

Evening by Evening

By

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VOLUME FOUR

*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;
and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:
When I remember thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the night watches.
Psalm 63:5,6*

For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Psalm 84:11

BOUNTEOUS is Jehovah in His nature; to give is His delight. His gifts are beyond measure precious, and are as freely given as the light of the sun. He gives grace to His elect because He wills it, to His redeemed because of His covenant, to the called because of His promise, to believers because they seek it, to sinners because they need it. He gives grace abundantly, seasonably, constantly, readily, sovereignly; doubly enhancing the value of the boon by the manner of its bestowal. Grace in all its forms He freely renders to His people: comforting, preserving, sanctifying, directing, instructing, assisting grace, He generously pours into their souls without ceasing, and He always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall, but the Lord will give grace; poverty may happen to us, but grace will surely be afforded; death must come but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is as years roll round, and the leaves begin again to fall, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this, "The Lord will give grace."

The little conjunction "*and*" in this verse is a diamond rivet binding the present with the future: grace and glory always go together. God has married them, and none can divorce them. The Lord will never deny a soul glory to whom He has freely given to live upon His grace; indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its Sabbath dress, grace in full bloom, grace like autumn fruit, mellow and perfected. How soon we may have glory none can tell! It may be before this month of October has run out we shall see the Holy City; but be the interval longer or shorter, we shall be glorified ere long. Glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of eternity, the glory of Jesus, the glory of the Father, the Lord will surely give to His chosen. Oh, rare promise of a faithful God!

Two golden links of one celestial chain:

Who owneth grace shall surely glory gain.

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

Daniel 10:11

CHILD of God, do you hesitate to appropriate this title? Ah! Has your unbelief made you forget that *you* are greatly beloved too? Must you not have been greatly beloved, to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? When God smote His only begotten Son for you, what was this but being greatly beloved? You lived in sin, and rioted in it, must you not have been greatly beloved for God to have borne so patiently with you? You were called by grace and led to a Saviour, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven. All this proves, does it not, a very great and superabounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with mercies, it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved. If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger; if He has made you poor, yet in grace you have been rich. The more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the more evidence have you that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours. The more demerit you feel, the clearer is the display of the abounding love of God in having chosen you, and called you, and made you an heir of bliss. Now, if there be such love between God and us, let us live in the influence and sweetness of it, and use the privilege of our position. Do not let us approach our Lord as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to hear us—for we are greatly beloved by our loving Father. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Come boldly, O believer, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of thine own heart, thou art greatly beloved. Meditate on the exceeding greatness and faithfulness of divine love this evening, and so go to thy bed in peace.

*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted,
he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Hebrews 2:18

IT is a common-place thought, and yet it tastes like nectar to the weary heart—Jesus was tempted as I am. You have heard that truth many times: have you grasped it? He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall. Do not dissociate Jesus from our common manhood. It is a dark room which you are going through, but Jesus went through it before. It is a sharp fight which you are waging, but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy. Let us be of good cheer, Christ has borne the load before us, and the blood-stained footsteps of the King of glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour. There is something sweeter yet—Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned. Then, my soul, it is not needful for thee to sin, for Jesus was a man, and if one man endured these temptations and sinned not, then in His power His members may also cease from sin. Some beginners in the divine life think that they cannot be tempted without sinning, but they mistake; there is no sin in *being tempted*, but there is sin in *yielding to temptation*. Herein is comfort for the sorely tempted ones. There is still more to encourage them if they reflect that the Lord Jesus, though tempted, gloriously triumphed, and as He overcame, so surely shall His followers also, for Jesus is the representative man for His people; the Head has triumphed, and the members share in the victory. Fears are needless, for Christ is with us, armed for our defence. Our place of safety is the bosom of the Saviour. Perhaps we are tempted just now, in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed be any wind that blows us into the port of our Saviour's love! Happy wounds, which make us seek the beloved Physician. Ye tempted ones, come to your tempted Saviour, for He can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and will succour every tried and tempted one.

*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.
And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus
Christ the righteous:*

1 John 2:1

“**I**F any man sin, we *have* an advocate.” Yes, though we sin, we have Him still. John does not say, “If any man sin he has forfeited his advocate,” but “we *have* an advocate,” sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did, or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, as his advocate. The name here given to our Lord is suggestive. “*Jesus.*” Ah! Then He is an advocate such as we need, for Jesus is the name of one whose business and delight it is to save. “They shall call His name Jesus, for *He shall save* His people from their sins.” His sweetest name implies His success. Next, it is “*Jesus Christ*”—Christos, the anointed. This shows *His authority* to plead. The Christ has a right to plead, for He is the Father’s own appointed advocate and elected priest. If He were of our choosing He might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, we may safely lay our trouble where God has laid His help. He is Christ, and therefore authorized; He is Christ, and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has fully fitted Him for His work. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will the anointed use when He stands up to plead for me! One more letter of His name remains, “*Jesus Christ the righteous.*” This is not only His character BUT His plea. It is His character, and if the Righteous One be my advocate, then my cause is good, or He would not have espoused it. It is His plea, for He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by the plea that *He* is righteous. He declares Himself my substitute and puts His obedience to my account. My soul, thou hast a friend well fitted to be thine advocate, He cannot but succeed; leave thyself entirely in His hands.

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;
but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Mark 16:16

MR. MacDonald asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God." "Yes," said a middle-aged female, "and with a true heart too." "Ay," rejoined a third, "and with prayer"; and, added a fourth, "It must be the prayer of the heart." "And we must be diligent too," said a fifth, "in keeping the commandments." Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation, but they had aroused his deepest pity. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work and become great, but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. Believing and being baptized are no matters of merit to be gloried in—they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm. It may be that the reader is unsaved—what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation as laid down in the text to be dubious? How can that be when God has pledged His own word for its certainty? Do you think it too easy? Why, then, do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those without excuse who neglect it. To believe is simply to trust, to depend, to rely upon Christ Jesus. To be baptized is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience the very night of his conversion. The outward sign saves not, but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus, and, like the Lord's Supper, is not to be neglected. Reader, do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears, you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever, then remember there is but one door, and if you will not enter by it you will perish in your sins.

*And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because
of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married:
for he had married an Ethiopian woman.
Numbers 12:1*

STRANGE choice of Moses, but how much more strange the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than he! Our Lord, who is fair as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black, because the sun has looked upon her. It is the wonder of angels that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men. Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love, be also overwhelmed with astonishment that such love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace. Jesus must have found the cause of His love in His own heart; He could not have found it in us, for it is not there. Even since our conversion we have been black, though grace has made us comely. Holy Rutherford said of himself what we must each subscribe to—"His relation to me is, that I am sick, and He is the Physician of whom I stand in need. Alas! How often I play fast and loose with Christ! He bindeth, I loose; He buildeth, I cast down; I quarrel with Christ, and He agreeth with me twenty times a day!" Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls, pursue Thy gracious work of conforming us to Thine image, till Thou shalt present even us poor Ethiops unto Thyself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder if this vain world opposes Jesus and His spouse, and especially when great sinners are converted? For this is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, "This man receiveth sinners." Still is the old cause of quarrel revived, "Because he had married an Ethiopian woman."

*I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel
and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou
rebellest against me?*

Isaiah 36:5

READER, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian's answer, and see if it is yours. "On whom dost thou trust?" "I trust," says the Christian, "in a triune God. I trust *the Father*, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust Him to provide for me in providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house where the many mansions are. I trust *the Son*. Very God of very God is He—the man Christ Jesus. I trust in Him to take away all my sins by His own sacrifice, and to adorn me with His perfect righteousness. I trust Him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before His Father's throne, and I trust Him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust Him for what He is, for what He has done, and for what He has promised yet to do. And I trust *the Holy Spirit*—He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out; I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness; I trust Him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light for ever."

Oh, blessed trust! To trust Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never wane, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution! Happy art thou, reader, if this trust is thine! So trusting, thou shalt enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter, and the foundation of thy trust shall never be removed.

*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith,
praying in the Holy Ghost,
Jude 20*

MARK the grand characteristic of true prayer— “*In the Holy Ghost.*” The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven’s storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. We must shoot the Lord’s arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in *fervency*. Cold prayers ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer—it is essential that it be red hot. It is praying *perseveringly*. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker, and the longer the angel lingers the more resolved is he that he will never let him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God’s sight is tearful, agonizing, unconquerable importunity. It means praying humbly, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never sing *Gloria in excelsis* except we pray to God *De profundis*: out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never behold glory in the highest. It is *loving* prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love—love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. A man prevails only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it, so that we pray believing God’s promise. O that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Ghost is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert Thy mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer.

*But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.
Matthew 15:23*

GENUINE seekers who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Saviour did not at once bestow the blessing, even though the woman had great faith in Him. He intended to give it, but He waited awhile. "He answered her not a word." Were not her prayers good? Never better in the world. Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy. Did she not *feel* her need sufficiently? She felt it overwhelmingly. Was she not earnest enough? She was intensely so. Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus wondered, and said, "O woman, great is thy faith." See then, although it is true that faith brings peace, yet it does not always bring it instantaneously. There may be certain reasons calling for the trial of faith, rather than the reward of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul like a hidden seed, but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. A painful silence from the Saviour is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul, but heavier still is the affliction of a harsh cutting reply such as this, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light, but others are plants of slower growth. A deeper sense of sin may be given to you instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah! Poor heart, though Christ beat and bruise thee, or even slay thee, trust Him; though He should give thee an angry word, believe in the love of His heart. Do not, I beseech thee, give up seeking or trusting my Master, because thou hast not yet obtained the conscious joy which thou longest for. Cast thyself on Him, and perseveringly depend even where thou canst not rejoicingly hope.

*And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will
redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.*

Jeremiah 15:21

NOTE the glorious personality of the promise. *I will, I will.* The Lord Jehovah Himself interposes to deliver and redeem His people. He pledges Himself personally to rescue them. His own arm shall do it, that He may have the glory. Here is not a word said of any effort of our own which may be needed to assist the Lord. Neither our strength nor our weakness is taken into the account, but the lone *I*, like the sun in the heavens, shines out resplendent in all-sufficiency. Why then do we calculate our forces, and consult with flesh and blood to our grievous wounding? Jehovah has power enough without borrowing from our puny arm. Peace, ye unbelieving thoughts, be still, and know that the Lord reigneth. Nor is there a hint concerning secondary means and causes. The Lord says nothing of friends and helpers: He undertakes the work alone, and feels no need of human arms to aid Him. Vain are all our lookings around to companions and relatives; they are broken reeds if we lean upon them—often unwilling when able, and unable when they are willing. Since the promise comes alone from God, it would be well to wait only upon Him; and when we do so, our expectation never fails us. Who are the wicked that we should fear them? The Lord will utterly consume them; they are to be pitied rather than feared. As for terrible ones, they are only terrors to those who have no God to fly to, for when the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If we run into sin to please the wicked, we have cause to be alarmed, but if we hold fast our integrity, the rage of tyrants shall be overruled for our good. When the fish swallowed Jonah, he found him a morsel which he could not digest; and when the world devours the church, it is glad to be rid of it again. In all times of fiery trial, in patience let us possess our souls.

*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called:
and whom he called, them he also justified:
and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Romans 8:30

IN the second epistle to Timothy, first chapter, and ninth verse, are these words—“Who hath saved us, and called us with an *holy* calling.” Now, here is a touchstone by which we may try our calling. It is “an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.” This calling forbids all trust in our own doings, and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. As He that hath called you is holy, so must you be holy. If you are living in sin, you are not called, but if you are truly Christ’s, you can say, “Nothing pains me so much as sin; I desire to be rid of it; Lord, help me to be holy.” Is this the panting of thy heart? Is this the tenor of thy life towards God, and His divine will? Again, in Philippians 3:13, 14, we are told of “The *high* calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Is then your calling a high calling? Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires? Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend it with God and for God? Another test we find in Hebrews 3:1—“Partakers of the *heavenly* calling.” Heavenly calling means a call *from* heaven. If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? Is it a call to heaven as well as from heaven? Unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling; for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Is thy calling thus holy, high, heavenly? Then, beloved, thou hast been called of God, for such is the calling wherewith God doth call His people.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 14:26

THIS age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Jesus cheers us, not by His personal presence, as He shall do by-and-by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost, who is evermore the Comforter of the church. It is His office to console the hearts of God's people. He convinces of sin; He illuminates and instructs; but still the main part of His work lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. He does this by revealing Jesus to them. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If we may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Jesus is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of His own things, but of the things of Christ. So if we give to the Holy Spirit the Greek name of *Paraclete*, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of *Paraclesis*. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the Comfort. Now, with such rich provision for his need, why should the Christian be sad and desponding? The Holy Spirit has graciously engaged to be thy Comforter: Dost thou imagine, O thou weak and trembling believer, that He will be negligent of His sacred trust? Canst thou suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot or will not perform? If it be His especial work to strengthen thee, and to comfort thee, dost thou suppose He has forgotten His business, or that He will fail in the loving office which He sustains towards thee? Nay, think not so hardly of the tender and blessed Spirit whose name is "the Comforter." He delights to give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Trust thou in Him, and He will surely comfort thee till the house of mourning is closed for ever, and the marriage feast has begun.

*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the
coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*
Song of Solomon 8:6

WHOSE love can this be which is as mighty as the conqueror of monarchs, the destroyer of the human race? Would it not sound like satire if it were applied to my poor, weak, and scarcely living love to Jesus my Lord? I do love Him, and perhaps by His grace, I could even die for Him, but as for my love in itself, it can scarcely endure a scoffing jest, much less a cruel death. Surely it is my Beloved's love which is here spoken of—the love of Jesus, the matchless lover of souls. His love was indeed stronger than the most terrible death, for it endured the trial of the cross triumphantly. It was a lingering death, but love survived the torment; a shameful death, but love despised the shame; a penal death, but love bore our iniquities; a forsaken, lonely death, from which the eternal Father hid His face, but love endured the curse, and gloried over all. Never such love, never such death. It was a desperate duel, but love bore the palm. What then, my heart? Hast thou no emotions excited within thee at the contemplation of such heavenly affection? Yes, my Lord, I long, I pant to feel Thy love flaming like a furnace within me. Come Thou Thyself and excite the ardour of my spirit.

“For every drop of crimson blood
Thus shed to make me live,
O wherefore, wherefore have not I
A thousand lives to give?”

Why should I despair of loving Jesus with a love as strong as death? He deserves it: I desire it. The martyrs felt such love, and they were but flesh and blood, then why not I? They mourned their weakness, and yet out of weakness were made strong. Grace gave them all their unflinching constancy—there is the same grace for me. Jesus, lover of my soul, shed abroad such love, even Thy love in my heart, this evening.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

IF a Christian can by possibility be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire. Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired. Reader, would you wish to leave this world in the darkness of a desponding death bed, and enter heaven as a shipwrecked mariner climbs the rocks of his native country? Then be worldly; be mixed up with Mammonites, and refuse to go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. But would you have a heaven below as well as a heaven above? Would you comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Would you receive an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord? Then come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Would you attain the full assurance of faith? You cannot gain it while you commune with sinners. Would you flame with vehement love? Your love will be damped by the drenchings of godless society. You cannot become a great Christian—you may be a babe in grace, but you never can be a perfect man in Christ Jesus while you yield yourself to the worldly maxims and modes of business of men of the world. It is ill for an heir of heaven to be a great friend with the heirs of hell. It has a bad look when a courtier is too intimate with his king's enemies. Even small inconsistencies are dangerous. Little thorns make great blisters, little moths destroy fine garments, and little frivolities and little rogueries will rob religion of a thousand joys. O professor, too little separated from sinners, you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you be a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distinct one.

*But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb:
and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All
the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem.*

And none shall appear before me empty.

Exodus 34:20

EVERY firstborn creature must be the Lord's, but since the ass was unclean, it could not be presented in sacrifice. What then? Should it be allowed to go free from the universal law? By no means. God admits of no exceptions. The ass is His due, but He will not accept it; He will not abate the claim, but yet He cannot be pleased with the victim. No way of escape remained but redemption—the creature must be saved by the substitution of a lamb in its place; or if not redeemed, it must die. My soul, here is a lesson for thee. That unclean animal is thyself; thou art justly the property of the Lord who made thee and preserves thee, but thou art so sinful that God will not, cannot, accept thee; and it has come to this, the Lamb of God must stand in thy stead, or thou must die eternally. Let all the world know of thy gratitude to that spotless Lamb who has already bled for thee, and so redeemed thee from the fatal curse of the law. Must it not sometimes have been a question with the Israelite which should die, the ass or the lamb? Would not the good man pause to estimate and compare? Assuredly there was no comparison between the value of the soul of man and the life of the Lord Jesus, and yet the Lamb dies, and man the ass is spared. My soul, admire the boundless love of God to thee and others of the human race. Worms are bought with the blood of the Son of the Highest! Dust and ashes redeemed with a price far above silver and gold! What a doom had been mine had not plenteous redemption been found! The breaking of the neck of the ass was but a momentary penalty, but who shall measure the wrath to come to which no limit can be imagined? Inestimably dear is the glorious Lamb who has redeemed us from such a doom.

*For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.
Psalm 36:9*

THERE are times in our spiritual experience when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without Him, and He therefore takes away everything upon which we have been in the habit of depending, that He may drive us to Himself. It is a blessed thing to live at the fountain head. While our skin-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry, nothing will serve us but “Thou God seest me.” We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs and forget our Father’s house. Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion; they are blessed things, but we may put them in God’s place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God: even the brazen serpent is to be despised as “Nehushtan”, if we worship it instead of God. The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father’s bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. Our Lord favours us with a famine in the land that it may make us seek after Himself the more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God’s grace—still abiding where he stood at first—“Having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” Let us never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings, but know that because Christ offered a full atonement, therefore we are saved; for we are complete in Him. Having nothing of our own to trust to, but resting upon the merits of Jesus—His passion and holy life furnish us with the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition, we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 40:11

OUR good Shepherd has in His flock a variety of experiences, some are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith, but He is impartial in His care for all His sheep, and the weakest lamb is as dear to Him as the most advanced of the flock. Lambs are wont to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary, but from all the danger of these infirmities the Shepherd protects them with His arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish—He nourishes them till life becomes vigorous; He finds weak minds ready to faint and die—He consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones He gathers, for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish. What a quick eye He must have to see them all! What a tender heart to care for them all! What a far-reaching and potent arm, to gather them all! In His lifetime on earth He was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that He dwells in heaven, His loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below. How gently did He gather me to Himself, to His truth, to His blood, to His love, to His church! With what effectual grace did He compel me to come to Himself! Since my first conversion, how frequently has He restored me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of His everlasting arm! The best of all is, that He does it all Himself personally, not delegating the task of love, but condescending Himself to rescue and preserve His most unworthy servant. How shall I love Him enough or serve Him worthily? I would fain make His name great unto the ends of the earth, but what can my feebleness do for Him? Great Shepherd, add to Thy mercies this one other, a heart to love Thee more truly as I ought.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?

*Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

1 Samuel 15:22

SAUL had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the fineries of will-worship, but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour's command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to His precepts with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing to lay upon His altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout actions which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," however pompous. Talk not of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of His child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to the Lord's precepts, all your formalities shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing when one has been taught the lesson, to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples and decorate their priests, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord! My soul, come not thou into their secret.

*But none saith, Where is God my maker,
who giveth songs in the night;
Job 35:10*

ANY man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can praise the God who gives a plenteous harvest or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Aeolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow—the difficulty is for music to swell forth when no wind is stirring. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is skilful who sings when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart. No man can make a song in the night of himself; he may attempt it, but he will find that a song in the night must be divinely inspired. Let all things go well, I can weave songs, fashioning them wherever I go out of the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no green thing grows, and wherewith shall I frame a hymn of praise to God? How shall a mortal man make a crown for the Lord where no jewels are? Let but this voice be clear, and this body full of health, and I can sing God's praise: silence my tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and how shall I then chant God's high praises, unless He Himself give me the song? No, it is not in man's power to sing when all is adverse, unless an altar-coal shall touch his lip. It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Then, since our Maker gives *songs in the night*, let us wait upon Him for the music. O Thou chief musician, let us not remain songless because affliction is upon us, but tune Thou our lips to the melody of thanksgiving.

*I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back:
bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the
earth;*

Isaiah 43:6

ALTHOUGH this message was sent to the south, and referred to the seed of Israel, it may profitably be a summons to ourselves. Backward we are naturally to all good things, and it is a lesson of grace to learn to go forward in the ways of God. Reader, are you unconverted, but do you desire to trust in the Lord Jesus? Then *keep not back*. Love invites you, the promises secure you success, the precious blood prepares the way. Let not sins or fears hinder you, but come to Jesus just as you are. Do you long to pray? Would you pour out your heart before the Lord? *Keep not back*. The mercy-seat is prepared for such as need mercy; a sinner's cries will prevail with God. You are invited, nay, you are commanded to pray, come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace.

Dear friend, are you already saved? Then *keep not back* from union with the Lord's people. Neglect not the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. You may be of a timid disposition, but you must strive against it, lest it lead you into disobedience. There is a sweet promise made to those who confess Christ—by no means miss it, lest you come under the condemnation of those who deny Him. If you have talents *keep not back* from using them. Hoard not your wealth, waste not your time; let not your abilities rust or your influence be unused. Jesus kept not back; imitate Him by being foremost in self-denials and self-sacrifices. *Keep not back* from close communion with God, from boldly appropriating covenant blessings, from advancing in the divine life, from prying into the precious mysteries of the love of Christ. Neither, beloved friend, be guilty of keeping others back by your coldness, harshness, or suspicions. For Jesus' sake go forward yourself, and encourage others to do the like. Hell and the leaguered bands of superstition and infidelity are forward to the fight. O soldiers of the cross, keep not back.

*And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled?
and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*

Luke 24:38

“**W**HY sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?” The Lord cares for all things, and the meanest creatures share in His universal providence, but His particular providence is over His saints. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.” “Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” Let the fact that, while He is the Saviour of all men, He is specially the Saviour of them that believe, cheer and comfort you. You are His peculiar care; His regal treasure which He guards as the apple of His eye; His vineyard over which He watches day and night. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Let the thought of His special love *to you* be a spiritual pain-killer, a dear quietus to your woe: “I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*.” God says that as much to you as to any saint of old. “Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” We lose much consolation by the habit of reading His promises for the whole church, instead of taking them directly home to ourselves. Believer, grasp the divine word with a personal, appropriating faith. Think that you hear Jesus say, “I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not.” Think you see Him walking on the waters of thy trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, “Fear not, it is I; be not afraid.” Oh, those sweet words of Christ! May the Holy Ghost make you feel them as spoken to you; forget others for awhile—accept the voice of Jesus as addressed to you, and say, “Jesus whispers consolation; I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight.”

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

John 16:15

THERE are times when all the promises and doctrines of the Bible are of no avail, unless a gracious hand shall apply them to us. We are thirsty, but too faint to crawl to the water-brook. When a soldier is wounded in battle it is of little use for him to know that there are those at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and medicines there to ease all the pains which he now suffers: what he needs is to be carried thither, and to have the remedies applied. It is thus with our souls, and to meet this need there is one, even the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to us. Think not that Christ hath placed His joys on heavenly shelves that we may climb up to them for ourselves, but He draws near, and sheds His peace abroad in our hearts. O Christian, if thou art tonight labouring under deep distresses, thy Father does not give thee promises and then leave thee to draw them up from the Word like buckets from a well, but the promises He has written in the Word He will write anew on your heart. He will manifest His love to you, and by His blessed Spirit, dispel your cares and troubles. Be it known unto thee, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eye of His people. The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you"; he actually poured in the oil and the wine. So Jesus not only gives you the sweet wine of the promise, but holds the golden chalice to your lips, and pours the life-blood into your mouth. The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim is not merely strengthened to walk, but he is borne on eagles' wings. Glorious gospel which provides everything for the helpless, which draws nigh to us when we cannot reach after it—brings us grace before we seek for grace! Here is as much glory in the giving as in the gift. Happy are the people who have the Holy Ghost to bring Jesus to them.

*And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray,
lest ye enter into temptation.*

Luke 22:46

WHEN is the Christian most liable to sleep? Is it not *when his temporal circumstances are prosperous*? Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Easy roads make sleepy travellers. Another dangerous time is *when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters*. Christian went not to sleep when lions were in the way, or when he was wading through the river, or when fighting with Apollyon, but when he had climbed half way up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a delightful arbour, he sat down, and forthwith fell asleep, to his great sorrow and loss. The enchanted ground is a place of balmy breezes, laden with fragrant odours and soft influences, all tending to lull pilgrims to sleep. Remember Bunyan's description: "Then they came to an arbour, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean." "The arbour was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary." Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine wisely remarked, "I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half so dangerous as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we enter into peaceful confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Take heed, joyous Christian, good frames are near neighbours to temptations: be as happy as you will, only be watchful.

*After that he poureth water into a bason,
and began to wash the disciples' feet,
and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.
John 13:5*

THE Lord Jesus loves His people so much, that every day He is still doing for them much that is analogous to washing their soiled feet. Their poorest actions He accepts; their deepest sorrow He feels; their slenderest wish He hears, and their every transgression He forgives. He is still their servant as well as their Friend and Master. He not only performs majestic deeds for them, as wearing the mitre on His brow, and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate, and standing up to plead for them, but humbly, patiently, He yet goes about among His people with the basin and the towel. He does this when He puts away from us day by day our constant infirmities and sins. Last night, when you bowed the knee, you mournfully confessed that much of your conduct was not worthy of your profession; and even tonight, you must mourn afresh that you have fallen again into the selfsame folly and sin from which special grace delivered you long ago; and yet Jesus will have great patience with you; He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will, be thou clean"; He will again apply the blood of sprinkling, and speak peace to your conscience, and remove every spot. It is a great act of eternal love when Christ once for all absolves the sinner, and puts him into the family of God; but what condescending patience there is when the Saviour with much long-suffering bears the oft recurring follies of His wayward disciple; day by day, and hour by hour, washing away the multiplied transgressions of His erring but yet beloved child! To dry up a flood of rebellion is something marvellous, but to endure the constant dropping of repeated offences—to bear with a perpetual trying of patience, this is divine indeed! While we find comfort and peace in our Lord's daily cleansing, its legitimate influence upon us will be to increase our watchfulness, and quicken our desire for holiness. *Is it so?*

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Ruth 2:3

HER hap was. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God, to humble but honourable toil, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband, that he should make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she a poor foreigner should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with unlooked for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us tomorrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us, that no good thing shall be withheld. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of today or tomorrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with Thy servants as Thou didst with Ruth.

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation tonight, our hap should be to light upon the place where our next Kinsman will reveal Himself to us! O Spirit of God, guide us to Him. We would sooner glean in His field than bear away the whole harvest from any other. O for the footsteps of His flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where He dwells! This is a weary world when Jesus is away—we could better do without sun and moon than without Him—but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of His presence! Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer this night until our hap shall be to light on a part of the field belonging to Jesus wherein He will manifest Himself to us.

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

Ecclesiastes 1:7

EVERYTHING sublunary is on the move, time knows nothing of rest. The solid earth is a rolling ball, and the great sun himself a star obediently fulfilling its course around some greater luminary. Tides move the sea, winds stir the airy ocean, friction wears the rock: change and death rule everywhere. The sea is not a miser's storehouse for a wealth of waters, for as by one force the waters flow into it, by another they are lifted from it. Men are born but to die: everything is hurry, worry, and vexation of spirit. Friend of the unchanging Jesus, what a joy it is to reflect upon thy changeless heritage; thy sea of bliss which will be forever full, since God Himself shall pour eternal rivers of pleasure into it. We seek an abiding city beyond the skies, and we shall not be disappointed.

The passage before us may well teach us gratitude. Father Ocean is a great receiver, but he is a generous distributor. What the rivers bring him he returns to the earth in the form of clouds and rain. That man is out of joint with the universe who takes all but makes no return. To give to others is but sowing seed for ourselves. He who is so good a steward as to be willing to use his substance for his Lord, shall be entrusted with more. Friend of Jesus, art thou rendering to Him according to the benefit received? Much has been given thee, what is thy fruit? Hast thou done all? Canst thou not do more? To be selfish is to be wicked. Suppose the ocean gave up none of its watery treasure, it would bring ruin upon our race. God forbid that any of us should follow the ungenerous and destructive policy of living unto ourselves. Jesus pleased not Himself. All fulness dwells in Him, but of His fulness have all we received. O for Jesus' spirit, that henceforth we may live not unto ourselves!

*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses
are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf;
and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

Isaiah 64:6

THE believer is a new creature, he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people—the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man; but for all that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so from the imperfection of his nature, and will continue so to the end of his earthly life. The black fingers of sin leave smuts upon our fairest robes. Sin mars our repentance, ere the great Potter has finished it, upon the wheel. Selfishness defiles our tears, and unbelief tampers with our faith. The best thing we ever did apart from the merit of Jesus only swelled the number of our sins; for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight; and as He charged His angels with folly, much more must He charge us with it, even in our most angelic frames of mind. The song which thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains, hath human discords in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a bruised and battered prayer, and only moves that arm because the sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication. The most golden faith or the purest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much alloy in it as to be only worthy of the flames, in itself considered. Every night we look in the glass we see a sinner, and had need confess, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Oh, how precious the blood of Christ to such hearts as ours! How priceless a gift is His perfect righteousness! And how bright the hope of perfect holiness hereafter! Even now, though sin dwells in us, *its power is broken*. It has no dominion; it is a broken-backed snake; we are in bitter conflict with it, but it is with a vanquished foe that we have to deal. Yet a little while and we shall enter victoriously into the city where nothing defileth.

*His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy,
and black as a raven.
Song of Solomon 5:11*

COMPARISONS all fail to set forth the Lord Jesus, but the spouse uses the best within her reach. By *the head* of Jesus we may understand His deity, “for the head of Christ is God” and then the ingot of purest gold is the best conceivable metaphor, but all too poor to describe one so precious, so pure, so dear, so glorious. Jesus is not a grain of gold, but a vast globe of it, a priceless mass of treasure such as earth and heaven cannot excel. The creatures are mere iron and clay; they all shall perish like wood, hay, and stubble, but the everliving Head of the creation of God shall shine on for ever and ever. In Him is no mixture, nor smallest taint of alloy. He is for ever infinitely holy and altogether divine. *The bushy locks* depict His manly vigour. There is nothing effeminate in our Beloved. He is the manliest of men. Bold as a lion, laborious as an ox, swift as an eagle. Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty is to be found in Him, though once He was despised and rejected of men.

“His head the finest gold;
With secret sweet perfume,
His curled locks hang all as black
As any raven’s plume.”

The glory of His head is not shorn away, He is eternally crowned with peerless majesty. *The black hair* indicates youthful freshness, for Jesus has the dew of His youth upon Him. Others grow languid with age, but He is forever a Priest as was Melchisedek; others come and go, but He abides as God upon His throne, world without end. We will behold Him tonight and adore Him. Angels are gazing upon Him—His redeemed must not turn away their eyes from Him. Where else is there such a Beloved? O for an hour’s fellowship with Him! Away, ye intruding cares! Jesus draws me, and I run after Him.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

Luke 24:16

THE disciples ought to have known Jesus; they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is wonderful they did not discover Him. Yet is it not so with you also? You have not seen Jesus lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this evening, and though He plainly says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot discern Him. Alas, our eyes are holden! We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His bosom, and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious book and have no glimpse of the Wellbeloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus feedeth among the lilies of the word, and you walk among those lilies, and yet you behold Him not. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture, and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture, but cannot see Him, though He is always there. And why do we not see Him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples', to unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Jesus, and therefore they did not know Him. To a great extent in spiritual things we get what we expect of the Lord. Faith alone can bring us to see Jesus. Make it your prayer, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see my Saviour present with me." It is a blessed thing to *want* to see Him; but oh, it is far better to gaze upon Him! To those who seek Him He is kind; but to those who find Him, beyond expression is He dear!

*Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.
Song of Solomon 8:13*

MY sweet Lord Jesus remembers well the garden of Gethsemane, and although He has left that garden, He now dwells in the garden of His church: there He unbosoms Himself to those who keep His blessed company. That voice of love with which He speaks to His beloved is more musical than the harps of heaven. There is a depth of melodious love within it which leaves all human music far behind. Ten of thousands on earth, and millions above, are indulged with its harmonious accents. Some whom I well know, and whom I greatly envy, are at this moment hearkening to the beloved voice. O that I were a partaker of their joys! It is true some of these are poor, others bedridden, and some near the gates of death, but O my Lord, I would cheerfully starve with them, pine with them, or die with them, if I might but hear Thy voice. Once I did hear it often, but I have grieved Thy Spirit. Return unto me in compassion, and once again say unto me, "I am thy salvation." No other voice can content me; I know Thy voice, and cannot be deceived by another, let me hear it, I pray thee. I know not what Thou wilt say, neither do I make any condition, O my Beloved, do but let me hear Thee speak, and if it be a rebuke I will bless Thee for it. Perhaps to cleanse my dull ear may need an operation very grievous to the flesh, but let it cost what it may, I turn not from the one consuming desire, cause me to hear Thy voice. Bore my ear afresh; pierce my ear with Thy harshest notes, only do not permit me to continue deaf to Thy calls. Tonight, Lord, grant Thine unworthy one his desire, for I am Thine, and Thou hast bought me with Thy blood. Thou hast opened mine eye to see Thee, and the sight has saved me. Lord, open Thou mine ear. I have read Thy heart, now let me hear Thy lips.

I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

Hosea 13:5

YES, Lord, Thou didst indeed know me in my *fallen state*, and Thou didst even then choose me for Thyself. When I was loathsome and self-abhorred, Thou didst receive me as Thy child, and Thou didst satisfy my craving wants. Blessed forever be Thy name for this free, rich, abounding mercy. Since then, *my inward experience* has often been a wilderness; but Thou hast owned me still as Thy beloved, and poured streams of love and grace into me to gladden me, and make me fruitful. Yea, when my *outward circumstances* have been at the worst, and I have wandered in a land of drought, Thy sweet presence has solaced me. Men have not known me when scorn has awaited me, but Thou hast known my soul in adversities, for no affliction dims the lustre of Thy love. Most gracious Lord, I magnify Thee for all Thy faithfulness to me in trying circumstances, and I deplore that I should at any time have forgotten Thee and been exalted in heart, when I have owed all to Thy gentleness and love. Have mercy upon Thy servant in this thing!

My soul, if Jesus thus acknowledged thee in thy low estate, be sure that thou own both Himself and His cause now that thou art in thy prosperity. Be not lifted up by thy worldly successes so as to be ashamed of the truth or of the poor church with which thou hast been associated. Follow Jesus into the wilderness: bear the cross with Him when the heat of persecution grows hot. He owned thee, O my soul, in thy poverty and shame—never be so treacherous as to be ashamed of Him. O for more shame at the thought of being ashamed of my best Beloved! Jesus, my soul cleaveth to Thee.

“I’ll turn to Thee in days of light,
As well as nights of care,
Thou brightest amid all that’s bright!
Thou fairest of the fair!”

*And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away;
so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

Matthew 24:39

UNIVERSAL was the doom, neither rich nor poor escaped: the learned and the illiterate, the admired and the abhorred, the religious and the profane, the old and the young, all sank in one common ruin. Some had doubtless ridiculed the patriarch—where now their merry jests? Others had threatened him for his zeal which they counted madness—where now their boastings and hard speeches? The critic who judged the old man's work is drowned in the same sea which covers his sneering companions. Those who spoke patronizingly of the good man's fidelity to his convictions, but shared not in them, have sunk to rise no more, and the workers who for pay helped to build the wondrous ark, are all lost also. The flood swept them *all away*, and made no single exception. Even so, out of Christ, final destruction is sure to every man of woman born; no rank, possession, or character, shall suffice to save a single soul who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. My soul, behold this widespread judgment and tremble at it.

How marvellous the general apathy! They were all eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the awful morning dawned. There was not one wise man upon earth out of the ark. Folly duped the whole race, folly as to self-preservation—the most foolish of all follies. Folly in doubting the most true God—the most malignant of fooleries. Strange, my soul, is it not? All men are negligent of their souls till grace gives them reason, then they leave their madness and act like rational beings, but not till then.

All, blessed be God, were safe in the ark, no ruin entered there. From the huge elephant down to the tiny mouse all were safe. The timid hare was equally secure with the courageous lion, the helpless cony as safe as the laborious ox. All are safe in Jesus. My soul, art thou in Him?

*Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that
forsake thy law.
Psalm 119:53*

MY soul, feelest thou this holy shuddering at the sins of others? For otherwise thou lackest inward holiness. David's cheeks were wet with rivers of waters because of prevailing unholiness; Jeremiah desired eyes like fountains that he might lament the iniquities of Israel, and Lot was vexed with the conversation of the men of Sodom. Those upon whom the mark was set in Ezekiel's vision, were those who sighed and cried for the abominations of Jerusalem. It cannot but grieve gracious souls to see what pains men take to go to hell. They know the evil of sin experimentally, and they are alarmed to see others flying like moths into its blaze. Sin makes the righteous shudder, because it violates a holy law, which it is to every man's highest interest to keep; it pulls down the pillars of the commonwealth. Sin in others horrifies a believer, because it puts him in mind of the baseness of his own heart: when he sees a transgressor he cries with the saint mentioned by Bernard, "He fell today, and I may fall tomorrow." Sin to a believer is horrible, because it crucified the Saviour; he sees in every iniquity the nails and spear. How can a saved soul behold that cursed kill-Christ sin without abhorrence? Say, my heart, dost thou sensibly join in all this? It is an awful thing to insult God to His face. The good God deserves better treatment, the great God claims it, the just God will have it, or repay His adversary to his face. An awakened heart trembles at the audacity of sin, and stands alarmed at the contemplation of its punishment. How monstrous a thing is rebellion! How direful a doom is prepared for the ungodly! My soul, never laugh at sin's fooleries, lest thou come to smile at sin itself. It is thine enemy, and thy Lord's enemy—view it with detestation, for so only canst thou evidence the possession of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

*Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people:
and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to
his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.
2 Chronicles 30:27*

PRAYER is the never-failing resort of the Christian in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bow-string may be relaxed, but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the javelin, but he trembles at prayer. Sword and spear need furbishing, but prayer never rusts, and when we think it most blunt it cuts the best. Prayer is an open door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succours can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the time of our necessities. Prayer is never out of season: in summer and in winter its merchandize is precious. Prayer gains audience with heaven in the dead of night, in the midst of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or doubt, your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place. Nor is prayer ever *futile*. True prayer is evermore true power. You may not always get what you ask, but you shall always have your real wants supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If thou askest for a coarse meal, wilt thou be angered because He gives thee the finest flour? If thou seekest bodily health, shouldst thou complain if instead thereof He makes thy sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than removed? This evening, my soul, forget not to offer thy petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant thee thy desires.

*For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.*

Psalm 36:9

NO lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Ghost fills them with life and power; till our Immanuel reveals Himself within, the soul sees Him not. If you would see the sun, would you gather together the common means of illumination, and seek in that way to behold the orb of day? No, the wise man knoweth that the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:" said He to Peter, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select, elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power, yet none of these can reveal Christ. The Spirit of God must come with power, and overshadow the man with His wings, and then in that mystic holy of holies the Lord Jesus must display Himself to the sanctified eye, as He doth not unto the purblind sons of men. Christ must be His own mirror. The great mass of this blear-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground, rejected by the vain and despised by the proud. Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with eye-salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is He understood. "To you that believe He is precious"; to you He is the chief corner-stone, the Rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others He is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests Himself, for His promise to such is that He will *make His abode with them*. O Jesus, our Lord, our heart is open, come in, and go out no more forever. Show Thyself to us now! Favour us with a glimpse of Thine all-conquering charms.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

Psalm 100:4

OUR Lord would have all His people rich in high and happy thoughts concerning His blessed person. Jesus is not content that His brethren should think meanly of Him; it is His pleasure that His espoused ones should be delighted with His beauty. We are not to regard Him as a bare necessary, like to bread and water, but as a luxurious delicacy, as a rare and ravishing delight. To this end He has revealed Himself as the “pearl of great price” in its peerless beauty, as the “bundle of myrrh” in its refreshing fragrance, as the “rose of Sharon” in its lasting perfume, as the “lily” in its spotless purity.

As a help to high thoughts of Christ, remember the estimation that Christ is had in beyond the skies, where things are measured by the right standard. Think how God esteems the Only Begotten, His unspeakable gift to us. Consider what the angels think of Him, as they count it their highest honour to veil their faces at His feet. Consider what the blood-washed think of Him, as day without night they sing His well deserved praises. High thoughts of Christ will enable us to act consistently with our relations towards Him. The more loftily we see Christ enthroned, and the more lowly we are when bowing before the foot of the throne, the more truly shall we be prepared to act our part towards Him. Our Lord Jesus desires us to think well of Him, that we may submit cheerfully to His authority. High thoughts of Him increase our love. Love and esteem go together. Therefore, believer, think much of your Master’s excellencies. Study Him in His primeval glory, before He took upon Himself your nature! Think of the mighty love which drew Him from His throne to die upon the cross! Admire Him as He conquers all the powers of hell! See Him risen, crowned, glorified! Bow before Him as the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, for only thus will your love to Him be what it should.

*Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath
enjoined unto you.*

Hebrews 9:20

THERE is a strange power about the very name of blood, and the sight of it is always affecting. A kind heart cannot bear to see a sparrow bleed, and unless familiarized by use, turns away with horror at the slaughter of a beast. As to the blood of men, it is a consecrated thing: it is murder to shed it in wrath, it is a dreadful crime to squander it in war. Is this solemnity occasioned by the fact that the blood is the life, and the pouring of it forth the token of death? We think so. When we rise to contemplate the blood of the Son of God, our awe is yet more increased, and we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin, and the terrible penalty which the Sin-bearer endured. Blood, always precious, is priceless when it streams from Immanuel's side. The blood of Jesus seals the *covenant* of grace, and makes it forever sure. Covenants of old were made by sacrifice, and the everlasting covenant was ratified in the same manner. Oh, the delight of being saved upon the sure foundation of divine engagements which cannot be dishonoured! Salvation by the works of the law is a frail and broken vessel whose shipwreck is sure; but the covenant vessel fears no storms, for the blood ensures the whole. The blood of Jesus made His *testament* valid. Wills are of no power unless the testators die. In this light the soldier's spear is a blessed aid to faith, since it proved our Lord to be really dead. Doubts upon that matter there can be none, and we may boldly appropriate the legacies which He has left for His people. Happy they who see their title to heavenly blessings assured to them by a dying Saviour. But has this blood no voice to us? Does it not bid us to sanctify ourselves unto Him by whom we have been redeemed? Does it not call us to newness of life, and incite us to entire consecration to the Lord? O that the power of the blood might be known, and felt in us this night!

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:8

IN order to learn how to discharge your duty as a witness for Christ, look at His example. He is always witnessing: by the well of Samaria, or in the Temple of Jerusalem: by the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day; His mighty prayers are as vocal to God as His daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; Scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth; even before Pilate He witnesses a good confession. He witnesses so clearly and distinctly that there is no mistake in Him. Christian, make your life a clear testimony. Be you as the brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom—not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface—but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be visible to all. You need not *say*, "I am true": *Be* true. Boast not of integrity, but be upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Never, for fear of feeble man, restrain your witness. Your lips have been warmed with a coal from off the altar; let them speak as like heaven-touched lips should do. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." Watch not the clouds, consult not the wind—in season and out of season witness for the Saviour, and if it shall come to pass that for Christ's sake and the gospel's you shall endure suffering in any shape, shrink not, but rejoice in the honour thus conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord; and joy also in this—that your sufferings, your losses, and persecutions shall make you a platform, from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall witness for Christ Jesus. Study your great Exemplar, and be filled with His Spirit. Remember that you need much teaching, much upholding, much grace, and much humility, if your witnessing is to be to your Master's glory.

And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

Mark 14:14

JERUSALEM at the time of the passover was one great inn; each householder had invited his own friends, but no one had invited the Saviour, and He had no dwelling of His own. It was by His own supernatural power that He found Himself an upper room in which to keep the feast. It is so even to this day—Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by His supernatural power and grace He makes the heart anew. All doors are open enough to the prince of darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for Himself or lodge in the streets. It was through the mysterious power exerted by our Lord that the householder raised no question, but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guestchamber. Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he readily accepted the honour which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. In like manner it is still discovered who are the Lord's chosen, and who are not; for when the gospel comes to some, they fight against it, and will not have it, but where men receive it, welcoming it, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul, and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear reader, to receive Christ? Then there is no difficulty in the way; Christ will be your guest; His own power is working with you, making you willing. What an honour to entertain the Son of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet He condescends to find a house within our hearts! We are not worthy that He should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when He condescends to enter! For then He makes a feast, and causes us to feast with Him upon royal dainties, we sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed thereon. Blessed among the sons of Adam is he who entertains the angels' Lord.

*He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the
munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him;
his waters shall be sure.*

Isaiah 33:16

DO you doubt, O Christian, do you doubt as to whether God will fulfil His promise? Shall the munitions of rock be carried by storm? Shall the storehouses of heaven fail? Do you think that your heavenly Father, though He knoweth that you have need of food and raiment, will yet forget you? When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, will you mistrust and doubt Him? Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you till you dare to trust your God, and then it shall end. Full many there be who have been tried and sore vexed till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God, and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance; they have seen whether God would keep His promise or not. Oh, I pray you, doubt Him no longer! Please not Satan, and vex not yourself by indulging any more those hard thoughts of God. Think it not a light matter to doubt Jehovah. Remember, it is a sin; and not a little sin either, but in the highest degree criminal. The angels never doubted Him, nor the devils either: we alone, out of all the beings that God has fashioned, dishonour Him by unbelief, and tarnish His honour by mistrust. Shame upon us for this! Our God does not deserve to be so basely suspected; in our past life we have proved Him to be true and faithful to His word, and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as we have received, and are daily receiving, at His hands, it is base and inexcusable that we suffer a doubt to sojourn within our heart. May we henceforth wage constant war against doubts of our God—enemies to our peace and to His honour; and with an unstaggering faith believe that what He has promised He will also perform. “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.”

*It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master,
and the servant as his lord.*

*If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub,
how much more shall they call them of his household?*

Matthew 10:25

NO one will dispute this statement, for it would be unseemly for the servant to be exalted above his Master. When our Lord was on earth, what was the treatment He received? Were His claims acknowledged, His instructions followed, His perfections worshipped, by those whom He came to bless? No; “He was despised and rejected of men.” Outside the camp was His place: cross-bearing was His occupation. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” This inhospitable country afforded Him no shelter: it cast Him out and crucified Him. Such—if you are a follower of Jesus, and maintain a consistent, Christ-like walk and conversation—you must expect to be the lot of that part of your spiritual life which, in its outward development, comes under the observation of men. They will treat it as they treated the Saviour—they will despise it. Dream not that worldlings will admire you, or that the more holy and the more Christ-like you are, the more peaceably people will act towards you. They prized not the polished gem, how should they value the jewel in the rough? “If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?” If we were more like Christ, we should be more hated by His enemies. It were a sad dishonour to a child of God to be the world’s favourite. It is a very ill omen to hear a wicked world clap its hands and shout “Well done” to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his character, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong, when the unrighteous give him their approbation. Let us be true to our Master, and have no friendship with a blind and base world which scorns and rejects Him. Far be it from us to seek a crown of honour where our Lord found a coronet of thorn.

*He shall choose our inheritance for us,
the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.
Psalm 47:4*

BELIEVER, if your inheritance be a lowly one you should be satisfied with your earthly portion; for you may rest assured that it is the fittest *for you*. Unerring wisdom ordained your lot, and selected for you the safest and best condition. A ship of large tonnage is to be brought up the river; now, in one part of the stream there is a sandbank; should someone ask, "Why does the captain steer through the deep part of the channel and deviate so much from a straight line?" His answer would be, "Because I should not get my vessel into harbour at all if I did not keep to the deep channel." So, it may be, you would run aground and suffer shipwreck, if your divine Captain did not steer you into the depths of affliction where waves of trouble follow each other in quick succession. Some plants die if they have too much sunshine. It may be that you are planted where you get but little, you are put there by the loving Husbandman, because only in that situation will you bring forth fruit unto perfection. Remember this, had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, divine love would have put you there. You are placed by God in the most suitable circumstances, and if you had the choosing of your lot, you would soon cry, "Lord, choose my inheritance for me, for by my self-will I am pierced through with many sorrows." Be content with such things as you have, since the Lord has ordered all things for your good. Take up your own daily cross; it is the burden best suited for your shoulder, and will prove most effective to make you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God. Down busy self, and proud impatience, it is not for you to choose, but for the Lord of Love!

"Trials must and will befall—
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all;
This is happiness to me."

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 6:12

IF ever one of woman born might have lived without prayer, it was our spotless, perfect Lord, and yet none was ever so much in supplication as He! Such was His love to His Father, that He loved much to be in communion with Him: such His love for His people, that He desired to be much in intercession for them. *The fact* of this eminent prayerfulness of Jesus is a lesson for us—He hath given us an example that we may follow in His steps. *The time* He chose was admirable, it was the hour of silence, when the crowd would not disturb Him; the time of inaction, when all but Himself had ceased to labour; and the season when slumber made men forget their woes, and cease their applications to Him for relief. While others found rest in sleep, He refreshed Himself with prayer. *The place* was also well selected. He was alone where none would intrude, where none could observe: thus was He free from Pharisaic ostentation and vulgar interruption. Those dark and silent hills were a fit oratory for the Son of God. Heaven and earth in midnight stillness heard the groans and sighs of the mysterious Being in whom both worlds were blended. *The continuance* of His pleadings is remarkable; the long watches were not too long; the cold wind did not chill His devotions; the grim darkness did not darken His faith, or loneliness check His importunity. We cannot watch with Him one hour, but He watched for us whole nights. *The occasion* for this prayer is notable; it was after His enemies had been enraged—prayer was His refuge and solace; it was before He sent forth the twelve apostles—prayer was the gate of His enterprise, the herald of His new work. Should we not learn from Jesus to resort to special prayer when we are under peculiar trial, or contemplate fresh endeavours for the Master's glory? Lord Jesus, teach us to pray.

*And he spake a parable unto them to this end,
that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
Luke 18:1*

IF men ought always to pray and not to faint, much more *Christian men*. Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and this mission includes intercession. What if I say that the church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the church is to find a mouth for it. It is the church's high privilege to pray with acceptance. The door of grace is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was rent *for her*, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar *for her*, God constantly invites *her* to ask what she wills. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is she not the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at every hour? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The church always has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, or falling into open sin. There are lambs to be prayed for, that they may be carried in Christ's bosom. The strong, lest they grow presumptuous; and the weak, lest they become despairing. If we kept up prayer-meetings four-and-twenty hours in the day, all the days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor, the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who seek the conversion of relatives, the reclaiming of back-sliders, or the salvation of the depraved? Nay, with congregations constantly gathering, with ministers always preaching, with millions of sinners lying dead in trespasses and sins; in a country over which the darkness of Romanism is certainly descending; in a world full of idols, cruelties, devilries, if the church doth not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the commission of her loving Lord? Let the church be constant in supplication, let every private believer cast his mite of prayer into the treasury.

*And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country,
to give the younger before the firstborn.*

Genesis 29:26

WE do not excuse Laban for his dishonesty, but we scruple not to learn from the custom which he quoted as his excuse. There are some things which must be taken in order, and if we would win the second we must secure the first. The second may be the more lovely in our eyes, but the rule of the heavenly country must stand, and the elder must be married first. For instance, many men desire the beautiful and well-favoured Rachel of joy and peace in believing, but they must first be wedded to the tender-eyed Leah of repentance. Every one falls in love with happiness, and many would cheerfully serve twice seven years to enjoy it, but according to the rule of the Lord's kingdom, the Leah of real holiness must be beloved of our soul before the Rachel of true happiness can be attained. Heaven stands not first but second, and only by persevering to the end can we win a portion in it. The cross must be carried before the crown can be worn. We must follow our Lord in His humiliation, or we shall never rest with Him in glory.

My soul, what sayest thou, art thou so vain as to hope to break through the heavenly rule? Dost thou hope for reward without labour, or honour without toil? Dismiss the idle expectation, and be content to take the ill-favoured things for the sake of the sweet love of Jesus, which will recompense thee for all. In such a spirit, labouring and suffering, thou wilt find bitters grow sweet, and hard things easy. Like Jacob, thy years of service will seem unto thee but a few days for the love thou hast to Jesus; and when the dear hour of the wedding feast shall come, all thy toils shall be as though they had never been—an hour with Jesus will make up for ages of pain and labour.

Jesus, to win Thyself so fair,
Thy cross I will with gladness bear:
Since so the rules of heaven ordain,
The first I'll wed the next to gain.

*Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen,
O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.*

Psalm 68:28

IT is our wisdom, as well as our necessity, to beseech God continually to strengthen that which He has wrought in us. It is because of their neglect in this, that many Christians may blame themselves for those trials and afflictions of spirit which arise from unbelief. It is true that Satan seeks to flood the fair garden of the heart and make it a scene of desolation, but it is also true that many Christians leave open the sluice-gates themselves, and let in the dreadful deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to their strong Helper. We often forget that the Author of our faith must be the Preserver of it also. The lamp which was burning in the temple was never allowed to go out, but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil; in like manner, our faith can only live by being sustained with the oil of grace, and we can only obtain this from God Himself. Foolish virgins we shall prove, if we do not secure the needed sustenance for our lamps. He who built the world upholds it, or it would fall in one tremendous crash; He who made us Christians must maintain us by His Spirit, or our ruin will be speedy and final. Let us, then, evening by evening, go to our Lord for the grace and strength we need. We have a strong argument to plead, for it is *His own work of grace* which we ask Him to strengthen—“*that which Thou hast wrought for us.*” Think you He will fail to protect and sustain *that*? Only let your faith take hold of His strength, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over your joy and peace. Why faint when you may be strong? Why suffer defeat when you may conquer? Oh! Take your wavering faith and drooping graces to Him who can revive and replenish them, and earnestly pray, “Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”

*Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:
they shall behold the land that is very far off.*

Isaiah 33:17

THE more you know about Christ the less will you be satisfied with superficial views of Him; and the more deeply you study His transactions in the eternal covenant, His engagements on your behalf as the eternal Surety, and the fulness of His grace which shines in all His offices, the more truly will you see the King in His beauty. Be much in such outlooks. Long more and more to see Jesus. *Meditation and contemplation* are often like windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which we behold the Redeemer. Meditation puts the telescope to the eye, and enables us to see Jesus after a better sort than we could have seen Him if we had lived in the days of His flesh. Would that our conversation were more in heaven, and that we were more taken up with the person, the work, the beauty of our incarnate Lord. More meditation, and the beauty of the King would flash upon us with more resplendence. Beloved, it is very probable that we shall have such a sight of our glorious King as we never had before, *when we come to die*. Many saints in dying have looked up from amidst the stormy waters, and have seen Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, and heard Him say, "It is I, be not afraid." Ah, yes! When the tenement begins to shake, and the clay falls away, we see Christ through the rifts, and between the rafters the sunlight of heaven comes streaming in. But if we want to see face to face the "King in His beauty" *we must go to heaven* for the sight, or the King must come here in person. O that He would come on the wings of the wind! He is our Husband, and we are widowed by His absence; He is our Brother dear and fair, and we are lonely without Him. Thick veils and clouds hang between our souls and their true life: when shall the day break and the shadows flee away? Oh, long-expected day, begin!

*Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith;
and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.
Ecclesiastes 10:9*

OPPRESSOR may get their will of poor and needy men as easily as they can split logs of wood, but they had better mind, for it is a dangerous business, and a splinter from a tree has often killed the woodman. Jesus is persecuted in every injured saint, and He is mighty to avenge His beloved ones. Success in treading down the poor and needy is a thing to be trembled at: if there be no danger to persecutors here there will be great danger hereafter.

To cleave wood is a common every-day business, and yet it has its dangers; so then, reader, there are dangers connected with your calling and daily life which it will be well for you to be aware of. We refer not to hazards by flood and field, or by disease and sudden death, but to perils of a spiritual sort. Your occupation may be as humble as log splitting, and yet the devil can tempt you in it. You may be a domestic servant, a farm labourer, or a mechanic, and you may be greatly screened from temptations to the grosser vices, and yet some secret sin may do you damage. Those who dwell at home, and mingle not with the rough world, may yet be endangered by their very seclusion. Nowhere is he safe who thinks himself so. Pride may enter a poor man's heart; avarice may reign in a cottager's bosom; uncleanness may venture into the quietest home; and anger, and envy, and malice may insinuate themselves into the most rural abode. Even in speaking a few words to a servant we may sin; a little purchase at a shop may be the first link in a chain of temptations; the mere looking out of a window may be the beginning of evil. O Lord, how exposed we are! How shall we be secured! To keep ourselves is work too hard for us: only Thou Thyself art able to preserve us in such a world of evils. Spread Thy wings over us, and we, like little chickens, will cower down beneath Thee, and feel ourselves safe!

Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.

Psalm 93:2

CHRI^ST is EVERLASTING. Of Him we may sing with David, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” Rejoice, believer, in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus always was. The Babe born in Bethlehem was united to the Word, which was in the beginning, by whom all things were made. The title by which Christ revealed Himself to John in Patmos was, “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” If He were not God from everlasting, we could not so devoutly love Him; we could not feel that He had any share in the eternal love which is the fountain of all covenant blessings; but since He was from all eternity with the Father, we trace the stream of divine love to Himself equally with His Father and the blessed Spirit. As our Lord always *was*, so also He *is* for evermore. Jesus is not dead; “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Resort to Him in all your times of need, for He is waiting to bless you still. Moreover, Jesus our Lord ever *shall be*. If God should spare your life to fulfil your full day of threescore years and ten, you will find that His cleansing fountain is still opened, and His precious blood has not lost its power; you shall find that the Priest who filled the healing fount with His own blood, lives to purge you from all iniquity. When only your last battle remains to be fought, you shall find that the hand of your conquering Captain has not grown feeble—the living Saviour shall cheer the dying saint. When you enter heaven you shall find Him there bearing the dew of His youth; and through eternity the Lord Jesus shall still remain the perennial spring of joy, and life, and glory to His people. Living waters may you draw from this sacred well! Jesus always was, He always is, He always shall be. He is eternal in all His attributes, in all His offices, in all His might, and willingness to bless, comfort, guard, and crown His chosen people.

*Oh that I knew where I might find him!
that I might come even to his seat!*
Job 23:3

IN Job's uttermost extremity he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God is once more to see his Father's face. His first prayer is not "O that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" nor even "O that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" but the first and uppermost cry is, "O that I knew where I might find HIM, who is my God! That I might come even to His seat!" God's children run home when the storm comes on. It is the heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul to seek shelter from all ills beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He that hath made his refuge God," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when afflicted by God, resents the infliction, and, like a slave, would run from the Master who has scourged him; but not so the true heir of heaven, he kisses the hand which smote him, and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of the God who frowned upon him. Job's desire to commune with God was intensified by the failure of all other sources of consolation. The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends, and looked up to the celestial throne, just as a traveller turns from his empty skin bottle, and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, "O that I knew where I might find my God!" Nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator, as when we learn the emptiness of all besides. Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where we find no honey, but many sharp stings, we rejoice in Him whose faithful word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. In every trouble we should first seek to realize God's presence with us. Only let us enjoy His smile, and we can bear our daily cross with a willing heart for His dear sake.

*The conies are but a feeble folk,
yet make they their houses in the rocks;
Proverbs 30:26*

CONSCIOUS of their own natural defenselessness, the conies resort to burrows in the rocks, and are secure from their enemies. My heart, be willing to gather a lesson from these feeble folk. Thou art as weak and as exposed to peril as the timid cony, be as wise to seek a shelter. My best security is within the munitions of an immutable Jehovah, where His unalterable promises stand like giant walls of rock. It will be well with thee, my heart, if thou canst always hide thyself in the bulwarks of His glorious attributes, all of which are guarantees of safety for those who put their trust in Him. Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have so done, and have found myself like David in Adullam, safe from the cruelty of my enemy; I have not now to find out the blessedness of the man who puts his trust in the Lord, for long ago, when Satan and my sins pursued me, I fled to the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, and in His riven side I found a delightful resting place. My heart, run to Him anew tonight, whatever thy present grief may be; Jesus feels for thee; Jesus consoles thee; Jesus will help thee. No monarch in his impregnable fortress is more secure than the cony in his rocky burrow. The master of ten thousand chariots is not one whit better protected than the little dweller in the mountain's cleft. In Jesus the weak are strong, and the defenceless safe; they could not be more strong if they were giants, or more safe if they were in heaven. Faith gives to men on earth the protection of the God of heaven. More they cannot need, and need not wish. The conies cannot build a castle, but they avail themselves of what is there already: I cannot make myself a refuge, but Jesus has provided it, His Father has given it, His Spirit has revealed it, and lo, again tonight I enter it, and am safe from every foe.

*There they made him a supper; and Martha served:
but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*

John 12:2

H*E is to be envied.* It was well to be Martha and serve, but better to be Lazarus and commune. There are times for each purpose, and each is comely in its season, but none of the trees of the garden yield such clusters as the vine of fellowship. To sit with Jesus, to hear His words, to mark His acts, and receive His smiles, was such a favour as must have made Lazarus as happy as the angels. When it has been our happy lot to feast with our Beloved in His banqueting hall, we would not have given half a sigh for all the kingdoms of the world, if so much breath could have bought them.

He is to be imitated. It would have been a strange thing if Lazarus had not been at the table where Jesus was, for he had been dead, and Jesus had raised him. For the risen one to be absent when the Lord who gave him life was at his house, would have been ungrateful indeed. We too were once dead, yea, and like Lazarus stinking in the grave of sin; Jesus raised us, and by His life we live—can we be content to live at a distance from Him? Do we omit to remember Him at His table, where He deigns to feast with His brethren? Oh, this is cruel! It behoves us to repent, and do as *He* has bidden us, for His least wish should be law to us. To have lived without constant intercourse with one of whom the Jews said, “Behold how He loved him,” would have been disgraceful to Lazarus, is it excusable in us whom Jesus has loved with an everlasting love? To have been cold to Him who wept over his lifeless corpse, would have argued great brutishness in Lazarus. What does it argue in us over whom the Saviour has not only wept, but bled? Come, brethren, who read this portion, let us return unto our heavenly Bridegroom, and ask for His Spirit that we may be on terms of closer intimacy with Him, and henceforth sit at the table with Him.

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,
and the fellowship of his sufferings,
being made conformable unto his death;
Philippians 3:10*

THE doctrine of a risen Saviour is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take a volume to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but to *know* that He has risen, and to have fellowship with Him as such—communing with the risen Saviour by possessing a risen life—seeing Him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Saviour more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you *believe* that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you, rest not contented even there. Though you cannot, like the disciples, see Him visibly, yet I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith; and though, like Mary Magdalene, you may not “touch” Him, yet may you be privileged to converse with Him, and to know that He is risen, you yourselves being risen in Him to newness of life. To know a crucified Saviour as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a risen Saviour as having justified me, and to realize that He has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life, this is a noble style of experience: short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both “know Him, and the power of His resurrection.” Why should souls who are quickened with Jesus, wear the grave-clothes of worldliness and unbelief? Rise, for the Lord is risen.

*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high
mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings,
lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid;
say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

Isaiah 40:9

EACH believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God, and longing to climb the hill of the Lord, and see Him face to face. We ought not to rest content in the mists of the valley when the summit of Tabor awaits us. My soul thirsteth to drink deep of the cup which is reserved for those who reach the mountain's brow, and bathe their brows in heaven. How pure are the dews of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the fare of the dwellers aloft, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem! Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, who see not the sun; they eat dust like the serpent when they might taste the ambrosial meat of angels; they are content to wear the miner's garb when they might put on king's robes; tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. Satisfied I am that many a believer pines in a dungeon when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rouse thee, O believer, from thy low condition! Cast away thy sloth, thy lethargy, thy coldness, or whatever interferes with thy chaste and pure love to Christ, thy soul's Husband. Make Him the source, the centre, and the circumference of all thy soul's range of delight. What enchants thee into such folly as to remain in a pit when thou mayst sit on a throne? Live not in the lowlands of bondage now that mountain liberty is conferred upon thee. Rest no longer satisfied with thy dwarfish attainments, but press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God!

“When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
Oh come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blest when Thou art near.”

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Proverbs 24:33, 34

THE worst of sluggards only ask for a little slumber; they would be indignant if they were accused of thorough idleness. A little folding of the hands to sleep is all they crave, and they have a crowd of reasons to show that this indulgence is a very proper one. Yet by these littles the day ebbs out, and the time for labour is all gone, and the field is grown over with thorns. It is by little procrastinations that men ruin their souls. They have no intention to delay for years—a few months will bring the more convenient season—tomorrow if you will, they will attend to serious things; but the present hour is so occupied and altogether so unsuitable, that they beg to be excused. Like sands from an hour-glass, time passes, life is wasted by driblets, and seasons of grace lost by little slumbers. Oh, to be wise, to catch the flying hour, to use the moments on the wing! May the Lord teach us this sacred wisdom, for otherwise a poverty of the worst sort awaits us, eternal poverty which shall want even a drop of water, and beg for it in vain. Like a traveller steadily pursuing his journey, poverty overtakes the slothful, and ruin overthrows the undecided: each hour brings the dreaded pursuer nearer; he pauses not by the way, for he is on his master's business and must not tarry. As an armed man enters with authority and power, so shall want come to the idle, and death to the impenitent, and there will be no escape. O that men were wise be-times, and would seek diligently unto the Lord Jesus, or ere the solemn day shall dawn when it will be too late to plough and to sow, too late to repent and believe. In harvest, it is vain to lament that the seed time was neglected. As yet, faith and holy decision are timely. May we obtain them this night.

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Romans 9:15

IN these words the Lord in the plainest manner claims the right to give or to withhold His mercy according to His own sovereign will. As the prerogative of life and death is vested in the monarch, so the Judge of all the earth has a right to spare or condemn the guilty, as may seem best in His sight. Men by their sins have forfeited all claim upon God; they deserve to perish for their sins—and if they all do so, they have no ground for complaint. If the Lord steps in to save any, He may do so if the ends of justice are not thwarted; but if He judges it best to leave the condemned to suffer the righteous sentence, none may arraign Him at their bar. Foolish and impudent are all those discourses about the rights of men to be all placed on the same footing; ignorant, if not worse, are those contentions against discriminating grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and sceptre of Jehovah. When we are brought to see our own utter ruin and ill desert, and the justice of the divine verdict against sin, we no longer cavil at the truth that the Lord is not bound to save us; we do not murmur if He chooses to save others, as though He were doing us an injury, but feel that if He deigns to look upon us, it will be His own free act of undeserved goodness, for which we shall forever bless His name.

How shall those who are the subjects of divine election sufficiently adore the grace of God? They have no room for boasting, for sovereignty most effectually excludes it. The Lord's will alone is glorified, and the very notion of human merit is cast out to everlasting contempt. There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture than that of election, none more promotive of gratitude, and, consequently, none more sanctifying. Believers should not be afraid of it, but adoringly rejoice in it.

For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Zechariah 4:10

SMALL things marked the beginning of the work in the hand of Zerubbabel, but none might despise it, for the Lord had raised up one who would persevere until the headstone should be brought forth with shoutings. *The plummet was in good hands.* Here is the comfort of every believer in the Lord Jesus; let the work of grace be ever so small in its beginnings, the plummet is in good hands, a master builder greater than Solomon has undertaken the raising of the heavenly temple, and He will not fail nor be discouraged till the topmost pinnacle shall be raised. If the plummet were in the hand of any merely human being, we might fear for the building, but the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Jesus' hand. The works did not proceed irregularly, and without care, for *the master's hand carried a good instrument.* Had the walls been hurriedly run up without due superintendence, they might have been out of the perpendicular; but the plummet was used by the chosen overseer. Jesus is evermore watching the erection of His spiritual temple, that it may be built securely and well. We are for haste, but Jesus is for judgment. He will use the plummet, and that which is out of line must come down, every stone of it. Hence the failure of many a flattering work, the overthrow of many a glittering profession. It is not for us to judge the Lord's church, since Jesus has a steady hand, and a true eye, and can use the plummet well. Do we not rejoice to see judgment left to Him?

The plummet was in active use—it was in the builder's hand; a sure indication that he meant to push on the work to completion. O Lord Jesus, how would we indeed be glad if we could see Thee at Thy great work. O Zion, the beautiful, thy walls are still in ruins! Rise, Thou glorious Builder, and make her desolations to rejoice at Thy coming.

*In whom we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;
Ephesians 1:7*

COULD there be a sweeter word in any language than that word “forgiveness”, when it sounds in a guilty sinner’s ear, like the silver notes of jubilee to the captive Israelite? Blessed, forever blessed be that dear star of pardon which shines into the condemned cell, and gives the perishing a gleam of hope amid the midnight of despair! Can it be possible that sin, such sin as mine, can be forgiven, forgiven altogether, and forever? Hell is my portion as a sinner—there is no possibility of my escaping from it while sin remains upon me—can the load of guilt be uplifted, the crimson stain removed? Can the adamantine stones of my prison-house ever be loosed from their mortices, or the doors be lifted from their hinges? Jesus tells me that I may yet be clear. For ever blessed be the revelation of atoning love which not only tells me that pardon is possible, but that it is secured to all who rest in Jesus. I have believed in the appointed propitiation, even Jesus crucified, and therefore my sins are at this moment, and forever, forgiven by virtue of His substitutionary pains and death. What joy is this! What bliss to be a perfectly pardoned soul! My soul dedicates all her powers to Him who of His own unpurchased love became my surety, and wrought out for me redemption through His blood. What riches of grace does free forgiveness exhibit! To forgive at all, to forgive fully, to forgive freely, to forgive forever! Here is a constellation of wonders; and when I think of how great my sins were, how dear were the precious drops which cleansed me from them, and how gracious was the method by which pardon was sealed home to me, I am in a maze of wondering worshipping affection. I bow before the throne which absolves me, I clasp the cross which delivers me, I serve henceforth all my days the Incarnate God, through whom I am this night a pardoned soul.

For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.
Esther 10:3

MMORDECAI was a true patriot, and therefore, being exalted to the highest position under Ahasuerus, he used his eminence to promote the prosperity of Israel. In this he was a type of Jesus, who, upon His throne of glory, seeks not His own, but spends His power for His people. It were well if every Christian would be a Mordecai to the church, striving according to his ability for its prosperity. Some are placed in stations of affluence and influence, let them honour their Lord in the high places of the earth, and testify for Jesus before great men. Others have what is far better, namely, close fellowship with the King of kings, let them be sure to plead daily for the weak of the Lord's people, the doubting, the tempted, and the comfortless. It will redound to their honour if they make much intercession for those who are in darkness and dare not draw nigh unto the mercy seat. Instructed believers may serve their Master greatly if they lay out their talents for the general good, and impart their wealth of heavenly learning to others, by teaching them the things of God. The very least in our Israel may at least seek the welfare of his people; and his desire, if he can give no more, shall be acceptable. It is at once the most Christlike and the most happy course for a believer to cease from living to himself. He who blesses others cannot fail to be blessed himself. On the other hand, to seek our own personal greatness is a wicked and unhappy plan of life, its way will be grievous and its end will be fatal.

Here is the place to ask thee, my friend, whether thou art to the best of thy power seeking the wealth of the church in thy neighbourhood? I trust thou art not doing it mischief by bitterness and scandal, nor weakening it by thy neglect. Friend, unite with the Lord's poor, bear their cross, do them all the good thou canst, and thou shalt not miss thy reward.

*And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil,
and for the sweet incense,
Exodus 35:8*

MUCH use was made of this anointing oil under the law, and that which it represents is of primary importance under the gospel. The Holy Spirit, who anoints us for all holy service, is indispensable to us if we would serve the Lord acceptably. Without His aid our religious services are but a vain oblation, and our inward experience is a dead thing. Whenever our ministry is without unction, what miserable stuff it becomes! Nor are the prayers, praises, meditations, and efforts of private Christians one jot superior. A holy anointing is the soul and life of piety, its absence the most grievous of all calamities. To go before the Lord without anointing is as though some common Levite had thrust himself into the priest's office—his ministrations would rather have been sins than services. May we never venture upon hallowed exercises without sacred anointings. They drop upon us from our glorious Head; from His anointing we who are as the skirts of His garments partake of a plenteous unction. Choice spices were compounded with rarest art of the apothecary to form the anointing oil, to show forth to us how rich are all the influences of the Holy Spirit. All good things are found in the divine Comforter. Matchless consolation, infallible instruction, immortal quickening, spiritual energy, and divine sanctification all lie compounded with other excellencies in that sacred eye-salve, the heavenly anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. It imparts a delightful fragrance to the character and person of the man upon whom it is poured. Nothing like it can be found in all the treasuries of the rich, or the secrets of the wise. It is not to be imitated. It comes alone from God, and it is freely given, through Jesus Christ, to every waiting soul. Let us seek it, for we may have it, may have it this very evening. O Lord, anoint Thy servants.

*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
Revelation 12:7*

WAR always will rage between the two great sovereignties until one or the other be crushed. Peace between good and evil is an impossibility; the very pretence of it would, in fact, be the triumph of the powers of darkness. *Michael will always fight*; his holy soul is vexed with sin, and will not endure it. Jesus will always be the dragon's foe, and that not in a quiet sense, but actively, vigorously, with full determination to exterminate evil. All His servants, whether angels in heaven or messengers on earth, will and must fight; they are born to be warriors—at the cross they enter into covenant never to make truce with evil; they are a warlike company, firm in defence and fierce in attack. The duty of every soldier in the army of the Lord is daily, with all his heart, and soul, and strength, to fight against the dragon.

The dragon and his angels will not decline the affray; they are incessant in their onslaughts, sparing no weapon, fair or foul. We are foolish to expect to serve God without opposition: the more zealous we are, the more sure are we to be assailed by the myrmidons of hell. The church may become slothful, but not so her great antagonist; his restless spirit never suffers the war to pause; he hates the woman's seed, and would fain devour the church if he could. The servants of Satan partake much of the old dragon's energy, and are usually an active race. War rages all around, and to dream of peace is dangerous and futile.

Glory be to God, we know the end of the war. The great dragon shall be cast out and forever destroyed, while Jesus and they who are with Him shall receive the crown. Let us sharpen our swords tonight, and pray the Holy Spirit to nerve our arms for the conflict. Never battle so important, never crown so glorious. Every man to his post, ye warriors of the cross, and may the Lord tread Satan under your feet shortly!

*Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness,
and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

Psalm 107:8

IF we complained less, and praised more, we should be happier, and God would be more glorified. Let us daily praise God for *common mercies*—common as we frequently call them, and yet so priceless, that when deprived of them we are ready to perish. Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad, for the bread we eat, for the raiment we wear. Let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined amongst the guilty; let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts; let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. But, beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in our songs of praise should be of *redeeming love*. God's redeeming acts towards His chosen are for ever the favourite themes of their praise. If we know what redemption means, let us not withhold our sonnets of thanksgiving. We have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged. We have been led to the cross of Christ—our shackles of guilt have been broken off; we are no longer slaves, but children of the living God, and can antedate the period when we shall be presented before the throne without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm-branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair linen which is to be our everlasting array, and shall we not unceasingly give thanks to the Lord our Redeemer? Child of God, canst thou be silent? Awake, awake, ye heirs of glory, and lead your captivity captive, as ye cry with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Let the new month begin with new songs.

*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun;
and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Ecclesiastes 1:14

NOTHING can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Saints have tried to anchor in other roadsteads, but they have been driven out of such fatal refuges. Solomon, the wisest of men, was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words: "So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What! The whole of it vanity? O favoured monarch, is there nothing in all thy wealth? Nothing in that wide dominion reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra's glorious palaces? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? In all thy music and dancing, and wine and luxury, is there nothing? "Nothing," he says, "but weariness of spirit." This was his verdict when he had trodden the whole round of pleasure. To embrace our Lord Jesus, to dwell in His love, and be fully assured of union with Him—this is all in all. Dear reader, you need not try other forms of life in order to see whether they are better than the Christian's: if you roam the world around, you will see no sights like a sight of the Saviour's face; if you could have all the comforts of life, if you lost your Saviour, you would be wretched; but if you win Christ, then should you rot in a dungeon, you would find it a paradise; should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you will yet be satisfied with favour and full of the goodness of the Lord.

*Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.*

Psalm 24:8

WELL may our God be glorious in the eyes of His people, seeing that He has wrought such wonders for them, in them, and by them. *For them*, the Lord Jesus upon Calvary routed every foe, breaking all the weapons of the enemy in pieces by His finished work of satisfactory obedience; by His triumphant resurrection and ascension He completely overturned the hopes of hell, leading captivity captive, making a show of our enemies openly, triumphing over them by His cross. Every arrow of guilt which Satan might have shot at us is broken, for who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Vain are the sharp swords of infernal malice, and the perpetual battles of the serpent's seed, for in the midst of the church the lame take the prey, and the feeblest warriors are crowned.

The saved may well adore their Lord for His conquests *in them*, since the arrows of their natural hatred are snapped, and the weapons of their rebellion broken. What victories has grace won in our evil hearts! How glorious is Jesus when the will is subdued, and sin dethroned! As for our remaining corruptions, they shall sustain an equally sure defeat, and every temptation, and doubt, and fear, shall be utterly destroyed. In the Salem of our peaceful hearts, the name of Jesus is great beyond compare: He has won our love, and He shall wear it. Even thus securely may we look for victories *by us*. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We shall cast down the powers of darkness which are in the world, by our faith, and zeal, and holiness; we shall win sinners to Jesus, we shall overturn false systems, we shall convert nations, for God is with us, and none shall stand before us. This evening let the Christian warrior chant the war song, and prepare for tomorrow's fight. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:23

THIS groaning is universal among the saints: to a greater or lesser extent we all feel it. It is not the groan of murmuring or complaint: it is rather the note of desire than of distress. Having received an earnest, we desire the whole of our portion; we are sighing that our entire manhood, in its trinity of spirit, soul, and body, may be set free from the last vestige of the fall; we long to put off corruption, weakness, and dishonour, and to wrap ourselves in incorruption, in immortality, in glory, in the spiritual body which the Lord Jesus will bestow upon His people. We long for the manifestation of our adoption as the children of God. "We groan," but it is "*within ourselves.*" It is not the hypocrite's groan, by which he would make men believe that he is a saint because he is wretched. Our sighs are sacred things, too hallowed for us to tell abroad. We keep our longings to our Lord alone. Then the apostle says we are "*waiting,*" by which we learn that we are not to be petulant, like Jonah or Elijah, when they said, "Let me die"; nor are we to whimper and sigh for the end of life because we are tired of work, nor wish to escape from our present sufferings till the will of the Lord is done. We are to groan for glorification, but we are to wait patiently for it, knowing that what the Lord appoints is best. Waiting implies being ready. We are to stand at the door expecting the Beloved to open it and take us away to Himself. This "groaning" is a *test*. You may judge of a man by what he groans after. Some men groan after wealth—they worship Mammon; some groan continually under the troubles of life—they are merely impatient; but the man who sighs after God, who is uneasy till he is made like Christ, that is the blessed man. May God help us to groan for the coming of the Lord, and the resurrection which He will bring to us.

And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.

Zechariah 1:20

IN the vision described in this chapter, the prophet saw four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest; and the prophet asked, "What are these?" The answer was, "These are the horns which have scattered Israel." He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the church of God. There were four horns; for the church is attacked from all quarters. Well might the prophet have felt dismayed; but on a sudden there appeared before him *four carpenters*. He asked, "What shall these do?" These are the men whom God hath found to break those horns in pieces. *God will always find men for His work*, and He will find them *at the right time*. The prophet did not see the carpenters *first*, when there was nothing to do, but first the "horns," and then the "carpenters." Moreover, the Lord finds *enough men*. He did not find *three* carpenters, but *four*; there were four horns, and there must be four workmen. God finds *the right men*; not four men with pens to write; not four architects to draw plans; but four carpenters to do rough work. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the "horns" grow troublesome, the "carpenters" will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the church of God at any moment; there may be growing up in obscurity the valiant reformer who will shake the nations: Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools, and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London's poverty. The Lord knows where to find His servants. He hath in ambush a multitude of mighty men, and at His word they shall start up to the battle; "for the battle is the Lord's," and He shall get to Himself the victory. Let us abide faithful to Christ, and He, in the right time, will raise up for us a defence, whether it be in the day of our personal need, or in the season of peril to His Church.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

Revelation 1:13

“**O**NE like unto the Son of Man” appeared to John in Patmos, and the beloved disciple marked that He wore a girdle of gold. *A girdle*, for Jesus never was ungirt while upon earth, but stood always ready for service, and now before the eternal throne He stays not His holy ministry, but as a priest is girt about with “the curious girdle of the ephod”. Well it is for us that He has not ceased to fulfil His offices of love for us, since this is one of our choicest safeguards that He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Jesus is never an idler; His garments are never loose as though His offices were ended; He diligently carries on the cause of His people. *A golden girdle*, to manifest the superiority of His service, the royalty of His person, the dignity of His state, the glory of His reward. No longer does He cry out of the dust, but He pleads with authority, a King as well as a Priest. Safe enough is our cause in the hands of our enthroned Melchisedek.

Our Lord presents all His people with an example. We must never unbind our girdles. This is not the time for lying down at ease, it is the season of service and warfare. We need to bind the girdle of truth more and more tightly around our loins. It is a golden girdle, and so will be our richest ornament, and we greatly need it, for a heart that is not well braced up with the truth as it is in Jesus, and with the fidelity which is wrought of the Spirit, will be easily entangled with the things of this life, and tripped up by the snares of temptation. It is in vain that we possess the Scriptures unless we bind them around us like a girdle, surrounding our entire nature, keeping each part of our character in order, and giving compactness to our whole man. If in heaven Jesus unbinds not the girdle, much less may we upon earth. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22

PAUL'S great object was not merely to instruct and to improve, but to save. Anything short of this would have disappointed him; he would have men renewed in heart, forgiven, sanctified, in fact, *saved*. Have our Christian labours been aimed at anything below this great point? Then let us amend our ways, for of what avail will it be at the last great day to have taught and moralized men if they appear before God unsaved? Blood-red will our skirts be if through life we have sought inferior objects, and forgotten that men needed to be saved. Paul knew the ruin of man's natural state, and did not try to educate him, but to save him; he saw men sinking to hell, and did not talk of refining them, but of saving from the wrath to come. To compass their salvation, he gave himself up with untiring zeal to telling abroad the gospel, to warning and beseeching men to be reconciled to God. His prayers were importunate and his labours incessant. To save souls was his consuming passion, his ambition, his calling. He became a servant to all men, toiling for his race, feeling a woe within him if he preached not the gospel. He laid aside his preferences to prevent prejudice; he submitted his will in things indifferent, and if men would but receive the gospel, he raised no questions about forms or ceremonies: the gospel was the one all-important business with him. If he might save some he would be content. This was the crown for which he strove, the sole and sufficient reward of all his labours and self-denials. Dear reader, have you and I lived to win souls at this noble rate? Are we possessed with the same all-absorbing desire? If not, why not? Jesus died for sinners, cannot we live for them? Where is our tenderness? Where our love to Christ, if we seek not His honour in the salvation of men? O that the Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of men.

*Thy congregation hath dwelt therein:
thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.
Psalm 68:10*

ALL God's gifts are prepared gifts laid up in store for wants foreseen. He anticipates our needs; and out of the fulness which He has treasured up in Christ Jesus, He provides of His goodness for the poor. You may trust Him for all the necessities that can occur, for He has infallibly foreknown every one of them. He can say of us in all conditions, "I knew that thou wouldst be this and that." A man goes a journey across the desert, and when he has made a day's advance, and pitched his tent, he discovers that he wants many comforts and necessaries which he has not brought in his baggage. "Ah!" says he, "I did not foresee this: if I had this journey to go again, I should bring these things with me, so necessary to my comfort." But God has marked with prescient eye all the requirements of His poor wandering children, and when those needs occur, supplies are ready. It is goodness which He has prepared for the poor in heart, goodness and goodness only. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Reader, is your heart heavy this evening? God knew it would be; the comfort which your heart wants is treasured in the sweet assurance of the text. You are poor and needy, but He has thought upon you, and has the exact blessing which you require in store for you. Plead the promise, believe it and obtain its fulfillment. Do you feel that you never were so consciously vile as you are now? Behold, the crimson fountain is open still, with all its former efficacy, to wash your sin away. Never shall you come into such a position that Christ cannot aid you. No pinch shall ever arrive in your spiritual affairs in which Jesus Christ shall not be equal to the emergency, for your history has all been foreknown and provided for in Jesus.

*And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation,
and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;
Isaiah 32:18*

PEACE and rest belong not to the unregenerate, they are the peculiar possession of the Lord's people, and of them only. The God of Peace gives perfect peace to those whose hearts are stayed upon Him. When man was unfallen, his God gave him the flowery bowers of Eden as his quiet resting places; alas! How soon sin blighted the fair abode of innocence. In the day of universal wrath when the flood swept away a guilty race, the chosen family were quietly secured in the resting-place of the ark, which floated them from the old condemned world into the new earth of the rainbow and the covenant, herein typifying Jesus, the ark of our salvation. Israel rested safely beneath the blood-besprinkled habitations of Egypt when the destroying angel smote the first-born; and in the wilderness the shadow of the pillar of cloud, and the flowing rock, gave the weary pilgrims sweet repose. At this hour we rest in the promises of our faithful God, knowing that His words are full of truth and power; we rest in the doctrines of His word, which are consolation itself; we rest in the covenant of His grace, which is a haven of delight. More highly favoured are we than David in Adullam, or Jonah beneath his gourd, for none can invade or destroy our shelter. The person of Jesus is the quiet resting-place of His people, and when we draw near to Him in the breaking of the bread, in the hearing of the word, the searching of the Scriptures, prayer, or praise, we find any form of approach to Him to be the return of peace to our spirits.

“I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty sacrifice, and I have peace with God.
‘Tis everlasting peace, sure as Jehovah’s name,
‘Tis stable as His steadfast throne, for evermore the same:
The clouds may go and come, and storms may sweep my sky,
This blood-sealed friendship changes not, the cross is ever
nigh.”

*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple,
of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God,
heard us: whose heart the Lord opened,
that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.
Acts 16:14*

IN Lydia's conversion there are many points of interest. It was brought about by *providential circumstances*. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, but just at the right time for hearing Paul we find her at Philippi; providence, which is the handmaid of grace, led her to the right spot. Again, *grace was preparing her soul for the blessing*—grace preparing for grace. She did not know the Saviour, but as a Jewess, she knew many truths which were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus. Her conversion took place in the use of the means. On the Sabbath she went when prayer was wont to be made, and there prayer was heard. Never neglect the means of grace; God *may* bless us when we are not in His house, but we have the greater reason to hope that He will when we are in communion with His saints. Observe the words, "Whose heart *the Lord* opened." She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it; Paul did not do it. The Lord Himself must open the heart, to receive the things which make for our peace. He alone can put the key into the hole of the door and open it, and get admittance for Himself. He is the heart's master as He is the heart's maker. The first outward evidence of the opened heart was *obedience*. As soon as Lydia had believed in Jesus, she was baptized. It is a sweet sign of a humble and broken heart, when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is not essential to his salvation, which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of condemnation, but is a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master. The next evidence was love, manifesting itself in acts of grateful kindness to the apostles. Love to the saints has ever been a mark of the true convert. Those who do nothing for Christ or His church, give but sorry evidence of an "opened" heart. Lord, evermore give me an opened heart.

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:24

TO what choice order of officials was this word spoken? To kings who proudly boast a right divine? Ah, no! Too often do they serve themselves or Satan, and forget the God whose sufferance permits them to wear their mimic majesty for their little hour. Speaks then the apostle to those so-called “right reverend fathers in God”, the bishops, or “the venerable the archdeacons”? No, indeed, Paul knew nothing of these mere inventions of man. Not even to pastors and teachers, or to the wealthy and esteemed among believers, was this word spoken, but to servants, ay, and to slaves. Among the toiling multitudes, the journeymen, the day labourers, the domestic servants, the drudges of the kitchen, the apostle found, as we find still, some of the Lord’s chosen, and to them he says, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” This saying ennobles the weary routine of earthly employments, and sheds a halo around the most humble occupations. To wash feet may be servile, but to wash *His* feet is royal work. To unloose the shoe-latchet is poor employ, but to unloose the great Master’s shoe is a princely privilege. The shop, the barn, the scullery, and the smithy become temples when men and women do all to the glory of God! Then “divine service” is not a thing of a few hours and a few places, but all life becomes holiness unto the Lord, and every place and thing, as consecrated as the tabernacle and its golden candlestick.

“Teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see;

And what I do in anything to do it as to Thee.

All may of Thee partake, nothing can be so mean,

Which with this tincture, for Thy sake, will not grow bright
and clean.

A servant with this clause makes drudgery divine;

Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws, makes that and the
action fine.

*They have dealt treacherously against the LORD:
for they have begotten strange children:
now shall a month devour them with their portions.
Hosea 5:7*

BELIEVER, here is a sorrowful truth! Thou art the beloved of the Lord, redeemed by blood, called by grace, preserved in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, on thy way to heaven, and yet, “thou hast dealt treacherously” with God, thy best friend; treacherously with Jesus, whose thou art; treacherously with the Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast been quickened unto life eternal! How treacherous you have been in the matter of vows and promises. Do you remember the love of your espousals, that happy time—the springtide of your spiritual life? Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then, saying, “He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of His service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in Him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus’ sake.” Has it been so? Alas! If conscience speak, it will say, “He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree.” “Thou hast dealt treacherously.” Treachery to Jesus! What words shall be used in denouncing it? Words little avail: let our penitent thoughts execrate the sin which is so surely in us. Treacherous to Thy wounds, O Jesus! Forgive us, and let us not sin again! How shameful to be treacherous to Him who never forgets us, but who this day stands with our names engraven on His breastplate before the eternal throne.

And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

Isaiah 54:12

THE church is most instructively symbolized by a building erected by heavenly power, and designed by divine skill. Such a spiritual house must not be dark, for the Israelites had light in their dwellings; there must therefore be windows to let the light in and to allow the inhabitants to gaze abroad. These windows are *precious* as agates: the ways in which the church beholds her Lord and heaven, and spiritual truth in general, are to be had in the highest esteem. Agates are not the most transparent of gems, they are but semi-pellucid at the best:

“Our knowledge of that life is small,
Our eye of faith is dim.”

Faith is one of these precious agate windows, but alas! It is often so misty and beclouded, that we see but darkly, and mistake much that we do see. Yet if we cannot gaze through windows of diamonds and know even as we are known, it is a glorious thing to behold the altogether lovely One, even though the glass be hazy as the agate. *Experience* is another of these dim but precious windows, yielding to us a subdued religious light, in which we see the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, through our own afflictions. Our weak eyes could not endure windows of transparent glass to let in the Master’s glory, but when they are dimmed with weeping, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are tempered, and shine through the windows of agate with a soft radiance inexpressibly soothing to tempted souls. *Sanctification*, as it conforms us to our Lord, is another agate window. Only as we become heavenly can we comprehend heavenly things. The pure in heart see a pure God. Those who are like Jesus see Him as He is. Because we are so little like Him, the window is but agate; because we are somewhat like Him, it is agate. We thank God for what we have, and long for more. When shall we see God and Jesus, and heaven and truth, face to face?

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

THE Lord Jesus Christ acted in what He did as a great public representative person, and His dying upon the cross was the virtual dying of all His people. Then all His saints rendered unto justice what was due, and made an expiation to divine vengeance for all their sins. The apostle of the Gentiles delighted to think that as one of Christ's chosen people, he died upon the cross in Christ. He did more than believe this doctrinally, he accepted it confidently, resting his hope upon it. He believed that by virtue of Christ's death, he had satisfied divine justice, and found reconciliation with God. Beloved, what a blessed thing it is when the soul can, as it were, stretch itself upon the cross of Christ, and feel, "I am dead; the law has slain me, and I am therefore free from its power, because in my Surety I have borne the curse, and in the person of my Substitute the whole that the law could do, by way of condemnation, has been executed upon me, for I am crucified with Christ."

But Paul meant even more than this. He not only believed in Christ's death, and trusted in it, but he actually felt its power in himself in causing the crucifixion of his old corrupt nature. When he saw the pleasures of sin, he said, "I cannot enjoy these: I am dead to them." Such is the experience of every true Christian. Having received Christ, he is to this world as one who is utterly dead. Yet, while conscious of death to the world, he can, at the same time, exclaim with the apostle, "Nevertheless I live." He is fully alive unto God. The Christian's life is a matchless riddle. No worldling can comprehend it; even the believer himself cannot understand it. Dead, yet alive! Crucified with Christ, and yet at the same time risen with Christ in newness of life! Union with the suffering, bleeding Saviour, and death to the world and sin, are soul-cheering things. O for more enjoyment of them!

*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold,
I will lay thy stones with fair colours,
and lay thy foundations with sapphires.
Isaiah 54:11*

NOT only that which is seen of the church of God, but that which is unseen, is fair and precious. Foundations are out of sight, and so long as they are firm it is not expected that they should be valuable; but in Jehovah's work everything is of a piece, nothing slurred, nothing mean. The deep foundations of the work of grace are as sapphires for preciousness, no human mind is able to measure their glory. We build upon *the covenant of grace*, which is firmer than adamant, and as enduring as jewels upon which age spends itself in vain. Sapphire foundations are eternal, and the covenant abides throughout the lifetime of the Almighty. Another foundation is *the person of the Lord Jesus*, which is clear and spotless, everlasting and beautiful as the sapphire; blending in one the deep blue of earth's ever rolling ocean and the azure of its all embracing sky. Once might our Lord have been likened to the ruby as He stood covered with His own blood, but now we see Him radiant with the soft blue of love, love abounding, deep, eternal. Our eternal hopes are built upon *the justice and the faithfulness of God*, which are clear and cloudless as the sapphire. We are not saved by a compromise, by mercy defeating justice, or law suspending its operations; no, we defy the eagle's eye to detect a flaw in the groundwork of our confidence—our foundation is of sapphire, and will endure the fire.

The Lord Himself has laid the foundation of His people's hopes. It is matter for grave enquiry whether our hopes are built upon such a basis. Good works and ceremonies are not a foundation of sapphires, but of wood, hay, and stubble; neither are they laid by God, but by our own conceit. Foundations will all be tried ere long: woe unto him whose lofty tower shall come down with a crash, because it is based on a quicksand. He who is built on sapphires may await storm or fire with equanimity, for he shall abide the test.

*Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea,
from that time that thine ear was not opened:
for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously,
and wast called a transgressor from the womb.*

Isaiah 48:8

IT is painful to remember that, in a certain degree, this accusation may be laid at the door of *believers*, who too often are in a measure *spiritually insensible*. We may well bewail ourselves that we do not hear the voice of God as we ought, “Yea, thou heardest not.” There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us: there are whisperings of divine command and of heavenly love which are alike unobserved by our leaden intellects. Alas! We have been *carelessly ignorant*—“Yea, thou knewest not.” There are matters within which we ought to have seen, corruptions which have made headway unnoticed; sweet affections which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended by us; glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived if we did not wall up the windows of our soul. But we “have not known.” As we think of it we are humbled in the deepest self-abasement. How must we adore the grace of God as we learn from the context that all this folly and ignorance, on our part, was *foreknown by God*, and, notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of mercy! Admire the marvellous sovereign grace which could have chosen us in the sight of all this! Wonder at the price that was paid for us when Christ knew what we should be! He who hung upon the cross foresaw us as unbelieving, backsliding, cold of heart, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer, and yet He said, “I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour . . . Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life”! O redemption, how wondrously resplendent dost thou shine when we think how black we are! O Holy Spirit, give us henceforth the hearing ear, the understanding heart!

*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,
and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

John 10:9

JESUS, the great I AM, is the entrance into the true church, and the way of access to God Himself. He gives to the man who comes to God by Him four choice privileges.

1. *He shall be saved.* The fugitive manslayer passed the gate of the city of refuge, and was safe. Noah entered the door of the ark, and was secure. None can be lost who take Jesus as the door of faith to their souls. Entrance through Jesus into peace is the guarantee of entrance by the same door into heaven. Jesus is the only door, an open door, a wide door, a safe door; and blessed is he who rests all his hope of admission to glory upon the crucified Redeemer.

2. *He shall go in.* He shall be privileged to go in among the divine family, sharing the children's bread, and participating in all their honours and enjoyments. He shall go in to the chambers of communion, to the banquets of love, to the treasures of the covenant, to the storehouses of the promises. He shall go in unto the King of kings in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the secret of the Lord shall be with him.

3. *He shall go out.* This blessing is much forgotten. We go out into the world to labour and suffer, but what a mercy to go in the name and power of Jesus! We are called to bear witness to the truth, to cheer the disconsolate, to warn the careless, to win souls, and to glorify God; and as the angel said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might," even thus the Lord would have us proceed as His messengers in His name and strength.

4. *He shall find pasture.* He who knows Jesus shall never want. Going in and out shall be alike helpful to him: in fellowship with God he shall grow, and in watering others he shall be watered. Having made Jesus his all, he shall find all in Jesus. His soul shall be as a watered garden, and as a well of water whose waters fail not.

*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
and look well to thy herds.*

Proverbs 27:23

EVERY wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven, will cry, "Search me, O God, and try me"; and he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; and of old His servants knew Him as "the Lord which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men". Let me stir you up in His name to make diligent search and solemn trial of your state, lest you come short of the promised rest. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with us all, I exhort you to do with yourself this evening. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for grey heads may cover black hearts: and let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy. Every now and then a cedar falls into our midst. The enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, verily, but I shall hope the rather that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy. By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite, but that sincere souls might show forth His praise, I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, "Mene, Mene, Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Revelation 21:1

SCARCELY could we rejoice at the thought of losing the glorious old ocean: the new heavens and the new earth are none the fairer to our imagination, if, indeed, literally there is to be no great and wide sea, with its gleaming waves and shelly shores. Is not the text to be read as a metaphor, tinged with the prejudice with which the Oriental mind universally regarded the sea in the olden times? A real physical world without a sea is mournful to imagine, it would be an iron ring without the sapphire which made it precious. There must be a spiritual meaning here. In the new dispensation there will be no *division*—the sea separates nations and sunders peoples from each other. To John in Patmos the deep waters were like prison walls, shutting him out from his brethren and his work: there shall be no such barriers in the world to come. Leagues of rolling billows lie between us and many a kinsman whom tonight we prayerfully remember, but in the bright world to which we go there shall be unbroken fellowship for all the redeemed family. In this sense there shall be no more sea. The sea is the emblem of change; with its ebbs and flows, its glassy smoothness and its mountainous billows, its gentle murmurs and its tumultuous roarings, it is never long the same. Slave of the fickle winds and the changeful moon, its instability is proverbial. In this mortal state we have too much of this; earth is constant only in her inconstancy, but in the heavenly state all mournful change shall be unknown, and with it all fear of storm to wreck our hopes and drown our joys. The sea of glass glows with a glory unbroken by a wave. No tempest howls along the peaceful shores of paradise. Soon shall we reach that happy land where partings, and changes, and storms shall be ended! Jesus will waft us there. Are we in Him or not? This is the grand question.

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

Matthew 20:8

GOD is a good paymaster; He pays His servants while at work as well as when they have done it; and one of His payments is this: an easy conscience. If you have spoken faithfully of Jesus to one person, when you go to bed at night you feel happy in thinking, "I have this day discharged my conscience of that man's blood." There is a great *comfort in doing something for Jesus*. Oh, what a happiness to place jewels in His crown, and give Him to see of the travail of His soul! There is also very great reward in *watching the first buddings of conviction in a soul!* To say of that girl in the class, "She is tender of heart, I do hope that there is the Lord's work within." To go home and pray over that boy, who said something in the afternoon which made you think he must know more of divine truth than you had feared! Oh, the joy of hope! But as for *the joy of success*, it is unspeakable. This joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry thing—you pine for more of it. To be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in the world. With every soul you bring to Christ, you get a new heaven upon earth. But who can conceive the bliss which awaits us above! Oh, how sweet is that sentence, "Enter thou into *the joy of thy Lord!*" Do you know what the joy of Christ is over a saved sinner? This is the very joy which we are to possess in heaven. Yes, when He mounts the throne, you shall mount with Him. When the heavens ring with "Well done, well done," you shall partake in the reward; you have toiled with Him, you have suffered with Him, you shall now reign with Him; you have sown with Him, you shall reap with Him; your face was covered with sweat like His, and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as His soul was, now shall your face be bright with heaven's splendour as is His countenance, and now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys even as His soul is.

I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

Ezekiel 16:10

SEE with what matchless generosity the Lord provides for His people's apparel. They are so arrayed that the divine skill is seen producing an unrivalled *broidered work*, in which every attribute takes its part and every divine beauty is revealed. No art like the art displayed in our salvation, no cunning workmanship like that beheld in the righteousness of the saints. Justification has engrossed learned pens in all ages of the church, and will be the theme of admiration in eternity. God has indeed "curiously wrought it". With all this elaboration there is mingled utility and durability, comparable to our being *shod with badgers' skins*. The animal here meant is unknown, but its skin covered the tabernacle, and formed one of the finest and strongest leathers known. The righteousness which is of God by faith endureth forever, and he who is shod with this divine preparation will tread the desert safely, and may even set his foot upon the lion and the adder. Purity and dignity of our holy vesture are brought out in *the fine linen*. When the Lord sanctifies His people, they are clad as priests in pure white; not the snow itself excels them; they are in the eyes of men and angels fair to look upon, and even in the Lord's eyes they are without spot. Meanwhile the royal apparel is delicate and rich as *silk*. No expense is spared, no beauty withheld, no daintiness denied.

What, then? Is there no inference from this? Surely there is gratitude to be felt and joy to be expressed. Come, my heart, refuse not thy evening hallelujah! Tune thy pipes! Touch thy chords!

“Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed
By the Great Sacred Three!
In sweetest harmony of praise
Let all thy powers agree.”

They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

Deuteronomy 32:5

WHAT is the secret spot which infallibly betokens the child of God? It were vain presumption to decide this upon our own judgment; but God's word reveals it to us, and we may tread surely where we have revelation to be our guide. Now, we are told concerning our Lord, "to as many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." Then, if I have received Christ Jesus into my heart, I am a child of God. That reception is described in the same verse as *believing on the name of Jesus Christ*. If, then, I believe on Jesus Christ's name—that is, simply from my heart trust myself with the crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer, I am a member of the family of the Most High. Whatever else I may not have, if I have this, I have the privilege to become a child of God. Our Lord Jesus puts it in another shape. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Here is the matter in a nutshell. Christ appears as a shepherd to His own sheep, not to others. As soon as He appears, His own sheep perceive Him—they trust Him, they are prepared to follow Him; He knows them, and they know Him—there is a mutual knowledge—there is a constant connection between them. Thus the one mark, the sure mark, the infallible mark of regeneration and adoption is a hearty faith in the appointed Redeemer. Reader, are you in doubt, are you uncertain whether you bear the secret mark of God's children? Then let not an hour pass over your head till you have said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Trifle not here, I adjure you! If you must trifle anywhere, let it be about some secondary matter: your health, if you will, or the title deeds of your estate; but about your soul, your never-dying soul and its eternal destinies, I beseech you to be in earnest. Make sure work for eternity.

*The day is thine, the night also is thine:
thou hast prepared the light and the sun.*

Psalm 74:16

YES, Lord, Thou dost not abdicate Thy throne when the sun goeth down, nor dost Thou leave the world all through these long wintry nights to be the prey of evil; Thine eyes watch us as the stars, and Thine arms surround us as the zodiac belts the sky. The dews of kindly sleep and all the influences of the moon are in Thy hand, and the alarms and solemnities of night are equally with Thee. This is very sweet to me when watching through the midnight hours, or tossing to and fro in anguish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun: may my Lord make me to be a favoured partaker in them.

The night of affliction is as much under the arrangement and control of the Lord of Love as the bright summer days when all is bliss. Jesus is in the tempest. His love wraps the night about itself as a mantle, but to the eye of faith the sable robe is scarce a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day the eternal Watcher observes His saints, and overrules the shades and dews of midnight for His people's highest good. We believe in no rival deities of good and evil contending for the mastery, but we hear the voice of Jehovah saying, "I create light and I create darkness; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the Lord's servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the Lord, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem defeat to us may be victory to Him.

"Though enwrapt in gloomy night,
We perceive no ray of light;
Since the Lord Himself is here,
'Tis not meet that we should fear."

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Isaiah 40:5

WE anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ; when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and the bats; when Romanism shall be exploded, and the crescent of Mohammed shall wane, never again to cast its baleful rays upon the nations; when kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall call their Redeemer blessed. Some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We know that the world and all that is therein is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for new heavens and for a new earth; but we cannot read our Bibles without the conviction that—

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Does his successive journeys run.”

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays; we are not disheartened by the long period which He allots to the church in which to struggle with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never suffer this world, which has once seen Christ’s blood shed upon it, to be always the devil’s stronghold. Christ came hither to deliver this world from the detested sway of the powers of darkness. What a shout shall that be when men and angels shall unite to cry “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!” What a satisfaction will it be in that day to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord! Happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him, doing their little in His name and by His strength! How unhappy are those on the side of evil! It is a losing side, and it is a matter wherein to lose is to lose and to be lost forever. On whose side are you?

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Job 1:5

WHAT the patriarch did early in the morning, after the family festivities, it will be well for the believer to do for himself ere he rests tonight. Amid the cheerfulness of household gatherings it is easy to slide into sinful levities, and to forget our avowed character as Christians. It ought not to be so, but so it is, that our days of feasting are very seldom days of sanctified enjoyment, but too frequently degenerate into unhallowed mirth. There is a way of joy as pure and sanctifying as though one bathed in the rivers of Eden: holy gratitude should be quite as purifying an element as grief. Alas! For our poor hearts, that facts prove that the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting. Come, believer, in what have you sinned today? Have you been forgetful of your high calling? Have you been even as others in idle words and loose speeches? Then confess the sin, and fly to the sacrifice. The sacrifice sanctifies. The precious blood of the Lamb slain removes the guilt, and purges away the defilement of our sins of ignorance and carelessness. This is the best ending of a Christmas-day—to wash anew in the cleansing fountain. Believer, come to this sacrifice continually; if it be so good tonight, it is good every night. To live at the altar is the privilege of the royal priesthood; to them sin, great as it is, is nevertheless no cause for despair, since they draw near yet again to the sin-atonement victim, and their conscience is purged from dead works.

Gladly I close this festive day,
 Grasping the altar's hallow'd horn;
 My slips and faults are washed away,
 The Lamb has all my trespass borne.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:20

THE Lord Jesus is in the midst of His church; He walketh among the golden candlesticks; His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always." He is as surely with us now as He was with the disciples at the lake, when they saw coals of fire, and fish laid thereon and bread. Not carnally, but still in real truth, Jesus is with us. And a blessed truth it is, for where Jesus is, *love becomes inflamed*. Of all the things in the world that can set the heart burning, there is nothing like the presence of Jesus! A glimpse of Him so overcomes us, that we are ready to say, "Turn away Thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Even the smell of the aloes, and the myrrh, and the cassia, which drop from His perfumed garments, causes the sick and the faint to grow strong. Let there be but a moment's leaning of the head upon that gracious bosom, and a reception of His divine love into our poor cold hearts, and we are cold no longer, but glow like seraphs, equal to every labour, and capable of every suffering. If we know that Jesus is with us, *every power will be developed*, and every grace will be strengthened, and we shall cast ourselves into the Lord's service with heart, and soul, and strength; therefore is the presence of Christ to be desired above all things. *His presence will be most realized by those who are most like Him*. If you desire to see Christ, you must grow in conformity to Him. Bring yourself, by the power of the Spirit, into union with Christ's desires, and motives, and plans of action, and you are likely to be favoured with His company. Remember *His presence may be had*. His promise is as true as ever. He delights to be with us. If He doth not come, it is because we hinder Him by our indifference. He will reveal Himself to our earnest prayers, and graciously suffer Himself to be detained by our entreaties, and by our tears, for these are the golden chains which bind Jesus to His people.

*And the LORD shall guide thee continually,
and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones:
and thou shalt be like a watered garden,
and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

Isaiah 58:11

“**T**HE Lord shall guide thee.” Not an angel, but JEHOVAH shall guide thee. He said He would not go through the wilderness before His people, an angel should go before them to lead them in the way; but Moses said, “If *Thy* presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel’s guidance: He Himself leads the van. You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar, but Jehovah will never forsake you. Notice the word *shall*—“The Lord shall guide thee.” How certain this makes it! How sure it is that God will not forsake us! His precious “shalls” and “wills” are better than men’s oaths. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Then observe the adverb *continually*. We are not merely to be guided sometimes, but we are to have a perpetual monitor; not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander, but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd; and if we follow close at His heels, we shall not err, but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in. If you have to change your position in life; if you have to emigrate to distant shores; if it should happen that you are cast into poverty, or uplifted suddenly into a more responsible position than the one you now occupy; if you are thrown among strangers, or cast among foes, yet tremble not, for “the Lord shall guide thee continually.” There are no dilemmas out of which you shall not be delivered if you live near to God, and your heart be kept warm with holy love. He goes not amiss who goes in the company of God. Like Enoch, walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road. You have infallible wisdom to direct you, immutable love to comfort you, and eternal power to defend you. “Jehovah”—mark the word—“Jehovah shall guide thee continually.”

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:
I came not to send peace, but a sword.
Matthew 10:34*

THE Christian will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make none; but if to do the right, and to believe the true, should cause him to lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly, and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever. O ye who have taken up His cross, know ye not what your Master said? "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Christ is the great Peacemaker; but before peace, He brings war. Where the light cometh, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee; or, if it abideth, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trodden under foot. If you follow Christ, you shall have all the dogs of the world yelping at your heels. If you would live so as to stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it the world will not speak well of you. He who has the friendship of the world is an enemy to God; but if you are true and faithful to the Most High, men will resent your unflinching fidelity, since it is a testimony against their iniquities. Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right. You will need the courage of a lion unhesitatingly to pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe; but for the love of Jesus you must thus be courageous. For the truth's sake to hazard reputation and affection, is such a deed that to do it constantly you will need a degree of moral principle which only the Spirit of God can work in you; yet turn not your back like a coward, but play the man. Follow right manfully in your Master's steps, for He has traversed this rough way before you. Better a brief warfare and eternal rest, than false peace and everlasting torment.

*Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?
They say unto him, The Son of David.
Matthew 22:42*

THE great test of your soul's health is, *What think you of Christ?* Is He to you "fairer than the children of men"—"the chief among ten thousand"—the "altogether lovely"? Wherever Christ is thus esteemed, all the faculties of the spiritual man exercise themselves with energy. I will judge of your piety by this barometer: does Christ stand high or low with you? If you have thought little of Christ, if you have been content to live without His presence, if you have cared little for His honour, if you have been neglectful of His laws, then I know that your soul is sick—God grant that it may not be sick unto death! But if the first thought of your spirit has been, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" I tell you that you may have a thousand infirmities, and even scarcely know whether you are a child of God at all, and yet I am persuaded, beyond a doubt, that you are safe, since Jesus is great in your esteem. I care not for thy rags, what thinkest thou of *His* royal apparel? I care not for thy wounds, though they bleed in torrents, what thinkest thou of *His* wounds? Are they like glittering rubies in thine esteem? I think none the less of thee, though thou liest like Lazarus on the dunghill, and the dogs do lick thee—I judge thee not by thy poverty: what thinkest thou of the King in His beauty? Has He a glorious high throne in thy heart? Wouldst thou set Him higher if thou couldst? Wouldst thou be willing to die if thou couldst but add another trumpet to the strain which proclaims His praise? Ah! Then it is well with thee. Whatever thou mayst think of thyself, if Christ be great to thee, thou shalt be with Him ere long.

"Though all the world my choice deride,
Yet Jesus shall my portion be;
For I am pleased with none beside,
The fairest of the fair is He"

Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

2 Samuel 2:26

IF, O my reader, thou art merely a professor, and not a possessor of the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the following lines are a true sketch of thine end.

You are a respectable attendant at a place of worship; you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next twenty or thirty years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion by an outward attendance upon the means of grace, but having no heart in the matter. Tread softly, for I must show you the deathbed of such a one as yourself. Let us gaze upon him gently. A clammy sweat is on his brow, and he wakes up crying, "O God, it is hard to die. Did you send for my minister?" "Yes, he is coming." The minister comes. "Sir, I fear that I am dying!" "Have you any hope?" "I cannot say that I have. I fear to stand before my God; oh! Pray for me." The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness, and the way of salvation is for the ten-thousandth time put before him, but before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink. I may put my finger upon those cold eyelids, for they will never see anything here again. But where is the man, and where are the man's true eyes? It is written, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Ah! Why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he was so accustomed to hear the gospel that his soul slept under it. Alas! If you should lift up your eyes there, how bitter will be your wailings. Let the Saviour's own words reveal the woe: "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." There is a frightful meaning in those words. May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah's wrath!

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

Jeremiah 8:20

NOT *saved!* Dear reader, is this your mournful plight? Warned of the judgment to come, bidden to escape for your life, and yet at this moment *not saved!* You know the way of salvation, you read it in the Bible, you hear it from the pulpit, it is explained to you by friends, and yet you neglect it, and therefore you are *not saved*. You will be without excuse when the Lord shall judge the quick and dead. The Holy Spirit has given more or less of blessing upon the word which has been preached in your hearing, and times of refreshing have come from the divine presence, and yet you are without Christ. All these hopeful seasons have come and gone—your summer and your harvest have past—and yet you are *not saved*. Years have followed one another into eternity, and your last year will soon be here: youth has gone, manhood is going, and yet you are *not saved*. Let me ask you—*will you ever be saved?* Is there any likelihood of it? Already the most propitious seasons have left you unsaved; will other occasions alter your condition? Means have failed with you—the best of means, used perseveringly and with the utmost affection—what more can be done for you? Affliction and prosperity have alike failed to impress you; tears and prayers and sermons have been wasted on your barren heart. Are not the probabilities dead against your ever being saved? Is it not more than likely that you will abide as you are till death for ever bars the door of hope? Do you recoil from the supposition? Yet it is a most reasonable one: he who is not washed in so many waters will in all probability go filthy to his end. The convenient time never has come, why should it ever come? It is logical to fear that it never will arrive, and that Felix like, you will find no convenient season till you are in hell. O bethink you of what that hell is, and of the dread probability that you will soon be cast into it!

Reader, suppose you should die unsaved, your doom no words can picture. Write out your dread estate in tears and blood, talk of it with groans and gnashing of teeth: you will be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of the Lord, and from the

glory of His power. A brother's voice would fain startle you into earnestness. O be wise, be wise in time, and ere another year begins, believe in Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost. Consecrate these last hours to lonely thought, and if deep repentance be bred in you, it will be well; and if it lead to a humble faith in Jesus, it will be best of all. O see to it that this year pass not away, and you an unforgiven spirit. Let not the new year's midnight peals sound upon a joyless spirit! *Now, NOW, NOW* believe, and live.

“ESCAPE FOR THY LIFE;
LOOK NOT BEHIND THEE,
NEITHER STAY THOU
IN ALL THE PLAIN;
ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAIN,
LEST THOU BE CONSUMED.”

Scripture Memory Programme 2014

O taste and see that the LORD is good!

The Book of Psalms is filled with God's blessings and assurances that uphold believers for a closer walk with Him. The 52 passages in this booklet have been carefully selected not only to highlight the theme but also to encourage you to read the Psalms daily on your own so that you may draw near to God as He draws near to you.

Memorize them and meditate on them prayerfully to be spiritually uplifted!

January 5 – Provision

Psalms 65:11 – Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

January 12 – Trusting in God

Psalms 34:8 – O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

January 19 – Praise

Psalm 9:1 – I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

January 26 – Wise Choice

Psalm 118:8 – It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

February 2 – God’s eternal existence

Psalm 93:2 – Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.

February 9 – Security

Psalm 18:2 – The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

February 16 – Love for Righteousness

Psalm 11:7 – For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

February 23 – God’s Goodness

Psalm 86:15 – But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

March 2 – God’s Help

Psalm 18:35 – Thou has also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

March 9 – Love for God’s Word

Psalm 119:15 – I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

March 16 – Rejoicing

Psalm 33:21 – For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

March 23 – Divine Ownership

Psalm 50:10 – For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

March 30 – God’s Mercy

Psalm 147:11 – The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

April 6 – Delighting in God

Psalm 37:4 – Delight thyself in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart

April 13 – God’s Greatness

Psalm 145:3 – Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

April 20 – Christ’s Resurrection

Psalm 16:10 – For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

April 27 – Adoration

Psalm 96:3 – Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

May 4 – Protection

Psalm 46:1 – God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

May 11 – Cheerful Service

Psalm 100:2 – Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

May 18 – Edifying Speech

Psalm 34:13 – Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

May 25 – Spiritual Renewal

Psalm 51:12 – Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

June 1 – Contrition

Psalm 51:17 – The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

June 8 – Overcoming Fear

Psalm 56:3 – What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

June 15 – God’s love

Psalm 103:13 – Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

June 22 – God’s Judgment

Psalm 62:12 – Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

June 29 – God’s Faithfulness

Psalm 73:23 – Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

July 6 – Thanksgiving

Psalm 100:4 – Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

July 13 – God’s Blessing

Psalm 84:11 – For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

July 20 – Guidance

Psalm 86:11 – Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

July 27 – Hope

Psalm 71:5 – For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

August 3 – Prayer

Psalm 25:1 – Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

August 10 – Worship

Psalm 96:9 – O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

August 17 – God’s Benevolence

Psalm 103:8 – The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

August 24 – Protection

Psalm 118:6 – The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

August 31 – Courage

Psalm 27:1 – The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

September 7 – Peace

Psalm 4:8 – I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

September 14 – Forgiveness

Psalm 103:12 – As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

September 21 – Anchoring in God’s Word

Psalm 119:23 – Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

September 28 – Provision

Psalm 127:1 – Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

October 5 – Praise

Psalm 103:1 – Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

October 12 – Divine Design

Psalm 100:3 – Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

October 19 – Overcoming Anxiety

Psalm 94:19 – In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

October 26 – Harmony

Psalm 133:1 – Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

November 2 – God’s Greatness

Psalm 147:5 – Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

November 9 – Deliverance

Psalm 34:19 – Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

November 16 – Rejoicing

Psalm 13:5 – But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

November 23 – Protection

Psalm 121:1-2 – I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

November 30 – Eternal Blessing

Psalm 146:5 – Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

December 7 – Comfort

Psalm 119:50 – This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

December 14 – Waiting upon God

Psalm 123:2 – Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

December 21 – Eternal Promise

Psalm 111:9 – He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

December 28 – Comprehensive Praise

Psalm 150:6 – Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

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