

APRIL 9.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deut. 6:4, 5.

IN nothing has God acted more worthily of His nature, than in constituting love as the soul and essence of religion, and Himself its supreme object. In doing so, He has as much consulted the happiness of the creature as His own honor; as much our benefit as His glory. Indeed it would seem as if, in enjoining the obligation, in issuing the requirement of our motto, He had a view to our happiness beyond every other end. Apart from the honor which accrues to Him from our obedience to this precept, what advantage can He derive from our affection? Himself the infinite sea of love, full to the eternal satisfaction of His own nature, what good could arise to Him from the tribute of affection poured from every heart? But He would bring us to a more perfect enjoyment of Himself, by bringing us to love Him with a supreme affection. He who loves God, walks with God, dwells with God, is like God. He has not far to travel in order to find God. Let him look within upon his own tranquil conscience, let him wander through the illuminated chambers of his own soul, and there, in finding love, he finds God. If love is not there, neither is God there; for where love is, there is God enthroned upon the heart. "God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him."

It is, then, the great characteristic of true believers, that they love God. Their love embraces each person in the Godhead. They love the Father--for to Him they are indebted for His unspeakable gift. They love the Son--for to Him they owe their redemption. They love the Spirit--for having renewed them, He dwells in them forever as His temple. Such are all the children of God. Oh the blessedness they feel in loving God in Christ! Oh the happiness that springs from this divine, this heavenly emotion, expanding, purifying, and ennobling the soul! They ascribe its possession to no motive existing in themselves; but, with the apostle, are ever ready to acknowledge, "We love Him, because He first loved us." It is true, their love to God, the Triune God, is at best but an imperfect emotion, mingling with a thousand frailties, an affection unworthy of themselves, still more deeply unworthy of Him, yet they love Him sincerely; He has drawn their hearts, has overcome them by His grace, and they are enabled to say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth whom I desire in comparison with You."

The deathlessness of love to God is a beautiful idea of Scripture. Every other grace will cease but that of love. Faith!--that precious grace which has been as the sheet-anchor of our soul in the wildest storms; which, as our compass, has steered us through the deep billows, and brought us in safety to the port; which, amid all the trials, needs, and perils of the way, was so great and so sweet a solace--when we reach the world of glory we shall need it no more, for faith must then give place to sight. Hope!--that pole-star of the soul, which cheered us with its mild luster many a weary step of our desolate journey, gilding the dark pictures of our earthly pilgrimage with its heavenly brightness, and alluring us on to the heaven from where it shone--when we reach the world of glory we shall want it no more, for hope will terminate in full fruition. But Love will live forever! It will tread with us the dark valley, it will cross with us the swelling river, and enter with us into the realms of eternal blessedness--its home, from where it came, and where it again returns. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." But "Love never fails," it lives forever.

APRIL 10.

And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. John 1:16.

THE word fullness in this passage is sometimes employed to express the idea of abundance. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" that is, the abundance of the earth is the Lord's. But in this connection it has a meaning still more impressive. It signifies not only the fullness of abundance, but the fullness of redundancy. The vessel is not only full to the brim, but it runs over, and rushes on in ten thousand streams to the utmost limit of man's necessities. Such a redundancy of grace was required to bring God and the sinner together. The gulf which separated these two extremes of being was just that which separates the bottomless pit in hell from the highest throne in glory. No finite being could annihilate it. All the resources of wisdom, and power, and benevolence of all the angels in heaven could not bridge it. But the redundant grace that is in Christ Jesus has crossed this gulf, and God and man meet and are reconciled in one Mediator. And now from the glorious heights of pardoning grace on which he stands, the sinner can look down upon a hell deserved, but a hell escaped.

Such a redundant fullness of grace was never seen until Jesus appeared. The patriarchs and prophets saw this grace, but not as we are privileged to see it. They realized its sufficiency, but not its redundancy. The truth was revealed to them, but by degrees. The light beamed in upon their minds, but in solitary rays. The grace distilled, rather than flowed. They had the dew, rather than the showers of grace. And yet it was sufficient to meet their case. When Jehovah opened this fountain of grace to two of the greatest sinners the world ever saw, and declared that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," dim and

partial as was the discovery, it was sufficient to lift them from the dark borders of despair and of hell, into the sunny region of hope and of heaven. Thus the saints of the former dispensation saw this grace, but not so clearly as we see it. They dwelt amid the shadows, we in the full blaze of glory. They lived in the twilight of grace, but we in its meridian day. They had the law, but we have the gospel. They had grace in the hands of Moses, but we have grace in the hands of Jesus. They were the "children of the bondwoman," but we are the "children of the free-woman." They had the "spirit of bondage unto fear," but we have the "spirit of adoption " unto love. And one passage will explain the reason of this great difference: "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Spoken unto us by His Son! Behold the fullness, the redundancy, the sufficiency of this grace! "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Such, reader, is the fullness of Jesus--this Divine Vessel of grace. And now, if this grace were sufficient for God--sufficient to enable Him to extend mercy to the utmost, to sinners the vilest, and yet remain strictly just--then, I ask, is it not sufficient, my reader, for you? If God, on the basis of this grace, can come forward and extend His hand of reconciliation to you, may you not with the plea of this same grace advance and extend your hand of faith to God? If there is no difficulty or reluctance on the part of God, why should there be on the part of man? And has God ever hesitated? Has He ever refused on the footing of Christ's merits to save the penitent sinner, who, having heard that the King of heaven is a merciful King, has cast himself upon that mercy, like the servants of Benhadad, with sackcloth upon their loins, and ashes upon their head, humbly suing for life? Never! It is the delight of God, as it is His glory, to prove the power and the sufficiency of His grace in Christ Jesus, to save man to the uttermost extent of his guiltiness and woe. How overflowing with saving grace does the heart of God appear in these words: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon!" Oh, place your empty vessel beneath this overflowing fountain of grace! and remove it not until, in its measure, it becomes the "fullness of Him who fills all in all."

APRIL 11.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. John 16:23

THAT God should have erected in this lower world a throne of grace, a mercy-seat, around which may gather, in clustering and welcome multitudes, the helpless, the burdened, the friendless, the vile, the guilty, the deeply necessitous--that no poor comer, be his poverty never so great, his burden never so heavy, or his case never so desperate, should meet with the refusal of a hearing or a welcome, does greatly develop and magnify the riches of His grace, His wisdom, and His love to sinners. What a God our God must be, thus to have appointed a meeting-place, an audience-chamber, for those upon whom all other doors were closed! But more than this,

That He should have appointed Jesus the door of approach to that throne--should have given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to be the "new and living way" of access, thus removing all obstruction in the path of the soul's coming, both on the part of Himself, and on the part of the sinner; that the door should be a crucified Savior--the wounds of the Son of God--that through blood, and that blood the blood of the incarnate Deity, the guilty should approach--wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! Shall we say even more than this? For there is a yet lower depth in this love and condescension of God--that He should have sent His Spirit into the heart, the Author of prayer, inditing the petition--breathing in the soul--implanting the desire--convincing of the existing necessity--unfolding the

character of God--working faith in the heart--and drawing it up to God through Jesus--seems the very perfection of His wisdom, benevolence, and grace.

It must be acknowledged by the spiritual mind that all true prayer is of the inditing of the Spirit--that He is the Author of all real approach of the soul to God. And yet how perpetually we need to be reminded of this! Prayer is one of the most spiritual employments that can possibly engage the mind. It is that holy act of the soul which brings it immediately in contact with a holy God. It has more directly to do with the "high and lofty One" than any other exercise. It is that state of mind, too, that most deeply acknowledges its dependence on God. Prayer is the expression of want--it is the desire of need, the acknowledgment of poverty--the language of dependence--the breathing of a soul that has nothing in itself, but hangs on God for all it needs. It must therefore be a highly spiritual and holy exercise. But still more so will this appear, if we consider that true prayer is the breathing of the life of God in the soul of man. It is the Spirit dwelling and breathing in him. It is the new nature pouring out its vital principle, and that into the ear of God where it came. It is the cry of the feeble child turning to the Father it loves, and in all its conscious weakness, dependence, and need, pouring out the yearnings of its full heart into the bosom where dwells nothing but love. In a word, it is God and the creature meeting and blending, in one act of blessed, holy, and eternal fellowship.

APRIL 12.

God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him. John 3:34.

WE needed just such a glorious head of His Church as Jesus. Moses could not have done; Aaron could not have sufficed. We wanted a head in whom "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." We needed One not only "filled with the Spirit," but possessing it illimitably, even without measure; with sufficient not only for Himself, but for a poor needy people, who as empty vessels should hang upon Him as their true Eliakim. In Him there was no lack of the Spirit's anointing. And oh how much of that Spirit needed He Himself in order to work out the great problem of man's recovery! How could He have accomplished it, considered in His inferior nature as man, but as He was replenished or sustained by the supernatural grace of the Spirit! As the Head of the Church, then, expect from a source so full, so rich, and so ample, all spiritual blessings. With Him is "the residue of the Spirit." He is our true Aaron, whose anointing flows down to His feet in streams of grace, adequate to the deepest necessity of the most feeble and lowly believer. To that fullness repair, nothing doubting of a welcome and a blessing. There was a sufficiency of the Spirit in Christ for Himself, and there is a sufficiency in Him for you. Come, then, and receive "grace for grace,"--grace needed by you, equal to all grace dwelling in Him.

A solemn inference from this subject is--if our blessed and adorable Lord needed the Spirit, how much more do His people! If He needed Him to strengthen, to comfort, to uphold, to teach, to anoint, how much deeper is our necessity of the same exalted blessing! He had no human sinful infirmity; there was no conflict in His soul between the antagonist principles of sin and holiness; and yet as man He was a pensioner each moment upon the sanctifying, teaching, upholding grace of the Spirit, His deity operating by this divine and glorious Agent. But our need of the same Spirit, oh how infinitely greater! We are encompassed with innumerable sinful infirmities; we have a law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members. We are constantly assailed by Satan, and as constantly liable to yield. Oh with what power, and constant actings of faith, should we throw ourselves upon the Spirit! How ceaselessly should we pray to Him with all supplication, imploring His guiding, teaching, sealing, comforting grace, to help us in every time of need!

APRIL 13.

In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Eph. 1:13.

WHAT do we understand by the sealing of the Spirit? What does the word of God teach upon the subject? There are various passages in which the same figure is employed, but which do not convey the idea we ascribe to His present operation. For example, there is a sealing spoken of in 2 Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His." We think it clear that the seal here alluded to has respect to the Father's sealing His people in election with the seal of His foreknowledge, which, of course, is an operation anterior to the existence of faith in the soul, and is within Himself, and not upon them. It is, so to speak, His secret designation of His people, known especially and only to Himself. There is also a sealing spoken of in Sol. Song 8:6: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm: for love is strong as death." Equally clear is it that this cannot refer to the work of the Spirit, but to Christ's strong and unchangeable love to His people. They are set as a seal upon His heart, the dwelling-place of love, and upon His arm, the instrument of power; unchangeable love and omnipotent power being pledged to their eternal security. As a seal set upon His heart, and worn upon His arm, they are precious to, and valued by, Him.

Nor are we to interpret the sealing under consideration to mean the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; for it is a remarkable fact, which speaks solemnly to those who are forming a higher estimate of gifts than of graces--that the Corinthian Church, the most distinguished for its possession of the gifts of the Spirit, was at the same time most remarkable for its lack of the sanctifying graces of the Spirit. It was the most gifted, but at the same time the least holy, community gathered and planted by the apostles.

The question still recurs--what are we to understand by the sealing of the Spirit? It is that act of the Holy Spirit, by which the work of grace is deepened in the heart of the believer, so that he has an increasing and abiding conviction of his acceptance in Jesus, and his adoption into the family of God. It is a clearer and more undoubted manifestation of Christ to the soul--a larger degree of the sanctifying, witnessing, and anointing influences of the Holy Spirit--evidencing itself in a growing holiness of character. Let us not be misunderstood. We speak not of some peculiar and sudden impulse on the mind--of some immediate suggestion or revelation to the soul--some vision of the night, or voice in the air. No; we speak of a growth in the knowledge of Christ--in sanctification of heart--in holiness of life--in an increasing and abiding moral certainty of the believer's "calling and election." The Holy Spirit is both the seal and the sealer; even as Jesus was both the sacrifice and the priest. He deepens the work of grace in the heart--He witnesses to the believer that he is born of God He seals the soul to the day of redemption, and by His indwelling and anointing influences enables him to say, "I know in whom I have believed. He has loved one, and given Himself for me."

APRIL 14.

Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us. Hebrews 10:15

THIS is sometimes a sudden work of the Spirit. A soul may be so deeply sealed in conversion--may receive such a vivid impression of Divine grace--such an enlarged communication of the Divine Spirit, as it never afterwards loses. It is sealed "unto the day of redemption;" and that, too, in the most simple way: in the hearing of a single sermon, the reading of a single chapter of God's word, some promise brought with the power of the Holy Spirit and sealed upon the heart; in a moment the soul is brought into the full assurance of understanding and of faith. Take for example that one precious promise which the Spirit has

sealed, never to be effaced, upon many a poor sinner's softened heart--"him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, what a sealing is this! God speaking to a poor, distressed, and disconsolate soul, assuring it of a cordial welcome and of a free pardon--that though no tongue can express its vileness and poverty, and no imagination conceive its deep sorrow, yet, coming to Jesus just as it is, it shall in no wise be cast out! Is not this an impression of the seal in the hands of the great Sealer, which is unto the day of redemption?

Sometimes it is as the Holy Spirit unfolds to the anxious soul that great truth, that Christ is the Savior of a sinner. You have been long waiting for some reward, some gift, some price with which to come--long lingering on the margin of the fountain, waiting for some preparation to enter--in other words, for it amounts to this, waiting to feel less vile, less unworthy, in order that you may be more welcome. And now the blessed Spirit opens to your mind that great and precious truth, that "Christ died for the ungodly,"--that He is the mighty and the willing Savior of a sinner--that no gift, no price, is asked--no previous fitness or self-preparation is necessary--that the more vile and unworthy, the more fit and the more welcome. Oh, what an impression of the seal is this upon a wounded heart! When the glorious announcement is brought home to the soul--a full and free pardon for a poor sinner--the blood of Jesus cleansing from all sin--is it any marvel that no change of time or circumstance can ever obliterate the impression or the remembrance of that moment from the mind? It was a sealing of pardon upon a heart which God had made soft, and which was the sure prelude to, yes, the beginning of, eternal glory.

But, in most cases, the sealing of the Spirit is a more gradual work. It is a work of time. The soul is placed in the school of deep experience--is led on step by step, stage by stage. The knowledge of self and of Christ increases--deeper views of indwelling sin are discovered--the heart's treachery is more acutely felt--the devices of Satan are better known--the mystery of God's gracious and providential dealings with His children more clearly unfolded and better understood--and all this, it may be, arrived at through a process of deep and painful, yet sanctified, discipline of the covenant--so that years may elapse before a child of the covenant attains to the full sealing of the Spirit. And yet, blessed be God, the work of regeneration is so perfect in itself--the blotting out of all a believer's sins so complete, and his justification so entire--that a saint of God dying in the first stages of the Divine life is safe forever. May we not refer to the thief upon the cross, as an example illustrating and confirming this?

APRIL 15.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he send forth judgment unto victory. Matthew 12:20

SURELY, it is a question of all others the most interesting and important, "Am I, or am I not, a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?" We do not say that the state of doubt and uncertainty from which this inquiry arises necessarily invalidates the evidence of grace which already exists; nor would we have it inferred, that the question itself indicates a healthy, vigorous tone of mind. But what we affirm is, that where there exists the principle of life, and a growing acquaintance with the plague of the human heart, with a conscience increasingly tender, the question will sometimes arise--"Am I a living soul in Christ?"

In enabling us to meet and satisfy this inquiry, how kind and condescending is God the Holy Spirit! A state of uncertainty as to his personal salvation cannot be regarded by the believer as the most favorable for the cultivation of personal holiness. He, indeed, is the most heavenly-minded, happy, and useful child of God, who, with the lowly confidence of the great apostle, can say, "I know in whom I have believed." But we

must admire the love of the Spirit in providing for the necessities of the weakest state of grace. If saints of advanced stature in Christ can but little sympathize with the timidity, the fearfulness, and the weakness of children of more dwarfish proportions, not so the loving, faithful Spirit of God. He is never above His own work. The smallest part is too precious to His heart, to allow of the withdrawal of His eye from it for a single moment. It is not the extent of the territory which He has subjugated to Himself in the soul, that most thrills His heart with delight--this He is sure to perfect--but it is His having at all effected an entrance, and established Himself permanently there. This is the ground of his greatest triumph, the source of His highest joy--that after all the opposition and the difficulty, He should at last have gotten Himself the victory. Is it possible, then, that the tenderest bud of grace, or the faintest glimmering of light in the soul, can be a matter of indifference to Him? Ah no! Would Titian have despised a painting, upon whose outline He had stamped the impress of his genius, because its pencilings were not complete? Would Canova have destroyed his sculpture, almost breathing with life, because its chiselings were unfinished? And will the Holy Spirit, in drawing the moral likeness of God upon the soul, in modeling the mind for heaven, slight this, His master-piece of wisdom and of power, because of its present incompleteness? No! The faintest outline of the Divine image, the roughest shaping of the Divine nature in man, presents to His eye more beauty, and symmetry, and skill, than the finest pencilings of nature, or the most perfect modelings of art. The universe of loveliness and of wonder contains nothing that can compare with it.

APRIL 16.

For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart fails me. Psalm 40:12

IN the more advanced stages of the Christian life, we find much into the experience of which the believer is brought, tending to cast down the people of God. Without minutely describing the many causes of soul-disquietude which exist, we may group together in one view those, the most fruitful, which conspire to this abasement of the spirit. We may mention, as among the most powerful, the clinging body of sin, to which his renewed spirit is enchained, from which it sighs to be delivered, but from which death only frees it; consequently, there is the daily battle with a heart of unbelief, incessantly departing from God. Then there are the labyrinths of the desert, the straitness of the narrow way, the fears within, and the fightings without, the trials of faith, the chastisements of love, the offence of the cross, the intricacies of truth, the woundings of the world, the unkindnesses of the saints, and the varied difficulties and afflictions of the wilderness--all these create oftentimes great disquietude and despondency of soul. When to these are added the yet more painful and humbling remembrance of his sins since conversion, his stumblings and falls, his unkind requitals of God's love, the base returns which he has made, and the deep ingratitude which he has felt for all the Divine goodness, with the consequent hidings of God's face, and the withdrawals of Christ's presence, he exclaims in the bitterness of his spirit, "My soul is cast down within me;" "my heart fails me."

Ah! there is no humiliation like that which a sight and sense of sin produces, the heart laid open and the soul laid low before God. The world's bitter scorn, the creature's cold neglect, are nothing in comparison. In the one case, the heart is only mortified; in the other, it is truly humbled. The one is a feeling that has to do with man only--the other is an emotion that has to do with God. And when once the believer is solemnly conscious of acting beneath the eye of God, the gaze of other eyes affects him but slightly. Oh how little do some professors deport themselves as though they had to do only with God! How imperfectly do they look upon sin as God looks upon it! But did they live more as setting the Lord always before them, how superior would they rise to the poor opinion of their fellow-sinners! To them it would then appear a very

little matter to be judged of man's judgment.

APRIL 17.

God, that comforts those that are cast down. 2 Cor. 7:6

IF there is much to cast down the child of God, there is more to lift him up. If in his path to glory there are many causes of soul-despondency, of heart-sorrow, and mental disquietude, yet in that single truth--God comforts the disconsolate--he has an infinite counterbalance of consolation, joy, and hope. That "God comforts those that are cast down," His own truth declares. It is in His heart to comfort them, and it is in His power to comfort them. He blends the desire, deep and yearning, with the ability, infinite and boundless. Not so with the fondest, tenderest creature. The sorrow is often too deep and too sacred for human sympathy to reach. But what is fathomless to man is a shallow to God.

I have said, that it is in the heart of God to comfort His people. Everything that He has done to promote their comfort proves it. He has commanded His ministers to "speak comfortably" to them. He has sent forth His word to comfort them. He has laid up all comfort and consolation for them, in the Son of His love. And in addition to all this, He has given them His own Spirit, to lead them to the Divine sources of "all consolation" which He has provided. Who could comfort the disconsolate but God? Who could effectually undertake their case but Himself? He only knows their sorrow, and He only could meet it. There is not a moment in which God is not bent upon the comfort of "those that are cast clown." All His dealings with them tend to this--even those that appear adverse and contrary. Does He wound?--it is to heal. Does He cause deep sorrow?--it is to turn that sorrow into a deeper joy. Does He empty?--it is to fill. Does He cast down?--it is to lift up again. Such is the love that moves Him, such is the wisdom that guides Him, and such too is the end that is secured in the Lord's disciplinary conduct with His people. Dear reader, it is in God's loving heart to speak comfortably to your sorrowful heart. Let but the Holy Spirit enable you to receive this truth in simple faith, and your grief, be its cause and its degree what they may, is more than half assuaged. Not a word may yet be spoken by the "God of all comfort," not a cloud may be dispersed, nor a difficulty be removed; yet to be assured by the Divine Comforter that the heart of God yearns over you, and that consolation is sparkling up from its infinite depths, waiting only the command to pour its tide of joyousness into your sorrow-stricken bosom, and it is enough. Yes, I repeat it--for every reiteration of so precious a truth must still be but a faint expression of its magnitude--it is in the loving heart of God to lift up your disconsolate soul from the dust. Listen to His words--there is melody in them such as David's harp spoke not when its soft and mellow strains soothed the perturbed spirit of Saul--"I, even I, am He that comforts you." Mark with what earnestness He makes this declaration. How solicitous does he appear to impress this truth upon the heart--that to comfort His own tried saints is His sole prerogative, and His infinite delight. "I, even I, am He that comforts you."

APRIL 18.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; . . . And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. 1 Thes. 1:5, 6

THUS does the Spirit of God empty the soul, preparing it for the reception of the grace of Christ. He 'sweeps and garnishes' the house. He dislodges the unlawful inhabitant, dethrones the rival sovereign, and thus secures room for the Savior. He disarms the will of its rebellion against God, the mind of its ignorance, and the heart of its hatred. He prostrates the barrier, removes the veil, and unlocks the door, at

which the Redeemer triumphantly enters. In effecting this mighty work, He acts as the Divine Forerunner of Christ. What the Baptist was to our Lord, "crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord," the Holy Spirit is, in heralding the entrance of Jesus to the soul. He goes before, and prepares His way. The Divinity of the Spirit furnishes Him with all the requisites for the work. He meets with difficulty, and He removes it--with obstruction, and He overcomes it--with opposition, and He vanquishes it. His power is omnipotent, His influence is irresistible, His grace is efficacious. There is no soul, however filled with darkness, and enmity, and rebellion, which He cannot prepare for Christ. There is no heart of stone which He cannot break, no brazen wall which He cannot prostrate, no mountain which He cannot level. Oh, for more faith in the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man! How much do we limit, and in limiting how do we dishonor, Him in His work of converting grace!

The providential dealings of God are frequently instrumental in the hand of the Holy Spirit of accomplishing this emptying process, thus preparing the soul for the reception of Christ. The prophet thus strikingly alludes to it: "Moab has been at ease from his youth, and He has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel." It was in this way God dealt with Naomi. Listen to her touching words: "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty." Thus it is that the bed of sickness, or the chamber of death, the loss of creature good, perhaps the loveliest and the dearest, has prepared the heart for Christ. The time of bereavement and of solitude, of suffering and of loss, has been the Lord's time of love. Providence is the hand-maid of grace--and God's providential dealings with man are frequently the harbingers of the kingdom of grace in the soul. Ah! how many whose glance falls upon this page may testify "Even thus has the Lord dealt with me. I was rich, and He has impoverished me. I was exalted, and He has laid me low. Not one cup only did He drain, not one vessel only did He dash to the earth, but many. He has emptied me 'from vessel to vessel.' " Happy shall you be if the result of all this emptying and humbling shall be the filling and enriching of your soul with larger communications of grace and truth from Jesus. A cloud of witnesses around you testify to this invariable principle of the Lord's procedure with His people--that He enriches by impoverishing them; strengthens by weakening them; replenishes by emptying; and exalts by laying them low.

APRIL 19.

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. Rev. 14:1

DO NOT FORGET, O believer, that you are journeying to the mount of God, and will soon be there. Behold it in the distance! What wonders encircle it! What glory bathes it! The exile of Patmos, lifting a corner of the veil, has presented it to our view in the words of our motto. Oh what a spectacle of magnificence is this! There is Jesus the Lamb as it had been slain. To Him every face is turned, on Him every eye is fixed, before Him every knee bends, and every tongue chants His praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Around Him are gathering each moment the One Church of God, redeemed from among men. In the light and splendor of the scene all distinctions are absorbed, all minds assimilate, all hearts blend, all voices harmonize, and the grand, visible manifestation of the Unity of the Church is perfected.

To this consummation you are hastening--keep it full in view. Turn not aside, yielding to the enchanting scenes through which you pass; but forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to the mark of the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To Mount Zion you will certainly arrive at last. Your feet shall stand upon its summit. Your voice shall blend with its music. Your heart shall thrill with its gladness. Your soul shall bathe in its glory. Oh! kindles not your spirit with ardor, and is not your heart winged with

love, while the mount of God unveils its splendor to your view? Speak, Elijah! for you have reached that exaltation, and tell us what it is to be there! No, you cannot tell. You have heard its deep songs of joy--but their strains are unutterable. You have seen its ineffable glory--but that glory is unspeakable. Let but your mantle fall upon us, and a double portion of your spirit be ours, and at our departure let your chariot of fire convey us to the skies, and we will be content to wait and gaze for awhile upon the distant vision--like some early traveler pausing upon the mountain's side to admire the ascending sun, until his features and his vestments borrow the crimson glow--until, "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," we reach it at last, and delight ourselves forever amid its transcendent beams--ceasing from our conflict, and reposing from our toil, in the beatific presence of God!

APRIL 20.

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Elijah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Matthew 8:16, 17

IN one respect only may it be said, that our Divine and adorable Lord would seem to have been exempted from the physical infirmities peculiar to the nature which He so voluntarily and entirely assumed--it does not appear that He was ever, in His own person, the subject of sickness or disease. It is indeed declared by His inspired biographer, thus confirming at the same time a prediction of one of the prophets, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses;" but this He did in the same manner in which He bore our moral sicknesses, without any personal participation. He bore our sins, but He was Himself sinless. He carried our sicknesses, but He Himself was a stranger to disease. And His exemption from the one will explain His exemption from the other. His humanity knew no sin; it was that "holy thing" begotten by the Holy Spirit, and as stainless as God Himself. As sin introduced into our nature every kind of physical evil, and disease among the rest, our Lord's freedom from the cause necessarily left Him free from the effect. He was never sick, because He never sinned. No, He had never died, had He not consented to die. With a nature prepared and conceived totally without moral taint, there were no seeds of decay from which death could reap its harvest. Under no sentence of dissolution, death had no power to claim Him as its victim. As pure as our first parents before the fall, like them in their original state of holiness, He was naturally deathless and immortal. Had He not, by an act of the most stupendous grace, taken upon Him the curse and sin of His Church, thereby making Himself responsible to Divine justice for the utmost payment of her debt, the "bitterness of death" had never touched His lips. But even then His death was voluntary. His relinquishment of life was His own act and deed. The Jew who hunted Him to the cross, and the Roman by whose hands He died, were but the actors in the awful tragedy. The "king of terrors" wrenched not His spirit from Him. Death waited the permission of Essential Life before he winged the fatal dart. "Jesus yielded up the spirit," literally, made a surrender, or let go His spirit. Thus violent though it was, and responsible for the crime as were its agents, the death of Jesus was yet voluntary. "I lay down lay life," are His expressive words.

The control and power of Christ over bodily disease form one of the most instructive and tender pages of His history when upon earth. We can but briefly refer the reader to a few of the different traits of the Divine Physician's grace, as illustrated by the various cures which He effected. His promptness in healing the nobleman's son, John 4:43--54. His unsolicited cure of the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, and the man with a withered hand, John 5:1--9; Mark 3:1--6. The humility and delicacy with which He heals the centurion's servant, Matt. 8:5--13. The tenderness with which He restored the widow's son, Luke 7:11--17. The simplicity with which He recovered the man born blind, John 9:1--7. The gentle touch with which He

cured the man, sick of the dropsy, Luke 14:1--6. The natural and spiritual healing of the paralytic, Luke 5:17--28. The resistless compassion with which He cured the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, Mark 8:24--30. The wisdom and the authority with which He healed the lunatic child, Luke 9:37--43. The power with which He ejected the demons from the man, permitting their entrance into the swine, Matthew 8:28--34. Truly the name of our Divine Physician is "Wonderful!" All this skill and power and feeling He still possesses; and in their exercise, in His present dealings with His suffering saints, is He glorified.

APRIL 21.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Those who are whole need not a physician; but those who are sick.
Luke 5:31

THAT Physician is He who spoke these words. The power of the Son of God over the moral and physical diseases of men, prove Him to be just the Physician which our circumstances require. Want we skill? He possesses it. Sympathy? He has it. Patience, tenderness, perseverance? all belong to Jesus. Wonderful Physician! No disease can baffle You, for You are Divine. No suffering can fail to move You, for You are human. Are your deep anxieties awakened, my reader, on behalf of some loved object, now pining in sickness, perhaps, to all appearance, in circumstances of extreme danger? In simple faith call in the aid of this Physician. Let the prayer of Moses for Miriam be yours, presented with the faith and urged with the importunity of the Syrophenician mother, "Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech You." "I will come and heal her," will be His reply. Deem not the case beyond His skill. Thus reasoned the sister of Lazarus: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give it You." Go in prayer and faith, and lay your sick one at His feet. Jesus is with you. One word from Him, and the disease shall vanish; one touch of His hand, and health shall be restored. He who raised Lazarus from the grave, can bring back from its brink the dear one around whose fast-waning life the veins of your heart are entwined. Ask believingly, ask submissively, ask importunately, and then leave the result with Him.

When human power has come to its end--when skill and affection can do no more--when man retires, and hope is extinguished, and the loved one is despairingly abandoned to death--then to see the Lord step forward and take the case in His hands, arresting the disease, rebuking the distemper, bringing back the glow of hea

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