

SPURGEON GEMS VOL. 1-2

by C.H. Spurgeon

A curated two-volume collection of memorable passages, insights, and striking statements from Spurgeon's vast literary and preaching output, distilling the best of his wisdom for reflection.

2 Chapters

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One wrong step—and down we go!

"How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life!" Matthew 7:14

In some sense, the path to heaven is very safe—but in other respects, there is no road so dangerous! It is beset with difficulties. One wrong step—and down we go! And how easy it is to take that treacherous step—if grace is absent!

What a slippery path is that—which some of us have to tread! How many times have we to exclaim with the Psalmist, "But as for me, my feet were slipping—and I was almost gone!"

If we were strong, sure-footed mountaineers, this would not matter so much; but in ourselves, how weak we are!

Even in the best roads—we soon falter!

In the smoothest paths—we quickly stumble!

These feeble knees of ours—can scarcely support our tottering weight!

A straw may trip us up—and a pebble can wound us!

We are mere infants, tremblingly taking our first steps in the walk of faith. Our heavenly Father holds us by the arms—or we would soon tumble down!

Oh, if we are kept from falling, how must we bless the patience, power and wisdom of God—who watches over us moment by moment—and day by day! Think—

how prone we are to sin,

how apt to choose dangerous paths,

how strong our tendency to cast ourselves down

—and these reflections will make us sing more sweetly than we have ever done, "Glory to Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy!" Jude 1:24

We have many foes—who try to push us down, and destroy us!

The road is rough—and we are weak!

But in addition to this, enemies lurk in ambush, who rush out when we least expect them, and labor to trip us up, or hurl us down the nearest deadly precipice!

Only an Almighty arm can preserve us from these unseen foes, who are seeking to destroy us at every step! Such an arm is engaged for our defense. He is faithful, who has promised, and He is able to keep us from falling, so that with a deep sense of our utter weakness, we may cherish a firm belief in our perfect safety!

~ ~ ~ A solemn sham and an impudent mockery!

"Rend your heart—and not your garments." Joel 2:13

Garment-rending and other external signs of religious emotion, are easily manifested, and are frequently hypocritical. True repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Unsaved men will attend to the most multiplied and minute religious ceremonies and regulations—for such things are pleasing to their flesh. But true godliness is too humbling, too heart-searching, too spiritual for the tastes of carnal men! They prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. External religious rituals are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self-righteousness is puffed up. But they are ultimately delusive, for at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than religious ceremonies and rituals to lean upon.

Apart from vital godliness—all religion is utterly vain! When offered without a sincere heart, every form of religious worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of God!

Heart-rending is divinely wrought—and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form—but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of—but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating and sin-purging! But also, it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumbled souls are unable to receive! This heart-rending distinctly belongs to the elect of God—and to them alone. The text commands us to rend our hearts—but they are naturally as hard as marble! How then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary! A dying Savior's voice rent the rocks once—and it is just as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us effectually hear the death-cries of Jesus—and our hearts shall be rent!

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This was his final verdict!

"Behold, all is vanity!" Ecclesiastes 1:14

Nothing can fully satisfy a person—but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Christians have tried other pursuits—but they have been driven out of such fatal refuges.

Solomon, the wisest of men, was permitted to make experiments for us all; and to do for us—what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words, "So I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind! Nothing was gained under the sun!" "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!"

What! Is the whole of it meaningless? O favored monarch—is there nothing in all your wealth? Nothing in that wide dominion reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in your glorious palaces? Is there nothing—in all your music and dancing, and wine and luxury? "Nothing!" he says, "but a chasing after the wind!" This was his final verdict—after he had trodden the whole round of pleasure. To embrace our Lord Jesus, to dwell in His love, and be fully assured of union with Him—this is all in all. Dear reader, you need not try other forms of pleasure in order to see whether they are better than Christ. If you roam the whole world—you will see no sights like a sight of the Savior's face! If you could have all the comforts of life—without the Savior, you would be most wretched. But if you possess Christ—though you should rot in a dungeon—you would find it a paradise! Though you should live in obscurity, or die with famine—yet you would be satisfied with the favor and goodness of the Lord!

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We must be wedded to the Leah of real holiness

"Laban replied—It is not our custom here, to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one." Genesis 29:26

We do not excuse Laban for his dishonesty—but we desire to learn from the custom which he quoted as his excuse. There are some things which must be taken in order; and if we would win the second—we must secure the first. The second may be the more desirable in our eyes—but the rule of the heavenly country must stand—the elder must be married first.

For instance, many men desire the beautiful Rachel of joy and peace—but they must first be wedded to the bleary-eyed Leah of repentance. Everyone falls in love with happiness, and many would cheerfully serve twice seven years to enjoy it. But according to the rule of the Lord's kingdom—we must be wedded to the Leah of real holiness—before the Rachel of true happiness can be gained.

Heaven is not first—but second; and only by persevering to the end, can we enter into it.

The cross must be carried—before the crown can be worn!

We must follow our Lord in His sufferings—or we shall never rest with Him in glory.

Dear heart, are you so vain as to hope to break through this heavenly rule? Do you hope for reward without labor—or honor without toil? Dismiss the idle expectation! Be content to take the difficult things—for the sake of the sweet love of Jesus, which will recompense you for all. In such a spirit, laboring and suffering, you will find that bitters grow sweet—and that hard things grow easy. Like Jacob, your years of service will seem unto you but a few days—for the love which you have to Jesus. And when the dear hour of the wedding feast shall come—all your toils shall be as though they had never been! An hour with Jesus—will make amends for ages of pain and labor!

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Petty wars over abstruse points and unimportant questions

"Be careful to devote yourself to good works." Titus 3:8

"Avoid foolish questions." Titus 3:9

Our days are few, and are far better spent in devoting ourselves to good works, than in disputing over matters which are, at best, of minor importance. Incessant discussion of subjects of no practical value, do a world of mischief. Our churches suffer much from petty wars over abstruse points and unimportant questions. After everything has been said that can be said—neither party is any the wiser! Therefore, the discussion no more promotes knowledge, than love! It is foolish to sow in so barren a field.

Questions upon . . .

points wherein Scripture is silent;

mysteries which belong to God alone;

prophecies of doubtful interpretation;

modes of observing mere human ceremonies

—are all foolish! Wise men will avoid them! Our business is neither to ask nor answer foolish questions—but to avoid them altogether! If we observe the apostle's precept to be careful to devote ourselves to good works—we shall find ourselves far too much occupied with profitable business—to take much interest in unworthy, contentious, and needless strivings!

There are, however, some questions which are the reverse of foolish—which we must not avoid—but fairly and honestly answer, such as these:

Am I growing in grace and Christ-likeness?

Does my life adorn the doctrine of my Savior?

What more can I do for Jesus?

Such inquiries as these, urgently demand our attention!

If we have been at all given to arguing and disputing, let us now turn to a service so much more profitable. Let us endeavor to lead others, both by our precept and example, to "avoid foolish questions."

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The diamonds of heaven!

"Behold—he prays!" Acts 9:11

Prayers are instantly noticed in heaven. The moment Saul began to pray—the Lord heard him. Here is comfort for the distressed, but praying soul. Oftentimes a poor broken-hearted one bends his knee—but can only utter his wailing in the language of sighs and tears. Yet that groan has made all the harps of heaven thrill with music; that tear has been caught by God and treasured in the lachrymatory of heaven. "You put all my tears into Your bottle," implies that they are caught—as they flow!

The suppliant, who can only groan out his words, will be well understood by the Most High God. He may only look up with misty eye; but prayer is the falling of a tear! Tears are the diamonds of heaven! Sighs are a part of the music of Jehovah's court, and are numbered with the most sublime strains which reach the majesty on high!

Do not think that your prayer, however weak or trembling—will be unregarded. Our God not only hears prayer—but also loves to hear it. "He does not forget the cry of the humble." True, He does not regard proud looks and lofty words. He has no concern for the pomp and pageantry of kings. He does not listen to the swell of martial music. He has no regard for the triumph and pride of man. But wherever there is . . .

a heart full with godly sorrow,

or a lip quivering with agony,

or a deep groan,

or a penitential sigh

—the heart of Jehovah is open! He marks that prayer down in the registry of His memory! He puts our prayers, like rose leaves—between the pages of His book of remembrance; and when the volume is opened at last, there shall be a precious fragrance springing up therefrom!

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Holy shuddering!

"Horror grips me because of the wicked, who have forsaken Your law!" Psalms 119:53 My soul, do you feel this holy shuddering at the sins of others? If not, you lack inward holiness. David's cheeks were wet with rivers of waters, because of prevailing unholiness. Jeremiah desired eyes like fountains, that he might lament the iniquities of Israel. Lot, a righteous man, was distressed because of all the immorality and wickedness around him. Those upon whom the mark was set in Ezekiel's vision, were those who sighed and cried because of the abominations of Jerusalem.

It cannot but grieve gracious souls—to see what pains men take to go to Hell. They know the evil of sin experimentally, and they are alarmed to see others flying like moths into its blaze!

Sin makes the righteous shudder, because it violates God's holy law, which is to every man's highest interest to keep. Sin pulls down the pillars of the society!

Sin in others horrifies a believer, because it puts him in mind of the vileness of his own heart. When he sees a heinous sinner, he cries, "He fell today—and, but for God's grace—I may fall tomorrow!"

Sin is horrible to a believer, because it crucified his Savior! He sees in every iniquity—the nails and the spear! How can a saved soul behold that cursed Christ-killing sin—without abhorrence?

Say, my heart—do you sensibly join in all this? It is an awful thing to insult God to His face. The good God deserves better treatment; the great God claims it; the just God will have it—or repay His adversary to his face! An awakened heart trembles at the audacity of sin—and stands alarmed at the contemplation of its punishment. How monstrous a thing is sin! How direful a doom is

prepared for the ungodly! My soul, never laugh at sin's fooleries—lest you come to smile at sin itself! Sin is your Lord's enemy, and your enemy—view it with detestation, for only so, can you evidence the possession of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

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Amidst all the changes of this troublous life

"I am the Lord—and I do not change!" Malachi 3:6

It is well for us that, amidst all the alterations and vicissitudes of life, that there is . . .

One whom change cannot affect,

One whose heart can never alter,

One on whose brow mutability can make no furrows.

All other things have changed—all other things are changing. The sun itself grows dim with age. The world is waxing old—the heavens and earth must soon pass away and perish! There is One alone, who has immortality—of whose years there is no end, and in whose person there is no change.

The delight which the mariner feels, when, after having been tossed about for many a day, he steps again upon the solid shore—is the satisfaction of a Christian when, amidst all the changes of this troublous life, he rests the foot of his faith upon this truth, "I am the Lord—and I do not change!" The stability which the anchor gives the ship when it has at last obtained a hold-fast, is like that which the Christian's hope affords him when it fixes itself upon this glorious truth.

"With Him there is no variation!" Whatever His attributes were of old—they are now! His power, His wisdom, His justice, His truth, are alike unchanged.

He has ever been the refuge of His people, their stronghold in the day of trouble—and He is their sure Helper still.

He is unchanged in His love. He has loved His people with "an everlasting love!" He loves them now, as much as ever He did! And when all earthly things shall have melted in the last conflagration, His love will still wear the dew of its youth.

Precious is the assurance that our God never changes! The wheel of providence revolves—but its axle is eternal love!

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Have you seen Jesus lately?

"But they did not know who He was." Luke 24:16 The disciples ought to have recognized Jesus, they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is amazing that they did not know Him. Yet is it not so with you also? Have you seen Jesus lately? You have been to His table—and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble, and though He plainly says, "It is I—do not be afraid," yet you do not recognize Him. Alas! our eyes are blinded! We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His

bosom—and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying, "O that I knew where I might find Him!"

We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image. Yet how frequently we open that precious book—and have no glimpse of our Well-beloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus walks through the glades of Scripture, and desires to commune with His people. Yet you are in the garden of Scripture—but cannot see Him, though He is always there!

Make it your prayer, "Lord, open my eyes—that I may see my Savior present with me!" It is a blessed thing to desire to see Him. But oh! it is better far to gaze upon Him! To those who seek Him—He is kind; but to those who find Him—He is precious beyond expression!

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Little did she know, that amid the sheaves—she would find a husband!

"Ruth left and entered the field to gather grain behind the harvesters. She happened to be in the portion of land belonging to Boaz, who was from Elimelech's family." Rth_2:3

"She happened." Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident—but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother-in-law's blessing, under the care of her God—to humble but honorable toil; and the providence of God was guiding her every step! Little did she know, that amid the sheaves—she would find a husband; and that he would make her the joint owner of all those broad acres; and that she, a destitute foreigner, would become an ancestor of the great Messiah!

God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with unlooked for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us in the future; but this sweet fact should cheer us—that nothing which is really good for us—shall be withheld from us! The word "chance" is banished from the Christian's vocabulary—for we see the hand of God in everything. The seemingly trivial events of today or tomorrow, may involve consequences of the highest importance. Take comfort—our Lord deals as graciously with all His servants—as He did with Ruth!

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That unclean donkey is yourself!

"You must redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb. But if you do not redeem it—you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck!" Exodus 34:20

Every firstborn creature must be the Lord's—but since the donkey was unclean, it could not be presented in sacrifice to Him. What then? Should it be allowed to go free from the universal law? By no means! God admits of no exceptions. The donkey is His due—but He will not accept it; He will not abate the claim—but yet He cannot be pleased with the unclean victim. No way of escape remained, but redemption—the donkey must be saved by the substitution of a lamb in its place; or if not redeemed, it must die!

My soul, here is a lesson for you! That unclean donkey is yourself! You are justly the property of the Lord who made you and preserves you—but you are so sinful that God will not, cannot, accept you! It has come to this—the Lamb of God must stand in your stead—or you must die eternally!

Let all the world know of your gratitude to that spotless Lamb who has died for you, and so redeemed you from the fatal curse of the law!

Must it not sometimes have been a question with the Israelite, as to which should die—the donkey or the lamb? Would not the man pause to estimate and compare the values of these animals? Assuredly there was no comparison between the value of a sinful man—and the spotless Lord Jesus! Yet the Lamb dies—and man the donkey is spared! My soul, admire the boundless love of God to you! Vile worms are bought—with the blood of the holy Lamb of God! Dust and ashes are redeemed—with a price far above silver and gold! What a doom would have been mine—had not plenteous redemption been found!

The breaking of the neck of the donkey was but a momentary penalty. But who shall measure the eternal wrath to come—to which no limit can be imagined! Inestimably dear is the glorious Lamb—who has redeemed me from such a doom!

~ ~ ~ ~ That is all they have to enjoy "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity!" Psalms 119:37
No Christian enjoys comfort—when his eyes are fixed on vanity.

I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures. Why should I? Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy! A godly wife who despaired of her husband's salvation, was always very kind to him, for she said, "I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy—and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it."

Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere—than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world. Vain amusements are dangerous to renewed souls. It is when the Christian departs from God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavors to feed on vanities—that the devil discovers his vantage hour. O for grace to sincerely pray, "Remove vanity and lies far from me!" Proverbs 30:8

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Look into those languid eyes!

"Show me why You contend with me!" Job 10:2

Beloved, it was thus once with you—a text of Scripture, a threatening, a touch of the rod of affliction—and you went to your Father's feet, crying, "Show me why You contend with me!" Is it so now? Are you content to follow Jesus, afar off? O it is a grievous thing, when we can live contentedly, without the present enjoyment of the Savior's face. Let us labor to feel what an evil thing this is—little love to our own dying Savior, little joy in our precious Jesus, little fellowship with the Beloved!

Remember where you first received salvation. Go at once to the cross! There, and there alone—can you get your heart quickened. No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead you may have become—go again in all the rags, poverty, and defilement of your present condition. Clasp that cross! Look into those languid eyes! Bathe in that fountain filled with blood! This alone will bring you back to your first love; this alone will restore the simplicity of your faith, and the tenderness of your heart!

~ ~ ~ ~ The infinite tenderness of Jesus!

"He will carry the lambs in His bosom, holding them close to His heart." Isaiah 40:11 Who is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? He is the Good Shepherd. Why does He carry the lambs in His bosom? Because He has a tender heart, and any weakness at once melts His heart. The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock—draw forth His compassion. He purchased them with blood, they are His property—He must and will care for that which cost Him so dear.

"He will carry the lambs in His bosom, holding them close to His heart."

Here is boundless affection. Would He put them in His bosom—if He did not love them much?

Here is tender nearness—so near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer.

Here is hallowed familiarity—there are precious love-passages between Christ and His weak ones.

Here is perfect safety—in His bosom, who can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first.

Here is perfect rest and sweetest comfort.

Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus!

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Pride cannot live beneath the cross!

"He humbled Himself." Php_2:8

Jesus is the great teacher of 'humility of heart'. We need daily to learn of Him. See the Master taking a towel and washing His disciples feet! Follower of Christ—will you not humble yourself? See Him as the Servant of servants—and surely you cannot be proud! Is not this sentence the compendium of His biography, "He humbled Himself"? Was He not on earth, always stripping off first one robe of honor and then another—until, naked, He was fastened to the cross; and there did He not empty out His inmost self, pouring out His life-blood, giving up for all of us, until they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave?

How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud?

Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed. See His thorn-crown; mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills; see His hands and feet given up to the rough iron spikes, and His whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame; hear the horrid shriek, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me!"

If you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross—you have never seen it! If you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus—you do not know Him. You were so lost that nothing could save you—but the sacrifice of God's only begotten Son. Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you—bow yourself in humility at His feet. A sense of Christ's amazing love to us—has a greater tendency to humble us, than even a consciousness of our own guilt. May the Lord bring us in

contemplation, to Calvary. Then our position will no longer be that of pompous pride—but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much—because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross! Let us sit there and learn our lesson—and then rise and carry it into practice!

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Do not forsake me, O Lord!

"Do not forsake me, O Lord! Do not be far from me, O my God!" Psalms 38:21

Frequently we pray that God would not forsake us in the hour of trial and temptation; but we too much forget that we have need to use this prayer at all times. There is no moment of our life, however holy—in which we can do without His constant upholding. Whether in light or in darkness, in communion or in temptation—we alike need the prayer, "Do not forsake me, O Lord!"

A little child, while learning to walk—always needs the parent's aid. The ship left by the pilot—drifts at once from her course. Just so—we cannot survive without continuous aid from God.

Let it be your prayer today, "Do not forsake me, O Lord! Father, do not forsake Your child—lest he fall by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, do not forsake Your lamb—lest he wander from the safety of the fold. Great Gardener, do not forsake Your plant—lest it wither and die! Do not forsake me now, O Lord! And do not forsake me at any moment of my life. Do not forsake me in my joys—lest they absorb my heart. Do not forsake me not in my sorrows—lest I murmur against You. Do not forsake me—for my path is dangerous, and full of snares—and I cannot travel without Your guidance. Do not forsake me—for without You I am weak—but with You I am strong. Do not be far from me, O Lord, for trouble is near—and there is none to help. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation!"

"Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:115

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Calvary's tragedy!

"The place which is called Calvary." Luke 23:33 The hill of comfort—is the hill of Calvary. The house of consolation—is built with the wood of the cross. The temple of heavenly blessing—is founded upon the cleft rock—cleft by the spear which pierced His side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul—like Calvary's tragedy!

Light springs from the midday-midnight of Golgotha!

Every flower of blessing blooms sweetly beneath the shadow of that accursed tree! In that place of thirst—grace has dug a fountain which ever gushes with waters as pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes of mankind!

You who have had your seasons of trouble—will confess that it was at Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha that you have found real comfort. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane—have often taken away the bitters of your life. The scourge of Gabbatha—has often scourged away your cares. The groans of Golgotha—have yielded you rare and rich comfort.

We would never have known Christ's love in all its heights and depths—if He had not died. Nor could we guess the Father's deep affection—if He had not given His Son to die. He who would know real love—let him retire to Calvary, and see the Man of sorrows die!

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Do men make their own gods?

"Do men make their own gods? Yes—but they are not gods!" Jeremiah 16:20

One great besetting sin of ancient Israel was idolatry, and we who are the spiritual Israel are vexed with a tendency to the same folly! We no longer bow down to sticks and stones—but Mammon still intrudes his golden calf; and the shrines of pride are not forsaken. SELF in various forms, struggles to subdue the chosen ones under its dominion; and the flesh sets up its altars wherever it can find space for them.

Children are often the cause of much sin in believers. The Lord is grieved when He sees us doting upon them above measure; they will live to be as great a curse to us—as Absalom was to David, or they will be taken from us to leave our homes desolate. If Christians desire to grow thorns to stuff their sleepless pillows—let them dote on their children!

It is truly said that "they are not gods," for the objects of our foolish devotion are very doubtful blessings; the solace which they yield us now is dangerous, and the help which they can give us in the hour of trouble is little indeed.

Why, then, are we so bewitched with vanities?

We pity the poor heathen who adore a god of stone—and yet worship a god of gold! Where is the vast superiority between a god of wood—and one of flesh? The principle, the sin, the folly is the same in either case; only that in our case—the crime is more aggravated because we have more light—and sin in the face of it. The heathen bows to a false deity—but he has never known the true God. But we commit two evils, inasmuch as we forsake the living God—and turn unto idols! May the Lord purge us all from this grievous iniquity!

"The dearest idol I have known,

Whatever that idol be;

Help me to tear it from Thy throne,

And worship only Thee!

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Rise up My love, My beautiful one—and come away!

"My Beloved spoke and said to me—Rise up My love, My beautiful one—and come away!"
Son_2:10

Lo, I hear the voice of my Beloved! He speaks to me! He bids me "Rise up!" and well He may, for I have long enough been lying among the pots of worldliness. Why should I cleave unto the dust? From lower loves, desires, pursuits, and aspirations—I would rise towards Him.

He calls me by the sweet title of "My love" and regards me as beautiful! This is a good encouragement for my rising. If He has thus exalted me, and thinks me thus lovely—how can I linger in the dark tents of Kedar and find congenial associates among the world?

He bids me "Come away!" Come away further and further from everything selfish, groveling, worldly, and sinful! He calls me from the outwardly religious world which knows Him not, and has no sympathy with the mystery of the pious life.

"Come away" has no harsh sound in it to my ear—for what is there to hold me in this wilderness of vanity and sin? O my Lord, would that I could come away—but I am stuck among the thorns—and cannot escape from them as I would! I would, if it were possible, have neither eyes, nor ears, nor heart for sin!

You call me to Yourself by saying "Come away!" and this is a melodious call indeed. To come to You is to come home from exile; to come to land out of the raging storm; to come to rest after long labor; to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes! But Lord, how can a stone rise, how can a lump of clay come away from the horrible pit? O raise me, draw me—and I will run after You! Your grace alone can do it. Send forth Your Holy Spirit to kindle sacred flames of love in my heart—and I will continue to rise until I leave life and time behind me, and indeed come away!

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These scars!

"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne!"
Revelation 5:6

Why should our exalted Lord appear in heaven—with His wounds? The wounds of Jesus are—His glories, His jewels, His sacred ornaments. To the eye of the believer, Jesus is lovely, because He is "white and ruddy"; white with innocence, and ruddy with His own blood. We see Him as the Lily of matchless purity—and as the Rose crimsoned with His own gore. Christ is lovely in His life and His teaching—but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as He who hung upon the cross! There we behold all His beauties in perfection, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed!

Beloved, the wounds of Jesus are far more lovely in our eyes—than all the splendor and pomp of kings! The thorny crown is more attractive than any imperial diadem. Jesus wears the appearance of a slain Lamb—as His court dress in which He wooed our souls, and redeemed them by His complete atonement. Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ—they are the trophies of His love and of His victory! He has redeemed for Himself a great multitude whom no man can number—and these scars are the memorials of the fight! Ah! if Christ delights to retain the thought of His sufferings for His people—how precious should His wounds be to us!

"Behold how every wound of His,

A precious balm distills,

Which heals the scars that sin had made,

And cures all mortal ills.

Those wounds are mouths that preach His grace;

The ensigns of His love;

The seals of our expected bliss,

In paradise above!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Take both sorrow and sin—to the same place!

"Look upon my affliction and my pain—and forgive all my sins!" Psalms 25:18

It is well for us when prayers about our sorrows—are linked with pleas concerning our sins; when, being under God's hand, we are not wholly taken up with our pain—but remember our offences against God. It is well, also, to take both sorrow and sin—to the same place! It was to God—that David carried his sorrow. It was to God—that David confessed his sin.

We must take our sorrows to God. Even your little sorrows you may roll upon God—for He counts the hairs of your head. And your great sorrows you may commit to Him—for He holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be—and you shall find Him able and willing to relieve you. But we must also take our sins to God. We must carry them to the cross, that the blood may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power. The special lesson of the text is this—that we are to go to the Lord with sorrows and with sins in the right frame of heart. Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, "Look upon my affliction and my pain." But the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided and plain, "Forgive all my sins!"

Many sufferers would have put it, "Remove my affliction and my pain—and look at my sins." But David does not say so—he cries, "Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I will not dictate to Your wisdom. Lord, look at them—I will leave them to You. I would be glad to have my pain removed—but do as You will. But as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want with them—I must have them forgiven! I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment!" A Christian counts his sorrow lighter in the scale—than his sin. He can bear that his troubles should continue—but he cannot support the burden of his transgressions.

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The diamond rivet!

"The Lord will give grace and glory!" Psalms 84:11

Jehovah is bounteous in His nature—to give is His delight. His gifts are precious beyond measure, and are as freely given as the light of the sun!

He freely gives grace in all its forms, to all His people:

saving grace,

comforting grace,

preserving grace,
sanctifying grace,
directing grace,
instructing grace,
assisting grace!
He gives grace . . .

abundantly,
seasonably,
constantly,
readily,
sovereignly!

He doubly enhances the value of His grace—by the manner of its bestowal. He generously pours grace into their souls without ceasing—and He always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall—but the Lord will give grace. Poverty may come to us—but grace will surely be afforded. Death must come—but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is as years roll along, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this, "The Lord will give grace!" The little conjunction "and" in this verse is the diamond rivet binding the present with the future! Grace and glory always go together. God has married them—and none can divorce them! The Lord will never deny a soul eternal glory—to whom He has freely given His saving grace. Indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its heavenly dress; grace in full bloom; grace like autumn fruit—mellow and perfected.

How soon we may have glory—none can tell. It may be before this month has run out—that we shall see the Celestial City. But be the interval longer or shorter—we shall be glorified before long. The Lord will surely give glory to all His chosen ones:

the glory of heaven,
the glory of eternity,
the glory of Jesus!

Oh, rare promise of a faithful God! Two golden links of one celestial chain! Whoever has grace—shall surely gain glory!

~ ~ ~ ~

We need You to bring us to You!

"When my heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!" Psalms 61:2 Most of us know what it is to be overwhelmed in heart—sinking like a vessel deluged by the storm!

Discoveries of inward corruption will do this—if the Lord permits the great deep of our depraved heart to become troubled, and cast up its mire and dirt.

Disappointments and heartbreaks will do this—when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the raging surf!

Blessed be God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace—our God is the harbor of weather-beaten souls, the hospice of forlorn pilgrims! His mercy is higher than our sins! His love is higher than we could imagine!

It is pitiful to see unsaved men putting their trust in something lower than themselves; but our confidence is fixed upon the exceeding high and glorious Lord. A Rock He is—since He changes not. And He is a high Rock—because the tempests which overwhelm us—roll far beneath at His feet! He is not disturbed by them—but rules them at His will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock—we may defy the hurricane! All is peaceful under the shelter of that towering cliff!

Alas! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need piloting to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text, "When my heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the Rock that is higher than I! O Lord, our God, by Your Holy Spirit—teach us the way of faith, and lead us into Your rest. The wind blows us out to sea—and our puny hand cannot steer the helm! You, You alone can steer us over the wide ocean between yon sunken rocks—and safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon You! We need You to bring us to You! To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace is Your gift, and Yours alone!"

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Your children "Bring him unto Me!" Mark 9:19

Despairingly the poor disappointed father turned away from the disciples, to their Master. His son was in the worst possible condition, and all means had failed—but the miserable child was soon delivered from the evil one, when the parent in faith obeyed the Lord Jesus' word, "Bring him unto Me!" Your children are a precious gift from God—but much anxiety comes with them. They may be a great joy—or a great bitterness to their parents. They may be filled with the Spirit of God—or possessed with the spirit of evil. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one recipe for the curing of all their ills, "Bring them unto Me!"

O for more agonizing prayer on their behalf, while they are yet babes. Sin is there, let our prayers begin to attack it. In the days of their youth we shall see sad tokens of that dumb and deaf spirit, which will neither pray aright, nor hear the voice of God in the soul—but Jesus still commands, "Bring them unto Me!" When they are grown up, they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God! Then, when our hearts are breaking—we should remember the great Physician's words, "Bring them unto Me!" Never must we cease to pray for them—until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless—while Jesus lives. The Lord sometimes allows His people to be driven into a corner—that they may experimentally know how necessary He is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts—drive us to flee to the Strong One for strength—and this is a great blessing to us!

Whatever this day's need may be, let it like a strong current—bear us to the ocean of divine love! Jesus can soon remove our sorrow. He delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to Him—while He

waits to meet us!

~ ~ ~ ~

Lest Madam Bubble bewitch them with her vile suggestions

"She grabbed him by his garment and said, 'Sleep with me!' But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran from the house." Genesis 39:12 In contending with certain sins, there remains no mode of victory, but by flight. He who would be safe from acts of evil—must hasten away from occasions of it. A covenant must be made with our eyes—not even to look upon the cause of temptation; for such sins only need a spark to begin with—and a blaze follows in an instant! Who would wantonly enter the leper's hut—and sleep amid its horrible corruption? He alone who desires to be leprous himself—would thus court contagion. If the mariner knew how to avoid a storm, he would do anything rather than run the risk of weathering it. Cautious pilots have no desire to try how near the quicksand they can sail, or how often they may touch a rock without springing a leak; their aim is to keep as nearly as possible in the midst of a safe channel. This day I may be exposed to great peril—let me have wisdom to keep out of it and avoid it. The wings of a dove may be of more use to me—than the jaws of a lion. I may be an apparent loser by declining evil company—but I had better leave my cloak—than lose my character! It is not needful that I should be rich—but it is imperative upon me to be pure. No ties of friendship, no chains of beauty, no flashings of talent, no shafts of ridicule—must turn me from the wise resolve to flee from sin. I am to resist the devil—and he will flee from me. But the lusts of the flesh, I must flee—or they will surely overcome me!

O God of holiness, preserve your Josephs—lest Madam Bubble bewitch them with her vile suggestions. May the horrible trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil—never overcome us!

~ ~ ~ ~

They were not carried to heaven on beds of ease!

"Woe is me—that I dwell among these scoundrels of Meshech! It pains me to live with these people from Kedar!" Psalms 120:5 As a Christian, you have to live in the midst of an ungodly world, and it is of little use for you to cry, "Woe is me!"

Jesus did not pray, "O that you should be taken out of the world!" And what He did not pray for—you need not desire! Better far in the Lord's strength—to meet the difficulty, and glorify Him in it. The enemy is ever on the watch to detect inconsistency in your conduct; be therefore very holy. Remember that the eyes of all are upon you—and that more is expected from you, than from others! Strive to give no occasion for blame. Like Daniel, let your godliness and piety be the only faults which they can discover in you.

Seek to be useful—as well as consistent. Perhaps you think, "If I were in a more favorable position, I might be able to serve the Lord's cause. But I cannot do any good where I am!" But the worse the people are among whom you live—the more need they have of your exertions! If they are crooked—the more necessity that you should set them straight! If they are perverse—the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. Where should the physician be—but where there are many sick? Where is honor to be won by the soldier—but in the hottest fire of the battle? When weary of the strife and sin which meets you on every hand—consider that all the saints have

endured the same trial! They were not carried to heaven on beds of ease!—and you must not expect to travel more easily than they! They had to hazard their lives unto the death, in the midst of the battlefield—and you will not be crowned—until you also have endured hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, "Be courageous! Be strong!" 1 Corinthians 16:13

~ ~ ~ ~

Surely something must be amiss with the scales!

"You are to have honest balances, honest weights, an honest dry measure, and an honest liquid measure; I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." Leviticus 19:36
Weights, and scales, and measures—were to be all according to the standard of justice.

Surely no Christian will need to be reminded of this in his business, for if justice were banished from all the world beside—it should find a shelter in true Christian hearts!

There are, however, other scales and balances which weigh moral and spiritual things—and these often need examining. We will call in the Judge right now.

Those scales in which we weigh our own and other men's characters—are they quite accurate? Do we not turn our own ounces of goodness—into pounds; and other people's pounds of excellence—into ounces? See to just weights and measures here, Christian!

Those scales in which we measure our trials and troubles—are they according to standard? Paul, who had far more to suffer than we have—called his afflictions light. Yet we often consider our afflictions to be heavy! Surely something must be amiss with the scales! We must see to this matter, lest we get reported to the court above, for unjust dealing!

Those scales with which we measure our beliefs—are they quite fair? The precepts and doctrines should have the same weight with us as the promises—no more and no less! With many, one scale or the other is unfairly weighted. It is a grand matter to give just measure in God's truths. Christian, be careful here!

Those scales in which we estimate our obligations and responsibilities look rather small. When a rich man gives no more to the cause of God, than the poor contribute—is that an honest weight, an honest measure, a just balance?

Reader, we might lengthen the list—but we prefer to leave it as your day's work—to find out and destroy all unjust scales, balances, weights, and measures!

~ ~ ~ ~

The Breaker!

"The Breaker has gone up before them. He will bring you through the gates of your cities of captivity, back to your own land. Your King will lead you; the Lord Himself will guide you!" Micah 2:13

Inasmuch as Jesus has gone before us, things do not remain as they would have been, had He never passed that way. He has conquered every foe which has obstructed the way. Cheer up O faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ traveled the road—but He has slain your enemies upon

life's road!

Do you dread sin? He has nailed it to His cross!

Do you fear death? He has been the death of death!

Are you afraid of hell? He has barred the gates of hell from being entered by any of His children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition!

Whatever foes may be before the Christian—they are all overcome!

There are lions—but their teeth are broken!

There are serpents—but their fangs are extracted!

There are rivers—but they are bridged or fordable!

There are flames—but we wear that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire!

The Breaker, Christ—has taken away all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, you may go safely and joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand! What shall you do—but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. You shall, it is true, often engage in combat; but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe! His head is broken! He may attempt to injure you—but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be sure—and your treasure shall be beyond all count!

"Proclaim aloud the Savior's fame,

Who bears the Breaker's wondrous name;

Sweet name; and it befits Him well,

Who breaks down earth, sin, death, and hell!"

~ ~ ~ ~

He who eats the grapes of Sodom

"As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins." Numbers 6:4

Nazirites had taken, among other vows, one which debarred them from the use of wine. In order that they might not violate the obligation, they were forbidden to drink the unfermented juice of grapes, nor even to eat either fresh or dried grapes. They were, in fact, to avoid even the appearance of evil.

Surely this is a lesson to the Lord's separated ones, teaching them to come away from sin in every form; to avoid not merely its grosser shapes—but even the appearance of evil. Strict walking is much despised in these days—but rest assured, dear reader, it is both the safest and the happiest course. He who yields a point or two to the world—is in fearful peril. He who eats the grapes of Sodom—will soon drink the wine of Gomorrah! A little crevice in a large dyke may soon break open—so that a whole town is drowned. Worldly conformity, in any degree, is a snare to the soul,

and makes it more and more liable to presumptuous sins.

Doubtful things—we need not doubt about; they are wrong to us!

Tempting things—we must not dally with—but flee from them with haste!

Careful walking may involve much self-denial—but it has pleasures of its own which are more than a sufficient recompense!

~ ~ ~ ~

O blessed hurricane!

"On My arm, they shall trust." Isaiah 51:5 In seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is quickly sinking, and no human deliverance can avail—he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God.

Happy storm—that wrecks a man on such a rock as this!

O blessed hurricane—that drives the soul to God and God alone! When a man is so burdened with troubles, so poor, so friendless, so helpless that he has nowhere else to turn—he flies into his Father's arms, and is blessedly clasped therein! Oh, tempest-tossed believer—it is a happy trouble which drives you to your Father!

~ ~ ~ ~

Sin is shut out—and they are shut in!

"The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!" Isaiah 65:19

The glorified weep no more—because all causes of grief are gone! There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander—are unknown there. No pain distresses, and no thought of death or bereavement saddens.

They weep no more—because they are perfectly sanctified! No "evil heart of unbelief" prompts them to depart from the living God. They are without fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image! Well may they cease to mourn—who have ceased to sin!

They weep no more—because all fear of change is past! They know that they are eternally secure! Sin is shut out—and they are shut in!

They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed!

They bask in a sun which shall never set!

They drink of a river which shall never run dry!

They pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither!

Countless cycles may revolve—but eternity shall not be exhausted; and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord!

They weep no more—because every desire is fulfilled! They cannot wish for anything—which they don't already have in full possession.

Eye and ear,

heart and hand,

mind and imagination,

desire and affection—

all the faculties, are completely satisfied!

As imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God has prepared for those who love Him—yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the glorified saints are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight—is in them. They bathe forever in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite blessedness!

That same joyful rest remains for us! It may not be far distant. Before long—the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory! Sorrow's dewdrops will be transformed into the pearls of everlasting bliss!

"The sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more!"

"Therefore comfort one another with these words."

~ ~ ~ ~

The knife of the heavenly Surgeon

"This sickness is not unto death." John 11:4

From our Lord's words, we learn that there is a limit to sickness. In all sickness, the Lord says to the waves of pain, "Hitherto shall you go—but no further!" His fixed purpose is not the destruction of His people—but the instruction of His people. Wisdom hangs up the thermometer at the furnace mouth—and regulates the heat!

1. The limit is encouragingly comprehensive. The God of providence has limited the time, manner, intensity and effects of all our sicknesses. Each throb is decreed, each sleepless hour predestined, each relapse ordained, each depression of spirit foreknown, and each sanctifying result eternally purposed. Nothing great or small escapes the ordaining hand of Him who numbers the hairs of our head!

2. This limit is wisely adjusted to our strength, to the end designed, and to the grace apportioned. Affliction does not come by 'chance'—the weight of every stroke of God's rod—is accurately measured. He who made no mistakes in balancing the clouds, and measuring out the heavens—commits no errors in measuring out the ingredients which compose the medicine of souls. We cannot suffer too much—nor be relieved too late!

3. The limit is tenderly appointed. The knife of the heavenly Surgeon never cuts deeper than is absolutely necessary. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." A mother's heart cries, "Spare my child!" but no mother is more compassionate than our gracious God. When

we consider how self-willed we are—it is a wonder that we are not driven with a sharper bit! The thought is full of consolation—that He who has fixed the bounds of our habitation, has also fixed the bounds of our tribulation.

~ ~ ~ ~

Grace found her a maniac—and made her a minister!

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene—out of whom He had cast seven devils." Mark 16:9

Mary of Magdala was the victim of a fearful evil. She was possessed by not one devil only—but seven. These dreadful inhabitants caused much pain and pollution to the poor frame in which they had found a lodging. Hers was a hopeless, horrible case! She could not help herself, neither could any human support avail. But Jesus passed that way, and unsought, and probably even resisted by the poor demoniac, He uttered the word of power—and Mary of Magdala became a trophy of the saving power of Jesus.

What a blessed deliverance!

What a happy change!

From delirium—to delight,

from despair—to peace,

from hell—to heaven! At once, she became a constant follower of Jesus, catching His every word, following His winding steps, sharing His toilsome life; and withal she became His generous helper, first among that band of saved and grateful women—who ministered unto Him of their substance. When Jesus was lifted up in crucifixion, Mary remained the sharer of His shame—we find her drawing near to the foot of the cross. She could not die on the cross with Jesus—but she stood as near to it as she could. She was the faithful and watchful believer—last at the sepulcher where Jesus slept; first at the grave whence He arose!

Thus, grace found her a maniac—and made her a minister!

Grace delivered her from Satan—and united her forever to the Lord Jesus! May I also be such a miracle of grace!

~ ~ ~ ~

Blight and mildew and hail "I smote you with blight and mildew and hail—to destroy all the produce of your labor." Haggai 2:17

How destructive is the hail to the standing crops—beating the precious grain down to the ground! How grateful ought we to be when the grain is spared so terrible a ruin! Let us offer unto the Lord thanksgiving.

Even more to be dreaded, are those mysterious destroyers—blight and mildew. These turn the corn into a mass of soot, or render it putrid, or dry up the grain—and all in a manner so beyond all human control, that the farmer is compelled to cry, "This is the finger of God!" Innumerable minute fungi cause the mischief, and were it not for the goodness of God, the rider on the black horse

would soon scatter famine over the land! Infinite mercy spares the food of men; but in view of the active agents which are ready to destroy the harvest, right wisely are we taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We have constant need of God's blessing!

"I smote you with blight and mildew and hail—to destroy all the produce of your labor." When blight and mildew come—they are chastisements from God, and men must learn to hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it!

Spiritually, mildew is a common evil. When our work is most promising, this mildew appears. We hoped for many conversions, but instead—a general apathy, an abounding worldliness, or a cruel hardness of heart! There may be no open sin in those for whom we are laboring—but there is a deficiency of sincerity and holiness, sadly disappointing our desires.

We learn from this—our dependence upon the Lord, and the need of prayer that no blight or mildew may fall upon our work. Spiritual pride or sloth will soon bring upon us the dreadful evil—and only the Lord of the harvest can remove it.

Mildew and blight may even attack our own hearts—and shrivel our prayers and pious exercises! May it please the great Gardener to avert so serious a calamity. Shine, O blessed Sun of Righteousness, and drive the blights away!

~ ~ ~ ~

Behold the Emperor of Woe!

"Behold the Man!" John 19:5

If there is one place where our Lord Jesus most fully becomes the joy and comfort of His people—it is where He plunged deepest into the depths of woe!

Come hither, gracious souls, and behold the Man in the garden of Gethsemane! Behold His heart so brimming with love—that He cannot hold it in; so full of sorrow—that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distills from every pore of His body, and falls upon the ground!

Behold the Man as they drive the nails into His hands and feet! Look up, repenting sinners, and see the sorrowful image of your suffering Lord! Mark Him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and adorn the diadem of the King of Misery with priceless gems!

Behold the Man when all His bones are out of joint, and He is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death! God has forsaken Him—and hell compasses Him about. Behold and see—was there ever sorrow—like unto His sorrow? All you who pass by—draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief! Unique, unparalleled, a wonder to men and angels—an unmatched marvel!

Behold the Emperor of Woe—who had no equal or rival in His agonies! Gaze upon Him, you mourners, for if there is not consolation in a crucified Christ—there is no joy in earth or heaven. If in the ransom price of His blood, there is not hope—you harps of heaven, there is no joy in you; and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore!

We have only to sit more continually at the cross foot—to be less troubled with our afflictions and woes. We have but to see His sorrows—and we shall be ashamed to mention our sorrows. We have but to gaze into His wounds—and heal our own. If we would live aright—it must be by the contemplation of His death. If we would rise to dignity—it must be by considering His humiliation and His sorrow!

~ ~ ~ ~

Two precious jewels glittering side by side "Delight yourself in the Lord." Psalms 37:4 The teaching of these words must seem very surprising to those who are strangers to vital godliness. But to the sincere believer, it is only the inculcation of a recognized truth.

The life of the believer is here described as a delight in God—and we are thus certified of the great fact—that true religion overflows with happiness and joy. Ungodly people and mere professors never look upon piety as a joyful thing; to them it is dreary service, duty, or necessity—but never a pleasure or delight. The thought of delight in Christ is so strange to most people, that no two words in their language stand further apart than "holiness" and "delight." But believers who know Christ, understand that delight and holiness are so blessedly united, that the gates of hell cannot prevail to separate them. Those who love Christ with all their hearts, find that all His ways are ways of pleasantness; and all His paths are peace.

Christians discover such joys, such brimful delights, such overflowing blessednesses, that so far from serving Him from custom, they would follow Him—though all the world casts out His name as evil.

We do not love God because of any compulsion:

our faith is no fetter,

our profession is no bondage,

we are not dragged to holiness,

nor driven to duty. Our piety is our pleasure,

our hope is our happiness,

our duty is our delight!

Holiness and delight are as allied—as root and flower. They are, in fact, two precious jewels glittering side by side in a setting of gold!

~ ~ ~ ~

Christ's garden "I have come into My garden—My sister, My bride!" Son_5:1 The heart of the believer is Christ's garden. He bought it with His precious blood, and He enters it and claims it as His own. A garden implies separation. It is not the open common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around, or hedged in. Would that we could see the wall of separation between the Christian and the world made broader and stronger. It makes one sad to hear professors saying, "Well, there is no harm in this; there is no harm in that," thus getting as near to the world as possible! Grace is at a low ebb in that soul, which can even raise the question of how far it may go in worldly conformity.

A garden is a place of beauty, it far surpasses the wild uncultivated fields. The genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought to produce the best flowers in all the world. Even the best is poor—compared with Christ's deservings; let us not put Him off with withered and dwarf plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses—ought to bloom in Christ's own garden! The garden is a place of growth. The saints are not to remain undeveloped, always mere buds and blossoms. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the Gardener, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above.

A garden is a place of retirement. So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve our hearts as a place in which He can manifest Himself, as He does not unto the world. O that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more closely locked up for Christ! We often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving—so that we have not the room for Christ that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we should. May the Lord grant the sweet showers of His grace to water His garden this day!

~ ~ ~ ~

Oh, the atrocity!

"O Lord, we are covered with shame—because we have sinned against You!" Daniel 9:8 A deep sense and clear sight of sin—its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves—should make us lie low before God's throne. As Christians—we have sinned! Alas! that it should be so. Favored as we have been—we have yet been ungrateful. Privileged beyond most—we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. What Christian is there—who will not blush when he looks back upon his past sins?

Oh, the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins cheaply—when compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom.

Alas! these sins of ours would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire—if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning! My soul, bow down under a sense of your natural sinfulness, and worship your God. Admire . . .

the grace which saves you;

the mercy which spares you;

the love which pardons you!

~ ~ ~ ~

MY having been His murderer!

"A great multitude of the people followed Him, including women who mourned and wailed for Him."
Luke 23:27

Amid the rabble crowd which hounded the Redeemer to His doom, there were some gracious souls whose bitter anguish sought vent in wailing and lamentations—fit music to accompany that

march of woe! When my soul can, in imagination, see the Savior bearing His cross to Calvary—she joins the godly women, and weeps with them. They bewailed,

innocence—maltreated,

goodness—persecuted,

love—bleeding,

meekest—dying! But my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn: MY SINS were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders! MY SINS were the thorns which crowned that bleeding brow! MY SINS cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and laid the cruel cross upon His gracious shoulders! His being led forth to die, is sorrow enough for one eternity—but MY having been His murderer—is more, infinitely more grief, than one poor fountain of tears can express! Those women who loved and wept—could not have had greater reasons for love and grief—than my heart has! The widow of Nain saw her son restored—but I myself have been raised to newness of life!

Peter's mother-in-law was cured of the fever—but I myself have been cured of the plague of sin!

Mary Magdalene had seven devils cast out of her—but a whole legion of devils were cast out of me!

Mary and Martha were favored with visits from Jesus—but He dwells with me!

I am not behind these holy women in debt to Jesus—let me not be behind them, in gratitude or sorrow.

"Love and grief my heart dividing,

With my tears His feet I'll lave;

Constant still in heart abiding,

Weep for Him who died to save!"

~ ~ ~ ~

As white as the lily—and as red as the rose "With His stripes we are healed." — Isaiah 53:5

Pilate delivered our Lord to the lictors to be scourged. This Roman scourging was a most dreadful instrument of torture. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and sharp bones were inter-twisted among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down—these pieces of bone inflicted fearful laceration, and tore off the flesh from the victim. The Savior was, no doubt, bound to the pillar, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this scourging of the Roman lictors—was probably the most severe of His flagellations. My soul, stand here and weep over His poor stricken body. Believer in Jesus, can you gaze upon Him without tears—as He stands before you—the picture of agonizing love? He is at once as white as the lily for innocence, and as red as the rose with the crimson of His own blood. As we feel the sure and blessed healing which His stripes have wrought in us—does not our heart melt at once with love and grief? If ever we have loved our Lord Jesus—surely we must feel that affection glowing now within our bosoms!

We would sincerely go to our chambers and weep! We pray our Beloved to print the image of His bleeding self—upon the tablets of our hearts—and sorrow that our sin should have cost Him so dear!

~ ~ ~ Those ghastly corpses might well have affrighted Rizpah!

"Then Rizpah, the mother of two of the men, spread sackcloth on a rock and stayed there the entire harvest season. She prevented vultures from tearing at their bodies during the day, and stopped wild animals from eating them at night." 2 Samuel 21:10

If the love of a woman to her slain sons, could make her prolong her mournful vigil for so long a period—shall we be weary of considering the sufferings of our blessed Lord? She drove away the vultures—and shall not we chase away those worldly and sinful thoughts which defile our minds? Away, you evil birds! Leave the sacrifice alone!

Rizpah bore the scorching heat of summer, the night dews and the rains, unsheltered and alone. Sleep was chased from her weeping eyes—for her heart was too full for slumber. Behold how she loved her children! Shall Rizpah thus endure—and shall we give up at the first little inconvenience or trial? Are we such cowards—that we cannot bear to suffer with our Lord? She even chased away the wild beasts, with courage unusual in her gender—and will not we be ready to encounter every foe for Jesus' sake? Her children were slain by other hands than hers—and yet she wept and watched. What ought we to do—who by our sins, have crucified our Lord! Our obligations are boundless, our love should be fervent, and our repentance thorough!

Those ghastly corpses might well have affrighted Rizpah! But in our Lord, at whose cross-foot we are sitting, there is nothing revolting—but everything attractive! Never was living beauty so enchanting, as a dying Savior! To abide by His cross—will be our solace.

~ ~ ~

He is dull, heavy, lumpy—all but dead "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way." Psalms 119:37

"Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

There are diverse kinds of vanity. The cap and bells of the fool; the mirth of the world; the dance and the cup of the dissolute. All these we know to be vanities; they wear their proper name and title upon their forefront. Far more treacherous, are those equally vain things—the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in his business—as in the theater! If he is spending his life in amassing wealth—he passes his days in a vain show. Unless we follow Christ, and make our God the great object of life—we only differ in appearance, from the most frivolous. It is clear that there is much need of the first prayer of our text.

"Quicken me in Your way."

The Psalmist confesses that he is dull, heavy, lumpy—all but dead. Perhaps, dear reader, you feel the same. We are so sluggish that the best motives cannot quicken us, apart from the Lord Himself. What! will not hell quicken me? Shall I think of sinners perishing—and yet not be awakened? Will not heaven quicken me? Can I think of the glory that awaits the righteous—and

yet be cold? Will not death quicken me? Can I think of dying, and standing before my God—and yet be slothful in my Master's service? Will not Christ's love constrain me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His cross—and not be stirred with fervency and zeal? It seems so! No mere consideration can quicken us to zeal—but God Himself must do it, hence the cry, "Quicken me!" The Psalmist breathes out his whole soul in vehement pleadings—his body and his soul unite in prayer. "Turn away my eyes," says the body. "Quicken me," cries the soul. This is a fit prayer for every day. O Lord, hear it in my case this day.

~ ~ ~ ~

A little thing?

Beware of light thoughts of sin. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him—no longer alarms him in the least. We palliate and excuse our sin; we throw a cloak over it; we call it by dainty names.

Sin, a little thing? Is it not a poison! Who knows its deadliness!

Sin, a little thing? Do not the little foxes—spoil the grapes? Does not the tiny coral insect—build a rock which wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes—fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings—wear away stones?

Sin, a little thing? It girded your Redeemer's head with thorns—and pierced His heart! It made Him suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe! Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity—you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. Look upon all sin as that which crucified your Savior—and you will see it to be "exceeding sinful."

~ ~ ~ ~ If I might but get the broken crumbs!

"They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights!" Psalms 36:8 The Queen of Sheba was amazed at the sumptuousness of Solomon's table. She was overwhelmed when she saw the provisions of a single day; and she marveled equally at the company of servants who were feasted at the royal table. But what is this, compared to the feast provided by the God of grace! Thousands of His people are daily fed there! Hungry and thirsty—they bring large appetites with them to the banquet—but not one of them return unsatisfied! There is enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore!

Though the multitude which feeds at Jehovah's table is as countless as the sands of the sea—yet each one has his portion of food. Think how much grace one Christian requires—so much that nothing but the Infinite God could supply him for one day! And yet the Lord spreads His table, not for one—but many saints; not for one day—but for many years; not for many years only—but for generation after generation!

Observe the full feasting spoken of in the text, the guests at mercy's banquet are satisfied, nay, more "they feast;" and that not with ordinary fare—but "on the abundance of Your house"—the special abundance of God's own house! And such feasting is guaranteed by a faithful promise—to all those who are sheltered under the shadow of Jehovah's wings.

I once thought, that if I might but get the broken crumbs at God's back door of grace—that I would be satisfied; like the woman who said, "even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." But no child of God is ever served with scraps and leftovers! Like Mephibosheth, they all feast from the King's own table. In matters of grace, we all have Benjamin's portion—we all have ten times more than we could have expected! And though our necessities are great—yet are we often amazed at the marvelous plenty of grace, which God gives us experimentally to enjoy!

"They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from Your river of delights!"
Psalms 36:8

~ ~ ~ ~ Do you understand what you read?

"Do you understand what you read?" Acts 8:30

We would be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine—if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Scriptures, is He who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His teaching, and His guidance into all truth. When the prophet Daniel would interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah; but it is written first, "I wept much!" The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the sealed book was opened!

Therefore, if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," remember that prayer is your best means of study! Like Daniel, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof—when you have sought unto God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed—after you have wept much.

Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised—and there is not a stony doctrine in Scripture, which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith! You may force your way through anything—with the leverage of prayer. Prayer is the lever which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within! So shall you grow healthy, strong, and happy in the divine life!

~ ~ ~ ~

Look up today, O parched plant!

"I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Here is sovereign grace, "I will send down showers." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy—for who can say, "I will send down showers," except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain, "Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Grace is the gift of God—and is not to be

created by man.

It is also needed grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds—but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful, is the divine blessing. In vain you labor—until God bestows the plenteous shower, and sends the needed grace down!

Then, it is plenteous grace. "I will send down showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we need plenteous grace . . .

to keep us humble,

to make us prayerful,

to make us holy,

to make us zealous,

to preserve us through this life,

and at last to land us in heaven!

We cannot do without saturating showers of grace!

Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will send down showers in season." What is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "I will send down showers in season."

And here is a varied grace. "I will give you showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives converting grace, He will also give comforting grace. He will send "showers of blessing." Look up today, O parched plant—and open your leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering!

~ ~ ~ ~ The grand object of the eye of faith!

"We fix our eyes not on what is seen—but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!" 2 Corinthians 4:18 In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part—to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown—and onward is the goal. Whether it is for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love—the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith!

Looking into the future—the Christian sees sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of eternal glory. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed. He sees himself . . .

enter within the pearly gates,

hailed as more than conqueror,

crowned by the hand of Christ,

embraced in the arms of Jesus,
glorified with Him, and
made to sit together with Him on His throne!
Contemplation of my glorious future may well relieve,
the darkness of the past, and
the gloom of the present! The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth!
Hush, hush, my fears!

Death is but a narrow stream—and you shall soon have forded it!

Death—how brief! Immortality—how endless!

Time—how short! Eternity—how long! The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there!

"In the future, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day; and not only to me—but to all those who have loved His appearing!" 2 Timothy 4:8

~ ~ ~ A portion for each day

"Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes—and he dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life. As for his allowance, a regular allowance was given to him by the king, a portion for each day, for the rest of his life." 2 Kings 25:29-30

Jehoiachin was not sent away from the king's palace with a 'supply' to last him for months—but his provision was given him as a daily pension. Herein he well pictures the happy position of all the Lord's people. A daily portion is all that a man really needs. We do not need tomorrow's portion; for that day has not yet dawned, and its needs are as yet unborn. The thirst which we may suffer in the month of June—does not need to be quenched in February, for we do not feel it yet. If we have enough for each day as the days arrive—we shall never know want. Sufficient for the day—is all that we can enjoy.

We cannot eat or wear more than the day's supply of food and clothing. Any surplus gives us the care of storing it, and the anxiety of watching against a thief. One staff aids a traveler—but a bundle of staffs is a heavy burden. Enough is not only as good as a feast—but is all that the greatest glutton can truly enjoy. Enough is all that we should expect—a craving for more than this, is ungrateful. When our Father does not give us more—we should be content with His daily allowance.

Jehoiachin's case is ours—we have . . .

a sure portion;

a portion given to us by the King;

a gracious portion;

and a perpetual portion.

Here is surely ground for thankfulness.

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

"Give us each day—our daily bread." Luke 11:3 "As your days—so shall your strength be."
Deuteronomy 33:25

~ ~ ~ HE cares for ME!

"Casting all your care upon Him—for He cares for you!" 1 Peter 5:7

It is a happy way of soothing sorrow, when we can feel—"HE cares for ME!" Christian! do not dishonor God, by always wearing a brow of worry! Come—cast your burden upon your God! You are staggering beneath a weight—which your Father would not feel. What seems like a crushing burden to you—would be but as small dust to Him. Nothing is so sweet as to,

"Lie passive in God's hands,

And know no will, but His."

O child of suffering—be patient! God has not overlooked you in His providence. He who is the feeder of sparrows—will also furnish you with what you need. Do not sit down in despair.

There is One who cares for you! His all-seeing eye is fixed on you! His all-loving heart beats with pity for your woe! His omnipotent hand shall yet bring you the needed help! The darkest cloud—shall scatter itself in showers of mercy. The blackest gloom—shall give place to the morning light.

If you are one of His family—He will bind up your wounds, and heal your broken heart. Do not doubt His grace, because of your troubles—but believe that He loves you as much in seasons of distress—as in times of happiness. What a serene and quiet life might you lead—if you would leave providing—to the God of providence!

If God cares for you—why need you care also? Can you trust Him for your soul—and not for your body? He has never refused to bear your burdens—He has never fainted under their weight. Come, then, soul! Be done with fretful worry—and leave all your concerns in the hand of your gracious God!

~ ~ ~ Shame on you—O silly heart!

"What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have—that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God—why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?"
1 Corinthians 4:7

Christian! By nature—you are no better than others! What would you be—without the continual influence of the Spirit? O believer, whatever you are—you have nothing to make you proud. The more you have—the more you are in debt to God—and should you be proud of that which renders you a debtor?

Consider your origin—look back to what you were. "Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins!" Ephesians 2:1. Consider what you would have been—but for divine grace!

It is only God's grace—which has made you to differ! Great believer—you would have been a great sinner—if God had not made you to differ! O you who are valiant for truth—you would have been as valiant for error—if grace had not laid hold upon you!

Therefore, do not be proud, though you have a wide domain of grace—for once, you had not a single thing to call your own—except your sin and misery!

Oh! strange infatuation, that you—who have borrowed everything, should think of exalting yourself! How foolish—that you—a poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of your Savior—are yet proud! Shame on you—O silly heart!

~ ~ ~ The devil's jackals!

"One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing—a very beautiful woman." 2 Samuel 11:2 At that hour David saw Bathsheba. We are never out of the reach of temptation! Both at home and abroad we are liable to meet with allurements to evil. The morning opens with peril—and the shadows of evening find us still in jeopardy. They are well kept—whom God keeps! But woe unto those who go forth into the world, or even dare to walk their own house, unarmed. Those who think themselves secure, are more exposed to danger than any others. The armor-bearer of sin—is self-confidence.

David should have been engaged in fighting the Lord's battles, instead of which he tarried at Jerusalem, and gave himself up to luxurious repose, for he arose from his bed in the evening. Idleness and luxury are the devil's jackals—and find him abundant prey. In stagnant waters—noxious creatures swarm. Neglected soil—soon yields a dense tangle of weeds and briars. Oh for the constraining love of Jesus to keep us active and useful! When I see the King of Israel sluggishly leaving his couch at the close of the day, and falling at once into temptation—let me take warning, and set holy watchfulness to guard the door! Is it possible that the king had mounted his housetop for prayer and devotion? If so, what a caution is given us to count no place, however secret—a sanctuary from sin!

While our hearts are so like a tinder-box, and sparks so plentiful—we had need use all diligence in all places—to prevent a blaze. Satan can climb housetops, and enter closets! And even if we could shut out that foul fiend—our own corruptions are enough to work our ruin—unless God's grace prevents it.

Reader, beware of evening temptations. Be not secure. The sun is down—but sin is up. We need a watchman for the night—as well as a guardian for the day. O blessed Spirit, keep us from all evil this night. Amen.

~ ~ ~ ~ If there were an ant at the door of your granary "Do not be afraid—for I Myself will help you—declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 41:14 This morning, let us hear the Lord Jesus speak to each one of us:

"I Myself will help you. It is but a small thing for Me, your God, to help you. Consider what I have done already. What! not help you? Why, I bought you with My blood. What! not help you? Why, I have died for you! And if I have done the greater—will I not do the lesser? Help you? Before the world began—I chose you. I laid aside My glory and became a man for you. I gave up My life for you! And if I did all this—I will surely help you now. If you had need of a thousand times as much help—I would give it to you. You require little, compared with what I am ready to give. It is much for you to need—but it is nothing for Me to bestow.

What! not help you? Fear not! If there were an ant at the door of your granary, asking for help—it would not ruin you to give him a handful of your wheat! Just so, you are nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency!"

"I Myself will help you!" O my soul, is not this enough? Bring your empty pitcher here! Surely this well will fill it. Hasten! gather up your needs, and bring them here—your emptiness, your woes, your troubles. Behold, this river of God is full for your supply. What more can you desire? The Eternal God is your helper!

~ ~ ~ ~ Such likeness between men and swine!

Rowland Hill illustrated the folly of sinners, by the story of a butcher who was followed by the swine right into the slaughterhouse. As pigs are not usually in the mind to go where they are wanted, it seemed a mystery how these animals were so eager to follow their executioner; but when it was seen that he wisely carried a bag of corn with which he enticed the creatures onward—the riddle was solved at once. Unsuspicious of impending death—the hogs cared only for the passing gratification of their appetites, and hastened to the slaughter.

Just in the same manner, ungodly men follow the great enemy of souls down into the jaws of hell, merely because their depraved passions are pleased with the lusts of the flesh and the pleasures of sin which the devil gives them by handfuls on the road. Alas, that there should be such likeness between men and swine! The joys of sin are so short and so unsatisfactory, that they can never be thought of for a moment—as a fitting inducement for a rational being to lose his immortal soul. Will a few hours' foolery, gambling, drinking, or immorality — compensate for eternal fire? Is the momentary indulgence of a base passion, worth . . .

enduring of flames which never can be quenched,

eternally moaning in vain for a drop of water,

being tormented by the never dying worm,

being shut out from heaven forever,

being eternally cursed by God! Is any sin worth all this? Can any gain make up for this?

O you who delight in the poisonous sweets of sin—remember that though pleasant in the mouth for the moment—sin will be as wormwood and gall in your belly forever! Why will you swallow the

bait—when you know that the hook is there? Why will you be lured by the Satanic fowler? Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird; but you are more foolish than the birds—and fly into the snare when you know it to be there! O that you were wise, and would consider your latter end. Let that one word "Eternity!" ring in your ears, and drive out the giddy laughter of worldlings, who prefer the present sensual joys.

~ ~ ~ A football to be kicked from man to man

Two learned doctors were angrily disputing the nature of food, and allowing their meal to lie untasted; while nearby, a simple farmer was eating heartily of that which was set before him.

Just so, the religious world is full of quibblers, critics, and debaters, who, like the doctors—argue over religious controversies, without profit either to themselves or others. Those are far happier, who imitate the farmer—and feed upon the Word of God, which is the true food of the soul.

Questioning with honesty and candor is not to be condemned, when the object is to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." But to treat Scripture as if it were a football to be kicked from man to man—is irreverence, if not worse!

Study the Word of God; lay hold upon it, and spend your time in feasting upon precious truth! Reader, argue, if you please—but remember that communion with the Lord Jesus gives infinitely more enjoyment than disputing can ever afford you. Eat—don't argue!

Gems vol. 2

Spurgeon GEMS volume 2 The coney "The coney is but a feeble folk—yet they make their home in the rocky cliffs." Proverbs 30:26

Conscious of their own natural defenselessness, the coney resorts to clefts in the rocky cliffs, and are secure from their enemies. My heart, be willing to gather a lesson from these feeble folk. You are as weak and as exposed to peril as the timid coney—strive to be as wise as they are to seek a shelter. My best security is within the fortifications of an immutable Jehovah, where His unalterable promises stand like giant cliffs of rock. It will be well with you, my heart, if you can always hide yourself in the bulwarks of His glorious attributes, all of which are guarantees of safety for those who put their trust in Him.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have done so and have found myself like David in the cave of Adullam—safe from the cruelty of my enemy. I experience the blessedness of the man who puts his trust in the Lord—for long ago, when Satan and my sins pursued me—I fled to the cleft of the Rock—Christ Jesus! And in His riven side—I found a secure resting-place!

Dear heart, run to Him anew today, whatever your present grief may be! Jesus cares for you! Jesus will console and help you! No monarch in his impregnable fortress, is more secure than the coney in his rocky shelter. The leader of a thousand armies is not one whit better protected—than the little dweller in the rocky cleft.

Just so, in Jesus—the weak are strong, and the defenseless are safe! They could not be more strong—if they were giants! They could not be more safe—if they were in Heaven! Faith gives to men on earth—the protection of the God of Heaven! More protection they cannot need, and need not wish. The coney cannot build a castle—but they avail themselves of what is there already. Just so, I cannot make a refuge for myself—but Jesus has provided it, His Father has given it, His Spirit has revealed it—and lo, I enter it and am safe from every foe!

~ ~ ~ Partings, and changes, and storms!

"And there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1

Scarcely could we rejoice at the thought of losing the glorious old ocean. The new Heavens and the new earth are none the fairer to our imagination, if, indeed, literally there is to be no great and wide sea, with its gleaming waves and shelly shores. Is not the text to be read as a metaphor, tinged with the bias with which the Oriental mind universally regarded the sea in the olden times? A real physical world without a sea is mournful to imagine, it would be an iron ring, without the diamond which made it precious. There must be a spiritual meaning here. In Heaven, there will be no division—the sea separates nations and divides peoples from each other. To John on the island of Patmos, the deep waters were like prison walls, shutting him out from his brethren and his work. There shall be no such barriers in the world to come. Leagues of rolling billows lie between us and many a kinsman whom we prayerfully remember—but in the bright world to which

we go—there shall be unbroken fellowship for all the redeemed family. In this sense there shall be no more sea. The sea is the emblem of change—with its ebbs—and flows, its glassy smoothness—and its mountainous billows, its gentle murmurs—and its tumultuous roarings. The sea is never the same for long. As the slave of fickle winds and the changeful moon—its instability is proverbial. In this mortal state—we have too much of this change. This world is constant—only in her inconstancy! But in the Heavenly state—all mournful change shall be unknown, and with it all fear of any storm to wreck our hopes or drown our joys. The sea of glass glows with a glory, which is unbroken by a wave! No tempest howls along the peaceful shores of paradise!

Soon shall we reach that happy land where partings, and changes, and storms shall all be ended! Jesus will waft all of His people there! Are you in Him or not? This is the grand question!

~ ~ ~ We may throw the dice!

"We may throw the dice—but the Lord determines how they fall." Proverbs 16:33

If the fall of the dice is under the Lord's control—then whose is the arrangement of our whole life? If the simple casting of the dice is guided by Him—how much more the events of our entire life—especially when we are told by our blessed Savior, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father!" It would bring a holy calm over your mind, dear friend, if you were always to remember this. It would so relieve your mind from worry—that you would be the better able to walk in patience, calmness, and cheerfulness, as a Christian should. When a man is anxious—he cannot pray with faith, or serve his Master. When you worry and fret about your lot and circumstances, you are meddling with Christ's business, and neglecting your own! You have been attempting "providing" work—and forgetting that it is yours to "obey". Be wise and attend to the obeying—and let Christ manage the providing.

Come and survey your Father's storehouse, and ask whether He will let you starve—while He has laid up so great an abundance in His garner! Look at His heart of mercy—and ask if that heart can ever prove unkind! Look at His inscrutable wisdom—and ask if that wisdom can ever be at fault. Above all, look to Jesus Christ your Intercessor, and ask yourself, while He pleads, can your Father deal ungraciously with you? If He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of His poor children?

"Cast your burden upon the Lord—and He will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall." Psalms 55:22

~ ~ ~ ~ The great heart-searcher "Be diligent to know the condition of your flock—and pay attention to your herds." Proverbs 27:23

Every wise merchant will occasionally hold a stock-taking, when he will open up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of Heaven, will cry, "Search me, O God, and try me!" He will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is the great heart-searcher; and of old His servants knew Him as the "Righteous God, who searches minds and hearts!" Let me stir you up in His name—to make diligent search and solemn trial of your spiritual state, lest you come short of the promised rest! That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with us

all—I exhort you to do with yourself today. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for grey heads may cover black hearts! Let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy. The enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat.

It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, truly—but I shall hope the rather—that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away! It is not security—but carnal security, which we would kill! It is not confidence—but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow! It is not peace—but false peace, which we would destroy! By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite—but that sincere souls might show forth His praise, I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, "You are weighed in the balances, and are found lacking!"

~ ~ ~ ~ Four choice privileges "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture." John 10:9

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

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

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

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

4. He shall find **PASTURE**. He who knows Jesus—shall never lack. Going in and out shall be alike helpful to him. In fellowship with God he shall grow—and in watering others he shall be watered. Having made Jesus his all—he shall find all in Jesus. His soul shall be as a watered garden, and as a well whose waters shall never fail.

~ ~ ~ ~ Paint upon the eyeballs of my soul "I remember you." Jeremiah 2:2

Let us note that Christ delights to think upon His Church, and to look upon her beauty. As the bird returns often to its nest, and as the wayfarer hastens to his home—so does the mind continually pursue the object of its desire. We cannot look too often upon that face which we love. We desire always to have our precious things in our sight.

It is just so with our Lord Jesus. From all eternity "His delights were with the sons of men." When the world was set upon its pillars, He was there—and His thoughts rolled onward to the time when His elect would be born into the world; He viewed them in the mirror of His foreknowledge. Many a time before His incarnation, He descended to this lower earth in the similitude of a man, and visited His people: on the plains of Mamre, by the brook Jabbok, beneath the walls of Jericho, and in the fiery furnace of Babylon.

Because His soul delighted in them—He could not rest away from them, for His heart longed after them! He had engraved their names upon His hands. Never were they absent from His heart, for as the breastplate containing the names of the tribes of Israel was the most brilliant ornament worn by the high priest—so the names of Christ's elect were His most precious jewels, and glittering on His heart!

We may often forget to meditate upon the perfections of our Lord—but He never ceases to remember us! Let us chide ourselves for past forgetfulness, and pray for grace ever to bear Him in fondest remembrance. Lord, paint upon the eyeballs of my soul—the image of Your lovely Son!

~ ~ ~ ~

Your ear has not been open!

"You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ear has not been open!" Isaiah 48:8

"You have neither heard nor understood!" It is painful to remember that, in a certain degree, this accusation may be laid at the door of believers, who too often are in a measure, spiritually insensible. We may well bewail ourselves, that we do not hear the voice of God as we ought, "You have not heard!" There are gentle motions of the Holy Spirit in the soul which are unheeded by us. There are whisperings of divine command and of Heavenly love—which are alike unobserved by our leaden intellects.

Alas! We have been carelessly ignorant, "You have neither heard nor understood!" There are matters within our hearts which we ought to have seen: corruptions which have made headway unnoticed; holy graces which are being blighted like flowers in the frost, untended by us; glimpses of the divine face which might be perceived—if we had not walled up the windows of our soul. But we "have not understood." As we think of this—we are humbled in the deepest self-abasement. How must we adore the grace of God as we learn from the context—that all this folly and ignorance, on our part, was foreknown by God, and, notwithstanding that foreknowledge, He yet has been pleased to deal with us in a way of saving mercy! Admire the marvelous sovereign grace which could have chosen us—in the sight of all this! Wonder at the price that was paid for us—when Christ knew what we would be! He who hung upon the cross, foresaw us as unbelieving, backsliding, cold-hearted, indifferent, careless, lax in prayer—and yet He said, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior! I have loved you!"

O redemption, how wondrously resplendent do you shine—when we think how black we are! O Holy Spirit, give us henceforth the hearing ear, and the understanding heart!

~ ~ ~ ~

Come unto Me!

"Come unto Me!" Matthew 11:28 The cry of the Christian Religion is the gentle word, "Come." The Jewish LAW harshly said, "Go, take heed unto your steps as to the path in which you shall walk. Break the commandments, and you shall perish; keep them, and you shall live." The LAW was a dispensation of terror, which drove men before it as with a scourge; the GOSPEL draws with bands of love. Jesus is the good Shepherd going before His sheep, bidding them follow Him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, "Come." The LAW repels—the GOSPEL attracts. The LAW shows the distance which there is between God and man; the GOSPEL bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it. From the first moment of your spiritual life, until you are ushered into glory—the language of Christ to you will be, "Come, come unto Me!" As a mother puts out her finger to her little child and woos it to walk by saying, "Come," even so does Jesus. He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow Him as the soldier follows his captain. He will always go before you to pave your way, and clear your path, and you shall hear His animating voice calling you after Him all through life. In the solemn hour of death, His sweet words with which He shall usher you into the Heavenly world shall be, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father!"

Nay, further, this is not only Christ's cry to you—but, if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ, "Come! Come!" You will be longing for His second advent; you will be saying, "Come quickly—even so come Lord Jesus!" You will be panting for nearer and closer communion with Him. As His voice to you is "Come," your response to Him will be, "Come, Lord, and abide with me! Come, and occupy alone the throne of my heart! Reign there without a rival, and consecrate me entirely to Your service!"

~ ~ ~ ~

No better than Orpah's kiss!

"Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung to Naomi." Rth_1:14

Both of them had an affection for Naomi, and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the hour of test came; Naomi most unselfishly set before each of them the trials which awaited them, and bade them if they cared for ease and comfort—to return to their Moabitish friends. At first both of them declared that they would cast in their lot with the Lord's people; but upon still further consideration, Orpah with much grief and a respectful kiss, left her mother-in-law, and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends; while Ruth with all her heart gave herself up to the God of her mother-in-law.

It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair—and quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements and difficulties. The kiss of outward profession is very cheap and easy—but the practical cleaving to the Lord, which must show itself in holy decision for truth and holiness—is not so small a matter.

How does the case stand with us—is our heart fixed upon Jesus? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the Master's sake? The after gain will be an abundant recompense, for Egypt's treasures are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

Orpah is heard of no more; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure, her life melts into the gloom of death. But Ruth lives in history and in Heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line from whence sprung the King of kings. Blessed among women shall those be—who for Christ's sake

can renounce all. But forgotten and worse than forgotten, shall those be—who in the hour of trial, turn back unto the world. O that we may not be content with the mere form of devotion, which may be no better than Orpah's kiss! But may the Holy Spirit work in us a cleaving of our whole heart to our Lord Jesus!

~ ~ ~ The predestined moment has not yet struck!

"I have many people in this city!" Acts 18:10 This should be a great encouragement to evangelize—since God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken—an elect people who must be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and they must receive it—for so the decree of predestination runs. They are as much redeemed by Christ's blood—as the saints before the eternal throne! They are Christ's property—yet perhaps they are at present, lovers of the ale-house, and haters of holiness. But if Jesus Christ has purchased them—He will have them.

If you will select me the vilest specimen of humanity—I will have hope for him yet, because Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst—to be made the best. Grace turns pebbles of the brook—into jewels for His royal crown. He transforms worthless dross—into pure gold. Redeeming love has set apart many of the worst of mankind—to be the reward of the Savior's passion. Effectual grace calls forth many of the vilest of the vile—to sit at the table of mercy! Therefore let none despair.

God is not unfaithful to forget the price which His Son has paid. He will not allow His substitutionary sacrifice to be in any case—an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet—but regenerated they must be! This is our comfort when we go forth to them with the quickening Word of God.

Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "My prayer is not for them alone," says the great Intercessor, "I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message." Poor, ignorant souls—they do not pray for themselves—but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on His breastplate, and before long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace.

"The time for figs is not yet." The predestined moment has not yet struck! But when it comes—they shall obey—for God will have His own redeemed people! They must obey—for the Spirit is not to be withstood when He comes forth with fullness of His saving power. They must become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of My power."

~ ~ ~

There is no spot in you!

"You are absolutely beautiful, My beloved! There is no spot in you!" Son_4:7

Having pronounced His Church positively full of beauty—our Lord confirms His praise by a precious negative, "There is no spot in you!" As if the thought occurred to the Bridegroom that the carping world would insinuate that He had only mentioned her lovely parts—and had purposely omitted those features which were deformed or defiled—He sums up all by declaring her

universally and entirely lovely, and utterly devoid of stain. A spot may soon be removed, and is the very least thing that can disfigure beauty—but even from this little blemish, the believer is delivered in his Lord's sight. If He had said there is no hideous scar, no horrible deformity, no repulsive ulcer—we might even then have marveled. But when He testifies that she is free from the slightest spot—all these other forms of defilement are included, and the height of wonder is increased.

If He had but promised to remove all spots in Heaven, we would have had eternal reason for joy. But when He speaks of it as already done—who can restrain the most intense emotions of satisfaction and delight! O my soul, here is marrow and fatness for you; eat your full, and be satisfied with royal dainties!

Christ Jesus has no quarrel with His spouse. She often wanders from Him, and grieves Him—but He does not allow her faults to affect His love. He sometimes chides—but it is always in the tenderest manner, with the kindest intentions—it is "My love" even then. There is no remembrance of our follies. He does not cherish ill thoughts of us—but He pardons and loves as well after the offence—as before it! It is well for us that it is so, for if Jesus were as mindful of injuries as we are—how could He commune with us? Our precious Husband knows our silly hearts too well—to take any offence at our follies and faults.

~ ~ ~ ~

There is no more humbling doctrine in Scripture!

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Romans 9:15 In these words, the Lord in the plainest manner claims the right to give or to withhold His saving mercy, according to His own sovereign will. As the prerogative of life and death is vested in the monarch—so the Judge of all the earth has a right to spare or condemn the guilty—as may seem best in His sight.

Men by their sins have forfeited all claim upon God; they deserve to perish for their sins—and if they all do so, they have no ground for complaint. If the Lord steps in to save any, He may do so if the ends of justice are not thwarted; but if He judges it best to leave the condemned to suffer the righteous sentence, none may arraign Him at their bar. Foolish and impudent, are all those discourses against God's sovereign grace, which are but the rebellions of proud human nature against the crown and scepter of Jehovah. When we are brought to see our own utter ruin and ill desert, and the justice of the divine verdict against sin—we no longer cavil at the truth that the Lord is not bound to save us. We do not murmur if He chooses to save others, as though He were doing us an injury—but feel that if He deigns to look upon us, it will be His own free act of undeserved goodness, for which we shall forever bless His name!

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

~ ~ ~ ~

We were stinking in the grave of sin!

"Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him." John 12:2

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

Lazarus is to be imitated. It would have been a strange thing if he had not been at the table where Jesus was, for he had been dead—and Jesus had raised him. For the risen one to be absent when the Lord who gave him life was at his house, would have been ungrateful indeed.

We too were once dead! Yes, and like Lazarus—we were stinking in the grave of sin! Jesus raised us—and we live! Can we be content to live at a distance from Him? Do we omit to remember Him at His table, where He deigns to feast with His brethren? Oh, this is cruel! It behooves us to repent, and do as He has bidden us, for His least wish should be law to us. To have lived without constant fellowship with one of whom the Jews said, "Behold how He loved him," would have been disgraceful to Lazarus! Is it excusable in us—whom Jesus has loved with an everlasting love! To have been cold to Him who wept over his lifeless corpse, would have argued great brutishness in Lazarus. What does it argue in us—over whom the Savior has not only wept—but bled!

Come, brethren, who read this portion—let us return unto our Heavenly Bridegroom, and ask for His Spirit that we may be on terms of closer intimacy with Him, and henceforth sit at the table with Him!

~ ~ ~ ~ God's children run home when the storm comes on!

"O that I knew where I might find Him!" Job 23:3 In Job's uttermost extremity—he cried after the Lord. The longing desire of an afflicted child of God—is once more to see his Father's face! His first prayer is not, "O that I might be healed of the disease which now festers in every part of my body!" Nor even "O that I might see my children restored from the jaws of the grave, and my property once more brought from the hand of the spoiler!" But the first and uppermost cry is, "O that I knew where I might find HIM who is my God! O that I might come even to His presence!"

God's children run home when the storm comes on! It is the Heaven-born instinct of a gracious soul—to seek shelter from all troubles, beneath the wings of Jehovah. "He who has made God his refuge," might serve as the title of a true believer. A hypocrite, when afflicted by God, resents the infliction and, like a slave, would run from the Master who has scourged him! But not so with the true heir of Heaven—he kisses the hand which smote him—and seeks shelter from the rod in the bosom of the God who frowned upon him!

Job's desire to commune with God was intensified, by the failure of all other sources of consolation. The patriarch turned away from his sorry friends, and looked up to the celestial

throne—just as a traveler turns from his empty water bottle, and betakes himself with all speed to the well. He bids farewell to earth-born hopes, and cries, "O that I knew where I might find my God!"

Nothing teaches us so much the preciousness of the Creator, as when we learn the emptiness of all other things. Turning away with bitter scorn from earth's hives, where we find no honey—but many sharp stings; we rejoice to turn to Him whose faithful Word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. In every trouble, we should first seek God's presence with us. Only let us enjoy His smile—and we can bear our daily cross with a willing heart, for His dear sake!

~ ~ ~ You cannot do any of these things!

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit." Ephesians 4:30

All that the believer has, must come from Christ—but it comes solely through the channel of the Spirit of grace. Moreover, as all blessings thus flow to you through the Holy Spirit, so also no good thing can come out of you in holy thought, devout worship, or gracious act—apart from the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit. Even if the good seed is sown in you—yet it will lie dormant—until He works in you to will and to work of His own good pleasure. Do you desire to speak for Jesus? How can you—unless the Holy Spirit touches your tongue? Do you desire to pray? Alas! what dull work it is—unless the Spirit makes intercession for you! Do you desire to subdue sin? Would you be holy? Would you imitate your Master? Do you desire to rise to superlative heights of spirituality? Are you wanting to be full of zeal and ardor for the Master's cause?

You cannot do any of these things—without the Spirit!

"Without Me—you can do nothing." O branch of the vine—you can have no fruit without the sap! O child of God, you have no life within you—apart from the life which God gives you through His Spirit! Then let us not grieve Him or provoke Him to anger by our sin. Let us not quench Him in one of His faintest motions in our soul. Let us foster His every leading, and be ready to obey His every prompting.

If the Holy Spirit is indeed so mighty—let us attempt nothing without Him! Let us begin no project, and carry on no enterprise, and conclude no transaction, without imploring His blessing. Let us give Him the due homage, of feeling our entire weakness apart from Him; and then depend alone upon Him!

~ ~ ~

The Lord's portion

"The Lord's portion is His people." Deuteronomy 32:9

How are they His portion?

First, by His own sovereign election. He chose them, and set His love upon them. He chose them altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which He foresaw in them. He had mercy on whom He would have mercy, and ordained a chosen company unto eternal life. Therefore, are they His by His unconstrained election.

They are not only His by choice—but by purchase. He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing—hence there can be no dispute about His title to them. The Lord's portion has been fully redeemed, not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! See the blood-mark upon all the elect, invisible to human eye—but known to Christ, for "the Lord knows those who are His!" He forgets none of those whom He has redeemed! He counts the sheep for whom He laid down His life, and well remembers the people for whom He gave Himself.

They are also His by conquest. What a battle He had in us—before we would be won! How long He laid siege to our hearts! How often He sent us terms of surrender! But we barred our gates, and fortified our walls against Him. Do we not remember that glorious hour—when He conquered our hearts? When He placed His cross against the wall, and scaled our ramparts, planting the blood-red flag of His omnipotent mercy on our strongholds? Yes, we are, indeed—the conquered captives of His omnipotent love!

~ ~ ~ ~

He is loathsome to the last degree!

"They claim to follow the Lord—but then they worship Molech, too! So now I will destroy them!"
Zephaniah 1:5

Such people thought themselves safe because they were with both parties—they went with the followers of Jehovah, and also bowed down to Molech. But duplicity is despicable and abominable with God! His soul hates hypocrisy! The idolater who distinctly gives himself to his false god—has one sin less than he who brings his polluted and detestable sacrifice into the temple of the Lord—while his heart is with the world! In the common matters of daily life—a double-minded man is despised; but in true religion—he is loathsome to the last degree!

The penalty pronounced in the verse before us is terrible—but it is well deserved. Should divine justice spare the sinner, who knows the right, approves it, and professes to follow it—and all the while loves the evil, and gives it dominion in his heart?

My soul, search yourself—and see whether you are guilty of double-dealing with God. You profess to be a follower of Jesus—do you truly love Him? Is your heart right with God? A mere profession of Christ is of little value—if I am indeed dead in trespasses and sins. To have one foot on the land of truth, and the other on the sea of falsehood—will end in a terrible fall and a total ruin.

Christ will be all—or nothing!

If God truly reigns in my heart—there will be no space for another reigning power. Do I rest alone on Jesus crucified, and live alone for Him? Is it my heart's desire to do so? If so, blessed be the mighty grace which has led me to salvation! If not—O Lord, pardon my sad offence, and unite my heart to fear Your name!

~ ~ ~ ~

If we were more like Christ

"It is enough for the disciple—to be as his Master." Matthew 10:25

No one will dispute this statement, for it would be unfitting for the servant to be exalted above his Master. When our Lord was on earth, what was the treatment He received? Were His claims acknowledged, His instructions followed, His perfections worshiped, by those whom He came to bless? No! "He was despised and rejected by men." His place was outside the camp! Cross-bearing was His occupation. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests—but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head." This inhospitable world afforded Him no shelter—it cast Him out—and crucified Him!

So, if you are a follower of Jesus, and maintain a consistent, Christ-like walk and lifestyle—the world will treat you as they treated the Savior—they will despise you!

Do not dream that worldlings will admire you—or that the more holy and the more Christ-like you are—the more peaceably people will act towards you. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" If we were more like Christ—we would be more hated by His enemies!

It would be a sad dishonor to a child of God—to be the world's favorite. It is a very bad sign—to hear a wicked world clap its hands and shout "Well done!" to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his character, and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong, when the ungodly give him their approbation. Let us be true to our Master, and have no friendship with a blind and base world which scorns and rejects Him! Far be it from us—to seek a crown of honor where our Lord found a coronet of thorns!

"If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it—the world hates you!" John 15:18-19

~ ~ ~ Celestial eye-salve!

"All whom the Father gives Me—will come to Me!" John 6:37

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man—but by My Father in Heaven!" Matthew 16:17 No lips can communicate the love of Christ to another—until Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions of Jesus all fall flat and bland—unless the Holy Spirit fills them with life and power. Until our Immanuel reveals Himself within—the soul cannot truly see Him. If you would see the sun—the sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that mighty lamp be seen. It is just so with Christ.

Purify your heart by any educational process you may select; elevate your mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power—yet this can never reveal Christ to your soul. The Spirit of God must come with power—and then in that mystic holy of holies—the Lord Jesus will display Himself to the sanctified eye—as He does not unto the blind world. Christ must be His own mirror! The great mass of this blar-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them . . .

without beauty or loveliness,

a root out of a dry ground,

rejected by the vain, and

despised by the proud.

Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with celestial eye-salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a Heavenly taste—only then is Jesus truly understood.

"To you who believe—He is precious!" To you, He is the chief corner-stone, the rock of your salvation, your all in all; but to others He is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests Himself, for His promise to such, is that He will make His abode with them.

O Jesus, show Yourself to me now! Favor me with a glimpse of Your all-conquering charms!

~ ~ ~ The Christian's never-failing resort!

"Their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even unto Heaven!" 2 Chronicles 30:27

Prayer is the Christian's never-failing resort in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword—you may take to the weapon of all-prayer! Your gun-powder may be damp, your bow-string may be broken—but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the javelin—but he trembles at prayer. Sword and spear need furbishing—but prayer never rusts; and when we think it most blunt—it cuts the best.

Prayer is an open door which none can shut! Devils may surround you on all sides—but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by force or storm—so long as Heavenly help comes down to us, to support us in the time of our necessities.

Prayer is never out of season—in summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains an audience with God . .

in the dawn of morning,

in the heat of noonday,

in the midst of business,

in the shades of evening,

in the dead of night. In every condition—whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or sin—your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place.

Prayer is never futile. True prayer is evermore—true power. You may not always get what you ask—but you shall always have your real needs supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter—He does so according to the spirit. If you ask for coarse meal—will you be angered because He gives you the finest flour? If you seek bodily health, should you complain if instead thereof—He makes your sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the affliction sanctified, than removed? My soul, do not forget to offer your petition and request—for the Lord is ready to grant you your desires!

~ ~ ~ The most foolish of all follies!

"People didn't realize what was going to happen—until the flood came and swept them all away! That is the way it will be—when the Son of Man comes!" Matthew 24:39 Universal was the doom—none escaped! The rich and poor,

the learned and the illiterate,

the admired and the abhorred,

the religious and the profane,

the old and the young—

all sank in one common ruin!

Some had doubtless ridiculed Noah—where were their merry jests now? Others had threatened him for his zeal which they counted madness—where were their boastings and hard speeches now? The carper who criticized old Noah's work—is drowned in the same sea which covers his sneering companions. Those who spoke patronizingly of good Noah's fidelity to his convictions—but did not share in them, have sunk to rise no more! And the workers who were paid to help build the wondrous ark, are all lost also. The flood swept them all away, and made no single exception.

Just so, final destruction is sure to every person outside of Christ! No rank, possession, or uprightness of character shall suffice to save a single soul who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. My soul, behold this wide-spread judgment—and tremble at it. How astonishing was the general apathy! They were all eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—until the dreadful morning dawned. There was not one wise man upon earth, outside of the ark. Folly duped the whole race, folly as to self-preservation—the most foolish of all follies! Folly in doubting the most true God—the most malignant of fooleries!

Strange, is it not? All men are negligent of their souls—until saving grace gives them reason; then they leave their madness and act like rational beings—but not until then.

All who were in the ark were safe—no ruin entered there. All are safe in Jesus. My soul, are you in Him?

~ ~ ~ Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty "His head is as the most fine gold, His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." Son_5:11 All comparisons fail to set forth the beauty of Jesus—but the spouse uses the best within her reach. By the 'head' of Jesus we may understand His deity—and the ingot of purest gold is the best conceivable metaphor—but all too poor to describe one so precious, so pure, so dear, so glorious! Jesus is not a grain of gold—but a vast globe of it—a priceless mass of treasure such as earth and Heaven cannot excel. The creatures are mere iron and clay—they all shall perish like wood, hay, and stubble—but the ever-living Head of the creation, shall shine on for ever and ever! In Him is no mixture, nor smallest taint of alloy. He is for ever infinitely holy—and altogether divine! The 'bushy locks' depict His manly vigor. There is nothing effeminate in our Beloved. He is the manliest of men. Bold as a lion, laborious as an ox, swift as an eagle. Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty, are to be found in Him—though once He was despised and rejected by men. He is eternally crowned with peerless majesty. The 'black hair' indicates youthful freshness, for Jesus has the dew of His youth upon Him. Others

grow languid and grey with age—but He is forever a Priest, as was Melchizedek. Others come and go—but He abides as God upon His throne, world without end.

We will behold Him today and adore Him. Angels are gazing upon Him—His redeemed must not turn away their eyes from Him. Where else is there such a Beloved? O for an hour's fellowship with Him! Away, you intruding cares! Jesus draws me—and I run after Him!

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It is a broken-backed snake!

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!" Isaiah 64:6

The believer is a new creature; he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people; the Spirit of God is in him; and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man. But for all that—the Christian is a sinner still. He is so from the imperfection of his nature—and will continue so to the end of his earthly life.

The black fingers of sin leave smuts upon our fairest robes! Sin mars our repentance upon the wheel, before the great Potter has finished it. Selfishness defiles our tears. Unbelief tampers with our faith. Apart from the merit of Jesus, the best thing we ever did—only swelled the number of our sins! For when we have been most pure in our own sight—yet, like the Heavens, we are not pure in God's sight! And as He charged His angels with folly, much more must He charge us with it—even in our most angelic frames of heart!

Our song which thrills to Heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains—has human discords in it. Our prayer which moves the arm of God—is still a bruised and battered prayer, and only moves that arm because the sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication.

The most golden faith, or the purest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth—has still so much alloy in it—as to be only worthy of the eternal flames, in itself considered. Every night we look into the mirror—and we see a sinner; and have need confess, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!"

Oh, how precious is the blood of Christ—to such hearts as ours! How priceless a gift is His perfect righteousness! And how bright the hope of perfect holiness hereafter!

Even now, though sin dwells in us—its power is broken. It has no dominion. It is a broken-backed snake! We are in bitter conflict with it—but it is with a vanquished foe, that we have to deal. In but a little while—we shall enter victoriously into the city where, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!" Revelation 21:27

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Everything is hurry, worry, and vexation!

"The rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows again to the sea." Ecclesiastes 1:7

Every earthly thing is on the move. Time knows nothing of rest. The solid earth is a rolling ball, and the great sun himself is but a star obediently fulfilling its course around some greater luminary. Tides move the sea, winds stir the airy ocean, friction wears the rock—change and death rule everywhere!

The sea is not a miser's storehouse for a wealth of waters, for as by one force the waters flow into it, by another they are lifted from it. Men are born but to die—everything is hurry, worry, and vexation! "Everything under the sun is meaningless, like chasing the wind!" Ecclesiastes 1:14

Friend of the unchanging Jesus—what a joy it is to reflect upon your changeless heritage! Your sea of bliss will be forever full—since God Himself shall pour eternal rivers of pleasure into it! We seek an abiding city beyond the skies—and we shall not be disappointed!

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You have fallen again into the same folly and sin!

"He poured water into a basin—and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him!" John 13:5

The Lord Jesus loves His people so much—that every day He is still doing for them, much that is analogous to the washing of their soiled feet. He accepts their poorest actions. He feels their deepest sorrows. He hears their slenderest wishes. He forgives their every transgression. In one sense, He is still their Servant—as well as their Friend and Master.

He still humbly and patiently goes among His people with the basin and the towel. He does this when day by day—He cleanses them from their constant infirmities and sins.

Last night, when you bowed the knee, you mournfully confessed your sinful conduct; and even tonight, you must mourn afresh that you have fallen again into the same folly and sin, from which special grace delivered you long ago—and yet Jesus will have great patience with you! He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will—be clean!" He will again apply the blood of sprinkling, and speak peace to your conscience, and remove every vile spot!

What condescending patience there is—when the Savior bears with the oft recurring follies of His wayward disciple—day by day, and hour by hour, washing away the multiplied transgressions of His erring, but yet beloved child! To endure the constant follies and sins of His people—this is divine indeed!

While we find comfort and peace in our Lord's daily cleansing, its legitimate influence upon us will be to increase our watchfulness, and quicken our desire for holiness! Is it so with you?

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We love the swine-troughs—and forget our Father's house!

"With You is the fountain of life!" Psalms 36:9

There are times in our spiritual experience, when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without Him—and therefore He takes away every prop

upon which we have been in the habit of depending, that He may drive us to Himself! It is a blessed thing to live at the fountain-head. While our water-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry—nothing will serve us but our God.

We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs—and forget our Father's house! Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks—even out of the forms of religion. They are blessed things—but we may put them in God's place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an IDOL—when it keeps us away from God! The prodigal was never safer—than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. Our Lord favors us with a famine—that it may make us seek after Himself the more. The best position for a Christian—is living wholly and directly on God's grace! Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition—we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness!

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Though a lamb, He is yet the lion!

"Who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire!" Malachi 3:2

Christ's first coming was without external pomp or show of power. Herod and all Jerusalem with him, were stirred at the news of the wondrous birth. Those who supposed themselves to be waiting for Him—showed the fallacy of their professions, by rejecting Him when He came. His life on earth was a winnowing fan, which tried the great heap of religious profession—and few could abide the sifting process.

But what will His second coming be? What sinner can endure to think of it? "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked!" When in His humiliation He did but say to the soldiers, "I am He!"—and immediately they fell backward! What will be the terror of His enemies—when He shall more fully reveal Himself in judgment! His death shook the earth and darkened the Heavens—what shall be the dreadful splendor of that day in which as the living Savior, He shall summon the living and dead before Him? O that the terrors of the Lord would persuade men to forsake their sins and "kiss the Son—or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment!"

Though a lamb, He is yet the lion of the tribe of Judah, rending the prey in pieces! Though He does not break the bruised reed—yet will He crush His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. None of His foes shall bear up before the tempest of His wrath, or hide themselves from the sweeping hail of His indignation!

But His beloved blood-washed people look for His appearing with joy! To them He sits as a refiner even now—and when He has tried them, they shall come forth as gold. Let us search ourselves—and make our calling and election sure, so that the coming of the Lord may cause no dark forebodings in our mind. O for grace to cast away all hypocrisy, and to be found by Him, "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation" in the day of His appearing!

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An ounce of heart knowledge—is worth a ton of head learning!

"I consider everything a loss—compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Php_3:8

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with Him. No, I must know Him for myself.

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an intelligent knowledge. I must know Him, not as the visionary dreams of Him—but as the Word reveals Him. I must know His natures, divine and human. I must know His offices—His attributes—His works—His shame—His glory. I must meditate upon Him until I am "able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love; and know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge!"

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an affectionate knowledge of Him. Indeed, if I know Him at all, I must love Him. An ounce of heart knowledge—is worth a ton of head learning!

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be a satisfying knowledge. When I know my Savior, my mind will be full to the brim—I shall feel that I have that which my spirit panted after. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again!"

Saving knowledge of Christ, will be an exciting knowledge. The more I know of my Beloved—the more I shall want to know. The higher I climb—the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall want the more—as I get the more. Like the miser's treasure—my gold will make me covet more!

To conclude, saving knowledge of Christ Jesus will be a most happy one. In fact, it will be so elevating, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows!

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Never such a love—never such a death!

"Love is as strong as death." Son_8:6

Whose love can this be—which is as mighty as death—the conqueror of monarchs, the destroyer of the human race? Would it not sound like satire if it were applied to my poor, weak, and scarcely living love to Jesus my Lord? I do love Him, and perhaps by His grace, I could even die for Him. But as for my love in itself—it can scarcely endure a scoffing jest, much less a cruel death! Surely it is my Beloved's love which is here spoken of—the love of Jesus, the matchless lover of my soul!

His love was indeed stronger than the most terrible death, for it endured the trial of the cross triumphantly! It was a lingering death—but love survived the torment! It was a shameful death—but love despised the shame! It was a penal death—but love bore our iniquities! It was a forsaken, lonely death, from which the eternal Father hid His face—but love endured the curse, and gloried over all. Never such a love—never such a death! It was a desperate duel—but divine love conquered.

What then, my heart? Have you no emotions excited within you—at the contemplation of such Heavenly affection? Yes, my Lord, I long, I pant to feel Your love flaming like a furnace within me!

Come Yourself, and excite the ardor of my heart!

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

Come, my soul, sit at Jesus' feet—and learn of Him all this day!

~ ~ ~ ~

It is so sweet a bitter

"Godly sorrow works repentance." 2 Corinthians 7:10

Genuine, spiritual mourning for sin—is the work of the Spirit of God. Repentance is too choice a flower to grow in nature's garden! Pearls grow naturally in oysters—but penitence never shows itself in sinners—unless divine grace works it in them. If you have one particle of real hatred for sin, God must have given it to you—for human nature's thorns never produced a single fig. "That which is born of the flesh—is flesh."

True repentance has a distinct reference to the Savior. When we repent of sin, we must have one eye upon SIN—and another upon the CROSS! It will be better still—if we fix both our eyes upon Christ—and see our transgressions only in the light of His love.

True sorrow for sin is eminently practical. No man may say he hates sin—if he lives in it. Repentance makes us see the evil of sin, not merely as a theory—but experimentally, as the burnt child dreads the fire. We shall be as much afraid of it, as a man who has lately been accosted and robbed—is afraid of the thief upon the highway. We shall shun sin—shun it in everything—not in great things only—but in little things; as men shun little snakes—as well as great vipers!

True mourning for sin will make us very watchful over our tongue—lest it should say a wrong word. We shall be very watchful over our daily actions—lest in anything we offend. Each night we shall close the day with painful confessions of shortcomings; and each morning awaken with anxious prayers, that this day God would preserve us—that we may not sin against Him.

Sincere repentance is continual. Believers repent until their dying day. Repentance is not intermittent. Every other sorrow yields to time—but this dear sorrow grows with our growth. It is so sweet a bitter, that we thank God that we are permitted to experience it, until we enter our eternal rest!

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The Holy Spirit is the Comforter—but Jesus is the Comfort!

"The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit." John 14:26

This age is especially, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Jesus cheers us, not by His personal presence, as He shall do by-and-by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Spirit, who is evermore the Comforter of His people. It is His office to console the hearts of

God's people. He convinces of sin; He illuminates and instructs—but still the main part of His work lies . . .

in comforting the hearts of the renewed,

in confirming the weak, and

lifting up all those who are bowed down.

He does this—by revealing Jesus to them! The Holy Spirit consoles—but Christ is the consolation. If we may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician—but Jesus is the medicine. The Holy Spirit heals the wound—but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's grace. The Holy Spirit the Comforter—but Jesus is the Comfort!

Now, with such rich provision for his need, why should the Christian be sad and desponding? The Holy Spirit has graciously engaged to be your Comforter. Do you imagine, O weak and trembling believer, that He will be negligent of His sacred trust? Can you suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot or will not perform? If it is His special work to strengthen you, and to comfort you—do you suppose He has forgotten His business, or that He will fail in the loving office which He sustains towards you? No! Do not think so harshly of the tender and blessed Spirit, whose name is "the Comforter." He delights to give beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Trust in Him, and He will surely comfort you until the house of mourning is closed forever—and the marriage feast has begun!

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If we would get the wine of consolation

"I will meditate on Your precepts!" Psalms 119:15

There are times when solitude is better than society; and silence is wiser than speech. We would be better Christians—if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering spiritual strength through meditation on His Word. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we only thus get the real nutriment out of them.

Truth is something like the cluster of the vine—if we would have wine from it—we must bruise it; we must press and squeeze it many times. The bruiser's feet must come down joyfully upon the clusters, or else the juice will not flow; and they must carefully tread the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. So we must, by meditation, tread the clusters of truth—if we would get the wine of consolation from them.

Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth—but the process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone—is the process of digestion. It is by digestion, that the food becomes assimilated to the body.

Just so, our souls are not nourished merely by listening awhile to this, and then to that, and then to the other part of divine truth. Hearing, reading, and learning—all require inward digesting to complete their usefulness; and the inward digesting of the truth lies for the most part in meditating upon it.

Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons—make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their closets—and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat—but they do not grind it. They would have the corn—but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it. The fruit hangs upon the tree—but they will not pluck it. The water flows at their feet—but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord, and be this our resolve this day, "I will meditate on Your precepts!"

~ ~ ~ Is your calling thus holy, high, Heavenly?

"Those He predestined—He also called." Romans 8:30

In 2 Timothy 1:9 are these words, "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." Now, here is a touchstone by which we may try our calling. It is "a holy calling, not according to our works—but according to His own purpose and grace." This calling forbids all trust in our own doings, and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation. But it afterwards purges us from dead works—to serve the living and true God. As He who has called you is holy—so must you be holy. If you are living in sin—you are not called by God. But if you are truly Christ's, you can say, "Nothing pains me so much as sin! I desire to be rid of it! Lord, help me to be holy!" Is this the panting of your heart? Is this the tenor of your life towards God, and His divine will?

In Php_3:14, we are told of "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Is then your calling, a high calling? Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon Heavenly things? Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires? Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend it with God and for God?

Another test we find in Hebrews 3:1, "Partakers of the Heavenly calling." Heavenly calling means a call from Heaven. If man alone calls you—you are uncalled. Is your calling from God? Is it a call to Heaven—as well as from Heaven? Unless you are a stranger here on earth, and Heaven is your desired home—you have not been called with a Heavenly calling. For those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

Is your calling thus holy, high, Heavenly? Then, beloved, you have been called of God—for such is the calling with which God always calls His people.

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Praying in the Holy Spirit

"Praying in the Holy Spirit." Jude 20

Mark the grand characteristic of true prayer—it is "in the Holy Spirit." The seed of acceptable devotion, must come from Heaven's storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God—can go to God. We must shoot the Lord's arrows—back to Him! Only that desire which He writes upon our heart—will move His heart and bring down a blessing—but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying in fervency. Cold prayers—ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency—do not plead at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire—as of

lukewarm prayer. It is essential that prayer be red hot!

Praying in the Holy Spirit is praying perseveringly. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent—when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker! The longer the angel lingers—the more resolved is he to never let him go without the blessing. Tearful, agonizing, unconquerable, importunate prayer—is beautiful in God's sight!

Praying in the Holy Spirit means praying humbly, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never pray acceptably, unless we cry to God out of the depths of contrite hearts.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is loving prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love—love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ.

Moreover, it must be a prayer full of faith. A man prevails—only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it, so that we pray believing God's promise.

O that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert Your mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer!

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The necessity of human agency

"Put out into deep water—and let down the nets for a catch. Simon answered—Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because You say so—I will let down the nets." Luke 5:4-5

We learn from this narrative, the necessity of human agency. The catch of fish was miraculous—yet neither the fisherman nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle were ignored; but all were used to take the fishes. Just so in the saving of souls—God works by means; and while the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. When God works without instruments, doubtless He is glorified; but He has Himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which He is most magnified in the earth.

Means of themselves, are utterly unavailing. "Master, we have toiled all night—and have caught nothing!" What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special trade? They were no novices—they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskillfully? No! Had they lacked industry? No—they had toiled. Had they lacked perseverance? No—they had toiled all night. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master came—they swam to the net in shoals!

What, then, is the reason? It is because there is no power in the means of themselves, apart from the presence of Jesus!

"Without Him—we can do nothing." But with Christ—we can do all things. Christ's presence confers success! Jesus sat in Peter's boat, and His will, by a mysterious influence, drew the fish to

the net. When Jesus is lifted up in His Church, His presence is the Church's power! "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Let us go out today on our work of soul-fishing, looking up in faith, and around us in solemn concern. Let us toil until night comes, and we shall not labor in vain; for He who bids us let down the net—will fill it with fish!

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On whom do you trust?

"On whom do you trust?" Isaiah 36:5

Reader, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian's answer—and see if it is yours. "On whom do you trust?"

"I trust," says the Christian, "in a triune God. I trust the Father, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundation of the world; I trust Him to provide for me in His providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house where the many mansions are!"

"I trust the Son. The man Christ Jesus—is also the true God. I trust in Him to take away all my sins by His own sacrifice, and to adorn me with His perfect righteousness. I trust Him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before His Father's throne, and I trust Him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust Him for what He is, for what He has done, and for what He has promised yet to do!"

"And I trust the Holy Spirit—He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out. I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my evil passions. I trust Him to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness. I trust Him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly—and then to take me up to dwell forever in glory!"

Oh, blessed trust! To trust Him . . .

whose power will never be exhausted,

whose love will never wane,

whose kindness will never change,

whose faithfulness will never fail,

whose wisdom will never be confounded, and

whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution!

Happy are you, reader—if this trust is yours! So trusting, you shall enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter! The foundation of your trust shall never be removed!

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Why have You afflicted Your servant?

"Why have You afflicted Your servant?" Numbers 11:11

Our Heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles—to test our faith. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilding is afraid of fire—but gold is not. The glass gem dreads to be touched by the diamond—but the true jewel fears no test.

It is a false faith—which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable. That alone is true faith—which clings to the Lord when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden. A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, "Though He slays me—yet will I trust in Him," is Heaven-born faith.

The Lord afflicts His servants—to glorify Himself, for He is greatly glorified in the graces of His people, which are His own handiwork. "We rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope!" The Lord is honored by these growing virtues.

We would never know the music of the harp—if the strings were left untouched. We would never enjoy the juice of the grape—if it were not trodden in the winepress. We would never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon—if it were not pressed and beaten. We would never feel the warmth of fire—if the coals were not utterly consumed. The wisdom and power of the great Workman are revealed by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Present afflictions tend also to heighten future joy. There must be dark shadows in the picture—to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in Heaven—if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Will not peace be sweeter—after conflict?

Will not rest be more welcome—after toil?

Will not the bliss of the glorified—be enhanced by the recollection of past sufferings?

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Because he had married an Ethiopian woman!

"Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses—because he had married an Ethiopian woman!" Numbers 12:1

Strange choice of Moses! But how much more strange—is the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than him! Our Lord, who is pure as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black. It is the wonder of angels—that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men!

Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love—be also overwhelmed with astonishment, that such divine love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do—our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace! Jesus must have found the cause of His love—in His own heart; He could not have found it in us—for it is not there! Even since our conversion, we have been black with sin—though sovereign grace has made us lovely in His sight.

Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls—pursue Your gracious work of conforming us to Your image, until You shall present even us poor Ethiopians unto Yourself— without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder that this vain world opposes Jesus and His spouse, and especially when heinous sinners are converted? This is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, "This Man receives sinners!" Still the old cause of quarrel is revived, "Because he had married an Ethiopian woman!"

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The human heart is insatiable!

"Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him, will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him to eternal life!" John 4:14

He who is a believer in Jesus—finds enough in his Lord to satisfy him now, and to content him for evermore! The believer is not the man whose days are weary for lack of comfort—and whose nights are tedious from absence of heart-cheering thought. For he finds in piety—such a spring of joy, such a fountain of consolation, that he is content and happy!

Put him in a dungeon—and he will find good company.

Place him in a barren wilderness—he will eat the bread of Heaven.

Drive him away from friendship—and he will meet the "friend that sticks closer than a brother."

Blast all his gourds—and he will find shelter beneath the Rock of Ages.

Sap the foundation of his earthly hopes—and his heart will still be fixed, trusting in the Lord. The human heart is insatiable—until Jesus enters it, and then it is a cup full to overflowing. There is such a fullness in Christ—that He alone is the believer's ALL. The true saint is so completely satisfied with the all-sufficiency of Jesus—that he thirsts no more—except it be for deeper draughts of the living fountain! In that sweet manner, believer, shall you THIRST. It shall not be a thirst of pain—but of loving desire. You will find it a sweet thing—to be panting after a fuller enjoyment of Jesus' love.

One in days of yore, has said, "I have constantly been sinking my bucket down into this well—but now my thirst after Jesus has become so insatiable—that I long to put the well itself to my lips, and drink!" Is this the feeling of your heart now, believer? Do you feel that all your desires are satisfied in Jesus, and that you have no need now—but to know more of Him, and to have closer fellowship with Him? Then come continually to the fountain—and take of the water of life freely! Jesus will never think you take too much—but will ever welcome you, saying, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O My beloved!"

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There is no sin in being tempted

Some beginners in the Christian life, think that they cannot be tempted without sinning—but they are mistaken. There is no sin in being tempted—but there is sin in yielding to temptation. Our place of safety is the bosom of the Savior! Perhaps we are tempted just now—this should cause us to flee to Jesus for help. Blessed be any wind that blows us into the port of our Savior's love! Happy wounds, which make us seek the beloved Physician. You tempted ones, come to your loving Savior, for He can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and will support every tried and tempted one.

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You are greatly loved!

"Daniel, you are a man greatly loved by God." Daniel 10:11

Child of God, do you hesitate to appropriate this title? Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that you are greatly loved by God also? Must you not have been greatly loved—to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ? When God smote His only begotten Son for you—what was this but being greatly loved by Him? You lived in sin, and rioted in it—must you not have been greatly loved for God to have borne so patiently with you? You were called by grace and led to a Savior, and made a child of God and an heir of Heaven! All this proves, does it not—a very great and super-abounding love?

Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with mercies—it has been full of proofs that you are greatly loved by God. If the Lord has chastened you—yet it was not in anger. If He has made you poor—yet in grace you have been made rich. The more unworthy you feel yourself to be—the more evidence you have—that nothing but unspeakable divine love—could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours! The more demerit you feel—the clearer is the display of the abounding love of God, in having chosen you, and called you, and made you an heir of bliss!

Now, if there is such great love from God to us—let us live in the influence and sweetness of it, and use the privilege of our exalted position as God's children. Do not let us approach our Lord as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to hear us—for we are greatly loved by our loving Father!

"He who spared not His own Son—but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Come boldly, O believer, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of your own heart—you are greatly loved! Meditate on the exceeding greatness and faithfulness of divine love today—and so go to your bed in peace.

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The most potent force for the product of virtue!

"The hope which is reserved for you in Heaven." Colossians 1:5 Our hope in Christ for the future, is the mainspring and the mainstay of our joy here on earth. It will animate our hearts to think often of Heaven—for all that we can desire is promised there. Here on earth—we are weary and toil-worn; but yonder is the land of rest—where the sweat of labor shall no more bedew the worker's brow, and fatigue shall be forever banished. To those who are weary and woe-worn, the

word "rest" is full of Heaven. We are always in the field of battle; we are so tempted within, and so molested by foes without—that we have little or no peace! But in Heaven we shall enjoy the victory, when the banner shall be waved aloft in triumph, and the sword shall be forever sheathed, and we shall hear our Captain say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

We have suffered bereavement after bereavement—but we are going to the land of the immortal, where graves are unknown things. Here on earth, sin is a constant grief to us—but there we shall be perfectly holy, for nothing which defiles shall enter into that pure kingdom! Hemlock does not spring up in the furrows of celestial fields.

Oh! is it not joy, that you are not to be in a state of banishment forever—that you are not to dwell eternally in this wilderness—but shall soon inherit everlasting glory!

Nevertheless let it never be said of us, that we are dreaming about the future—and forgetting the present. Let the future sanctify the present to highest uses. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the hope of Heaven is the most potent force for the product of virtue! It is a fountain of joyous effort, it is the corner stone of cheerful holiness. The man who has this hope in him—goes about his work with vigor, for the joy of the Lord is his strength. He fights against temptation with ardor, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labor without present reward, "for here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come!" Hebrews 13:1

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We worms, we mortals, we sinners!

"Accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:6

What a wonderful state of privilege! It includes our justification before God—but the term "acceptance" in the Greek means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of divine delight, nay, even of divine joy! How marvelous that we worms, we mortals, we sinners—should be the objects of divine love! But it is only "in the beloved."

Some Christians seem to think that they are accepted in their own experience. When their heart is lively, and their hopes bright—they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so Heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! But when their souls cleave to the dust—they fear that they are no longer accepted.

If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight—but that they stand accepted in One who never alters, in One who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—how much happier they would be—and how much more they would honor the Savior! Rejoice then, believer, in this—you are accepted "in the Beloved."

You look within, and you say, "There is nothing acceptable here!" But look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable there. Your sins trouble you—but God has cast your sins behind His back, and you are accepted in the Righteous One. You have to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation—but you are already accepted in Him who has overcome the powers of

evil. The devil tempts you—but be of good cheer, he cannot destroy you, for you are accepted in Him who has broken the red dragon's head! Even glorified souls in Heaven—are not more accepted than you are! They are only accepted in Heaven "in the Beloved," and you are even now accepted in Christ, after the same manner!

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I will say it again!

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Php_4:4 Be glad of heart, O believer—but take care that your gladness has its spring in the Lord. You have much cause for gladness in your God, for you can sing with David, "God is my exceeding joy!" Be glad that the Lord reigns—that Jehovah is King! Rejoice that He sits upon the throne—and rules all things!

Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in the sunlight of our gladness. That He is wise—should make us glad, knowing as we do our own foolishness. That He is mighty—should cause us to rejoice, who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting—should always be a theme of joy, when we know that we wither as the fading flower. That He is unchanging—should perpetually yield us a song, since we change every hour. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it—that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory—all this should tend to make us glad in Him! This gladness in God is as a deep river—we have only as yet touched its brink. We know only a little of its clear sweet, Heavenly streams—onward the depth is greater, and the current more impetuous in its joy. The Christian feels that he may delight himself, not only in what God is—but also in all that God has done. The Psalms show us that God's people in olden times were accustomed to think much of God's past mercies—and to have a song concerning each of them. So let God's people now rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts, and "sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" Nor let them ever cease to sing, for as new mercies flow to them day by day—so should their gladness in the Lord's loving acts in providence and in grace—show itself in continual thanksgiving.

"Be glad O children of Zion—and rejoice in the Lord your God!" Joel 2:23

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Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble "I will sing of mercy and judgment!" Psalms 101:1

Faith triumphs in trial. When reason is thrust into the inner prison, with her feet made fast in the stocks—faith makes the dungeon walls ring with her merry notes, as she cries, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto you, O Lord, will I sing." Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble—and discovers the angel beneath.

There is a subject for song—even in the judgments of God towards us. For,

1. the trial is not so heavy—as it might have been
2. the trouble is not so severe—as we deserved to have borne
3. our affliction is not so crushing—as the burden which others have to carry.

Faith sees that in her worst sorrow, that there is nothing penal—there is not a drop of God's wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith discerns love gleaming like a jewel on the breast of an angry God! Faith says of her grief, "This is a badge of honor, for the child must feel the rod"; and then she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her spiritual good. "Nay, more," says Faith, "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" So Faith rides forth on the black horse, conquering and to conquer, trampling down carnal reason and fleshly sense, and chanting notes of victory amid the thickest of the fray!

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Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist?

"Have you explored the springs from which the seas come? Have you walked about and explored their depths?" Job 38:16

Some things in nature must remain a mystery to the most intelligent and enterprising investigators. Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is for God alone. If this is so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal.

Why, then, have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to how to reconcile divine predestination with human responsibility? These deep and dark truths I am no more able to comprehend, than to explore the springs from which the seas come, from which old ocean draws her watery stores. Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of His actions, the design of His visitations? Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist, and hold the universe in my palm? Yet these are as a drop of a bucket—when compared with the Lord my God. Let me not strive to understand the infinite—but spend my strength in loving our transcendent God! What I cannot gain by intellect—I can possess by affection—and let that suffice me.

I cannot penetrate the heart of the sea—but I can enjoy the healthful breezes which sweep over its bosom, and I can sail over its blue waves with favorable winds. Even if I could explore the springs from which the seas come—the feat would serve no useful purpose either to myself or to others. It would not save the sinking boat, or give the drowned mariner back to his weeping wife and children!

Neither would my solving deep theological mysteries, avail me a single whit—for the least love to God, and the simplest act of obedience to Him—are better than the profoundest theoretical knowledge! My awesome God, I leave the infinite to You, and beg You to put far away from me—such a love for the tree of knowledge, as might keep me from the tree of life!

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Holy taste

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight—and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Son_2:3

Faith, in the Scripture, is spoken of under the emblem of all the senses.

Faith is sight, "Look unto Me—and be saved."

Faith is hearing, "Hear—and your soul shall live."

Faith is smelling, "All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." "Pleasing is the fragrance of Your perfumes; Your Name is like perfume poured out."

Faith is spiritual touch. By faith, the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ's garment. By faith—we handle the things of the good Word of life.

Faith is equally the soul's taste. "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my lips!" "Except a man eats My flesh," says Christ, "and drinks My blood, there is no life in him." This spiritual "taste" is faith in one of its highest operations.

One of the first performances of faith is hearing. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone—but with the inward ear! We hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the "hearing" of faith.

Then our mind looks upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it, we perceive its meaning; that is the "seeing" of faith.

Next we discover its preciousness; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is; that is faith in its "smell."

Then we appropriate the mercies which are prepared for us in Christ; that is faith in its "touch."

Hence follow the enjoyments of spiritual peace, delight, and communion; which are faith in its "taste."

True enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, is received into us, and made, by inward and spiritual apprehension of His sweetness and preciousness, to be the food of our souls! It is then that we "sit under His shadow with great delight—and find His fruit sweet to our taste!

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If a fire gets out of control

"If a fire gets out of control and goes into another person's field, destroying the sheaves or the standing grain—then the one who started the fire must surely make restitution for the lost crops."
Exodus 22:6

The fire of strife is a terrible evil—when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied, and God was glorified, jealousy and envy do the devil's work most effectually! Where the golden grain was being housed, the fire of enmity comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness—a poor reward for the toil of the great Boaz!

Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us. Those who feed the fire, deserve just censure. But he who first kindles it—is most to blame. We shall certainly be the chief sufferers, if we are the chief offenders.

Discord usually takes first hold upon the thorns. It is nurtured among the hypocrites and false professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end!

O Lord and giver of peace—make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among Your people!

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A bad example

"If a fire gets out of control and goes into another person's field, destroying the sheaves or the standing grain—then the one who started the fire must surely make restitution for the lost crops."
Exodus 22:6

But what restitution can he make who casts abroad the fire-brands of error, or the coals of lust—and sets men's souls on a blaze with the fire of hell? The guilt is beyond estimate—and the result is irretrievable. If such an offender is forgiven, what grief it will cause him in the retrospect, since he cannot undo the great harm which he has done!

A bad example may kindle a sinful flame—which years of regret cannot quench. To burn a man's house is bad enough—but how much worse to damn his soul! It may be useful to us to reflect how far we may have been guilty in the past, and to inquire whether, even in the present, there may not be any evil in us—which has a tendency to bring damage to the souls of our relatives, friends, or neighbors!

~ ~ ~ ~ The unsearchable riches of Christ!

"The unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

My Master has riches—

beyond the count of arithmetic,

beyond the measurement of reason,

beyond the dream of imagination, and

beyond the eloquence of words!

They are unsearchable! You may look, and study, and weigh—but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think Him to be—when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon—than you to sin; more able to forgive—than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your needs—than you are to ask for them!

Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with silver when He deserves gold.

My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you now. He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of His pipe—when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no love like His, neither earth nor Heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in Him—oh!

this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined!

My Master does not treat His servants churlishly—He gives to them as a king gives to a king! He gives them two Heavens: a Heaven below in serving Him here—and a Heaven above in delighting in Him forever!

His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity. He will give you on the way to Heaven all you need; your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure. But it is there, THERE, where you shall hear the song of those who triumph, the shout of those who feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One! The unsearchable riches of Christ! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of Heaven!

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The distinction between the church and the world "And they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall." Nehemiah 3:8

Well fortified cities have broad walls, and so had Jerusalem in her glory. The New Jerusalem must, in like manner, be surrounded and preserved by a broad wall of nonconformity to the world, and separation from its customs and spirit. The tendency of these days is to break down the holy barrier, and make the distinction between the church and the world merely nominal. Professors are no longer strict and holy; questionable literature is read on all hands; frivolous pastimes are currently indulged; and a general laxity threatens to deprive the Lord's peculiar people of those sacred singularities which separate them from the ungodly.

It will be a sorry day for the church and the world—when the proposed amalgamation shall be complete, and the sons of God and the daughters of men shall be as one—then shall another deluge of wrath be ushered in!

Beloved reader, be it your aim in heart, in word, in dress, in action—to maintain the broad wall, remembering that friendship with the world is enmity against God!

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Christ's reign in His Church "He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of Jehovah." Micah 5:4 Christ's reign in His Church, is that of a Shepherd-king.

Christ's reign has supremacy—but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock. He commands and receives obedience—but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness.

Christ's reign is practical in its character. It is said, He will stand and shepherd His flock." The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for His people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a scepter without wielding it in government. No, He stands and shepherds. The expression in the original, means to shepherdize, to do everything expected of a shepherd—to guide, to watch, to preserve, to restore, to tend, as well as to feed.

Christ's reign is continual in its duration. It is said, "He will stand and shepherd His flock." His eyes never slumber, and His hands never rest; His heart never ceases to beat with love, and His shoulders are never weary of carrying His people's burdens!

Christ's reign is effectually powerful in its action; "He will shepherd His flock in the strength of Jehovah." Wherever Christ is—there is God; and whatever Christ does—is the act of Almighty God. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider, that He who stands today representing the interests of His people—is very God of very God, to whom every knee shall bow. Happy are we who belong to such a Shepherd, whose humanity communes with us, and whose divinity protects us. Let us worship and bow down before Him as the people of His pasture!

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The mercy of God

"I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever!" Psalms 52:8

Meditate a little on this mercy of the Lord.

It is tender mercy. With gentle, loving touch, He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He is as gracious in the manner of His mercy—as in the matter of it.

It is great mercy. There is nothing little in God; His mercy is like Himself—it is infinite. You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great—that it forgives great sins of great sinners, after great lengths of time; and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great Heaven of the great God!

It is undeserved mercy, as indeed all true mercy must be, for deserved mercy is only a misnomer for justice. There was no right on the sinner's part, to the saving mercy of the Most High God. Had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire—he would have justly merited the doom; and if delivered from wrath, sovereign love alone has found a cause, for there was none in the sinner himself.

It is rich mercy. Some things are great—but have little efficacy in them—but this mercy is:

a cordial to your drooping spirits;

a golden ointment to your bleeding wounds;

a Heavenly bandage to your broken bones;

a royal chariot for your weary feet;

a bosom of love for your trembling heart!

It is manifold mercy. As Bunyan says, "All the flowers in God's garden are double." There is no single mercy. You may think you have but one mercy—but you shall find it to be a whole cluster of mercies.

It is abounding mercy. Millions have received it—yet far from its being exhausted, it is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever!

It is unfailing mercy. It will never leave you. If saved by sovereign mercy—mercy will be with you in temptation—to keep you from yielding; with you in trouble—to prevent you from sinking; with you in living—to be the light and life of your countenance; and with you in dying—to be the joy of your soul when earthly comfort is ebbing fast!

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The muddy river of this world's pleasure "What have you to do in the way of Egypt—to drink the waters of the muddy river?" Jeremiah 2:18 By wondrous miracles, by manifold mercies and by marvelous deliverances, Jehovah had proved Himself to be worthy of Israel's trust. Yet they broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they forsook their own true and living God and followed after false gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this infatuation, and our text contains one instance of God's expostulating with them, "What have you to do in the way of Egypt—to drink the waters of the muddy river?" for so it may be translated.

"Why do you wander afar to drink the waters of the muddy river—and leave your own cool stream from Lebanon? Why are you so strangely set on mischief, that you cannot be content with the good and healthful—but would follow after that which is evil and deceitful?" Is there not here a word of expostulation and warning to the Christian? O believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus—you have tasted of better drink—than the muddy river of this world's pleasure can give you! You have had fellowship with Christ; you have obtained the joy of seeing Jesus, and leaning your head upon His bosom. Do the trifles, the songs, the honors, the merriment of this earth—content you after that? Have you eaten the bread of angels—and can you live on swine-husks? Good Rutherford once said, "I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it has put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys." Methinks it should be so with you.

If you are wandering after the muddy waters of Egypt, O return quickly to the one living fountain! "The waters of the Nile may be sweet to the Egyptians—but they will prove only bitterness to you. What have you to do with them?" Jesus asks you this question; what will you answer Him?

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What God has prepared for those who love Him!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined—what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9

Oh! what enlightenment, what joys, what consolation, what delight of heart—is experienced by him who has learned to feed on Jesus—and on Jesus alone. Yet the realization which we have of Christ's preciousness is, in this life, imperfect at the best. As an old writer says, "Tis but a taste!" We have but tasted "that the Lord is gracious," but we do not yet know how good and gracious He is; although what we know of His sweetness, makes us long for more. We have enjoyed the first fruits—and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fullness of the Heavenly vintage. Here we are like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eshcol—there we shall be in the vineyard!

We are but beginners now in spiritual education; for although we have learned the first letters of the alphabet, we cannot read words yet, much less can we put sentences together. As one says, "He who has been in Heaven but five minutes—knows more than all the theologians on earth!"

We have many ungratified desires at present—but soon every wish shall be satisfied; and all our powers shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. O Christian, within a very little time you shall be rid of all your trials and your troubles. Your eyes which are now suffused with tears—shall weep no longer. You shall gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendor of Him who sits upon the throne! Nay, more—upon His throne—you shall sit! The triumph of His glory shall be shared by you! His crown, His joy, His paradise—these shall be yours! You shall be co-heir with Him who is the heir of all things!

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An infant's breath might blow it out!

"He will not break a bruised reed, and He will not put out a smoldering wick." Matthew 12:20 What is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoldering wick? A reed that grows in the marsh—let but the wild duck land upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken; every wind that flits across the river—moves it to and fro. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence is more in jeopardy, than a bruised reed.

Then look at the smoldering wick—what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true—but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; nothing has a more precarious existence than its flame.

Weak things are here described—yet Jesus says of them, "I will not break a bruised reed; I will not put out a smoldering wick." Some of God's children are made strong to do mighty works for Him; God has His Samsons here and there—who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; He has a few mighties who are lion-like men. But the majority of His people are a timid, trembling race. They are like starlings, frightened at every passer-by. They are a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they are captured like birds in a snare. If trial threatens, they are ready to faint; their frail skiff is tossed up and down by every wave; they drift along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows—weak things, without strength, without wisdom, without foresight.

Yet, as weak as they are—and because they are so weak—they have this promise made specially to them! Herein is grace and graciousness! Herein is love and loving-kindness! How it reveals the compassion of Jesus to us—so gentle, tender, considerate! We need never shrink back from His touch. We need never fear a harsh word from Him—though He might well chide us for our weakness. Bruised reeds shall have no blows from Him, and the smoldering wick no damping frowns!

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They must all die!

Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Let not one of them escape!" So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered them there!" 1 Kings 18:40

So must it be with our sins—they must all die! Not one must be preserved. Our darling sin must die. Spare it not—for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon His own Son! With stern unflinching purpose—must you

condemn to death, that sin which was once the idol of your heart!

Do you ask how you are to accomplish this? Jesus will be your power. You have grace to overcome sin, given you in the covenant of grace. You have strength to win the victory in the crusade against inward lusts, because Christ Jesus has promised to be with you even unto the end. If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt—as the immediate presence of God.

Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did—when his eye of faith rested upon God—and then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes.

The fine gold of the Christian is oft becoming dim. We need the sacred fire to consume the dross. Let us fly to our God—He is a consuming fire; He will not consume our spirit—but our sins. Let the goodness of God excite us to a sacred jealousy, and to a holy revenge against those iniquities which are hateful in His sight. Go forth to battle with your sins—in His strength, and utterly destroy the accursed crew—let not one of them escape!

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The fact is, "Called to be saints." Romans 1:7

We are very apt to regard the New Testament saints as if they were "saints" in a more especial manner, than the other children of God. All are "saints" whom God has called by His grace, and sanctified by His Spirit; but we are apt to look upon the apostles as extraordinary beings, scarcely subject to the same weaknesses and temptations as ourselves! Yet in so doing, we are forgetful of this truth—that the nearer a man lives to God—the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart; and the more his Master honors him in His service, the more also does the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. The fact is, if we had seen the apostle Paul, we would have thought him just like the rest of the chosen family. And if we had talked with him, we would have said, "We find that his experience and ours are much the same. He is more faithful, more holy, and more deeply taught than we are—but he has the same exact trials to endure. Nay, in some respects—he is more sorely tried than ourselves." Do not, then, look upon the New Testament saints as being exempt either from infirmities or sins. And do not regard them with that mystic reverence which will almost make us idolaters! Their holiness is attainable even by us. We are "called to be saints" by that same voice which constrained them to their high calling. It is every Christian's duty to force his way into the inner circle of saintship. If these saints were superior to us in their attainments, as they certainly were, let us follow them; let us emulate their ardor and holiness. We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to us—so we should not rest satisfied until we have equaled them in Heavenly character! They lived with Jesus, they lived for Jesus, therefore they grew like Jesus. Let us live by the same spirit as they did—"looking unto Jesus," and our saintship will soon be apparent!

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The evidence of Gospel salvation "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." 2 Timothy 1:9

Gospel salvation is accompanied by a holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the cross—are in due time effectually called by the power of the Holy Spirit unto holiness. They leave their sins; they endeavor to be like Christ; they choose holiness, from the compulsion of a new nature and new affection, which lead them to rejoice in holiness—just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin.

God neither chose them nor called them because they were holy—but He called them that they would be holy. This holiness is evidenced by the graces produced by His workmanship in them. The graces which we see in a believer are as much the work of God—as the atonement itself.

Such is the evidence of Gospel salvation—a holy life.

~ ~ ~ Christ's love-letters "The Scriptures point to Me!" John 5:39

Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. He is the constant theme of its sacred pages; from first to last—they testify of Him. We catch a glimpse of Him in the promise of the woman's seed; we see Him typified in the ark of Noah; we walk with Abraham, as He sees Messiah's day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we hear the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh; and in the numerous types of the law, we find the Redeemer abundantly foreshadowed. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way—they all stand as the cherubim did over the ark—desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great atoning sacrifice.

Still more manifestly in the New Testament we find our Lord—the one pervading subject. It is not a gem here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered—but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold; for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified, and even its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer's name!

We should always read Scripture in this light—we should consider the Word to be as a mirror, into which Christ looks down from Heaven. And then we, looking into it, see His face reflected as in a mirror—darkly, it is true—but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing Him—as we shall see Him face to face. This volume contains Christ's love-letters to us, perfumed by His love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the royal chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for His children. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child Jesus—unroll them and you find your Savior the quintessence of the Word of God—is Christ!

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The Lord has done great things for us!

"The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!" Psalms 126:3

Some Christians are sadly prone to look on the dark side of everything, and to dwell more upon what they have gone through, than upon what God has done for them. Ask for their impression of the Christian life, and they will describe their continual conflicts, their deep afflictions, their sad adversities, and the sinfulness of their hearts—yet with scarcely any allusion to the mercy and help which God has vouchsafed them. But a Christian whose soul is in a healthy state, will come forward joyously, and say, "I will speak, not about myself—but to the honor of my God. He has

brought me up out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings—and He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad!"

Such an abstract of experience as this, is the very best that any child of God can present. It is true that we endure trials—but it is just as true that we are delivered out of them. It is true that we have our corruptions, and mournfully do we know this—but it is quite as true that we have an all-sufficient Savior, who overcomes these corruptions, and delivers us from their dominion. In looking back, it would be wrong to deny that we have been in the Slough of Despond, and have crept along the Valley of Humiliation—but it would be equally wicked to forget that we have been through them safely and profitably; we have not remained in them, thanks to our Almighty Helper and Leader, who has brought us "out into a wealthy place." The deeper our troubles—the louder our thanks to God, who has led us through all, and preserved us until now. Our griefs cannot mar the melody of our praise, we reckon them to be the bass part of our life's song, "He has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!"

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What sort of life is this?

"Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." Php_1:27 What sort of life is this? In the first place, the gospel is very simple. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behavior—that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. The gospel is pre-eminently true, it is gold without dross. So the Christian's life will be lustreless and valueless without the jewel of truth. The gospel is a very bold gospel, it fearlessly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not. We must be equally faithful and unflinching. But the gospel is also very gentle. Mark this spirit in its Founder, "a bruised reed He will not break." Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts. The gospel is very loving. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ's last command to His disciples was, "Love one another." O for more real, hearty love to all the saints—for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men!

We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is holy. It never excuses sin. It pardons sin—but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun, not merely the grosser vices—but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ. For His sake, for our own sakes, and for the sakes of others—we must strive day by day—to live our life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ!

~ ~ ~ ~

Store your jewels where you can never lose them "I am with you always!" Matthew 28:20

It is well that there is One who is ever the same—and who is ever with us. It is well that there is one stable rock amidst the billows of the sea of life. O my soul, do not set your affections upon rusting, moth-eaten, decaying treasures—but set your heart upon Him who abides forever faithful to you. Do not build your house upon the moving quicksands of a deceitful world—but found your hopes upon this rock, which, amid descending rain and roaring floods—shall stand immovably

secure! My soul, I charge you—lay up your treasure in the only secure cabinet; store your jewels where you can never lose them. Put your all in Christ—set all your affections on His person, all your hope in His merit, all your trust in His efficacious blood, all your joy in His presence—and so you may laugh at loss, and defy destruction.

Remember that all the flowers in the world's garden wither and die—and the day comes when nothing will be left but the black, cold earth. Death's black extinguisher must soon put out your candle. Oh! how sweet to have sunlight—when the candle is gone! The dark flood must soon roll between you—and all you have! So wed your heart to Him who will never leave you. Trust yourself with Him who will go with you through the black and surging current of death's stream—and who will land you safely on the celestial shore, and make you sit with Him in Heavenly places forever!

Go, sorrowing son of affliction—tell your secret troubles to the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. Trust all your concerns with Him—who never can be taken from you, who will never leave you—and who will never let you leave Him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" "I am with you always," is enough for my soul to live upon—though all others forsake me!

~ ~ ~ He is full—infinately full!

"The only begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Ah! He is full of grace. Had He not been—I would never have been saved. He drew me when I struggled to escape from His grace; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy-seat, He said, 'Your sins which are many—are all forgiven—be of good cheer!' And He is full of truth. Not one of His promises has failed. I bear witness that . . .

never any servant had such a master as I have;

never any brother had such a kinsman as He has been to me;

never any spouse had such a husband as Christ has been to my soul;

never any sinner had a better Savior;

never any mourner had a better comforter than Christ has been to my heart.

I desire none beside Him! In life—He is my life. In death—He shall be the death of death. In poverty—Christ is my riches. In sickness—He makes my bed. In darkness—He is my star. In brightness—He is my sun.

He is my manna in this wilderness.

He shall be Heavenly manna when I come to the Heavenly Canaan.

Jesus is to me—all grace and no wrath; all truth and no falsehood. And of grace and truth, He is full—infinately full!

~ ~ ~

His abounding preciousness "I am the Rose of Sharon." Son_2:1

Whatever there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world, in a tenfold degree! Among flowers, the rose is deemed the sweetest—but Jesus is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul—than the rose can in the gardens of earth. He takes the first place—as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun—and all others are the stars; the Heavens and the day are dark—in comparison with Him, for the King in His beauty transcends all.

"I am the Rose of Sharon." This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not "the Rose" alone, He is "the Rose of Sharon." Just as He calls His righteousness "gold," and then adds, "the gold of Ophir" that is—the best of the best. He is positively lovely, and superlatively the loveliest.

There is variety in His charms. The rose is delightful to the eye, and its scent is pleasant and refreshing. Just so—each of the senses of the soul, whether it be the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell—finds appropriate gratification in Jesus. Even the recollection of His love is sweet. Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay the leaves in the jar of memory, and you shall find each leaf fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume.

Heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the Rose of Sharon. What emblem can fully set forth His beauty? Human speech and earth-born things, fail to describe Him. Earth's choicest charms added together, feebly picture His abounding preciousness. Blessed Rose, bloom in my heart forever!

~ ~ ~ ~

The 'separated' life "Let us go forth therefore unto Him, outside the camp." Hebrews 13:13

Jesus, bearing His cross, went forth to suffer outside the gate. The Christian's reason for leaving the camp of the world's sin and the world's religion—is not because he loves to be singular—but because Jesus did so—and the disciple must follow his Master. Christ was "not of the world," His life and His testimony were a constant protest against conformity with the world. Never was there such overflowing affection for men as you find in Him—but still He was "separate from sinners." In like manner, Christ's people must "go forth unto Him." They must take their position "outside the camp," as witness-bearers for the truth. They must be prepared to tread the straight and narrow path. They must have bold, unflinching, lion-like hearts, loving Christ first, and His truth next—above all the world.

Jesus would have His people "go forth outside the camp" for their own sanctification. You cannot grow in grace to any high degree—while you are conformed to the world. The separated life may be a path of sorrow—but it is the highway of safety; and though the separated life may cost you many pangs, and make every day a battle—yet it is a happy life after all. No joy can excel that of the soldier of Christ; Jesus reveals Himself so graciously, and gives such sweet refreshment, that the Christian warrior feels more calm and peace in his daily strife—than others in their hours of rest! The highway of holiness is the highway of communion with Jesus. It is thus, that we shall hope to win the crown—if we are enabled by divine grace faithfully to follow Christ "outside the camp." The crown of glory—will follow the cross of separation. A moment's shame—will be well recompensed by eternal honor, when we are "forever with the Lord!"

~ ~ ~ ~

Beggars must not be choosers!

"I called Him—but He gave me no answer." Son_5:6

Prayer sometimes tarries, like a petitioner at the gate, until the King comes forth to fill her bosom with the blessings which she seeks. The Lord, when He has given great faith, has been known to try it by long delayings. He has allowed His servants' voices to echo in their ears—as from a brazen sky. They have knocked at the golden gate—but it has remained immovable, as though it were rusted upon its hinges! Like Jeremiah, they have cried, "You have covered Yourself with a cloud—that our prayer should not pass through."

Thus have true saints continued long in patient waiting without reply—not because their prayers were not vehement, nor because they were unaccepted—but because it so pleased Him who is a Sovereign, and who gives according to His own pleasure. If it pleases Him to bid our patience to exercise itself—shall He not do as He wills, with His own! Beggars must not be choosers—either as to time, place, or form—of the answer to their prayers. But we must be careful not to take delays in prayer—for denials! Unanswered petitions are not unheard. God keeps a file for our prayers—they are not blown away by the wind—they are treasured in the King's archives! This is a registry in the court of Heaven—wherein every prayer is recorded! Tried believer, your Lord has a tear-bottle in which your costly drops of sacred grief are stored away—and a book in which your holy groanings are numbered. Can you not be content to wait a little? Will not your Lord's time—be better than your time? By-and-by, your prayer shall be answered—to your soul's joy, and make you put away the sackcloth and ashes of long waiting—and put on the scarlet and fine linen of full fruition!

~ ~ ~ ~

The cross is not made of soft feathers!

"Take up the cross—and follow Me." Mark 10:21

You have not the liberty of making of your own cross; although unbelief is a master carpenter at cross-making. Neither are you permitted to choose your own cross; although self-will would gladly be lord and master. Your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love—and you are cheerfully to accept it. You are to take up the cross as your chosen portion, and not to stand caviling at it. Jesus bids you to submit your shoulder to His easy yoke. Do not . . .

kick at it in petulance, or

trample on it in vain-glory, or

fall under it in despair, or

run away from it in fear.

Take it up like a true follower of Jesus.

Jesus was a cross-bearer; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if He carried a cross—what nobler burden would you desire?

The Way of the Cross is the way of safety—do not fear to tread its thorny paths.

Beloved, the cross is not made of soft feathers, or lined with velvet—it is heavy and galling to disobedient shoulders! But it is not an iron cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colors! It is a wooden cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of sorrows carried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit—you will soon be so in love with it, that like Moses, you would not exchange the reproach of Christ for all the treasures of Egypt!

Remember that the cross will soon be followed by the crown, and the thought of the coming weight of glory—will greatly lighten the present heaviness of trouble. May the Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will before you fall, that you may go forth to this day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which befits a follower of the Crucified.

~ ~ ~ ~

Royal feet have left a blood-red track upon the road

"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are." Hebrews 4:15

Christ knows our needs, and sympathizes with us. In all our sorrows—we have His sympathy. Temptation, pain, disappointment, weakness, weariness, poverty—He knows them all—for He has felt them all. Remember this, Christian, and let it comfort you!

However difficult and painful your road—it is marked by the footsteps of your Savior! And even when you reach the dark valley of the shadow of death, and the deep waters of the swelling Jordan—you will find His footprints there! In all places wherever we go—He has been our forerunner. Each burden we have to carry—has once been laid on the shoulders of Immanuel.

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

~ ~ ~ ~

You will have to endure the pruning knife! The promise of the old covenant—is prosperity.

The promise of the new covenant—is adversity. The true Christian expects to have his reward in the next life—and to endure hardness in this life. Remember Christ's words, "Every branch that produces fruit," What? "He prunes it, that it may bring forth fruit." If you bring forth fruit—you will have to endure the pruning knife!

"Alas!" you say, "that is a terrible prospect." But this affliction works out such precious results, that the Christian who is the subject of it must learn to rejoice in tribulations; because as his tribulations abound—so his consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Rest assured, if you are a child of God—you will be no stranger to the "rod"! Sooner or later, every bar of gold must pass through the refining fire. Fear not—but rather rejoice that such fruitful times are in store for you, for in them you will be weaned from earth and made fit for Heaven; you will be delivered from clinging to the present world, and made to long for those eternal things which are so soon to be revealed to you.

~ ~ ~ ~ Both our teacher and our lesson!

"He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures—the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27 The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a most profitable journey. Their companion was the best of teachers—in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This unrivaled tutor used as His class-book, the best of books. He showed us that the surest road to wisdom is not speculation, reasoning, or reading human books—but meditation upon the Word of God. The readiest way to be spiritually rich in Heavenly knowledge, is to dig in this mine of diamonds, to gather pearls from this Heavenly sea! When Jesus Himself sought to enrich others—He wrought in the quarry of Holy Scripture. The favored pair were led to consider the best of subjects, for Jesus spoke of Jesus, and expounded the things concerning Himself. Here the diamond cut the diamond, and what could be more admirable? The Master of the House unlocked His own doors, conducted the guests to His table, and placed His own dainties upon it! He who hid the treasure in the field, Himself guided the searchers to it. Our Lord would naturally discourse upon the sweetest of topics—and He could find none sweeter than His own person and work. With an eye to these things—we should always search the Word. O for grace to study the Bible with Jesus as both our teacher and our lesson!

~ ~ ~ ~

A perpetual guide "Jehovah shall guide you continually." Isaiah 58:11

"Jehovah shall guide you." Not an angel—but JEHOVAH Himself shall guide you. Christian, God has not left you in your earthly pilgrimage to an angel's guidance—He Himself leads the van. You may not see the cloudy, fiery pillar—but Jehovah will never forsake you.

Notice the word "continually". We are not merely to be guided sometimes—but we are to have a perpetual guide. We are not occasionally to be left to our own understanding, and so to wander—but we are continually to hear the guiding voice of the Great Shepherd; and if we follow close at His heels, we shall not err—but be led by a right way to a city to dwell in.

"Jehovah" mark the word, "Jehovah shall guide you continually." There are no dilemmas out of which you shall not be delivered, if you live near to God, and your heart is kept warm with holy love. Like Enoch, walk with God, and you cannot mistake your road. You have . . .

infallible wisdom to direct you,

immutable love to comfort you,

and eternal power to defend you!

~ ~ ~ ~

Lay your foundations with sapphires "Lay your foundations with sapphires." Isaiah 54:11 Not only that which is seen of the church of God—but that which is unseen, is fair and precious. Foundations are out of sight, and so long as they are firm—it is not expected that they should be valuable; but in Jehovah's work, everything is costly, nothing skimped, nothing cheap. The deep foundations of the work of grace, are as sapphires for preciousness, no human mind is able to measure their glory. We build upon the covenant of grace, which is firmer than adamant, and as enduring as jewels upon which age spends itself in vain. Sapphire foundations are eternal, and the covenant abides throughout the lifetime of the Almighty.

Another foundation is the person of the Lord Jesus, which is clear and spotless, everlasting and beautiful as the sapphire; blending in one the deep blue of earth's ever rolling ocean—and the azure of its all embracing sky. Once might our Lord have been likened to the ruby as He stood covered with His own blood—but now we see Him radiant with the soft blue of love—love abounding, deep, eternal. Our eternal hopes are built upon the justice and the faithfulness of God, which are as clear and cloudless as the sapphire. We are not saved by a compromise, by mercy defeating justice, or law suspending its operations. No! We defy the eagle's eye to detect a flaw in the groundwork of our confidence—our foundation is of sapphire, and will endure the fire. The Lord Himself has laid the foundation of His people's hopes. It is matter for grave inquiry whether our hopes are built upon such a basis. Good works and ceremonies are not a foundation of sapphires—but of wood, hay, and stubble; neither are they laid by God—but by our own conceit. Foundations will all be tried before long—woe unto him whose lofty tower shall come down with a crash, because based on quicksand! He who is built on sapphires—may await storm or fire with equanimity, for he shall abide the test!

~ ~ ~ ~

Life is wasted by driblets

"A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man!" Proverbs 24:33-34 The worst of sluggards only ask for a little slumber; they would be indignant if they were accused of thorough idleness. A little folding of the hands to rest is all they crave, and they have a crowd of reasons to show that this indulgence is a very proper one. Yet by these littles—the day ebbs out, and the time for labor is all gone, and the field is grown over with thorns!

It is by little procrastinations—that men squander their opportunities. They have no intention to delay for years—a few months will bring the more convenient season. Tomorrow they will attend to serious things; but the present hour is so occupied and altogether so unsuitable, that they beg to be excused.

Like sands through an hour-glass, time passes. Life is wasted by driblets, and seasons of opportunity are lost by little slumbers. Oh, to be wise, to catch the flying hour—to use the moments on the wing! May the Lord teach us this sacred wisdom!

~ ~ ~ ~

The most healthy state of a Christian

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the Heavens." Lamentations 3:41

The act of prayer teaches us our unworthiness—which is a very beneficial lesson for such proud beings as we are. If God gave us favors without constraining us to pray for them—we would never know how poor we are—but a true prayer is . . .

an inventory of needs,

a catalog of necessities,

a revelation of hidden poverty.

While prayer is an application to divine wealth—it is also a confession of human emptiness. The most healthy state of a Christian—is to be always empty in SELF and constantly depending upon the Lord for supplies; to be always poor in SELF—and rich in Jesus; weak as water personally—but mighty through God to do great exploits. And hence prayer, while it adores God, it lays the creature where it should be—in the very dust!

Prayer is in itself, apart from the answer which it brings, a great benefit to the Christian. As the runner gains strength for the race by daily exercise, so for the great race of life, we acquire energy by the hallowed labor of prayer. Prayer plumes the wings of God's young eaglets—that they may learn to mount above the clouds. Prayer sends God's warriors forth to combat—with their sinews braced and their muscles firm. An earnest pleader comes out of his closet, even as the sun arises from the chambers of the east, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race.

Prayer is that uplifted hand of Moses—which routs the Amalekites more than the sword of Joshua. Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into Heavenly wisdom, and gives the peace of God to troubled mortals. We have no idea what prayer can do!

We thank you, great God, for the mercy-seat, a choice proof of Your marvelous loving-kindness. Help us to use it aright throughout this day!

~ ~ ~ A holy shame!

"For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king—Our God protects all those who worship Him, but His fierce anger rages against those who abandon Him." Ezra 8:22 On many accounts, a convoy from the king would have been desirable for the pilgrim band—but a holy shame would not allow Ezra to seek one. He feared lest the heathen king would think that his professions of faith in God—to be mere hypocrisy, or imagine that the God of Israel was not able to preserve His own worshipers. Ezra could not bring his mind to lean on an arm of flesh in a matter so evidently of the Lord; and therefore the caravan set out with no visible protection, guarded only by Him who is the sword and shield of His people.

It is to be feared that few believers feel this holy jealousy for God. Even those who in a measure walk by faith, occasionally mar the luster of their life—by seeking aid from man. It is a most blessed thing to have no creature props and buttresses—but to stand upright on the Rock of Ages, upheld by the Lord alone! Would any true believers seek state endowments for their Church—if they remembered that the Lord is dishonored by their asking Caesar's aid? as if the Lord could not supply the needs of His own cause! Should we run so hastily to friends and relations for help—if we remembered that the Lord is magnified by our implicit reliance upon His solitary arm? My soul, wait only upon God!

"But," says one, "are not means to be used?" Assuredly they are—but our fault seldom lies in their neglect—far more frequently it springs out of foolishly believing in them—instead of believing in God. Few run too far in neglecting the creature's arm—but very many sin greatly in making too much of it. Learn, dear reader, to glorify the Lord by leaving means untried—if by using them you would dishonor the name of the Lord.

~ ~ ~ He takes them from the dunghill—and wears them as jewels in His crown!

"This Man receives sinners!" Luke 15:2

Observe the condescension of this fact. This Man, who towers above all other men—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—this Man receives sinners! This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces—this Man receives sinners! It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love! That He, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon Himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then receive the vilest of the vile—this is amazing indeed!

"This Man receives sinners!" Not, however, that they may remain sinners—but He receives them that He may pardon their sins, cleanse their hearts by His purifying Word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and enable them to serve Him, to show forth His praise, and to have communion with Him. Into His heart's love, He receives sinners. He takes them from the dunghill—and wears them as jewels in His crown! He plucks them as brands from the burning—and preserves them as costly monuments of His mercy! None are so precious in Jesus' sight—as the sinners for whom He died!

He opens the golden gates of His royal heart, and receives the sinner right into Himself! There was never such a reception as this!

~ ~ ~ ~

An invisible hand is always on the world's helm "We know that all things work together for good—to those who love God." Romans 8:28 The believer is absolutely sure, that an invisible hand is always on the world's helm, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That reassuring knowledge prepares him for everything. He looks over the raging waters—and sees Jesus treading the billows; and he hears a voice saying, "It is I, do not be afraid!" He knows also, that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is confident that there can be no accidents, no mistakes; that nothing can occur—which ought not to arise. He can say, "If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have—if God so wills. The worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could befall to me—if God ordains it."

"We know that all things work together for good—to those who love God." The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory—but he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs mixed in fit proportions, have worked the cure. The sharp cuts of the lancet, have cleansed out the proud flesh and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing that God rules all, that He governs wisely, that He brings good out of evil—the believer's heart is assured, and he is enabled calmly to meet each trial as it comes. The believer can in the spirit of true resignation pray, "Send me what You will, my God—so long as it comes from You! A bad portion never came from Your table—to any of Your children."

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How great the sin of God's people is "How many are my iniquities and sins!" Job 13:23 Have you ever really weighed and considered, how great the sin of God's people is? Think how heinous is your own transgression, and you will find that not only does a sin here and there tower up like an

alp—but that your iniquities are heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled mountain upon mountain. What an aggregate of sin there is—in the life of one of the most sanctified of God's children! Attempt to multiply this, the sin of one Christian only—by the multitude of the redeemed, "a number which no man can number," and you will have some conception of the great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Jesus shed His blood! But we arrive at a more adequate idea of the magnitude of sin—by the greatness of the remedy provided. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only and well-beloved Son. God's Son! Angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of Heaven surround His glorious throne. "God over all, blessed forever. Amen!" And yet He takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain—since nothing but the blood of the incarnate Son of God could make atonement for our offences! No human mind can adequately estimate the infinite value of that divine sacrifice, for as great as the sin of God's people is—the atonement which takes it away is immeasurably greater! Therefore, the believer, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past is bitter, can yet stand before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and cry, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died!"

While the recollection of his sin fills him with shame and sorrow—he at the same time makes it a dark foil—to show the brightness of mercy! Our guilt is the dark night in which the fair star of divine love shines with serene splendor!

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The door of the Word only opens to the key of diligence!

"Search the Scriptures." John 5:39 The word here rendered "search" signifies a strict, close, assiduous, diligent search—such as men make when they are seeking gold—or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two—but with the candle of the Spirit—we must deliberately seek out the essential meaning of the Word.

Holy Scripture requires searching—much of it can only be learned by careful study. There is milk for babes—but also meat for strong men. The rabbis wisely say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word of Scripture. No man who merely skims the book of God—can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hidden treasure. The door of the Word only opens to the key of diligence! The Scriptures need searching. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur—who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them—despises the God who wrote them! God forbid that any of us should have our Bibles to become swift witnesses against us, in the great day of account! The Word of God will repay searching. God does not bid us sift a mountain of chaff with here and there a grain of wheat in it—but the Bible is winnowed grain—we have but to open the granary door, and find it.

Scripture grows upon the student. It is full of surprises. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the searching eye—it glows with splendor of revelation, like a vast temple paved with gold, and roofed with rubies, emeralds, and all manner of precious gems.

Lastly, the Scriptures reveal Jesus, "The Scriptures point to Me!" No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this. He who finds Jesus finds life, Heaven, and all things. Happy he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Savior!

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Not one cold look for His poor pensioners "Your marvelous loving-kindness." Psalms 17:7 When we give our hearts with our alms—we give well; but we must often plead to a failure in this respect. Not so our Master and our Lord. His favors are always performed with the love of His heart. He does not send to us the cold meat and the broken pieces from the table of His luxury—but He dips our morsel in His own dish, and seasons our provisions with the spices of His fragrant affections. When He puts the golden tokens of His grace into our palms, He accompanies the gift with such a warm pressure on our hand, that the manner of His giving is as precious as the blessing itself! He will come into our houses upon His errands of kindness, and He will not act as some austere visitors do in the poor man's cottage—but He sits by our side, not despising our poverty, nor blaming our weakness.

Beloved, with what smiles does He speak! What golden sentences drop from His gracious lips! What embraces of affection does He bestow upon us! If He had but given us pennies, the manner of His giving would have gilded them; but as it is, the costly alms are set in a golden basket—by His pleasant manner of giving. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of His charity, for there is a bleeding heart stamped upon the face of all His blessings. He gives liberally and upbraids not. Not one hint that we are burdensome to Him; not one cold look for His poor pensioners; but He rejoices to show mercy to us—and presses us to His bosom—while He is pouring out His life for us.

There is a fragrance in His spikenard, which nothing but His heart could produce; there is a sweetness in His honeycomb, which could not be in it unless the very essence of His soul's affection had been mingled with it. Oh! the rare communion which such singular heartiness effects! May we continually taste and know the blessedness of His marvelous loving-kindness!

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All, all, all are yours!

"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him." Colossians 2:9-10

All the attributes of Christ are at our disposal. All the fullness of the Godhead, whatever that marvelous term may comprehend, is ours to make us complete. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability and infallibility, are all combined for our defense. Arise, believer, and behold the Lord Jesus yoking the whole of His divine Godhead—to the chariot of salvation!

How vast His grace,
how firm His faithfulness,
how unswerving His immutability,
how infinite His power,
how limitless His knowledge!

All these are by the Lord Jesus made the pillars of the temple of salvation; and all, without diminution of their infinity, are covenanted to us as our perpetual inheritance.

Every drop of the fathomless love of the Savior's heart is ours; every sinew in the arm of might, every jewel in the crown of majesty—the immensity of divine knowledge, and the sternness of divine justice—all are ours, and shall be employed for us. The whole of Christ, in His adorable character as the Son of God, is by Himself made over to us most richly to enjoy!

His wisdom is our direction,

His knowledge is our instruction,

His power is our protection,

His justice is our surety,

His love is our comfort,

His mercy is our solace, and

His immutability is our trust.

He makes no reserve—but opens the recesses of the Mount of God—and bids us dig in its mines for the hidden treasures. "All, all, all are yours!" says He.

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Those cheeks!

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." Son_5:13

Lo, the flowery month of May has arrived! March winds and April showers have done their work—and the earth is all bedecked with beauty! Come my soul, put on your holiday attire and go forth to gather garlands of Heavenly thoughts. You know where to betake yourself. For to you, "the beds of spices" are well known, and you have so often smelled the perfume of "the sweet flowers," that you will go at once to your well-beloved and find all loveliness, all joy in Him. That cheek once so crudely smitten with a rod, oft bedewed with tears of sympathy, and then defiled with spittle—that cheek as it smiles with mercy—is a fragrant aromatic to my heart! You did not hide Your face from shame and spitting, O Lord Jesus—and therefore I will find my dearest delight in praising You. Those cheeks were furrowed by the plough of grief, and crimsoned with red lines of blood from Your thorn-crowned temples; such marks of unbounded love cannot but charm my soul—far more than "pillars of perfume."

If I may not see the whole of His face—I would behold His cheeks, for the least glimpse of Him is exceedingly refreshing to my spiritual sense—and yields a variety of delights! In Jesus I find not only fragrance—but a bed of spices; not one flower—but all kinds of sweet flowers. He is to me—my rose and my lily, my heart's-ease and my cluster of camphire. When He is with me—it is May all the year round, and my soul goes forth to wash her happy face in the morning-dew of His grace, and to solace herself with the singing of the birds of His promises.

Precious Lord Jesus, let me in very deed know the blessedness which dwells in abiding, unbroken fellowship with You. I am a poor worthless one, whose cheek You have deigned to kiss! O let me kiss You in return with the kisses of my lips!

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Fear Him!

"But I will show you whom you should fear:

Fear Him who, after the killing of the body,
has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell
you, fear Him!" Luke 12:5

Worldlings may well be afraid—for they have . . .
an angry God above them,
a guilty conscience within them,
and a yawning hell beneath them!

"For we know the One who has said, 'Vengeance
belongs to Me, I will repay!' It is a terrifying
thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Hebrews 10:30-31

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The photograph of a contrite heart

"Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation—and my tongue will sing aloud of Your righteousness." Psalms 51:14 In this SOLEMN CONFESSION—it is pleasing to observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it man-slaughter, nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man—but he calls it by its true name, the guilt of bloodshed. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain—and he was his murderer, before the Lord.

Learn in confession—to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins. Call them what you will—they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that you must labor to feel them to be; and with all openness of heart, acknowledge their real character.

Observe, that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words—but it is difficult to feel their meaning. The fifty-first Psalm is the photograph of a contrite heart. Let us seek after the same brokenness of heart; for however excellent our words may be, if our heart is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin—we cannot expect to find forgiveness. Our text has in it AN EARNEST PRAYER—it is addressed to the God of salvation. It is His prerogative to forgive; it is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Better still,

the text calls Him the God of my salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, while I am yet going to Him through Jesus' blood, I can rejoice in the God of my salvation. The psalmist ends with A COMMENDABLE VOW—if God will deliver him, he will sing—nay, more, he will "sing aloud." Who can sing in any other style—of such a mercy as this! But note the SUBJECT of the song, "Your Righteousness." We must sing of the finished work of a precious Saviour; and he who knows most of forgiving love—will sing the loudest!

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If we could reach Him!

"They kept shouting—Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Luke 23:21 The bloody cross was, in fact, the full expression of the world's feeling towards Christ! "There," they seemed to say, "O Son of God, this is the manner in which God Himself would be treated—if we could reach Him!"

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Sought out "You shall be called, Sought out." Isaiah 62:12 The surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly, in that we were sought out. We were mingled with the mire—like when some precious jewel falls into the sewer, and men gather out and carefully inspect a mass of abominable filth, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap—until the treasure is found.

Or, to use another figure, we were as lost sheep—so desperately lost, and had wandered into such a strange country, that it did not seem possible that even the Good Shepherd should track our devious roamings! But glory be to unconquerable grace—we were sought out! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us—we were found and brought home! Glory be to infinite love!

Strange and marvelous are the ways which God uses to find His own people. He never relinquishes the search—until the chosen people are sought out effectually. That any should be sought out is matchless grace—but that we should be sought out—is grace beyond degree! We can find no reason for it—but God's own sovereign love; and can only lift up our heart in wonder, and praise the Lord that we wear the name of "Sought out."

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It is necessary to pass through many troubles "It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22

God's people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from the sicknesses and pains of mortality, was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, He included chastisements among the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestined for us in Christ's last legacy, "In this world you will have trouble." John 16:33. So surely as the stars are fashioned by his hands, and their orbits fixed by Him—so surely are our trials allotted to us! He has ordained their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us.

Godly men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs—and you shall discover that none of those whom God made vessels of mercy—who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old, that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy—as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honor are distinguished.

Though tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have Christ's presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure. And when they reach "the kingdom of Heaven," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it.

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When men have ridden the high horse "Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty." Proverbs 18:12 The wise man teaches us, that a haughty heart is the prophetic prelude of destruction. Pride is as safely the sign of destruction, as the change of mercury in the weather-glass is the sign of rain; and far more infallibly so than that. When men have ridden the high horse—destruction has always overtaken them!

See Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty builder of Babylon, creeping on the earth, devouring grass like oxen, until his nails had grown like bird's claws, and his hair like eagle's feathers! Daniel 4:33. Pride made the boaster—a beast; as once before it made an angel—a devil. God hates high looks, and never fails to bring them down. All the arrows of God—are aimed at proud hearts!

O Christian, is your heart haughty? For pride can get into the Christian's heart as well as into the unbeliever's; it can delude him into dreaming that he is "rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing." Are you glorying in your graces or your talents? Are you proud of yourself, that you have had holy frames and sweet experiences? Mark it, reader, there is a destruction coming to you also! Your flaunting poppies of self-conceit will be pulled up by the roots! Your mushroom graces will wither in the burning heat! Your self-sufficiency shall become as straw for the dunghill.

If you forget to live at the foot of the cross in deepest humility of heart—God will not forget to make you smart under His rod! A destruction will come to you, O unduly exalted believer—the destruction of your joys and of your comforts, though there can be no destruction of your soul. Therefore, "He who glories—let him glory in the Lord!"

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Like a dove "He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove." Matthew 3:16 As the Spirit of God descended upon the Lord Jesus, the head—so He also, in a measure, descends upon all the members of the mystical body. His descent is to us, after the same fashion as that in which it fell upon our Lord.

There is often a singular rapidity about it—before ever we are aware, we are impelled onward and Heavenward beyond all expectation. Yet is there none of the hurry of earthly haste, for the wings of the dove are as soft as they are swift. Quietness seems essential to many spiritual operations; the Lord is in the still small voice; and like the dew—His grace is distilled in silence. The dove has ever been the chosen type of purity, and the Holy Spirit is holiness itself. Where He comes,

everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report, is made to abound—and sin and impurity depart.

Peace reigns also where the Holy Dove comes with power; He bears the olive branch which shows that the waters of divine wrath are assuaged.

Gentleness is a sure result of the Sacred Dove's transforming power: hearts touched by His benign influence are meek and lowly henceforth and for ever.

Harmlessness follows, as a matter of course. Eagles and ravens may hunt their prey; the dove can endure wrong—but cannot inflict it. We must be harmless as doves. The dove is an apt picture of love, the voice of the dove is full of affection. Just so, the soul visited by the blessed Spirit, abounds in love to the brethren, and in love to the lost; and above all, in love to Jesus. The brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep, first produced order and life—and in our hearts, He causes and fosters new life and light. Blessed Spirit, as You rested upon our dear Redeemer, even so rest upon me from this time forward and forever!

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Great hearts can only be made by great troubles "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us—so our consolation also abounds by Christ." 2 Corinthians 1:5

Here is a blessed proportion. The Ruler of Providence bears a pair of scales—in this side He puts His people's trials—and in that He puts their consolations. When the scale of trial is nearly empty—you will always find the scale of consolation in nearly the same condition. And when the scale of trials is full—you will find the scale of consolation just as heavy. When the night lowers and the tempest is coming on—the Heavenly Captain is always closest to His crew.

It is a blessed thing, that when we are most cast down—then it is that we are most lifted up by the consolations of the Spirit. One reason is, because trials make more room for consolation. Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for consolation. God comes into our heart—He finds it full—He begins to break our comforts and to make it empty; then there is more room for grace. The humbler a man lies—the more comfort he will always have, because he will be more fitted to receive it.

Another reason why we are often most happy in our troubles, is this—then we have the closest dealings with God. When the barn is full—man can live without God; when the purse is bursting with gold—we try to do without so much prayer. But once take our gourds away—and we want our God; once cleanse the idols out of the house—then we are compelled to honor Jehovah.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord." There is no prayer half so hearty—as that which comes up from the depths of the soul, through deep trials and afflictions. Hence they bring us to God, and we are happier—for nearness to God is happiness. Come, troubled believer—do not fret over your heavy troubles—for they are the heralds of weighty mercies!

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Arise, and take your last journey!

"Arise, and depart." Micah 2:10 The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all, "Arise, and go forth from the home in which you have dwelt, from the city in which you have done your business, from your family, from your friends. Arise, and take your last journey!"

What do we know of the journey? What do we know of the country to which we are bound? We have read a little thereof, and a measure has been revealed to us by the Spirit; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know that there is a black and stormy river called "Death." God bids us to cross it, promising to be with us. And, after death—what then? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view? No traveler has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the Heavenly land—to make us welcome our summons there, with joy and gladness! The journey of death may be dark—but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here—but we shall be going to our Father's house—to our Father's home, where Jesus is—to that royal "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This shall be our last abode—to dwell forever with Him whom we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God.

Christian, meditate much on Heaven—it will help you to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This valley of tears is but the pathway to the better country! This present world of woe—is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss!

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The half has not been told to me!

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard!" 1 John 1:3 Have you not found the gospel to be in yourselves—just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said He would give you rest—have you not enjoyed the sweetest peace in Him? He said you should have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in Him—have you not received all these? Are not His ways—ways of pleasantness; and His paths—paths of peace?

Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told to me! I have found Christ more sweet than His servants ever said He was. I looked upon His likeness as they painted it—but it was a mere daub compared with Himself; for the King in His beauty outshines all imaginable loveliness!"

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Christ takes a worm—and transforms it into an seraph!

"Perfect in Christ Jesus." Colossians 1:28 Do you not feel in your own soul—that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? Every tear which trickles from your eye—weeps "imperfection"; every harsh word which proceeds from your lip—mutter "imperfection." You have too frequently had a view of your own heart—to dream for a moment of any perfection in yourself. But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, here is comfort for you—you are "perfect in Christ Jesus." In God's sight, you are "complete in Him;" even now you are "accepted in the Beloved." But there is a second perfection—yet to be realized, which is sure to all the chosen seed. Is it not delightful, to look forward to the time when every stain of sin shall be removed from

the believer, and he shall be presented faultless before the throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Christian will then be so pure, that not even the eye of Omniscience will see a spot or blemish in him! He will be so holy and so glorious, that he will be able to say, "With my Savior's garments on—as Holy as the Holy One!" Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, "Complete in Christ!" Not until then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus. Does not your heart leap for joy at the thought of it? As black as you are—you shall be white one day! As filthy as you are—you shall be pure. Oh, it is a marvelous salvation! Christ takes a worm—and transforms it into an seraph! Christ takes a vile and deformed thing—and makes it pure and matchless in His glory, peerless in His beauty, and fit to be His eternal companion! O my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth, of perfection in Christ.

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The College of Christ "Then He opened their understanding—that they might understand the Scriptures." Luke 24:45

Many teachers can bring the Scriptures to the mind—but the Lord alone can prepare the mind to receive the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear—but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter—but He imparts an inward taste for the truth, by which we perceive its savor and spirit. The most unlearned of men—become ripe scholars in the school of grace—when the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible!

Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! How many men of profound learning—are ignorant of eternal things! They have a veil upon their hearts which the eyes of carnal reason cannot penetrate.

Such was our case a little time ago; we who now see—were once utterly blind! Truth was to us—as beauty in the dark, a thing unnoticed and neglected. Had it not been for the love of Jesus—we would have remained to this moment in utter ignorance—for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the Pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars! The College of Christ is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive Heavenly things.

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If you can pour this promise into your cup "I will be their God!" Jeremiah 31:33

Christian! here is all you can require. To make you happy—you need something that shall satisfy you—and is not this enough? If you can pour this promise into your cup—you will say, with David, "My cup runs over! I have more than heart can wish!"

Come, soul, meditate on this sweet promise, "I will be their God!" Here is a deep sea of bliss, a shoreless ocean of delight! Come—bathe your spirit in it; swim an age—and you shall find no shore; dive throughout eternity—and you shall find no bottom!

"I will be their God!" This is the masterpiece of all the promises! Its enjoyment makes a Heaven below—and will make a Heaven above! Let your soul be always ravished with His love, and rejoice with unspeakable joy!

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The only true delight!

"Your love is better than wine." Son_1:2

Nothing gives the believer so much joy—as fellowship with Christ. He has enjoyment as others have, in the common mercies of life; he can be glad both in God's gifts and God's works. But in all these separately, yes, and in all of them added together—he does not find such substantial delight—as in the matchless person of his Lord Jesus! He has wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; he has bread which all the richest grain-fields could never bring forth. Where can such sweetness be found—as we have tasted in communion with our Beloved? In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine—when compared with Jesus, the Heavenly manna. We would rather have one mouthful of Christ's love, and a sip of His fellowship—than a whole world full of carnal delights! What is the chaff—compared to the wheat? What is the 'sparkling glass'—compared to the true diamond? What is time's mirth, in its best form—compared to our Lord Jesus in His most despised estate?

If you know anything of spiritual life, you will confess that your highest, purest, and most enduring joys—must be the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water—as that well which was dug with the soldier's spear! All earthly bliss is of the earth, earthy—but the comforts of Christ's presence are like Himself, Heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. In time and in eternity—He is worthy to be called the only true delight! For nourishment, consolation, exhilaration, and refreshment, no wine can rival the love of Jesus. Let us drink to the full!

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