

Morning by Morning

By

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VOLUME ONE

*He wakeneth morning by morning,
he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.
Isaiah 50:4*

Note: This devotional can be accessed at: www.lifebpc.com/devotions

*And the manna ceased on the morrow
after they had eaten of the old corn of the land;
neither had the children of Israel manna any more;
but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.
Joshua 5:12*

ISRAEL'S weary wanderings were all over, and the promised rest was attained. No more moving tents, fiery serpents, fierce Amalekites, and howling wildernesses: they came to the land which flowed with milk and honey, and they ate the old corn of the land. Perhaps this year, beloved Christian reader, this may be thy case or mine. Joyful is the prospect, and if faith be in active exercise, it will yield unalloyed delight. To be with Jesus in the rest which remaineth for the people of God, is a cheering hope indeed, and to expect this glory so soon is a double bliss. Unbelief shudders at the Jordan which still rolls between us and the goodly land, but let us rest assured that we have already experienced more ills than death at its worst can cause us. Let us banish every fearful thought, and rejoice with exceeding great joy, in the prospect that this year we shall begin to be "for ever with the Lord."

A part of the host will this year tarry on earth, to do service for their Lord. If this should fall to our lot, there is no reason why the New Year's text should not still be true. "We who have believed do enter into rest." The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance; He gives us "glory begun below." In heaven they are secure, and so are we preserved in Christ Jesus; there they triumph over their enemies, and we have victories too. Celestial spirits enjoy communion with their Lord, and this is not denied to us; they rest in His love, and we have perfect peace in Him: they hymn His praise, and it is our privilege to bless Him too. We will this year gather celestial fruits on earthly ground, where faith and hope have made the desert like the garden of the Lord. Man did eat angels' food of old, and why not now? O for grace to feed on Jesus, and so to eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan this year!

*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
Colossians 4:2*

IT is interesting to remark how large a portion of Sacred Writ is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;” and just as we are about to close the volume, the “Amen” of an earnest supplication meets our ear. Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elias; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities, that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray. Dost thou want nothing? Then, I fear thou dost not know thy poverty. Hast thou no mercy to ask of God? Then, may the Lord’s mercy show thee thy misery! A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of a Christian. If thou be a child of God, thou wilt seek thy Father’s face, and live in thy Father’s love. Pray that this year thou mayst be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter oftener into the banqueting-house of His love. Pray that thou mayst be an example and a blessing unto others, and that thou mayst live more to the glory of thy Master. The motto for this year must be, “Continue in prayer.”

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Isaiah 49:8

JESUS Christ is Himself the sum and substance of the covenant, and as one of its gifts, He is the property of every believer. Believer, canst thou estimate what thou hast gotten in Christ? “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Consider that word “God” and its infinity, and then meditate upon “perfect man” and all his beauty; for all that Christ, as God and man, ever had, or can have, is thine—out of pure free favour, passed over to thee to be thine entailed property forever. Our blessed Jesus, as God, is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent. Will it not console you to know that all these great and glorious attributes are altogether yours? Has He power? That power is yours to support and strengthen you, to overcome your enemies, and to preserve you even to the end. Has He love? Well, there is not a drop of love in His heart which is not yours; you may dive into the immense ocean of His love, and you may say of it all, “It is mine.” Hath He justice? It may seem a stern attribute, but even that is yours, for He will by His justice see to it that all which is promised to you in the covenant of grace shall be most certainly secured to you. And all that He has as *perfect man* is yours. As a perfect man the Father’s delight was upon Him. He stood accepted by the Most High. O believer, God’s acceptance of Christ is thine acceptance; for knowest thou not that the love which the Father set on a perfect Christ, He sets on thee *now*? For all that Christ did is thine. That perfect righteousness which Jesus wrought out, when through His stainless life He kept the law and made it honourable, is thine, and is imputed to thee. Christ is in the covenant.

*“My God, I am thine—what a comfort divine!
What a blessing to know that the Saviour is mine!
In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth dance at the sound of His name.”*

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.
2 Peter 3:18*

“**G**ROW in grace”—not in one grace only, but in *all* grace. Grow in that root-grace, *faith*. Believe the promises more firmly than you have done. Let faith increase in fullness, constancy, simplicity. Grow also in *love*. Ask that your love may become extended, more intense, more practical, influencing every thought, word, and deed. Grow likewise in *humility*. Seek to lie very low, and know more of your own nothingness. As you grow *downward* in humility, seek also to grow *upward*—having nearer approaches to God in prayer and more intimate fellowship with Jesus. May God the Holy Spirit enable you to “*grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.*” He who grows not in the knowledge of Jesus, refuses to be blessed. To know Him is “life eternal,” and to advance in the knowledge of Him is to increase in happiness. He who does not long to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet. Whoever hath sipped this wine will thirst for more, for although Christ doth satisfy, yet it is such a satisfaction, that the appetite is not cloyed, but whetted. If you know the love of Jesus—as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so will you pant after deeper draughts of His love. If you do not desire to know Him better, then you love Him not, for love always cries, “Nearer, nearer.” Absence from Christ is hell; but the presence of Jesus is heaven. Rest not then content without an increasing acquaintance with Jesus. Seek to know more of Him in His divine nature, in His human relationship, in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession, and in His future royal advent. Abide hard by the Cross, and search the mystery of His wounds. An increase of love to Jesus, and a more perfect apprehension of His love to us is one of the best tests of growth in grace.

*And God saw the light, that it was good:
and God divided the light from the darkness.*

Genesis 1:4

LIGHT might well be good since it sprang from that fiat of goodness, "Let there be light." We who enjoy it should be more grateful for it than we are, and see more of God in it and by it. Light *physical* is said by Solomon to be sweet, but *gospel* light is infinitely more precious, for it reveals eternal things, and ministers to our immortal natures. When the Holy Spirit gives us *spiritual* light, and opens our eyes to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we behold sin in its true colours, and ourselves in our real position; we see the Most Holy God as He reveals Himself, the plan of mercy as He propounds it, and the world to come as the Word describes it. Spiritual light has many beams and prismatic colours, but whether they be knowledge, joy, holiness, or life, all are divinely good. If the light received be thus good, what must the *essential* light be, and how glorious must be the place where He reveals Himself. O Lord, since light is so good, give us more of it, and more of Thyself, the true light.

No sooner is there a good thing in the world, than *a division is necessary*. Light and darkness have no communion; God has divided them, let us not confound them. Sons of light must not have fellowship with deeds, doctrines, or deceits of darkness. The children of the day must be sober, honest, and bold in their Lord's work, leaving the works of darkness to those who shall dwell in it for ever. Our Churches should by discipline divide the light from the darkness, and we should by our distinct separation from the world do the same. In judgment, in action, in hearing, in teaching, in association, we must discern between the precious and the vile, and maintain the great distinction which the Lord made upon the world's first day. O Lord Jesus, be Thou our light throughout the whole of this day, for Thy light is the light of men.

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

1 Peter 5:7

IT is a happy way of soothing sorrow when we can feel— “HE careth for *me*.” Christian! do not dishonour religion by always wearing a brow of care; come, cast your burden upon your Lord. You are staggering beneath a weight which your Father would not feel. What seems to you a crushing burden, would be to Him but as the small dust of the balance. Nothing is so sweet as to

“Lie passive in God’s hands,

And know no will but His.”

O child of suffering, be thou patient; God has not passed thee over in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows, will also furnish *you* with what you need. Sit not down in despair; hope on, hope ever. Take up the arms of faith against a sea of trouble, and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. *There is* One who careth for you. His eye is fixed on you, His heart beats with pity for your woe, and His hand omnipotent shall yet bring you the needed help. The darkest cloud shall scatter itself in showers of mercy. The blackest gloom shall give place to the morning. He, if thou art one of His family, will bind up thy wounds, and heal thy broken heart. Doubt not His grace because of thy tribulation, but believe that He loveth thee as much in seasons of trouble as in times of happiness. What a serene and quiet life might you lead if you would leave providing to the God of providence! With a little oil in the cruse, and a handful of meal in the barrel, Elijah outlived the famine, and you will do the same. If God cares for you, why need you care too? Can you trust Him for your soul, and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens, He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! have done with fretful care, and leave all thy concerns in the hand of a gracious God.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

THE believer did not always live to Christ. He began to do so when God the Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and when by grace he was brought to see the dying Saviour making a propitiation for his guilt. From the moment of the new and celestial birth the man begins to live to Christ. Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price, for whom we are willing to part with all that we have. He has so completely won our love, that it beats alone for Him; to His glory we would live, and in defence of His gospel we would die; He is the pattern of our life, and the model after which we would sculpture our character. Paul's words mean more than most men think; they imply that the *aim and end of his life was Christ*—nay, his life itself was Jesus. In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life. Jesus was his very breath, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart, the life of his life. Can you say, as a professing Christian, that you live up to this idea? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? Your business—*are you doing it for Christ?* Is it not done for self-aggrandizement and for family advantage? Do you ask, “Is that a mean reason?” For the *Christian* it is. He professes to live for Christ; how can he live for another object without committing a spiritual adultery? Many there are who carry out this principle in some measure; but who is there that dare say that he hath lived wholly for Christ as the apostle did? Yet, this alone is the true life of a Christian—its source, its sustenance, its fashion, its end, all gathered up in one word—*Christ Jesus*. Lord, accept me; I here present myself, praying to live only in Thee and to Thee. Let me be as the bullock which stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be, “Ready for either.”

And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

Exodus 28:38

WHAT a veil is lifted up by these words, and what a disclosure is made! It will be humbling and profitable for us to pause awhile and see this sad sight. The iniquities of our public worship, its hypocrisy, formality, lukewarmness, irreverence, wandering of heart and forgetfulness of God, what a full measure have we there! Our work for the Lord, its emulation, selfishness, carelessness, slackness, unbelief, what a mass of defilement is there! Our private devotions, their laxity, coldness, neglect, sleepiness, and vanity, what a mountain of dead earth is there! If we looked more carefully we should find this iniquity to be far greater than appears at first sight. Dr. Payson, writing to his brother, says, "My parish, as well as my heart, very much resembles the garden of the sluggard; and what is worse, I find that very many of my desires for the melioration of both, proceed either from pride or vanity or indolence. I look at the weeds which overspread my garden, and breathe out an earnest wish that they were eradicated. But why? What prompts the wish? It may be that I may walk out and say to myself, 'In what fine order is my garden kept!' This is *pride*. Or, it may be that my neighbours may look over the wall and say, 'How finely your garden flourishes!' This is *vanity*. Or I may wish for the destruction of the weeds, because I am weary of pulling them up. This is *indolence*." So that even our desires after holiness may be polluted by ill motives. Under the greenest sods worms hide themselves; we need not look long to discover them. How cheering is the thought, that when the High Priest bore the iniquity of the holy things he wore upon his brow the words, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD:" and even so while Jesus bears our sin, He presents before His Father's face not our unholiness, but his own holiness. O for grace to view our great High Priest by the eye of faith!

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

CHRISTIAN! here is all thou canst require. To make thee happy thou wantest something that shall *satisfy* thee; and is not this enough? If thou canst pour this promise into thy cup, wilt thou not say, with David, “My cup runneth over; I have more than heart can wish”? When this is fulfilled, “*I am thy God,*” art thou not possessor of all things? Desire is insatiable as death, but He who filleth all in all can fill it. The capacity of our wishes who can measure? but the immeasurable wealth of God can more than overflow it. I ask thee if thou art not complete when God is thine? Dost thou want anything but God? Is not His all-sufficiency enough to satisfy thee if all else should fail? But thou wantest more than quiet satisfaction; thou desirest *rapturous delight*. Come, soul, here is music fit for heaven in this thy portion, for God is the Maker of Heaven. Not all the music blown from sweet instruments, or drawn from living strings, can yield such melody as this sweet promise, “I will be their God.” Here is a deep sea of bliss, a shoreless ocean of delight; come, bathe thy spirit in it; swim an age, and thou shalt find no shore; dive throughout eternity, and thou shalt find no bottom. “*I will be their God.*” If this do not make thine eyes sparkle, and thy heart beat high with bliss, then assuredly thy soul is not in a healthy state. But thou wantest more than present delights—thou cravest something concerning which thou mayest exercise *hope*; and what more canst thou hope for than the fulfillment of this great promise, “I will be their God”? This is the masterpiece of all the promises; its enjoyment makes a heaven below, and will make a heaven above. Dwell in the light of thy Lord, and let thy soul be always ravished with His love. Get out the marrow and fatness which this portion yields thee. Live up to thy privileges, and rejoice with unspeakable joy.

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous judge,
shall give me at that day: and not to me only,
but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

2 Timothy 4:8

DOUBTING one! thou hast often said, "I fear I shall never enter heaven." Fear not! all the people of God shall enter there. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who exclaimed, "I have no fear of going home; I have sent all before me; God's finger is on the latch of my door, and I am ready for Him to enter." "But," said one, "are you not afraid lest you should miss your inheritance?" "Nay," said he, "nay; there is one crown in heaven which the angel Gabriel could not wear, it will fit no head but mine. There is one throne in heaven which Paul the apostle could not fill; it was made for me, and I shall have it." O Christian, what a joyous thought! thy portion is secure; "there remaineth a rest." "But cannot I forfeit it?" No, it is entailed. If I be a child of God I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there. Come with me, believer, and let us sit upon the top of Nebo, and view the goodly land, even Canaan. Seest thou that little river of death glistening in the sunlight, and across it dost thou see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Dost thou mark the pleasant country, and all its joyous inhabitants? Know, then, that if thou couldst fly across thou wouldst see written upon one of its many mansions, "This remaineth for such a one; preserved for him only. He shall be caught up to dwell for ever with God." Poor doubting one, see the fair inheritance; it is thine. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus, if thou hast repented of sin, if thou hast been renewed in heart, thou art one of the Lord's people, and there is a place reserved for thee, a crown laid up for thee, a harp specially provided for thee. No one else shall have thy portion, it is reserved in heaven for thee, and thou shalt have it ere long, for there shall be no vacant thrones in glory when all the chosen are gathered in.

*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear,
receive the word with joy; and these have no root,
which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

Luke 8:13

MY soul, examine thyself this morning by the light of this text. Thou hast received the word with joy; thy feelings have been stirred and a lively impression has been made; but, remember, that to receive the word in the ear is one thing, and to receive Jesus into thy very soul is quite another; superficial feeling is often joined to inward hardness of heart, and a lively impression of the word is not always a lasting one. In the parable, the seed in one case fell upon ground having a rocky bottom, covered over with a thin layer of earth; when the seed began to take root, its downward growth was hindered by the hard stone and therefore it spent its strength in pushing its green shoot aloft as high as it could, but having no inward moisture derived from root nourishment, it withered away. Is this my case? Have I been making a fair show in the flesh without having a corresponding inner life? Good growth takes place upwards and downwards at the same time. Am I rooted in sincere fidelity and love to Jesus? If my heart remains unsoftened and unfertilized by grace, the good seed may germinate for a season, but it must ultimately wither, for it cannot flourish on a rocky, unbroken, unsanctified heart. Let me dread a godliness as rapid in growth and as wanting in endurance as Jonah's gourd; let me count the cost of being a follower of Jesus, above all let me feel the energy of His Holy Spirit, and then I shall possess an abiding and enduring seed in my soul. If my mind remains as obdurate as it was by nature, the sun of trial will scorch, and my hard heart will help to cast the heat the more terribly upon the ill-covered seed, and my religion will soon die, and my despair will be terrible; therefore, O heavenly Sower, plough me first, and then cast the truth into me, and let me yield Thee a bounteous harvest.

And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

1 Corinthians 3:23

“YE are Christ’s.” You are His by donation, for the Father gave you to the Son; His by His bloody purchase, for He counted down the price for your redemption; His by dedication, for you have consecrated yourself to Him; His by relation, for you are named by His name, and made one of His brethren and joint-heirs. Labour practically to show the world that you are the servant, the friend, the bride of Jesus. When tempted to sin, reply, “I cannot do this great wickedness, for I am Christ’s.” Immortal principles forbid the friend of Christ to sin. When wealth is before you to be won by sin, say that you are Christ’s, and touch it not. Are you exposed to difficulties and dangers? Stand fast in the evil day, remembering that you are Christ’s. Are you placed where others are sitting down idly, doing nothing? Rise to the work with all your powers; and when the sweat stands upon your brow, and you are tempted to loiter, cry, “No, I cannot stop, for I am Christ’s. If I were not purchased by blood, I might be like Issachar, crouching between two burdens; but I am Christ’s, and cannot loiter.” When the siren song of pleasure would tempt you from the path of right, reply, “Thy music cannot charm me; I am Christ’s.” When the cause of God invites thee, give thy goods and thyself away, for thou art Christ’s. Never belie thy profession. Be thou ever one of those whose manners are Christian, whose speech is like the Nazarene, whose conduct and conversation are so redolent of heaven, that all who see you may know that you are the Saviour’s, recognizing in you His features of love and His countenance of holiness. “I am a Roman!” was of old a reason for integrity; far more, then, let it be your argument for holiness, “I am Christ’s!”

*Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold:
but they went not; for the ships were broken at Eziongeber.
1 Kings 22:48*

SOLOMON'S ships had returned in safety, but Jehoshaphat's vessels never reached the land of gold. Providence prospers one, and frustrates the desires of another, in the same business and at the same spot, yet the Great Ruler is as good and wise at one time as another. May we have grace today, in the remembrance of this text, to bless the Lord for ships broken at Ezion-geber, as well as for vessels freighted with temporal blessings; let us not envy the more successful, nor murmur at our losses as though we were singularly and specially tried. Like Jehoshaphat, we may be precious in the Lord's sight, although our schemes end in disappointment.

The secret cause of Jehoshaphat's loss is well worthy of notice, for it is the root of very much of the suffering of the Lord's people; it was his alliance with a sinful family, his fellowship with sinners. In 2 Chron. 20:37, we are told that the Lord sent a prophet to declare, "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." This was a fatherly chastisement, which appears to have been blest to him; for in the verse which succeeds our morning's text we find him refusing to allow his servants to sail in the same vessels with those of the wicked king. Would to God that Jehoshaphat's experience might be a warning to the rest of the Lord's people, to avoid being unequally yoked together with unbelievers! A life of misery is usually the lot of those who are united in marriage, or in any other way of their own choosing, with the men of the world. O for such love to Jesus that, like Him, we may be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; for if it be not so with us, we may expect to hear it often said, "The Lord hath broken thy works."

*Who is this that cometh from Edom,
with dyed garments from Bozrah?
this that is glorious in his apparel,
travelling in the greatness of his strength?
I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.
Isaiah 63:1*

BY the words “to save” we understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy desire onward to complete sanctification. The words are *multum in parvo*: indeed, here is all mercy in one word. Christ is not only “mighty to save” those who repent, but He is able to make men repent. He will carry those to heaven who believe; but He is, moreover, mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them. He is mighty to make the man who hates holiness love it, and to constrain the despiser of His name to bend the knee before Him. Nay, this is not all the meaning, for the divine power is equally seen in the after-work. The life of a believer is a series of miracles wrought by “the Mighty God.” The bush burns, but is not consumed. He is mighty to keep His people holy after He has made them so, and to preserve them in his fear and love until he consummates their spiritual existence in heaven. Christ’s might doth not lie in making a believer and then leaving him to shift for himself; but He who begins the good work carries it on; He who imparts the first germ of life in the dead soul, prolongs the divine existence, and strengthens it until it bursts asunder every bond of sin, and the soul leaps from earth, perfected in glory. Believer, here is encouragement. Art thou praying for some beloved one? Oh, give not up thy prayers, for Christ is “mighty to save.” You are powerless to reclaim the rebel, but your Lord is Almighty. Lay hold on that mighty arm, and rouse it to put forth its strength. Does your own case trouble you? Fear not, for His strength is sufficient for you. Whether to begin with others, or to carry on the work in you, Jesus is “mighty to save;” the best proof of which lies in the fact that He has saved *you*. What a thousand mercies that you have not found Him mighty to destroy!

And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.

2 Samuel 7:25

GOD'S promises were never meant to be thrown aside as waste paper; He intended that they should be used. God's gold is not miser's money, but is minted to be traded with. Nothing pleases our Lord better than to see His promises put in circulation; He loves to see His children bring them up to Him, and say, "Lord, do as Thou hast said." We glorify God when we plead His promises. Do you think that God will be any the poorer for giving you the riches He has promised? Do you dream that He will be any the less holy for giving holiness to you? Do you imagine He will be any the less pure for washing you from your sins? He has said "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Faith lays hold upon the promise of pardon, and it does not delay, saying, "This is a precious promise, I wonder if it be true?" but it goes straight to the throne with it, and pleads, "Lord, here is the promise, 'Do as Thou hast said.'" Our Lord replies, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." When a Christian grasps a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonours Him; but when he hastens to the throne of grace, and cries, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this, 'Thou hast said it;'" then his desire shall be granted. Our heavenly Banker delights to cash His own notes. Never let the promise rust. Draw the word of promise out of its scabbard, and use it with holy violence. Think not that God will be troubled by your importunately reminding Him of His promises. He loves to hear the loud outcries of needy souls. It is His delight to bestow favours. He is more ready to hear than you are to ask. The sun is not weary of shining, nor the fountain of flowing. It is God's nature to keep His promises; therefore go at once to the throne with "Do as Thou hast said."

Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 41:14

THIS morning let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us: “I will *help* thee.” “It is but a small thing for Me, thy God, to *help* thee. Consider what I have done already. What! not help thee? Why, I bought thee with My blood. What! not help thee? I have died for thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* thee! It is the least thing I will ever do for thee; I *have* done more, and *will* do more. Before the world began I chose thee. I made the covenant for thee. I laid aside My glory and became a man for thee; I gave up My life for thee; and if I did all this, I will surely help thee now. In helping thee, I am giving thee what I have bought for thee already. If thou hadst need of a thousand times as much help, I would give it thee; thou requirest little compared with what I am ready to give. ‘Tis much for thee to need, but it is nothing for me to bestow. ‘*Help* thee?’ Fear not! If there were an ant at the door of thy granary asking for help, it would not ruin thee to give him a handful of thy wheat; and thou art nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency. ‘I will help thee.’”

O my soul, is not this enough? Dost thou need more strength than the omnipotence of the United Trinity? Dost thou want more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, or more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring hither thine empty pitcher! Surely this well will fill it. Haste, gather up thy wants, and bring them here—thine emptiness, thy woes, thy needs. Behold, this river of God is full for thy supply; what canst thou desire beside? Go forth, my soul, in this thy might. The Eternal God is thine helper!

“Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismay’d!

I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid.”

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

Revelation 14:1

THE apostle John was privileged to look within the gates of heaven, and in describing what he saw, he begins by saying, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" This teaches us that the chief object of contemplation in the heavenly state is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Nothing else attracted the apostle's attention so much as the person of that Divine Being, who hath redeemed us by His blood. He is the theme of the songs of all glorified spirits and holy angels. Christian, here is joy for thee; thou hast looked, and thou hast seen the Lamb. Through thy tears thine eyes have seen the Lamb of God taking away thy sins. Rejoice, then. In a little while, when thine eyes shall have been wiped from tears, thou wilt see the same Lamb *exalted on His throne*. It is the joy of thy heart to hold daily fellowship with Jesus; thou shalt have the same joy to a higher degree in heaven; thou shalt enjoy the constant vision of His presence; thou shalt dwell with Him for ever. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb!" Why, that Lamb is heaven itself; for as good Rutherford says, "Heaven and Christ are the same thing;" to be with Christ is to be in heaven, and to be in heaven is to be with Christ. That prisoner of the Lord very sweetly writes in one of his glowing letters—"O my Lord Jesus Christ, if I could be in heaven without thee, it would be a hell; and if I could be in hell, and have thee still, it would be a heaven to me, for thou art all the heaven I want." It is true, is it not, Christian? Does not thy soul say so?

"Not all the harps above

Can make a heavenly place,

If God His residence remove,

Or but conceal His face."

All thou needest to make thee blessed, supremely blessed, is "to be with Christ."

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Hebrews 4:9

HOW different will be the state of the believer in heaven from what it is here! Here he is born to toil and suffer weariness, but in the land of the immortal, fatigue is never known. Anxious to serve his Master, he finds his strength unequal to his zeal: his constant cry is, "Help me to serve Thee, O my God." If he be thoroughly active, he will have much labour; not too much for his will, but more than enough for his power, so that he will cry out, "I am not wearied *of* the labour, but I am wearied *in it*." Ah! Christian, the hot day of weariness lasts not for ever; the sun is nearing the horizon; it shall rise again with a brighter day than thou hast ever seen upon a land where they serve God day and night, and yet rest from their labours. *Here*, rest is but partial, *there*, it is *perfect*. *Here*, the Christian is always unsettled; he feels that he has not yet attained. *There*, all are at rest; they have attained the summit of the mountain; they have ascended to the bosom of their God. Higher they cannot go. Ah, toil-worn labourer, only think when thou shalt rest forever! Canst thou conceive it? It is a rest *eternal*; a rest that "remaineth." Here, my best joys bear "mortal" on their brow; my fair flowers fade; my dainty cups are drained to dregs; my sweetest birds fall before Death's arrows; my most pleasant days are shadowed into nights; and the flood-tides of my bliss subside into ebbs of sorrow; but *there*, everything is immortal; the harp abides unruined, the crown unwithered, the eye undimmed, the voice unflinching, the heart unwavering, and the immortal being is wholly absorbed in infinite delight. Happy day! happy! when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and the Eternal Sabbath shall begin.

*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.
Song of Solomon 3:1*

TELL me where you lost the company of Christ, and I will tell you the most likely place to find Him. Have you lost Christ in the closet by restraining prayer? Then it is there you must seek and find Him. Did you lose Christ by sin? You will find Christ in no other way but by the giving up of the sin, and seeking by the Holy Spirit to mortify the member in which the lust doth dwell. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? You must find Christ in the Scriptures. It is a true proverb, "Look for a thing where you dropped it, it is there." So look for Christ where you lost Him, for He has not gone away. But it is hard work to go back for Christ. Bunyan tells us, the pilgrim found the piece of the road back to the Arbour of Ease, where he lost his roll, the hardest he had ever travelled. Twenty miles onward is easier than to go one mile back for the lost evidence.

Take care, then, when you find your Master, to cling close to Him. But how is it you have lost Him? One would have thought you would never have parted with such a precious friend, whose presence is so sweet, whose words are so comforting, and whose company is so dear to you! How is it that you did not watch Him every moment for fear of losing sight of Him? Yet, since you have let Him go, what a mercy that you are seeking Him, even though you mournfully groan, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" Go on seeking, for it is dangerous to be without thy Lord. Without Christ you are like a sheep without its shepherd; like a tree without water at its roots; like a sere leaf in the tempest—not bound to the tree of life. With thine whole heart seek Him, and He will be found of thee: only give thyself thoroughly up to the search, and verily, thou shalt yet discover Him to thy joy and gladness.

*And she again bare his brother Abel.
And Abel was a keeper of sheep,
but Cain was a tiller of the ground.
Genesis 4:2*

AS a shepherd Abel *sanctified his work to the glory of God, and offered a sacrifice of blood upon his altar; and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering.* This early type of our Lord is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. As we see Abel, a shepherd and yet a priest, offering a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God, we discern our Lord, who brings before His Father a sacrifice to which Jehovah ever hath respect. Abel was hated by his brother—hated without a cause; and even so was the Saviour: the natural and carnal man hated the accepted man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until his blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his altar and sacrifice with his own blood, and therein sets forth the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord. “The good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep.” Let us weep over Him as we view Him slain by the hatred of mankind, staining the horns of His altar with His own blood. *Abel’s blood speaketh.* “The Lord said unto Cain, ‘The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto Me from the ground.’” The blood of Jesus hath a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy. It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at the altar of our good Shepherd! to see Him bleeding there as the slaughtered priest, and then to hear His blood speaking peace to all His flock, peace in our conscience, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker, peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed men. Abel is the first shepherd in order of time, but our hearts shall ever place Jesus first in order of excellence. Thou great Keeper of the sheep, we the people of Thy pasture bless Thee with our whole hearts when we see Thee slain for us.

*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written,
There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer,
and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
Romans 11:26*

WHEN Moses sang at the Red Sea, it was his joy to know that *all* Israel were safe. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed." In the last time, when the elect shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb, it shall be the boast of Jesus, "Of all whom thou hast given me, I have lost none." In heaven there shall not be a vacant throne.

*"For all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of His grace,
And make His glories known."*

As many as God hath chosen, as many as Christ hath redeemed, as many as the Spirit hath called, as many as believe in Jesus, shall safely cross the dividing sea. We are not all safely landed yet:

*"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."*

The vanguard of the army has already reached the shore. We are marching through the depths; we are at this day following hard after our Leader into the heart of the sea. Let us be of good cheer: the rear-guard shall soon be where the vanguard already is; the last of the chosen ones shall soon have crossed the sea, and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure. But oh! if one were absent—oh! if one of His chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed, and cut the strings of the harps of paradise, so that music could never be extorted from them.

*Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree,
or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?*

Ezekiel 15:2

THESSE words are for the humbling of God's people; they are called God's vine, but what are they by nature more than others? They, by God's goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil; the Lord hath trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary, and they bring forth fruit to His glory; but what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit, begetting fruitfulness in them? O believer, learn to reject pride, seeing that thou hast no ground for it. Whatever thou art, thou hast nothing to make thee proud. The more thou hast, the more thou art in debt to God; and thou shouldst not be proud of that which renders thee a debtor. Consider thine origin; look back to what thou wast. Consider what thou wouldst have been but for divine grace. Look upon thyself as thou art now. Doth not thy conscience reproach thee? Do not thy thousand wanderings stand before thee, and tell thee that thou art unworthy to be called His son? And if He hath made thee anything, art thou not taught thereby that it is grace which hath made thee to differ? Great believer, thou wouldst have been a great sinner if God had not made thee to differ. O thou who art valiant for truth, thou wouldst have been as valiant for error if grace had not laid hold upon thee. Therefore, be not proud, though thou hast a large estate—a wide domain of grace, thou hadst not once a single thing to call thine own except thy sin and misery. Oh! strange infatuation, that thou, who hast borrowed everything, shouldst think of exalting thyself; a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of thy Saviour, one who hath a life which dies without fresh streams of life from Jesus, and yet proud! Fie on thee, O silly heart!

*Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst,
I have laid help upon one that is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
Psalm 89:19*

WHY was Christ chosen out of the people? Speak, my heart, for heart-thoughts are best. Was it not that He might be able to be *our brother*, in the blest tie of kindred blood? Oh, what relationship there is between Christ and the believer! The believer can say, "I have a Brother in heaven; I may be poor, but I have a Brother who is rich, and is a King, and will He suffer me to wait while He is on His throne? Oh, no! He loves me; He is my Brother." Believer, wear this blessed thought, like a necklace of diamonds, around the neck of thy memory; put it, as a golden ring, on the finger of recollection, and use it as the King's own seal, stamping the petitions of thy faith with confidence of success. He is a brother born for adversity, treat Him as such.

Christ was also chosen out of the people that He might know our wants and sympathize with us. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." In all our sorrows we have His sympathy. Temptation, pain, disappointment, weakness, weariness, poverty—He knows them all, for He has felt all. Remember this, Christian, and let it comfort thee. However difficult and painful thy road, it is marked by the footsteps of thy Saviour; and even when thou reachest the dark valley of the shadow of death, and the deep waters of the swelling Jordan, thou wilt find His footprints there. In all places whithersoever we go, He has been our forerunner; each burden we have to carry, has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel.

*"His way was much rougher and darker than mine
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"*

Take courage! Royal feet have left a blood-red track upon the road, and consecrated the thorny path for ever.

*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
and from the noisome pestilence.*

Psalm 91:3

GOD delivers His people from the snare of the fowler in two senses. *From*, and *out of*. First, He delivers them *from* the snare—does not let them enter it; and secondly, if they should be caught therein, He delivers them *out of* it. The first promise is the most precious to some; the second is the best to others.

“He shall deliver thee *from* the snare.” How? *Trouble* is often the means whereby God delivers us. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction, and He in mercy sends the rod. We say, “Lord, why is this?” not knowing that our trouble has been the means of delivering us from far greater evil. Many have been thus saved from ruin by their sorrows and their crosses; these have frightened the birds from the net. At other times, God keeps His people *from* the snare of the fowler by giving them great spiritual strength, so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” But what a blessed thing it is that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come into the net, yet God will bring him *out of* it! O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair. Wanderer though thou hast been, hear what thy Redeemer saith—“Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you.” But you say you cannot return, for you are a captive. Then listen to the promise—“Surely He shall deliver thee out of the snare of the fowler.” Thou shalt yet be brought out of all evil into which thou hast fallen, and though thou shalt never cease to repent of thy ways, yet He that hath loved thee will not cast thee away; He will receive thee, and give thee joy and gladness, that the bones which He has broken may rejoice. No bird of paradise shall die in the fowler’s net.

*I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD,
and the praises of the LORD,
according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us,
and the great goodness toward the house of Israel,
which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies,
and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.*

Isaiah 63:7

AND canst thou not do this? Are there no mercies which thou hast experienced? What though thou art gloomy now, canst thou forget that blessed hour when Jesus met thee, and said, "Come unto me"? Canst thou not remember that rapturous moment when He snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the earth, and said, "I came to break thy bonds and set thee free"? Or if the love of thine espousals be forgotten, there must surely be some precious milestone along the road of life not quite grown over with moss, on which thou canst read a happy memorial of His mercy towards thee? What, didst thou never have a sickness like that which thou art suffering now, and did He not restore thee? Wert thou never poor before, and did He not supply thy wants? Wast thou never in straits before, and did He not deliver thee? Arise, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and plait them into an ark, wherein thine infant-faith may float safely on the stream. Forget not what thy God has done for thee; turn over the book of thy remembrance, and consider the days of old. Canst thou not remember the hill Mizar? Did the Lord never meet with thee at Hermon? Hast thou never climbed the Delectable Mountains? Hast thou never been helped in time of need? Nay, I know thou hast. Go back, then, a little way to the choice mercies of yesterday, and though all may be dark *now*, light up the lamps of the past, they shall glitter through the darkness, and thou shalt trust in the Lord till the day break and the shadows flee away. "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses, for they have been ever of old."

*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not,
neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;
yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.
Are ye not much better than they?*

Matthew 6:26

GOD'S people are doubly His children, they are His offspring by creation, and they are His sons by adoption in Christ. Hence they are privileged to call Him, "Our Father which art in heaven." Father! Oh, what precious word is that. Here is *authority*: "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" If ye be sons, where is your obedience? Here is *affection* mingled with authority; an authority which does not provoke rebellion; an obedience demanded which is most cheerfully rendered—which would not be withheld even if it might. The obedience which God's children yield to Him must be *loving* obedience. Do not go about the service of God as slaves to their taskmaster's toil, but run in the way of His commands because it is your *Father's* way. Yield your bodies as instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your Father's will, and His will should be the will of His child. *Father!*—Here is a kingly attribute so sweetly veiled in love, that the King's crown is forgotten in the King's face, and His sceptre becomes, not a rod of iron, but a silver sceptre of mercy—the sceptre indeed seems to be forgotten in the tender hand of Him who wields it. Father!—Here is honour and love. How great is a Father's love to his children! That which friendship cannot do, and mere benevolence will not attempt, a father's heart and hand must do for his sons. They are his offspring, he must bless them; they are his children, he must show himself strong in their defence. If an earthly father watches over his children with unceasing love and care, how much more does our heavenly Father? Abba, Father! He who can say this, hath uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach. There is heaven in the depth of that word—Father! There is all I can ask; all my necessities can demand; all my wishes can desire. I have all in all to all eternity when I can say, "Father."

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

John 1:16

THESE words tell us that there is a fulness in Christ. There is a fulness of essential Deity, for “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.” There is a fulness of perfect manhood, for in Him, bodily, that Godhead was revealed. There is a fulness of atoning efficacy in His blood, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” There is a fulness of justifying righteousness in His life, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” There is a fulness of divine prevalence in His plea, for “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him; seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” There is a fulness of victory in His death, for through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. There is a fulness of efficacy in His resurrection from the dead, for by it “we are begotten again unto a lively hope.” There is a fulness of triumph in His ascension, for “when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.” There is a fulness of blessings of every sort and shape; a fulness of grace to pardon, of grace to regenerate, of grace to sanctify, of grace to preserve, and of grace to perfect. There is a fulness at all times; a fulness of comfort in affliction; a fulness of guidance in prosperity. A fulness of every divine attribute, of wisdom, of power, of love; a fulness which it were impossible to survey, much less to explore. “It pleased the Father that in Him should *all* fulness dwell.” Oh, what a fulness must this be of which *all* receive! Fulness, indeed, must there be when the stream is always flowing, and yet the well springs up as free, as rich, as full as ever. Come, believer, and get all thy need supplied; ask largely, and thou shalt receive largely, for this “fulness” is inexhaustible, and is treasured up where all the needy may reach it, even in Jesus, Immanuel—God with us.

*Whom we preach, warning every man,
and teaching every man in all wisdom;
that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
Colossians 1:28*

DO you not feel in your own soul that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? Every tear which trickles from your eye, weeps “imperfection”; every harsh word which proceeds from your lip, mutters “imperfection.” You have too frequently had a view of your own heart to dream for a moment of any perfection *in yourself*. But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, here is comfort for you—you are “perfect *in Christ Jesus*.” In God’s sight, you are “complete in Him;” *even now* you are “accepted in the Beloved.” But there is a second perfection, yet to be realized, which is sure to all the seed. Is it not delightful to look forward to the time when every stain of sin shall be removed from the believer, and he shall be presented faultless before the throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Church of Christ then will be so pure, that not even the eye of Omniscience will see a spot or blemish in her; so holy and so glorious, that Hart did not go beyond the truth when he said—

*“With my Saviour’s garments on,
Holy as the Holy One.”*

Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, “Complete in Christ.” Not till then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus. Doth not thy heart leap for joy at the thought of it? Black as thou art, thou shalt be white one day; filthy as thou art, thou shalt be clean. Oh, it is a marvellous salvation this! Christ takes a worm and transforms it into an angel; Christ takes a black and deformed thing and makes it clean and matchless in His glory, peerless in His beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphs. O my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth of perfection in Christ.

*While we look not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen:
for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:18*

IN our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part, to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown, and onward is the goal. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith. Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded, and the hills of light attained on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than conqueror, crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with Him, and made to sit together with Him on His throne, even as *He* has overcome and has sat down with the Father on His throne. The thought of this future may well relieve the darkness of the past and the gloom of the present. The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth. Hush, hush, my doubts! death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it. Time, how short—eternity, how long! Death, how brief—immortality, how endless! Methinks I even now eat of Eshcol's clusters, and sip of the well which is within the gate. The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there.

*“When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts to heaven ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.
Faith's bright vision shall sustain me
Till life's pilgrimage is past;
Fears may vex and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last.”*

*And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops
of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself:
for then shall the LORD go out before thee,
to smite the host of the Philistines.*

2 Samuel 5:24

THE members of Christ's Church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts, that the kingdom of Christ may come, and that His "will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven;" but there are times when God seems especially to favour Zion, such seasons ought to be to them like "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." We ought then to be doubly prayerful, doubly earnest, wrestling more at the throne than we have been wont to do. Action should then be prompt and vigorous. The tide is flowing—now let us pull manfully for the shore. O for Pentecostal outpourings and Pentecostal labours. Christian, in *yourself* there are times "when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." You have a peculiar power in prayer; the Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness; the Scripture is open to you; the promises are applied; you walk in the light of God's countenance; you have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion, and more closeness of communion with Christ than was your wont. Now, at such joyous periods when you hear the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," is the time to bestir yourself; now is the time to get rid of any evil habit, while God the Spirit helpeth your infirmities. Spread your sail; but remember what you sometimes sing—

*"I can only spread the sail;
Thou! Thou! must breathe the auspicious gale."*

Only be sure you have the sail up. Do not miss the gale for want of preparation for it. Seek help of God, that you may be more earnest in duty when made more strong in faith; that you may be more constant in prayer when you have more liberty at the throne; that you may be more holy in your conversation whilst you live more closely with Christ.

*In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely:
and this is his name whereby he shall be called,
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Jeremiah 23:6

IT will always give a Christian the greatest calm, quiet, ease, and peace, to think of the perfect righteousness of Christ. How often are the saints of God downcast and sad! I do not think they ought to be. I do not think they would if they could always see their perfection in Christ. There are some who are always talking about corruption, and the depravity of the heart, and the innate evil of the soul. This is quite true, but why not go a little further, and remember that we are “perfect in Christ Jesus.” It is no wonder that those who are dwelling upon their own corruption should wear such downcast looks; but surely if we call to mind that “Christ is made unto us righteousness,” we shall be of good cheer. What though distresses afflict me, though Satan assault me, though there may be many things to be experienced before I get to heaven, those are done for me in the covenant of divine grace; there is nothing wanting in my Lord, Christ hath done it all. On the cross He said, “It is finished!” and if it be finished, then am I complete in Him, and can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” You will not find on this side heaven a holier people than those who receive into their hearts the doctrine of Christ’s righteousness. When the believer says, “I live on Christ alone; I rest on Him solely for salvation; and I believe that, however unworthy, I am still saved in Jesus;” then there rises up as a motive of gratitude this thought— “Shall I not live to Christ? Shall I not love Him and serve Him, seeing that I am saved by His merits?” “The love of Christ constraineth us,” “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them.” If saved by imputed righteousness, we shall greatly value imparted righteousness.

*Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD:
for great is the glory of the LORD.
Psalm 138:5*

THE time when Christians begin to sing in the ways of the Lord is when they first lose their burden at the foot of the Cross. Not even the songs of the angels seem so sweet as the first song of rapture which gushes from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God. You know how John Bunyan describes it. He says when poor Pilgrim lost his burden at the Cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing—

*“Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!”*

Believer, do you recollect the day when *your* fetters fell off? Do you remember the place when Jesus met you, and said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins; they shall not be mentioned against thee any more forever.” Oh! what a sweet season is that when Jesus takes away the pain of sin. When the Lord first pardoned my sin, I was so joyous that I could scarce refrain from dancing. I thought on my road home from the house where I had been set at liberty, that I must tell the stones in the street the story of my deliverance. So full was my soul of joy, that I wanted to tell every snow-flake that was falling from heaven of the wondrous love of Jesus, who had blotted out the sins of one of the chief of rebels. But it is not only at the commencement of the Christian life that believers have reason for song; as long as they live they discover cause to sing in the ways of the Lord, and their experience of His constant lovingkindness leads them to say, “I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” See to it, brother, that thou magnifiest the Lord *this day*.

*“Long as we tread this desert land,
New mercies shall new songs demand.”*

*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood;
and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Hebrews 9:22

THIS is the voice of unalterable truth. In none of the Jewish ceremonies were sins, even typically, removed without blood-shedding. In no case, by no means can sin be pardoned without atonement. It is clear, then, that there is no hope for me out of Christ; for there is no other blood-shedding which is worth a thought as an atonement for sin. Am I, then, believing in Him? Is the blood of His atonement truly applied to my soul? All men are on a level as to their need of Him. If we be never so moral, generous, amiable, or patriotic, the rule will not be altered to make an exception for us. Sin will yield to nothing less potent than the blood of Him whom God hath set forth as a propitiation. What a blessing that there is the one way of pardon! Why should we seek another?

Persons of merely formal religion cannot understand how we can rejoice that all our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. Their works, and prayers, and ceremonies, give them very poor comfort; and well may they be uneasy, for they are neglecting the one great salvation, and endeavouring to get remission without blood. My soul, sit down, and behold the justice of God as bound to punish sin; see that punishment all executed upon thy Lord Jesus, and fall down in humble joy, and kiss the dear feet of Him whose blood has made atonement for thee. It is in vain when conscience is aroused to fly to feelings and evidences for comfort: this is a habit which we learned in the Egypt of our legal bondage. The only restorative for a guilty conscience is a sight of Jesus suffering on the cross. "The blood is the life thereof," says the Levitical law, and let us rest assured that it is the life of faith and joy and every other holy grace.

*"Oh! how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood;
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God."*

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh,
to live after the flesh.*

Romans 8:12

AS God's creatures, we are all debtors to Him: to obey Him with all our body, and soul, and strength. Having broken His commandments, as we all have, we are debtors to His justice, and we owe to Him a vast amount which we are not able to pay. But of the *Christian* it can be said that he does not owe God's *justice* anything, for Christ has paid the debt His people owed; for this reason the believer owes the more to *love*. I am a debtor to God's grace and forgiving mercy; but I am no debtor to His justice, for He will never accuse me of a debt already paid. Christ said, "It is finished!" and by that He meant, that whatever His people owed was wiped away forever from the book of remembrance. Christ, to the uttermost, has satisfied divine justice; the account is settled; the handwriting is nailed to the cross; the receipt is given, and we are debtors to God's justice no longer. But then, because we are not debtors to our Lord in that sense, we become ten times more debtors to God than we should have been otherwise. Christian, pause and ponder for a moment. What a debtor thou art to divine *sovereignty*! How much thou owest to His disinterested *love*, for He gave His own Son that He might die for thee. Consider how much you owe to His forgiving *grace*, that after ten thousand affronts He loves you as infinitely as ever. Consider what you owe to His *power*; how He has raised you from your death in sin; how He has preserved your spiritual life; how He has kept you from falling; and how, though a thousand enemies have beset your path, you have been able to hold on your way. Consider what you owe to His *immutability*. Though you have changed a thousand times, He has not changed once. Thou art as deep in debt as thou canst be to every attribute of God. To God thou owest thyself, and all thou hast—yield thyself as a living sacrifice, it is but thy reasonable service.

Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

Hosea 3:1

BELIEVER, look back through all thine experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how He hath fed and clothed thee every day—how He hath borne with thine ill manners—how He hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how He has opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how His grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles—how His blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins—how His rod and His staff have comforted thee. When thou hast thus looked back upon the love of the Lord, then let faith survey His love *in the future*, for remember that Christ's covenant and blood have something more in them than the *past*. He who has loved thee and pardoned thee, shall never cease to love and pardon. He is Alpha, and He shall be Omega also: He is first, and He shall be *last*. Therefore, bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for He is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold floods of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death cannot separate thee from His love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, "For I am persuaded, that neither death; nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, soul, is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love Jesus? Doth not a flight through illimitable plains of the ether of love inflame thy heart and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Surely as we meditate on "the love of the Lord," our hearts burn within us, and we long to love Him more.

*And we have seen and do testify
that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
1 John 4:14*

IT is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ did not come forth without His Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent of the Father, that He might be the Saviour of men. We are too apt to forget that, while there are distinctions as to the *persons* in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of *honour*. We too frequently ascribe the honour of our salvation, or at least the depths of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do the Father. This is a very great mistake. What if Jesus came? Did not His Father send Him? If He spake wondrously, did not His Father pour grace into His lips, that He might be an able minister of the new covenant? He who knoweth the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost as he should know them, never setteth one before another in his love; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary, all equally engaged in the work of salvation. O Christian, hast thou put thy confidence in the Man Christ Jesus? Hast thou placed thy reliance solely on Him? And art thou united with Him? Then believe that thou art united unto the God of heaven. Since to the Man Christ Jesus thou art brother, and holdest closest fellowship, thou art linked thereby with God the Eternal, and "the Ancient of days" is thy Father and thy friend. Didst thou ever consider the depth of love in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped His Son for the great enterprise of mercy? If not, be this thy day's meditation. The *Father* sent Him! Contemplate that subject. Think how Jesus works what the *Father* wills. In the wounds of the dying Saviour see the love of the great I AM. Let every thought of Jesus be also connected with the Eternal, ever-blessed God, for "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief."

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,
and watching thereunto with all perseverance
and supplication for all saints;
Ephesians 6:18*

WHAT multitudes of prayers we have put up from the first moment when we learned to pray. Our first prayer was a prayer for ourselves; we asked that God would have mercy upon us, and blot out our sin. He heard us. But when He had blotted out our sins like a cloud, then we had more prayers for ourselves. We have had to pray for sanctifying grace, for constraining and restraining grace; we have been led to crave for a fresh assurance of faith, for the comfortable application of the promise, for deliverance in the hour of temptation, for help in the time of duty, and for succour in the day of trial. We have been compelled to go to God for our souls, as constant beggars asking for everything. Bear witness, children of God, you have never been able to get anything for your souls elsewhere. All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drunk has flowed from the living rock—Christ Jesus the Lord. Your soul has never grown rich in itself; it has always been a pensioner upon the daily bounty of God; and hence your prayers have ascended to heaven for a range of spiritual mercies all but infinite. Your wants were innumerable, and therefore the supplies have been infinitely great, and your prayers have been as varied as the mercies have been countless. Then have you not cause to say, “I love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication”? For as your prayers have been many, so also have been God’s answers to them. He has heard you in the day of trouble, has strengthened you, and helped you, even when you dishonoured Him by trembling and doubting at the mercy-seat. Remember this, and let it fill your heart with gratitude to God, who has thus graciously heard your poor weak prayers. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

Micah 2:10

THE hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all—“Arise, and go forth from the home in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou hast done thy business, from thy family, from thy friends. Arise, and take thy last journey.” And what know we of the journey? And what know we of the country to which we are bound? A little we have read thereof, and somewhat has been revealed to us by the Spirit; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know that there is a black and stormy river called “Death.” God bids us cross it, promising to be with us. And, after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view? No traveller has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father’s house—to our Father’s home, where Jesus is—to that royal “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” This shall be our *last* removal, to dwell forever with Him we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God. Christian, meditate much on heaven, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss.

*“Prepare us, Lord, by grace divine,
For Thy bright courts on high;
Then bid our spirits rise, and join
The chorus of the sky.”*

*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name
JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Matthew 1:21

WHEN a person is dear, everything connected with him becomes dear for his sake. Thus, so precious is the person of the Lord Jesus in the estimation of all true believers, that everything about Him they consider to be inestimable beyond all price. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," said David, as if the very vestments of the Saviour were so sweetened by His person that he could not but love them. Certain it is, that there is not a spot where that hallowed foot hath trodden—there is not a word which those blessed lips have uttered—nor a thought which His loving Word has revealed—which is not to us precious beyond all price. And this is true of the *names* of Christ—they are all sweet in the believer's ear. Whether He be called the Husband of the Church, her Bridegroom, her Friend; whether He be styled the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the King, the Prophet, or the Priest—every title of our Master—Shiloh, Emmanuel, Wonderful, the Mighty Counsellor—every name is like the honeycomb dropping with honey, and luscious are the drops that distil from it. But if there be one name sweeter than another in the believer's ear, it is the name of *Jesus*. Jesus! it is the name which moves the harps of heaven to melody. Jesus! the life of all our joys. If there be one name more charming, more precious than another, it is this name. It is woven into the very warp and woof of our psalmody. Many of our hymns begin with it, and scarcely any, that are good for anything, end without it. It is the sum total of all delights. It is the music with which the bells of heaven ring; a song in a word; an ocean for comprehension, although a drop for brevity; a matchless oratorio in two syllables; a gathering up of the hallelujahs of eternity in five letters.

*"Jesus, I love Thy charming name,
'Tis music to mine ear."*

*And when David enquired of the LORD, he said,
Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them,
and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.*

2 Samuel 5:23

WHEN David made this enquiry he had just fought the Philistines, and gained a signal victory. The Philistines came up in great hosts, but, by the help of God, David had easily put them to flight. Note, however, that when they came a second time, David did not go up to fight them without enquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious, and he might have said, as many have in other cases, "I shall be victorious again; I may rest quite sure that if I have conquered once I shall triumph yet again. Wherefore should I tarry to seek at the Lord's hands?" Not so, David. He had gained one battle by the strength of the Lord; he would not venture upon another until he had ensured the same. He enquired, "Shall I go up against them?" He waited until God's sign was given. Learn from David to take no step without God. Christian, if thou wouldst know the path of duty, take God for thy compass; if thou wouldst steer thy ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the hand of the Almighty. Many a rock might be escaped, if we would let our Father take the helm; many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid, if we would leave to His sovereign will to choose and to command. The Puritan said, "As sure as ever a Christian carves for himself, he'll cut his own fingers;" this is a great truth. Said another old divine, "He that goes before the cloud of God's providence goes on a fool's errand;" and so he does. We must mark God's providence leading us; and if providence tarrys, tarry till providence comes. He who goes before providence, will be very glad to run back again. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go," is God's promise to His people. Let us, then, take all our perplexities to Him, and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Leave not thy chamber this morning without enquiring of the Lord.

*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:
every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full
and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

Philippians 4:12

THERE are many who know “how to be abased” who have not learned “how to abound.” When they are set upon the top of a pinnacle their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall. The Christian far oftener disgraces his profession in prosperity than in adversity. It is a dangerous thing to be prosperous. The crucible of adversity is a less severe trial to the Christian than the fining-pot of prosperity. Oh, what leanness of soul and neglect of spiritual things have been brought on through the very mercies and bounties of God! Yet this is not a matter of necessity, for the apostle tells us that he knew how to abound. When he had much he knew how to use it. Abundant grace enabled him to bear abundant prosperity. When he had a full sail he was loaded with much ballast, and so floated safely. It needs more than human skill to carry the brimming cup of mortal joy with a steady hand, yet Paul had learned that skill, for he declares, “In all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry.” It is a divine lesson to know how to be full, for the Israelites were full once, but while the flesh was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Many have asked for mercies that they might satisfy their own hearts’ lust. Fulness of bread has often made fulness of blood, and that has brought on wantonness of spirit. When we have much of God’s providential mercies, it often happens that we have but little of God’s grace, and little gratitude for the bounties we have received. We are full and we forget God: satisfied with earth, we are content to do without heaven. Rest assured it is harder to know how to be full than it is to know how to be hungry—so desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God. Take care that you ask in your prayers that God would teach you “how to be full.”

*“ Let not the gifts Thy love bestows
Estrange our hearts from Thee.”*

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,
and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men,
they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them,
that they had been with Jesus.*

Acts 4:13

A CHRISTIAN should be a striking likeness of Jesus Christ. You have read lives of Christ, beautifully and eloquently written, but the best life of Christ is His living biography, written out in the words and actions of His people. If we were what we profess to be, and what we should be, we should be pictures of Christ; yea, such striking likenesses of Him, that the world would not have to hold us up by the hour together, and say, "Well, it seems somewhat of a likeness;" but they would, when they once beheld us, exclaim, "He has been with Jesus; he has been taught of Him; he is like Him; he has caught the very idea of the holy Man of Nazareth, and he works it out in his life and every-day actions." A Christian should be like Christ in his *boldness*. Never blush to own your religion; your profession will never disgrace you: take care you never disgrace *that*. Be like Jesus, very valiant for your God. Imitate Him in your *loving* spirit; think kindly, speak kindly, and do kindly, that men may say of you, "He has been with Jesus." Imitate Jesus in His *holiness*. Was He zealous for His Master? So be you; ever go about doing good. Let not time be wasted: it is too precious. Was He self-denying, never looking to His own interest? Be the same. Was He devout? Be you fervent in your prayers. Had He deference to His Father's will? So submit yourselves to Him. Was He patient? So learn to endure. And best of all, as the highest portraiture of Jesus, try to forgive your enemies, as He did; and let those sublime words of your Master, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," always ring in your ears. Forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Heap coals of fire on the head of your foe by your kindness to him. Good for evil, recollect, is godlike. Be godlike, then; and in all ways and by all means, so live that all may say of you, "He has been with Jesus."

*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us,
so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

2 Corinthians 1:5

HERE is a blessed proportion. The Ruler of Providence bears a pair of scales—in this side He puts His people's trials, and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty, you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition; and when the scale of trials is full, you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. When the black clouds gather most, the light is the more brightly revealed to us. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on, the Heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew. It is a blessed thing, that when we are most cast down, then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of the Spirit. One reason is, because *trials make more room for consolation*. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies, the more comfort he will always have, because he will be more fitted to receive it. Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is this—*then we have the closest dealings with God*. When the barn is full, man can live without God: when the purse is bursting with gold, we try to do without so much prayer. But once take our *gourds* away, and we want our *God*; once cleanse the idols out of the house, then we are compelled to honour Jehovah. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." There is no cry so good as that which comes from the bottom of the mountains; no prayer half so hearty as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier; for nearness to God is happiness. Come, troubled believer, fret not over your heavy troubles, for they are the heralds of weighty mercies.

*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
that we should be called the sons of God:*

therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear
what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear,
we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

1 John 3:1,2

BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. Consider who we were, and what we feel ourselves to be even now when corruption is powerful in us, and you will wonder at our adoption. Yet we are called “*the sons of God.*” What a high relationship is that of a son, and what privileges it brings! What care and tenderness the son expects from his father, and what love the father feels towards the son! But all *that*, and more than *that*, we now have through Christ. As for the temporary drawback of suffering with the elder brother, this we accept as an honour: “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” We are content to be unknown with Him in His humiliation, for we are to be exalted with Him. “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God.*” That is easy to read, but it is not so easy to feel. How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow? Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? Does your faith almost fail you? Fear not, it is neither your graces nor feelings on which you are to live: you must live simply by faith on Christ. With all these things against us, *now*—in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—*now*, as much in the valley as on the mountain, “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.” “Ah, but,” you say, “see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory.” But read the next: “*It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.*” The Holy Spirit shall purify our minds, and divine power shall refine our bodies, then shall we see Him as He is.

And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

2 Kings 25:30

JEHOIACHIN was not sent away from the king's palace with a store to last him for months, but his provision was given him as a daily pension. Herein he well pictures the happy position of all the Lord's people. A daily portion is *all that a man really wants*. We do not need tomorrow's supplies; that day has not yet dawned, and its wants are as yet unborn. The thirst which we may suffer in the month of June does not need to be quenched in February, for we do not feel it yet; if we have enough for each day as the days arrive we shall never know want. Sufficient for the day is *all that we can enjoy*. We cannot eat or drink or wear more than the day's supply of food and raiment; the surplus gives us the care of storing it, and the anxiety of watching against a thief. One staff aids a traveller, but a bundle of staves is a heavy burden. Enough is not only as good as a feast, but is all that the veriest glutton can truly enjoy. This is *all that we should expect*; a craving for more than this is ungrateful. When our Father does not give us more, we should be content with his daily allowance. Jehoiachin's case is ours, we have a *sure* portion, a portion *given us of the king*, a *gracious* portion, and a *perpetual* portion. Here is surely ground for thankfulness.

Beloved Christian reader, in matters of grace *you need a daily supply*. You have no store of strength. Day by day must you seek help from above. It is a very sweet assurance that *a daily portion is provided for you*. In the word, through the ministry, by meditation, in prayer, and waiting upon God you shall receive renewed strength. In Jesus all needful things are laid up for you. Then *enjoy your continual allowance*. Never go hungry while the daily bread of grace is on the table of mercy.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever.

Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

HEAVEN will be full of the ceaseless praises of Jesus. Eternity! Thine unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course, but forever and forever, “to Him be glory.” Is He not a “Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek”? “To Him be glory.” Is He not King for ever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, the everlasting Father? “To Him be glory *for ever*.” Never shall His praises cease. That which was bought with blood deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the cross must never be eclipsed; the lustre of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed. O Jesus! thou shalt be praised for ever. Long as immortal spirits live—long as the Father’s throne endures—for ever, for ever, unto Thee shall be glory. Believer, you are anticipating the time when you shall join the saints above in ascribing all glory to Jesus; but are you glorifying Him *now*? The apostle’s words are, “To Him be glory both *now* and for ever.” Will you not this day make it your prayer? “Lord, help me to glorify Thee; I am poor, help me to glorify Thee by contentment; I am sick, help me to give Thee honour by patience; I have talents, help me to extol Thee by spending them for Thee; I have time, Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve thee; I have a heart to feel, Lord, let that heart feel no love but Thine, and glow with no flame but affection for Thee; I have a head to think, Lord, help me to think *of* Thee and *for* Thee; Thou hast put me in this world for something, Lord, show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose: I cannot do much, but as the widow put in her two mites, which were all her living, so, Lord, I cast my time and eternity too into Thy treasury; I am all Thine; take me, and enable me to glorify Thee *now*, in all that I say, in all that I do, and with all that I have.”

*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned,
in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Philippians 4:11

THESE words show us that contentment is not a natural propensity of man. "Ill weeds grow apace." Covetousness, discontent, and murmuring are as natural to man as thorns are to the soil. We need not sow thistles and brambles; they come up naturally enough, because they are indigenous to earth: and so, we need not teach men to complain; they complain fast enough without any education. But the precious things of the earth must be cultivated. If we would have wheat, we must plough and sow; if we want flowers, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated; it will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us. Paul says, "I have *learned* . . . to be content;" as much as to say, he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mystery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned, and then broke down. And when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old, grey-headed man, upon the borders of the grave—a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome. We might well be willing to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him, if we too might by any means attain unto his good degree. Do not indulge the notion that you can be contented without *learning*, or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. We know this from experience. Brother, hush that murmur, natural though it be, and continue a diligent pupil in the College of Content.

And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.

Genesis 25:11

HAGAR had once found deliverance there and Ishmael had drunk from the water so graciously revealed by the God who liveth and seeth the sons of men; but this was a merely casual visit, such as worldlings pay to the Lord in times of need, when it serves their turn. They cry to Him in trouble, but forsake Him in prosperity. Isaac *dwelt* there, and made the well of the living and all-seeing God his constant source of supply. The usual tenor of a man's life, the *dwelling* of his soul, is the true test of his state. Perhaps the providential visitation experienced by Hagar struck Isaac's mind, and led him to revere the place; its mystical name endeared it to him; his frequent musings by its brim at eventide made him familiar with the well; his meeting Rebecca there had made his spirit feel at home near the spot; but best of all, the fact that he there enjoyed fellowship with the living God, had made him select that hallowed ground for his dwelling. Let us learn to live in the presence of the living God; let us pray the Holy Spirit that this day, and every other day, we may feel, "Thou God seest me." May the Lord Jehovah be as a well to us, delightful, comforting, unfailling, springing up unto eternal life. The bottle of the creature cracks and dries up, but the well of the Creator never fails; happy is he who dwells at the well, and so has abundant and constant supplies near at hand. The Lord has been a sure helper to others: His name is Shaddai, God All-sufficient; our hearts have often had most delightful intercourse with Him; through Him our soul has found her glorious Husband, the Lord Jesus; and in Him this day we live, and move, and have our being; let us, then, dwell in closest fellowship with Him. Glorious Lord, constrain us that we may never leave Thee, but dwell by the well of the living God.

*I will say unto God, Do not condemn me;
shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.*

Job 10:2

PERHAPS, O tried soul, the Lord is doing this to develop thy graces. There are some of thy graces which would never be *discovered* if it were not for thy trials. Dost thou not know that thy faith never looks so grand in summer weather as it does in winter? Love is too often like a glow-worm, showing but little light except it be in the midst of surrounding darkness. Hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity. Afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of His children’s graces, to make them shine the better. It was but a little while ago that on thy knees thou wast saying, “Lord, I fear I have no faith: let me know that I have faith.” Was not this really, though perhaps unconsciously, praying for trials?—for how canst thou know that thou hast faith until thy faith is exercised? Depend upon it, God often sends us trials that our graces may be discovered, and that we may be certified of their existence. Besides, it is not merely discovery, *real growth* in grace is the result of sanctified trials. God often takes away our comforts and our privileges in order to make us better Christians. He trains His soldiers, not in tents of ease and luxury, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long mile with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. Well, Christian, may not this account for the troubles through which thou art passing? Is not the Lord bringing out your graces, and making them grow? Is not this the reason why He is contending with you?

*“Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.”*

*Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of
by the house of Israel, to do it for them;
I will increase them with men like a flock.
Ezekiel 36:37*

PRAYER is the forerunner of mercy. Turn to sacred history, and you will find that scarcely ever did a great mercy come to this world unheralded by supplication. You have found this true in your own personal experience. God has given you many an unsolicited favour, but still great prayer has always been the prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the cross, you had been praying much, and earnestly interceding with God that He would remove your doubts, and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer. When at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers. When you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles, and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Prayer is always the preface to blessing. It goes before the blessing *as the blessing's shadow*. When the sunlight of God's mercies rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain. Or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, He Himself shines behind them, and He casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain, if we are much in prayer, our pleadings are the shadows of mercy. Prayer is thus connected with the blessing *to show us the value of it*. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we should think them common things; but prayer makes our mercies more precious than diamonds. The things we ask for are precious, but we do not realize their preciousness until we have sought for them earnestly.

*"Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw;
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love;
Brings every blessing from above."*

*Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down,
comforted us by the coming of Titus;
2 Corinthians 7:6*

AND who comforteth like Him? Go to some poor, melancholy, distressed child of God; tell him sweet promises, and whisper in his ear choice words of comfort; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. He is drinking gall and wormwood, and comfort him as you may, it will be only a note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will bring forth no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no joyful sonnets. But let *God* come to His child, let Him lift up his countenance, and the mourner's eyes glisten with hope. Do you not hear him sing—

*“’Tis paradise, if thou art here;
If thou depart, ‘tis hell?”*

You could not have cheered him: but the Lord has done it; “He is the God of all comfort.” There is no balm in Gilead, but there is balm in God. There is no physician among the creatures, but the Creator is Jehovah-ropi. It is marvellous how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the goldbeater, and can hammer that promise out for whole weeks. So, then, poor Christian, thou needest not sit down in despair. Go to the Comforter, and ask Him to give thee consolation. Thou art a poor dry well. You have heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get water, and so, Christian, when thou art dry, go to God, ask Him to shed abroad His joy in thy heart, and then thy joy shall be full. Do not go to earthly acquaintances, for you will find them Job's comforters after all; but go first and foremost to thy “God, that comforteth those that are cast down,” and you will soon say, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.”

*Let your conversation be without covetousness;
and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,
I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
Hebrews 13:5*

IF we can only grasp these words by faith, we have an all-conquering weapon in our hand. What doubt will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What fear is there which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death; will not the corruptions within, and the snares without; will not the trials from above, and the temptations from beneath, all seem but light afflictions, when we can hide ourselves beneath the bulwark of "He hath said"? Yes; whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort. And this may teach us the extreme value of *searching* the Scriptures. There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore you miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it, you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is so near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopoeia of Scripture, and you may yet continue sick unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He hath said." Should you not, besides reading the Bible, store your memories richly with the promises of God? You can recollect the sayings of great men; you treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought you not to be profound in your knowledge of the words of God, so that you may be able to quote them readily when you would solve a difficulty, or overthrow a doubt? Since "He hath said" is the source of all wisdom, and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly, as "A well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." So shall you grow healthy, strong, and happy in the divine life.

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)
Genesis 49:24

THAT strength which God gives to His Josephs is *real* strength; it is not a boasted valour, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, but which ends in smoke; it is true—*divine strength*. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. There is nought that we can do without the power of God. All true strength comes from “the mighty God of Jacob.” Notice in what a *blessedly familiar way* God gives this strength to Joseph— “The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” Thus God is represented as putting His hands on Joseph’s hands, placing His arms on Joseph’s arms. Like as a father teaches his children, so the Lord teaches them that fear Him. He puts His arms upon them. Marvellous condescension! God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His throne and lays His hand upon the child’s hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong! This strength was also *covenant strength*, for it is ascribed to “the mighty *God of Jacob*.” Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, you should remember the covenant with Jacob. Christians love to think of God’s covenant. All the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the things we have, flow to us from the well-head, through the covenant. If there were no covenant, then we should fail indeed; for all grace proceeds from it, as light and heat from the sun. No angels ascend or descend, save upon that ladder which Jacob saw, at the top of which stood a covenant God. Christian, it may be that the archers have sorely grieved you, and shot at you, and wounded you, but still your bow abides in strength; be sure, then, to ascribe all the glory to Jacob’s God.

*Let your conversation be without covetousness;
and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,
I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
Hebrews 13:5*

NO promise is of private interpretation. Whatever God has said to any one saint, He has said to all. When He opens a well for one, it is that all may drink. When He openeth a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened, but all hungry saints may come and feed too. Whether He gave the word to Abraham or to Moses, matters not, O believer; He has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee, nor a wide mercy too extensive for thee. Lift up now thine eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is thine. Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of the divine promise, for the land is all thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which thou mayest not drink. If the land floweth with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk, for both are thine. Be thou bold to believe, for He hath said, "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." In this promise, God gives to His people everything. "I will never leave thee." Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is He mighty? He will show Himself strong on the behalf of them that trust Him. Is He love? Then with lovingkindness will He have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity, every one of them to its fullest extent shall be engaged on our side. To put everything in one, there is nothing you can want, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection-morning, nothing in heaven which is not contained in this text—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Ezekiel 34:26

HERE is *sovereign mercy*—“I will give them the shower in its season.” Is it not sovereign, *divine mercy*?—for who can say, “I will give them showers,” except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain. Who sendeth down the rain upon the earth? Who scattereth the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord? So grace is the gift of God, and is not to be created by man. It is also *needed* grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds, but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful is the divine blessing. In vain you labour, until God the plenteous shower bestows, and sends salvation down. Then, it is *plenteous grace*. “I will send them showers.” It does not say, “I will send them drops,” but “showers.” So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we want plenteous grace to keep us humble, to make us prayerful, to make us holy; plenteous grace to make us zealous, to preserve us through this life, and at last to land us in heaven. We cannot do without saturating showers of grace. Again, it is *seasonable grace*. “I will cause the shower to come down *in his season*.” What is thy season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. “As thy days so shall thy strength be.” And here is a *varied* blessing. “I will give thee *showers* of blessing.” The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God’s blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives converting grace, He will also give comforting grace. He will send “showers of blessing.” Look up today, O parched plant, and open thy leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matthew 3:7

IT is pleasant to pass over a country after a storm has spent itself; to smell the freshness of the herbs after the rain has passed away, and to note the drops while they glisten like purest diamonds in the sunlight. That is the position of a Christian. He is going through a land where the storm has spent itself upon His Saviour's head, and if there be a few drops of sorrow falling, they distil from clouds of mercy, and Jesus cheers him by the assurance that they are not for his destruction. But how terrible is it to witness the approach of a tempest: to note the forewarnings of the storm; to mark the birds of heaven as they droop their wings; to see the cattle as they lay their heads low in terror; to discern the face of the sky as it groweth black, and look to the sun which shineth not, and the heavens which are angry and frowning! How terrible to await the dread advance of a hurricane—such as occurs, sometimes, in the tropics—to wait in terrible apprehension till the wind shall rush forth in fury, tearing up trees from their roots, forcing rocks from their pedestals, and hurling down all the dwelling-places of man! And yet, sinner, this is your present position. No hot drops have as yet fallen, but a shower of fire is coming. No terrible winds howl around you, but God's tempest is gathering its dread artillery. As yet the water-floods are dammed up by mercy, but the flood-gates shall soon be opened: the thunderbolts of God are yet in His storehouse, but lo! the tempest hastens, and how awful shall that moment be when God, robed in vengeance, shall march forth in fury! Where, where, where, O sinner, wilt thou hide thy head, or whither wilt thou flee? O that the hand of mercy may now lead you to Christ! He is freely set before you in the gospel: His riven side is the rock of shelter. Thou knowest thy need of Him; believe in Him, cast thyself upon Him, and then the fury shall be overpast for ever.

*But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*

Jonah 2:9

SALVATION is the work of God. It is He alone who quickens the soul “dead in trespasses and sins,” and it is He also who maintains the soul in its spiritual life. He is both “Alpha and Omega.” “Salvation is of the Lord.” If I am prayerful, God makes me prayerful; if I have graces, they are God’s gifts to me; if I hold on in a consistent life, it is because He upholds me with His hand. I do nothing whatever towards my own preservation, except what God Himself first does in me. Whatever I have, all my goodness is of the Lord alone. Wherein I sin, that is my own; but wherein I act rightly, that is of God, wholly and completely. If I have repulsed a spiritual enemy, the Lord’s strength nerved my arm. Do I live before men a consecrated life? It is not I, but Christ who liveth in me. Am I sanctified? I did not cleanse myself: God’s Holy Spirit sanctifies me. Am I weaned from the world? I am weaned by *God’s* chastisements sanctified to my good. Do I grow in knowledge? The great Instructor teaches me. All my jewels were fashioned by heavenly art. I find in God all that I want; but I find in myself nothing but sin and misery. “He only is my rock and my salvation.” Do I feed on the Word? That Word would be no food for me unless the Lord made it food for my soul, and helped me to feed upon it. Do I live on the manna which comes down from heaven? What is that manna but Jesus Christ himself incarnate, whose body and whose blood I eat and drink? Am I continually receiving fresh increase of strength? Where do I gather my might? My help cometh from heaven’s hills: without Jesus I can do nothing. As a branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can I, except I abide in Him. What Jonah learned in the great deep, let me learn this morning in my closet: “Salvation is of the Lord.”

*Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge,
even the most High, thy habitation;
Psalm 91:9*

THE Israelites in the wilderness *were continually exposed to change*. Whenever the pillar stayed its motion, the tents were pitched; but tomorrow, ere the morning sun had risen, the trumpet sounded, the ark was in motion, and the fiery, cloudy pillar was leading the way through the narrow defiles of the mountain, up the hillside, or along the arid waste of the wilderness. They had scarcely time to rest a little before they heard the sound of “Away! this is not your rest; you must still be onward journeying towards Canaan!” They were never long in one place. Even wells and palm trees could not detain them. Yet they had an abiding home in their God, His cloudy pillar was their roof-tree, and its flame by night their household fire. They must go onward from place to place, continually changing, never having time to settle, and to say, “Now we are secure; in this place we shall dwell.” “Yet,” says Moses, “though we are always changing, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place throughout all generations.” The Christian knows no change with regard to God. He may be rich today and poor tomorrow; he may be sickly today and well tomorrow; he may be in happiness today, tomorrow he may be distressed—but there is no change with regard to his relationship to God. If He loved me yesterday, He loves me today. My unmoving mansion of rest is my blessed Lord. Let prospects be blighted; let hopes be blasted; let joy be withered; let mildews destroy everything; I have lost nothing of what I have in God. He is “my strong habitation whereunto I can continually resort.” I am a pilgrim in the world, but at home in my God. In the earth I wander, but in God I dwell in a quiet habitation.

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

Psalm 62:5

IT is the believer's privilege to use this language. If he is looking for aught from the world, it is a poor "expectation" indeed. But if he looks to God for the supply of his wants, whether in temporal or spiritual blessings, his "expectation" will not be a vain one. Constantly he may draw from the bank of faith, and get his need supplied out of the riches of God's lovingkindness. This I know, I had rather have God for my banker than all the Rothschilds. My Lord never fails to honour His promises; and when we bring them to His throne, He never sends them back unanswered. Therefore I will wait only at His door, for He ever opens it with the hand of munificent grace. At this hour I will try Him anew. But we have "expectations" beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our "expectation is from Him." Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness He will send angels to carry us to His bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily, some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, "Sister spirit, come away!" As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be amongst the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord—for "We shall see Him as He is." Then if these be thine "expectations," O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify Him from whom cometh all thy supplies, and of whose grace in thy election, redemption, and calling, it is that thou hast any "expectation" of coming glory.

*The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.
Jeremiah 31:3*

THE thunders of the law and the terrors of judgment are all used to bring us to Christ; but the final victory is effected by lovingkindness. The prodigal set out to his father's house from a sense of need; but his father saw him a great way off, and ran to meet him; so that the last steps he took towards his father's house were with the kiss still warm upon his cheek, and the welcome still musical in his ears.

*“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”*

The Master came one night to the door, and knocked with the iron hand of the law; the door shook and trembled upon its hinges; but the man piled every piece of furniture which he could find against the door, for he said, “I will not admit the man.” The Master turned away, but by-and-bye He came back, and with His own soft hand, using most that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again—oh, so softly and tenderly. This time the door did not shake, but, strange to say, it opened, and there upon his knees the once unwilling host was found rejoicing to receive his guest. “Come in, come in; thou hast so knocked that my bowels are moved for thee. I could not think of thy pierced hand leaving its blood-mark on my door, and of thy going away houseless, ‘Thy head filled with dew, and thy locks with the drops of the night.’ I yield, I yield, Thy love has won my heart.” So in every case: lovingkindness wins the day. What Moses with the tablets of stone could never do, Christ does with His pierced hand. Such is the doctrine of effectual calling. Do I understand it experimentally? Can I say, “He drew me, and I followed on, glad to confess the voice divine?” If so, may He continue to draw me, till at last I shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Song of Solomon 4:16

ANYTHING is better than the dead calm of indifference. Our souls may wisely desire the north wind of trouble if that alone can be sanctified to the drawing forth of the perfume of our graces. So long as it cannot be said, "The Lord was not in the wind," we will not shrink from the most wintry blast that ever blew upon plants of grace. Did not the spouse in this verse humbly submit herself to the reproofs of her Beloved; only entreating Him to send forth His grace in some form, and making no stipulation as to the peculiar manner in which it should come? Did she not, like ourselves, become so utterly weary of deadness and unholy calm that she sighed for any visitation which would brace her to action? Yet she desires the warm south wind of comfort, too, the smiles of divine love, the joy of the Redeemer's presence; these are often mightily effectual to arouse our sluggish life. She desires either one or the other, or both; so that she may but be able to delight her Beloved with the spices of her garden. She cannot endure to be unprofitable, nor can we. How cheering a thought that Jesus can find comfort in our poor feeble graces. Can it be? It seems far too good to be true. Well may we court trial or even death itself if we shall thereby be aided to make glad Immanuel's heart. O that our heart were crushed to atoms if only by such bruising our sweet Lord Jesus could be glorified. Graces unexercised are as sweet perfumes slumbering in the cups of the flowers: the wisdom of the great Husbandman overrules diverse and opposite causes to produce the one desired result, and makes both affliction and consolation draw forth the grateful odours of faith, love, patience, hope, resignation, joy, and the other fair flowers of the garden. May we know by sweet experience, what this means.

*But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines,
to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter,
and his axe, and his mattock.*

1 Samuel 13:20

WE are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. *Every weapon within our reach must be used.* Preaching, teaching, praying, giving, all must be brought into action, and talents which have been thought too mean for service, must now be employed. Coulter, and axe, and mattock, may all be useful in slaying Philistines; rough tools may deal hard blows, and killing need not be elegantly done, so long as it is done effectually. Each moment of time, in season or out of season; each fragment of ability, educated or untutored; each opportunity, favourable or unfavourable, must be used, for our foes are many and our force but slender.

Most of our tools want sharpening; we need quickness of perception, tact, energy, promptness, in a word, complete adaptation for the Lord's work. Practical common sense is a very scarce thing among the conductors of Christian enterprises. We might learn from our enemies if we would, and so *make the Philistines sharpen our weapons.* This morning let us note enough to sharpen our zeal during this day by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the energy of the Papists, how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, are they to monopolize all the earnestness? Mark the heathen devotees, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols! are they alone to exhibit patience and self-sacrifice? Observe the prince of darkness, how persevering in his endeavours, how unabashed in his attempts, how daring in his plans, how thoughtful in his plots, how energetic in all! The devils are united as one man in their infamous rebellion, while we believers in Jesus are divided in our service of God, and scarcely ever work with unanimity. O that from Satan's infernal industry we may learn to go about like good Samaritans, seeking whom we may bless!

*Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver;
I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
Isaiah 48:10*

COMFORT thyself, tried believer, with this thought: God saith, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Does not the word come like a soft shower, assuaging the fury of the flame? Yea, is it not an asbestos armour, against which the heat hath no power? Let affliction come—God has chosen me. Poverty, thou mayst stride in at my door, but God is in the house already, and He has chosen me. Sickness, thou mayst intrude, but I have a balsam ready—God has chosen me. Whatever befalls me in this vale of tears, I know that He has "chosen" me. If, believer, thou requirest still greater comfort, remember *that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace*. In that silent chamber of yours, there sitteth by your side One whom thou hast not seen, but whom thou lovest; and oftentimes when thou knowest it not, He makes all thy bed in thy affliction, and smoothes thy pillow for thee. Thou art in poverty; but in that lovely house of thine the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor. He loves to come into these desolate places, that He may visit thee. Thy friend sticks closely to thee. Thou canst not see Him, but thou mayst feel the pressure of His hands. Dost thou not hear His voice? Even in the valley of the shadow of death He says, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." Remember that noble speech of Caesar: "Fear not, thou carriest Caesar and all his fortune." Fear not, Christian; Jesus is with thee. In all thy fiery trials, His presence is both thy comfort and safety. He will never leave one whom He has chosen for His own. "Fear not, for I am with thee," is His sure word of promise to His chosen ones in the "furnace of affliction." Wilt thou not, then, take fast hold of Christ, and say—

*"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where He goes."*

*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee:
for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
2 Corinthians 12:9*

IF none of God's saints were poor and tried, we should not know half so well the consolations of divine grace. When we find the wanderer who has not where to lay his head, who yet can say, "Still will I trust in the Lord;" when we see the pauper starving on bread and water, who still glories in Jesus; when we see the bereaved widow overwhelmed in affliction, and yet having faith in Christ, oh! what honour it reflects on the gospel. God's grace is illustrated and magnified in the poverty and trials of believers. Saints bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good, and that out of apparent evils a real blessing shall ultimately spring—that their God will either work a deliverance for them speedily, or most assuredly support them in the trouble, as long as He is pleased to keep them in it. This patience of the saints proves the power of divine grace. There is a lighthouse out at sea: it is a calm night—I cannot tell whether the edifice is firm; the tempest must rage about it, and then I shall know whether it will stand. So with the Spirit's work: if it were not on many occasions surrounded with tempestuous waters, we should not know that it was true and strong; if the winds did not blow upon it, we should not know how firm and secure it was. The master-works of God are those men who stand in the midst of difficulties, steadfast, unmoveable,—

*"Calm mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."*

He who would glorify his God must set his account upon meeting with many trials. No man can be illustrious before the Lord unless his conflicts be many. If then, yours be a much-tried path, rejoice in it, because you will the better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God. As for His failing you, never dream of it—hate the thought. The God who has been sufficient until now, should be trusted to the end.

*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others;
but let us watch and be sober.
1 Thessalonians 5:6*

THERE are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, “To prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse.” Christian enquired, “Brother, where shall we begin?” And Hopeful answered, “Where God began with us.” Then Christian sang this song—

*“When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither;
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them, in any wise,
Thus to keep open their drowsy slumb’ring eyes.
Saints’ fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell.”*

Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone, are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take “sweet counsel” with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is the Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto Him; let your heart be full of Him; let your lips speak of His worth. Friend, live near to the cross, and thou wilt not sleep. *Labour to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going.* If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, thou wilt not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open—the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them—a crown of gold ready for thy brow? Ah! no; in holy fellowship continue to watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 3:7

REGENERATION is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation, and we should be very diligent to take heed that we really are “born again,” for there are many who fancy they are, who are not. Be assured that the name of a Christian is not the nature of a Christian; and that being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no avail whatever, unless there be something more added to it—the being “born again,” is a matter so *mysterious*, that human words cannot describe it. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Nevertheless, it is a change which is *known and felt*: known by works of holiness, and felt by a gracious experience. This great work is *supernatural*. It is not an operation which a man performs for himself: a new principle is infused, which works in the heart, renews the soul, and affects the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making it alive: man can do the one, God alone can do the other. If you have then, been “born again,” your acknowledgment will be, “O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, Thou art my spiritual Parent; unless Thy Spirit had breathed into me the breath of a new, holy, and spiritual life, I had been to this day ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ My heavenly life is wholly derived from Thee, to Thee I ascribe it. ‘My life is hid with Christ in God.’ It is no longer I who live, but Christ who liveth in me.” May the Lord enable us to be well assured on this vital point, for to be unregenerate is to be unsaved, unpardoned, without God, and without hope.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

Mark 11:22

FAITH is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith *is* the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; and without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor Little-faith could not have fought "Apollyon;" it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor Little-faith could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Great-heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little-faith says, "It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go;" but Great-faith remembers the promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; as thy days, so shall thy strength be:" and so she boldly ventures. Little-faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood; but Great-faith sings, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:" and she fords the stream at once. Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness and not that of gloom? Then "have faith in God." If you love darkness, and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, "great faith."

*Confirming the souls of the disciples,
and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must
through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

Acts 14:22

GOD'S people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, He included chastisements amongst the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in Christ's last legacy. So surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by Him, so surely are our trials allotted to us: He has ordained their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the "Father of the faithful." Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honour are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have His presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "the kingdom," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it.

His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend,

O daughters of Jerusalem.

Song of Solomon 5:16

THE superlative beauty of Jesus is all-attracting; it is not so much to be admired as to be loved. He is more than pleasant and fair, He is lovely. Surely the people of God can fully justify the use of this golden word, for He is the object of their warmest love, a love founded on the intrinsic excellence of His person, the complete perfection of His charms. Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master's lips, and say, "Are they not most sweet?" Do not His words cause your hearts to burn within you as He talks with you by the way? Ye worshippers of Immanuel, look up to His head of much fine gold, and tell me, are not His thoughts precious unto you? Is not your adoration sweetened with affection as ye humbly bow before that countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars? Is there not a charm in His every feature, and is not His whole person fragrant with such a savour of His good ointments, that therefore the virgins love Him? Is there one member of His glorious body which is not attractive?—one portion of His person which is not a fresh loadstone to our souls?—one office which is not a strong cord to bind your heart? Our love is not as a seal set upon His heart of love alone; it is fastened upon His arm of power also; nor is there a single part of Him upon which it does not fix itself. We anoint His whole person with the sweet spikenard of our fervent love. His whole life we would imitate; His whole character we would transcribe. In all other beings we see some lack, in Him there is all perfection. The best even of His favoured saints have had blots upon their garments and wrinkles upon their brows; He is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots: the fair world itself hath its wilderness; we cannot love the whole of the most lovely thing; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy—light without darkness—glory without cloud— "Yea, He is *altogether* lovely."

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

Psalm 30:6

“**M**OAB settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly: let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy—and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be *presumption*; even David said, “I shall never be moved;” and we are not better than David, nor half so good. Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way; if you are treading them, or if the way be rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure, we should dream “we stand;” and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy.

We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank Him for our changes; we extol His name for losses of property; for we feel that had He not chastened us thus, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial.

*“Afflictions, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent.”*

*Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.
But sin, that it might appear sin,
working death in me by that which is good;
that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

Romans 7:13

BEWARE of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear lest they should offend against God. But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world: the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him does not alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds. At first a little sin startles us; but soon we say, "Is it not a little one?" Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a little ill; and then follows an unholy presumption: "We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it has been consistent." So we palliate sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names. Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin. Take heed lest thou fall by little and little. Sin, a *little* thing? Is it not a poison? Who knows its deadliness? Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes? Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin, a little thing? It girded the Redeemer's head with thorns, and pierced His heart! It made *Him* suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor *the least appearance of evil*. Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Saviour, and you will see it to be "exceeding sinful."

*Ye have heard that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
Matthew 5:43*

“**L**OVE thy neighbour.” Perhaps he rolls in riches, and thou art poor, and living in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion; thou seest every day his estates, his fine linen, and his sumptuous banquets; God has given him these gifts, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. Be content with thine own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were as thyself. Love him, and then thou wilt not envy him.

Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbour. Own that thou art bound to love them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are far more thine equals than thine inferiors, for “God hath made of one blood all people that dwell upon the face of the earth.” It is thy coat which is better than theirs, but thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? Take heed that thou love thy neighbour even though he be in rags, or sunken in the depths of poverty.

But, perhaps, you say, “I cannot love my neighbours, because for all I do they return ingratitude and contempt.” So much the more room for the heroism of love. Wouldst thou be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, still loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*; and remember if *they* spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them. Love thy neighbour, for in so doing thou art following the footsteps of Christ.

*And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate:
and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?
2 Kings 7:3*

DEAR reader, this little book was mainly intended for the edification of believers, but if you are yet unsaved, our heart yearns over you: and we would fain say a word which may be blessed to you. Open your Bible, and read the story of the lepers, and mark their position, which was much the same as yours. If you remain where you are you must perish; if you go to Jesus you can but die. "Nothing venture, nothing win," is the old proverb, and in your case the venture is no great one. If you sit still in sullen despair, no one can pity you when your ruin comes; but if you die with mercy sought, if such a thing were possible, you would be the object of universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; but you know that, at any rate, some are saved who believe in Him, for certain of your own acquaintances have received mercy: then why not you? The Ninevites said, "Who can tell?" Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord's mercy. To perish is so awful, that if there were but a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand. We have thus been talking to you on your own unbelieving ground, we would now assure you, as from the Lord, that if you seek Him He will be found of you. Jesus casts out none who come unto Him. You shall not perish if you trust Him; on the contrary, you shall find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria's deserted camp. May the Holy Spirit embolden you to go at once, and you shall not believe in vain. When you are saved yourself, publish the good news to others. Hold not your peace; tell the King's household first, and unite with them in fellowship; let the porter of the city, the minister, be informed of your discovery, and then proclaim the good news in every place. The Lord save thee ere the sun goes down this day.

*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
1 Corinthians 10:12*

IT is a curious fact, that there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith, I shall not fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray." He who boasts of grace has little grace to boast of. Some who do this imagine that their graces can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, or else the brook will soon be dry. If a continuous stream of oil comes not to the lamp, though it burn brightly today, it will smoke tomorrow, and noxious will be its scent. Take heed that thou gloriest not in thy graces, but let all thy glorying and confidence be in Christ and His strength, for only so canst thou be kept from falling. Be much more in prayer. Spend longer time in holy adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him; and when that happy day shall come, when He whom you love shall say, "Come up higher," may it be your happiness to hear Him say, "Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, and henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away." On, Christian, with care and caution! On, with holy fear and trembling! On, with faith and confidence in Jesus alone, and let your constant petition be, "Uphold me according to Thy word." He is able, and He alone, "To keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

*Thou therefore, my son, be strong
in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 Timothy 2:1*

CHRI**S**T has grace without measure in Himself, but He hath not retained it for Himself. As the reservoir empties itself into the pipes, so hath Christ emptied out His grace for His people. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He seems only to have in order to dispense to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing, but only running in order to supply the empty pitchers and the thirsty lips which draw nigh unto it. Like a tree, He bears sweet fruit, not to hang on boughs, but to be gathered by those who need. Grace, whether its work be to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore, is ever to be had from Him freely and without price; nor is there one form of the work of grace which He has not bestowed upon His people. As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb; and herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and His Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the meanest saint has an unction of the same costly moisture as that which fell upon the head. This is true communion when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch. As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from Him, we shall behold Him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with Him. Let us make daily use of our riches, and ever repair to Him as to our own Lord in covenant, taking from Him the supply of all we need with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse.

*Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry;
hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee,
and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

Psalm 39:12

YES, O Lord, *with Thee*, but not *to Thee*. All my natural alienation from Thee, Thy grace has effectually removed; and now, in fellowship with Thyself, I walk through this sinful world as a pilgrim in a foreign country. *Thou* art a stranger in Thine own world. Man forgets Thee, dishonours Thee, sets up new laws and alien customs, and knows Thee not. When Thy dear Son came unto His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Never was foreigner so speckled a bird among the denizens of any land as Thy beloved Son among His mother's brethren. It is no marvel, then, if I who live the life of Jesus, should be unknown and a stranger here below. Lord, I would not be a citizen where Jesus was an alien. His pierced hand has loosened the cords which once bound my soul to earth, and now I find myself a stranger in the land. My speech seems to these Babylonians among whom I dwell an outlandish tongue, my manners are singular, and my actions are strange. A Tartar would be more at home in Cheapside than I could ever be in the haunts of sinners. But here is the sweetness of my lot: I am a stranger *with Thee*. Thou art my fellow-sufferer, my fellow-pilgrim. Oh, what joy to wander in such blessed society! My heart burns within me by the way when thou dost speak to me, and though I be a sojourner, I am far more blest than those who sit on thrones, and far more at home than those who dwell in their ceiled houses.

“To me remains nor place, nor time:

My country is in every clime;

I can be calm and free from care

On any shore, since God is there.

While place we seek, or place we shun,

The soul finds happiness in none:

But with a God to guide our way,

‘Tis equal joy to go or stay.”

*Only they would that we should remember the poor;
the same which I also was forward to do.*

Galatians 2:10

WHY does God allow so many of His children to be poor? He could make them all rich if He pleased; He could lay bags of gold at their doors; He could send them a large annual income; or He could scatter round their houses abundance of provisions, as once he made the quails lie in heaps round the camp of Israel, and rained bread out of heaven to feed them. There is no necessity that they should be poor, except that He sees it to be best. “The cattle upon a thousand hills are His”—He could supply them; He could make the richest, the greatest, and the mightiest bring all their power and riches to the feet of His children, for the hearts of all men are in His control. But He does not choose to do so; He allows them to suffer want, He allows them to pine in penury and obscurity. Why is this? There are many reasons: one is, *to give us, who are favoured with enough, an opportunity of showing our love to Jesus.* We show our love to Christ when we sing of Him and when we pray to Him; but if there were no sons of need in the world we should lose the sweet privilege of evidencing our love, by ministering in almsgiving to His poorer brethren; He has ordained that thus we should prove that our love standeth not in word only, but in deed and in truth. If we truly love Christ, we shall care for those who are loved by Him. Those who are dear to Him will be dear to us. Let us then look upon it not as a duty but as a privilege to relieve the poor of the Lord’s flock—remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Surely this assurance is sweet enough, and this motive strong enough to lead us to help others with a willing hand and a loving heart—recollecting that all we do for His people is graciously accepted by Christ as done to Himself.

*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3:26*

THE fatherhood of God is common to all his children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and be as valiant as he! But, alas, I stumble at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not one whit more God's child than you are. Peter and Paul, the highly-favoured apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you also; the weak Christian is as much a child of God as the strong one.

*"This cov'nant stands secure,
Though earth's old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now."*

All the names are in the same family register. One may have more grace than another, but God our heavenly Father has the same tender heart towards all. One may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the King's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father."

Yet, while we are comforted by knowing this, let us not rest contented with weak faith, but ask, like the Apostles, to have it increased. However feeble our faith may be, if it be real faith in Christ, we shall reach heaven at last, but we shall not honour our Master much on our pilgrimage, neither shall we abound in joy and peace. If then you would live to Christ's glory, and be happy in His service, seek to be filled with the spirit of adoption more and more completely, till perfect love shall cast out fear.

*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
Romans 4:20*

CHRISTIAN, take good care of thy faith; for recollect *faith is the only way whereby thou canst obtain blessings*. If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down but faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers, from God's throne except it be the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and the Lord Jesus in glory. Let that angel be withdrawn, we can neither send up prayer, nor receive the answers. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and heaven—on which God's messages of love fly so fast, that before we call He answers, and while we are yet speaking He hears us. But if that telegraphic wire of faith be snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble?—I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy?—my soul on her dear Refuge leans by faith. But take faith away—in vain I call to God. There is no road betwixt my soul and heaven. In the deepest wintertime faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel—ay, and all the better for the biting frost; but blockade the road, and how can we communicate with the Great King? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the power of God. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith ensures every attribute of God in my defence. It helps me to defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavereth—who is like a wave of the Sea—expect that he will receive anything of God! O, then, Christian, watch well thy faith; for with it thou canst win all things, however poor thou art, but without it thou canst obtain nothing. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

Song of Solomon 2:8

THIS was a golden name which the ancient Church in her most joyous moments was wont to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in her land, *her* love-note was sweeter than either, as she sang, “*My beloved* is mine and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies.” Ever in her song of songs doth she call Him by that delightful name, “My beloved!” Even in the long winter, when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to lay aside the burden of the Lord for a little season, and to say, as Esaias did, “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard.” Though the saints had never seen His face, though as yet He was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld His glory, yet He was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the “beloved” of all those who were upright before the Most High. We, in the summer days of the Church, are also wont to speak of Christ as the best beloved of our soul, and to feel that He is very precious, the “chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” So true is it that the Church loves Jesus, and claims Him as her beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword have been able to do it; nay, he joyously boasts, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

O that we knew more of Thee, Thou ever precious one!

*My sole possession is Thy love;
In earth beneath, or heaven above,
I have no other store;
And though with fervent suit I pray,
And importune Thee day by day,
I ask Thee nothing more.*

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

John 16:32

FEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of “the agony.” Occupied with the passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes as to the spirit of the gospel. To twelve, nay, to eleven only was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see “this great sight.” Out of the eleven, eight were left at a distance; they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favoured ones could approach the veil of our Lord’s mysterious sorrow: within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone’s-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press *alone*, and of the people there must be none with Him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced saints, who may be written down as “Fathers;” these having done business on great waters, can in some degree measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer’s passion. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for future, special, and tremendous conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest; they have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and are made conformable unto His death. Yet even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Saviour’s woe. “Thine unknown sufferings” is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy: there was an inner chamber in our Master’s grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. There Jesus is “*left alone.*” Here Jesus was more than ever an “Unspeakable gift!” Is not Watts right when he sings—

*“And all the unknown joys he gives,
Were bought with agonies unknown.”*

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Matthew 26:39

THERE are several instructive features in our Saviour's prayer in His hour of trial. It was *lonely prayer*. He withdrew even from His three favoured disciples. Believer, be much in solitary prayer, especially in times of trial. Family prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice, these are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God's.

It was *humble prayer*. Luke says He knelt, but another evangelist says He "fell on His face." Where, then, must be THY place, thou humble servant of the great Master? What dust and ashes should cover *thy* head! Humility gives us good foot-hold in prayer. There is no hope of prevalence with God unless we abase ourselves that He may exalt us in due time.

It was *filial prayer*. "Abba, Father." You will find it a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. You have no rights as a subject, you have forfeited them by your treason; but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not afraid to say, "My Father, hear my cry."

Observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times. Cease not until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Lastly, *it was the prayer of resignation*. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will determine for the best. Be thou content to leave thy prayer in His hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately, yet with humility and resignation, thou shalt surely prevail.

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Luke 22:44

THE mental pressure arising from our Lord's struggle with temptation, so forced his frame to an unnatural excitement, that his pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground. This proves *how tremendous must have been the weight of sin* when it was able to crush the Saviour so that He distilled great drops of blood! This demonstrates *the mighty power of His love*. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth *the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings*, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. If men suffer great pain of mind apparently the blood rushes *to* the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Saviour in His agony; He is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of His agony driving His blood to the heart to nourish Himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours Him out upon the ground, pictures the fulness of the offering which He made for men.

Do we not perceive how intense must have been the wrestling through which He passed, and will we not hear its voice *to us*? "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Behold the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;
Hebrews 5:7

DID this fear arise from the infernal suggestion *that He was utterly forsaken*. There may be sterner trials than this, but surely it is *one* of the worst to be utterly forsaken? “See,” said Satan, “thou hast a friend nowhere! Thy Father hath shut up the bowels of His compassion against thee. Not an angel in His courts will stretch out his hand to help thee. All heaven is alienated from Thee; Thou art left alone. See the companions with whom Thou hast taken sweet counsel, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there Thy brother James, see there Thy loved disciple John, and Thy bold apostle Peter, how the cowards sleep when Thou art in Thy sufferings! Lo! Thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against Thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon Thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm Thee: and what wilt Thou do, Thou solitary one?” It may be, this was the temptation; we think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto Him strengthening Him removed that fear. He was heard in that He feared; He was no more alone, but heaven was with Him. It may be that this is the reason of His coming three times to His disciples—as Hart puts it—

*“Backwards and forwards thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man.”*

He would see for Himself whether it were really true that all men had forsaken Him; He found them all asleep; but perhaps He gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. At any rate, He was heard in that He feared. Jesus was heard in His deepest woe; my soul, thou shalt be heard also.

*But Jesus said unto him, Judas,
betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?
Luke 22:48*

“**T**HE kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Let me be on my guard when the world puts on a loving face, for it will, if possible, betray me as it did my Master, with a kiss. Whenever a man is about to stab religion, he usually professes very great reverence for it. Let me beware of the sleek-faced hypocrisy which is armour-bearer to heresy and infidelity. Knowing the deceivableness of unrighteousness, let me be wise as a serpent to detect and avoid the designs of the enemy. The young man, void of understanding, was led astray by the kiss of the strange woman: may my soul be so graciously instructed all this day, that “the much fair speech” of the world may have no effect upon me. Holy Spirit, let me not, a poor frail son of man, be betrayed with a kiss!

But what if I should be guilty of the same accursed sin as Judas, that son of perdition? I have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; I am a member of His visible Church; I sit at the communion table: all these are so many kisses of my lips. Am I sincere in them? If not, I am a base traitor. Do I live in the world as carelessly as others do, and yet make a profession of being a follower of Jesus? Then I must expose religion to ridicule, and lead men to speak evil of the holy name by which I am called. Surely if I act thus inconsistently I am a Judas, and it were better for me that I had never been born. Dare I hope that I am clear in this matter? Then, O Lord, keep me so. O Lord, make me sincere and true. Preserve me from every false way. Never let me betray my Saviour. I do love Thee, Jesus, and though I often grieve Thee, yet I would desire to abide faithful even unto death. O God, forbid that I should be a high-soaring professor, and then fall at last into the lake of fire, because I betrayed my Master with a kiss.

*Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he:
if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:
John 18:8*

MARK, my soul, the care which Jesus manifested even in His hour of trial, towards the sheep of His hand! The ruling passion is strong in death. He resigns Himself to the enemy, but He interposes a word of power to set His disciples free. As to Himself, like a sheep before her shearers He is dumb and opened not His mouth, but for His disciples' sake He speaks with Almighty energy. Herein is love, constant, self-forgetting, faithful love. But is there not far more here than is to be found upon the surface? Have we not the very soul and spirit of the atonement in these words? The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, and pleads that they must therefore go free. The Surety is bound, and justice demands that those for whom He stands a substitute should go their way. In the midst of Egypt's bondage, that voice rings as a word of power, "*Let these go their way.*" Out of slavery of sin and Satan the redeemed must come. In every cell of the dungeons of Despair, the sound is echoed, "*Let these go their way,*" and forth come Despondency and Much-afraid. Satan hears the well-known voice, and lifts his foot from the neck of the fallen; and Death hears it, and the grave opens her gates to let the dead arise. *Their way* is one of progress, holiness, triumph, glory, and none shall dare to stay them in it. No lion shall be on their way, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon. "The hind of the morning" has drawn the cruel hunters upon himself, and now the most timid roes and hinds of the field may graze at perfect peace among the lilies of his loves. The thunder-cloud has burst over the Cross of Calvary, and the pilgrims of Zion shall never be smitten by the bolts of vengeance. Come, my heart, rejoice in the immunity which thy Redeemer has secured thee, and bless His name all the day, and every day.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Matthew 26:56

HE never deserted them, but they in cowardly fear of their lives, fled from Him in the very beginning of His sufferings. This is but one instructive instance of the frailty of all believers if left to themselves; they are but sheep at the best, and they flee when the wolf cometh. They had all been warned of the danger, and had promised to die rather than leave their Master; and yet they were seized with sudden panic, and took to their heels. It may be, that I, at the opening of this day, have braced up my mind to bear a trial for the Lord's sake, and I imagine myself to be certain to exhibit perfect fidelity; but let me be very jealous of myself, lest having the same evil heart of unbelief, I should depart from my Lord as the apostles did. It is one thing to promise, and quite another to perform. It would have been to their eternal honour to have stood at Jesus' right side manfully; they fled from honour; may I be kept from imitating them! Where else could they have been so safe as near their Master, who could presently call for twelve legions of angels? They fled from their true safety. O God, let me not play the fool also. Divine grace can make the coward brave. The smoking flax can flame forth like fire on the altar when the Lord wills it. These very apostles who were timid as hares, grew to be bold as lions after the Spirit had descended upon them, and even so the Holy Spirit can make my recreant spirit brave to confess my Lord and witness for His truth.

What anguish must have filled the Saviour as He saw His friends so faithless! This was one bitter ingredient in His cup; but that cup is drained dry; let me not put another drop in it. If I forsake my Lord, I shall crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Keep me, O blessed Spirit, from an end so shameful.

*And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,
that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Ephesians 3:19

THE love of Christ in its sweetness, its fulness, its greatness, its faithfulness, passeth all human comprehension. Where shall language be found which shall describe His matchless, His unparalleled love towards the children of men? It is so vast and boundless that, as the swallow but skimmeth the water, and diveth not into its depths, so all descriptive words but touch the surface, while depths immeasurable lie beneath. Well might the poet say,

“O love, thou fathomless abyss!”

for this love of Christ is indeed measureless and fathomless; none can attain unto it. Before we can have any right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand His previous glory in its height of majesty, and His incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame. But who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When He was enthroned in the highest heavens He was very God of very God; by Him were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof. His own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the praises of cherubim and seraphim perpetually surrounded Him; the full chorus of the hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of his throne: He reigned supreme above all His creatures, God over all, blessed for ever. Who can tell His height of glory then? And who, on the other hand, can tell how low He descended? To be a man was something, to be a man of sorrows was far more; to bleed, and die, and suffer, these were much for Him who was the Son of God; but to suffer such unparalleled agony—to endure a death of shame and desertion by His Father, this is a depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. Herein is love! and truly it is love that “passeth knowledge.” O let this love fill our hearts with adoring gratitude, and lead us to practical manifestations of its power.

*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience
by the things which he suffered;
Hebrews 5:8*

WE are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of His own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master's experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. But there is one very comforting thought in the fact of Christ's "being made perfect through suffering"—it is, that He can have complete sympathy with us. "He is not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." In this sympathy of Christ we find a sustaining power. One of the early martyrs said, "I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and He suffers in me now; He sympathizes with me, and this makes me strong." Believer, lay hold of this thought in all times of agony. Let the thought of Jesus strengthen you as you follow in His steps. Find a sweet support in His sympathy; and remember that, to suffer is an honourable thing—to suffer for Christ is glory. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do this. Just so far as the Lord shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer with Christ, just so far does He honour us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings whom God hath anointed are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honoured. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us up. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath
poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the
transgressors; and he bare the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Isaiah 53:12

WHY did Jesus suffer Himself to be enrolled amongst sinners? This wonderful condescension was justified by many powerful reasons. *In such a character He could the better become their advocate.* In some trials there is an identification of the counsellor with the client, nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, when the sinner is brought to the bar, Jesus appears there Himself. *He stands to answer the accusation. He points to His side, His hands, His feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom He represents; He pleads His blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for He hath found a ransom."* Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors in order that they might *feel their hearts drawn towards Him.* Who can be afraid of one who is written in the same list with us? Surely we may come boldly to Him, and confess our guilt. He who is numbered with us cannot condemn us. Was He not put down in the transgressor's list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints?* He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; He transfers His name from yonder list to this black indictment, and our names are taken from the indictment and written in the roll of acceptance, for there is a complete transfer made between Jesus and His people. All our estate of misery and sin Jesus has taken; and all that Jesus has comes to us. His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He hath He gives us as our dowry. Rejoice, believer, in your union to Him who was numbered among the transgressors; and prove that you are truly saved by being manifestly numbered with those who are new creatures in Him.

*But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.*

Isaiah 53:5

PILATE delivered our Lord to the lictors to be scourged. The Roman scourge was a most dreadful instrument of torture. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and sharp bones were inter-twisted every here and there among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down these pieces of bone inflicted fearful laceration, and tore off the flesh from the bone. The Saviour was, no doubt, bound to the column, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this of the Roman lictors was probably the most severe of His flagellations. My soul, stand here and weep over His poor stricken body.

Believer in Jesus, can you gaze upon Him without tears, as He stands before you the mirror of agonizing love? He is at once fair as the lily for innocence, and red as the rose with the crimson of His own blood. As we feel the sure and blessed healing which His stripes have wrought in us, does not our heart melt at once with love and grief? If ever we have loved our Lord Jesus, surely we must feel that affection glowing now within our bosoms.

*“See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty’s hands,
And spit in their Creator’s face.
With thorns His temples gor’d and gash’d
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back’s with knotted scourges lash’d.
But sharper scourges tear His heart.”*

We would fain go to our chambers and weep; but since our business calls us away, we will first pray our Beloved to print the image of His bleeding self upon the tablets of our hearts all the day, and at nightfall we will return to commune with Him, and sorrow that our sin should have cost Him so dear.

Scripture Memory Programme 2013

Wisdom for Daily Living

The Book of Proverbs is filled with wisdom for daily living. The 52 proverbs in this booklet have been carefully selected to equip you with divine wisdom to know what is good and what is evil, and with the right attitudes that will enable you to live in conformity to God's will.

Memorise them and meditate on them prayerfully to be spiritually enriched!

January 6 – True Wisdom

Proverbs 9:10 – The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

January 13 – Trusting God

Proverbs 3:5 – Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

January 20 – Guidance from God

Proverbs 3:6 – In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

January 27 – True Wisdom

Proverbs 3:7 – Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

February 3 – Security in God

Proverbs 18:10 – The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

February 10 – Contentment

Proverbs 15:16 – Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

February 17 – Contentment

Proverbs 30:8 – Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.

February 24 – Hypocrisy in Worship

Proverbs 15:8 – The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is His delight.

March 3 – Right Motives

Proverbs 21:2 – Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

March 10 – Discernment

Proverbs 14:15 – The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

March 17 – Fear of Man

Proverbs 29:25 – The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

March 24 – True Value

Proverbs 13:7 – There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

March 31 – Hatred and Love

Proverbs 10:12 – Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

April 7 – Forgiveness

Proverbs 17:9 – He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

April 14 – Slothfulness

Proverbs 13:4 – The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

April 21 – Diligence

Proverbs 30:25 – The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer.

April 28 – Being Frugal

Proverbs 21:20 – There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

May 5 – Love for Pleasure

Proverbs 21:17 – He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

May 12 – The Godly Woman

Proverbs 31:30 – Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

May 19 – Addiction to Wine

Proverbs 20:1 – Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

May 26 – Exercising Moderation

Proverbs 25:16 – Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

June 2 – Choice of Friends

Proverbs 13:20 – He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

June 9 – True Friendship

Proverbs 17:17 – A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

June 16 – Parenting

Proverbs 22:6 – Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

June 23 – Faithfulness

Proverbs 11:13 – A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

June 30 – Folly of Pride

Proverbs 16:18 – Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

July 7 – Being Considerate

Proverbs 25:17 – Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.

July 14 – Correction

Proverbs 27:6 – Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

July 21 – Willingness to Learn

Proverbs 13:18 – Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

July 28 – Counsel

Proverbs 27:9 – Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

August 4 – God's Judgment

Proverbs 14:34 – Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

August 11 – Honesty

Proverbs 12:22 – Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

August 18 – Honesty

Proverbs 11:1 – A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

August 25 – Habitual Borrowing

Proverbs 22:7 – The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

September 1 – Character Moulding

Proverbs 27:17 – Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

September 8 – Peace with Man

Proverbs 16:7 – When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

September 15 – Love Your Enemy

Proverbs 24:17 – Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.

September 22 – Doing Good

Proverbs 3:27 – Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

September 29 – Respect for Parents

Proverbs 23:22 – Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

October 6 – Boasting

Proverbs 27:2 – Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

October 13 – Guarding the Heart

Proverbs 4:23 – Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

October 20 – Integrity

Proverbs 22:1 – A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

October 27 – Counsel

Proverbs 11:14 – Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

November 3 – Handling Conflicts

Proverbs 15:1 – A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

November 10 – Confession

Proverbs 28:13 – He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

November 17 – Effects of Speech

Proverbs 12:18 – There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

November 24 – Restraint in Speech

Proverbs 10:19 – In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

December 1 – Self-Control

Proverbs 16:32 – He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

December 8 – Warning against Evil

Proverbs 4:14 – Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

December 15 – Care for the Poor

Proverbs 19:17 – He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.

December 22 – Generosity

Proverbs 11:25 – The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

December 29 – Love Wisdom

Proverbs 23:23 – Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

* * *

EPILOGUE: Love and Seek True Wisdom

Proverbs 8:17 – “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.”

Wisdom loves her lovers and seeks her seekers. He is already wise who seeks to be wise, and he has almost found wisdom who diligently seeks her. What is true of wisdom in general is specially true of wisdom embodied in our LORD Jesus. Him we are to love and to seek, and in return we shall enjoy His love and find Himself.

Our business is to seek Jesus early in life. Happy are the young whose morning is spent with Jesus! It is never too soon to seek the LORD Jesus. Early seekers make certain finders. We should seek Him early by diligence. Thriving tradesmen are early risers, and thriving saints seek Jesus eagerly. Those who find Jesus to their enrichment give their hearts to seeking Him. We must seek Him first, and thus earliest. Above all things Jesus. Jesus first and nothing else even as a bad second.

The blessing is that He will be found. He reveals Himself more and more clearly to our search. He gives Himself up more fully to our fellowship. Happy men who seek One who, when He is found, remains with them forever, a treasure growingly precious to their hearts and understandings.

LORD Jesus, I have found Thee; be found of me to an unutterable degree of joyous satisfaction.

(Taken from “Faith’s Checkbook” by C.H. Spurgeon)