

THE BOOK THAT WILL SUIT YOU!

by James Smith

Smith's extensive work containing remarks suited to almost every class of character and circumstance, designed for casual reading and as gifts, with plain, pointed language addressing spiritual needs from different angles.

97 Chapters

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00 Book That Will Suit You!

The Book That Will Suit You!

Or, a Word for Every One!

James Smith

"Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land."
Ecclesiastes 11:2

00p PREFACE

PREFACE

This book is intended to lay on the table in the drawing-room, parlor, hall, kitchen, or cottage; that the Visitor who is waiting for an interview, or the Neighbor who comes in to sit down for a few minutes — may take it up and read a portion; hoping that the Holy Spirit will make it a blessing. It is also suitable as a present to a relative, friend, servant, or neighbor; and contains remarks adapted to every class of character, and suitable to almost every circumstance in life. The remarks are plain and pointed, and are conveyed in language, the meaning of which cannot be mistaken. The writer's only design is to do good, to benefit every class of his fellow-men, and glorify his God for His rich, free, and sovereign grace. It is hoped that nothing will be found in this book which can justly displease any true Christians; it is not particularly suited to one section of the church of Christ, more than another.

Reader, would you desire benefit from this book? If so, look up and pray for the presence, power, and teaching of the Holy Spirit — who alone can render it a blessing to your soul. If you obtain a blessing by its perusal, circulate it; if you have the means, give a few copies away where it is likely to be of use; but if you cannot afford to do this, lend your own copy, praying the Lord to make it a blessing. Do not lock it up in the chest, or book-case; but lay it where it is likely to attract attention and be read — who can tell what the Lord may do by such a feeble instrument? May He condescend to bless it to every reader; and may each one who derives benefit from it, remember to pray for the Author at our heavenly Father's throne.

James Smith, New Park Street Church,

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01 The Testimony of God

The Testimony of God "I came to you declaring the testimony of God." 1 Corinthians 2:1 The gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but the very Word of God; it is a divine testimony; a message from Jehovah to man. It comes directly from heaven, and is addressed to us in love. By the gospel, God testifies to us that we are totally and entirely lost by nature; that there is neither help nor hope for us but in the Lord Jesus Christ; but that in Him is all that we need, or that our circumstances require. He has . . .

pardon for all sin;

a righteousness to justify the ungodly;

peace for the troubled conscience;

life for the dying soul;

holiness for the impure and filthy;

strength for the weak and languishing;

in a word — a full salvation for the lost and perishing!

He possesses all the wealth of God. He is able to make . . .

the foolish, wise;

the guilty, just;

the filthy, clean;

the miserable, happy;

the weak, strong;

the diseased, healthy;

the carnal, spiritual; and

the slaves of Satan, the children of God.

Christ is all that God can give! Christ has all that a sinner can need. Having Christ — we can need no more; and, if we are taught by the Holy Spirit — we can be satisfied with no less. The gospel testifies — that we are welcome to all that the fullness of Christ contains, without money and without price. God has set no price upon gospel blessings, because they are invaluable. He has prescribed no conditions, but given a universal welcome. His words are, "Whoever will — let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17.) And the testimony declares, that believing; Christ, and all He has, becomes ours! We receive Him. We are entitled to all that He has. We are interested in all He has done. His work is reckoned ours, for our justification; it is received as ours,

to be the foundation of our hope; and it is pleaded as ours, and forms a prevailing plea with God. It becomes our joy, our boast, and our song, in the house of our pilgrimage. The gospel testifies — that true faith always produces penitence, and leads to holiness. The believing heart and the weeping eye go together. If we really believe — we daily repent. We cannot repent of sin — unless we believe in Jesus. And we do not believe in Jesus — unless we repent of sin. Faith produces godly sorrow — and godly sorrow leads to holiness of life. The stronger our faith — the deeper our penitence; and the deeper our repentance — the holier our life.

Never be satisfied with faith without a broken heart; nor imagine that the heart is broken — unless sin is bitter. And if sin is bitter to the soul — it will be sure to be forsaken. Faith and holiness are indisputable evidences of a title to heaven. Faith purifies the heart — and the heart reforms the life.

You have heard the testimony of God, you have read it; but do you believe it? Do you perceive its great importance, and receive it into your heart, as a message of love coming direct from God to you? Do you heartily approve of it? Do you act upon it?

If you reject the testimony, you treat God with contempt!

If you deny the testimony — you give God the lie!

If you postpone the consideration of it — you manifest the greatest folly!

If you receive the testimony — you set to your seal that God is true! The testimony being sent — man is brought to the test. The testimony being rejected — the doom of man is sealed. Once more the testimony is placed before your eye, and presented to your heart — it is to be received or rejected? Decide!

02 The Proposal and Promise

The Proposal and Promise

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:29

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." The yoke is the symbol of subjection and obedience. The Jews wore the yoke of Moses. And we by nature wear the yoke of Satan and of sin. We are all under a yoke, but Jesus proposes that we change masters. Be my disciples, take your place at my feet, and learn of me. I will teach you doctrines, such as are suited to your state, and calculated to purify, elevate, and fill you with joy and peace! I will teach you to believe to the saving of the soul. I will instruct you to do the will of God from the heart. I will teach you to suffer with patience, fortitude, and hope. I will show you how to die in peace, and with a blissful assurance of immortality. Be my servants, admit my authority, receive my Word, aim to please me.

"I am meek and lowly of heart." I am not austere or unfeeling; but full of sympathy and love! I condescend to the lowest, I cast out none! Come, learn my character. Come, prove my promises. Come, try my service.

"You shall find rest unto your souls." There is no rest in the world. There is no repose in the service of sin. There is no peace to the sinner, while distant from Jesus. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." But Jesus promises peace, and he gives rest to every one who takes and wears his yoke. Such find rest from those anxious, perplexing, and troublesome thoughts, which others are tried with, and cannot conquer. Such as, "Is there a God? What is his character? What is eternity? Can I be saved? How can I be accepted of God?" The disciples of Jesus know the Father; they rejoice in His character; they anticipate eternity as an infinite duration of pleasure and joy; they know the way of salvation, and walk in it; and they feel the comfort of being accepted of God in the Beloved. They rest on the revelation which God has given. They rest in the knowledge and enjoyment of truth. They rest by faith, and rejoice in hope.

They find rest from guilty fears, which arise and revel in the breasts of others. They look to the blood of Jesus, and obtain pardon; they trust in the Word of promise, and feel safe; they draw near to God and enjoy fellowship.

They rest from burdensome services, for what was once a toil — becomes a pleasure; what was felt to be a servant's duty — is enjoyed as the privilege of a beloved child. The very precepts seem to change their character, and only require what the soul approves, desires, and ardently longs to perform.

They find rest for the affections, on a worthy, suitable, and proper object; God in Christ is all they can desire or enjoy; and when the affections are fixed upon Him, they are satisfied, delighted, and fully employed.

They find repose for their hopes; they may expect until expectation can stretch no further, and yet there is more to be possessed and realized! They feel, that beneath the anchor of their hope — there is a rock which will hold it firm forever, and secure it amidst all the storms and tempests of this mortal life. They see through the looking-glass of the Word, and see stretched before them, the promised land, on which the sun of righteousness never sets, in which the fruits and flowers never fade or die; where the inhabitants never say, "I am sick," and whose glory is the perpetual presence of its God!

They find rest from anxious, worldly cares; the promises and providence of God being engaged for them! God himself being their Father, and Jesus, their Advocate, being before the throne, they feel that they can exercise implicit confidence in his care and kindness. And they manage their affairs in faith, looking up to the Lord in prayer, and expecting his sanction and blessing. The thirst for happiness, which is common to man — they find gratified; and the water which Jesus gives, which is the Holy Spirit — quenches, or rather satisfies this thirst, and they have within them a spring of living water; so that, as the wise man says, "The good man is satisfied from himself." In a word, they enjoy a general satisfaction of soul; they have in Jesus all they can want, they receive from Jesus all that they need, they enjoy in the presence of Jesus' comfort beyond anything they ever found in the world, and look forward to the future, rejoicing that the present is the worst state they will ever be in — for before them all is bright and glorious!

Well, reader, what do you say to the Savior's proposal? Will you accept it? How will you treat the meek and lowly Savior? He only seeks your welfare and your happiness. Will you try his yoke? Refuse it — and you will have an eternity to repent of it. But then, repentance will be useless, and without relief.

03 A Mistake Corrected

A Mistake Corrected "It is time to seek the Lord!" Hosea 10:12

It is generally admitted, that the Lord should be sought; but it is as generally considered that it should be at some future period. Any time but the present — is the general idea. But this is a mistake, a gross mistake, a very dangerous mistake; for the opposite is the fact — and no time is like the present. The Lord should be sought by you, whose eye is now passing over this page.

Consider that He is . . .

the author of your being;

the source of happiness;

the center of holiness;

the giver of grace;

and the judge of all.

You are at a distance from Him; you are in a state of estrangement from Him — but it is quite possible for you to find Him. He is not far from you. He has revealed himself in Jesus. You may find Him on the throne of grace. You will be admitted into his presence, if you go in the name, and plead the blood of Jesus. But seeking requires attention; it must be in faith, by prayer, with diligence.

Unless you think — you will not feel;

unless you feel — you will not desire;

unless you desire — you will not seek.

Without faith you will not find Him, for, "he who comes to God, must believe that He is; and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

It is time to seek the Lord — for none can seek Him too early. Youth has the greatest encouragement, for to such he says, "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early, shall find me." The young meet with the fewest obstacles. Many have delayed too long; the foolish virgins did; and multitudes, on their death-beds, have confessed and deplored this. Therefore, seek the Lord now, at once; before, "the evil days come, and the years draw near, wherein you shall fay, I have no pleasure in them." Seek now, while God invites you — while Jesus calls you — while ministers exhort and warn you — while the Spirit is promised you — and while space for repentance is given you. Soon the door may be shut. Soon the Lord may swear, "They shall not enter into my rest." Soon the Eternal may say, "Let him alone! Israel would have none of me, so I gave them up!" Do you ask why we are so earnest with you, so anxious for you? Because we wish you to be wise — to be safe — to be holy — to be honorable — to be happy. And this can never be

the case, unless you, "seek the Lord."

We consider God's right. He has a right to your heart, your love, and your service; but these he will not have, unless you "seek the Lord."

We are acquainted with your need. You need . . .

the blood of Jesus to pardon you,

the Spirit of God to sanctify you,

the presence of God to cheer you, and

the promises of God to support you. But these you will never enjoy — unless you "seek the Lord."

We know the enmity, practice, and wicked design of Satan — that he is aiming to secure your damnation; and this he will effect — unless you, "seek the Lord."

We know the influence of the world, and the force of habit; and enter into the meaning of the prophet, "Let the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots — then may they also do good who are accustomed to do evil." Therefore, we urge you, at once, to, "seek the Lord."

We sympathize with you, we feel love to you, we are deeply concerned for your salvation; and, therefore, we plead with you to, "seek the Lord."

"It is time to seek the Lord" — for . . .

sickness may seize you;

sin may harden you;

Satan may blind you;

error may deceive you;

the world may bewitch you;

death may arrest you; or

God may give you up! Not one moment beyond the present is secured to you. "Now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." Therefore, "seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." Say not, "Go your way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will send for you." No time is like the present. If present impressions are allowed to die away — they may never be revived! If this warning is slighted — another may not be sent. If this invitation is rejected — you may be given up to blindness and hardness of heart; and this testimony may witness against you at the last day!

04 True Wisdom and its Result

True Wisdom and its Result "If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you." Proverbs 9:12 The address of Scripture is frequently direct — it comes up to the man and speaks to his face, like Ehud to Eglon, "I have a message from God unto you!" Or, like Nathan to David, "You are the man!" So the passage before us, "If you are wise, you shall be wise for yourself." True wisdom comes down from above, and, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." It is of the greatest importance; therefore Solomon says, "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding." It may be obtained, and you may obtain it; for the Apostle says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault — and it will be given to him." Wisdom is religion, and real religion is true wisdom. The holy man is the wise man; and the sinner is the fool.

Wisdom, consists . . .

in admitting God's authority;

in reverencing God's Word; and

in aiming to please God in all things. The truly wise man cordially believes all that God has said, and because God has said it.

He fears, because God threatens;

he comes to Jesus, because God invites him;

he prays in faith, because God bids him;

he rests alone for acceptance on the perfect work of Jesus, because God directs him;

he expects the greatest blessings, because God promises them;

and he obeys the precepts of the Word, because they are God's commands.

He derives all of his knowledge of divine things from the Bible — and learns to think as God thinks, and to speak as God speaks. He habitually prefers spiritual things to temporal; the smile of God to the applause of mortals, and the heavenly inheritance to this barren wilderness. The Word of God is his rule — and the glory of God is his aim. He becomes deeply acquainted with God, and is at peace, and thereby good comes to him.

He is wise for himself, he reaps all the benefit of his wisdom. He pleases God, but cannot profit Him. Hence the question, "Can a man be profitable unto God?" And again, "If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand?" His wisdom will benefit his fellow-men, but the profit will be principally his own. Being wise, he will escape the snares, dangers, and temptations, into which others fall; he will secure to himself many, great, and

invaluable blessings; he will obtain a good report in the church of God; and be prepared for all the changes to which he may be exposed. Wisdom may not preserve him from trouble, but it will help him in trouble, and secure his speedy and honorable deliverance out of it.

Reader, are you wise? wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus? Are you wise enough to discover the nature of sin — and hate it? The guilt of sin — and obtain the pardon of it? The consequences of sin — and escape from it? Are you wise enough to flee to Jesus, and make Him your refuge from the wrath to come? Beware, lest carnal wisdom deceive you, and you be found a fool at the judgment-seat of Christ!

Remember the foolish virgins, and let their mistake warn you, and their doom make you cautious; they had much, but they had not the one thing needful. Be sure you have what will be required of you at death, and at the judgment — a title to heaven, founded in the perfect work of Jesus; and a fitness for heaven, "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." Make sure work for eternity; dig deep, and lay your foundation on the rock, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." If in Christ — you are safe; if like Christ — you are fit for heaven.

05 Contempt of God, and its Consequences

Contempt of God, and its Consequences "If you are a scorner — you alone will suffer." Proverbs 9:12 To scorn, is to treat with contempt; thus they laughed Jesus to scorn, they treated Him contemptuously. This, unbelief always does; and every unconverted sinner is treating God with contempt. If God asks his heart, and speaks in the kindest terms and most winning accents, saying, "My son, give me your heart," — He is treated with contempt! Many never give the request any serious consideration at all, but pass it by, as though not addressed to them, or as beneath their notice. While others admit its propriety, but never practically attend to it.

If He offers a free and full pardon of all sin, to every one who, laying down the weapons of rebellion, will seek it in the name of Jesus — it is treated with contempt! The sinner knows he must be pardoned — or he is lost forever; he hears the gracious message of a kind, forgiving God — but it has no effect upon him; he passes it by as though it were unworthy of his regard!

If He sends the good news of a complete salvation, without money and without price; if He says, "Whoever will, let him come, and take freely" — the sinner puts it from him, and judges himself unworthy of everlasting life. Without the least show of reason, he neglects the great salvation, and despises the riches of the goodness and grace of God. In a word, every unconverted sinner scorns the authority of God in the law, and the grace of God in the gospel; he will not bow to a command, nor accept of a free salvation. He is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; but he is also proud, obstinate, perverse, scornful, and foolish!

Reader, is this your case? If so, God says, "You alone will suffer." Suffer what? Your scorning. What of the scorning? The blame and the punishment. The whole blame of your damnation will lie upon yourself. You have procured it unto yourself. It is the fruit of your scorning, the consequence of your thus treating God with contempt. The blame is entirely your own; it cannot be charged upon God. He warned you, He expostulated with you, He invited you. He presented a full salvation unto you. He offered you pardon on the easiest terms; but you treated the whole with contempt! Neither can it be charged upon the ministers of the gospel; if faithful, they told you, from the mouth of God — your state, your danger, and urged you to flee for refuge to Jesus. They were earnest, affectionate, importunate — but you treated them with contempt! Nor can you lay the blame on Satan. True, he tempted — but he could not force you; he allured, but he could not compel. You preferred his counsel to that of your best friends, yes, to the counsel of the Lord and Savior Himself; you yielded to him, while you rejected your God. The blame will lie upon yourself exclusively and eternally; and so the punishment, "You alone shall suffer." You shall suffer the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the wrath of God, "where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched!" In a word, you shall suffer all the consequences of treating God with contempt. You shall suffer it alone, without help, without sympathy, without mitigation, and without the most distant prospect of deliverance.

Let me beseech you now to examine yourself. Are you wise? Or are you a scorner? One or the other you must be, for the whole world is divided into these two classes; and soon, very soon you

will find, that "If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a scorner, you alone will suffer." If you are not decided, may I ask you, with the Psalmist, "When will you be wise?" Or, with Solomon, "How long will you love simplicity, and delight in your scorning, and hate knowledge?" Or with Paul, "How will you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?" Or with Jesus, "What will it profit you, if you should gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? What will you give in exchange for the soul?"

06 The Distinguishing Prayer

The Distinguishing Prayer "Say unto my soul: I am your salvation!" Psalms 25:3

Salvation is deliverance from evil or danger. The salvation of the gospel is deliverance from . . .

sin,

condemnation,

and the wrath of God.

Sin procures condemnation, and condemnation is introductory to eternal punishment. The Lord saves His people from their sins.

He removes the guilt of sin, by the blood of Jesus.

He destroys the power of sin, by his Holy Spirit.

He purges out the love of sin, by His sanctifying grace.

He becomes their Deliverer — and saves them with an everlasting salvation. But he not only saves them — but gives them the knowledge of salvation, so that they can rejoice in it. They know Him as their salvation — personally, experimentally, and satisfactorily; and they are happy in their God. His love and power remove their fears;

His Word and veracity disperse their doubts; and

His faithfulness and immutability produce confidence. When he lifts up the light of His countenance, or sheds upon them the rays of His love, they exult and say, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid! For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." When people become really concerned for the salvation of their souls, they hear of this; and it appears to them to be the most desirable blessing; therefore, they begin to seek it, and in earnestness of soul, with importunity and anxiety, they cry, "Say unto my soul: I am your salvation!" Oh, how they long for this favor! How they pant for this privilege! They feel as if they could renounce everything else, if they may but be favored with this. And this distinguishes those who are taught by the Holy Spirit, from all others: they are serious, they are in earnest, they cannot be satisfied with slight evidences. They wish to feel that they are upon the rock, that God is their refuge and strength. They sigh after the sealing of the Holy Spirit — to enjoy His witness in their hearts. In His holy Word, the Lord tells us whom He will save, and how he will save; and by His Spirit in the heart — He assures us that He will save us. This is done by opening and applying His Word, which scatters our doubts, and spreads a sweet, and holy peace through the soul; by shedding abroad His love in our hearts, and then we feel that we love Him, and have an inward consciousness that there is nothing between God and our souls, but love. We are persuaded that God is reconciled to us, and at peace with us, through the blood of His dear Son. We feel a hatred to all sin spring up. We are careful to flee from temptation. We cleave to Jesus, and dread the

thought of losing the sweet presence of our God. We now possess courage, and can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Psalms 27:1) We enjoy confidence, and exclaim, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear!" (Psalms 46:1-2). We are full of praise, and sing, "You are my God, and I will praise you! You are my God, I will exalt you." (Psalm 117:28.)

Dear reader, has this prayer been yours? Do you know anything of deliverance from sin? Have you enjoyed the testimony of the Holy Spirit in your heart? It is heaven begun in the soul, it is true happiness. O seek it, seek it at once; and rest not until you enjoy it!

07 The Believer Commended

The Believer Commended

"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." Luke 1:45

Mary's faith was tried, for she was called to believe what no one else ever was asked to; and the whole highly improbable. She was to believe that though a virgin — she would have a son; and though a sinner — her son should be pure and holy; that though her son — He would be called the Son of the Highest; and that though her family was so poor — yet God would give unto Him the throne of his father David.

All this was directly opposite to appearances; but God spoke — and Mary believed. This was the ground of her faith. She knew He always intended what He said, could perform all that He promised, frequently did wondrous things, and never failed to fulfill His Word; therefore she surrendered herself up, and said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your Word!"

She visited her cousin Elizabeth, told her the whole of the circumstances, and she said, "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." She honored God by believing His word — and God honored her by the testimony of her aged cousin. She was blessed of God, and He did fulfill all that He had spoken unto her.

Mary is proposed for our example. God has spoken to us. He requires us to believe, and to every believer he will fulfill his Word. He speaks to our experience, and promises according to our needs. Are we guilty? Do our sins appear of a flagrant and alarming character? He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember your sins."

Reader, do you believe this? Do you believe that God calls you to Him, just as you are, and calls you on purpose to forgive you? That if you confess your sins — He is faithful and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness? This is the fact of the case, that God stands pledged to forgive every sinner who frankly confesses his sins at His throne, and to do so for His own name's sake.

Again, are you thirsting for grace and His Holy Spirit? He speaks to you, and says, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst — I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring." Do you believe this? God means it. He is faithful to His Word, and He cannot deny Himself.

Once more: are you in perplexity, and know not which way to take? The Lord speaks to your case. He sympathizes with you, and says, "I will bring the blind by a way which they do not know; I will lead them in paths that they had not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Do you believe this? If so, "Blessed is he who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told him from the Lord." The promises are intended to . . .

disperse our fears,

raise our expectations,

exercise our faith,

encourage us in our prayers,

and fill us with joy and peace.

Whoever believes them, and pleads them before God in prayer — will have them fulfilled to him to the very letter. To doubt them, is to reflect upon the veracity of God. To neglect them, is to despise our own mercies. To question the fulfillment of them, is to question whether the promiser is God. His wisdom, knowledge, unchangeableness, power, veracity, faithfulness, covenant, oath, and the blood of Jesus — all conspire to say, "There shall be a fulfillment of those things which were spoken by the Lord." Let us, therefore . . .

resist our fears,

condemn our unbelief,

confess our doubts before the Lord,

and seek for more faith. Our God gives liberally and upbraids not; He will give us more grace; and enable us to believe, not only to the saving of the soul — but will fill us with joy and peace in believing!

08 The Inquiry!

The Inquiry!

"Is it peace?" 2 Kings 9:17

Peace is either agreement with man — or reconciliation with God: the former is important, the latter is invaluable. Peace with God is . . .

external, as proclaimed;

internal, as enjoyed; or

eternal, as promised. The first is in the gospel,

the second in the heart,

and the third in heaven.

It is in reference to peace with God that we ask the question, "Is it peace?"

Aged pilgrim — is it peace? You have long been pacing the valley of Baca, you have passed through many changes, you are approaching your end; the snows of old age are upon your head, and the wrinkles of care upon your brow — but is the peace of God in your heart? Are your prospects bright? Does the goodly land appear spread out before you? Are your evidences strong? Does faith cleave to the Rock? Does love burn like the fire upon the altar? Does hope hold like the anchor within the pier? Does devotion lead you upward to your God?

You will soon be called to lay aside your staff; to bid farewell to the gloomy desert: your journey is almost ended, and it is important that the peace of God she aid keep your heart.

Tried Christian — is it peace? Your trials, though many, painful, and tedious — are but proofs of your heavenly Father's love! They are sent in mercy — to convince you that this poor world is not your rest. Your Father's wisdom chose them,

His love sent them, and

His mercy will sanctify them to you!

They may alarm those who neglect their Bible — but they cannot injure a child of God. You are tried — but is it peace? Are you looking to Jesus? He can hush the storm, and still the tempest. He is always near in trouble. Is your eye fixed upon Him? Does your heart repose on His tender love and faithful Word? Do you recognize the Lord's hand in your trials? His hand is in them, whether you see it or not. He sends, bounds, and removes them — and it has often comforted the saint to realize that the hand of God is in every trial, trouble, and disappointment. Do you suffer as a Christian? With patience, with submission, with fear lest you should offend your God. If so, it is peace: all is well between God and your soul.

Young believer — is it peace? You have lately forsaken the ranks of the enemy, and turned your back upon the world? Are you relying simply on Jesus? There is no gospel-peace without this. SELF must be renounced. "Jesus only," must be our motto. Unless we rely wholly and only on Him for acceptance with God; unless we look to His blood alone for pardon, and to His righteousness alone for justification — we cannot enjoy peace. Are you strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus? He has grace for you, every kind of grace: grace for suffering, and grace for service. And you must live upon the grace that is in Christ — or you can have no stable peace. Are you aiming to be useful? Happiness is closely allied to usefulness. Activity for God, from love to Jesus — will promote and maintain peace.

Undecided soul — is it peace? How can it be? There is no peace without decision. You must first decide for Christ; exercise faith in His atoning blood; and walk with God and His people — before you can know peace.

Lost sinner — is it peace? Oh, no! A dead calm there may be — but peace there cannot be.

Peace — what, while you love sin!

Peace — what, while you slight the Savior!

Peace — what, while you prefer the world to God!

Peace — what, while you put off the evil day, and continue in your sins!

Nay, "there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked!"

He has no peace in life — his bosom is like the restless ocean!

He has no peace in death — his end is like the midnight storm!

He lives in uncertainty,

dies in perplexity, and

enters eternity without hope!

09 The Love of Jesus

The Love of Jesus "I have loved you!" John 15:12 WHOM does Jesus love? Every believer, whatever his outward circumstances may be. That is, everyone who loves Him — and are in a measure, like Him. How wonderful that Jesus should love us, who are so vile, so debased, so ungrateful! Yes — and it is fact, and He has proved it in a variety of ways.

He displayed His love BEFORE we knew Him, or were even capable of doing so — in choosing fallen men to be saved — and not the fallen angels. They fell as we did — but their nature was more noble, their fall was from a greater eminence — yet He did not assume their nature to save them — but He became man to give us! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!" In making a full atonement for our sins, He satisfied justice to the full. He removed the curse entirely. He produced for us a righteousness, sparkling with glory beyond the rays of the morning sun! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!"

He displayed His love NOW in the following ways: In conquering all our spiritual adversaries which had overcome us, and had taken captive our entire race. No human arm was strong enough to overcome them, no mere creature could escape from them; but He came, He fought, He conquered, He triumphed in our nature, in our name, for our sake! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!" In going to heaven as our forerunner. He has carried our nature into the presence of the Father, He has shown that the path to glory is attainable, and He is now actively employed in heaven preparing places for us! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!" In sending the Holy Comforter, who comes in His name, to quicken, call, cleanse, and sanctify. By Him we are . . .

converted to God,

prepared for glory,

rendered useful in the present world,

and comforted in all our tribulations.

He was sent by Jesus into the church when first enthroned at the right hand of the Father. He was sent by Jesus into our hearts! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!" In acting as our intercessor and advocate before the Father. "He made intercession for the transgressors." He has pleaded for us, He presently pleads for us, He will continue to plead for us! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!"

He has displayed His love in His DEALINGS with us. He found us cruel, determined, unfeeling enemies to Him. But He reconciled us, made us friends, and filled us with wonder at His love.

He bore with us, while under conviction of sin, when we thought harshly of Him, doubted Him, and tried by all possible means to do without Him.

He keeps us by His power and Holy Spirit, for we cannot be trusted for one solitary moment!

He only chastens us in love — when he might justly punish us in wrath.

He restores us from all our wanderings, and freely forgives our follies.

He carries on His work within us, and generously supplies all our needs. He rejoices to save us, though as repulsive as worms, and viler than the earth! And He does all this for us, and does all gladly, notwithstanding our ingratitude, perverseness, and rebellion! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you!" His love is displayed in what He INTENDS do for us. He will come in glory and majesty as our Bridegroom, to fetch us home, and openly marry us, and make us the partners of His throne, triumphs, and glory forever!

He will separate us from all sin and sinners, and everything that can pain, trouble, or grieve us.

He will clothe us with glory as bright as the sun, and as lasting as eternity! He will bring us to reign, and to triumph — and crown us with glory!

He will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and give us to possess more than our eye has seen, or our ear ever heard, or our heart could ever imagine! And why? He tells us, "I have loved you."

What will he not do for those whom He loves? What has not the love of Jesus done, or promised to do? It is, it will be, it must be matter of wonder throughout eternity — that Jesus should love us so — so freely, so constantly, with love so pure, so unbounded, and so Godlike!

Behold, how He loves us!

Behold, and wonder!

Behold, and praise!

Behold, and love Him in return!

10 The True Token

The True Token "Give me a true token!" Joshua 2:12 This was the request of the harlot Rahab. Jericho was threatened with destruction; its doom was fast approaching; its danger was now imminent; the spies came to her house, and she received them, for she believed that God would give the Jericho into the hands of Israel. Her concern for the salvation of herself and family was great and natural; her precaution was wise; she wanted a token — one which she could trust, which would inspire confidence; she asked it, and her request was granted.

She used a scarlet-colored rope to let down the spies, and they said, "You shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down." And she collected all her family together, into her house, "And she tied the scarlet cord in the window." This was to . . .

mark the house,

to remind the spies,

to support her hope, and

to preserve her family.

It was visible, being of a scarlet color; it was useful, being the cord by which the spies escaped. It was the means of the salvation of the family; for when Jericho was destroyed Joshua said, "Go into the harlot's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her" and they did so.

Now let us improve the subject:

The world is threatened with destruction, as Jericho was;

its doom is fast approaching;

the danger is near and imminent;

we should be concerned for our safety, and the salvation of those connected with us;

we should not be satisfied with a, "Perhaps we may be safe," but should seek, "a true token." The Lord gives such — and many possess them. The life of God in the soul is a true token of safety. If quickened by the Holy Spirit, if God dwells in us, and occupies our thoughts, engages our affections, and separates us from sin and folly — then it is a clear proof that we are the Lord's. The fear of the Lord, by which men depart from evil, is also, "a true token." If a person fears to offend God, and desires above everything to please Him — if, with this end in view, every plan is formed, every purpose executed, and every duty attended to — then it is a scriptural evidence of union to Christ. The spirit of prayer is also, "a true token." If we are taught our need of the blessings God has promised; if we experience the irrepressible desire after them; if we are frequently prompted to retire to pray for them; if we are assisted in pleading with God for them, with fervor, zeal, and

importunity, if prayer becomes natural to our souls, like breathing to our bodies; if prayer is . . .
our relief in trouble,
our solace in sorrow,
our delight in joy, and
felt to be our privilege
— then it is clear that we are born from above.

True repentance is, "a true token." By which we mean heartfelt sorrow for sin, because it is an offence against God and grievous in his sight; accompanied with a loathing of sin, and departure from it — on account of its filthiness and evil character. Such repentance is . . .

the gift of Jesus,
the production of the Holy Spirit, and
the distinguishing mark of an 'Israelite indeed'.

Faith in Jesus is, "a true token." That is, not only giving credence to His Word — but resting upon His perfect work for acceptance with God, looking to His mediation as the only ground of hope and comfort, and presenting and pleading His atoning blood before God for all that we need. Faith always fastens the scarlet cord in the window — or sprinkles the doorposts with the blood of the paschal lamb, that the inhabitants may be safe from the sword of justice and the wrath of God.

Love to the saints is, "a true token." Loving them because they are holy, and because Jesus loves them; loving them though poor, afflicted, persecuted, and despised; loving them so as to be willing to do anything for them, for Jesus' sake. A holy life, flowing from faith in Christ, is, "a true token." If we are united to Jesus, the root being holy — we shall be holy too! If Jesus dwells in us — He will sanctify us, and we shall . . .

breathe His spirit,
imitate His example,
and aim at His glory!

Reader, have you "a true token?" Is it as visible as the gleaming scarlet — and as useful as the cord which let down the spies? Has it secured others, as well as benefitted yourself? Are you seeking a true token? If so, do not be discouraged. Pray, "Give me a true token!" Is the scarlet cord in your window?

11 The Burden!

The Burden!

"O wretched man that I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" Romans 8:24. This is the language of the apostle Paul, and conveys to the mind some idea of the strong inward conflict he endured. He speaks in the first person singular all through the passage, and uses language which it is difficult to misunderstand, unless the mind is prejudiced against the truth. Here is . . .

Paul's heart laid open,
the working of his mind set forth,
the conflict in his bosom exposed!

Here is the flesh was warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh — so that he could not do the things he would. He delighted in the law of God, which none but a Christian can do. He panted for holiness as with every breath — but he felt evil working in his nature, and sometimes prevailing against him, and he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

He was burdened — and he groaned being burdened. But his burden was nothing external — he could triumph over all his external trials, and say, "None of these things move me!" Nor was his burden his natural body — which he inhabited as a poor and uncomfortable tabernacle. But it was the corruption of his nature; the plague of the heart; the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind! And this, like a dead corpse fastened to a living body — was weighty, loathsome, deadly, and a constant hindrance to him! It was the consequence of Adam's sin! And it was the mainspring of his life! It was a corrupt flowing fountain sending out streams of corruption, which defile the thoughts, desires, motives, plans, affections, and activities. Its parts, are the lusts of the flesh working powerfully; its tendency, is to eternal death, or separation from God; and while it is a part of the Christian, he renounces it, disowns it, and says, "It is no more I — but sin which dwells in me!" Still it . . .

binds him down to earth,
hinders him in every holy exercise,
depresses him and sinks his spirit in gloom,
unfits him for the enjoyment of the high and holy privileges of the gospel,

and causes him in bitterness of soul to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" But we are not to suppose the Apostle was positively unhappy — for he was not. He was delivered from guilt; and though occasionally overcome by sin, he was not a slave to sin — but a son of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Still he felt . . .

sin working,

lust rising,

and pollution flowing!

These things hindered him.

They were powerful — and he hated them!

They put him to grief and pain, and . . .

as a person grieved in spirit — he groaned;

as one opposed — he wrestled;

as one in pain — he sighed for ease;

as sorrowful — he pined for comfort;

as wearied — he longed for rest;

as unable to deliver himself — he applied to his God;

as conscious that it would last through life — he cried, "O wretched man that I am!"

"Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" He knew who would deliver him — and he thanks God for it. This statement is not the language of ignorance — but of impassioned desire. He longs for deliverance, and that, because he knew that his God hated sin, and his one ruling desire was to please God in all things!

He found also, that his burden prevented or interrupted his fellowship with God; and being led away by its effect sometimes, his Father hid His face from him. His evident love to holiness had become natural; consequently his hatred to sin, in every shape and form, especially in himself — was strong and painful. He found also, that sin dwelling in him, unfitted him for those high and holy duties which devolved upon him; and indisposed him occasionally for attending to them. It led him into evil, and gave Satan and the world a degree of power over him. All which things raised in his soul a burning desire for entire deliverance from this life that is dominated by sin, this fountain of impurity, this law in the members; and therefore he cries out, "Who shall deliver me?"

See, my Christian reader, the nature and tendency of sin — it plagued, pained, hindered, and caused an Apostle to call himself a wretched man! See also what we are to expect below — even sorrow, grief, hindrances, and pains! The sinful body will burden us, press us down, and cause us sometimes to long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Believer, your case is not singular, or new; but your experience is the experience of all the saints, even of those who were most highly favored! Paul himself . . .

felt just as you feel,

groaned as you groan, and

longed for deliverance as you do now.

Nothing effects the true believer — so painfully as sin! And when his conduct is so correct, that those around him can see no cause for sorrow or complaint — he feels enough to mourn over, on account of the sin that dwells in him.

"Why should a soul redeemed with blood,

Called by grace and born of God,

Feel a perpetual war within,

'Twixt reigning grace — and dwelling sin?

'Tis but to make him every day

From self, to Jesus turn away;

And 'tis a sign of life within,

To groan beneath the load of sin! Who but the soul who feels his woe,

Will to the blood of sprinkling go?

And seek salvation only there,

From all that he shall feel or fear!"

12 Jesus Glorified, and the Sinner Encouraged

Jesus Glorified, and the Sinner Encouraged "Jesus answered them, saying: The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified." John 12:23

Sinners seldom think aright in reference to themselves, their God, or the Savior. When a man begins to feel his true state, and to see his real condition — he immediately begins to think that there is no mercy for him, and he imagines that Jesus will not receive him. It never enters into his mind, that Jesus receives none but such characters as he reveals himself to be — or that Jesus can be glorified in his salvation, and is well-pleased to see him weep and pray. But such is the case. A few Gentile sinners desired to see Jesus; Philip and Andrew tell Him so, and He immediately replies, "Now is the Son of man glorified." If language means anything, this expression of Jesus means, that the coming sinner glorified him. He loves to save sinners — it is not only His work — but His delight; no one was ever half so much pleased with his employment as Jesus is; it just suits His nature, gratifies His tender loving heart, and increases His pure and holy joy.

He is glorified when poor souls come to Him as sinners, having . . .

nothing to plead — but His Word;

nothing to appeal to — but His mercy;

nothing to present — but their sins, and lost and ruined persons.

He is glorified when they come with ardent desires, crying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" — desires which none can satisfy but Himself; desires which nothing will meet — but a full and free salvation.

Jesus is glorified, when we come to Him as a Savior; to be saved from sin, wrath, and death — by His obedience, blood-shedding, and intercession.

Jesus is glorified, when we come to Him as the great Teacher sent from God, to be taught to know, believe, and do the truth.

Jesus is glorified, when we come to Him as the Physician, to be healed of the disease of sin, and prepared to glorify God in our body, soul, and spirit, which are His.

We glorify Jesus, not by doubting His power, willingness, or tender love; but by believing His invitation and faithful promises. He is not glorified by our slavish fears, unfounded suspicions, or guilty shyness; but by our hope in His mercy, our earnest prayers, our steady reliance, our confidence in His Word, and our humility before His throne. And when we have found mercy and enjoy peace — He is glorified by our grateful love, fervent zeal, prompt obedience, and diligence in spreading His fame.

Jesus is glorified when many come together — when great sinners come; when they come who have long delayed, and wickedly refused to come before.

He is glorified when the coming sinner . . .

receives His pardon,

feels in himself that he is healed,

opens his mouth in praise,

runs in the way of His commandments,

fixes his streaming eyes on the cross,

and devotes his entire person to His service. The salvation of the sinner glorifies . . .

the blood which procured his pardon,

the righteousness which justifies him from all things,

the grace which sanctifies his nature, and

the mercy which pitied him in his lost condition.

Reader, what encouragement is given you to come to Jesus! Do you not see, that in coming, you not only obtain an eternal salvation for yourself — but you please, delight and glorify the Savior also? Are you discouraged? Think of this. Believe this, and your fears will flee, your doubts must depart, and confidence and peace follow. Have you never come to Jesus? Do you not need salvation? Can you obtain it without an application to Him? You cannot. Without Him you perish, and perish forever. Come to Him — and you live. Stay away from Him — and you die in your sins. Come then to Jesus. Come at once. Approach Him, for His throne is before you. His eye is upon you, the word of salvation is sent to you, His hand is stretched out to receive you! And when you fall at His feet and cry from the heart, "Jesus, save me, save me by your grace, save me to your glory, save me for your mercy's sake!" Then He will say, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified in the salvation of the sinner."

Believer, was it not a happy hour, when you first came to Jesus, and found him faithful to His Word? Does it not cause your bosom to glow with gladness, to think that Jesus can be, and is glorified in your salvation? What a source of consolation is this — "Jesus is glorified in saving me! Jesus was glorified when I came and fell before Him, feeling that I was not worthy to look up to His throne, or speak one word in his presence; when I cried for mercy at his hands, and found Him gracious, kind, and true! And oh! Delightful thought — Jesus will be glorified in my salvation throughout eternity! Oh, the pleasure He will feel when the myriads of His redeemed surround Him; and ascribe all their salvation unto Him!"

Trembling sinner, cease your doubting;

Look to Christ, the sinner's friend;

He is now your soul inviting,

To His precious words attend!
Come, poor sinner —
Come to me, the sinner's Friend.
I am ready to receive you;
I will peace and pardon send;
Come to me — I will relieve you,
On my faithful Word depend.
Come, poor sinner —
Come to me, the sinner's Friend!

13 Favor Neglected

Favor Neglected "I gave her space to repent — and she will not repent." Revelation 2:21 So spoke the Savior in reference to some ungodly characters at Thyatira; and the testimony is true of many in our beloved country. Many have space to repent — who have not grace to repent. These are very different things, and do not always go together. Each of them is a favor, a favor conferred on those who may justly be punished for their sins, and be banished without one moment's delay.

Space to repent is a favor.

Consider your origin: you are the child of Adam, a traitor — of one who rebelled against God, under the most aggravating circumstances, in the most inexcusable way.

Look at your nature: your heart is enmity against the God in whom you live, move, and have your being. You have hated Him with an obstinate hatred; and so far as you have known Him or His will, you have rejected it.

Review your conduct: it has been in direct opposition to His Word. You have said unto God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of your ways!" Read the sentence passed upon you long since, "The soul that sins it shall die." "He who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Think of your folly: in childhood, youth, and manhood! How have you slighted the most solemn warnings, trifled with the most gracious invitations, and put away the messages of mercy from you, judging yourself unworthy of everlasting life!

Put all these things together, and say, if God give you space to repent — is it not a favor? Could it be demanded, or expected as a matter of right? It could not! It is a favor, and one which should be instantly improved. The design of this favor, is that you may repent. The goodness of God leads you to repentance. Time is given you that you may . . .

reflect upon your conduct,

perceive your danger,

feel the need of mercy,

confess your sins to the Lord,

obtain the pardon of your transgressions,

and reform your life according to His Word.

It assures you that God has no delight in punishing — but would rather that you turn from your wickedness and live. He does not desire that you should perish in your sins — or He would have cut you off long ago. He prefers penitence to punishment; this is clear . . .

from His nature, which is love;

from His Word, which invites you to His throne of grace;

from His oath, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked — but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die?"

from His conduct; He waits to be gracious, and never yet cast out one that came;

from the provision He has made: He has

provided a Savior,

sent a message of mercy,

suspended punishment,

appointed a public judgment,

given space for repentance, and

commanded, "all men everywhere to repent." But see how His favor is neglected, and what obstinacy is manifested. "She repented not." So it must be said of many. Reader, can it justly be said of you? What! do you still prefer . . .

sin to holiness;

Satan to Jesus;

and Hell to Heaven? Is not repentance necessary, necessary for you? Is it not required? Does not Jesus say, "Unless you repent — you shall all likewise perish." Is it not promised? Jesus is exalted a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and the remission of sins. Did you ever desire to possess it? Did you ever seek it? Is it not expected, expected of you? Are you not inexcusable, if you live and die impenitent? You must repent — or perish.

Just contrast the patience and long-suffering of God — with the pride and obstinacy of men. Remember, that repentance alone can prevent your ruin, your eternal ruin. Repentance requires time: space is given you for repentance, you have it today — but it may expire before tomorrow. Yes, you are not sure of another moment! Where time is given, fruits fit for repentance are expected. How many years have been given you? How often has the Lord come seeking fruit on you, a barren fig-tree? Ah! if he should now say, "Cut it down, why does it use up the ground!" How fearful! How dreadful this! When the space given for repentance is trifled away — the sinner perishes with double destruction. Aged sinner, read, tremble, repent; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

14 The Sinner Appealed to

The Sinner Appealed to "When will you be wise?" Psalms 94:8 In what does true wisdom consist?

Wisdom consists in hearkening to counsel (Proverbs 12:5) — the counsel of the wise, the experienced and the holy; but especially in hearkening to the counsel of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who counsels us to procure from Him wealth, clothing, and wisdom, which last forever. (Revelation 3:18.)

Wisdom consists in gathering in summer — and so providing for winter which is approaching. (Proverbs 10:5.) In the summer of youth — we should provide for the winter of old age; and in the summer of life — we should provide for the winter of death. Now we are surrounded by the means of salvation; now we are hailed by the inviting voice of the Savior, saying, "Seek me — and you shall live;" and now we are encouraged by the gracious assurance, "Every one that seeks, finds."

Wisdom consists in obtaining salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, for which purpose the Holy Scriptures are given us, which are able to make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15.) In a word, it is our wisdom to avoid misery, disgrace, and death; and to secure the greatest happiness, honor, and everlasting safety! But what folly is generally displayed! Men prefer a course which must secure misery, disgrace, and destruction! Is this wisdom — or is it folly? "The wages of sin is death." "The way of transgressors is hard." Is it wisdom — to slight the warnings of mercy — which are given that we may avoid the snare, escape the pit, and obtain invaluable blessings? Is it wisdom — to excuse ourselves from sitting down at the gospel feast, when invited to partake of the benevolence of God, and feed on the bread which endures to everlasting life? Is it wisdom — to reject the Word of the Lord, which counsels us in kindness, and sets before us the way of life and the way of death? Is it wisdom to trifle, with . . .

death at our elbow,

judgment in prospect, and

Hell or Heaven but a short distance before us? Was Cain wise, who slew his brother, went out from the presence of the Lord, ruined his own soul, and entailed a curse on his posterity? Was Esau wise, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright? Was Achan wise, who for a wedge of gold and a Babylonish garment ruined himself and his family? Was Judas wise, who for gain sold his Master, and went to his own place?

Ah! if you could hear their groans, their lamentations, their self-reproaches — you would not, you could not say that they were wise. But are you wise, or do you follow their pernicious ways? Do you believe in Jesus? Are you united with the saints? Will you now consecrate yourself to the Lord? When will you be wise?

You have, perhaps, heard the gospel, you have sometimes felt something of its power, you have promised at some future time to attend to it, you have postponed it again and again, you have delayed until now. Surely you are foolish, you are in the greatest danger, you are totally

inexcusable! When will you be wise? Are you now young? Youth is the time to incline the ear unto wisdom, and apply the heart unto understanding; to cry after knowledge, and lift up the voice for understanding; to seek for her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:2-6.)

If you are not wise in youth, it is probable you never will be. Few become wise when settled down in life, and fewer still in old age. My young friend, look at the mirthful young man on his dying pillow, hear his dying regrets, mark his gloomy end — was he wise? Look for one moment at the state and condition of lost souls — were they wise?

Now pause, solemnly pause and listen:

God asks you from His throne, "When will you be wise?"

Jesus asks you from His cross, "When will you be wise?" The Holy Spirit speaks to you by the Bible, and asks, "When will you be wise?" The preacher cries to you from the pulpit, "When will you be wise?" The godly friends ask you, "When will you be wise?"

See the end of the wise: "they shine as the brightness of the skies." (Daniel 12:3.) See the end of the foolish; they cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jeremiah 8:20.)

15 Hope Encouraged

Hope Encouraged "With Lord there is mercy." Psalms 130:7

We often think with the Lord there is justice, there is holiness, there is wrath; but we do not realize this sweet truth, "With the Lord there is mercy." Hope needs encouragement, and here the Lord has provided it. There is mercy with God for sinners, mercy on the ground of an atonement, mercy exactly suited to every case. Mercy in all its fullness — deeper than the depths of human guilt — higher than the mountains of a creature's sins — and broader than all our needs. Mercy in every variety, for every purpose, for every season, for every applicant. Mercy in all its tenderness. God's mercy in Jesus, has . . .

a melting eye,

a mother's heart,

a velvet hand;

it has affections of compassion, and sympathy too deep to be described.

There is mercy with the Lord to receive sinners; it looks out for the sinner's approach, draws him with invitations and promises, welcomes him to a Father's bosom, and bids him not fear — but frankly confess and hope.

There is mercy to pardon — to pardon fully, to pardon freely, to pardon cheerfully, to pardon frequently, to pardon every confessing soul, to pardon like a God!

There is mercy to introduce to privileges, even all the glorious privileges of the gospel. Such as peace with God, access to God, acceptance with God, the sweet friendship of God.

There is mercy to bless beyond our largest expectations; yes, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

There is mercy — and God loves to display it, to display it in the salvation of the vilest of men, in the most wonderful and remarkable manner. He loves to impart it, and to hear the recipient say with Paul, "I obtained mercy!"

He loves to exalt and glorify His mercy, as He does in the salvation of vile sinners; and will especially at the last, when all the vessels of mercy are collected, purified, filled, exalted, and arranged before His eternal throne! Then will mercy shine forth in all its glory, brighter than the morning sun, and lovelier than the lily's tints.

"With the Lord there is mercy," as much now as there ever was, and it is as free as ever; and this is published in order to encourage sinners who have never sought for mercy to seek it. That those who have never come to Jesus, may come; may come at once, may come with confidence and hope.

Mercy comprises all that the sinner needs,
mercy gives all that the sinner wants,
mercy welcomes every one who comes.

None need fear, none need delay, none need stay to inquire, "May I come?" for "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Mercy is designed also to direct those who are coming to bring nothing with them — for mercy has all that they can possibly need; nor to be discouraged, because they have nothing to bring — for mercy loves to relieve misery, and to supply the needs of the poor and destitute. You poor souls, you perishing souls, you unworthy souls, you doubting souls, you fearing souls — fear not, delay not, for, "with the Lord there is mercy," and mercy for you!

Backslider, this is good news for you; there is mercy with the Lord, even for backsliders.

Mercy to pardon your crimson crimes,
mercy to heal your festering sores,
mercy to cheer your drooping heart,

mercy to restore your wandering soul to the paths of holiness and peace. Do not yield to fears; do not give way to despair — your God tells you that there is mercy with Him. The mercy that received you at first — waits to receive you again; the mercy that first gave you peace — waits to bestow upon you the same blessing; the mercy that assured you that God would never leave you nor forsake you — will make good the Word. Therefore return unto the Lord your God, and He will abundantly pardon.

Believer, there is mercy with your God to help you in every time of need:

to comfort you in sorrow,
to sanctify your troubles,
to bring you through all your trials, and

make all things work together for your good. The mercy of God is like Himself — infinite, and eternal! It is always on the throne, and reigns through the atonement of Jesus. It may be obtained by every applicant, without money and without price. Hope therefore in God. Hope at all times, and under all circumstances. Hope in His mercy, honors him; but doubts and slavish fears — reflect badly on His pity, His kindness, and love. He asks for your confidence. He promises you grace. He forbids your fears. He swears that He will not be angry with His saints, and that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner; therefore, "hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

16 The Two Essentials

The Two Essentials

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead — you will be saved." Romans 10:9 The essentials of religion are few and simple; the weakest may understand them, and the poorest may possess them.

There must be FAITH, for without faith it is impossible to please God. By faith, is not meant the cold assent of the understanding — but the warm confidence of the heart. It must be the faith of the heart, or a cordial believing, approving, and confiding in the gospel. There must be belief in the resurrection of Christ, which proves that His claim was just, that His work is finished and accepted, and that His authority is now universal. If the resurrection of Christ is believed — then the truth of His doctrines must be admitted, and His right to claim, rule, and use us for His glory be allowed.

"With the heart man believes unto righteousness." Faith is not in the place of righteousness — but the gospel presents the righteousness of Jesus as God's free gift; and faith leads the heart to embrace it as presented; and thus the believer becomes righteous, is justified before God, and is treated as such. The faith of the heart, is confidence in God's Word, dependence on Christ's work, leading to an affectionate reliance on the faithfulness of Jehovah.

He who believes must CONFESS. He must confess that Jesus Christ, who was crucified, is raised from the dead; and that being raised from the dead, "He is Lord of all." That He alone is the Savior. That His blood made atonement, and procured peace with God. That He is all He said, did all He undertook, and will perform all that is written in His Word. This confession must be with the mouth, in words; and with the life, in deeds. It must be open, without fear, sincere, without disguise; cordial, without regret; at any expense or hazard to which it may expose us.

Without confession, there is no salvation; for, "the fearful," who are afraid or ashamed to confess Christ, "shall have their part in the lake which burns with brimstone and fire, which is the second death."

Faith secures an interest in the justifying righteousness of Jesus; and confession secures an interest in, and the fulfillment of, the promise of Christ, "Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in Heaven." (Matthew 10:32-33; also Luke 12:8-9.)

Confession with the mouth, when connected with the faith of the heart — is also an evidence that God is with us, and dwells in us, as it is written, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God." (1 John 4:15.) If we profess, without possessing — it is hypocrisy and deceit; and if we possess without professing — it is no less. How can we be honest, if we believe in Christ — and do not confess it? Does not faith regard His precepts — as well as His doctrines and promises, and does He not require us to confess Him? Is not the believer afraid

to live in willful disobedience? And is it not disobedience to refuse to profess Christ? Ought we not to endeavor to put our salvation out of doubt? But how can we, if we do not confess Him before men? Is it right to receive His benefits — and refuse to confess who is our benefactor, especially when He requires it at our hands? The demands of the gospel are simple and clear: "Believe, confess, be saved." Accept of what God gives, and acknowledge it to His praise. Receive what He presents, and be honest enough to own it. A public profession of Christ is indispensable; there is no private way to Heaven. You must not only secretly believe and privately pray — but you must openly acknowledge and profess faith in your Savior. You must avow . . .

that you take Him for your example,
that you listen to Him as your Prophet,
that you trust in Him as your Priest, and
that you bow to and own Him as your King.

Those who are afraid to confess Christ, cannot expect to be saved by Him:

their faith is dead,
their dependence is vain,
and their hopes are delusive.

But, "if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead — you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "It is a faithful saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." (2 Timothy 2:11-14.)

17 A Source of Comfort

A Source of Comfort "The Lord will give grace." Psalms 84:11 No one knows what lies ahead of him, nor is it possible for human foresight to provide against the evils which may arise; but this is the Christian's comfort — his God knows and has provided for all, and will give him grace according to his day.

Grace in God is His free and sovereign favor; grace from God is the expression and proof of that favor. Grace given, is sometimes wisdom to direct; at others, strength to enable: at others, holiness to sanctify; it takes the form we need, and is just what we need, and all that we need. "The Lord will give grace," more grace (James 4:6;) grace for grace (John 1:16;) abundance of grace (Romans 5:17;) grace to crown grace. (1 Peter 1:13.) Grace for life and living, and grace for death and dying. The Lord gives to the poor and unworthy; He gives liberally, as much and as often as is needed; and He gives with pleasure and delight. The grace which the Lord gives, will conquer unbelief, and enable us to believe His Word. (Acts 18:27.) It will pardon all our sins, (Ephesians 1:7;) and justify us fully and freely. (Romans 3:24.) It will help us to perform Christian duties; to bear all our trials with fortitude and patience, and to overcome all our foes. It is grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) It inclines the heart to work for God, and assist the believer in all he undertakes for the Lord's glory. Paul could say, "The grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, for I labored more abundantly than they all; and yet not I — but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10.) This grace is sufficient to enable us to bear a thorn in the flesh with joy, and to overcome even a special messenger of Satan, sent to buffet us. (2 Corinthians 12:9.) It is all-sufficient to enable us to do and abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8;) and to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28.) It will give everlasting consolation, and inspire with a good hope (2 Thessalonians 2:16;) and it will form the most lovely character out of the crudest material. (2 Corinthians 1:12.)

It brings the tidings of salvation to the ear (Titus 2:11;) produces faith by which we embrace and enjoy them (Ephesians 2:8;) and completes and crowns the work. (Ephesians 2:5-8; Acts 15:11.) It makes the poorest sinner which it embraces, an heir of promise (Hebrews 6:17;) of salvation (Hebrews 1:14;) and of God, (Titus 3:7; Romans 8:17.) In a word, it . . .

has all we can want,

promises all we shall ever need,

gives all we ask in faith, and

saves us with an everlasting salvation!

Reader, this promise is brief — but it is full of blessing; it is suited to our case, and opens a fountain of comfort for our supply. The Lord will give grace — then this should prevent our giving way to fear; what cannot grace enable us to do? What will not grace bring us safely through? If the Lord will give grace, then may we boldly ask, "Of what, or of whom shall I be afraid?" This

promise should strengthen our faith, and make us confident in God, saying, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation." This promise should stir us up to prayer; what can we need that is not included in the word grace? And yet this is the very thing which Jehovah has so plainly and positively promised. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need!" This promise should nerve us to diligence and entire consecration to God; the grace received from God should be employed for the glory of God; and if we thus employ what we receive — then we may have whatever we ask. He says, "Work while it is called today." The believer feels weak and insufficient; but the God who bids him work, promises grace to enable him to perform; the precept should lead us to the promise, the promise should up, taken to the throne in prayer, and the grace received in answer to prayer, should be employed in performing the precept.

Lastly, this promise should produce gratitude, and embolden us in the Lord's cause; not only should we say, "I will run the way of your commandments;" but, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth!"

18 Patience, the Necessary Grace

Patience, the Necessary Grace

"You have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." Hebrews 10:36 The present is a state of exercise and trial. It is not intended for rest or indulgence — but for labor and the exercise of all the Christian graces. Our employment is to do the will of God; our own will must be merged in His; and we must from His Word, ascertain what He requires of us in every state, in every place, and under all circumstances. We must learn to . . .

renounce our own will,

give up our own way,

and deny ourselves —

because our God requires it.

Having ascertained what God commands, we must do it — and do it promptly, cheerfully, heartily, universally — not choosing one part of His will and refusing the rest.

We often find our own will running counter to God's will; and our own way, just the opposite of God's way; but when this is the case, the path of duty is plain, SELF must be mortified — and the flesh denied. So the dispensations of providence are often very trying, and we find it more difficult to suffer the will of God in a proper spirit, than to do it; but whether doing or suffering — we shall find grace necessary, for nature is inefficient and very often opposed; and grace is provided for us, and promised to us.

We have especially need of patience, by which alone we can quietly bear the burden laid upon us — and persevere in the way marked out for us.

We need patience — to preserve us from fretting against the Lord, or murmuring at His dealings with us. Patience will close the mouth, and cause the heart to bow down in silent sorrow before the Lord. Patience will not allow us to speak against God — but will cause us mentally to say, "I will be silent, I will not open my mouth, for it is God's will, it is the Lord's doing."

We need patience — to prevent apostasy. Saul had no patience, and he lost the kingdom, and became an apostate; only the patient will persevere.

We need patience — to enable us to wait the Lord's time for deliverance; it often travels but slowly, and we have long to pray, wait, watch, and expect, before it comes; and if there is not patience, we shall wickedly say with one, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

We need patience — to suffer privations, which are often very painful and distressing; we looked for light — but beheld darkness; we expected liberty — but found a prison; we anticipated plenty — but are left in poverty! And now without patience, where would we be?

We need patience — to press through difficulties. The further we go, the greater our difficulties often appear! Our corruptions within appear to grow stronger, and our troubles to increase in number and weight; and now — but for patience, we would certainly turn back. We need patience to travel the whole length of the wilderness, and then to enter into the promised land, "that having done the will of God, we may receive the promise." Our need of patience will appear, if you look . . .

at the number and variety of our trials;

at our sore and powerful temptations;

at our many and great disappointments;

at our painful and grievous vexations;

at the conflict within our own bosoms;

and at our liability to mistake the wise and holy design of our God and Father.

He intends to prove us and try us, and show us what is in our hearts! He intends to manifest the power and tendency of His grace, and to exhibit to all, His faithfulness and love. My brother have you this precious grace? If so — then you feel your impatience. Mourn over your lack of exact conformity to the will of God; and plead with God as the God of patience and consolation, to perfect you in this grace. Only the patient discover and grieve over their lack of patience! It is generally by trials, troubles, and disappointments — that the Lord draws forth and increases our patience; as the Apostle says, "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patience; patience, character; and character, hope." Hence also the exhortation of James, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops patience. Patience must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything!"

19 The Secret

The Secret "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Psalms 25:14

Real religion, in the Old Testament, is often called, "the fear of the Lord;" in the New Testament, it is called, "love." Under the past dispensation, the saints felt more like servants; under the present, they have the privilege of children.

Yet still we fear God. The fear of the Lord includes . . .

faith in His Word,

hope in His mercy, and

love to His gracious character. Where these are experienced and possessed, there is:

1. a fear to offend God, as a child fears to offend a beloved and kind father;
2. a fear to tempt God, by presuming upon His promises when neglecting His precepts, or expecting His intervention when dishonoring His name;
3. a fear to turn a deaf ear to Him, whether He speaks in mercy or majesty, for comfort or reproof.

Indeed, the ruling desire of such an one, is to commend himself to God, and enjoy His approving smile.

"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him." A secret is a sacred deposit between two friends. And the secret of the Lord with a person is real religion, which is "the root of the matter," and the cause of holiness, happiness, and honor. The secret of the Lord consists in the power of God sweetly put forth, to raise the thoughts, the desires, the hopes, the affections, and the whole soul to God. It furnishes the man with what answers to the wings of the eagle, so that he mounts upward to his God, and enjoys the ascent. He learns to understand what the apostle meant, by being, "raised up together, and made to sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The secret of the Lord includes pleasure in the presence, service and ways of God; they are no more toilsome, tiresome, or vexatious; but afford joy, impart comfort, and yield sacred satisfaction. The secret of the Lord comprehends grace sanctifying, that is, fitting and setting apart the person for God's glory, both in this world, and also in that which is to come. So that the secret of the Lord which is with the righteous, consists in such a knowledge of Him, and such communications from Him, as make his ways pleasantness and his paths peace. Or it is power raising, pleasure inviting, and grace sanctifying the man; so that he becomes a new creature, and piety becomes his element, his food, and his delight.

Those who fear the Lord, are much in secret with the Lord. They dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. They love His company, they enjoy His presence, they prefer His society, they profit by His communications, and hold confidential

fellowship with Him. He entrusts them with His secrets, treats them as His friends, and opens His heart to them. And they trust Him with theirs, they tell him what they wish, what they fear, the purposes they have formed, and leave their concerns with Him.

"He will show them His covenant." His new covenant, which is a covenant of grace and peace.

He shows them the provision which it contains; provision for their guilt, fears, weakness, foes, sorrows, and dangers — all they can want in time, or enjoy throughout eternity! A covenant ordered in all things and sure, containing all their salvation, and all they can consistently desire.

He shows them the basis on which it rests — even His own grace, faithfulness, and immutability; so that it cannot be broken, or fail; for His holiness, power, and glory are involved in its permanence and completion.

He shows them the objects it secures, as the glory of God, the complete salvation of the whole church, the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, and the destruction of every foe!

He shows them that it is identified with Jesus, who is called the covenant, and promised the Gentiles as such. He is the messenger of the covenant, who publishes it, and is engaged for its fulfillment. He is the Mediator of the covenant, who stands between the Father and all the covenant seed, presenting His blood as an atonement for their sins, and becoming the medium of communication between God and them. He is the Surety of the covenant also, who is to see every promise fulfilled, the provision appropriated; and the people covenanted for, or given by the Father to Him . . .

called by grace,

preserved through life,

fitted for glory, and

raised up and presented faultless at the last day. The Lord shows this covenant by shining on His Word, enlightening the mind, and leading us to feel our need of covenant blessings — to seek them in faith, receive and enjoy them, and to know more of this covenant; and to enjoy more of its provision, security, and pleasures!

20 A Desperate Case!

A Desperate Case!

"There was no remedy!" 2 Chronicles 36:16

Israel had polluted God's sanctuary, mocked His messengers, despised His Word, and misused His prophets — until the wrath of the Lord arose against them, and there was no remedy! Their case became desperate, for God would tolerate no more. He would use no more means to bring them to repentance — but He gave them up and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost! Their disease was become inveterate — no relief could now be obtained. God rejected them, and no other physician could be found. The city was destroyed, the temple leveled with the dust, thousands of the inhabitants slain, and a vast multitude of souls lost forever! What a fearful picture! What a lesson is set before us!

Dear friends, the subject suggests a solemn caution; it cries aloud, "Beware!" It bids us to inquire and examine. WHO were the people that were brought into this desperate state? They were the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God. They had been religiously educated, they had the ordinances of God, the priesthood, the written Word, and the prophets. They felt assured that they were safe, for their false confidence was very strong. Hence the prophet complains, "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No evil can come upon us!" (Micah 3:10-11.) To whom does this now especially speak?

1. To the children of godly parents, who have taught them, prayed with them, and endeavored to lead them in the everlasting way.
2. To the regular attendants upon public worship, who pollute the sanctuary by their lightness, their worldliness, and their indifference. How many trifle! How many encourage worldly thoughts! How many show themselves indifferent to the most solemn subjects!

They, like those referred to in the narrative, despise the Lord's Word. He sends His servants to warn them of their danger; to counsel them for their good; to exhort them to flee and be safe; to pronounce His threatenings against the impenitent; and to invite all to lay down the weapons of rebellion, and receive pardon, peace, and protection. But they mock His messengers, and one goes to his farm, and another to his merchandise. They make light of the gospel message, and despise the goodness and patience of God, until there is no remedy. O fearful case! O alarming situation! But WHEN may this be the case? When may it be said of a sinner, that there is no remedy?

1. Sometimes in life and health; for the Lord says of the fools who hate knowledge, "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke — they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their

schemes!" Proverbs 1:28-31.

2. More particularly in the hour of death. How many presume on a death-bed repentance; and yet they have no promise of grace at that hour, they have but little ground to hope for acceptance then. But if deprived of reason by fever, the paralyzing stroke, or dementia — then indeed it is clearly seen that there is no remedy. And oh, to be banished from time into eternity with a load of unpardoned sin upon the conscience, to suffer the just wrath of God forever — how terrible is this!

Then comes the judgment — but there is no remedy; for impartial Justice sits upon the throne, and the record of the man's thoughts, words, and actions, is exposed; and in characters which cannot be erased, is written, "He trifled with My mercy, he insulted My justice, he dared My power, he laughed at My authority, he rejected My gospel, and he refused My grace!"

O fearful case! — there is no remedy!

In vain for mercy now they cry,

In lakes of liquid fire they lie!

There on the flaming billows tossed,

Forever — oh, forever lost!

21 The One Mediator

The One Mediator "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5 The mediation of Christ is the glory of the gospel! No one has seen the glory of the method of grace — who has not distinctly, clearly, and spiritually seen the nature of the mediation of Jesus. God and man are by nature separated; nor can they be reconciled or united — but by a Mediator. The cause of this separation is sin. The sin of man is rebellion against the just authority of God. The sin of man is deep-rooted, cruel, and wicked enmity against God. The sin of man is moral filth, in consequence of which he cannot be admitted into the presence of God.

Sinful man aims at nothing less than the destruction of the very being of the absolutely holy God; for if the sinner had the power — he would chase God out of all the worlds He has created, and deprive Him of His existence and very being! The character of man, is that of the enemy of God — he is the avowed, determined, and implacable enemy of God! And his enmity is so deep and dreadful — that nothing short of the divine power and influence of the Holy Spirit can subdue it, nothing but a new creation can change his character!

How then can such a vile being, in such a dreadful state — be admitted into the presence of the thrice holy God? Into the presence of that God:

1. Whose justice demands that the rights of the divine nature be maintained, and the sins of the sinner be punished!
2. Whose holiness is like a burning, glowing fire, and will not, cannot — allow anything impure to approach Him!
3. Whose truth is as immutable as His throne, and will not rescind or falsify His threatenings!
4. Whose power makes earth to tremble, and the perpetual mountains to bow!

How can such a holy God, and such vile creatures — meet and embrace, and love each other?

Only through a Mediator, one who can lay his hand upon both. The Mediator required must be one who can approach to and deal with God for man; whose dignity, glory, and majesty, are such, that it shall be no dishonor to Jehovah to admit Him to His council, and enter into terms with Him for man's redemption. The Mediator must be one who has ability to prevail with and reconcile men. He must have power . . .

to subdue the stubborn will,

to cleanse the filthy nature, and

to bring the rebel at a humble suppliant to the divine throne!

He must be willing to undertake this great and arduous work, and to go through with it, let it cost what it may of toil, suffering, and power.

He must also be acceptable to both parties: God must approve of Him and be satisfied with Him; and man must acquiesce in his appointment, office, and work.

He must be able to meet and fulfill all the conditions of the covenant . . .

obeying the precepts of the law,

suffering its dreadful penalty,

and new-creating the rebel man.

He must therefore be GOD — or how could He . . .

deal with God,

undertake for millions of sinners, and

deliberately engage in such a dreadful work?

If He is not God — then He is infinitely beneath God; for there is an infinite distance between God and the most exalted creature.

He must also be man, and PERFECT MAN, without spot, or stain of sin — or how could He obey the law in His life, and suffer its penalty in His death?

Jesus is BOTH God and man. God by nature, and man by choice — the God-man, therefore the Mediator. His WORK was first to lay a foundation for bringing God and man together upon just and honorable principles — this He did by His obedience and death. Then He must actually bring the parties together into friendship and agreement — this He does by His gospel and Holy Spirit. Then He must keep the parties together, in peace and love — and this He does by His intercession, constantly pleading His blood for sinners in the holiest, and sending down the Holy Spirit to sanctify, teach and guide them! As Mediator, He made peace. He proclaims peace, He imparts peace. He maintains peace. He will introduce His people into perfect and eternal peace! He stands between God and man as Intercessor with God — and as Advocate for them! He is the only medium of access to God; no sinner can approach God with acceptance — but through Him! As the medium of communion with God — God can not have fellowship with us — but through Him. As the medium of sympathy, He unites God and man so closely, so tenderly — that every groan touches Him, every sigh touches Him, every pain touches Him! And in all our afflictions — He is afflicted!

Wonderful union of God and man! Amazing mystery! That God and man should become one, through Jesus. The rebel and the Sovereign — one! The vile sinner and the Holiest — one! But so it is, and Jesus will be our one Mediator to us in ultimate glory forever. There is one Mediator, and but ONE! We need no more!

22 The Wealthy Family

The Wealthy Family "There is no lack to those who fear Him!" Psalms 34:9 They are not the truly wealthy — who appear to be so — or who boast of being so. The lost sinner must be poor. He has . . .

no God to comfort him;

no Savior to deliver him;

no Guide to conduct him;

no Advocate to plead for him;

no inward peace to support him;

no title to Heaven to animate him.

He is poor. He is in need. He will need . . .

confidence and comfort in death;

a wedding garment, in which to appear before God;

and a comfortable home throughout eternity!

Every lost sinner is indeed poor. His resources will soon be exhausted, and he will find himself "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!" They may have the appearance of prosperity — but not the reality; this belongs to another family. The Lord's people all fear him; that is, they fear to offend Him, and desire above all things to please Him. And though they may appear poor — they are really rich. God has provided all good things for them — and He gives all good things to them. They have a solid peace, flowing from a knowledge of acceptance with God, through the blood of Jesus. They have a joyful hope, which blooms with immortality. They are assured of strength equal to their day; and of sanctifying grace to make all their troubles work their good. They are content with God's wise and holy appointments; and godliness with contentment is a good fortune. They acquiesce in the will of God; and are often filled with joy which flows from his presence. They obtain victory over the temptations — which would ensnare them. They live above the world, which — would allure and beguile them. They are sure of support in death. They look forward to a joyful resurrection. They rightly anticipate Heaven as their portion forever!

There is no lack to them, for all they can need, is promised — and every promise is confirmed by the blood of Jesus.

Jehovah is theirs — with all that He is, and has! His power is their support! His wisdom their guide! His fullness their fortune! His mercy their friend! His love their Heaven.

"Happy are the people who are in such a case!" But all the Lord's people are in this case, and therefore they are all happy!

Just think of having God for your present, constant, eternal friend! Think of having the wealth of Deity to supply and satisfy you! And if you sincerely fear God — then this is the reality of your case! No truth is more clearly revealed in Scripture. No fact is more powerfully confirmed! No subject is more rich with consolation!

Strength may be exhausted,

health may decline,

courage may fail,

riches may flee,

friends may forsake,

enemies may increase,

all circumstances may change for the worse —

"but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing!"

Sweet promise of a faithful God!

Here, pilgrim, is your staff — take it and travel home!

Here, saint, is your cordial — drink and forget your misery!

Here, believer, is your fortune — take it and live upon it, while a resident below.

Here, fearful soul, is your antidote — use it to dispel your fears and cheer your fainting heart!

"The young lions may lack food and go hungry — but there is no lack to those who fear Him!"

Here is wealth! Here is comfort!

Here is all that we can need for life or death, time or eternity!

23 The Remedy for a Troubled Heart

The Remedy for a Troubled Heart "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God — believe also in Me!" John 14:1

We often trouble ourselves. We often allow our hearts to be tossed about like the waves of the sea, without any real cause. Our Savior forbids it. He forbids it in tender love. He forbids it because it is injurious. Inward commotion, or confusion, such as is referred to in the text, unfits us for social duties, pious exercises, and usefulness in the church of God. It lays us open to temptations, and fosters unbelief and anxiety. Our Lord would have us calm, patient, and composed; therefore He says, "Let not your heart be troubled!"

He prescribes a remedy for heart trouble, or inward anxiety:

1. "Believe in God." Believe in God as your Father — as loving you, acting for you, and rejoicing in your welfare. See Him . . .

ordering all events with consummate wisdom;

overruling all with infinite skill; and

sanctifying all to your welfare, by His sovereign grace.

There is no room for 'chance' — for His government is perfect.

There can be no unkindness — for His love is infinite.

All will be directed right — for He personally superintends every detail in the universe! The floating of the atom,

the rolling of the sea, and

all the movements of every mind —

are alike under His control and direction!

"He works all things after the counsel of His own will."

2. "Believe also in Me." Believe. . .

that I sympathize with you;

that I feel the deepest interest in your welfare;

that I never withdraw my eye or heart from you for one moment;

that I will support you in every place, and under every trial;

that My arm shall be stretched out for you, to lean upon, as you come up out of the wilderness of this world;

that I will save you to the uttermost;
that I will show you a brother's love;
that I will stand by you as a firm friend in every distress;
that I will overturn all the designs of your foes against you.

Believe that I will fill my characters in your experience, as your Savior, Brother, Friend!

Believe that I will fulfill my Word to you; every promise, the largest, the kindest — "for Heaven and earth shall pass away — but my Word shall not pass away, until all be fulfilled."

"Let not your heart therefore be troubled. It does not befit you as My redeemed child. It is injurious to you. It dishonors me. It can do no good. Therefore watch against it, as against a foe! Pray against it, that you may have grace to overcome it. Strive against it, for it is your duty. Always view worry as an evil, as an evil which it is possible to overcome. View it as . . .

inconsistent with your profession,
as injurious to your soul,
as dishonoring to your God."

There is no cause for you to be troubled, for your God performs all things for you. It is inconsistent for you to be troubled, for your Savior has bequeathed you His peace. It is sinful for you to be troubled, for you are bidden to cast all your care upon the Lord, and are assured that He cares for you. All your worry will not change the color of a hair, will not weaken the power of one foe, will not lighten a single burden — it is therefore folly — as well as sin! The remedy is before you. It was prescribed by the great Physician; it has proved effectual in innumerable instances; it is just suited to you, it was intended for you! Will you use it, and prove its beneficial effect?

Remember Jesus, that Jesus who . . .

lived for you,

labored for you,

suffered for you,

died for you,

rose for you, and

is now in Heaven pleading for you —

says, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God — believe also in Me!" Be still, my heart — these anxious cares,

To you are burdens, thorns, and snares;

They cast dishonor on your Lord,

And contradict his precious Word! Did ever trouble yet befall

And He refuse to hear your call?
And Has he not His promise past,
That you shall overcome at last?
He who has helped me hitherto.
Will help me all my journey through,
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise!

24 The Savior's Warning

The Savior's Warning

"Take heed to yourselves — lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with the cares of this life." Luke 21:34

Here our beloved Savior cautions us against a common evil:

the cares of this life;

or being too anxious to amass wealth;

or having too high a concern for temporal things. This is a snare into which many fall, an evil by which many are drowned in destruction and perdition! When are we too anxious about temporal things? When we shorten the necessary hours of rest. When we deprive ourselves of time for private devotion. When we neglect family duties. When we feel tied and bound to earthly things. When we do not make the salvation of our household the principal end. When we give up attendance at the Lord's house. When we let the world have the time once devoted to the Savior. When the heart is weighed down, and we cannot retain God's Word, are unfitted for holy meditation.

What leads to this state?

1. The love of present things — which arises very much from setting a false value upon them.
2. The fear of poverty — as if poverty were worse than sin, and was more to be dreaded than the frown of God.
3. A desire for independence — that we may feel that we are our own carvers — this is an improper feeling, an unholy desire. Happiness is in childlike dependence on God; and the more dependant, if faith is lively — the more happy.
4. Giving into temptations. Satan can so show us the false glare of the world — as to deceive us.
5. Presuming on our own abilities or strength — as if we imagined that we were wiser and stronger than others; and therefore more capable of managing earthly things. But we are always in danger when we begin to imagine, that though others have fallen — yet, though in the same place, and surrounded by the same temptations — we never shall. How necessary is that command, "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; if any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." All are liable to be overcome. The temptations are peculiarly strong, and multitudes have been overcome by them. The heart is dreadfully deceitful — and is sure to beguile us; let us, therefore, "take heed." Without caution — we shall not watch; unless we watch — we shall not pray; and unless we pray — we may not expect to be kept.

Beware, for if our heart is weighed down with the cares of this life, however spiritual we may have been . . .

it will soon impoverish the soul,

our graces will wither,

our evidences become dim and questionable,

and the fervor of our devotion will die. Our heart being weighed down with the cares of this life — will assist Satan! By the thorns of worldly cares — he chokes the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. It will perhaps injure bodily health, and even abridge our days. It will make sad work for repentance, and our souls will be filled with gloom, when they ought to be rejoicing in God. This caution of our dear Lord is kind, and it is as necessary as it is kind!

Take heed, for the day is coming! The day of death will soon be here — it may be much nearer than we expect! And if it finds our hearts weighed down with the cares of this life — it will find us unfit for Heaven. The day when Jesus will appear the second time will soon be here; and then, unless our lamps are trimmed, our loins girded, our lights burning, and we have oil in our vessels — there is no going in with Him into the marriage feast! My friend, what if that day should come upon you unawares, what if it should find you unprepared! It is possible. It must be a very dreadful thing, for death to come, or for Jesus to come and find us not ready — after all his cautions, warnings, and exhortations. The cares of this life render many inattentive to the most important duties: to despise the invaluable promises of God; to mistake the design of this life, which is to prepare for another, a better, an eternal state of existence!

25 The Prescription!

The Prescription!

"This is for your health." Acts 27:34

Bodily health is a great blessing, and should not be trifled with. All means likely to preserve it, should be attended to. To this the Apostle refers, and recommends the ship's company to take some food, because it was for their health.

Spiritual health is an invaluable blessing — and should be more carefully attended to. Unless the graces of the Spirit are in vigorous exercise, and the duties of piety are our delight — we are not in health; there is some sickness, and we need the physician's care. To preserve health where it is, or restore it where it is not — attend to the following prescription. It is valuable; it is important — because, "it is for your health."

First, you must have daily exercise. I recommend . . .

that you walk daily in the paradise of God's Word;

that you work in the vineyard of God's church;

that you bathe in the fountain of redeeming blood;

that you keep up fellowship with lively Christians;

and that you exercise all the graces of the Spirit.

Attend particularly to these points, for, "it is for your health."

Second, pay attention to your diet. Let your food be the best — the bread of life and the living waters of salvation are recommended. They satisfy and sanctify. They make healthy — and keep healthy! Be sure you take sufficient nutrition; a little will preserve life — but much is necessary to health! Take your food regularly, for regularity is important. You cannot, "prosper and be in health" unless you live upon Christ, and live upon Him every day!

Third, as to your medicine — it is made up of the bitter herbs of disappointment, losses, crosses, temptations, bereavements, troubles and trials of various sorts. It is very unpleasant — but very profitable. Unless taken, and taken pretty regularly — you will be laid up with idleness, carelessness, anxiety, pride, or selfishness! But this medicine is intended to prevent or remove these evils. Your Heavenly Father will prepare it — and Divine Providence will present it! You are to beg God's blessing upon it — take it and expect benefit from it. Do not despise your medicine, for, "it is for your health."

Fourth, we prescribe tranquility. You cannot be healthy, unless you preserve tranquility of mind. In order to calm your heart . . .

live in peace with God, as a loving child with a kind and tender Father;

cast all your cares upon Him,

daily confess your sins before Him,

get a renewed manifestation of His pardoning love,

trust the promises and providence of God for the future,

live day by day,

be content with your lot — it is appointed for you by infinite wisdom and love! It is the very best that can be, and this you will see and confess by-and-bye.

Take no anxious thought for the tomorrow — but leave the future with the Lord, for, "it is for your health."

Believer, God designs to preserve or restore your spiritual health in all that He does. Does He require you to obey His wise, His holy, His flesh-displeasing precepts? "It is for your health!" Does He afflict you? "It is for your health!" Does He try you in your temporal circumstances? "It is for your health!" Does He bereave you of your beloved relatives and friends? Even "this is for your health!" The cup is bitter — but the design is gracious! The medicine is nauseous — but the effect is sweet.

"All things work together for good, to those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose."

If we use much exercise, pay strict attention to our diet, and live in holy tranquility — we shall not need much 'medicine'. But if we become inactive, feed upon worldly vanities, and are anxious and troubled about many things — we shall often need a regular course of pungent 'medicine'! And as sure as we need it — we shall have it! And if we complain or repine — our Heavenly Father will silence us, by pointing to our folly and asking, "Have you not procured all this unto yourself?"

26 The Sincerity of Love

The Sincerity of Love "To prove the sincerity of your love." 2 Corinthians 8:8

True love is always active and benevolent. It is so in nature — see the mother with her child, mark the fond affection of the little one reciprocating a mother's kindness. See it in all the connections and relationships of life; and see it much more in the church of Jesus Christ. Faith produces love; and love always acts towards God in . . .

adoring His perfections,

praising His name,

consecrating the entire person to His service, and

making benevolent communications to His cause.

It acts towards the saints in . . .

preferring them to all other,

uniting with them in holy fellowship, and

working with them to promote the Lord's cause.

It acts toward lost sinners, in . . .

pitying them,

pleading for them, and

using means for their recovery.

Love is the bond of society, and the chief ornament of our nature.

God, as the Governor — requires it. As a Sovereign — He promises it. And as a Covenant God, by His Spirit He produces it. When the Spirit comes to produce love in our hearts, He convinces us that we have it not. He grants us to see its beauty and excellency. Then the desire to possess and enjoy it springs up — then we seek it by earnest, fervent prayer — and by the gospel it is produced. Here . . .

the love of God to us is manifested,

pardon is procured,

provision for all our needs is promised,

the most lovely prospects are unfolded, and

the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts — love to God, to saints, to all — springs up. The cross especially draws forth our love; sameness of nature causes it to fix on the saints; and while pursuing the same objects, we feel our love to each other increase and strengthen. But fellowship with God and His people, is that which more particularly sustains and increases our love one towards another.

Love, Christian love, professes . . .

to prefer Christ and His cause to everything besides;

to submit to His authority and acquiesce in His will;

to approve of and obey all His commands,

to choose and delight in His saints;

to sympathize with and relieve suffering believers;

and to be ready to every good work. The proof of love is required. The proof of its sincerity, its purity, and its strength. God requires proof — and for this end His commands are given and His ordinances appointed. "This is the love of God — that we keep his commandments." The church requires proof — hence her applications for assistance and the display of sympathy.

Sinners require proof; and strong proof too: and they are watching us, to see if we act as we profess, and walk according to our rule.

Circumstances will demand proof; as when the good Samaritan saw the poor Jew bleeding, gasping, and ready to die; he gave proof that he loved his neighbor by going to him and rendering him assistance; but the priest and Levite manifested that their pretensions to love were mere hypocrisy. Just so, when the Christian churches in Judea were tried with poverty, it proved the love of the Gentiles who sent them relief. And this will account for some things which occur at present. Why are some saints you know, poor — very poor? To prove the sincerity of your love, to see whether your love is only in word — or whether you will assist them as you should. Why are some believers near you sick, and sick for so long a time? Probably to prove the sincerity of your love — whether you will visit, comfort, and relieve them — or not. Why does the cause of God need and call for support from us? To prove the sincerity of our love; and the proof of our love should be evident, so evident as to leave no room for doubt! It should be proved by . . .

self-denying labors,

costly sympathies, and

prompt and cheerful assistance.

Love, if felt — should be shown. Love, if possessed — will appear. It will appear in . . .

visiting the sick,

teaching the young,

defending the oppressed,

relieving the poor, and

working to assist the Lord's cause.

Faith should be crowned with love — and love should be crowned with convincing proofs!

27 Public Worship

Public Worship "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Hebrews 10:25 The public worship of God is of divine appointment, and is intended to benefit the Lord's people, to be the means of the conversion of sinners, and to glorify God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Believers should meet to pray and praise together; to preach and hear together; to attend to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to administer discipline, and to receive others into fellowship. The saints should meet often, unless unavoidably prevented. The ordinances are means of grace, and we receive grace in attending upon them: they are to revive, strengthen, encourage, and reprove us, and we find they often do so. We cannot neglect the ordinances — without being serious losers; or attend them in a proper spirit — without being sensibly benefitted. The Lord is always present in the assembly of the saints, and present on purpose to bless them. Our attendance should be regular, never omitting if we can possibly be present; it should always be early, never coming in late if it can by any means be avoided. Every believer should be in the place of meeting a few minutes before the service commences, that there may be time to compose the mind, and offer up a short prayer for the Lord's presence and blessing. Those who habituate themselves to coming late, do not consider that they disturb the devotion of others, pain the preacher's mind, distract the attention of the congregation, and dishonor the Lord, who has been there from the commencement.

Let us not neglect the means — or attend to them in a cold, formal, lifeless manner; but let us bear in mind that we go to meet the Lord, to perform a solemn duty, to enjoy a delightful privilege, and to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Many practically despise the means of grace: their attendance is occasional, instead of regular; late, instead of early; formal, instead of lively and zealous. This arises from the coldness of the affections, the worldliness of the mind, and the influence of temptation on the spirit. Nothing is easier than to frame excuses for neglecting public worship, nor are many things more difficult than to give satisfactory reasons for so doing.

Reader, if tempted to neglect the public worship of God, remember that the honor of Jesus is involved in it; the command of God and the example of the saint, make it incumbent upon you. If you are at all concerned for the credit of He Savior's cause, for the comfort of the minister and members of the church, for your own spiritual welfare, or for the consistency of your conduct — have a place in the Lord's house which you can call your own, and be sure you fill it regularly, early, and with befitting seriousness. The promises of God, the practice of primitive times, and the happy experience of the saints — combine to urge you to a diligent attention to this duty. Our Apostle adds the coming of, "the day," the near approach of the Lord Jesus; it will be soon, sudden, and solemn: and we ought to be quite prepared for it, come when it may. But if the lamp of our profession is not burning brightly, if the vessel of our hearts is not well furnished with the oil of grace, if our loins are not girded with truth, if we are not found watching in the Lord's ways — then how can we be said to be ready? And are we likely to be in such a holy, happy state — if we live in the neglect of the ordinances of our God? Surely not! Let us, therefore, exhort one another to this duty; and let us do so the more earnestly affectionately, and frequently, as we see the day

approaching. In this respect let us not allow sin upon a brother, without kindly warning, and affectionately exhorting him to a more consistent course. Let us attend to all the ordinances of God, and use all the means of grace, that we may all be found of Jesus in peace, without spot and blameless, at His appearing; for if we are negligent, worldly-minded, and forsaking the right ways of the Lord — this cannot be the case.

28 Family Prayer

Family Prayer

"Pour out your fury upon the heathen that have not known you, and upon the families do not call upon your name!" Jeremiah 10:25

Family prayer is a most important means of grace, and has often proved one of the greatest blessings which a family could enjoy. It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we must honor God in our families. Twice in the day if we can, at least once — every family where Jesus is professed, should be called to bow before the Lord together. Parents and children, master and servants, should meet before the Lord their maker. The head of the family should lead the devotions if present; and his wife should lead, should he be absent. Family prayer should never be omitted if there is one of the family at home who can call upon God; even if the language is broken, and the time occupied is very brief. The gift of prayer always grows by use, and smallness of gift is no lawful excuse for omitting family prayer. If we cannot pray eloquently, we may pray earnestly — which is much better; if our language does not flow freely, we need not be long and tedious. Prevailing prayers are often short prayers.

Family devotions should generally be short, especially where there are young children, A short portion of God's holy Word should be read; and it has often been found profitable to read a few striking remarks on some spiritual subject, by an approved author. If those present can sing, a few verses of praise greatly enliven the service; if not, a short prayer, being a direct address to Jehovah, offered with feeling and fervor, under a sense of the divine presence, is very edifying and refreshing. God approves, an enlightened conscience commends, and all are benefitted.

Family prayer will prevent much sin, as well as do much good. It keeps up a remembrance of the divine presence, it brings important truths before the mind, it teaches the prayerless what prayer is, it leads children to think, and brings down the blessing of God upon the house. We are to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; but this we cannot do if family prayer is neglected. We are to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting; this cannot be observed, if we do not pray in our families. He who would excuse himself from family prayer, should expect to be excused from family blessings.

Reader, have you family prayer in your house? If not, allow me to ask, do you profess to be a Christian? Have you considered the solemn passage at the head of these remarks? If God is to pour out his fury upon the families which call not upon his name, and you have not family prayer, how can your family escape? You ought to own God in your house, and daily should you acknowledge your dependence upon Him, and obligation to Him. All your domestic comforts, all your temporal mercies, and all your spiritual privileges — flow from His love and grace; and will you daily as a family receive, and never as a family praise? The heathens have their household gods; and will not you have your family altar? Shall they honor idols of wood and stone, and must it be said of you, "The God in whose hands your breath is — you have not glorified?" An old divine

says, "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, opened and exposed to all the storms." Again, "Family prayer bolts the door against danger at night, and opens it for the admission of mercies in the morning." Private prayer was never intended to set aside family prayer, nor should family prayer be made an excuse for the neglect of private. The one is for the person, the other for the household. Both are necessary, and properly conducted both are means of blessing.

29 Apostolic Counsel

Apostolic Counsel "Each person should remain in whatever situation he was called." 1 Corinthians 7:24

External circumstances and human distinctions, are of small consequence to the Christian — for the religion he professes is able to make him useful and happy anywhere, and everywhere. Whether master or servant, sovereign or subject — the believer need not be much concerned; for in spiritual things, all are equal. All have the same spiritual privileges, all are alike the sons of God, and the brethren of the Lord Jesus; all are accepted of God, and all have access to Him on a throne of grace; every one is promised strength equal to his day, and grace according to his station; and all have the same glowing prospects opened before them.

Every condition has its peculiar trials and temptations; the wealthy are not exempt — nor have the poor an undue share. The master is tried in his station — as well as the servant in his. The poor are often the happiest, being rich in faith, fervent in prayer, and rejoicing in hope; their situation being low is more sheltered, and they find the gospel of Jesus peculiarly suited to them.

Present distinctions will not last long. Death, the great leveler, will soon pass by, and lay all alike in the dust; and then it will not much matter whether we were masters or servants; the only point of importance will be — were we holy and useful — and accordingly will every one, "have praise of God." The grand object to be kept in view by us all, is abiding with God as His children, walking with Him like Enoch did — and if we do so we shall realize His presence, exercise faith in His Word, keep up daily fellowship with Him on His throne, look not so much at present things as future, and expect Him to ratify His Word in our experience. This will bring joy in sorrow, strength in weakness, light in darkness, and inspire with immortal hope. It will enable us to adorn the gospel, convince the gainsayers, and glorify our Heavenly Father.

More depends on the state of the mind — than on any circumstances in which we can be placed; therefore, let not the wealthy be high-minded — but fear; let not the learned be proud — but humble; let not the poor be depressed — but hopeful; let not the illiterate despond — but look for divine teaching. Let no one be anxious or hasty to exchange situations. We know what our trials are in our present situation — but we know not what they may be in another. Let us all endeavor, where Providence placed us, to, "abide with God." This counsel reproves many rash speculating professors; dissatisfied with their present condition, determined to rise rapidly, they run before providence, and move without the approbation of God; and so fall, "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." This counsel is calculated to check the murmuring and repining of others. Remember, friend, you are where God in his providence has placed you. In your present situation the Lord can make you useful and happy; therefore be more concerned for an increase of grace, than for a change of situation. If you move without God, you may have to repent of it as Lot did; but if you aim to glorify God where you are, you cannot be neglected, or have cause to be distressed. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Therefore, "Be content with such things as you have, for God has said,

I will never leave you, nor forsake you." A restless spirit is not to be indulged — but mortified; if it is encouraged, it will become unmanageable, and cause us bitter sorrow; but if it is subdued by discipline and grace, it will become settled and composed. Complaining does not befit a Christian, nor is dissatisfaction consistent with our principles. We do not know what is best for us here! Lazarus was better off than Dives; for he was preparing for glory; while the rich man was ripening for perdition!

30 A Profitable Reflection

A Profitable Reflection

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices." Ezekiel 36:31 When the Lord's people are . . .

called out from among the ungodly,
cleansed from their sins,
sanctified in their natures,
saved from their foes,
restored from their backslidings, and
enjoy the privileges of the new covenant

— they are led to reflect upon the past. They review the days of their unregeneracy with sorrow, and with gratitude to God for His grace. They also reflect on their own evil ways since united to Jesus, with shame and self-abhorrence. This promise is fulfilled in every restored backslider.

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds." They were opposed to God's ways, to our own profession, and to what may have been justly expected from us. They were from an evil principle — unbelief; they were to an evil end — the gratification of the flesh; they were of an evil character, and the effect of listening to an evil monitor, even Satan. Our doings were evil — and equally opposed to God's holy law, and the Savior's glorious gospel. They were unholy, unrighteous, and injurious to both God and man.

You shall remember, reflect seriously, as the Church did, when she said, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Let us examine our ways thoroughly, and bring them to the touch-stone of the Lord's Word for trial.

You shall reflect painfully, as Peter did, "And Peter remembered the words of Jesus — and he went out and wept bitterly."

You shall reflect frequently, as David did, who said, "My sin is ever before me."

"You will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices." No man loathes himself by nature; but when a believer reflects upon his backslidings from his God, when he sees his sins in the light of God's holiness, when he beholds mercy rejoicing against judgment in his own case, like Job he exclaims, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" He feels deeply displeased with his folly — he judges himself totally unworthy the notice of his God — he groans in his spirit under the pressure he feels — he is wounded in his heart by the review of his folly — he is disgusted with himself for his inexcusable conduct; and exclaims, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man!" Thus . . .

pride is destroyed,
humility is drawn forth,
penitence is produced,
self is condemned, and

God is justified in using the severest means.

"You shall loathe yourselves," for the past shall be made distinctly to pass in review before you; you shall clearly discover the nature and character of your transgression; you shall turn with sorrow and disgust from yourselves — to your injured and insulted Lord; you shall feel as though you could never forgive yourselves for the wicked course you have pursued; you shall pass sentence on yourselves, and frankly confess your sins are abominable.

Such is the effect of divine mercy on the pardoned sinner, and restored backslider.

Reader, has divine mercy had this effect on you? Or, are you pleased with yourself, thinking lightly of your sin? Retire to Calvary, sit down before the cross of Jesus; and in the light of redeeming mercy — review and reflect upon your past course and conduct. Look back, look within, and then look up!

See what your life has been — a course of sin;

see what sin is — an evil and bitter thing;

see what your sins have done — even crucified the Lord of glory;

and can you do otherwise than loathe yourself, for all your iniquities and for all your abominations?

31 The Husband's Example

The Husband's Example

"Husbands, love your wives — even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25 This language is especially addressed to Christians; the Holy Spirit speaks on the wife's behalf. The husband and his wife are one. The union is most intimate and important, and it is for life. It should therefore be formed with much prayer, prudence, and reflection. And being formed, each party should strive to make it a means of blessing to the other, by closely attending to the precepts of Holy Scripture. No godly man should, under any pretense, marry an unsaved woman; for it is impossible to obey the precepts of the gospel, under such circumstances. The husband is to love his wife, not merely for her beauty, her amiable temper, or her attention to him; but he is to love her for Christ's sake, as a part of His mystical body, as dear to His heart, and appointed to reign with Him in glory. The husband will never love his wife as he should, unless he views her in Christ, considers her as one with Christ, and remembers that Jesus takes unkindness shown to her — as shown to himself. The wife must be loved not only for her own sake, not merely as a woman; but for the sake of Christ, who redeemed her by His blood, who loves her with an infinite love, and who is jealous of any slight shown or unkindness manifested to her.

Every husband who professes to be a Christian, should view his wife as in Christ; and remember that Jesus says — speaking of His saints, "He who touches you, touches the apple of His eye." Acting thus, he would be better able to bear with her infirmities and imperfections; and would be led to plead for her more earnestly with her God. Viewing her as Christ's, and also as his own flesh, he would always have a garment at hand to cast over her faults, and his love would cover the multitude of sins. A perfect wife is not to be expected. The husband should be the representative of Christ to his wife, loving her as Christ loves His church. Oh, what tenderness, what gentleness, what kindness, what sympathy, what condescension should be shown! If Jesus is to be the husband's pattern, if the husband endeavors to imitate Him — then how happy will the wife be made — how comfortable will the house become — how honorable will the marriage state appear!

Jesus so loved the church as to give Himself for her, even when she was most unlovely; and He so loves her as to give her all He has, even His glory. He never takes His eye off of her. He bears with her, pleads with His Father for her, sympathizes with her in every affliction, and will not allow anything to alienate His affections from her. There is not a sigh which escapes her — but it touches His heart; nor is a pain which is felt by her — but it enters His bosom.

Husbands, see your pattern. Look at the meekness, gentleness, forbearance, and tender love of Jesus, and see how you ought to act toward your dear wife. Look at your wife, and look at His Church, and ask: Is it possible for your wife to be as fickle, as false, as provoking, as ungrateful — as His church? See what He bears with, forgives, and forgets in His people — and then ask: What have you to bear with and forgive? Look at what Jesus is to His bride, and what you are to yours, and then answer. Do you imitate His example? Oh, what happy homes would the houses of

Christians be, if every husband loved his wife — as Jesus loves His church; if every husband cared for his wife — as Jesus cares for His church; if every husband consulted the honor and happiness of his wife — as Jesus consults the honor and happiness of His Church. My brother, the Holy Spirit says, you ought to love your wife as your own body, as your own self; yes, as Christ loved the church, who gave Himself for it. Your love should be tender, constant, uniform, and as manifest as the love of Jesus is. Let there be no bitterness, or contempt, or treating the wife as an inferior; but give honor unto her as the weaker vessel. Love her in Jesus; love her as Jesus bids you; love her and be happy!

32 The Wife's Rule

The Wife's Rule "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22 The comfort of home very much depends on the wife, and the happiness of the husband is greatly in her power. The wife has often ruined the husband, or rendered the marriage-tie a subject of deep regret. An ungovernable temper, a proud spirit, a wish to conform to all the fashions of the present world — has rendered many a Christian's home really miserable!

Submission is difficult — where pride rules in the spirit! Yes, it is impossible! And yet, without submission on the part of the wife, happiness will never be the portion of the husband. Submission is the wife's duty: the Holy Spirit says, "As the church is subject unto Christ — so let the wives be unto their own husbands in everything." A submissive disposition, and a meek quiet spirit — are two of the most beautiful ornaments a wife can wear.

Every Christian woman should look upon her husband as the representative of Christ in the family, and submit to him as such. Her submission should extend to everything which does not run counter to the commands of God. The less a wife desires to have her own will — the better for her own comfort. In consequence of sin, the Lord said, "Your desire shall be to your husband — and he shall rule over you." And this declaration of God stands in full force at the present day, "The husband is the head of the wife — even as Christ is the head of the church." In these different epistles, has the Holy Spirit spoken to wives, and commanded them to submit to their husbands; this may imply that the duty is difficult — but it testifies that the duty is imperative. The wife should love her own husband — as the church loves Christ; and strive by every possible means to make him happy and honorable. She should strive to make his home the most comfortable, never meeting him at his return with a frown, or hailing him with a cross word; but her countenance should be lighted up with love, and on her lips should be the law of kindness. A woman's love, judiciously manifested — is almost invincible! But an evil temper indulged by a wife — is most repulsive! Nothing weakens a husband's love, or raises a husband's temper, like cross words or unpleasant looks from his wife. They never ought to be; but if they have been, they should be confessed with sorrow, and conquered with care. The wife should bear in mind, that her husband is a Christian; that Jesus tenderly loves him; that He has made him His representative; that He requires her to submit to him in His name, and for His sake: and that He looks upon her disobedience — as directed against His authority; and her unkindness to her husband — as grieving His love. My sister, it is your duty to learn subjection, for the Lord's sake, to imbibe and manifest a meek, lowly, and submissive spirit; a spirit that will yield everything for conscience' sake, unless in so doing you would sin against God.

Oh, if wives were willing to submit, if they only consulted the happiness of their husbands, if they made the precepts of the gospel their rule — what happy homes, what happy husbands they would have!

"Let the wife see that she respect her husband." But is this the case, even with godly wives? Can it be neglected, and the Spirit who commanded — not be grieved? Can the Spirit be daily grieved,

by conduct the very opposite of His command — and the Christian be happy? It is impossible! See then one cause why so many wives are in such an unhappy and uncomfortable a state!

Chaste conversation should be coupled with fear — a fear to grieve, wound, or distress a husband's mind. Sarah, who obeyed and revered Abraham, should be the wife's daily pattern. No wife can be happy, no wife can be ornamental, no wife can have the testimony of a good conscience — unless she observes the precept, "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands — as unto the Lord."

33 A Parent's Duty

A Parent's Duty

"Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4 The desire for and love to children, are implanted in our nature by our good and great Creator; and children are given to us to be brought up for the Lord. They are His property; He only lends them to us to enjoy, to train, and prepare for future life. Children involve a great responsibility. They are immortal. They are depraved. They are ignorant. They need the most tender, wise, and constant training. Every parent is accountable to God for the manner in which he educates and brings up his children; and that account must be rendered under the most solemn circumstances.

It is the parent's duty to instruct the child, not only in things natural — but in things spiritual. The great facts of Scripture should be very early placed before the child's mind, by the parents. The child should learn from a mother's lips, that it is immortal; that it is a sinner; that as such it is exposed to the wrath of God; that there is no way to God but by Jesus; that nothing can be accepted by God, but through Him. The person, the work, the character, the offices, and love of Jesus, should especially be pressed on the child's attention. The true character of God, as just and yet merciful, as holy and yet love, as true to his Word and yet ready to forgive — should be clearly unfolded to the child's understanding. In a word, the Bible, in its facts, doctrines, promises, prophecies, precepts; and especially the glorious glad tidings of a free salvation for sinners as sinners — should be instilled into the youthful mind. Our children should be made familiar with the Bible, and be impressed with a sense of its value, veracity, and excellence.

It is the parent's duty to pray for and with the child; especially should mothers do this. There is something in the tone of a mother's voice, in the tenderness of a mother's expressions, in the fervency of a mother's pleading — which cannot be imitated. A father has it not, nor can he acquire it. When a mother takes her child aside into a private room, and having spoken to it of God, of Jesus, of sin, of the need of a new heart — she bids it kneel down by her, she takes its little hands into one of hers, she lays the other on its head, and offers up a mother's prayer — full of pathos, of glowing desire, of holy reverence — she does that which the child cannot forget. The tones of her voice, the earnestness of her pleading, the gentle pressure of the hand, will never be forgotten while memory holds her place.

It is the parent's duty to set a proper example before children; knowing that what is seen — makes more impression than what is merely heard. Parents should never tell, or act a lie before their children. They should never trifle with Divine things, or expose the faults of God's people, or speak slightly of the Lord's ministers before their children: but should set the Lord always before their face, and be always aiming at the immediate conversion of every one of their offspring.

They should not only avoid setting a wrong example before them — but also endeavor to keep them as much as they prudently can from others who would do so; remembering the words of the

wise man, "He who walks with wise men — shall be wise; but the companion of fools — shall be destroyed."

Once more: parents should early lead their children to the house of God, pointing out to them that God requires the worship of the heart, the service of the entire person; and that God is present in an especial manner when His people meet.

How important it must be then for parents to be real Christians, not only for their own account — but for their children's sake. Parents, your situation is most solemn and responsible; remember, very much of your own conduct depends upon how you bring up your children! Remember also, that others will be benefitted or injured by your children. And above all, remember that you must meet every one of your children at the judgment-seat of Christ; and how dreadful it would be, if your child should there witness that you were accessory to its damnation!

34 The Father's Prayer

The Father's Prayer "Lord, have mercy on my son!" Matthew 17:15

Here is a father in trouble — in trouble about his son. The son was a sinner, a sufferer, and in great danger. The father knew the danger of his son, deeply felt for his condition, was daily grieved on his account, and desired his deliverance at any expense. This is very much the case with us, in reference to our children, when suffering from bodily distempers; but is it so in reference to their souls? Our children are all sick of a mortal disease; it is rooted in their very nature; they suffer from it now, for every pain and disease is the effect of sin. They are in imminent danger of perishing forever; they hang over Hell by a mere thread — the thread of time. We are not sure that they will not be in Hell in five minutes; death may seize them in a moment, and they cannot be in Heaven, unless they are born from above, and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit; for, "without holiness, no one can see the Lord." But do we realize this? Do we feel for their eternal welfare, as we do for their temporal welfare? Or as this man did for his afflicted son? Are we daily grieved to see our children . . .

the enemies of God,

the friends of Satan,

the slaves of sin?

Such they must be, if not truly converted by grace. Are we desiring their deliverance from sin, Satan, the world, and the wrath of God, above everything beside? Do we say so by our conduct? Do our prayers say so? Does our conversation with our children say so? Alas! alas! how few parents feel or act consistently on this subject!

Here is a father with Jesus. He had heard of the Savior, of His works of mercy, of the power He displayed, and the kindness He showed to all. His trouble, connected with this information, brought him to Jesus. He came for his son; he came without an invitation; he came at a perhaps; a father's heart impelled him; he fell at the Redeemer's feet, and out of a full heart, with a loud voice, he cried, "Lord, have mercy on my son!"

Just so, we have heard of Jesus, we know Him, we are invited by Him. But do we come to Him as this man for our children? My brother, have you a son that is unruly, perverse, and wicked? Go to Jesus for him, as this poor man did; go on purpose; go and appeal to His tender heart; go frequently; go in faith, and you shall not go in vain.

Here is a father at prayer for his son. He kneeled before Jesus; he lifted up a father's eye, and looked into his heart; he lifted up a father's voice, and awakened his tenderest sympathies; he poured forth a father's prayer, and obtained relief.

See how simple his words: "Lord, have mercy on my son." How earnest his manner; how humble his spirit; how importunate his application — he had applied to others, and even to the disciples in

vain; but he would not, he could not rest until he had tried the Lord, and he was successful. He tried His mercy — and the Lord listened to Him; he tried His power — and the Lord healed his son.

Parents, do not despond; never give over a child as lost; Jesus can heal the most desperate case; He can restore the greatest wanderer, He can melt the most obdurate heart, He can reclaim the foulest transgressor. Only realize the danger of your children, believe the promises made to you in God's blessed book; feel that none but Jesus can effect the change you desire; and apply to Him in faith, determined to take no denial; wrestle, plead, wait, watch, expect, and walk according to your prayers — and you must succeed.

"The Lord is full of pity and of great mercy." Bring your children with you to Jesus; if you can, get them to kneel by your side and hear you pray for them; but if they will not, go for them; and remember that, "the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much." Prayer cannot be lost. God stands engaged to hear and answer the prayer of faith; and Jesus, at the right-hand of the Father, is your Advocate and Intercessor, and will sprinkle your prayers with His blood.

35 The Successful Mother

The Successful Mother "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire!" Matthew 15:28

Mothers, here is an example for you to imitate; here is encouragement for you under your trials. Here is a mother who had a daughter possessed by the devil, grievously vexed. The case seemed desperate. The trial was of long standing — all her efforts hitherto had been in vain. Her discouragements were many and great — she was a Gentile; she came unbidden; when she came, Jesus would not notice her; when she cried to Him — "He answered her not a word!" Her perseverance offended the disciples, and they said, "Send her away!" When the Savior addressed her, His language appeared unkind, as though He had called her a dog. Her application appeared to be useless, for He said, "I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!" But she would not be discouraged. She had heard that He had power, and she believed it. She had heard that He was kind — and she believed it. She had heard that He never refused any one who applied to Him — and she believed it. She believed that He could help her — and no one else. She believed He would help her-and therefore she persevered. And as she believed — so it was; when tried — she came forth as gold; and Jesus said unto her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire! And her daughter was made whole from that very hour!"

Mothers, does not this woman's conduct reprove you? Is there not reason to fear that she will rise up in the judgment and condemn many British mothers? many professing mothers? Will she condemn you? You have children dear to you as hers was; yours also are possessed by Satan, for he is, "the spirit that works in all the children of disobedience;" (Ephesians 2:2,) that is, in all unconverted children. No one can cast out Satan, and make your children the temples of the Holy Spirit — but Jesus — and He daily does so in the instance of others. But do you feel for your children, as this mother did? Do you believe the danger they are in, as pointed out in your Bible? Do you believe them to be children of wrath, under the curse of the law, and exposed to all the wrath of the Lord? Do you apply to Jesus as though you believed this? Do you persevere as this woman did? Remember, you have greater encouragement, you know more of Jesus than she did, you are invited by Him — she was not; He bids you to come to Him. Are you burdened with the state of your family, and does your concern for their eternal welfare weary you?

Mothers, does not your own conduct reprove you? If your child is sick, you send for the doctor, watch it by night and by day, sparing neither time, trouble, toil, nor expense — that it may be restored again to health. But do you act thus in reference to the souls of your children, who are sick and dying with the disease of sin? You have sat up the whole night to watch beside the couch of the sick body; but did you ever devote part of a night for the special purpose of seeking the salvation of the soul? You have suspended all other business to attend to the suffering body; but are you as ready to leave business at times to plead with God for the soul? You consider that you would not be justified, that your conscience would not acquit you, if you had left any likely means untried, to restore bodily health; but have you tried all means with the same care, concern, and

promptness, for the salvation of the soul? And if not, how can you be justified, or how can your conscience acquit you? Consider this, consider it seriously, as before God, and the Lord make you consistent mothers!

36 The Child's Guide

The Child's Guide "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."
Colossians 3:20

We may grow up to be adults; but while our parents live — we cannot cease to be children. And our love to, respect for, and concern to please our parents — should continue as long as the Lord spares them. Our parents have a right to command us — as long as we are dependant upon them. And we are bound to obey — not only because they have authority founded in nature — but because God commands us in the Word of His grace. The parent's will is the child's rule! Unless the parent requires anything plainly opposed to the will of God — no child can be justified in despising, or grieving, or disobeying a parent; even though that parent is poor, illiterate, and unattractive in appearance. For we are not commanded to obey our parents if they are rich, or if they are learned, or if they are highly respected — but because they are our parents. And we should bear in mind, that they did not become our parents by chance; but by the appointment of God; and the God who appointed the relationship, says to us, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3.)

Parents are to be honored by their children, and unless they are steeped in vice and dyed in open sin — they are to be honored by us everywhere. A father should always be treated with reverence and respect, and a mother with attention and love. If they are in need, their children should consider it not only a duty — but an honor to assist them. If they are not in need, they should often receive the little token of affectionate remembrance, and the distinguishing mark of special attention. A father's care should be repaid by the child's respect; and a mother's kindness, by the child's affectionate attention. The obedience of children to their parents pleases the Lord; but their disobedience grieves and provokes Him. And very commonly it is the case, that Providence so orders it, that our children behave to us — just as we did to our parents; and many a parent will see in the conduct of his children, the antitype of his own — if he is a careful, thoughtful, observer.

Reader, how did you act toward your parents? Have you felt that your disobedience to them was a sin against God — a sin to be repented of and confessed before God with sorrow? How are you acting to them now? Remember, with whatever measure you mete out — it shall be measured to you again; and this will apply with great force to your behavior to your parents.

You cannot disobey, or slight, or treat your parents with any degree of disrespect — but God notices and disapproves, and will chastise for it. Christians ought especially to be kind, attentive, and obedient to their parents; and if their parents are still graceless, they should pray earnestly for them, and try by amiableness of manner, sweetness of temper, and particular displays of kindness — to bring them under the gospel. Many a child has smarted after a parent's death for not having used all possible means to secure the salvation of the soul while living; happy is the child who has nothing to regret, whose conscience does not accuse him, who can think of a departed parent without a fear or apprehension of meeting him before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Children, God bids you to love, respect, and honor your parents! Do so publicly and privately; do so, from love to God and respect to the authority of the Lord Jesus; do now as you may wish you had done when you see your parent on his dying pillow, or when lying there yourself.

37 The Father's Joy

The Father's Joy "My son, if your heart is wise — then my heart will be glad!" Proverbs 23:15 A godly parent cannot but feel the deepest interest in the present and everlasting welfare of his child; his solicitude is often painful, and his fears distressing. Nothing pains such a one, like seeing his beloved child indifferent to spiritual things; and choosing the vanities of time, in preference to the Lord Jesus and His salvation. No one but a parent can at all enter into a parent's feelings on this point; and only those parents who live up to their profession, and constantly realize the importance of truth, and the solemnities of eternity — know the deep concern that is felt by such. The desire of such a parent are here beautifully and touchingly set forth.

"My son, if your heart is wise." It is not the wisdom of this world which is intended — but that wisdom which comes down from above, and which, "is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." This wisdom is discovered by its possessor:

1. in avoiding . . .

evil company,

forbidden paths,

pernicious principles,

and sinful pleasures;

2. by choosing the company of the wise, the holy, and the humble;

3. by pursuing those things which God requires, the Scripture commands, and the saints of God approve;

4. by imbibing principles which are pure and scriptural, true and peaceable, and free from all extravagance;

5. by seeking and enjoying those pleasures which come from God and lead to God.

If the heart is really wise — then it is wise unto salvation; and this wisdom gives a dignity and a savor to the conversation and life.

If the heart is wise — then the life will be holy, and the end safe and honorable.

Well may the parent say, "My son, if your heart is wise — then my heart will be glad!" Oh, with what joy does the parent witness the indications of concern for the salvation of the soul. With what pleasure does he see his beloved child retire for private prayer, and observe him reading the Word of God with attention and concern! What pleasure does it impart to see the tear of penitence sparkle in the eye, more lovely than the dew-drops of the morning; or, to hear the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Nothing can impart such pure and solid satisfaction as this! My young

friends, your parents, if godly, are full of solicitude for your spiritual welfare; for you they agonize in prayer, and travail in birth again — until Christ is formed in you. Consider, I beseech you, your solemn responsibility! Do not grieve your parents, by turning to folly! Do not insult God, by rejecting His council! Do not disappoint your minister, by despising your own soul! Do not ruin your eternal soul, by persevering in sin! But gladden your beloved parents, honor your Creator and your God, rejoice the heart of your minister, and secure your own happiness and honor — by seeking the Lord while He may be found, and obtaining the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Youth is the seed-time of life; what is sown now — will spring up and ripen, and by-and-by will come the harvest. If you sow to the flesh by gratifying its lusts and passions — then you will reap sorrow, misery, and woe! But if you sow to the Spirit, by seeking the present and everlasting salvation of your soul — then you will reap everlasting life. God bids you remember Him, seek Him, and love Him; and promises to be found by you, bless you, and manifest Himself unto you.

God speaks to you as a Father: He says, "My son, if your heart is wise — then my heart will be glad!" There is joy in Heaven over a repenting sinner:

The Father rejoices, in an object of His love;

the Son rejoices, in the result of His agonies and death;

the Holy Spirit rejoices, in the soul He has renewed;

the spirits of the just rejoice, in the addition of another to their number;

the holy angels rejoice, in the triumphs of their God and Lord.

There is joy on earth also:

parents rejoice, with joy which none but parents know;

ministers rejoice, and are encouraged in their work;

saints rejoice, and see an answer to their prayers;

and the penitent rejoices with unspeakable joy!

38 Establishment by Faith

Establishment by Faith "By faith you stand!" 2 Corinthians 1:24 "It is a good thing that the heart is established with grace."

"But if you will not believe — surely you shall not be established."

"We walk by faith — not by sight!" 2 Corinthians 5:7

Establishment consists in holding fast our profession. We profess to believe the gospel — all that it says regarding . . .

ourselves,

our God,

our Lord Jesus Christ,

our foes,

our trials.

We profess to obey all that it requires, in the strength that it promises.

Establishment includes, maintaining our character as . . .

the disciples of Christ,

the holy ones,

the children of God who imitate their Father who is in Heaven,

the friends of God and the light of the world.

Establishment involves . . .

perseverance in the paths of holiness,

pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling,

abounding in the work of the Lord.

Establishment supposes the enjoyment of our privileges, such as . . .

peace with God,

realizing the favor of God,

rejoicing in God,

walking in sweet fellowship with God,

receiving grace from God,
and even glorying in tribulation.

Establishment is to include . . .

abiding in Christ — as the branch in the vine;
living with Christ — as the wife with her husband;
confiding in Christ — as one in the friend which is as his own soul;
deriving all from Christ — as the member from union to the head.

Establishment is . . .

to stand,
to keep our post,
fulfill our duties,
adorn our profession,
hold fast our principles,
persevere in our work, and
be steadfast in the Savior's cause.

Establishment is only by faith. By faith we live. By faith we walk. By faith we overcome. By faith we receive the salvation of our souls.

Faith looks to Christ for all that we need — in every difficulty, and from every foe.

Jesus says, "Look unto me — and be saved." Here is the warrant of faith. Faith says, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Here is the purpose of faith. The Lord hears, approves, and answers; and then faith bears testimony, saying, "You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your Word!"

Faith leans on Christ. The strongest believer feels his weakness most, and therefore, like the spouse, he comes, "up out of the wilderness, leaning upon his beloved."

Faith carries everything to Christ — which keeps up a constant fellowship with Him.

Faith receives everything from Christ — which keeps alive a sense of dependence and obligation.

Faith uses the strength of Christ — which renders it necessary to realize union, and walk close with Him.

Faith lives upon Christ — for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and whatever else may be needed. When faith rules, Christ is all! Thus it is, that faith establishes us, or makes us to stand — for faith is an active, growing, imperishable principle.

True faith brings us to Christ as sinners, and keeps us near Christ as saints. Though shaken and weakened by backsliding — true faith will recover its hold and maintain its standing. True faith sticks to the cross — like the limpet on the rock! Nor can waves, or winds, or storms, cause it to relinquish its hold. Our stability is as our faith is; if faith is strong and active — then our souls will be steady, being stayed on the Lord. But if our faith is weak and sickly — then our hearts will be dull and wavering.

Faith should be fed — by frequent meditation on the promises, and the person and work of Jesus; or our perseverance will not be apparent or comfortable. Unless faith be vigorous, we shall neither be active nor happy in the Lord's ways — but duty will be drudgery, and privileges a task. Unless our faith is fixed on the person and work of Jesus, and have much to do with the gospel as a display of rich, free, and sovereign grace — we shall neither be . . .

happy in the love of God,

holy in our spirit, temper, and conduct,

nor be established in the truth.

Everything is to us — as our faith is. Jesus said, "According to your faith — be unto you!" And it is still so to a much greater extent than many even of the Lord's people think. The Lord increase our faith!

39 The Good Fortune!

The Good Fortune!

"Godliness with contentment is great gain!" 1 Timothy 6:6

Godliness is conformity to the moral image of God, and the entire consecration of the soul to the Lord's service. The godly are created anew in Christ Jesus; they are united to God through Jesus; and have all the graces or fruits of the Spirit within them. They view things very much as God does; hence they look . . .

upon sin — as the greatest of all evils;

upon the world — as a vast vanity;

upon saints — as the excellent of the earth;

and upon the Lord Jesus — as altogether lovely!

They . . .

hate sin,

renounce the world,

unite with the saints, and

adore the Savior as their God and Lord.

They approve of God's precepts, and choose the employment he prescribes. They . . .

love God,

believe in Jesus,

walk in the Spirit,

fear sin,

loathe self, and

walk in the fear of the Lord.

They . . .

rely wholly on the perfect work of Christ for acceptance;

pant for holiness with ardent longing; and

desire always to acquiesce in the sovereign will of God.

True godliness produces and strengthens contentment; and contentment is the calm sunshine of a man's life. We do not mean . . .

sitting down in idleness,

feeling at home in filth,

or indulging in negligence;

this would be a disgrace to any creature, especially a professing Christian! But contentment is connected with . . .

honest industry,

general cleanliness, and

a concern for the honor of God.

True contentment springs from acknowledging and eyeing God's providence, whose "tender mercies are over all His works." It is . . .

a bowing to His will — as the infinitely wise and invariably good;

believing the promises He has given;

expecting the provision He has made; and

feeling satisfied to share in the common lot with His people.

Contented Christians prize spiritual blessings before temporal, and live sensible of their demerit and desert. They know that everything short of Hell is a favor — and that the glories of Heaven will more than make amends for all the toils and privations of this world's wilderness pilgrimage. They do not expect to find rest below, or a paradise in the desert of this world. They are persuaded, "that all things work together for good, to those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose."

Pride is slain, and humility flourishes; for pride is the parent of . . .

discontent,

ingratitude,

peevishness,

rebellion against God,

and many other evils.

While humility produces . . .

contentment,

patience,

gratitude,

submission to the will of God,

and many other virtues. The godly who are contented are rich — for they have a good fortune!

They have inward peace and satisfaction of mind — which are better than gold!

They are filled with gratitude and thankfulness to God — which are better than a large estate!

They have love to God and delight in Him — which are preferable to a splendid mansion!

They have a joyful anticipation of eternal glory, of being acknowledged as the sons of God, and fellow-heirs of Jesus — which is to be esteemed above all the titles and honors of this perishing world!

They contently live in the enjoyment of what they now have — realizing that their glorious portion is yet to come! Their aspirations are on the same level as their earthly condition — hence, they are strangers to fretfulness, murmuring, and the constant vexations which most men experience. They prove that, Better a little with the fear of the Lord — than great wealth with turmoil."

Reader, are you a godly person? Are you acquainted with God — as your God, your Friend, your Father? Are you contented with your place, portion, and prospect in this perishing world! If so, you have a good fortune!

40 A Powerful Inducement to Liberality

A Powerful Inducement to Liberality "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord; and He will reward him for what he has done." Proverbs 19:17

One design of the religion of the Bible, is to remove us from the region of selfishness and covetousness, in which we all dwell by nature — and to teach us self-denial and true Christian charity. He who dislikes such a topic as this, is in an unhealthy state of mind; for the Lord's Word is very plain and pointed on the subject.

Let us notice the interesting position of the poor: they are the Lord's representatives and collectors; they come to us in God's name, and ask of us — as from Him who gave us our all.

Everything we have is from God. Are you in the habit of viewing things thus? Your property is from God. Did you earn it? Who gave you the talent, the opportunity, the health to do so? Did you inherit it? Who appointed that you should be born in such a connection, at such a time, and directed your relatives or friends to leave it to you? Is it much — or is it little? Who fixed the measure and the sum? These things come forth from the Lord Almighty, who is wise in heart, excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working. The poor are our tests. The Lord by them tests our professions and our principles. He has informed us in His Word what He requires. He sends the poor to us — to see if we regard His authority, and observe His commands. He notices how we conduct ourselves towards them.

Observe the true character of benevolent donations — they are loans to the Lord. We should recognize . . .

His hand in the application,

His authority requiring us to give,

His eyes as observing our movements,

His heart as approving genuine benevolence,

His memory as recording every kind action,

and His faithfulness as pledged to reward us.

We may give to the poor — but in so doing, we only lend to the Lord.

Consider the great inducement to liberality — what is given to the poor — the Lord will repay. He places it to our account, and assures us we shall never lack it. "He who gives to the poor will lack nothing — but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses!" (Proverbs 28:27.) Here the Lord engages to prevent our future lack.

Such shall be happy, "He who has mercy on the poor — happy is he." (Proverbs 14:21) They shall be blessed, "A generous man will himself be blessed — for he shares his food with the poor."

(Proverbs 22:9) Man will bless him, and God will bless him too! "Blessed is he who has regard for the poor; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. The Lord will protect him and preserve his life. He will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness." (Psalms 41:1-3.) His kindness shall be returned — as Joseph returned his brethren's money in their sacks.

"Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land." (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2.), "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (Proverbs 11:24-25.) The descendants of the liberal shall be blessed, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed." (Psalms 37:25-26.)

God is pleased with the liberal, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:16.)

Thus, you perceive that the Lord is a bounteous receiver — even though the poor to whom you give should prove ungrateful. Therefore while their conduct should make us prudent — His promise should keep us benevolent. Brethren, in giving to the poor — give . . .

from love to Jesus;

from respect to the command of God;

from faith in His gracious promise;

according as you have ability and opportunity.

41 The Ungrateful

The Ungrateful "Where are the other nine?" Luke 17:17

Ten lepers had been cleansed — one only returned to give glory to God! Struck with their ingratitude, Jesus inquires, "Where are the other nine?" They had received mercy — the greatest temporal mercy they could receive. They could not be insensible of it — they must know it. They were expected to be thankful, and manifest their gratitude. But they were negligent and ungrateful, and Jesus notices their ingratitude! The Lord will inquire after these nine healed lepers — and after every one who has received His mercy. And how many receive His mercy — who never acknowledge it! How many owe the debt of gratitude, who never attempt to pay it! WHEN does the Lord inquire after the ungrateful? When His people present themselves at His throne, to praise Him for mercies received, and plead for the blessings they need. When they assemble in His ordinances, to celebrate His goodness, commemorate His love, adore His perfections, and enjoy His sweet presence. When His truth is falling in the street, or is vilified and spoken against. When His poor people are pinched by poverty, and need someone to relieve and comfort them. When His servants are persecuted and oppressed, and need a friend to stand by and cheer them. When His cause is low in any place, and needs to be fostered, screened, and supported. Then the Lord asks, "Where are the other nine?" Where are those who have received such great mercies at my hands? They ought to be . . .

first at my throne;

foremost in my house;

zealous for my truth;

ready to help my poor;

delighted to animate my servants;

and pleased to assist my cause! But where are the other nine?

Perhaps some of them are in the world, mixed up with the giddy multitude; devoted to pleasure, or business, and find no time, nor feel any inclination, to return to give glory to God.

Others are lulled asleep in carnal security — and imagining that they are God's favorites, they rest upon their lees, neglect Christian duties, and dishonor the worthy name whereby they are called. But they ought, if they have obtained spiritual blessings, to be in the church; devoting themselves to the Lord's glory; and using all their talents for the increase of the Redeemer's kingdom. They ought to be awake, and active, and zealous — showing forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. But will not this inquiry be asked by and bye, when the sheep are separated from the goats — when the Lord's people are collected together — will not many be missing, whom we expected to find among them?

Ah! where will the ungrateful be then? Now they may have a name among the saints. Now they may have a place in the church. But then, they will be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. Then all the ungrateful will be herded together, and be driven to darkness, damnation, and black eternal despair!

Ah! "where are the other nine?" Once they were with the saints. Once we expected to see them among the glorified. But where are they in the day of judgement?

Dear Reader, let us examine ourselves, and ask, Where am I now? Am I in Christ? There is no safety outside of Him — no salvation but by union to Him. We must be one with Christ — or we perish forever. Where am I now? Am I in the path of duty? Am I where the Lord would have me to be?

What am I? Am I a Christian? A decided Christian? A grateful Christian? A devoted Christian?

What am I doing? Am I working for God? Walking with God? Aiming in all things at the glory of God? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows — that shall he also reap."

Friend, let us acknowledge the mercies we have received; we are undeserving of the least of them! They flow spontaneously from the kind heart of God; they ought to be acknowledged, and our God be praised, according to what he has done for us. He requires it. He expects it. He demands it at our hands. It is just. It is reasonable. The Lord will inquire after us if we neglect it. He will send by His ministers, by His providence, or by His Spirit, and will ask, "Where are the other nine?"

42 The Detection!

The Detection!

"This is one of them!" Mark 14:69 The disciples were objects of suspicion and dislike; their Master was suffering, and it was intended that they should be with Him. They wished to be unknown — but they could not be hide. Their connection with Jesus was become notorious: and Peter was soon recognized as "one of them."

Real Christianity cannot be hidden. It is association with Jesus . . .

as His disciples — to be taught His doctrines;

as His subjects — to be ruled by His laws;

as His dependants — to be supplied by His bounty.

All of His disciples . . .

believe His testimony;

reverence His authority;

walk by His rules; and

venture in His cause. As His disciples, they were the objects of general hatred; they were exposed to fiery temptations and cruel persecution. But still, every right-minded Christian would be thankful, when detected as being, "one of them." And there are many who are so; the charge is still applicable to thousands. They are such as . . .

who hear the gospel attentively;

who pray fervently and secretly;

who acquiesce heartily in God's plan of salvation;

who separate decidedly from the world;

and who cleave to the saints affectionately.

Reader, do you know any person who attentively listens to the gospel message; who prays fervently to God, as a God in Christ; who is willing to be saved by grace; who comes out of the world, and feels attached to the saints? "This is one of them!"

He has a right to a place in the church of God;

he has a title to all the great and glorious promises of the gospel;

he is savingly interested in all the blessings of the new and better covenant. The privileges of such are great, as . . .

peace with God;
access into His presence with confidence;
enjoyment of the friendship of God;
to be the heir of God; and
to be acknowledged as the Lord's at last.

Then their pleasures will be eternal, and their joys unspeakably great! Then it will be the greatest honor to be recognized as, "one of them." But many try to conceal their connection with Jesus now. They love Him, believe in Him, and walk with Him — in secret; but they determine no one shall know it. They will not make a profession, lest they should turn back; but they will go to Heaven quietly by themselves. This they will find impossible. The savor of their conversation, their preference of spiritual people, and their attachment to the means of grace — will be sure to betray them! And some discerning person will soon say of them, "This is one of them!" The good tree will bear good fruit — and by its fruit it will be known. The fountain of grace opened in the heart will send forth its streams — and the streams will reveal it. It was said of the Master, "He could not be hidden" — neither can the disciples. For in this the children of God are manifest, that . . .

they love the very name of Jesus;
they cannot bear those that are evil;
they strive for the salvation of others;
they are tenderly attached to all who bear the Savior's image;
they grieve over sin, and
they pant for perfect holiness.

Reader, are you, "one of them?" It is an important question — for the Lord says, He will, "spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him!" He will "put a difference between the Hebrews and the Egyptians." He will separate them from others, "as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats! He will set the one on His right hand and the other on His left!" He will say to the one, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father — inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" But He will say to the other, "Depart from me, you who are cursed — into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels! And these shall go away into everlasting punishment — but the righteous into life eternal."

Oh to be, "one of them" then! How blessed, how glorious it will be! But if we are found among them then — we must be now; for now they are collected — and then they will be manifested!

43 The Liar's Portion!

The Liar's Portion!

"All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur! This is the second death!"
Revelation 21:8

Lying is attempting to deceive; and every species of designed deception is lying. It is common to human nature — but it is abhorred by God. It is often practiced without fear, though thus plainly denounced in God's Word. It is even pleaded for as necessary in some cases — and yet, in every instance — the above threatening will be made good.

There is much lying associated with religion. In some religious services there is much falsehood — more is said than is true — or the heart contradicts the lips. This is awful — but it is very common. Yet, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!"

Deception is very much practiced in trade; the article is misrepresented as to price, quality, and sometimes quantity. The seller tries to deceive, assuring the buyer that it is cheaper and better than it is. The buyer attempts to deceive — by running down the goods: "It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase!" Proverbs 20:14. But, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!"

Deception is often practiced in families; the parents deceive the children: the servants deceive their mistress; the mistress requires the servant to try and deceive the visitor, by saying, "She's not at home!" Each part of the family tries to deceive the other; and yet, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!"

Deception is practiced in common friendship. When the company is disagreeable, it is often said, "I am so glad to see you!" When there is no wish for the visit to be repeated, it is asked, "When will you call again?" In relating the common occurrences of life — they are exaggerated, or a part of the circumstances is designedly kept back! The promise is readily given — but as frequently broken! In a word, lying is common in order . . .

to injure,

to gain, or

to gratify an evil passion.

But, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!" But will all liars really perish? Yes — if they live and die impenitent. But will not the practice of the trade, or the custom of the country, or the fashion of the times — form an excuse? No! All liars shall perish in Hell. If they repent of this sin, confess it before God, and forsake it in their practice, through the blood of Jesus — they may obtain a pardon. But otherwise, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!"

There is a place of punishment on purpose for liars, called "their place." It is very severe — it is called the second death, because it is separation from God, after death separates from friends. It deprives of all cheering hope, all sweet company, all bright and animating prospects! There the mind is filled with tormenting reflection, and harassed by the recollection of past follies, sins, and opportunities! There the worm of an ever-accusing conscience never dies — and the fire is never quenched!

Reader, are you guilty of this sin? Do you lie for gain, or revenge, or from custom, or to cover your faults? Remember, "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur! This is the second death!"

None of God's people are habitual liars. No Christian can be a habitual liar. Every liar is forever excluded from Heaven. Every liar is daily and knowingly requesting a place in Hell. Are you a professor? Leave off lying, or leave off professing the religion of truth! Are you outside the church? Never think of entering it — until you have learned habitually to speak the truth. Are you attempting to soften down the subject and excuse the sin? Remember, God is a jealous God, and He has told you as plain as possible in His holy Word, that "All liars shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur!" Disbelieve this — and you make God a liar!

44 Privilege, Duty, and Promise

Privilege, Duty, and Promise

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth — and I will fill it!" Psalms 81:10 Our great privilege is to have God for our God:

to know Him,

to love Him,

to adore Him,

and to trust in Him.

If God is ours — all must be well. If God has delivered us from . . .

the Egypt of this world,

the power of sin, and

the tyranny of Satan —

then He is our God.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt." He delivered Israel because He was their God — and He delivered us because we were His people.

He says, "I am Jehovah — the compassionate God . . .

who sympathizes with my people in their sorrows,

counts their tears,

feels their groans, and

records their prayers." The Psalmist bears his testimony to this, saying, "You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." (Psalms 86:15.)

"I am Jehovah — the God of power . . .

who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage;

whose strength is as infinite as my nature,

for whom nothing is too hard."

"I am Jehovah — the God of love . . .

whose resources are boundless,

whose pity is tender, and
who never fails or forsakes those who trust in Him."

"I am Jehovah your God . . .

pledged to you by promise;

engaged for you by covenant;

and bound to you by oath! As I am your God . . .

look to me,

trust in me,

expect from me."

"Open your mouth wide!" That is, "Ask **LARGELY** — ask for great, numerous, and costly blessings! Do not be afraid of asking for too much!

My heart is large,

my love is great,

my wealth is unbounded!

Ask **BOLDLY** — do not be afraid — but come boldly to my throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Ask **FREQUENTLY** — I am always ready to give! I am never weary of listening to your prayers. Come whenever you are in need — I rejoice to do you good. No parent ever delighted to give to a darling child — as I delight to give to you! Therefore ask and receive, that your joy may be full.

Ask with **IMPORTUNITY** — do not imagine you are denied, because the answer is delayed. I love to hear you plead. I delight to see you come, and come again; therefore plead until you prevail! Seek until you possess the blessing!"

"Open your mouth wide — and I will fill it!" That is, "I have the very blessings which you need. They are from me — they are for you! I have the disposition to give! Do not doubt my benevolence, for this grieves my heart. I give you my word, that I will bestow my favors upon you freely, plentifully, and frequently! My Word is plain — read it; it is faithful — trust it; it is honest — plead it; it is sure — expect the fulfillment of it. I have wrought for you in times past, I am in the same mind now as then — my nature is still as gracious and merciful. I will hear and bless you. I will do for you all I that have promised. I will give you all that you asks of me in faith, that is, giving me credit for honesty, faithfulness, and love — I will do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think!"

Reader, are we not reproved? Do we daily give our God credit for being so kind? Do we ask of Him — believing that He is faithful? Alas! we often ask in fear, or ask for but little! Are we not exhorted? Exhorted to change our views of God, and our conduct in reference to God. Let us humble ourselves before Him, because we have thought so improperly of Him, and conducted ourselves so inconsistently towards Him. He is generous, bountiful and blessed!

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth — and I will fill it!"

45 Hearing the Gospel

Hearing the Gospel "Take heed how you hear!" Luke 8:18 The gospel is a message sent from God to man; it is directed to everyone who hears it, and is as much intended for each, as if every man's name were appended to it. No one has therefore a right to say, "I am not interested in it, it does not concern me;" nor can any one be justified in refusing to listen to it. It is sent to all, it is addressed to every creature; and it proves either a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. Every man is either softened or hardened by the gospel; it always has an effect — but not always the same effect; therefore, "take heed how you hear!" The gospel should be heard with close attention, for it is the Word of God — and not the word of man.

It should be listened to with deep seriousness; for it speaks of the most solemn and important subjects. The thoughts should be exercised upon it, for it is deep, and conveys the thoughts of God.

It should be heard with prayer; for as the Holy Spirit alone can unfold and apply it to the heart, so that it shall work effectually — prayer should ascend while we are hearing, that the Holy Spirit would take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

It should be mixed with faith, or be cordially and heartily believed; it demands our credence, it calls for the confidence of the heart, and should be received with warm affections.

Every one should hear for himself, as though there was no one present but himself to listen to the Word; and should hear as if death was at his back, judgment before his face, and eternity opening in the distance before him.

"Take heed how you hear!" for there are many thoughtless people, who hear the word — but understand it not!

There are many trifling hearers, whom Satan amuses even while they profess to listen to the voice of God!

There are many prayerless hearers, on whom the Word falls as good seed upon a barren rock!

There are many unbelieving hearers — and the Word does not profit them, because they have no faith!

There are many who hear for others, instead of themselves, and imagine that the Word is suited to those around them, forgetting that it is God's message to them! So many are hardened by the Word, and become twice dead, like trees plucked up by the roots, and dried in the summer's sun.

"Take heed how you hear!" for all is not done when you have heard; you are accountable for the use you make of the Word, and must answer for the use or abuse of it before God. God will not allow any one to trifle with His gospel, slight His mercy, and insult His messages with importunity. He is a jealous God. He will maintain His right. He will avenge His injured grace! The gospel brings a vast responsibility with it, and places us in very solemn circumstances. It brings God near to us;

by it He speaks with us; and we either welcome Him — or say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways."

"Take heed what you hear." Compare it with God's written Word; for many false teachers have gone out into the world." Imitate the noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, to see if what an Apostle preached corresponded therewith. We are solemnly bound to compare the preacher's message — with God's Word; and receive or reject it, in proportion as it corresponds with or differs from it. We shall be judged by the Word of God; which Word of God, in His kind and gracious providence, has put into our hands, in our own mother tongue.

"Blessed are they who hear the Word of God — and keep it;" who . . .

hide it in their hearts,

write it on their memories,

embrace it with their affections,

and obey it in their lives.

It is a blessing to have an opportunity to hear it;

a greater blessing to have an inclination to embrace it;

but the greatest blessing of all is, to be conformed to it in our hearts and lives.

Such are indeed blessed; for they have . . .

a lamp, to enlighten their darkness;

a map, to mark out their road;

plentiful provision for their souls, and

eternal life in promise and prospect!

Reader, is this blessedness yours? Do you hear the Word of God as a message sent to you from God? Do you hear it regularly, thoughtfully, prayerfully, with faith, for yourself? Do you keep it, in your thoughts, in your affections, in your life?

46 The Mystery of Mercy

The Mystery of Mercy "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19 The humanity of Christ was the temple of God; for though it was more particularly united to one of the persons in Jehovah — yet in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. "God was in the anointed One." He could dwell in Jesus, because there was no sin in Him. He did dwell in Him, speak through Him, and work by Him; hence He said, "the Father that dwells in me — He does the works." Dwelling in Christ, He looked upon sinners with love; He pitied them as a Father, He felt the deepest sympathy. He manifested the greatest tenderness, and showed Himself full of compassion. Christ was the great manifester of God, "God was manifested in flesh," the flesh of Christ. He manifested the nature, mind, and purpose of God.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Man never sought reconciliation with God — it did not once enter into his depraved mind! But God formed a plan of reconciliation in eternity, and in time He came in Christ to accomplish it. This was done by removing the cause of enmity, which was sin; this sin was laid upon Jesus, punished in Him, and forever put away by Him. It included the demands of the law, which demands were presented by Jesus, accepted by Him, and perfectly satisfied by His obedience unto death. It embraced the threatenings of the Word, and these were executed on Jesus; the Shepherd took the blame for the sheep, and paid the entire penalty they had incurred. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He has made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

God, in Christ, holds out the greatest encouragement to sinners to return and be friends:

He invites us, though rebels;

He promises us all the fullness of God, though traitors;

He warns us, that He may not punish us;

He expostulates with us, because we are so stubborn;

and He sets before us examples of the greatest enemies, whom He has restored to His favor, introduced to His kingdom, and made honorable among His people.

He brings into friendship and fellowship, by accompanying His gospel with the power of His Holy Spirit, and winning over the heart by His grace. The method He has adopted to reconcile sinners, is most surprising; it is thus expressed, "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is not denied that they are sinners, and many of them notorious sinners. It is admitted, that God would be just in punishing them eternally; but He does not lay their sins to their charge — or place their transgressions to their account.

Christ has suffered — that we may be spared.

He was condemned — that we may be justified.

Sin was charged on Him — that it may never be charged on us.

He died — that we may live forever. The whole of the curse fell on Him — that we may inherit a blessing.

Justice was honored and satisfied, by His obedience and death. And now the sinner may be pardoned, justified, accepted, cared for, and glorified. Yes, now every penitent sinner, every one who believes in Jesus, must be pardoned, reconciled to God, and entitled to Heaven. This is truly a mystery of mercy, and it is all of God. It was . . .

contrived by His wisdom,

approved by His justice,

executed by His Son,

published by His servants,

and applied by His Holy Spirit.

Man is treated with the greatest kindness, and God displays the richest grace and condescension. Sinner, look not at God as displayed in His judgments, or manifested in His works — but look at Him in Jesus, there He is a reconciling God; approach Him, plead with Him, believe His Word, and expect His blessing! He will not impute to you your sins, or punish you for your transgressions — but, "He will abundantly pardon!"

47 The Purchaser's Sin!

The Purchaser's Sin!

(Editor's note: This is a necessary article for any who purchase at "yard-sales")

"It's no good, it's no good! says the buyer. Then off he goes and boasts about his purchase!"
Proverbs 20:14

Most people seem to be upon the lookout for bargains — they are not satisfied with fairness. Selfishness carries them beyond the golden rule, "So in everything, do unto others — what you would like to have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12.) The practices both of buyers and sellers must be grievous in the sight of God — but it is with the buyers whom we have now to do.

See them trying to cheapen an article — they are looking out for every fault; not with a view to estimate its real value — but to reduce it below the fair price! They often state what they do not believe — and yet think themselves honest! All they want is to get a bargain; they are not particular as to the means by which they obtain it. They do not think of the cost of the item, the wages of the workmen, or the profits of the tradesman; but leave all these out of the question, and only try to reduce the price of the article as cheap as possible.

"It's no good, it's no good! says the buyer!" "It is not worth so much!" and yet at the very moment, they believe it to be worth more! "It is an inferior article!" and yet they are conscious that it is an excellent one. They speak as if they cared nothing about it — and yet they feel that they must have it, they cannot do without it. They try in every way to depreciate it — that they themselves may obtain a larger profit by it.

"Then off he goes and boasts about his purchase!" "Look!" he says to his friends, "What a bargain! I only gave a pittance for it — and it is worth a great deal. It's like brand-new — look at the quality!" And yet he had greatly depreciated it in front of the seller! Is this honest? Is this lying? Is there anything honorable in such conduct? Is it not a disgrace to the Christian name? Ought not such practices to be left to infidels and heathens? Can we expect God's blessing on such a deceitful course? It is impossible! God is neither the author, nor the sanctioner of sin!

Buyers should remember:

1. that the eye of God follows them into the shop or market;
2. that the ear of God listens to every word they say;
3. that the book of God records every lie they tell;
4. that the Word of God assures them, "that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Judgment!"

5. that the God they profess to revere and serve — hates sin, hates it perfectly, hates it always and everywhere; that He makes no allowance for it, that He will not admit of any excuse for it!

Buyers should also remember, that they are to do all to the glory of God; they are therefore to keep God's glory in view while buying; and as much in the market as in the house of prayer.

Reader, be a Christian in the market — as well as in the sanctuary! Be a Christian in dealing with your fellow men — as well as in serving your God. Be scrupulously honest.

Maintain a tender conscience.

Always fear a lie, or the appearance of a lie.

Never be vile enough to stoop to practice deception; but always realize that God is with you, and observes your conduct at the market. If all who profess the religion of Christ would only act out their Christian principles — they would soon put an end to this wicked practice of deceit! When you next go to market, be sure that you take this thought with you: "God is going with me, and is saying — Be holy, for I am holy! He will observe my conduct and mark my words. I must give an account of myself to God!"

Love your neighbor as yourself. Do unto others — what you would like to have them do unto you. Be a pattern of good works.

Live in full prospect of eternity!

48 A Mistake in Business

A Mistake in Business "As with the buyer — so with the seller!" Isaiah 24:2

Some have embraced the opinion, that business cannot be carried on in accordance with the rigid morality of the New Testament. But this is a mistake — for it can only be carried on safely and consistently, according to those principles! Unless a man has . . .

the love of God in his heart,

the precepts of God in his memory,

and the fear of God before his eyes;

unless he loves his neighbor as himself, and keeps eternity in view — he cannot be an honest tradesman.

Nothing is really lost by honesty — nor is anything worth keeping gained by deception. If we bring God into our business, if we walk with Him in the office, the warehouse and the shop; if we endeavor to maintain a tender conscience, and commend ourselves to Him in well-doing — then things must go on well with us. We may be tried, deeply tried; but God is our friend, He approves our conduct, and will manifest His approbation in His own time and way. He will bless us with His favor, which is life, and His loving-kindness, which is better than life. But it is too often the case, that the precepts of the Bible are required to give way to the maxims of men; and the requirements of God — to the practices of the trade.

"We must do as our competitors do," is sometimes the language of professing Christians; but unless your competitors do as God directs in His Word — you must not! If you feel aright, you dare not! If they attempt to deceive — you must not. If they practice the tricks of the trade — you must be honest.

You are not to be guided by the conduct of your competitors. God has given you a rule, and He expects you to walk by it. God will not allow His children to sin with impunity; you are not of this world, nor ought you to act like the world.

"As with the buyer — so with the seller." This is too often the case in reference to business — each party tries to deceive. The seller cries up his article, boasts of its excellence, and assures the buyer that he is selling it at a great sacrifice; when at the same time, if conscience were to speak, it would flatly contradict the whole! It is a fearful thing to lie under any pretense — and every attempt to deceive, is a lie!

How few consider what God has spoken upon this subject — hear from His own mouth, His fixed and determined purposes, "He who speaks lies shall not escape." (Proverbs 19:5.) God will keep His eye upon him, justice will pursue Him, and punishment will overtake Him! "He who speaks lies shall perish." (Proverbs 19:9.) A liar cannot prosper; for though he appears to do so for a time, there is rottenness at the root; the displeasure of God will follow, and, without painful repentance

— the end will be dreadful.

He who lies in order to thrive in business, trusts in vanity; and vanity will be his recompense. (Isaiah 59:4.) "A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare!" (Proverbs 21:6.) Hear the liar's doom: "The mouth of those that speak lies, shall be stopped." (Psalms 63:11;) they shall be speechless before the Judge. "And all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!" (Revelation 21:8.) Be not deceived: no perpetual liar can be a Christian, for it is written of all the Lord's people, "Surely, they are my people, children that will not lie; so He was their Savior." (Isaiah 63:8.) The true Christian can say with David, "I hate and abhor lying; but I love your law;" (Psalms 119:163;) and will pray with him, "Keep me from the way of deceit and graciously give me Your instruction. (Psalms 119:29.) "Therefore, putting away lying — speak every one truth with his neighbor." (Ephesians 4:25.)

Reader, do not attempt to evade the subject; do not say that trickery in trade is not lying. It is, and will be punished as such! A lie can never be necessary, it can never be justified; do not therefore sell yourself to work this wickedness.

If the seller imitates the buyer in sin — then he will be united with the buyer in punishment! "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but those who speak truth are His delight." (Proverbs 12:22.) "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment!" (Proverbs 12:19.)

49 The Wrong Place

The Wrong Place "Peter sat down among them." Luke 22:54 WHO sat down? PETER! — one whom Jesus had called out of the world, and separated unto His kingdom and for His service. One who had been taught by the Father to know the character, and bear testimony to the dignity of Jesus. One who had been sent out to preach the gospel and work miracles, and who had rejoiced that the very demons were subject unto him through the name of Jesus. One who had been peculiarly favored; as in the house of Jairus, on the mount of transfiguration, and in the garden of Gethsemane. One to whom Jesus had promised a throne in His coming kingdom, and who had been solemnly cautioned against yielding to temptation. One who was considered a zealous and determined disciple, whom none suspected, nor did he suspect himself!

What Peter DID: "He sat down among them." He was now in the High Priest's house, before whom Jesus was brought as a criminal. He was surrounded by the enemies of His Master, who scoffed at his claims and thirsted for His blood. He was led there by curiosity, desiring to see what would be the end of the present attempt on his Master's life. He thus neglected the loving caution and exhortation of Jesus, who had said, "I tell you the truth, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" "Watch you and pray, lest you enter into temptation." He was off his guard, and neglecting prayer; and now he sits down among them as though he was one of them, like a person at home with them.

What was the CONSEQUENCE? He was tempted. The temptation was too strong for him; he fell — he manifested his weakness. He fell — fell into the very sin against which he was warned, against which he had so warmly and zealously protested! He fell within sight of Jesus, and before his determined and avowed foes. He repeated the sin, and at every repetition, manifested more hardness and depravity!

Poor Peter! where is your courage, your zeal — your going to prison and to death for Jesus? Satan desired to have you — and now he has you! How much better would it have been for you, if you had fled with the rest of your fellow-disciples, or had remained behind in the garden to pray! But it is trial alone — which will convince us of our fickleness and weakness!

Reader, take heed where you go! You are not safe in every place. "Do not go in the way of sinners." Do not stand in the council of the ungodly — lest you should at length sit in the seat of the scornful.

Peter fell by degrees — and so may you. Watch and pray wherever you go! You had need be always on the look-out for danger, and in prayer for divine keeping. When solicited to go into questionable places — think of Peter! When invited to join worldly parties — beware! Be sure you are justified in what you do, and where you go. Ask seriously: Will God go with me? For if God does not sanction you — if He does not go with you. You will be sure to fall. Ask again: Does the promise reach me here? Ask once more: Did duty call me here? If it did, you may be safe, for you may look for and expect to receive the Lord's blessing.

Professor of religion, think of Peter — and avoid the snare in which he was taken. It is recorded for your admonition — and it is intended to preserve you from falling. When inclined to join worldly parties, or to be present at carnal feasts, ask, "Should I sit down among them? Will God be with me? Can He approve of my going?" And if these remarks should be read by one, who can occasionally frequent the alehouse, and sit down among drunkards — I must tell such a one — you are in the wrong place! Peter, as weak as he was — would not go there. Peter would not have gone into the High Priest's hall — but that his Master was there; but you know that your Master is not in the alehouse! If at any time duty should lead there, holiness would prevent your remaining there longer than is absolutely necessary. Who do you find there? Swearers, liars, harlots, adulterers, and every kind of profane person; they feel at home there, they have fellowship with each other; but shall Peter sit down among them? Heaven forbid it! Either give up your profession altogether — or "Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing!"

How differently the Psalmist felt to what you do; witness his prayer:, "Do not take away my soul along with sinners, my life with bloodthirsty men." Hear his testimony: "I am a companion of all those who fear you, and of those who keep your precepts!"

50 The Backslider's Resolution

The Backslider's Resolution "I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now!" Hosea 2:7

Nothing is more common than backsliding — and yet nothing is more criminal. He who thus backslides — troubles his own heart and mind too. By the gospel we are espoused to Jesus, by grace we are united to Him; and when we profess religion we say, "I will be for you — and not for another. I will seek my happiness in your love, my supplies from your fullness, and my direction from your Word. I will aim at your honor, devote myself to your cause, and surrender myself to be ruled and guided by you alone!" For a time after conversion — the love of Jesus charms us, the appointments of Jesus delight us, and the authority of Jesus binds us. We walk with Him in peace and holiness. But listening to Satan, yielding to the working of unbelief in our hearts, or conforming to the present evil world — we gradually backslide from Him:

our private fellowship with Him becomes less fervent and frequent;

our thoughts of Him less interesting and sweet;

our concern for His glory decays;

selfishness increases, and is fostered;

and we leave our first love. The sin is inexcusable,

the folly great, and

the consequences always painful, and sometimes fearful. But here is one convinced of his folly, sorry for his sin, and determined to return.

"I will go," and humble myself at His feet, and confess my crime. I will seek to be restored to His favor and the enjoyment of His love. I will ask to be again employed in His service. I will beg to be received into His house. I am willing to be a servant, to do the lowest work, to be humbled to the lowest degree — if I may be but allowed to see His face, hear His voice, and once more enjoy His smile. He alone can satisfy me. His pardoning mercy alone can reach my case, and His gracious presence alone afford me comfort. I am wretched without Him. Emptiness and vanity are written upon everything around me! I deserve to be banished from His presence. He would be just if He sent me to Hell. But I must venture before Him, I must plead with Him, I must be again admitted into His favor — or I die!

"I will go,"

though conscience accuses me,

though His Word condemns me,

though Satan opposes me,

though my heart misgives me,
though saints slight and discourage me.

"I will go and return" — for He was my husband, my joy, my delight, my all. I cannot live without Him, I can but die before Him; but no — no sinner, not even a backsliding sinner, ever perished at His feet.

"I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now!" I remember the days of old, the season of my first love — how sweet, how delightful my experience! Then the presence of God raised me above my trials, and filled me with joy unspeakable. Then I had power over sin, and I could crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Then I enjoyed freedom from care — casting all my care upon Him, assured that He cared for me. Then I was indulged with discoveries of His love, which made it almost impossible to doubt. Then I found profit and pleasure in all the means of grace and ordinances of His appointment. Then I had joy and peace in believing. But oh! How different has it been with me since! Instead of the highway of holiness, and the paths of pleasantness and peace — my way has been hedged up with thorns! Instead of holy contentment and inward satisfaction — I have had constant vexation and disappointment. It was indeed better with me once, than now! But my injured Lord, my longsuffering Savior, my gracious God, is saying, "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings!" And my heart says, "Behold, I come unto you, for you are the Lord my God." "O Lord, our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone do we honor." Thus says the Lord, "I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely, for my anger is turned away from you. I will restore comfort unto you and to your mourners."

"Lord, I bow with deep contrition
Low before your throne of grace;
Heal me in your kind compassion,
While I seek your smiling face. Where — but to a bleeding Savior,
Should I come for life and peace?
Nothing but your boundless favor
Can my burdened soul release!
You have witnessed my transgression,
You have seen my load of guilt;
Witness now my deep confession.
You whose precious blood was spilt.
Oh, this sin of covenant-breaking!
Can You, will You, Lord, forgive?
Shall I hear your mercy speaking?

Can you bid me look and live?
Pardon, peace, and consolation,
At your bleeding cross I see;
There I take my humble station,
There I give my soul to Thee."

51 The Backslider's Petition

The Backslider's Petition "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free spirit." Psalms 51:12

Backsliding not only dishonors God — but it strips the believer of his joy, and leaves him disconsolate and dejected. This was the case with David; he had suffered much, and he feared more; and looking back upon his past experience, he prayed for the return of his joy. He had been happy, for he had known the joyful sound, and walked in the light of the Lord's countenance.

There is happiness in true religion. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy. A knowledge of a saving interest in all its privileges and blessings, causes us to rejoice in God; and its application by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces the most delightful effects:

guilt is purged from the conscience,

peace flows into the heart,

acceptance with God is realized,

access to God with confidence is enjoyed,

and Heaven appears to be opening to the view. But sin robs the soul of all comfort — the backslider cannot be happy. There may be a sense of need — but there is no feeding on the bread of life; there may be clear views — but there is no heart-warming appropriation; there may be the form of godliness kept up — but there is little of the power of it known in experience. There is prayer to God, perhaps — but no fellowship with God. Christ is honorable in the judgment — but not sensibly precious to the heart. The life and savor of godliness is gone; for these can only exist in connection with . . .

a clear eye,

a tender conscience,

an honest heart,

and a holy walk;

for unless we walk with God, we shall not savor of God. In such a state of declension, a backslider may be allowed to remain for some time; but the Lord will look upon him again; and this will produce . . .

painful convictions,

cutting regrets,

bitter remorse, and

deep humbling of soul before God.

Then the man . . .

sees his folly,

feels his guilt,

condemns his conduct,

mourns over his condition,

and pants for a revival of piety in his soul.

Now the backslider prays, prays in bitterness of soul, prays for a restoration. He cannot comfort himself, he refuses to be comforted by others, and is only willing to be comforted by God. Now he feels that he can sin away his comforts — but that none but God can restore them. This . . .

shows our weakness,

teaches us our dependence,

exhibits our folly, and

corrects us for wandering from God. The joy of salvation is a gift from God, as well as salvation itself; and though we may be saved by grace, we shall not enjoy our salvation, unless God anoints us with, "the oil of joy." To feel that we are saved, to have the Spirit witnessing with our spirits to the fact, is joy unspeakable; and it was for this the Psalmist prayed, and for this every backslider pleads. But he seeks not only a restoration of joy — but the upholding of the Spirit of adoption; his past conduct and the present experience taught him the need of the constant presence and power of the Spirit. His prayer now is, "Hold me up — and I shall be safe!" He perceives that . . .

his way is slippery,

his heart is false,

his corruptions are strong,

his foes are watchful, and

his temptations are powerful

— and he cries: Let your free Spirit watch me, influence me, guide me, and preserve me from sin and folly! The Lord, who knows our need, has promised his Holy Spirit, and He warns us against self-confidence. But it is seldom that anything but bitter experience convinces us of our need of His daily supplies.

Reader, are you a backslider? Have you left your first love, and lost your sweet joys? Are you convinced of your folly and your sin? Do not despond — but pray. Yield not to fear — but mourn over your folly. Go to the throne of grace, place yourself before your injured Savior, and encourage that sorrow which is unto repentance. Frankly confess your sin, do not palliate it or attempt to excuse it, for it is inexcusable.

Appeal to the mercy of your God,
plead His promises to the backslider,
hope in His Word,
wait His time,

and He, "will restore comfort unto you." Do not despair, however keen your sense of guilt may be; but like Jonah, "look again;" with Ephraim, "bemoan yourself;" and with David pray, "Cast me not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit."

Beware of spiritual declension in future; keep a jealous eye over self; be especially careful over yourself in reference to the closet — there backsliding generally begins; but though it begins there, it never ends there.

52 The Children's Mark

The Children's Mark "Jesus said unto them: If God were your Father — you would love Me." John 8:42 The children of God are by nature sinners, even as others; but by grace they are adopted into the Lord's family, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. The Holy Spirit becomes their teacher, and God deals with them as with children. They are entitled . . .

to exercise confidence in God, for all that they need;

to expect grace and comfort from God, as from a father;

and to live in friendship and fellowship with God.

They are expected, in return . . .

to exhibit the image of God;

to be filled with the Spirit of God;

in all things to aim to please God; and

to hasten home to be forever with God. But the principle mark by which the children of God are known, is their love to Jesus. They are led to see . . .

the beauty of His person,

the love of His heart,

the design of His sacrifice,

and the glory of His work —

and this always produces love to Him.

They love Him for what He IS . . .

as God, and God-man;

as the Mediator of the better covenant;

as the present and everlasting Savior of their souls.

They love Him for what He has DONE, in . . .

bearing their sins,

working out a righteousness for their souls,

and calling them by His grace.

They love His WORD . . .

as the mirror, in which His glory is seen;
as the record, in which His love is displayed; and
as the will, in which He has bequeathed His property to them.

They love His WAYS . . .

which lead from sin;
which are characterized by holiness;
and which conduct to happiness.

They love His PEOPLE, and esteem them the excellent of the earth. They may be poor and illiterate; they may be despised and hated by others — but they love them, prefer their company, and cleave to them. They love them, because the image of Christ is stamped upon them — and because they love Jesus. For wherever the image of Jesus is seen, or love to Jesus is manifested — there the love of the believer fixes.

"By this we know that we love the children of God — when we love God and keep His commandments." And by this we prove that we love Jesus — when we love His people, His Word, and His ways.

All the children of God love Jesus, though for loving Him, they may be called to . . .

part with their goods,
lose their friends, and
be stripped of their earthly comforts.

They love Him more than these. They can give up these — but they cannot give up Him. They can be happy without these — but they cannot be happy without Him. Jesus is all their salvation — and all their desire. They are not ashamed to own Him — nor afraid to suffer for Him. They love Him — though they do not enjoy Him as they wish. Their daily grief is . . .

that they love Him so little,
that they so seldom enjoy His presence,
that they feel so little of His love.

They want to love Him not only supremely — but intensely; not only really — but with all their hearts and souls! They feel as if they could never love Him enough; and they long for Heaven, that they may love Him without intermission, and without end! Their love to Jesus always produces high valuation and great esteem. They value Jesus above comforts, wealth, yes, life itself! They esteem Him above all in earth or Heaven. Their love to Jesus leads them to place implicit trust in Him; they trust their souls in His hands, and rest their salvation on His blood. They trust His word of promise, and rely on His gracious Providence; believing that Providence will bestow what His promise warrants them to expect. Their love to Jesus issues in cheerful obedience; they not only say, "Lord, Lord;" but they do the things which He commands them. They acquiesce in His will,

and desire to obey His Word. They work, not like the slave, from fear; but as children, from love.

Reader, do you love Jesus? You cannot be a child of God without loving Him. He says, "If God were your Father — you would love me." If you do not love Christ, God is not your Father; and if God is not your Father — then Satan is! How awful to hear Jesus testify, "You are of your father — the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do!"

53 The Children's Privileges

The Children's Privileges "You are sons of the living God!" Hosea 1:10

How much stress is laid by some, on their relation to certain great and noble people. If it is an honor to be related to the noble, the rich, or the good — then what must be the honor of the Christian! "Beloved," said the Apostle, "now are we the sons of God." And, "You are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." To have God for our Father, is the greatest honor conceivable, and it is an infinite source of comfort and joy. For if God is our Father — He will love us with a strong and tender love! He may try us and hide His face from us, to correct us for our follies; but He will still love us. Nothing shall separate His child from His love, or sever the bond that unites us to Himself.

If God is our Father — He will bear with our numerous and painful infirmities, because we are children, putting the best construction upon everything. For, "Like as a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who love Him. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust." He will accept our imperfect services, because we are but children. He knows our weakness, ignorance, and failings; and He also knows our desire to please Him. And when we can only desire, He accepts the will for the deed, saying, "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according to what a man has; and not according to what he has not."

If God is our Father — He will provide for and take care of us; making provision for us on earth, while He reserves our portion for Heaven. Will an earthly Father leave his child to lack — while he has plenty by him, and can supply him with the greatest ease? He will not! Neither will our Heavenly Father; but He will supply all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

If God is our Father — He will also protect us from all evils, spiritual and temporal. Sin shall not have dominion over us, Satan shall not overcome us, the world shall not destroy us — for God will protect us. He will keep us by His power, through faith unto salvation.

If God is our Father — He will reveal His mind and will to us for our comfort and salvation. He may hide the mysteries of the kingdom from the wise and prudent — but He will reveal them unto His babes. (Matthew 11:25.) He will send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth.

If God is our Father — He will give us freedom of access into His presence with confidence — so that we may carry all our sins, sorrows, troubles, and temptations to Him, and lay them at His feet; feeling that we have to do with a Father, one who loves us, pities us, and delights to bless us.

If God is our Father — He will bless us with freedom; setting us free from condemnation, and giving us "liberty to enjoy His Word, ordinances, and presence.

If God is our Father — He will make all things work together for our good. Good things — such as mercies, ordinances, and comforts; Bad things — such as sickness, poverty, reproach, persecution, bereavements, death — all shall work our good, and issue in our welfare.

If we are children of God, we are heirs of every promise in His book — and joint-heirs with Jesus Himself! He will give us a Father's blessing, a blessing worthy of His greatness, majesty, and glory. And He will keep us safe in every danger, from every foe; so that we shall never perish — but possess and enjoy eternal life.

Dear reader, are you a child of God? Have you received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father, in your heart? Do you love Jesus? If so, all these privileges are yours — along with others too numerous to mention. Yes, all things are yours and you are Christ's!

54 The Alarming Sentence

The Alarming Sentence

"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it — but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard: For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree — and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil!" Luke 13:6-7 No place is so dangerous for an unconverted person, as the church of God. It is to be feared that many join the church before they are truly converted; and yet very, very few — are ever converted after.

Once under a profession — God expects you to live up to that profession.

If you are planted in His vineyard — God expects you to bring forth fruit. The owner of the vineyard comes and seeks fruit; He comes again, and again; and if He find none, He passes this solemn sentence, "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?"

Let us look at this character a little. A fig-tree, or a professor of the religion of Christ. A fruitless fig-tree, or a useless professor; the leaves of profession; but not the fruit of holiness.

Such can have no true faith in Jesus, for true faith will work, as it is a fruit-bearing root — it will show its origin, nature, and tendency.

Such have no true love to saints, as saints, for love will act — it will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the wretched, relieve the miserable, and spread the gospel. Love is a most powerful principle; a very active grace, an ornamental virtue, an acceptable fruit of itself.

Such yield no hearty obedience to God, for He requires fruit; fruit in the family, fruit in the world, and fruit in the church. Every fruitless branch He takes away, and of every fruitless professor He says, "Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?" It takes up the room which may be occupied by a better tree; it drains the ground of its nourishment for no good purpose.

"Cut it down!" Labor is but lost upon it; means are useless to it; expectation is disappointed by it; therefore, "Cut it down! My patience and forbearance are worn out; I have come three years seeking fruit, and find none. The reputation of the vineyard is injured by it; so, Cut it down!"

It is a fearful sentence! God gives the command to some disease — He says, "Go, cut that barren professor down!" He sends death, like the woodsman with his sharpened axe — he lays down the axe at the root for a little; at length he strikes the fatal blow; and then the fruitless professor falls! This command of God is fearful — it is full of terror — it includes utter destruction! This command is irresistible — we cannot evade it — we cannot brave it out — the boldest spirit fails — the strongest body yields to God's "Cut it down!" This command is final, there is all that is dreadful wrapped up in it, even a "certain, fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary!"

It is to be cut down and committed to the eternal flames of Hell.

Here is wrath — fearful wrath!

Here is justice, inflexible justice!

Here is vengeance — the vengeance of an infinite God!

O fruitless professor. . .

Listen!

Consider!

Fear!

Examine!

Tremble!

Repent!

God looks for fruit from every professor. He demands fruit of everyone who has a place in His church. He will certainly punish — if there is no fruit, and good fruit too.

Just think, where is that fig-tree now? Where will you be soon? The axe lies at your root, even now! The executioner is only awaiting the command! His eye is anxiously fixed on the Lord of the vineyard, for orders! And were it not that there is an Intercessor, the command would have been given before this. The dresser of the vineyard pleads, "Lord, let it alone this year also" — and you have hitherto been spared. But mercy will soon urge her last plea; the year of reprieve will soon expire, and then, "Cut it down!" is all that remains. Oh, how dreadful the thought — to go to Hell through the church of God! To profess that you are traveling to Heaven — when in reality you are going with the lost multitude to eternal perdition!

55 An Offensive Question

An Offensive Question

"Look! the man exclaimed. "I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?"

Then they cursed him and said, "You are His disciple — but we are disciples of Moses!" John 9:27-28 This question was asked to the Jews — by the man whom Jesus had healed of blindness — and it stung them exceedingly! They despised the thought of being the disciples of Jesus. But this question may, perhaps, be asked to the reader, without giving so much offence. Will you, reader, be the disciple of Jesus? His wisdom is infinite! His power is omnipotent! His authority is universal! His beneficence is unbounded! His disposition is most gentle and meek!

He performs the most surprising miracles!

He teaches the most important and valuable truths!

He now sits at the right-hand of God, and he saves all His disciples with an everlasting salvation!

What do you say? Will you be His disciple? If so . . .

you must surrender yourself, and your all, unto Him;

you must be ready to suffer with, and die for Him;

you must be willing to . . .

embrace His doctrines,

submit to be ruled by His precepts,

imitate his example, and

observe all His institutions! A true disciple is teachable, and loves His Master above all. He . . .

studies to know His will,

watches His eye,

waits upon Him,

fears to offend Him,

delights to please Him,

confidently trusts Him,

zealously imitates Him,

cheerfully obeys Him,

is most happy when favored with His presence, and

will by no means leave Him — but cleaves to Him with full purpose of heart. Will you be His disciple? If so, you must obey Him — you must do what He commands . . .

out of respect to His authority,

from love to His will,

from deference to His wisdom,

from zeal for His honor,

with faith in His promise,

fearing His frown. His commands must rule your heart and life . . .

though your carnal nature may dislike them,

though friends may persuade you to neglect them,

though enemies may oppose and persecute you for regarding them,

and though for a time you may suffer loss for attending to them. Will you be His disciple? If so, you must unite with those who already sit at His feet, and they are, generally speaking, poor — not many wealthy are called. They are despised — for they walk contrary to the maxims of the world. They are often deeply afflicted, "For whom the Lord loves — He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

If you will be His disciple, you must forsake . . .

all your present follies,

all your vain companions,

and all your carnal pleasures.

You must publicly profess your faith in, and obedience to Him; and you must engage to attend His worship and support His cause.

Young friend, will you be His disciple? Notwithstanding all that has been said — His disciples are happy; yes, they are the only people who are truly happy. They may be placed in the most painful circumstances, and seem to be most miserable of all men — but there is a secret something within which supports, animates, and cheers them at the worst! The Christian's worst — is better than the worldling's best! His disciples are all honorable; they are the sons of God, they are kings in their minority, they are the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ — to whom He has willed all His vast and eternal possessions! It will take a whole eternity, to enjoy all that God has given them — all that the blood of Jesus has secured to them! His disciples are safe, for . . .

He throws around them the shield of His favor;

He places beneath them His everlasting arms;

He keeps fixed upon them His piercing, sleepless eye!

Thousands have entered His school, and been taught by His Spirit! Will you also be His disciples? Abraham was! David was! Paul was! Will you? "This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow!"

He never turned away one who sincerely sought to enter His school. Nor was one ever rejected because He could not teach them His lessons. He receives every applicant — and He makes scholars of all who enter. He teaches them to . . .

avoid sin,

love holiness,

find peace,

walk with God,

overcome their foes, and

leads them all at length, to sit down in the glorious kingdom of God!

56 The Aged Believer's Cordial

The Aged Believer's Cordial

"Hearken unto me, descendants of Jacob, all you who remain in Israel. I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!" Isaiah 46:3-4

There is something dreary in the prospect of old age. When we think of the failing of all our abilities, and the many troubles and ills from which the aged suffer — we shrink back from it, and desire, if God wills — to go home before old age arrives. But this is perhaps wrong; for God has made provision for old age, as well as for youth; and He can glorify Himself by the well-trying Christian in the decline of life. And if so, we ought to be content, for is it not the great end of our existence — that our God may be glorified in us and by us? The passage of Scripture at the head of this piece, is the aged believer's cordial. It is intended expressly for him; and while he has an interest in all the other promises of the Word, equally with his fellow-believers, he has an especial interest in this promise. Let us look at the beautiful images employed.

God is a parent, a kind and tender-hearted parent. He is peculiarly attached to His people — they are dear to Him, precious in His sight. They are His portion. He prizes them above all creation. He is strong to sustain, to defend, and support them. His strong arm, tender heart, and watchful eye — are all employed for them — and especially so in old age. The aged believer is as a child. He is weak. He feels exposed and defenseless. He is timid and fearful. But the Lord, as a tender parent, engages to take him up in the arms of His power — and carry him in the bosom of His love! Like a tender lamb in the shepherd's bosom, on a cold and frosty night, borne across a bleak and snow-covered common — so the believer, in the winter of old age, shall be carried in the bosom of his God, across the bleak and cheerless desert of time.

God will carry him tenderly — hushing the weak one's fears. He will bear him carefully — so that nothing shall harm or hurt him. He will soothe him with gentle words, and encourage him with kind acts — until He safely introduces him at home!

Dear aged Christian, you have nothing to fear! Your God says, "I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age!" I am your Father — your Friend — your solace — and your confidence. Look unto me — even to old age — I will carry you. I will carry your person, your cares, your provisions, and your comforts. I will bear you up under all that you feel and fear. I will carry you through all that discourages or distresses you. I will deliver you from foes, fears, dangers, and, death itself! Nothing shall by any means hurt you. My arm is strong enough — trust in it; my bosom is your resting-place — lean on it, lean hard! Do not be afraid, love dwells there, pity rules there, your name is engraved there! Trust me, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I am with you to save you; I will do you no harm myself — nor allow any one else.

"Hearken!" Believer, your God bids you to "hearken." His words are true and faithful, He speaks to banish your fears. He speaks to strengthen your faith. He speaks to comfort your poor drooping heart. He speaks, to clothe your care-worn brow, with the light of hope, with the cheerfulness which confidence imparts.

Hearken to Him — not to unbelief!

Hearken to Him, not to carnal reason!

Hearken Him, not to Satan!

Hearken to Him, not to erroneous men!

Hearken, it is your Savior who speaks;

it is the Guide of your youth who addresses you;

it is your tender Parent who seeks to cheer your heart.

"As one whom his mother comforts" — so does your God comfort you. He is near you — near you every moment;

He will carry you — carry you every step;

He will deliver — deliver you from every danger, trouble, and foe!

He will not fail you, nor forsake you; but will soon set you down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in His kingdom and glory. The way is right — though rough; it leads you home — though rugged; and your God is your strength.

57 The Touching Prayer

The Touching Prayer "I will say unto God: Do not condemn me; show me why you contend with me!" Job 10:2

Let us glance at the patriarch's state of mind. Communion with God was suspended; he could not perceive the presence, nor enjoy fellowship with Jehovah. He cried — but obtained no answer; he questioned — but there was no manifestation of sympathy. The painful correction of a Father's rod were experienced — he was smitten in his property, in his body, in his friendship, and what was worse, in his soul. He thought his God had become cruel unto him. Darkness surrounded him, gloom presided over his spirit, and despondency preyed upon his soul. Temptations vexed him, and the fiery darts of Satan inflamed and tortured his mind.

He reflected upon the past — but it only increased his distress;

he looked forward to the future — but he saw no way of escape;

he looked up to Heaven — but God hid His face from him;

he looked within — but all was perplexity and misery there! His soul was cast down within him, and he was afraid of all his troubles. He longed for death — but it fled from him; and everything seemed intended to deepen his distress. No one had so much patience — and no one had so much need for it; for no one was so much tried. He knew not the cause of his sufferings — and his friends falsely accused him; and amidst the whole he was panting for deliverance and restoration.

He saw the hand of God, and said, "It is the Lord!" He at times condemned himself, and sought relief at the throne of grace; but one thing above all others he feared — lest his God should condemn him. "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me." Do not account me wicked. Do not separate me from yourself. Do not always refuse me your presence. Do not unite the curse to my afflictions! "Cast me not away from your presence." "Show me why you contend with me!"

Afflictions sometimes indicate that God is displeased, that our way is perverse before Him. By trials, He contends with us for His own right, and against our improper conduct. To have a controversy with God, is always painful, and sometimes very distressing. But there is always a cause; if God afflicts — it is . . .

1. to reprove as, or

2. to prevent our falling into sin by self-dependence, or

3. to purify us and make us partakers of His holiness. A godly man in affliction will endeavor to search out the cause, in order that he may confess it, obtain pardon, and forsake it. This subject affords us important instruction. If a holy man, like Job, dreaded divine condemnation — then how much more may sinners; and how fearful and dreadful it must be! To be condemned by God is, of all evils, the very greatest; and yet every one who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is so condemned.

Reader, are you condemned? Did you ever inquire into your state before God? Did you ever dread condemnation, and flee to Jesus to escape it? If not — then you are condemned. The law condemns you for breaking its precepts. The gospel condemns you for rejecting its claims, and refusing its provisions.

Conscience will condemn you; and if grace does not prevent it — will be like a living, gnawing, devouring worm at your vitals forever.

Condemned! What degradation! Condemned by God! Why, this is Satan's state himself! Condemned to be banished from God forever! This is the punishment of devils! Condemned to suffer the due desert of your crimes! Why, this will last through eternity, and must be inflicted upon every member and faculty of the entire man! Condemned, what! by a God of love, under the sound of the gospel! O misery of misery!

Condemned, and condemned for refusing mercy!

What madness must be in the heart, what a pungency must this give to torment, what fierceness must this give to the ever-burning flame!

Lost sinner! I beseech you — stop, think, believe, pray, repent, embrace the Savior — and escape such an awful doom! Stop this moment!

Think of your danger before you proceed another step;

believe the good news which God has sent you;

pray for pardon, peace, and life;

repent, of your folly, and

break off your sins by righteousness.

Tried believer! Follow this example set for you by afflicted Job, go and fall down before your God, and pray, "Do not condemn me, show me why you contend with me." It will . . .

ease your mind,

relieve your spirit, and

conduct you to deliverance and peace"

58 The Comprehensive Promise

The Comprehensive Promise "In blessing, I will bless you!" Genesis 22:17 So spoke Jehovah to Abraham, as if He had said, "I will bless you with the greatest blessings — to the utmost extent of blessing." Or, "I will bless you like a God who is infinite, eternal, and immutably the same." This promise includes every blessing, for time and eternity — all that God can give, or man receive. But was it intended only for Abraham? Oh, no! It is a family portion! It was made to Abraham — as the father of all those who shall believe; and God left it in all its fullness, richness, and perfection, to every child in his vast family! Therefore, the Apostle says, "So then, those who are of faith," (or all believers,) "are blessed with faithful Abraham." And again, "Christ has redeemed us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ." (Galatians 3:9-14.) So that all who believe as Abraham did — are blessed as Abraham was.

Abraham believed on the simple ground of testimony, because God spoke; and he manifested the truth and power of his faith, by seeking to please God supremely; therefore he left his own kindred, birth-place, and relatives, because God bade him: he surrendered all to God, and held all that he had, as the property of God. His one business was to obey and please God; and this is always the case, where there is real faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God.

Now all who have this faith, are heirs of this promise. To every one of them, God is still saying, "In blessing, I will bless you." Such are blessed in Christ, the source and center of blessedness; as it is written, "Men shall be blessed in Him." They are blessed just as Abraham was: in their persons, with a justification from all sin, by faith in Jesus. They are blessed with friendship with God, who invites, accepts, and treats them as His friends. They are blessed with fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which stands the very essence of real religion. They are blessed with protection, for God is their SHIELD, and their exceeding great reward. They are blessed in their provision — the Lord blesses their bread and their water, and blesses them with a contented mind, which is a continual feast.

In addition to which, they have Christ with all His fullness for their portion — both in this world and in that which is to come. They are blessed in their families; not with an exemption from trials — but every trial is sanctified; and their families are under a blessing. They are blessed in their efforts to do good, the Lord approves of their attempts, accepts their feeble endeavors, and very generally crowns them with success. They are blessed in their very trials — there is no curse in them, and they are made most useful to them. Their losses, crosses, bereavements and perplexities — are all arranged for their welfare, and work together for their good — so that they would not be so blessed — if they were not so tried! What would injure others, benefits them. The very curse of men is turned into a blessing. They are blessed all through time, in the article of death, and will be blessed to all eternity. Surely we may say of our God, "Whom you bless — is blessed indeed!"

How important to be heir to such a promise! Reader, are you? Can you claim it? Do you believe it? Are you realizing its fulfillment, and expecting it to be made good to you, day by day?

What strong consolation it holds out. Let men curse me, revile me, and cast out my name as evil — my God says, "In blessing, I will bless you. I shall never think I can do too much for you — or be too kind to you. I will keep you as the apple of my eye, and I will bide you under the shadow of my wing."

What a great obligation such a promise lays us under. How should we love our God, who thus promises! With what warmth and constancy should our affections ascend unto Him! How should we obey Him, with what care, with what concern to please Him, and disregard of the opinion of others? How should we endeavor instrumentally to bless others?

Abraham was not only to be blessed — but to be a blessing. Very much of real blessedness, consists in our being a blessing to others.

How should we seek to realize, enjoy, and live up to our privilege; for it is only so, that we can honor our God, or render to Him again according to that which He has done for us.

59 The Strange Announcement

The Strange Announcement

"I tell you the truth: corrupt tax collectors and harlots will get into the Kingdom of God before you do!" Matthew 21:31

What class of people could be referred to by our Lord, when He uttered these words? Not the openly profane, or bold opposers of the truth — but rather, those who professed it, and were employed, some of them, in expounding it to others! This language, as strange as it may appear — is still applicable to a large class of people in the present day. They admit the inspiration of holy Scripture, and the truth of the doctrines preached by the servants of Christ. Many of them approve of preachers, and manifest their approbation by regularly sitting under the Word. They give their sanction, and often financial assistance to the cause. They assent to gospel requirements. But remain year after year unchanged, as to state and character! They have no deep, inward, painful sense of sin; they feel no real concern about a present salvation; but imagine that all will be well at last. They neither fear God's inflexible justice, nor prize His sweet mercy. They do not come to Jesus for life or salvation — in the exercise of desire, prayer, and hope. They come to ordinances — but not to Christ!

They are at ease, though evidently unconverted. They talk of doing the best they can, and of God doing the rest; but in reality they do nothing which God can either approve or accept. They read of being born again; but never examine whether they are so born or not. They hear of conversion — but never trouble themselves about it. If they are occasionally alarmed — they quiet their fears, by reference to the mercy of God; and because God is merciful, they live as if they did not believe Him to be just. They admit that others may be lost — but cannot think so badly of themselves; and though they allow that the Word of God may be true when applied to others — they always plead as if they did not believe it would be in their instance.

There are thousands of such people in our country, and to all such, the Savior's words are strictly applicable. Reader, are you one of them? Search and look, for your danger is imminent — if it should be the case. The Roman tax-collectors consisted of the lowest and most depraved class of men. Harlots were common prostitutes, the lowest and most degraded class of women. But such, our Lord says, will enter into the kingdom of Heaven before Pharisees, and proud self-assured professors. Open sinners are generally more easily wrought upon, for they have no covering or excuse for their sin. They have no self-righteousness to ward off the conviction; they see it is true, what is spoken of them, and they flee to the refuge set before them. They are more generally converted, than those who have formed a shield of their religious duties and observances — with which they throw back the arrows of God's Word. My friend, the most dangerous state is to be gospel-hardened; to be able to sit under the Word year after year, or month after month — without feeling its power, or yielding to its claims. A decent exterior is often a deceitful covering! What is within the heart? Is the Spirit of God there? Is the power of godliness there? Is the sanctifying grace of the gospel there? If not — then you are but a white-washed sepulcher — and tax

collectors and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you!

Gospel opposers often receive the gospel they oppose, and become monuments of its purity and power. We should never despair of such; their enmity is often slain, and gives place to pure and holy love. We have more cause to despair of those who have been hearers of the Word for years, who are externally moral and decent — for to such very often the gospel becomes, "a savor of death unto death."

Yet there is still space for repentance, and a way of escape for you, reader — if a Pharisee, Saul, who was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, was converted, and became a champion in the Lord's cause, and a blessing to thousands of souls. We do not mean that you should despair of mercy; but that you should see your danger, and flee at once for safety to the Lord Jesus, who casts out none who come unto Him. That gospel which you have neglected — still speaks to you; it is still God's message to you; in it He speaks to you, and says, "Come unto me."

Beware of that spirit of cold politeness, which says, "I will go, sir;" but leaves the person under the power of sin, the slave of Satan, and the lover of the present world!

If my reader has been one of those who have said, "I will not go," then let me beseech him at once to repent, confess his sin, and he will find saving mercy.

60 The Question

The Question "Do you love Me more than these?" John 21:17

We may, we ought to love our relations, friends, and neighbors; but Jesus requires and deserves our highest love. He should be first in our esteem — for He is most excellent. Toward Him our veneration should be directed — for He is truly divine and glorious. And to Him we should be most firmly and devotedly attached, for He is, "altogether lovely."

Look at His LIFE as recorded by the Evangelists — and see how just, punctual, prudent, kind, benevolent, and full of attention He was. In Him, every virtue shone forth in its fullness and perfection — and in Him every attribute of God was to be revealed.

Consider His TEACHING. He communicated His own ideas of divine subjects, which were just and correct; but almost totally different from those of any other instructor. He opened the heart of God, and showed us that it was love; assuring us that He "so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish — but have everlasting life." He clearly unfolded the most important and interesting of all subjects — salvation; showing us its nature and perfection, and how it may be obtained and enjoyed. He, in a word, revealed all that we need to know as to . . .

the mind, intent, and purposes of God;

the state, condition, and destiny of man;

the way of escape from wrath — and of admission into the world of purity, beauty, and bliss! But His infinite MERIT especially demands our love. He was great enough and pure enough to speak with God — and also engage for the salvation of sinners. He was kind enough and meek enough to speak to and provide salvation for man. He can fill the distance between an infinitely holy God — and depraved, polluted, and guilty man; and by the obedience of His life, and the atonement which He offered in His death — He can bring them together on easy and honorable terms. He has reconciled the justice of God — to the salvation of man. And He reconciles the heart of man — to the ways of God. He has removed everything out of the way of our acceptance at His Father's throne, and He removes everything from our hearts which would prevent our approaching with pleasure there.

Glorious Redeemer! your merit is boundless, and your worth infinite and eternal; who would not love you, and love you more than all things beside?

Glance but for one moment, also, at what He BESTOWS — and you must see at once His claim to our highest love. The very angels receive their happiness, security, and honor — from Him. His enemies, of the human family, are fed by His bounteous hand, and preserved by His Almighty power. But it is His saints, more especially, who are indebted to Him; He gives them . . .

His Spirit to instruct them,

His righteousness to justify them,
His blood to cleanse them,
His name to procure acceptance at the Father's throne,
His fullness to supply them, and
all that the wisest mind could devise — or the kindest heart bestow!

He gives grace and glory — with every other good thing under Heaven. And yet many do not love Him; and of those who talk of doing so — it must be said that their love is doubtful. Not to God, for He knows their hearts; but to the saints who desire that all should love Him, and love Him above all. Yes, to themselves, for they cannot say they love Him with an unwavering tongue. If they do love Him at all — their love is not strong, vigorous, and fruitful; it is like a stunted shrub, which only tells of the barrenness of the soil. And many have good cause to doubt; look at the neglected Bible, the slighted closet, the forsaken sanctuary, and the forgotten God; they all shout, "You have left your first love." But love to Jesus ought to be put out of doubt. "This is the love of God — that we keep His commandments." "If you love me — keep my commandments." By a cheerful acquiescing in His will; and by daily observing His commands, the whole of them — and even when we must make sacrifices to do so — we would put our love to Jesus out of doubt. My Reader, do you love the Savior? Why do you love Him? Is your love warm, cheerful, operative? Do you love Him more than all things beside? Are you in doubt about it? Rest not until all cause for doubt is entirely taken away, lest that fearful sentence should fall like a thunderbolt upon you, "If any man loves not our Lord Jesus Christ — let him be accursed when the Lord comes." Does he not deserve to be cursed? Surely if a man does not love Jesus, who is altogether lovely, and who is his constant benefactor and greatest friend — his sin is as the sin of Sodom — flagrant and inexcusable! Do I love You, O my Lord?

Behold my heart and see;
And turn each cursed idol out,
That dares to rival Thee!
You know I love You, dearest Lord,
But, Oh! I long to soar,
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
That I may love You more!

61 Laboring for Rest

Laboring for Rest

"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest — lest any man fail after the same example of unbelief." Hebrews 4:11

Sin is restless, and the sinner cannot enjoy true repose. Even many true believers do not enjoy the rest which God has provided for us under the gospel dispensation. Here the Apostle exhorts us to labor to enter into that rest.

He refers to the first Sabbath to illustrate his subject; this was God's rest; and the day was set apart for man's benefit. Creation was finished, and God had demonstrated and displayed His glorious perfections. Jehovah appeared a satisfied God, filled with delight; having pronounced His work to be good, very good. All creation acquiesced in God's will and man's happiness; all was lovely, obedient, and happy. Here was a beautiful garden, well furnished with all man could need, or really desire; and it was given to Adam for possession; here he was to keep Sabbath, and enjoy rest. The rest of the Christian is in the finished work of Christ, as a Redeemer; in which He displayed and harmonized all the perfections of Jehovah, in the everlasting salvation of every believer. Here God appears delighted, filled with satisfaction, rejoicing again in the works of His hands; rejoicing over His people with joy, and keeping a Sabbath in His love.

Here, on the cross of Jesus we see written, "God is love;" we behold sin put away; and by it all things are now arranged and directed, so that they shall work together for good, to all who love God, and are called according to His purpose. In the gospel, paradise is restored; for all that the sinner can want, the believer enjoy, or the most enlightened saint desire — is provided, presented, and made over to us. So that if we understand the gospel, it presents us with salvation and bids us keep Sabbath; it provides for us, that we may rest from fear, bondage, and apprehensions of danger, and rejoice in the Lord our God. The true gospel state, is a state of rest. . .

not from service — but from slavery;

not from duty — but from drudgery;

not in indolence — but in sweet activity.

Rest in Jesus. Rest with God. Rest through faith. The Apostle also refers to the rest of Canaan, which was promised to and set before Israel; in which they were to find everything prepared and provided for them; and enjoy . . .

liberty, from the slavery of Egypt;

rest, from the toils of the desert;

peace, after conflict and victory over their foes;

and plenty, for feasting, sacrifice, and daily food. So the gospel sets before us the rest of God, just as Canaan was set before Israel, and bids us to enter into it and possess it — here is . . .

liberty from the slavery of sin, Satan, and the world;

rest from legal toil and slavish fear;

peace, with God, with conscience, and with men;

and plenty, for food, atonement, and triumph —

so that we may rest, rejoice, and praise. But how few enter into and enjoy this rest, "Let us therefore labor to enter into that rest." Let us labor to ascertain our title, by making our calling and election sure; let us labor to improve our knowledge for possession and enjoyment. Let us labor by prayer, which is wrestling; by searching the Scriptures, which are a mine of wealth, which is therefore mining; and by believing, which is running, fighting, working, and following hard after God. There will be difficulties — such as tests and trials — but the rest is attainable.

Paul would awaken jealousy, that he may stir us up to activity. "Therefore," he says, alluding to the Israelites who fell in the wilderness, "lest any man fail after the same example of unbelief." Professors have fallen:

unbelief is the root,

disobedience the blossom,

and apostasy the fruit!

Professors may fall, for none are safe but those who are in Christ, and enjoy the rest of our gospel Canaan, who keep Sabbath in the Redeemer's finished work.

Beware of discrediting or neglecting any part of God's Word, which is your preservative and guide; beware of presuming you are safe without a good foundation; beware of departing from God either in heart or action.

Look at the context, and you will see that the Apostle connects the Word of truth, the eye of God, the great and good High Priest of our profession, the throne of grace, the solemn caution, and the fervent exhortation together — to preserve and keep us from falling. Let us therefore use and improve all for this solemn purpose!

62 The Unpardonable Sin

The Unpardonable Sin "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven." Matthew 12:31

There is one sin which God never pardons, and but one. This sin is called the sin against the Holy Spirit. Many sins against the Spirit are forgiven; but this sin is never forgiven. It was committed by some when our Lord was upon the earth; they were convinced in their consciences, that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah; that His works were wrought by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit; and yet they were so filled with malice and enmity against Him, that they said, He has a demon, and wrought His works by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. They blasphemed or spoke maliciously and spitefully against the Holy Spirit, contrary to the verdict and stirring of their own consciences.

Paul speaks of this sin in his epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10:26-31,) and represents it as a wicked trampling of the Son of God underfoot, and a willful, despiteful opposition to the Holy Spirit. The sin can only be committed by those who have clear light in the head, and deep-rooted malice in the heart; they know that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the only sacrifice for sin; and yet they feel such enmity against Him, that they speak reproachfully of Him, and would if they could, trample Him underfoot as the mire of the streets!

It is the effect of the meeting of clear light and powerful malice; when malice prevails, and the man manifests his hatred and perseveres in his sin. It is that presumptuous sin, for which no sacrifice is appointed; and for which no pardon is offered in the gospel. It is a sin of which no one ever did repent in this world, and no one ever will; for it is impossible to renew such unto repentance.

Many fear they have committed this sin, who would tremble at the thought of it; who never approached near unto it. No one ever did commit it — who feared he should, and prayed against it; or, who feared he had, and mourned on account of it. When this sin is committed, the soul is quite given up, and then no one is so hated and dreaded as the Lord Jesus; nothing is so loathed and abused as the glorious gospel; no people are so despised and contemned as the saints of God; and the deep enmity and malice of the soul seem especially directed against the person, office, and work of the Holy Spirit. Some such sinners may be given up to lightness, levity, and folly; others to gloom, sullenness, and reserve; others to covetousness, and love of money; others to work all uncleanness with greediness — all of them to hardness and impenitency of heart. No one who believes the divine authority of the gospel, who has any reverence for the Lord Jesus, or desires to be saved by Him, who is alarmed at the thought of having committed this crime — can have done so. For all such, there is mercy; to all such, pardon is presented in the gospel. They may have acted wrong, yes basely, toward the Lord Jesus; the most blasphemous thoughts against the Holy Spirit may have passed through their minds, so that they have trembled and shuddered at what was passing within them; they may have been tempted to the most fearful, unnameable crimes. These may imagine they have committed the most uncommon sin, and they may conclude, that there never were such singular, daring, and desperate wretches as themselves! Still for such there is mercy, for the unpardonable sin has not been committed yet.

Indeed, if you had sinned that sin, Satan would not harass you as he does; but being sure of your damnation, he would leave you to yourself, or only hurry you on to gross and abominable crimes.

"All manner of sin and blasphemy is forgiven unto men;" and if you confess your sin, reader — however vile, base, or uncommon it may be, God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness!

63 The All-comprehending One!

The All-comprehending One!

"Christ is all!" Colossians 3:11 As all light is in the sun, and as the source of all our springs is the ocean — so all blessings are in Christ and flow freely from Him. He is, He has — all the sinner does or can possibly need! The blessings which the sinner needs, can be obtained nowhere else but in Jesus. Does he need pardon? "The Son of man has power to forgive sins." He is exalted to give the remission of sins. He pardons all sin. He pardons every one who applies with confession, faith, and prayer. He pardons freely. He pardons frequently. He pardons without upbraiding. Does he need righteousness? It is only by the obedience of Jesus, that any can be made righteous. He brought in everlasting righteousness. "He is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believes." His perfect work is the "robe of righteousness," "the righteousness of God;" "the righteousness which is obtained, and enjoyed by faith — "the gift of righteousness." And by Him every one that believes is justified at once and forever, from all things. Does he need acceptance with God? It is only through Jesus, who is the one Mediator. He introduces sinners to God; by Him they have access, and they are accepted in Him, who is the beloved. Does he need wisdom, or holiness, or redemption? Christ is made to every sinner who believes — wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. By a saving interest in Him and union to Him, every believer is complete, "You are complete in Him." A sinner can think of nothing that he really needs — but it is to be found in Christ. All that is to be found in Christ — is to be obtained from Christ by faith and prayer.

Christ is all — in reference to the saint. Without Christ — we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. But with Christ — we are honorable, and happy, and rich, and clothed, and enjoy clear sight. All the saint can need in all circumstances — Christ is! Christian growth very much consists in daily learning our need of Christ — and learning to make use of Christ. Is the Christian in darkness? Christ is, "the Sun of righteousness," "the light of the world." Is he in danger? Christ is his shield, and He says, "I am your shield;" "above all taking the shield of faith:" the shield of reason, is argument, effort, or courage; but the shield of faith is the Lord Jesus; faith makes use of Christ to conquer every foe, quench every fiery dart, and overcome every difficulty. Is he diseased? Christ is the great, the skillful, the infallible Physician. He heals every believer. Heals as often as they are sick. Heals without fee or reward. Is he in need? Christ is the bread of Life, in Him are the wells of salvation; He has durable riches and righteousness; and the life which we live in the flesh — is by faith in the Son of God, who has loved us, and given Himself for us. Is he dull and lifeless? Christ is the resurrection and the life; His words are spirit, and they are life; He quickens whom He will. It is but for Him to speak, and our languishing graces revive, our spirits receive new strength, and we feel full of vigor and animation. Is he imperfect? In Christ is completeness. He can present us before the presence of His glory faultless; a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Reader, this subject is a touchstone — try yourself by it. Is Christ your all? Do you look to Him for all you need? Do you flee to Him from all you fear? Do you ask of Him all that you desire? Do you daily pray to be found in Him? Is He the highest object of your love? Is He your trust? Do you determine with Paul to glory in Him alone? The subject is a sign-post — it directs us all to Christ; and directs us to Christ for all that we need. It says, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." It says, "Jesus only, Jesus alone is all you need; look to Him, to Him alone, to Him for all you need, always and everywhere. Look to Jesus, and be happy and wealthy in Him."

64 Employers Commanded

Employers Commanded

"Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in Heaven." Colossians 4:1

It is the glory of the gospel, that it is no respecter of persons. It benefits all — it injures none. It deals honestly with all — and teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present life. It makes no excuse for sin; it does not treat the rich as favorites — but it comes with a rule for every conscience, and a direction for every state.

Here the Apostle speaks to masters; they must not be tyrants, for God requires them to be just; they are not to look upon servants as an inferior race of beings, nor to treat them with harshness; but to, "forbear threatening, knowing that their Master also is in Heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him."

Masters are to be just, not wishing or seeking to get rich by the poverty of their servants; they are to treat their servants as they would wish to be treated, if they were servants. They are not to conduct themselves as if they were irresponsible; they must give account of themselves as masters, and of their conduct to their servants to God.

They are to be just to their servants, not expecting them to work unreasonable hours, or to labor beyond their strength, or to give their time and service without a fair remuneration. Servants should receive what is equal to their talents, their services, and their needs. Masters are not to indulge in threatening language — but are to conduct themselves toward their servants with mildness, Christian forbearance, and befitting respect.

Employers should always bear in mind, that their servants have souls, that their souls are of immense importance, and that it is their duty, while they employ them, to seek their salvation. No servant, who lives in a family where there is one godly person, should ever be able to say, "No one cared for my soul;" for every true Christian should care for the souls of others, especially for those by whom they are more immediately surrounded.

Masters, mistresses, you have a Master in Heaven; His eye is upon you. He is observing you when you engage your servants, and notices what you demand of them; He is observing you when you require your servants to neglect His worship, to pamper your appetite; He is observing you when you require your servants to practice deception for you; when you bid them say you are away from home, because you do not wish to be seen — the lie is yours, and is placed to your account; He is observing if you attempt to "grind the poor," in their wages, that you may more speedily become rich. "He respects not persons;" He will call you to face your servant at His bar, and give an account in His presence of your conduct toward him. Act then toward your servants, as in the sight of God, in all things approving yourselves to God; as in prospect of the judgment, as one that must give an account; and be it your determination to give unto your servants that which

is just and equal, "knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven."

65 The Servant's Directory

The Servant's Directory

"Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." 1 Peter 2:18

Christianity is not only a friend to families in general — but to female servants in particular; in former times servants were slaves — but the religion of Christ has broken the fetters, and set the captive free. But though they are freed from slavery, they are not freed from duty. Servants, especially Christian servants, are directed, in the New Testament, how to conduct themselves in their situations, and toward their employers. Hear the words of the Holy Spirit to you: "Servants, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men."

Again, "Servants, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Again, "All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them."

Once more, "Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

See how full and particular are the directions which the Lord has given you; and in observing them and regulating your conduct by them — you will obtain respect, enjoy peace, and be crowned with the blessing of the Lord. You are to view the hand of the Lord in your present lot; and considering it to be His will that you should be a servant — you are to serve cheerfully, as serving Him — while you obey your employers; being persuaded that if men do not prize or adequately remunerate you for your services, your Savior will. You know he has said, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." But if you neglect duty, or get above your station, or give yourself airs, as if you were your own master or mistress — He will visit your transgressions with a rod; He notices the insults offered to your employers, and treats them as if offered to Himself.

If you cheerfully, honestly, and constantly obey all your employer's lawful commands, you honor God, adorn the gospel, and walk in the truth; and so doing, God will assuredly honor you. You are commanded to do whatever your employers require — if it is not sinful, and to do it heartily; not

only when their eye is upon you — but also in their absence; considering yourself the servant of God, whose eye is always upon you, and whom it is impossible to deceive. He has promised you a glorious inheritance, and will bestow it of freest grace, upon all who believe and obey His Word. But if you neglect your work, injure your master's property, idle away or misemploy his time — the Lord notices it, and will deal with you accordingly; for His promises were never intended to set aside His precepts; nor the relationship into which He has taken you, to raise you above His government. They aggravate your sins — but cannot dispense with your obedience. Your master is accountable for whatever is wrong in his conduct; and you must give an account of yours.

If your master be an infidel — you are to reverence him as your master; and to be obedient to him while his servant, even if he is ill-natured and severe. Your master's conduct towards you — is not your rule of obedience; but the precepts of God are to be your guide, and His honor your aim.

If your master is a believer, a member of the same church, you are not to imagine yourself his equal, or take liberties, because he is a brother in Christ; but be more diligent, respectful, and concerned to please him. Your aim must be to adorn the gospel, or represent it as lovely, by its effect on your life and conduct; pleasing, if possible, your employers in all things, not secretly taking or giving away any part of their property; but be scrupulously honest as in the sight of God. The precepts of God being thus plain and strict — be particular as to what situations you enter; always engage to have your Christian privileges; render your services valuable; obtain and keep a character which answers to God's requirements — and you must do well.

66 Idle Professors

Idle Professors

"For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work — he shall not eat!"
2 Thessalonians 3:10 The Gospel is directly opposed to all sin; and in proportion as we drink into its spirit — shall we hate sin, and regulate our lives by its precepts.

Idleness is a sin. Man was formed for labor; he is required to work, and the God who made him says, "If a man will not work — he shall not eat!"

There always have been some idle professors, who seem to imagine that they were born to live upon the industry of others; they creep into churches, plead their poverty, and by various artifices they impose upon the benevolent, and rob the industrious poor of what belongs to them. The alms of the church should be given to the aged, the sick, and the industrious poor. It is our sin, if we allow our benevolence to sanction idleness. We either ought to know whom we relieve, or employ others to dispense our alms who will inquire into cases, and give judiciously. A godly man would much rather work than beg; it is always a pleasure to him to earn what he eats and wears; but it pains him to be obliged to receive from others, and he is always grateful when he does. But some professors are never satisfied, and therefore they are never grateful; they speak and eat as if they thought the saints were under an obligation to them, because they profess religion; they have the mercenary spirit of the slave — but are destitute of the generous spirit of the child.

We should beware, lest we encourage idleness on the one hand — or allow the impositions of the unworthy to dry up the streams of our benevolence on the other hand. Some seem to want an argument, to satisfy their consciences, while they live in the neglect of the exercise of benevolence — and unworthy characters furnish them with one. But such should remember, that the precepts of the gospel still bind them, even if their kindness has been abused. They should realize that what they have given has not been thrown away, for God looks at our motives, records our good deeds, and "will not forget our work of faith and labor of love."

It is best, if possible, to employ the poor, if they are in health, or at least to offer them employment; to visit them at home, and see if there is cleanliness and frugality; for here, even some professors are very deficient. They would rather fold their hands, and spend their time in talk — than clean their dwellings or mend their clothes; such must not be encouraged — it is a sin to do so. "If a man will not work — he shall not eat!" Our attention should principally be directed to the aged poor, the sick, and those who have large families without wages, or insufficient employment; there are plenty of such, who require and deserve our assistance. But as for those who dress above their station, indulge their appetites, and waste their time in visiting and talk — such should be reprov'd, and be told plainly of their inconsistencies, first with gentleness and kindness; and if this has not the desired effect — then with sharpness, as those who live in sin because they love it.

Let no one think that the precept at the head of this piece is unduly severe — it is not; but it is absolutely necessary, and expresses the will of God respecting all idle professors. Work is

pleasant to the industrious, and labor is always conducive to health; it keeps us out of the way, of temptation, and preserves from a thousand snares! No one can be happy — who is not employed. No one is at liberty to waste precious time; talents were not given to be wrapped up in a napkin, and hidden in the earth — all are to be employed, for themselves, or for others, or for the Lord.

Idleness is a sin with which Satan was never charged, and of which every professor should be ashamed.

"If a man will not work — he shall not eat!" If this precept was obeyed — idle professors would be very few!

67 The Disowned

The Disowned "You are not my people" Romans 9:26 The Lord has a people peculiarly his own; this is clearly stated, and satisfactorily proved in the Word of God. He loves them. He approves of them. He rules them. He supplies them. He protects them. He honors them. For them, He gave His Son — to die in their stead. To them, He gives His Spirit — to sanctify and make them fit for glory. They are a favored and a happy people.

Many claim to be of them, who are not all like them. They would enjoy their privileges — but they do not possess their nature. They number themselves with them — but they will ultimately be separated from them. The Lord never did acknowledge them, and He will, by-and-by, openly disown them. He now says to them, "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord; and do not do the things that I say?" By-and-by He will say, "I do not know you — depart from me, you workers of iniquity." That is, "I do not approve you. I never did approve you. Therefore depart from me." But who are those who now presume — but will by-and-by be rejected? The Pharisee is one of them. He who is striving to purchase Heaven by his works; who is proud of his performances, and imagines that God must think as highly of him, as he does. The self-righteous Pharisee is one of the greatest enemies of our Lord — he is . . .

blind to the spirituality of the law,

ignorant of the true character of God,

a stranger to the wickedness of his own heart,

and practically rejects the holy gospel.

He will not object to it as a part of the Word of God; but let it be unfolded and applied — and his opposition will immediately appear. Those who reject the gospel — reject the Savior; and those who reject the Savior — will be rejected by God at last. The formalist will be disowned of God. He is nearly allied to the Pharisee. He will go through a round of duties, and hopes by so doing . . .

to satisfy conscience;

to please God;

and purchase Heaven. But formal duties are but decent sins! They offend, rather than please God. They merit Hell, instead of purchasing Heaven! If God is worshiped — it must be in spirit and in truth. If He is pleased with our poor performances — it is when they flow from love to Him, are sprinkled with the blood of His dear Son, and are laid as a child's offering at His throne. If our services are accepted by a just and holy God — they must be brought to the throne, by the way of the cross. The duties of the formalist are heartless, misplaced, and worthless; and the poor creatures who imagine they are pleasing God, and securing Heaven by their lifeless duties, will hear Him say to them, "You are not my people!" The licentious must be refused of God. He loves sin. He lives in direct and open opposition to God; for him, there can be no hope. His head may be

full of light — but his heart is enmity against God. He may talk very correctly about truth — but his walk gives his profession the lie. He has never been sanctified — and therefore cannot be glorified. The heart must be changed, and the life must be holy — or we are not God's people. He will not own us. He will not honor us. He will not receive us.

Reader, beware of false confidence! Many take it for granted that they are God's people — but will find themselves woefully deceived.

Look well to your evidences. Is the heart changed? Is the life holy? Do you walk with God? Only those who walk with God on earth — will be owned as His at last.

Look well to your title. Make your calling and election sure. Put your religion out of doubt. So walk, that all may be constrained to say of you, "If there is a Christian — then that man is one." Remember, all are not Israel — who are of Israel; nor are all God's people — who pass for such. Let no man deceive himself, or imagine that he is safe — while his heart and life are unholy; for "without holiness, no man can see the Lord." "Let no man deceive you — he who does righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous." (1 John 3:7)

68 The Acknowledged

The Acknowledged "There shall they be called the children of the living God." Romans 9:26

What an unspeakable privilege — to be a child of God, and to be acknowledged as such! Every real believer is God's child! God is his Father, the Lord Jesus calls him brother, and Heaven, our Father's house, is to be his home. But let us not deceive ourselves, and take it for granted that we are children of God, when we are not.

All the children of God are born of God, and are partakers of the divine nature. They were dead in sin — but have been quickened by the Holy Spirit, and made alive to God. They are a new creation, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. They are adopted into the Lord's family, and receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. They realize reconciliation to God, and feel that there is nothing between God and their souls but love. Sin is pardoned; guilt is gone; peace with God is felt; the promise is believed; and they know God as a covenant God. They love Him; they believe His Word; they fear to displease Him; they have fellowship with Him; they obey Him; they delight in holiness — and they expect every blessing, because God is their Father, and has promised to give them in His Word.

They are registered among the family of God, for their names are in the book of life; they are named in the will of the great Testator; and are appointed to glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. But how are the children of God to be known? By likeness: "God is love;" and every child of God is like Him. They love him supremely, and all whom he loves. By their conduct: they imitate God as dear children, in holiness, righteousness, and benevolence. By their attachment to His family: they love all the saints as their brothers and sisters in Christ; and love them for Christ's sake because they belong to Him and are like Him. By the value they set upon His Word: it is a family book, here the children's registry is found, here every one's fortune appears, here every one's duty is pointed out, here the history of the family is preserved; and they value and love the book. By their panting for home: this world is not their rest, nor their portion; they often long for home, where their brethren meet, their Savior reigns, and their God is forever glorified.

They are called the sons of the living God. Who calls them so? God, in His Word, and acknowledges them as such at His throne. Ministers, who are sent to inform them, encourage them and exhort them to duty. Saints, to whom they appear as the excellent of the earth, the children of a king. Angels acknowledge them too, and minister unto them as the heirs of salvation. The world will, by and-bye, when they appear in their glory, being introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Reader! Are you among the children of God — or the children of the devil? There are but two families — and to one of them you do, you must belong! Which is it?

Christian, improve your relation at a throne of grace: remember it when you are in the world, lest you dishonor it: act according to it, especially in the church of God. Consider the honor it involves; the blessings it secures; and the glory to which it entitles.

69 Prayer

Prayer "Men ought always to pray." Luke 18:1

Prayer is an important duty; and to the child of God, possessed of the Spirit of adoption — it is a delightful privilege. To call God Father, to pour out the heart before Him, to have communion with Him — is sweet indeed! The only proper object of prayer is Jehovah, as the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, God — as our kind and gracious Father in Jesus, as inviting us to His throne, waiting to bless us, and ready to pardon sin! The only medium of acceptable prayer is Jesus — Jesus as Mediator between God and man. He stands between God and sinners. He interposes His precious blood, and God is well pleased with all who come through Him. No acceptance for sinners — but through Jesus; no rejection of any sinner who comes in His dear name. The kinds of prayer are several:

mental, when the soul prays without the voice;

vocal, when the voice and soul are both employed;

private, when we are alone with God;

family, when we collect our family, and plead with God for them;

public, when we draw near to God in the assembly of His saints;

ejaculatory, when we send up the brief petition in the field, the street, the shop, the work-room, or any other place. The rule of prayer, is God's Word. Here we may learn what God is willing to give — from His promises, His precepts, and the history of His saints. To God's Word, we must add our own needs; for we do not always need exactly the same things; so that while God's Word tells us what God is willing to bestow generally — our own needs will direct us what to pray for particularly, at any one time. The pleas to be used in prayer are, principally, the name of Jesus, for it is to prayer in His name, that the promise is made. We must ask for His sake; because He is worthy; because He obeyed the law, and suffered in our stead. We may add the mercy of God, and plead for His mercy's sake. So also his faithfulness, and ask because He is faithful to His Word. We may mention what He has already done for us before, and for others similarly circumstanced, for so did the saints of old. Our assistance in prayer, is from the Holy Spirit; He teaches us our needs, brings the promises to our minds, stirs up our affections, whispers Abba, Father, and produces the unutterable groaning. Our obligation to pray, is founded in . . .

the relation in which we stand to God;

the duties we have to perform;

the sins we have committed;

the command of Jesus;

the promises made to prayer; and
the state of the world, the church, and our own souls. As to the nature of prayer, it is . . .
the child's application to a Father;
human misery's appeal to divine mercy;
the creature addressing his Creator;
the sinner approaching his gracious God;
and the needy seeking relief. The encouragements to prayer, are almost endless:
the comfort enjoyed;
the holiness derived;
the evils prevented;
the blessings obtained;
the promises given;
the Scriptural examples of Abraham's servant, Jacob, Hannah, Jabez, Elijah, and a whole host
besides.

It is truly important that we should pray always, or give ourselves unto prayer, as to . . .
our proper business,
our sweetest pleasure,
our principal resource.

"Praying always, with all prayer!"

Prayer was appointed to convey,
The blessings God designed to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray, they live. The Christian's heart his prayer indites,
He speaks as prompted from within;
The Spirit his petition writes.
And Christ receives and gives it in.
If pain afflicts, or wrongs oppress;
If cares distract, or fears dismay;
If guilt dejects, if sin distress;

The remedy's before you — pray!

70 The Hindrance to Prayer

The Hindrance to Prayer "If I cherish iniquity in my heart — the Lord will not hear me." Psalms 66:18

We ought not to be satisfied with praying — but expect that God will hear us — and look out for His answer. If we pray aright, we pray for what we . . .

really need,

ardently desire, and

cannot be holy or happy without. And if we pray for such things we must desire, and ought anxiously to expect our God to bestow them. He has promised. He is faithful. He ought to be believed. But this cannot be, unless we expect Him to hear and answer our prayers. The Lord loves to hear us pray, and He loves to answer our prayers!

There is but one effectual hindrance to the success of your prayers; if you love sin — then God will not hear you; He cannot hear you, for He hates sin with perfect abhorrence. A deep sense of your own unworthiness is no barrier to success. You may feel unworthy to lift up your eyes to Heaven, as the publican did; and yet obtain answers to your prayers. You may feel yourself to be only dust and ashes, as Abraham did; and yet plead with God and prevail. You may feel like the prodigal, only want to be treated as a slave; and yet find acceptance with God as a son. A sense of unworthiness actually befits us, it is profitable, provided it is not associated with unbelief. The weight of afflictions will not prevent success, though it may press you down, and fill you with distress. Who more burdened than Jacob, on the plains of Peniel? And yet who more successful than he? Was not the Psalmist deeply afflicted? Yet the Lord accepted his prayers, answered his petitions, and delivered him out of all his troubles.

Temptations cannot prevent success. They may confuse the mind, terrify the conscience, and trouble the heart; but our God distinguishes between the injections of the enemy — and the weakness of his child. If tempted not to pray — pray the more. If tempted to postpone prayer — pray at that very time. Most probably God has a blessing for you. Satan suspects he has — or he would not be so anxious to persuade you to put off prayer. Pray most — when tempted not to pray. The lack of gifts cannot hinder success in prayer — or else the gifted hypocrite would be heard, and the ungifted saint rejected. The Lord looks at the heart! He is not pleased with the tones of a man's voice, moved by the eloquence of a man's lips, or affected by the order of a man's sentences! He regards the sincere desire, the ardent longing, the heartfelt cry. If the heart is honest, if the desire is sincere, if the motive is pure — He will hear, though the voice be unmelodious, the language broken, and the sentences disjointed. But there is one thing that will effectually hinder success in prayer — it is SIN — the love of sin — sin cherished in the heart. It may be a hidden sin — as enmity against a brother; envying another's prosperity; covetousness; pride; hard thoughts of God; or unbelief. But if sin is loved, indulged, or cherished — then God will not hear us. We may ask — but we shall not receive; because we ask amiss. Therefore the

Apostle exhorts, "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord — and he will lift you up." (James 4:8-10.)

Prayer and repentance must go together. If an impenitent sinner could pray — God would not hear him, because he regards iniquity in his heart. If a praying soul falls, so as to indulge in, and love sin — then his prayers are of no avail — God will not hear him.

Examine yourself therefore. Ask, "How is my heart disposed toward sin?" As we are disposed toward sin — so is God disposed toward us. If we love sin, "He hates all the workers of iniquity." If we hate sin, "He honors those who fear the Lord." "The prayer of the upright is His delight."

71 Prayer Forbidden

Prayer Forbidden

"But because of you the Lord was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the Lord said. "Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter!" Deuteronomy 3:26

We are sometimes very anxious for what God is not willing to bestow. He will supply all our needs — but He will not grant all our wishes. He will give us that which is good for us — though He deny us that which is gratifying to us.

Moses was very desirous of entering into the promised land; but the Lord had determined to correct his sin; he had prayed and had been denied; he is inclined to persevere; but the Lord says, "Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter!" Even Moses cannot prevail. Yes, he is forbidden to pray on the subject. So may we, on some points.

Elijah prayed that he might die; David prayed for the life of his child; yet both were denied. So if we pray for health, wealth, ease, or shining gifts — then the Lord may deny — and yet be faithful to His Word. He never promised to answer selfish or carnal prayers, or to give what would do us harm. Therefore, when we ask for anything not positively promised — it should always be in submission to the will of God. He always wills our good, and His love rules over our destiny. But though the Lord may refuse us some things, and even forbid us to pray for them — yet He has promised us enough to satisfy us, if rightly employed. Let it, therefore, suffice you, believer, to live upon the promises of your God; for in them there is enough. Are you sick? He says, "I will make all your bed in your sickness." He will perform the part of a kind and attentive nurse; soothing your soul while your body suffers, and supporting you under your burden of affliction. Are you poor? He says, "I am your portion!" The wealth of Deity is yours! God is the portion of your inheritance, and of your cup. He maintains your lot. Are you weak? He says, "I am your strength." "I will strengthen you." And He will be as good as His Word. He will give strength equal to the day. Are you tempted? He will with the temptation make a way for your escape. Look to Him, and your refuge is certain. Trust in Him, and deliverance is sure. Are you friendless? He says, "I have called you My friends." And He will perform the part of a friend. He will counsel, relieve, and comfort you in every trouble and distress; and will never fail you nor forsake you. Are you bereaved? He asks, "Am I not better to you than ten children, or husbands, or wives — or whatever you have lost?" He can fill the void every lost relation, and more than make up for every loss. Are you aged? He says, "I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!"

"Let it suffice you, that I have promised, and I will perform My every promise. If I deny what you ask — I will give you something better. I will make all things work for your good. Therefore, do not be anxious, complaining, desponding, or foreboding!"

Thus you see there is enough promised. Enough to support us, comfort us, and carry us safely home! And if we have all we need, ought we not to be satisfied — though we do not have all that

we wish? The Bible is the directory for prayer — it tells us . . .

what to pray for,

how to pray, and

what to expect from the Lord. No one ever had all he desired in this world — and yet every Christian has confessed, "Not one Word of all that my God has promised, has failed!" Let us therefore . . . pray for what our God has promised; and be satisfied with what He is pleased to bestow.

Remember that, "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." If, therefore, our will runs in the channel of God's will, if we seek our sanctification principally — we shall never be disappointed, nor ever hear Him say, "Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter!"

72 The Widow's Warrant

The Widow's Warrant "Let your widows trust in Me." Jeremiah 49:11 The state of the widow is painful, and calls for pity and strong consolation. Having removed her head — who was her adviser, provider, comforter, companion, and stay — she appears exposed to the designs of the oppressor, the frowns of an unfeeling world, and the malicious darts of Satan! But the Lord is the widow's Friend, and has made many sweet and invaluable promises to her in His holy Word. To every widow who believes in Jesus — every promise that is confirmed in Christ belongs. But some of those promises are hers in a special and particular sense. Of such, the Lord speaks in the short portion before us now. It is short — because He would not burden her memory. It is comprehensive — because He would include all her needs. My widowed sister, the God who has taken away your husband, proposes Himself to fill his place. He says, "Your Maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is His name — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Look at Him in His greatness, glory, kindness, wealth, and tender love — and hear Him say, "I am your husband! I will never leave you. I will never neglect you. I will never turn away from you from doing you good."

He proposes to perform a husband's duties:

He will provide for your every need.

He will protect you from every danger.

He will defend you against every foe.

He will counsel you in every difficulty.

He will comfort you under all your sorrows.

He will be better to you than any earthly husband.

He will more than make up the loss which you have sustained.

He directs you into the way of peace. "Let," He says, "your widows trust in me." "I give them my Word — my Word of promise, the Word of the oath. My Word, which is stronger than the pillars of Heaven, and durable as the days of eternity. I refer them to my character. I have always been faithful and true. I have never falsified my Word, or despised a widow's prayer. I welcome them to my throne of grace. There I meet the praying widow, and I meet her on purpose to bless her. There I . . .

remove her burdens,

dry up her tears,

cheer her heart, and

grant her according to her faith.

I promise to attend to her request. I will not refuse a widow. I will not deny her a blessing; but I do for her exceeding abundantly above all that she can ask or think. I will always be her friend; others may change or fail her — but I never will. I will be to her a God, and do for her all that a God can do!"

"Let your widows trust in me." This amounts to a command — as when He says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Your God commands you to trust in Him.

It is a warrant — as when His servant says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." You are fully warranted to trust in your God . . .

at all times, in all places,

for all that He has promised,

for you do really need!

It is an exhortation — as when Paul exhorts, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering, for He is faithful who promised." You are exhorted to trust in your God, instead of . . .

yielding to fear,

dwelling on the past, or

doubting about the future.

It is a caution — as when the Lord says, "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." He cautions you not to trust in a friend, and to put no confidence in a human guide. Do not trust in man, however good or great; but, "trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah, there is everlasting strength!" Expect but little from the creature — for at best he is but a broken cistern. Expect everything from your God — for He is "the fountain of living waters."

Ask every godly widow you know, if her God has been faithful or not. Ask her, if she has ever been disappointed when she trusted in, and expected from her God. Ask her for her testimony, and she will doubtless say, "Not one thing has failed — of all that the Lord my God has promised!" Or, "You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your Word." Then do not yield to fear, and do not listen to Satan, for the eternal God says, "Let your widows trust in Me!"

73 The Friend of the Fatherless

The Friend of the Fatherless "In you the fatherless finds mercy." Hosea 14:3

It is a painful affliction to be deprived of a father, especially of a wise, judicious, and kind father — yet it is a common calamity. There are now thousands of families that have no head, and tens of thousands of children who have no father. To them the Lord speaks in His Word, and proclaims Himself the "Father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow." To them He condescends and proposes to fill the father's place, saying, "Will you now from this time cry unto me: My Father, you are the guide of my youth." He is "the helper of the fatherless." In Him, "the fatherless finds mercy." The children have lost the parent whose business it was to care for, guide, educate, comfort, protect and train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. No other creature can fill a father's place — but the Lord can. He has a father's heart and a father's eye — and "He relieves the fatherless and the widow." He is . . .

that suitable friend,

that present help,

that wise counselor,

which they need — and He has mercy for the fatherless.

They stand especially in need of mercy — and He has every variety of mercy, which He will illustrate and display in the experience of every fatherless child which seeks Him in sincerity and truth. Men may be deficient in mercy, even toward the fatherless; but God, our God in Jesus, will display the greatest kindness and compassion to His fatherless children. This renders Him so amiable, suitable, and glorious in the estimation of His people. Mercy is His sweetest attribute . . .

as beautiful as the morning light,

as measureless as the waters of the ocean,

as boundless as illimitable space,

as refreshing as the early dew,

as glorious as the noon-day sun!

Mercy is like His nature — pure, lovely, and eternal. Mercy is suited to all the needs of the fatherless — it is free, full, and meets every case!

Christian reader, are you a fatherless child? The Lord speaks to you. He assures you that He has mercy for you! He gives you His Word that you shall find mercy in Him.

He has pardoning mercy — which will suit your sinfulness; mercy that will blot out your sins, and remove them from you as far as the east is from the west!

He has delivering mercy — which will meet your misery; mercy which will deliver you from . . .
the power of sin,
the bondage of Satan,
the curse of the law,
the fear of death,
the terrors of judgment, and

all the soul-troubles which may fall upon you on earth! His mercy is tender mercy, which will suit the sickness of your soul. He will sympathize with you, pity you, and manifest the greatest forbearance and love. His mercy is so tender, that it will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. It will . . .

encourage the weak desire,
fan the feeble spark into a flame,

and take the will for the deed. His mercy is supplying mercy — to meet your needs and defects. It will supply all your needs, according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Whether your needs are temporal or spiritual — He will supply you. He will give you both grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from you, if you walk uprightly.

It is also sanctifying mercy — to suit your impurity. It will wash you in the laver of the Word, and in the fountain of a Savior's blood. It will teach you to wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It will sanctify your troubles, and make all things work together for your good.

It is rescuing mercy, which will appear for you, and deliver you from all the dangers which may line your way, and at last present you faultless before the throne of God! In a word, God's mercy will meet every case, circumstance, and condition in which it is possible for you to be placed! And it will more than fill a father's place.

Reader, will you not seek this mercy? It is in God. It is promised for the believer who is fatherless — yes, for all who are destitute. Oh, may you obtain this mercy!

Or, if you have obtained mercy, let me exhort you to dwell much on this excellent attribute of your God. Reader, let me exhort you to dwell much on this excellent attribute of your God. Meditate on God as all-merciful and all-sufficient for our every state! May we all imitate our merciful God, who is the friend of the fatherless.

74 The Single Christian's Rule

TheSingleChristian's Rule "She is free to marry anyone she wishes — but he must belong to the Lord."1 Corinthians 7:39

This, though spoken of widows — is the law of Christ in reference to all unmarried Christians, and is imperatively binding upon them. To slight it — is to slight the authority of Christ;

to reject it — is rebellion against the King of kings and Lord of lords;

and to act contrary to it — is to ensure sorrow, grief, and woe!

Celibacy is not sanctity — though it may, under some circumstances, be preferable to marriage. It is not required by the gospel, and in many instances, cannot be approved by the Lord.

Marriage is lawful — for God has instituted it;

it is honorable — for God commends it;

it is desirable — for God blesses it;

it is instructive — for God speaks by it;

it is profitable — for thereby we become helpers of each other;

and it is sometimes necessary — for the prevention of sin. But it must be according to God's Word — "only in the Lord." A Christian may only marry another Christian, for he is to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness — but rather reprove them." It is not enough for the other party to . . .

be moral — for morality is not salvation; or

an attendant on the means of grace — for many attend to whom the gospel is a savor of death unto death; or

a hopeful character — for of many it may be said, "They are not far from the kingdom of God," but they never enter it!

It must be a genuine believer, one who is born again by the Holy Spirit, who is in the Lord. That is, a person . . .

who is vitally united to the Lord Jesus;

who lives upon Christ;

who walks with Him in faith and holiness;

who is not ashamed to profess Him;

who adorns the doctrine of Christ his Savior;

a Christian not in word only — but in deed and in truth! And with no other, can a believer unite . . .
in accordance with God's Word,

under the approving smile of the Holy Spirit, or

with scriptural ground to expect the Lord's blessing. This command of Christ is plain; no one can misunderstand it — but from willful blindness.

It is imperative; it does not give permission to any one to qualify it, or excuse himself from conforming to it! If you are a Christian — you are solemnly bound to observe it. It is as much a crime to marry an unconverted person — as to steal, or to violate any of the ten commandments.

It is indispensable; no one has authority to set it aside, or to say, "I am not bound by it." If you are a Christian — you are bound by it, and woe unto you if you break it!

It is solemn; for it is a part of that Word by which Jesus will judge us at the last day. Therefore if you are tempted to trifle with it, remember you must be judged by it!

It is reasonable; "for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?" Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; but the body of an unbeliever, however moral, or amiable, or lovely — is the temple of Satan, who is preferred and served in preference to God. You are a member of the body of Christ — but every unconverted person is a member of the body of Satan! You are alive to God — every unregenerate person is dead in trespasses and sins. In a word, you . . .

are influenced by different spirits,

are walking in directly opposite roads,

observe contrary rules, and

serve two opposite masters!

"How can two walk together — unless they be agreed?" They cannot with comfort, propriety, or as mutual helps. The consequences of mixed marriages are generally fearful:

the unconverted partner becomes more hardened in sin;

the converted partner becomes carnalized and debased;

the family affairs cannot be conducted upon strictly Christian principles;

the children cannot be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;

there can be no family religion, though there may be a degree of the form of it;

and the cause of God must suffer by it.

If therefore, you have any regard for the authority of God,

if you have any concern to please the Lord Jesus Christ,

if you have any fear of grieving the Holy Spirit of God,

if you have any desire to maintain and increase your own spirituality,

if you have any wish to be approved and commended at the judgment of the great day,

if you would not be cruel to the soul of the unconverted person,

if you would not sow the seeds of sorrow, perplexity, and distress,

if you would not make bitter work for repentance —

then observe carefully and to the letter — this law of our Lord Jesus Christ! And when tempted to run counter to it, say, with holy Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness — and sin against God!"

75 The Wise Conclusion

The Wise Conclusion "We must obey God — rather than men!" Acts 5:29

Jehovah, as our glorious Creator and benevolent Preserver — has a right to command whatever He pleases, and to require of us obedience to His commands. But such is the wisdom, holiness, and benevolence of His nature — that He cannot command anything trifling, impure, or unkind! Wisdom, holiness, and kindness, are stamped upon all His requirements; and all of His commands are plainly revealed in His Word.

Whatever mysteries there may be in the doctrines of the gospel — there is no ambiguity about the commands — they are plain, positive, and universally binding. They are sometimes misunderstood, because man is prejudiced; or he is so proud, that he imagines that the Most High God is such a one as himself — and must therefore command just what puny man would.

If we search the Scriptures in a simple childlike spirit, and pray earnestly for divine teaching — we shall not make many mistakes in reference to the preceptive will of God. But man is so presumptuous sometimes, that he would set aside God's laws; he sets himself to distinguish between . . .

what is essential and what is non-essential,

what he may omit without fear, and

what must be observed.

Yes, he sometimes sets himself above God, and requires his children, or others — to obey him in opposition to God. Thus the High Priest and Jewish council acted; but the Apostles resisted their impious demand, and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men!"

Authority, whether it is the authority of a parent, an employer, or magistrate — is rarely to be resisted. But if any require us to sin against God — then they must be resisted, or we peril our own souls. But in such cases — we must be sure that God has commanded, and must be able to refer to some plain portion of His holy Word, as the rule of our conduct.

If we were forbidden to attend the means of grace, or read our Bibles, or honor the Lord by observing His own ordinances — we may justly persevere in the path of duty; yes, it would be sin to draw back.

If God commands — then I must obey;

if men oppose — then I must take up my cross;

if harm is likely to follow — then I must commit the keeping of myself unto God, as unto a faithful Creator.

Man has no right to require obedience — in opposition to God, or before God; and if man requires — then we ought not to obey. The believer's duty is plain — "to obey God." He is not to consult custom, or friends, or feelings; he is not to dwell too much upon possible consequences; but he is to ascertain the will of God, and having ascertained it, he is to do it from the heart, braving the displeasure of men!

Men will sometimes oppose God's will, for they are proud and ignorant; they will forbid their families from following out the convictions of their consciences, for they have no fear of God before their eyes. They will at least gravely advise against leaving the beaten tract, or incurring the displeasure or sneers of others — but they are not to be our counselors, any more than our lords. The path of duty — is the path of safety. The way of obedience to God — is the only happy and honorable way. If we suffer because we are Christians, or because as Christians we will obey God — then let us, "glorify God on this behalf." "If you are reproached for the name of Christ — then happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

Man's judgment may be against us — but the judgment of God will correct that of His creatures. Therefore let every one of us commend himself to God in well doing; and the day will soon arrive, when we shall be commended before angels and men; and our God will say unto us, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

76 Counsel and Promise

Counsel and Promise "In all your ways acknowledge Him — and He shall direct your paths."
Proverbs 3:6 The counsel of the wise should be regarded, especially when it is given under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. It is intended for our good, and cannot be neglected without loss. The Christian's path is often . . .

difficult — being through a dreary wilderness;

dark and perplexing — so that he knows not which path to choose;

all strange — for he has never trodden one foot of it before! But his God . . .

is always present with him,

is always ready to attend to him,

and is willing to direct him.

Therefore, "in all your ways acknowledge Him." As His beloved child — you are dependent upon Him. You should therefore acknowledge Him:

1. by consulting His Word — which gives you general rules to be applied to particular cases;
2. by believing His promise — in which He engages to be with you, to help you, to guide you, and to crown you with His blessing;
3. by praying for direction — God loves to be consulted by us, and we should never purpose, plan, or attempt to go anywhere without seeking His direction;
4. by watching His hand — it is not enough to read, believe, and pray; we must expect God to answer prayer, and look to see His hand working for us, clearing our way, and supporting us in it;
5. by submitting to His will — His will is not only regulated by wisdom, but love; He only wills our sanctification and salvation, and it is our duty to submit to His pleasure with patience, prayer, and faith;
6. by gratitude for favors already received — all our comforts are from God, to Him we are indebted for all we enjoy, and we should acknowledge the same with grateful praise. The Christian who acknowledges God by . . .

consulting His Word,

believing His promise,

praying for direction,

watching His hand,

submitting to His will, and
praising Him for His mercies —

will never be allowed to go far astray, or be long left in suspense.

Hence the promise, "He shall direct your paths." Man cannot even direct himself! This the prophet knew when he cried, "O Lord, I know that our lives are not our own. We are not able to direct our own steps!" (Jeremiah 10:23.), "A man's heart devises his way — but the Lord directs his steps!" (Proverbs 16:10.), "A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?" (Proverbs 20:21.) Therefore, "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him — and He shall bring it to pass." For, "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delights in His way." (Psalms 37:5, Psalms 37:23.)

He will preserve you from wrong paths — He will shine upon the right path — or He will lead you step by step, as He has said, "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way that you should go." (Isaiah 48:17.) And if at any time you feel bewildered, and are uncertain about the way, "Your ears shall hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it!" (Isaiah 30:21.) When God directs your paths and your ways please Him . . .

you will have peace of mind before Him,

you will become increasingly acquainted with Him,

and you will feel growing confidence in Him.

Therefore see the propriety of this counsel, and act upon it, for . . .

you are but a child, and are liable to be misled;

God is your Father and your Guide, and He expects you to consult Him;

He is willing to guide you by His counsel, until He receive you to glory.

You will not walk in the right path — unless He leads you; therefore acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, in the prosperous — and adverse, in the plain — as well as the difficult. He will guide you and conduct you right, for He says, "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." (Isaiah 42:16.) If the Lord leads you through the wilderness — He will bring you right; if He takes you along the longest road — you will find it is the safest; and be at length constrained to say, "He led me by the right path — to go to a city where I could live."

77 The Foolish Choice

The Foolish Choice "All the trees said to the bramble, 'Come and be our king.' The bramble said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon!'" Judges 9:14-15 This is the first parable in the Word of God, and it is very instructive. It was to the Shechemites, who had anointed a worthless bramble to be king over them; and it is so to many among us who imitate so foolish an example.

"All the trees said to the bramble, Come and be our king!" Sinners readily unite in evil; they renounce their allegiance to and dependence upon Jehovah; and unitedly display their folly by putting themselves under the government of some bramble!

It may be Satan — who reigns over all the children of disobedience.

It may be lust — which rules in all ungodly people.

It may be pleasure — which commands the poor unsettled worldling.

It may be worldly cares — which extend an iron scepter over many men of business.

It may be riches — the love of which drowns multitudes in destruction and perdition.

It may be honor or the applause of the multitude — which has attracted many into the whirlpool of destruction.

It may be a proud, haughty, unbending temper — which is as tormenting a bramble as any man can well anoint.

These are all base brambles, effects of the curse — and yet they are appointed by many to rule over them. Being under their influence or control — is like being under the government of a bramble; it is base — it is injurious — it is degrading. All who yield to such influence — subject themselves to misery, disappointment, and woe!

If the bramble is appointed — it will reign. "If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade." If I am to be king, honor me as such — let me reign. Trust in me for comfort, security, and peace. And is not this just the conduct of the multitude? Are they not looking for comfort and security, from their lusts — pleasures — riches — honors — applause — or the indulgence of their tempers and passions; to anything and everything, rather than the Lord! But as soon may the bramble in nature produce grapes, or the thistle figs — as for any, or the whole of these brambles — give real comfort, solid peace, or true security. Jesus alone can give what we need — and yet very few appoint Him to reign over them. But if the bramble be appointed it must be trusted, or its subjects be cursed. "If you will not honor me — then let fire come out of the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon!" Be true to your allegiance — or be consumed. The traitor in any cause is justly condemned. You have made your choice — be true to your profession; for the strongest must fall, if proved guilty. If all the trees appoint the bramble — then the bramble

will destroy the cedar, if it proves traitorous. Just so, the lusts, pleasures, or passions we now serve — will one day witness against its, and condemn us. Hell will be kindled by the fire that breaks out of our own follies.

Reader, see the folly of worldly wisdom — it only leads men to appoint a bramble to reign over them! See the arrogance of forbidden things — they demand entire subjection, constant fidelity, and full reliance! See the danger of subjecting to any but the Lord — fire will come forth of them and consume them!

Note the consequence of false dependancies — destruction! Destruction as by fire. Sinner, no one is fit to reign over you, but Jesus. He alone has the love, pity, wisdom, wealth, and forbearance necessary! Renounce your allegiance to all others, place your entire dependance on Him, and appoint him to reign over you.

He reigns in righteousness.

He rules in love. His laws are just. His government is wise. His subjects are safe, happy, and honorable!

78 Useful Employment

Useful Employment "And sitting down, they watched Him there." Matthew 27:36 The place where they sat was called Golgotha — Calvary, or the place of a skull. It was a hill or a rising on the north-west side of Jerusalem, and was appropriated for the execution of malefactors.

Here sin appeared in its most hideous form, bringing forth a painful, shameful death!

Here death triumphed in the most cruel way! And here man was degraded to the lowest degree.

To this spot, the Lamb of God came to be sacrificed;

here the Shepherd appears, to lay down His life for His sheep;

here we see Jesus, saving His people from their sins. The object is most striking: Jesus is crucified — dying the death of a Roman slave; never was such an object seen before. Many had been executed here — but all were criminals. No one ever professed what Jesus did — He said He was the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God. No one ever walked so correctly as He, even His judge was obliged to say, "I find in him no fault at all!" He did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with His God. He was condemned, though acknowledged guiltless; delivered over to a base people, to die a cruel death — and yet pronounced innocent!

How striking His manner, how singular His conduct! He . . .

comforts His mourners,

pities His bitterest foes, and

even prays for His murderers!

He was grossly-misrepresented; very few took a right view of His character, or spoke of Him as He justly deserved.

How deeply interesting is this sufferer to every spiritual mind — though hanging on a cross, though bleeding, groaning, and dying.

He is seen to be Jehovah's equal. His fellow, God by nature.

He is man's friend, without whom all must have perished forever, without help, and without hope.

He is Satan's antagonist, engaging him in the nature he had conquered, and overcoming him under the most disadvantageous circumstances.

He is mercy's representative, setting forth its depth, its tenderness, its power, and its constancy.

He is death's destroyer, overcoming it in its own dominions, by enduring it in its most cruel form.

He is making an atonement for sin, offering a sacrifice of expiation, and securing salvation to every humble believer.

Every view of Him is wonderful.

Every character He sustains is full of interest.

Every word He utters is full of meaning.

Oh to watch Him, to love Him, and to know that He suffered all for me!

They "watched" Him there. The soldiers watched Him, as a military guard, that no one should comfort or deliver Him. But others watched Him from different motives, and with different feelings. Our God and His Father watched Him, and saw His patience, His purity, His pity, His filial obedience, His perfect love; and how exactly He did and suffered all He had engaged to accomplish — all that was written of Him.

Angels watched Him — they had seen Him on His throne and worshiped Him; they had observed Him all the time He had sojourned on earth — but they never watched Him with such thoughts, such feelings, such wonder as now!

Devils watched Him; and strove and fought, and tried their utmost to overcome Him; and surely they must have wondered at His constancy and love.

Mary, John, and a few other disciples watched Him. With bleeding hearts, desponding spirits, and souls bewildered with confusion — they stood, and gazed, and wept!

Lost sinners watched Him — and were the only spectators who remained unaffected. How hard is the heart of man! How stubborn, how unfeeling! Sitting down, they observed His writhing frame; they watched His death-stricken countenance; they marked His quivering lips, and His dying sentences; they saw His eye-lids close, His head sink on His bosom, and knew the vital spark had fled. They watched Him, and saw the treatment he received, and the spirit He manifested.

Let us join them, let us sit on the brow of Calvary, and watch Him there.

Christian friend, does guilt oppress or alarm you! Sit down and see Jesus die the just for the unjust; see Him offer a sacrifice for your sins, and make an atonement for your guilt; He dies in your stead, and procures for you pardon, peace, and everlasting life. Are you suffering? Go to Golgotha, and see your Savior suffer. Behold and see, was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow? Watch Him, and see His patience, fortitude, and deep submission. He drains the bitter cup; He extracts the curse from all your afflictions, and only leaves behind what is medicinal and useful. Are you happy? Sit down and see what your comforts cost. If Jesus had not suffered — you would not have been comforted. All your comforts, joys, and bright prospects — are the effects of His agonies, bloody sweat, and dying groans! Never forget, in your happiest moments, the sorrows of your Savior — nor your vast obligations to Him. Are you at leisure? Sit down and watch Jesus, in His last, His dying hours. You cannot spend your leisure moments more profitably, or more consistently.

Watch Him — and wonder; wonder . . .

at His love,

at the effects of sin, and

at His amazing attachment to you.

Watch Him — and believe; could He possibly give greater proof of the truth of His promises, the tenderness of His compassion, and the power of His grace? What more could He do to deserve your confidence, gain your trust, or banish your unbelieving doubts?

Watch Him — and praise; praise His dear name, commend His finished work, speak of His amazing love.

Watch Him — and consecrate yourself entirely to His service; devote body, soul, time, talents — all to His glory and praise, in time and for evermore.

79 The Threatenings of God

The Threatenings of God "What will you say when He punishes you?" Jeremiah 13:21 God has threatened to punish lost sinners — every sinner who lives and dies in unbelief. His threatenings are written in His Word — that we may read them;

they are published by His ministers — that we may hear them;

they are often repeated — that we may not forget them;

some of them are fulfilled in this world — that we may believe and fear them. No unbelieving, impenitent, careless sinner shall escape! The whole of the wicked shall be turned into Hell — and all the nations that forget God.

Every one will be punished justly — in exact proportion to the nature and number of his sins.

Every one will be punished universally — in every part of body and soul.

Every one will be punished fearfully — without any mixture of mercy.

Every one will be punished eternally — without cessation or end. The threatenings of God are backed, and sustained . . .

by His omnipotent power;

by His unchangeable purpose;

by His impartial justice;

by His inflexible holiness;

and by His solemn oath.

They cannot be more sure, nor can they be more dreadful. Lost sinner, they are all pointed at you! They mean you. They speak . . .

of snares,

of fire and brimstone,

of a never-dying worm,

of a lake of fire,

of blackness and darkness,

of gnashing of teeth, and

of eternal separation from God.

Punishment is in store for you! You are warned of it, and invited to escape from it! But if you do not, then "What will you say when He punishes you?" Can you plead ignorance, and say that you did not know that sin and punishment are connected — that God had solemnly threatened such as you in His Word? You cannot — you have been warned, and now you are warned again. You are warned in time — that you may be safe and happy in eternity! Can you say that you never heard of a way of escape? No, for Jesus has been set before you, and you have been invited and exhorted to flee to Him and find safety. Can you say that you did not believe that God would be true to His Word? This were to insult Him to His face, and to tell Him plainly that you thought Him to be a liar! Will you say you intended to repent — but Satan deceived you? This will but be an acknowledgment, that you gave more heed to Satan than to God! But what will you say? What can you say? Suppose you were this moment summoned to appear before God, and He was to ask the question to you, "Sinner, what have you to say, what reason can you assign — that I should not punish you, as I have threatened in my Word?" Would you not be speechless?

Consider the importance of being prepared with an answer, against the time when it shall be demanded. Seriously think over the matter. Prepare your answer quickly, and endeavor to prepare such a one . . .

as will satisfy your conscience;

as will ease your torment;

as will confound Satan when he accuses you;

and appease the wrath of God. Can you find such an answer? If not, there is but one alternative; you must make up your mind to suffer the torments of quenchless flames forever — or flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation! He is the only way of escape — there is salvation in no other. There is pardon in His blood. There is mercy at His throne. There is pity in His heart. There is veracity in His Word. There is hope for you. Flee to Him — and you are safe. Reject Him, persevere in sin, prefer the world — and you must forever be lashed by an accusing conscience, be tormented by a cruel and remorseless devil, be punished by a just and holy God, and condemn yourself throughout eternity!

What will you say to this? Can you say it is not just? You will be convinced it is. Can you harden yourself in Hell? Suffering will increase with every attempt. Will you flee? Ah, where can you flee! All existences will be opposed to you, and armed against you; while every alleviation of your sufferings will flee away forever!

80 The Wise Choice

The Wise Choice "Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:42

Even Christians do not always choose wisely — but Mary did. We often manifest our folly in our preference — but she displayed her wisdom. She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus as a humble learner — she . . .

loved His person,

admired His preaching,

desired to learn His doctrine,

and above all to imbibe His spirit. Her object was communion with Him — in which we become conformed unto His image. She preferred fellowship with Jesus — to all anxious concern about entertaining Him as her guest. She preferred this to the commendations and praises of her visitors and friends. In her preference she revealed . . .

great spirituality of mind;

true wisdom and discernment;

attachment to her Lord and His doctrine;

deadness to the world and its vain formalities;

a concern for the present welfare of her own soul;

and a willingness to renounce all for Jesus.

Happy Mary! Honorable woman! May you be my pattern! Your choice was wise; your part was a worthy portion; and your example is held up for our imitation.

How many choose what they cannot keep — and prefer what they must part with. Many things we must lose — others we may lose. A good name and reputation may be sullied by the breath of slander, or stolen by the unmerciful tale-bearer. If we possess it, we are not sure that we shall retain it. The esteem and honor of friends, is a lovely flower; but the frost of adversity may nip it; or the scorching heat of persecution may destroy it. Our prospects in life may be as attractive as the May-day morning; but the thunder-cloud of bereavement may overshadow it; and the dispensations of a wise and holy Providence may entirely change it. Our gifts and abilities, which please us and profit others, may be removed by fevers, the paralyzing stroke, or the judgments of an offended God.

Yes, our temporal and spiritual comforts may all be removed from us, if we choose and prefer them to Mary's portion. But a place at the feet of Jesus, an interest in His love, fellowship with Him

— if these are preferred, they can never be taken away!

If grace brings us in humility to the Savior's feet;

if we really enjoy communion with Him more than the fleeting pleasures of time;

if an interest in the blessings of the glorious gospel is once realized;

if love to Jesus once reigns in the heart;

if the promise pleaded is acknowledged at the throne of grace;

if hope, blooming with immortality, springs up in the soul;

and if faith lays hold of the Redeemer's love, power, and atoning blood

— then we have a portion of which we cannot be deprived! Then . . .

Hell may oppose us — but we shall prevail,

the world may persecute us — but we shall overcome,

trials may press us — but our strength will be equal to our day. At the feet of Jesus we are safe — no enemy can overcome us there! At the feet of Jesus we are holy — no sin can gain dominion there! At the feet of Jesus we are happy — no trouble can be too much for us there! My soul, choose Mary's place — and Mary's portion. There is a place at the feet of Jesus for you! The good part may be obtained and enjoyed by you — and once obtained, your Lord will not allow you to be deprived of it.

Reader, there is a place also for you! You may sit by the side of Mary. Your sin is no obstacle in the way — for Jesus will pardon that! Your unworthiness is no barrier — for it is the worthless sinner's place! Oh, come to Jesus now,

take your place at His feet now,

sit down as one who intends to remain,

listen to His sweet voice,

receive His holy doctrines,

taste His precious love,

rest your soul on His atoning blood —

and Heaven will immediately begin in your soul!

81 The Alarm-bell!

The Alarm-bell!

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth!"
Revelation 3:15-16

Here is a solemn charge: "You are neither cold nor hot!" We profess the latter — to have the fire of love burning in our bosoms; and holy zeal boiling in our hearts. We profess to possess and be influenced by the most pure and powerful principles — to be like Jesus, whose food was to do His Father's will, and who could say, "Zeal for your house has consumed Me!" But we are not quite the former — or altogether cold. It cannot be said there is no concern, no attention, no interest manifested. We are not altogether careless and hardened. We are charged with the intermediate state, "You are lukewarm." You are at ease, instead of . . .

laboring in the Lord's vineyard,

fighting the Lord's battles, and

carrying out the Lord's commands.

You are resting on the bed of sloth — instead of fighting the good fight of faith.

You are formal — instead of being full of life, vigor, and the power of godliness.

You are presuming — instead of attending to the admonition which says, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." And the command, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Fire is lacking. Holy determination, and diligence in the Lord's cause, are lacking. "You are lukewarm!"

Here is a satisfactory proof of the truth of the charge, "I know your works!" Jesus knows not only our profession — but our works. He observes not only our hearts — but our conduct. He expects not only a sound creed and a scriptural profession — but fruit, "much fruit," fruit that will, "remain," "fruit that will abound." He knows all our works — their nature, number, and tendency. He knows them intimately and perfectly. Works are a proof of our real condition — and we should take them as such, for Jesus does.

"Faith without works is dead, being alone." Professing faith without works answerable thereunto, is hypocrisy! "Show me your faith without your works — and I will show you my faith by my works."

Here is a serious wish. "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!" The Lord hates indecision. The Savior declares that those who are not decidedly for Him, are against Him. He condemns half-heartedness in His cause. He desires that all who

profess Him — should honor Him. He prefers coldness to lukewarmness in religion. Here we are taught that a little religion is a very bad thing; we had better have none — than be satisfied with a little. Christ would rather have no servants — than cool, selfish, worldly ones; He loves to see His people throw their whole hearts into His cause — burning with love to His name, and boiling with zeal for His glory.

Here is a conditional sentence. "So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth!" That is, without repentance, as the following verses show. Jesus as the Intercessor takes up our names into His mouth, and even for the fruitless fig-tree pleads for a time, saying, "Let it alone this year also." But if it remains fruitless, He says, "Now cut it down!" So with the lukewarm — He may bear long with them; but He will reject them at last. He will reject them and their services — as loathsome and disgusting. He has cast away many lukewarm churches — until their places could not be found! And He has cast away many lukewarm professors — and they have been gathered up, cast into the fire and burned! And as sure as His name is jealous, as certain as he hates lukewarmness — He will cast away every cool professor with loathing and disgust!

Many who are now considered respectable professors, whose external conduct is decent, and whose attendance on the means of grace is tolerable regular — will be rejected and disowned by Him at last. Why? They are not hot! There is no fire, no zeal, no self-denial, no determined efforts for the promotion of the Lord's glory, or for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause!

Professor, examine, are you lukewarm? If so, "look to it — for evil is before you;" and no common evil, the Lord Jesus will disown you, refuse you, reject you as vile, loathsome, and abominable in His sight! Surely, many professors have cause to tremble. Surely, some of our churches must be in a dangerous case. "Let us search and try our ways — and turn again to the Lord."

See the need of repentance — for professors to repent, lukewarm professors especially. Jesus says, "Be zealous therefore, and repent." "I rebuke you in the way of chastening — be zealous therefore, in the way of repentance."

See the importance of a revival of religion in our churches, and in all our hearts! Oh, to keep at a distance from the danger against which we are warned!

82 Fear Produced!

Fear Produced!

"When I consider of all this — I fear Him!" Job 23:15

Thoughtless sinners are often fearless people; and to many, nothing is so painful as honest reflection. If they would be easy — they must not think; or at least they must not think upon serious subjects. Yet we must all eventually come to reflection — if we escape it here on earth — it will be said to us in Hell, "Son, remember!" But what is it which produces this fear of God? When I consider His law as holy, just, and good; when I view it as extending to my motives, thoughts, words, and actions; and compare my general conduct with it — then "I fear Him!" For I see that I have not kept His precepts, nor even aimed to keep them.

Just so when I consider the infinite purity of His nature, that he does, must, and will eternally hate and reject everything that is stained with moral defilement; and know that my nature is dreadfully depraved, that my heart is a sink, a fountain, an ocean of pollution — then "I fear Him!"

Also, when I consider His omnipotence, and know that it will be employed in punishing sin throughout eternity — and contrast it with my weakness, the very thought of being crushed by His power makes me "fear Him!"

Also, if I consider that His eye follows me, searches me, and penetrates my very being — the thought that my heart is desperately wicked, and my life a course of sin, makes me "fear Him!" When I read the threatenings of His holy Word, so numerous, so dreadful — and yet so just; and consider that I am absolutely at His disposal, and cannot escape out of His hand — then "I fear Him!" But especially when I consider His wrath as revealed against sin, and as displayed . . .

in the destruction of the old world,

in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah,

in the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,

and particularly as seen in the sufferings and death of His own Son, as the substitute of sinners, and think of my deserts — then "I fear Him!"

I am afraid of being called to His righteous judgment, of standing naked before Him, of being judged according to my works. I am afraid He will not have mercy upon me, pardon my sins, and save me with an everlasting salvation. Then my fear horrifies me, and, "I would gladly fly out of His hand!" Is this your case, Reader? If so, let me direct you to a REMEDY for this fear.

Look at the Lord as revealed in Jesus — then His terror will not make you afraid, nor His power, law, or justice, terrify you. Here He is love. Here He is light — amiable, lovely, benevolent. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Hear Him in the Gospel. Here He invites you to approach Him, promises you a full pardon, and presents to you a righteousness answerable to all the claims of His law and the demands of His justice.

Obey Him at once. He bids you to come — approach Him. He commands you to believe — confide in Him. He waits to be gracious — approach and be blessed. Use the name of Jesus as warranted. Plead it for all you need. Wear it as your choicest ornament. Trust in it, as your ground of acceptance with a holy God. Aim to please God in all things. He is easily pleased. If there is only a willing mind — it is accepted, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. Walk close with Him. He loves your company. He asks you to keep near Him. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your steps." Keep your eye on the Redeemer. Jesus is the Mediator. He stands between God and every coming sinner. He presents his blood and obedience to the Father for your acceptance; and takes your poor, broken, sinful prayers — and cleanses, arranges, perfumes, and so presents them to the Most High God. This is the remedy of all slavish fear; and thus acting, instead of saying, "When I consider of all this — I fear Him!" you will say, "When I consider all this — I love Him, I bless Him, I rejoice in Him."

83 Fear Prohibited!

Fear Prohibited!

"Fear not — I will help you!" Isaiah 41:13

Saints are the subjects of fear — and they often fear most who have the least reason. But our Heavenly Father forbids our fears, and our gracious Savior says, "Do not be afraid — only believe." Slavish fear dishonors God, by reflecting poorly on His kindness, care, or veracity; for if He is infinitely kind, if He cares for us, if His Word of promise is true — then what can a believer have to fear?

Needless fear not only dishonors God — but it weakens the soul; and this is manifest in all our exercises of faith, hope, and love. It also encourages Satan, who takes advantage of our fears to distress us, fills our minds with confusion, and our souls with gloom. It unfits us for duty — we can neither do nor suffer the will of God as we should — if our souls are tormented with gloomy fears! In a word, slavish fear reflects poorly on the gospel, stumbles the world, and is entirely groundless — springing only from ignorance or unbelief. Our God says, "Fear not — I will help you." WHO is this that promises to help us? The omnipotent Jehovah, who has all things in Heaven, earth, and Hell, at His command, and under His control! But will He really help us in every trial, difficulty, and need? He will! And you may not only draw this conclusion from His promise here set before you — but from His relation to you. You are His own, His children, His chosen, His beloved; the tenderness of a Father's heart, the love of a bridegroom's bosom.

You may also rest on the faithfulness of God — who assures you that He will help you! His very nature, which is love;

His promise, which is truth; and

His relation, which is the closest possible —

all combine to assure you that he will help you!

Also your dependence, the result of His wisdom — appeals to Him; you can say with David, "I will cry unto God Most High, unto God that performs all things for me."

You have also an Intercessor constantly before the throne — who never . . .

takes His eye off of you,

changes in His love to you,

or ceases to plead for you!

Also, your God can get glory by helping you!

"Fear not," therefore, "I will help you!" And help you speedily, effectually, frequently — all the way from earth to Heaven.

Perhaps a widow's eye may rest upon this page: "Fear not!" Your God will help you! "Your Maker is your husband, the Lord Almighty is His name — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth!" And He says, "Let your widows trust in me."

Reader, are you poor and friendless? "Fear not!" Look to Jesus, call upon your God, He will surely help you. In Him, "the fatherless finds mercy." By Him, the poor and oppressed are regarded with pity and compassion — and He will not allow them to appeal to Him in vain.

Reader, are you weak and sickly? "Fear not!" He will strengthen you, He will make your bed in your sickness. He will answer to your prayers, and glorify His grace and goodness in you.

If God is your Father, if Jesus is your Friend — then you have no real ground for fear! He will be with you in trouble. He will deliver you and honor you. He will set you on high, because you have known His name.

Fear nothing but sin! Fear no one but God! Do not fear Him with a slavish fear — unless you are living in sin, and are a stranger to His grace and salvation. The fears of a believer can never be justified, nor should they for one moment be encouraged. Faith . . .

honors God,

conquers Satan,

overcomes difficulties, and

fills the bosom of a believer with joy and peace.

"Rest," therefore, "in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

"On everlasting arms I lean;

These only can sustain my hope;

These have until now my refuge been.

And these, through life, shall hold me up!

I can look forward, now, with joy,

Though in myself a feeble worm;

For Jesus will His power employ,

And save my soul in every storm!"

84 Beloved — yet Sick

Beloved — yet Sick "Lord, behold he whom you love is sick!" John 11:3

Sickness is one of the effects of sin — but it is not always a proof of God's displeasure. The objects of His love are a poor and afflicted people. Whom the Lord loves — he chastens. The objects of His love may be known.

They are peculiar in their experience:

they fear sin;

they have low views of themselves;

they prize the throne of grace;

they highly value God's Word;

they love, cleave to, and depend entirely on Jesus for acceptance with God, and complete salvation;

they pant after holiness;

they pine for the presence of God; and

they prefer anything to being banished from Him.

They are singular in their practice:

they are separate from the world;

they are much in private with God;

they have no relish for the gaities and vanities of the profane;

and they wish and aim to copy the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

They say by their life, pursuits, and profession: "I am the Lord's!" The love of Jesus weans them from the world — and preserves them from inordinately loving the creature. The Savior loves all such. His love has been fixed on them from eternity past. His love to them is strong, tender, and deep. He loves them always, and will love them forever. But the love of Jesus does not prevent sickness; nay, sometimes it actually sends it! Lazarus was beloved — but Lazarus was sick. Bodily disease is often sent as a blessing — it is God's medicine. . .

to purge out some gross humours from the soul;

to wean us more from the world;

to embitter sin; and

to bring us to feel more than ever our dependence on the Lord.

It is sometimes sent as a correction:

we have perhaps been ungrateful for our health;

or we have been light, trifling, and worldly;

or we have over-valued the things of time, and practically slighted the things of God;

or we have been hewing out broken cisterns;

or we have been anxious and troubled about many things — to the neglect of the one thing needful

— and sickness is intended to chasten, correct, and cure us! Or it may be sent for instruction. We often learn more during a short illness — than we do in months and years of health. Then we see .

. .

the real emptiness of the world,

the vanity of the creature,

the folly of seeking a portion below,

the importance of divine things,

the value of salvation in Jesus,

the blessedness of fellowship with God, and

the necessity of being like servants waiting for the Lord.

Then we . . .

get nearer to our God,

become more detached from the world,

and enjoy divine things with a double relish.

Surely this sickness is sent in love. Does the mother love her child the less, because she sees it necessary to give it bitter medicine? Or, does a father love his son less, because he must chastise him to prevent his ruin? Or, is it unkind to teach a pupil the most valuable and important lessons, even if it requires confinement and difficult study for a time? No! Just so, Jesus send sickness to His people in love and kindness. But when saints are sick — Jesus should be sought; and to Him the application should be made. He is our physician, and He alone can give skill to the earthly physician, or render the means effectual. He is also one of the family — He is, "the brother born for adversity." Now He is especially needed, now He is peculiarly suitable, and now He is willing to visit and bless. He is our best friend, and deeply interested in our everlasting welfare. He requires that we visit Him, inform Him, invite Him to our sick chambers, and strive to profit by the afflictive dispensation. In making application, we should plead with Him on the ground of His love, "He whom you love is sick!" It is important that our state be decided, before sickness comes — also

that our walk in health should be consistent and spiritual — that our friends may thus plead for us. The sisters knew that Jesus loved Lazarus, and that Lazarus loved Him. But how many sisters there are, who do love Jesus themselves — but their brothers do not; they cannot go to Jesus for them in sickness, as these sisters did. Oh happy family where sisters and brothers all love Jesus, and are beloved of Him. If sickness visits such a house, with confidence may the other branches apply to the Savior, and love will listen, approve, and act for the benefit of its objects.

85 Happy as the Day

Happy as the Day "In your name shall they rejoice all the day." Psalms 89:16

"Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name — the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming: The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Exodus 34:5-7 The believer has all the elements of misery in his nature, and he is often surrounded by the most trying circumstances. Yet he has a source of joy, which is sufficient to enable him to rejoice all the day long. He may be happy every day, and all the day. He should rejoice — but not as the world does in health, wealth, wisdom, skill, strength, station, or worldly prospects; but in the name of his God. The name of God reveals His nature, His purposes, and the provision He has made for His people; it was proclaimed to Moses, (Exodus 34.) It is embodied in Jesus, and it assures the Christian of all that he can need, and should be the object of his glory and joy. The name of God assures us of pardon — full, free, and immutable; a daily pardon, a pardon of all sin; for a part of His name is, "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Here every word that is used for the evils of the heart, and the improprieties of the life, in the holy Scriptures, is introduced, to show that all manner of sin is forgiven. God pardons daily — the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, and the sins of the life. May we not well rejoice all the day in the name of our God, which forbids fear, generates confidence, and promises pardon. No one feels himself so unworthy, as the real Christian; and he has a growing sense of unworthiness which would weigh him down — but his God says, "I am gracious." Grace looks for nothing in its objects — but takes advantage of the creature's unworthiness to glorify itself. And this part of the divine name assures the believer of acceptance with God, and of a standing before him as a beloved child in Jesus. For as base and unworthy as we are — we are accepted "in the beloved," to the praise of His glorious grace. A believer has often a vivid and heart-affecting view of his daily infirmities, and sees so much in his own spirit, temper, disposition, and conduct which must be most offensive in the sight of God, that he is occasionally tempted to think that God will cast him away from His presence, and take His Holy Spirit from him; but the name of his God is, "slow to anger." Swift to show mercy, slow to manifest wrath, displaying infinite patience, forbearance, and grace. Not only so — but the name of God assures him of pity in weakness and affliction, of supply in poverty and need, and of comfort in distress and sorrow; for his God is, "the merciful." Mercy will pity and sympathize with misery; until it relieves and delivers. Mercy is laid up for future needs, and kept for the day of need; for He keeps mercy for thousands.

Every promise shall be made good, and every promised blessing shall be given as required, for Jehovah is, "abundant in truth." His Word is the word of veracity, and will be fulfilled to the very letter. It may be seen by-and-bye, that God has often gone beyond His promise — but it will not be seen that He ever came short of it.

If then Jehovah is the gracious, the merciful, and slow to anger; if He keeps mercy for thousands, forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; if He is abundant in goodness and truth; and if His name is to be illustrated and glorified, in dealing with His people — then may they not well rejoice in it all the day long? It gives a warrant to faith, hope, and prayer, and secures the believer always. The consistent Christian rejoices in God's name, as containing all that he needs, and as preventing all he fears. He rejoices in it in private and in public — in prosperity and in trial. His joy is holy and humble; it is abiding and sweet.

Reader, a believer has always cause for joy, and the cause of his joy is always the same — and it is his duty as well as his privilege to rejoice in the name of his God. The unhappiness of Christians often arises from their ignorance of God's name, or from the working of unbelief, which leads them to imagine that it will not be illustrated in their experience.

Believer, do you know God's name? If so, rejoice in it, spread the knowledge of it, and let all see that it is the source of your sweetest joy!

86 The Startling Demand

The Startling Demand "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?" Job 22:5 The effects of sin are dreadful! Sin hardens the heart of man — and provokes the wrath of God. It is rebellion against His authority, pouring contempt on His Word, and insulting Him to His face. Every sin is great — yet there are degrees in sin, as well as numbers of sins. Therefore the inquiry, "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Careless sinner — you slight God's book; you despise His solemn warnings; you disbelieve His plain and solemn threatenings; you make light of His invitations; you presume on His mercy; and you perhaps question, yes, provoke His justice. "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Formal professor — you are resting in a name, or in the performance of a few duties; but you neglect the exhortation, "Examine yourself whether you be in the faith;" you practice deception upon yourself, by crying, "Peace, peace — when there is no peace." You deceive the simple by your fair words and unfelt statements; you conclude you are safe, without any good grounds; you act as though you disbelieved Jehovah's omniscience, omnipresence, and veracity; you court destruction; "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Light-minded, licentious professor — you are insulting God's holiness; you are trifling with the Savior's blood; you abuse free and sovereign grace; you despise the idea of a judgment to come; you trifle with eternity, and are two-fold more a child of Hell than before you made any profession of Christianity. "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Worldly-minded, covetous professor — look at your conduct. God has promised a supply of temporal things. He has commanded you to hold the things of time with a loose hand; because, "the time is short." He bids you to be liberal to His cause and His poor; He directs you to lay up for yourself treasures in Heaven; He exhorts you to set your affections on things above — not on things on the earth; He assures you that you cannot "serve God and mammon;" He informs you that covetousness is idolatry; and yet you, "rise early, and late take rest," you grind the poor, withhold from the church, and are far more anxious to increase wealth, than spirituality; to be rich, than to be useful; "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Backslider — look at your case; you were once full of light, fired with love, clothed with zeal, and entirely devoted to the cause and glory of God. But now you are dark, lifeless, gloomy, inactive, and feel but little concern for sinners or the glory of God. You are sinning against knowledge — love — profession — conscience — the law and the gospel. "Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins infinite?"

Dear friends, examine yourselves; look at the nature and number of your transgressions: see how they are aggravated by the privileges you possess; they point to Heaven like mountains, they spread before you like a river. But do not despond, yield not to despair: there is a remedy for great wickedness, for infinite iniquities, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." You are

welcome to this remedy, you are welcome to it this moment. Once more you are apprised of it, directed to it, and encouraged to apply for it. Do not slight it, dare not despise it; it will but aggravate your sin and increase your guilt!

87 The Alternative

The Alternative

"Let Him take hold of my strength, that He may make peace with me; and He shall make peace with me." Isaiah 27:5

We are all, by nature, in opposition to God — His avowed and determined foes! This enmity is written out in our conduct, it is rooted in our hearts. But how wicked to hate a God who is love!

How dangerous to be at war with one who is Omnipotent!

How dreadful to fight against one whose mercy is infinite, and whose wrath is a consuming fire!

Yet such is the case — such are our circumstances. And all the fault is on our side, all the blame is attached to us. It was we that went to war with Him; we have persevered in our opposition to Him; and we have insultingly rejected all His overtures for peace. Yet, we are only like briars and thorns before a devouring fire; we are every moment liable to be consumed; there is but a step between us and destruction! We have provoked His wrath, and deserve to feel His indignation! But must we suffer the due desert of our crime? Is there no possibility of avoiding the dreadful doom? Yes, the Lord proposes an alternative; we must either stand against Him in battle, like briars and thorns placed before the consuming fire — or we must take hold of His strength and make peace with Him. He has laid help upon ONE that is mighty; He has appointed a Peacemaker; to Him He has entrusted the great work of reconciling sinners; and He calls Him — His Strength — the Strong One — the Mighty God.

He appears before us, full of grace and truth; and His appearance is, as though the Lord stretched out His hand, and in the most alluring accents said, "Come, and be reconciled to me. I will pardon all your sins. I will forget all your crimes. I will take you to me as a people. I will make you my friends. I will treat you as dear children whom I tenderly love. I will rejoice over you to do you good. I will delight in you, and you shall be my sons and daughters. I have made provision for all this in my Son. His life of obedience — shall be set against your life of folly; His sacrifice — shall atone for your guilt. I will accept you, bless you, and glorify you in Him. I present Him to you, receive Him; rely on His perfect work, plead His worthy name; submit yourselves in penitence at my feet — and peace is made; reconciliation is effected, and I am your God and Friend forever!"

Dear friend, peace with God is most desirable; for without it there can be no true comfort; no permanent safety; no salvation. Its importance is infinite. It is essential to usefulness, holiness and joy. Let us take hold of the Lord's strength; that is, let us believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and seek Him in prayer — so shall the strength of God be ours. His power, which is engaged against the obstinate sinner — is on the side of the believer, to befriend and protect him. So shall we make peace with Him, not meritoriously, that is done by the blood of the cross; but instrumentally, we shall find peace, obtain peace, enjoy peace. The peace of Jesus will be ours. The peace of God will rule in our hearts, and be to us a present Heaven.

Observe: Peace with God is attainable. But it can only be obtained in God's way — by believing in Jesus. Seeking peace is acceptable to God. Every seeker is encouraged by God. You are reduced to this dilemma — you must knowingly, wickedly, and inexcusably maintain war with God, and take the consequences — or submit to His authority, accept His terms, take hold of His strength, and be at peace with Him.

88 The Wonder!

The Wonder!

"Behold, God is my salvation!" Isaiah 12:2 No one can consistently use this language but an enlightened, sanctified, happy, believer. Still it is truly wonderful, and must appear so, if we consider what such a character was before he received grace. He may have been grossly immoral — as Manasseh, Mary, or the crucified thief. Or he may have been held in by the restraints of education, the influence of society, or the power of God. But whatever may have marked the outward conduct — the heart was enmity against God, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." There was not one pure desire, one holy thought, or one feeling of sympathy with God — until it was produced there by the Holy Spirit. And even now he feels, and is obliged to confess, that there is an unfathomable depth of depravity in his nature; that he is ever prone to turn aside like a broken bow; yes, that in himself, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing.

Further, what would he have been — but for the grace of God? This is a question which none but God can answer. Look at the vilest, the most debased, the lowest of our race — and it is not unfair to say, "Such we may have been — but for free and sovereign grace." "By the grace of God — I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

Let us turn from the person to the fact, "Behold, God is my salvation." Think of the greatness of God — His infinity, immensity, eternity! "He sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; He stretches out the Heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in." Consider His purity, and the extensive requirements of His law; try to catch a glimpse of His glory; and you will be filled with wonder at the thought — that God is the salvation of such a worm. For what does it imply — but that God, in all His greatness, purity, and glory — is engaged to deliver a poor, polluted, weak, and erring creature — from all real evils, both present, and to come. And then just think of how this deliverance is effected.

He takes our nature — and becomes man;

He takes our place — and is poor in this miserable world;

He takes our sins — and becomes a curse;

He suffers our desert — and dies on a shameful cross!

How astonishing! How calculated to fill us with amazement and love! God — becomes man; the author of Heaven — appears as a creature on earth; the fountain of purity — bows beneath a weight of sin; and the source and center of happiness — is the man of sorrows, the bleeding surety, the dying friend of His foes!

"Behold, God is my salvation." He would save — but no one could save for Him. His own arm must bring salvation,

His own obedience must furnish a righteousness,

His own blood must furnish a ransom, and

His own death must make an atonement.

Astonishing!

O the depth!

Behold, and wonder!

Behold, and admire!

Behold and adore!

Behold, and seek an interest in this great salvation! Behold, and take encouragement; if He saves such sinners, whom can he not save? If He save such, whom will He not save? Through eternity it will be a matter of wonder, and a subject of praise — that God should be our salvation. If God is our salvation — are we not safe? If God is our salvation — should we not be happy? If God has done so much for us, and has become salvation to us — will He withhold any good thing from us?

89 The Effect of Freedom

The Effect of Freedom "I will trust, and not be afraid." Isaiah 12:2 No one can trust in God, until he knows God, and enjoys something of the liberty of the gospel. Until he knows that His anger is turned away, that Jesus has made peace, that we are accepted in the Beloved — he cannot consistently use this language. It is a result arising out of the enjoyment of a great and precious privilege; if God is our salvation, and we know it, and enjoy it — then indeed, we may say, "I will trust, and not be afraid."

Such a believer will trust in God's gracious Word, which informs him of . . .

what God is,

what He has provided for His people,

what He has pledged to give them and to do for them;

and which is His warrant to expect every good thing which he may need.

He will trust in the wealth of God, his unbounded resources, which us Jesus are made over to us; to supply our needs, dissipate our fears, and fill us with joy and peace. The riches of mercy, the riches of grace, and the riches of glory, in Jesus and through Jesus are ours.

He will trust in the love of God, which is the source of every blessing, the fountain of life, light, and happiness; which is infinitely tender constant, and fruitful.

"I will trust," says the happy Christian, for . . .

God has spoken;

God is gloriously rich;

God is pure, infinite, eternal love.

There is no cause for doubting, or ground for fear; my eternal interests are secured, and the needs of time provided for. I have the fullest security, a basis for unbounded confidence:

the covenant ordered in all things and sure;

the many exceeding great and precious promises;

the solemn oath of God;

the precious blood of Jesus;

and the character of Jehovah Himself.

All combine to bid me, "trust and not be afraid!"

What,

though Providence may frown;

though God may delay to answer my prayers;

though circumstances may unite to perplex and try me;

though the Lord may hide His face from me; speak against me for my sin; yes, though He slay me — yet may I trust in Him! His Word cannot be broken, His oath cannot be violated, the blood of Jesus cannot be dishonored, nor can the character of my God be sullied! "I will therefore trust."

"I will not be afraid."

What should I fear? Poverty? — it is an appointment of infinite wisdom and love, it was the chosen lot of Jesus, and blessed are the poor.

What shall I fear? Dangers? — when I pass through the waters, my God will be with me, and through the rivers, they will not overflow me; when I pass through the fire — I shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon me.

What shall I fear? Satan? — God shall bruise Satan under my feet shortly!

What shall I fear? Death? — Jesus has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; saints do not die, they only sleep in Jesus.

What shall I fear? That God will change and reject me, and leave me to the wrath to come? — the mountains may depart and the hills be removed; but His kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on me.

"I will not be afraid."

My God is for me. My God is with me. My God surrounds me. My God dwells in me. My God is everything to me.

Am I weak? My God is my strength.

Am I exposed? My God is my defense and the Rock of my refuge.

Am I poor? My God is my wealth, and is pledged to supply all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Have I all the elements of misery and wretchedness in my fallen and depraved nature? My God is my happiness, my song, and my salvation; in Him I have enough to make me happy in the most trying circumstances, and to fill me with joy and peace in the midst of afflictions and troubles!

"I will trust and not be afraid," for I have enough to make me confident and happy; and though it is difficult to exercise confidence at all times, it is not impossible. I will then look to my God for confidence, as well as for salvation!

90 The Mournful Complaint

The Mournful Complaint "The Comforter who should relieve my soul is far from me." Lamentations 1:16 The Holy Spirit is the appointed and recognized Comforter of the church of God; it is His work to bring home and apply the consolations of the gospel. For this work He is peculiarly fitted. He has infinite wisdom to solve all our difficulties and doubts. He has power to animate and cheer the soul. He has love and tenderness to sympathize and bear with our manners. He is omnipresent, and therefore we are always under His eye. He is the supreme God, one with the Father and the Son; the object of love, trust, and worship.

It is His work, in the economy of redemption, to relieve the soul . . .

from guilt and darkness — which is done by bringing home and applying the atonement;

from doubt and fear — which is by unfolding and applying the promises;

from every species of bondage — by revealing the perfect work of Christ, and the paternal character of God.

He often relieves the soul . . .

by assisting in prayer;

by strengthening our faith;

by speaking peace through the blood of Jesus; and

by leading us to recline on the bosom of divine faithfulness.

He brings back the soul from all its wanderings, by afflictions, or His work within — and leads into the paths of peace, liberty, and obedience. The saints of old had realized and obeyed the power and peaceful operations of the Spirit; but now they cry, "The Comforter who should relieve my soul is far from me!"

We are not strangers to this experience; few ever enjoyed the presence of the Spirit — but they had to mourn His absence. He at such times withholds His help in prayer — and then it is but a dry duty; we feel no nearness to God; no sweet drawing out of the soul; no fervor; no taking hold of the promise and pleading it in confidence; no delightful fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. All is dry and barren. The closet becomes a dull place; and the soul is ready to cry out of the duty, "What a weariness it is!" The very gift of prayer seems diminished, while the grace appears quite gone.

He refuses His presence in ordinances — and then there are no sweet glimpses of Jesus; no tastes of divine love; no sealing of the Word on the heart; but all is lifeless, tedious, and dull!

He denies His teaching when we read the Word — and then the holy book appears stripped of its value, importance, and beauty; we read without interest, profit, or enjoyment. It is like attempting to

read in the dark, or to eat when there is no appetite.

He leaves us to suffer as though alone — and then there is no light arising in the darkness, no cheering hope in the gloom; no bright prospect opening in the distance; but all is dreary dark, and painful.

Now we learn by bitter experience, our dependence on the Holy Spirit — and our need of His presence, assistance, and love. The Comforter withdraws on account of sin. It grieves Him — it pains Him at His heart! It is a defiling of His temple, a quenching His influences, a grieving His love! He loves the believer — but He hates and will reprove his sin.

There is no relief or consolation in His absence. No one can supply His place. If He departs, our comfort is gone — our strength is gone; and we have only the lifeless form of religion left.

It is our mercy that He never entirely departs — though He retires to a distance. He never finally leaves — though He may suspend his comforting influences for a long time.

Dear friend, is it so, that our comfort, peace and prosperity depend thus on the Holy Spirit? Then how careful we should be not to grieve Him — how anxious we should be to please Him! We should constantly remember that though our comforts flow from the Father — who is the God of all comfort; and come to us through the Son — who is the consolation of Israel; yet they can only be directed into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

91 The Resource

The Resource "The Lord is my Helper — so I will not be afraid." Hebrews 13:6

Creatures sometimes would help us — but they cannot; and sometimes they could — but they will not. Yet the Christian need not be discouraged; he has a Friend who can, and is always willing to help him: it is his God — this is his resource. He may be disappointed by others; but this is divinely appointed, in order to lead him to trust only in his God.

Beloved, our God loves to help us Himself. It is His delight to do us good. He is pleased to see us coming to Him for assistance, or for grace, or for His blessing; especially if we come in a filial spirit, as children to a Father. He asks our confidence, and approves of our dependence upon His faithfulness and Word. Therefore He says to us, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will help you, I will strengthen you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness!" "I will never leave you, I will never, no never, no never, forsake you!" So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper — so I will not be afraid."

Help is sure to be needed — for we have . . .

many difficulties to overcome,

many foes to conquer,

many trials to endure,

many duties to perform,

and many privileges to enjoy. But not one of them can be attended to in a proper spirit, or be prosecuted with success — without divine help.

We have openly to profess Christ, and honorably to maintain our profession. We have to . . .

mortify sin,

cultivate holiness,

live above the world,

exercise patience,

and labor for God —

but such is our ignorance, and such is our weakness — that unless we are assisted by divine wisdom and strengthened by divine power — we shall fail in every point! But if God is our helper, if we daily feel our dependence on Him, and if we live upon Him for all we need — we shall know, as the Apostle did, that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. The Lord will help the poor, the needy, the afflicted; indeed, every one who, believing His Word, desires His help, and pleads for it at His throne in the name of Jesus. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. "He

is the strength of the poor." He is our helper, and a very present help in time of trouble. He is always near us — but especially then.

He is a powerful, an omnipotent helper; He has Heaven, earth, and Hell at His command. It is nothing for Him to help. He can work deliverance by the weakest and meanest instruments; and often does, in order to confound the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

He is a wise and judicious helper, and affords His assistance in such a way as to . . .

hide pride from men;

exercise the graces of His people;

try the sincerity of those who profess to rely upon Him;

and keep His saints humble at His footstool.

He equally displays His grace, wisdom, and power in . . .

the help He affords,

the supplies He sends,

and the deliverances He works.

Believer, see what you have to expect! You will be tried. You will feel your own weakness. You will learn more and more your need of divine help. Yes, you will be brought to see that only the Lord can afford you the help you need — that you need a helper, who is . . .

infinite in wisdom,

omnipotent in power, and

whose grace is immutable and free.

See to whom you are to look for help in every duty, trial or conflict — to the Lord, to the Lord always, for all you need — and to Him alone.

See what you are to do — believe His Word, plead at His throne, and prove Him faithful and true.

See how you should plan, "if the Lord wills!"

See how you should purpose, "I will go in the strength of the Lord!"

See in what you may triumph, "The Lord is my helper!"

92 The All-sufficient One!

The All-sufficient One!

"I am the Almighty God! Walk before Me and be perfect." Genesis 17:1

Abraham was now grown old; he had known the Lord for many years; he had endured many trials — but many more lay before him; and the Lord appears to his aged servant, and reveals Himself as, "The all-sufficient One." This was to comfort him amidst all the infirmities of old age, and to cheer him in the winter of life. The God who had always sustained, directed, and comforted him — now manifests peculiar sympathy and tender love. Aged believers should especially mark the kindness of the Lord, and look to Him for sympathy and grace in the decline of life.

"I am the Almighty God!" The title was intended to strengthen the faith of Abraham; he had wavered, the Lord intended to try his faith yet more; a promise was given — but everything appeared to oppose its fulfillment; yet the all-sufficiency of God was to be the stay and support of his faith. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Look at His wisdom — it is infinite! Look at His power — it is omnipotent! He is the all-sufficient. The title may have been intended to be placed in opposition to . . .

the foes he may meet,
the weakness he may feel,
the fears that may arise,
the needs he may experience.

What are all these — if God is with us; if God is for us — if the all-sufficient One is our God?

God may delay,
faith may be tried,
fears may arise,
foes may oppose,
temptations may assail,
needs may increase,
weakness may be painful,
the infirmities of age may gather around us

— but God is all-sufficient; and he bids us look to Him, trust in Him, and walk with Him!

"Walk before me." That is, walk . . .

exercising faith in my promise;

placing your dependence on my faithfulness;

and yielding hearty obedience to my precepts.

Walk before me as a servant in the presence of his master — realize that my eye is upon you, that I am interested in you, and am engaged to provide for you.

Walk before me as a child under the eye of his father — a father who loves him, observes him, cares for him, and delights to show favors unto him; a father who is teaching him, who will correct him — but who will never cease to love him.

Walk before me as a friend who is under my protection. You are my friend — if you do whatever I command you. I am your friend, and will show myself friendly; I will commune with you, I will counsel you, and I will make all my goodness pass before you.

Walk before me as an expectant — looking for the blessings I have promised; and expecting me to be all I have said, and to do all I have promised! Expect me to be . . .

faithful to my Word,

kind to my child, and

true to my character.

Walk before me, copying my example, that you may be a pattern to others. Be holy — for I am holy. Be perfect or sincere — for I am sincere.

"Be perfect," that is, sincere — or upright; sincere in heart — upright in life. Abraham had failed in this point, when he denied his wife; he had been reprov'd and corrected for it; and now he is reminded and admonished. The Lord will remind His people of their sins, and warn them against a repetition of the same.

He is also encouraged; it is as if the Lord had said, "Abraham, I am all-sufficient . . .

to preserve you in every place,

to protect you from every foe,

to guide you in every path;

therefore, never give way to duplicity — be always sincere and upright. Fear no one. Be false to no one. Be upright always, and in all things. A believer never can have any reason to practice deception, or yield to slavish fear — his God is with him; his God is engaged to defend and provide for him; his God will never leave him nor forsake him.

Christian, see what the character of your God is: he is Almighty — and will you fear? He is all-sufficient — and will you give way to gloomy foreboding?

Christian, see what He requires of you:

1. that you walk before Him, as always beneath His eye, in His presence, and under His gracious protection;

2. that you be sincere, open, upright; be just what you profess to be. Be an honest man, if you are not a faultless man. Your God hates deception. He abhors trickery. He will punish hypocrisy. Let your life be the faithful index of your heart. Say just what you mean — and do what you say. Hate the appearance of a lie, in all the shapes it wears.

93 The Past Reviewed

The Past Reviewed

"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness." Deuteronomy 8:2

It is well sometimes to look forward — and anticipate "the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior."

It is good sometimes to look within — and examine whether we are in the faith.

It is right sometimes to look around — and see the posture of our foes, and what temptations are laid for us.

It is necessary also to look back — and see the way the Lord our God has led us. WHERE have we been?

1. In a wilderness. For sin has changed the character of the present world; it was once the garden of the Lord — it is now a desolate wilderness. Its leading characteristic is barrenness. There is no food for the soul, nothing to satisfy the immortal spirits in it. King Solomon, who knew most, possessed most, and enjoyed most of this world, has said, "Vanity of vanities — all is vanity!"

2. It is a dangerous place, full of robbers, wild beasts, and terrible pits! It is full of troubles, and all who dwell in it are exposed to many, great, and painful privations. Who has been our GUIDE? The Lord your God has led You. He well knows the place — with all its turnings, windings, and dangers! He tenderly loves our persons; His love has in it more than a mother's tenderness, and more than a father's steadfastness and strength. He always consults our welfare. He does not always aim to please or gratify us — but He always guides us into safety, peace, and honor. He leads us according to our nature and circumstances: for Israel He provided the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night — to refresh, preserve, and lead them. He leads us by . . .

1. His sacred Word, 2. His Holy Spirit, and 3. the events of His Providence. By what WAY have we been led? Not by the nearest, or the smoothest, or the easiest — but the best way. The right way. The only right way. It has been rough, difficult, and round about — but it has been right. God chose it for us, and He has led us in it. It was the way in which He could . . .

teach us the most important lessons;

try and exercise all our graces;

prove the sincerity of our professions;

prepare us for His service below, and His glory above;

and make us really useful, that He might make us honorable — for only the useful are honorable in the kingdom of our God.

How LONG has He been leading us? Israel had been led forty years — so has the writer — so, perhaps, has the reader; this is a long period, more than half of man's allotted time below. It is the most interesting period; for in these years, we have been . . .

called by grace,
separated from the world,
consecrated to God,
sent into His vineyard,
and formed into families.

It is also the most important period. Few are converted after they are forty years of age. Generally, The Lord's people are called while young. In the past forty years . . .

our state has been changed,
our nature has been renewed,
our character has been formed, and
our usefulness has been evident.

What now does the Lord REQUIRE? "You shall remember all the way the Lord your God has led you." This implies we should notice, record, and preserve an account of the Lord's dealings and leadings. Remember the way — all the way — the occurrences of the way:

that you were led — not dragged, not driven, not carried — but led;

that your leader was not a tyrant — but a God, a friend, a father;

that you were led, not left to 'chance';

that you led every moment, every step, in every place, even when you least perceived it!

Remember that the Lord's leading has preserved you — and but for that — you would never have arrived so far in safety.

Remember your faults — how many, how great, how various! Remember how you have provoked the Lord, and grieved His Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 9:7, etc.)

Remember His favors — how rich, how free, how suitable! You were a slave, a rebel, a condemned criminal — and he ransomed you, reclaimed you, pardoned you, and raised you to freedom, dignity, and happiness! (Deuteronomy 5:15.)

Remember your foes — how they hated you, pursued you, fought against you, and were determined to destroy you; but your God delivered you. (Deuteronomy 25:17-18: Micah 6:5.)

Remember the friendship of your God — how necessary, how constant, how condescending! Friendship unparalleled, on which your supply, your safety, your all depended. (Deuteronomy 32:7-14.)

Remember the way, the Guide, and your own conduct — or you cannot be just; you will not be either grateful or humble. Remember, for God remembers. (Jeremiah 2:2.)

94 An Answer Required

An Answer Required "Now then, think it over, and decide how I should answer the one who sent me." 2 Samuel 24:13 The Gospel is a message sent from God to man: it is sent to every one of us; it tells us, "God is love;" that in love He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die, the just for the unjust; that He has found a ransom, accepted an atonement — and is now just in justifying every sinner who believes in Jesus. He assures us that He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, that He waits to be gracious, and is willing to receive every one that comes to Him for mercy and salvation. He beseeches you to be reconciled. He asks for your hearts. He presents to you a free and full salvation, without money and without price. He exhorts you to seek His face, and gives you His word that He will never cast you out. It is a message of mercy. It is an invitation to a feast. It is a call to surrender, with a promise of peace, happiness, and honor!

Reader, this message is sent to you. Have you considered it? Have you received it? Have you acted upon it? The Lord expects an answer to His message — an answer from you. Surely you will return Him an answer; and it ought to be a prompt answer. Can there be any need for hesitation? Do you need time to decide whether you will be happy — or miserable, forever? Can it be necessary to take time to consider whether you will accept His mercy — or expose yourself to all the vials of His wrath? The answer must be plain. You must receive — or reject. You must give up your heart to God — or say, "I will not have Him to reign over me!" You must decide; and you will say by your conduct, if you do not in so many words, either, "I will be saved by Jesus," or, "I will perish in my sins."

Let it be an honest answer: if you will not yield yourself unto God, say so, say so honestly; but do not say with the Pharisees, "I will go, sir," while you only act the hypocrite. If you will not be reconciled, if you are neither ashamed nor afraid to be the enemy of God — be honest enough to say so. For remember, He knows your heart; it is impossible to deceive Him. Give such an answer to the gospel message now, as you will not wish to reverse on your dying pillow, or be ashamed to hear published at the day of judgment before assembled worlds.

"Now then, think it over, and decide how I should answer the Lord." Consult with conscience, that monitor within; afford it all the assistance you can, by placing yourself in the light of eternity, and considering the character of God, and then ask, "What answer shall I return?"

Consult with the Bible; there you have truth without error, and light without darkness; there the past is brought before you, and the future is placed immediately under your eye.

Go to the death-bed of the sinner whose conscience is awakened, and who is just about to exchange worlds, and ask him, "What answer shall I return?"

Go to the saints of God, who know the bitters and the sweets of true religion, who have long been professing Christ, and advise with them as to what answer you shall return.

Yet consider to WHOM the answer is to be sent — even to the God who made you, who has hitherto befriended you, who will judge you, and either receive you into His glory — or banish you to Hell.

Bear in mind that you send it as an answer to the kindest message a mortal ever received, and a message that involves the most solemn consequences. Do not forget that it will be registered in Heaven, and be noticed, yes published, by the Judge of all as your own decision.

Think, O think, what may be its effects! If you return an improper answer, God may give you up to the hardness of your own hearts, and then your eternal ruin is certain! Yet I fear that some who may read this paper, will dismiss the subject from their thoughts, and say, "Go your way for this time; at present I prefer the world to the church; sin to holiness; Satan to Jesus. I determine to persevere, at present, and risk the consequences." Oh, do not! Do not!

95 No Excuse!

No Excuse!

"They are without excuse!" Romans 1:20 Who are without excuse? The Apostle refers to the heathen, who had only the light of nature. But as the unity, majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God are proclaimed by the works of creation, their worshiping so many, such base, such foolish, and such cruel deities — was inexcusable. They knew, or they might have known — that there was but one God; and that He was glorious, wise, and good; and they were held responsible for the knowledge they might have obtained; and are condemned for their follies and their crimes. But if heathens, who had only the book of nature, were inexcusable — then how much more so are those who have also the Book of inspiration; to whom the gospel is preached, and before whose eyes Jesus Christ, as crucified, is set forth.

Reader, you have the Bible, which contains a clear and full revelation of the character of God, and the demands of the law, and the provision of the everlasting gospel. To you the word of salvation is sent; God has set before you the way of life — and the way of death; if you therefore live in sin and die without hope, you "are without excuse!"

There can be no excuse for sin. God has prohibited it in His law; and he has threatened it with death, even eternal death. He often visits it in this world with evident marks of His displeasure, and He has pledged His character to punish it forever in those who die impenitent. No one is, or can be, forced to sin; it must be voluntary — or it is not sin; if, therefore in opposition to God's prohibition, if, defying His solemn threatenings, if, despising the promises of His mercy — men will persevere in sin — are they not, "without excuse"?

There can be no excuse for sinners. God has graciously provided means for our recovery from our fallen state; He has furnished us with the most powerful motives to flee from the paths of the destroyer, appealing to our hopes and our fears. He has promised His Holy Spirit to every one who asks; He has pleaded with us, exhorted us, and invited us by His servants; and He has told us plainly that our destruction is off ourselves. And yet multitudes who hear His Word remain unmoved and unaffected; and from year to year, go on, "treasuring up unto themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." To such especially we must say, "You are without excuse!" To you God has spoken both in justice and in mercy; to you God has presented His beloved Son, in the everlasting gospel; to you God has promised His Holy Spirit upon asking; and to you He has sent His servants to warn, invite, and beseech you to be reconciled unto Him. You have heard His Word; you profess to believe its truth; you have often felt convinced of sin; you have purposed and promised to reform! And yet you have violated those purposes and promises; you prefer sin to holiness; you mind the things of the flesh; you dare justice to do its worst; you resist the Holy Spirit; you treat mercy with contempt! And all this on the brink of eternity — with Hell flashing before your eyes!

What excuse can there be for you? You approve of sin, you love it, and therefore persevere in it; you justify the Jews in putting the Son of God to death, for reproving and condemning sin; you grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and you are in league with Satan. Who then will attempt to make an excuse for you? Will conscience? No, it cannot, for it often reproves and condemns you! Will saints? No, not even if nearly related to you by nature, for your conduct appears awful to them. Will angels? No, they will admire the long-suffering of God toward you, and justify God in your eternal condemnation. Will devils? No, they will accuse, reproach, and eternally torment you! Will Jesus? No, He will say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." All will be against you, and join to testify that you are without excuse.

Sinner, if you reject the Savior, if you despise the day of visitation, if you trifle with eternity under the light of the gospel — you will, "receive greater damnation!"

Salvation is brought near to you in the gospel. It is presented to you as a sovereign remedy for your soul maladies; do not dash it away from you like a maniac, do not treat it with neglect. It is spread before you as a feast, a supper of the great King; do not refuse the invitation, or begin to make excuses for not sitting down to partake.

It is a great salvation; great beyond expression, great beyond conception! It is as vast as our miseries, as boundless as our sins, as durable as eternity! Look at the price it cost — the blood of Jesus. Look at the evils it prevents, and the blessings it secures. Look at the happiness it promises, and the glory and honor it confers.

Neglect it not. If you do, how will you escape? (Hebrews 2:3.) You are shut up to the way of life — or the way of death; to salvation by free grace — or damnation as the effect of persevering in sin. Neglect it not. It is the height of folly, it is the basest ingratitude, it argues the greatest stupidity!

Remember, you are without excuse. You cannot escape. Would you flee? Where can you flee? Would you harden yourself in torment — who can harden himself against that God and prosper? Think, I beseech you, think. Beware! Oh, beware, lest He take you away with a stroke! Ask, ask, "How can my heart endure, or how can my hands be strong — in the day that God will deal with me?" See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from Heaven?" (Hebrews 12:25.)

Reader, at parting, allow me to repeat the solemn truth, "If you perish — you will perish without excuse!"

"Stop, poor sinner! stop, and think,

Before you farther go!

Will you sport upon the brink

Of everlasting woe!

Once again, I charge you, stop!

For unless you warning take,

Before you are aware, you drop

Into the burning lake!

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