

TILL HE COMES

by C.H. Spurgeon

A collection of C.H. Spurgeon's communion addresses delivered at the Lord's Supper, reflecting his weekly practice of this sacred ordinance and his deep devotion to Christ.

25 Chapters

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Chapter 1

Till He Come

Communion Meditations And Addresses

By

C. H. Spurgeon

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a PREFATORY NOTE.

PREFATORY NOTE. For many years, whether at home or abroad, it was Mr. Spurgeon's constant custom to observe the ordinance of the Lord's supper every Sabbath-day, unless illness prevented. This he believed to be in accordance with apostolic precedent; and it was his oft-repeated testimony that the more frequently he obeyed his Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me," the more precious did his Saviour become to him, while the memorial celebration itself proved increasingly helpful and instructive as the years rolled by.

MR. SPURGEON had intended to publish a selection of his Communion Addresses; so this volume may be regarded as another of the precious literary legacies bequeathed by him to his brethren and sisters in Christ who have yet to tarry a while here below. It is hoped that these sermonettes will be the means of deepening the spiritual life of many believers, and that they will suggest suitable themes for meditation and discourse to those who have the privilege and responsibility of presiding at the ordinance.

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Under the Apple Tree. ("till.htm" \\\ "under the apple tree")

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

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"Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men: so shall He sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."—Isaiah 52:13-15.

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Christ and His Table-companions.("till.htm" \\\ "christ and his table-companions")

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A Word from the Beloved's Own Mouth.("till.htm" \\\ "a word from the beloved's own mouth")

"And ye are clean."—John 13:10.

The Believer not an Orphan.("till.htm" \\\ "the believer not an orphan")

MYSTERIOUS VISITS

MYSTERIOUS VISITS AN ADDRESS TO A LITTLE COMPANY AT THE COMMUNION TABLE AT MENTONE.

"Thou hast visited me in the night."—Psalms 18:3.

IT is a theme for wonder that the glorious God should visit sinful man. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" A divine visit is a joy to be treasured whenever we are favoured with it. David speaks of it with great solemnity. The Psalmist was not content barely to speak of it; but he wrote it down in plain terms, that it might be known throughout all generations: "Thou hast visited me in the night." Beloved, if God has ever visited you, you also will marvel at it, will carry it in your memory, will speak of it to your friends, and will record it in your diary as one of the notable events of your life. Above all, you will speak of it to God Himself, and say with adoring gratitude, "Thou hast visited me in the night." It should be a solemn part of worship to remember and make known the condescension of the Lord, and say, both in lowly prayer and in joyful psalm, "Thou hast visited me."

When first of all the Lord draws nigh to the heart, the trembling soul perceives clearly the searching character of His visit. Remember how Job answered the Lord: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." We can read of God, and hear of God, and be little moved; but when we feel His presence, it is another matter. I thought my house was good enough for kings; but when the King of kings came to it, I saw that it was a hovel quite unfit for His abode. I had never known sin to be so "exceeding sinful" if I had not known God to be so perfectly holy. I had never understood the depravity of my own nature if I had not known the holiness of God's nature. When we see Jesus, we fall at His feet as dead; till then, we are alive with vainglorious life. If letters of light traced by a mysterious hand upon the wall caused the joints of Belshazzar's loins to be loosed, what awe overcomes our spirits when we see the Lord Himself! In the presence of so much light our spots and wrinkles are revealed, and we are utterly ashamed. We are like Daniel, who said, "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption." It is when the Lord visits us that we see our nothingness, and ask, "Lord, what is man? "

I think you will remember that, when the Lord first visited you in the night, it was with you as with Peter when Jesus came to him. He had been toiling with his net all the night, and nothing had come of it; but when the Lord Jesus came into his boat, and bade him launch out into the deep, and let down his net for a draught, he caught such a great multitude of fishes that the boat began to sink. See! the boat goes down, down, till the water threatens to engulf it, and Peter, and the fish, and all. Then Peter fell down at Jesus knees, and cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The presence of Jesus was too much for him: his sense of unworthiness made him sink like his boat, and shrink away from the Divine Lord. I remember that sensation well; for I was half

inclined to cry with the demoniac of Gadara, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high?" That first discovery of His injured love was overpowering; its very hopefulness increased my anguish; for then I saw that I had slain the Lord who had come to save me. I saw that mine was the hand which made the hammer fall, and drove the nails that fastened the Redeemer's hands and feet to the cruel tree.

"My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,

And plunged me in despair;

I saw my sins His blood had spilt,

And help'd to nail Him there." This is the sight which breeds repentance: "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him." When the Lord visits us, He humbles us, removes all hardness from our hearts, and leads us to the Saviour's feet.

Since those early days, I hope that you and I have had many visits from our Lord. Those first visits were, as I said, sharply searching; but the later ones have been sweetly solacing. Some of us have had them, especially in the night, when we have been compelled to count the sleepless hours. "Heaven's gate opens when this world's is shut." The night is still; everybody is away; work is done; care is forgotten, and then the Lord Himself draws near. Possibly there may be pain to be endured, the head may be aching, and the heart may be throbbing; but if Jesus comes to visit us, our bed of languishing becomes a throne of glory. Though it is true "He giveth His beloved sleep," yet at such times He gives them something better than sleep, namely; His own presence, and the fulness of joy which comes with it. By night upon our bed we have seen the unseen. I have tried sometimes not to sleep under an excess of joy, when the company of Christ has been sweetly mine.

Do you ask me to describe these manifestations of the Lord? It were hard to tell you in words: you must know them for yourselves. If you had never tasted sweetness, no man living could give you an idea of honey. Yet if the honey be there, you can "taste and see." To a man born blind, sight must be a thing past imagination; and to one who has never known the Lord, His visits are quite as much beyond conception.

Nor is it simply a close contemplation of Christ; for we can picture Him as exceedingly fair and majestic, and yet not have Him consciously near us. Delightful and instructive as it is to behold the likeness of Christ by meditation, yet the enjoyment of His actual presence is something more. I may wear my friend's portrait about my person, and yet may not be able to say, "Thou hast visited me."

When the Lord visits us in the night, what is the effect upon us? When hearts meet hearts in fellowship of love, communion brings first peace, then rest, and then joy of soul. I am speaking of no emotional excitement rising into fanatical rapture; but I speak of sober fact, when I say that the Lord's great heart touches ours, and our heart rises into sympathy with Him.

At such a time there is a delightful sense of rest; we have no ambitions, no desires. A divine serenity and security envelop us. We have no thought of foes, or fears, or afflictions, or doubts. There is a joyous laying aside of our own will. We are nothing, and we will nothing: Christ is everything, and His will is the pulse of our soul. We are perfectly content either to be ill or to be

well, to be rich or to be poor, to be slandered or to be honoured, so that we may but abide in the love of Christ. Jesus fills the horizon of our being.

Now, beloved friends, you may be saying to yourselves, "We have not enjoyed such visits as these." You may do so. If the Father loves you even as He loves His Son, then you are on visiting terms with Him. If, then, He has not called upon you, you will be wise to call on Him. Breathe a sigh to Him, and say,—

"When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?

Oh come, my Lord most dear!

Come near, come nearer, nearer still,

I'm blest when Thou art near.

"When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?

I languish for the sight;

Ten thousand suns when Thou art hid,

Are shades instead of light.

"When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?

Until Thou dost appear,

I count each moment for a day,

Each minute for a year."

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!" If you long for Him, He much more longs for you. Never was there a sinner that was half so eager for Christ as Christ is eager for the sinner; nor a saint one-tenth so anxious to behold his Lord as his Lord is to behold him. If thou art running to Christ, He is already near thee. If thou dost sigh for His presence, that sigh is the evidence that He is with thee. He is with thee now: therefore be calmly glad.

"Go forth, beloved, and talk with Jesus on the beach, for He oft resorted to the sea-shore. Commune with Him amid the olive-groves so dear to Him in many a night of wrestling prayer. If ever there was a country in which men should see traces of Jesus, next to the Holy Land, this Riviera is the favoured spot. It is a land of vines, and figs, and olives, and palms; I have called it "Thy land, O Immanuel." While in this Mentone, I often fancy that I am looking out upon the Lake of Gennesaret, or walking at the foot of the Mount of Olives, or peering into the mysterious gloom of the Garden of Gethsemane. The narrow streets of the old town are such as Jesus traversed, these villages are such as He inhabited. Have your hearts right with Him, and He will visit you often, until every day you shall walk with God, as Enoch did, and so turn week-days into Sabbaths, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven. So be it with us! Amen.

UNDER HIS SHADOW.

UNDER HIS SHADOW.

A BRIEF SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE DELIVERED AT MENTONE
TO ABOUT A SCORE BRETHREN.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."—Psalms 91:1.

I MUST confess of my short discourse, as the man did of the axe which fell into the stream, that it is borrowed. The outline of it is taken from one who will never complain of me, for to the great loss of the Church she has left these lower choirs to sing above. Miss Havergal, last and loveliest of our modern poets, when her tones were most mellow, and her language most sublime, has been caught up to swell the music of heaven. Her last poems are published with the title, "Under His Shadow," and the preface gives the reason for the name. She said, "I should like the title to be, 'Under His Shadow.' I seem to see four pictures suggested by that: under the shadow of a rock, in a weary plain; under the shadow of a tree; closer still, under the shadow of His wing; nearest and closest, in the shadow of His hand. Surely that hand must be the pierced hand, that may oftentimes press us sorely, and yet evermore encircling, upholding, and shadowing. "

I. We will begin with the first picture which Miss Havergal mentions, namely, THE ROCK sheltering the weary traveller:—"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2).

The shadow of a rock is remarkably cooling, and so was the Lord Jesus eminently comforting to us. The shadow of a rock is more dense, more complete, and more cool than any other shade; and so the peace which Jesus gives passeth all understanding, there is none like it. No chance beam darts through the rock-shade, nor can the heat penetrate as it will do in a measure through the foliage of a forest. Jesus is a complete shelter, and blessed are they who are "under His shadow." Let them take care that they abide there, and never venture forth to answer for themselves, or to brave the accusations of Satan.

There is, however, something of awe about this great shadow. A rock is often so high as to be terrible, and we tremble in presence of its greatness. The idea of littleness hiding behind massive greatness is well set forth; but there is no tender thought of fellowship, or gentleness: even so, at the first, we view the Lord Jesus as our shelter from the consuming heat of well-deserved punishment, and we know little more. It is most pleasant to remember that this is only one panel of the four-fold picture. Inexpressibly dear to my soul is the deep cool rock-shade of my blessed Lord, as I stand in Him a sinner saved; yet is there more.

Here we have not so much refuge from trouble as special rest in times of joy. The spouse is happily wandering through a wood, glancing at many trees, and rejoicing in the music of the birds. One tree specially charms her: the citron with its golden fruit wins her admiration, and she sits under its shadow with great delight; such was her Beloved to her, the best among the good, the

fairest of the fair, the joy of her joy, the light of her delight. Such is Jesus to the believing soul.

Dear friends, is Christ to each one of us a place of sitting down? I do not mean a rest of idleness and self-content,—God deliver us from that; but there is rest in a conscious grasp of Christ, a rest of contentment with Him as our all in all. God give us to know more of this! This shadow is also meant to yield perpetual solace, for the spouse did not merely come under it, but there she sat down as one who meant to stay. Continuance of repose and joy is purchased for us by our Lord's perfected work. Under the shadow she found food; she had no need to leave it to find a single needful thing, for the tree which shaded also yielded fruit; nor did she need even to rise from her rest, but sitting still she feasted on the delicious fruit. You who know the Lord Jesus know also what this meaneth.

Let us use His sacred name as a common word, as a household word, and run to Him as to a dear familiar friend. Under His shadow we are to feel that we are at home, and then He will make Himself at home to us by becoming food unto our souls, and giving spiritual refreshment to us while we rest. The spouse does not here say that she reached up to the tree to gather its fruit, but she sat down on the ground in intense delight, and the fruit came to her where she sat. It is wonderful how Christ will come down to souls that sit beneath His shadow; if we can but be at home with Christ, He will sweetly commune with us. Has He not said, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"?

III. The third view of the one subject is,—THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS,—a precious word. I think the best specimen of it, for it occurs several times, is in that blessed Psalm, the sixty-third, verse seven (Psalms 63:7):—

Does not this set forth our Lord as our trust in hours of depression? In the Psalm now open before us, David was banished from the means of grace to a dry and thirsty land, where no water was. What is much worse, he was in a measure away from all conscious enjoyment of God. He says, "Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee." He sings rather of memories than of present communion with God. We also have come into this condition, and have been unable to find any present comfort. "Thou hast been my help," has been the highest note we could strike, and we have been glad to reach to that. At such times, the light of God's face has been withdrawn, but our faith has taught us to rejoice under the shadow of His wings. Light there was none; we were altogether in the shade, but it was a warm shade. We felt that God who had been near must be near us still, and therefore we were quieted. Our God cannot change, and therefore as He was our help He must still be our help, our help even though He casts a shadow over us, for it must be the shadow of His own eternal wings. The metaphor is, of course, derived from the nestling of little birds under the shadow of their mother's wings, and the picture is singularly touching and comforting. The little bird is not yet able to take care of itself, so it cowers down under the mother, and is there happy and safe. Disturb a hen for a moment, and you will see all the little chickens huddling together, and by their chirps making a kind of song. Then they push their heads into her feathers, and seem happy beyond measure in their warm abode. When we are very sick and sore depressed, when we are worried with the care of pining children, and the troubles of a needy household, and the temptations of Satan, how comforting it is to run to our God,—like the little chicks run to the hen,—and hide away near His heart, beneath His Wings. Oh, tried ones, press closely to the loving heart of your Lord, hide yourselves entirely beneath His wings! Here awe has

disappeared, and rest itself is enhanced by the idea of loving trust. The little birds are safe in their mother's love, and we, too, are beyond measure secure and happy in the loving favour of the Lord.

"And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me."

These are mere surface thoughts. The subject deserves a series of discourses. Your best course, my beloved friends, will be to enlarge upon these hints by a long personal experience of abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. May God the Holy Ghost lead you into it, and keep you there, for Jesus' sake!

UNDER THE APPLE TREE.

UNDER THE APPLE TREE.

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

Christ known should be Christ used. The spouse knew her Beloved to be like a fruit-bearing tree, and at once she sat under His shadow, and fed upon His fruit. It is a pity that we know so much about Christ, and yet enjoy Him so little. May our experience keep pace with our knowledge, and may that experience be composed of a practical using of our Lord! Jesus casts a shadow, let us sit under it: Jesus yields fruit, let us taste the sweetness of it. Depend upon it that the way to learn more is to use what you know; and, moreover, the way to learn a truth thoroughly is to learn it experimentally. You know a doctrine beyond all fear of contradiction when you have proved it for yourself by personal test and trial. The bride in the song as good as says, "I am certain that my Beloved casts a shadow, for I have sat under it, and I am persuaded that He bears sweet fruit, for I have tasted of it." The best way of demonstrating the power of Christ to save is to trust in Him and be saved yourself; and of all those who are sure of the divinity of our holy faith, there are none so certain as those who feel its divine power upon themselves. You may reason yourself into a belief of the gospel, and you may by further reasoning keep yourself orthodox; but a personal trial, and an inward knowing of the truth, are incomparably the best evidences. If Jesus be as an apple tree among the trees of the wood, do not keep away from Him, but sit under His shadow, and taste His fruit. He is a Saviour; do not believe the fact and yet remain unsaved. As far as Christ is known to you, so far make use of Him. Is not this sound common-sense?

We have thus the door set open for us, and we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to enter in while we notice in the text two things which we pray that you may enjoy to the full. First, the heart's rest in Christ: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." And, secondly, the heart's refreshment in Christ: "His fruit was sweet to my taste."

The spouse had been seeking her Beloved, and in looking for Him she had asked where she was likely to find Him. "Tell me," says she, "O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon." The answer was given to her, "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." She did go her way; but, after a while, she came to this resolution: "I will sit down under His shadow."

She who said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight," could appreciate shade, for she had been sunburnt. Did we not read just now her exclamation,—"Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me"? She knew what heat meant, what the burning sun meant; and therefore shade was pleasant to her. You know nothing about the deliciousness of shade till you travel in a thoroughly hot country; then you are delighted with it. Did you ever feel the heat of divine wrath? Did the great Sun—that Sun without variableness or shadow of a turning—ever dart upon you His hottest rays,—the rays of his holiness and justice? Did you cower down beneath the scorching beams of that great Light, and say, "We are consumed by Thine anger"? If you have

ever felt that, you have found it a very blessed thing to come under the shadow of Christ's atoning sacrifice. A shadow, you know, is cast by a body coming between us and the light and heat; and our Lord's most blessed body has come between us and the scorching sun of divine justice, so that we sit under the shadow of His mediation with great delight.

Mark well these two things concerning the spouse. She knew what it was to be weary, and she knew what it was to be sunburnt; and just in proportion as you also know these two things, your valuation of Christ will rise. You who have never pined under the wrath of God have never prized the Saviour. Water is of small value in this land of brooks and rivers, and so you commonly sprinkle the roads with it; but I warrant you that, if you were making a day's march over burning sand, a cup of cold water would be worth a king's ransom; and so to thirsty souls Christ is precious, but to none beside.

The spouse tells us that, when she became quite overshadowed, then she felt great delight. Great "I" never has great delight, for it cannot bear to own a greater than itself, but the humble believer finds his delight in being overshadowed by his Lord. In the shade of Jesus we have more delight than in any fancied light of our own. The spouse had great delight. I trust that you Christian people do have great delight; and if not, you ought to ask yourselves whether you really are the people of God. I like to see a cheerful countenance; ay, and to hear of raptures in the hearts of those who are God's saints! There are people who seem to think that religion and gloom are married, and must never be divorced. Pull down the blinds on Sunday, and darken the rooms; if you have a garden, or a rose in flower, try to forget that there are such beauties: are you not to serve God as dolorously as you can? Put your book under your arm, and crawl to your place of worship in as mournful a manner as if you were being marched to the whipping-post. Act thus if you will; but give me that religion which cheers my heart, fires my soul, and fills me with enthusiasm and delight,—for that is likely to be the religion of heaven, and it agrees with the experience of the Inspired Song.

Often have I felt as if Jesus leaned over me, as a friend might look over my shoulder. Although no cool shade comes over your brow, yet you may as much feel His shadow as if it did, for your heart grows calm; and if you have been wearied with the family, or troubled with the church, or vexed with yourself, you come down from the chamber where you have seen your Lord, and you feel braced for the battle of life, ready for its troubles and its temptations, because you have seen the Lord. "I sat down" said she, "under His shadow with great delight." How great that delight was she could not tell, but she sat down as one overpowered with it, needing to sit still under the load of bliss. I do not like to talk much about the secret delights of Christians, because there are always some around us who do not understand our meaning; but I will venture to say this much—that if worldlings could but even guess what are the secret joys of believers, they would give their eyes to share with us. We have troubles, and we admit it, we expect to have them; but we have joys which are frequently excessive. We should not like that others should be witnesses of the delight which now and then tosses our soul into a very tempest of joy. You know what it means, do you not? When you have been quite alone with the heavenly Bridegroom, you wanted to tell the angels of the sweet love of Christ to you, a poor unworthy one. You even wished to teach the golden harps fresh music, for seraphs know not the heights and depths of the grace of God as you know them.

Now I leave this first part of the subject, only noticing how beautifully natural it is. There was a tree, and she sat down under the shadow: there was nothing strained, nothing formal. So ought true piety ever to be consistent with common-sense, with that which seems most fitting, most comely, most wise, and most natural. There is Christ, we may enjoy Him, let us not despise the privilege.

But as soon as ever she was under the shadow, then the fruit was all hers . "I sat down under His shadow," saith she, and then, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Dost thou believe in Jesus, friend? Then Jesus Christ Himself is thine; and if thou dost own the tree, thou mayest well eat the fruit. Since He Himself becomes thine altogether, then His redemption and the pardon that comes of it, His living power, His mighty intercession, the glories of His Second Advent, and all that belong to Him are made over to thee for thy personal and present use and enjoyment. All things are yours, since Christ is yours. Only mind you imitate the spouse: when she found that the fruit was hers, she ate it. Copy her closely in this. It is a great fault in many believers, that they do not appropriate the promises, and feed on them. Do not err as they do. Under the shadow you have a right to eat the fruit. Deny not yourselves the sacred entertainment.

The spouse rested while feasting: she sat and ate. So, O true believer, rest whilst thou art feeding upon Christ! The spouse says, "I sat, and I ate." Had she not told us in the former chapter that the King sat at His table? See how like the Church is to her Lord, and the believer to his Saviour! We sit down also, and we eat, even as the King doth. Right royally are we entertained. His joy is in us, and His peace keeps our hearts and minds.

What are the fruits which come from Christ? Are they not peace with God, renewal of heart, joy in the Holy Ghost, love to the brethren? Are they not regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption, and all the blessings of the covenant of grace? And are they not each and all sweet to our taste? As we have fed upon them, have we not said, "Yes, these things are pleasant indeed. There is none like them. Let us live upon them evermore "? Now, sit down, sit down and feed. It seems a strange thing that we should have to persuade people to do that, but in the spiritual world things are very different from what they are in the natural. In the case of most men, if you put a joint of meat before them, and a knife and fork, they do not need many arguments to persuade them to fall to. But I will tell you when they will not do it, and that is when they are full: and I will also tell you when they will do it, and that is when they are hungry. Even so, if thy soul is weary after Christ the Saviour, thou wilt feed on Him; but if not, it is useless for me to preach to thee, or bid thee come. However, thou that art there, sitting under His shadow, thou mayest hear Him utter these words: "Eat, O friend: drink, yea, drink abundantly." Thou canst not have too much of these good things: the more of Christ, the better the Christian.

She grew very full of this. It was such a grand thing to find a great Saviour, a triumphant Saviour, an exalted Saviour! But it was too much for her, and she became sick of soul with the excessive glory of what she had learned; and do you see what her heart craves for? She longs for her first simple joys, those countrified delights. "Comfort me with apples," she says. Nothing but the old joys will revive her. Did you ever feel like that? I have been satiated with delight in the love of Christ as a glorious exalted Saviour when I have seen Him riding on His white horse, and going forth conquering and to conquer; I have been overwhelmed when I have beheld Him in the midst of the throne, with all the brilliant assembly of angels and archangels adoring Him, and my thought has gone forward to the day when He shall descend with all the pomp of God, and make all kings

and princes shrink into nothingness before the infinite majesty of His glory. Then I have felt as though, at the sight of Him, I must fall at His feet as dead; and I have wanted somebody to come and tell me over again "the old, old story" of how He died in order that I might be saved. His throne overpowers me, let me gather fruit from His cross. Bring me apples from "the tree" again. I am awe-struck while in the palace, let me get away to the woods again. Give me an apple plucked from the tree, such as I have given out to boys and girls in His family, such an apple as this, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or this: "This man receiveth sinners." Give me a promise from the basket of the covenant. Give me the simplicity of Christ, let me be a child and feast on apples again, if Jesus be the apple tree. I would fain go back to Christ on the tree in my stead, Christ overshadowing me, Christ feeding me. This is the happiest state to live in. Lord, evermore give us these apples! You recollect the old story we told, years ago, of Jack the huckster who used to sing,—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,

But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Those who knew him were astonished at his constant composure. They had a world of doubts and fears, and so they asked him why he never doubted. "Well," said he, "I can't doubt but what I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, for I know that, and feel it every day. And why should I doubt that Jesus Christ is my all in all? for He says He is." "Oh!" said his questioner, "I have my ups and downs." "I don't," says Jack; "I can never go up, for I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all; and I cannot go down, for Jesus Christ is my all in all." He wanted to join the church, and they said he must tell his experience. He said, "All my experience is that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ is my all in all." "Well," they said, "when you come before the church-meeting, the minister may ask you questions." "I can't help it," said Jack, "all I know I will tell you; and that is all I know,—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,

But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He was admitted into the church, and continued with the brethren, walking in holiness; but that was still all his experience, and you could not get him beyond it. "Why," said one brother, "I sometimes feel so full of grace, I feel so advanced in sanctification, that I begin to be very happy." "I never do," said Jack; "I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all." "But then," said the other, "I go down again, and think I am not saved, because I am not as sanctified as I used to be." "But I never doubt my salvation," said Jack, "because Jesus Christ is my all in all, and He never alters." That simple story is grandly instructive, for it sets forth a plain man's faith in a plain salvation; it is the likeness of a soul under the apple tree, resting in the shade, and feasting on the fruit.

The Lord Himself bring forth His own sweet fruit to you! Amen.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS.

"My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."—Son_2:16-17.

IT may be that there are saints who are always at their best, and are happy enough never to lose the light of their Father's countenance. I am not sure that there are such persons, for those believers with whom I have been most intimate have had a varied experience; and those whom I have known, who have boasted of their constant perfectness, have not been the most reliable of individuals. I hope there is a spiritual region attainable where there are no clouds to hide the Sun of our soul; but I cannot speak with positiveness, for I have not traversed that happy land. Every year of my life has had a winter as well as a summer, and every day its night. I have hitherto seen clear shinings and heavy rains, and felt warm breezes and fierce winds. Speaking for the many of my brethren, I confess that though the substance be in us, as in the teil-tree and the oak, yet we do lose our leaves, and the sap within us does not flow with equal vigour at all seasons. We have our downs as well as our ups, our valleys as well as our hills. We are not always rejoicing; we are sometimes in heaviness through manifold trials. Alas! we are grieved to confess that our fellowship with the Well-beloved is not always that of rapturous delight; but we have at times to seek Him, and cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" This appears to me to have been in a measure the condition of the spouse when she cried, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved."

It is plain, from this Sacred Canticle, that the spouse may love and be loved, may be confident in her Lord, and be fully assured of her possession of Him, and yet there may for the present be mountains between her and Him. Yes, we may even be far advanced in the divine life, and yet be exiled for a while from conscious fellowship. There are nights for men as well as babes, and the strong know that the sun is hidden quite as well as do the sick and the feeble. Do not, therefore, condemn yourself, my brother, because a cloud is over you; cast not away your confidence; but the rather let faith burn up in the gloom, and let your love resolve to come at your Lord again whatever be the barriers which divide you from Him.

The spouse also speaks of shadows. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Shadows are multiplied by the departure of the sun, and these are apt to distress the timid. We are not afraid of real enemies when Jesus is with us; but when we miss Him, we tremble at a shade. How sweet is that song, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me!" But we change our note when midnight is now come, and Jesus is not with us: then we people the night with terrors: spectres, demons, hobgoblins, and things that never existed save in fancy, are apt to swarm about us; and we are in fear where no fear is.

When communion with Christ is broken, in all true hearts there is a strong desire to win it back again. The man who has known the joy of communion with Christ, if he loses it, will never be content until it is restored. Hast thou ever entertained the Prince Emmanuel? Is He gone elsewhere? Thy chamber will be dreary till He comes back again. "Give me Christ or else I die," is the cry of every spirit that has lost, the dear companionship of Jesus. We do not part with such heavenly delights without many a pang. It is not with us a matter of "maybe He will return, and we hope He will;" but it must be, or we faint and die. We cannot live without Him; and this is a cheering sign; for the soul that cannot live without Him shall not live without Him: He comes speedily where life and death hang on His coming. If you must have Christ you shall have Him. This is just how the matter stands: we must drink of this well or die of thirst; we must feed upon Jesus or our spirit will famish.

The dividing difficulties were many as well as great. She does not speak of "a mountain", but of "mountains": Alps rose on Alps, wall after wall. She was distressed to think that in so short a time so much could come between her and Him of whom she sang just now, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." Alas, we multiply these mountains of Bether with a sad rapidity! Our Lord is jealous, and we give Him far too much reason, for hiding His face. A fault, which seemed so small at the time we committed it, is seen in the light of its own consequences, and then it grows and swells till it towers aloft, and hides the face of the Beloved. Then has our sun gone down, and fear whispers, "Will His light ever return? Will it ever be daybreak? Will the shadows ever flee away?" It is easy to grieve away the heavenly sunlight, but ah, how hard to clear the skies, and regain the unclouded brightness!

So the spouse seems to have come to the conclusion that the difficulties in her way were insurmountable by her own power. She does not even think of herself going over the mountains to her Beloved, but she cries, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." She will not try to climb the mountains, she knows she cannot: if they had been less high, she might have attempted it; but their summits reach to heaven. If they had been less craggy or difficult, she might have tried to scale them; but these mountains are terrible, and no foot may stand upon their lone crags. Oh, the mercy of utter self-despair! I love to see a soul driven into that close corner, and forced therefore to look to God alone. The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. Where the sinner ends the Saviour begins. If the mountains can be climbed, we shall have to climb them; but if they are quite impassable, then the soul cries out with the prophet, "Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence. When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence." Our souls are lame, they cannot move to Christ, and we turn our strong desires to Him, and fix our hopes alone upon Him; will He not remember us in love, and fly to us as He did to His servant of old when He rode upon a cherub, and did fly, yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind?

Here I would remind you that this prayer is one that we may fairly offer, because it is the way of Christ to come to us when our coming to Him is out of the question. "How?" say you. I answer that of old He did this; for we remember "His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and in sins." His first coming into the world in human form, was it not because

man could never come to God until God had come to him? I hear of no tears, or prayers, or entreaties after God on the part of our first parents; but the offended Lord spontaneously gave the promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Our Lord's coming into the world was unbought, unsought, unthought of; he came altogether of His own free will, delighting to redeem.

"With pitying eyes, the Prince of grace

Beheld our helpless grief;

He saw, and (oh, amazing love!)

He ran to our relief." His incarnation was a type of the way in which He comes to us by His Spirit. He saw us cast out, polluted, shameful, perishing; and as He passed by, His tender lips said, "Live!" In us is fulfilled that word, "I am found of them that sought Me not." We were too averse to holiness, too much in bondage to sin, ever to have returned to Him if He had not turned to us. What think you? Did He come to us when we were enemies, and will He not visit us now that we are friends? Did He come to us when we were dead sinners, and will He not hear us now that we are weeping saints? If Christ's coming to the earth was after this manner, and if His coming to each one of us was after this style, we may well hope that now He will come to us in like fashion, like the dew which refreshes the grass, and waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. Besides, He is coming again in person, in the latter-day, and mountains of sin, and error, and idolatry, and superstition, and oppression stand in the way of His kingdom; but He will surely come and overturn, and overturn, till He shall reign over all. He will come in the latter-days, I say, though He shall leap the hills to do it, and because of that I am sure we may comfortably conclude that He will draw near to us who mourn His absence so bitterly. Then let us bow our heads a moment, and silently present to His most excellent Majesty the petition of our text: "Turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division."

It is easy, too, for Christ to come over the mountains for our relief . It is easy for the gazelle to cross the mountains, it is made for that end; so is it easy for Jesus, for to this purpose was He ordained from of old that He might come to man in his worst estate, and bring with Him the Father's love. What is it that separates us from Christ? Is it a sense of sin? You have been pardoned once, and Jesus can renew most vividly a sense of full forgiveness. But you say, "Alas! I have sinned again: fresh guilt alarms me." He can remove it in an instant, for the fountain appointed for that purpose is opened, and is still full. It is easy for the dear lips of redeeming love to put away the child's offences, since He has already obtained pardon for the criminal's iniquities. If with His heart's blood He won our pardon from our Judge, he can easily enough bring us the forgiveness of our Father. Oh, yes, it is easy enough for Christ to say again, "Thy sins be forgiven"! "But I feel so unfit, so unable to enjoy communion." He that healed all manner of bodily diseases can heal with a word your spiritual infirmities. Remember the man whose ankle-bones received strength, so that he ran and leaped; and her who was sick of a fever, and was healed at once, and arose, and ministered unto her Lord. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "But I have such afflictions, such troubles, such sorrows, that I am weighted down, and cannot rise into joyful fellowship." Yes, but Jesus can make every burden light, and cause each yoke to be easy. Your trials can be made to aid your heavenward course instead of hindering it. I know all about those heavy weights, and I perceive that you cannot lift them; but

skilful engineers can adapt ropes and pulleys in such a way that heavy weights lift other weights. The Lord Jesus is great at gracious machinery, and He has the art of causing a weight of tribulation to lift from us a load of spiritual deadness, so that we ascend by that which, like a millstone, threatened to sink us down.

To conclude, our Lord can do all this directly. As in the twinkling of an eye the dead shall be raised incorruptible, so in a moment can our dead affections rise to fulness of delight. He can say to this mountain, "Be thou removed hence, and be thou cast into the midst of the sea," and it shall be done. In the sacred emblems now upon this supper table, Jesus is already among us. Faith cries, "He has come!" Like John the Baptist, she gazes intently on Him, and cries, "Behold the Lamb of God!" At this table Jesus feeds us with His body and His blood. His corporeal presence we have not, but His real spiritual presence we perceive. We are like the disciples when none of them durst ask Him, "Who art Thou?" knowing that it was the Lord. He is come. He looketh forth at these windows,—I mean this bread and wine; showing Himself through the lattices of this instructive and endearing ordinance. He speaks. He saith, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone." And so it is; we feel it to be so: a heavenly springtide warms our frozen hearts. Like the spouse, we wonderingly cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Now in happy fellowship we see the Beloved, and hear His voice; our heart burns; our affections glow; we are happy, restful, brimming over with delight. The King has brought us into his banqueting-house, and His banner over us is love. It is good to be here!

"Friends, we must now go our ways. A voice saith, "Arise, let us go hence." O Thou Lord of our hearts, go with us! Home will not be home without Thee. Life will not be life without Thee. Heaven itself would not be heaven if Thou wert absent. Abide with us. The world grows dark, the gloaming of time draws on. Abide with us, for it is toward evening. Our years increase, and we near the night when dews fall cold and chill. A great future is all about us, the splendours of the last age are coming down; and while we wait in solemn, awe-struck expectation, our heart continually cries within herself, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division."

"Hasten, Lord! the promised hour;

Come in glory and in power;

Still Thy foes are unsubdued;

Nature sighs to be renew'd.

Time has nearly reach'd its sum,

All things with Thy bride say 'Come;'

Jesus, whom all worlds adore,

Come and reign for evermore!"

FRAGRANT SPICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS

FRAGRANT SPICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF MYRRH.

"Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee."—Son_4:7.

HOW marvellous are these words! "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." The glorious Bridegroom is charmed with His spouse, and sings soft canticles of admiration. When the bride extols her Lord there is no wonder, for He deserves it well, and in Him there is room for praise without possibility of flattery. But does He who is wiser than Solomon condescend to praise this sunburnt Shulamite? 'Tis even so, for these are His own words, and were uttered by His own sweet lips. Nay, doubt not, O young believer, for we have more wonders to reveal! There are greater depths in heavenly things than thou hast at present dared to hope. The Church not only is all fair in the eyes of her Beloved, but in one sense she always was so.

"In God's decree, her form He view'd;

All beauteous in His eyes she stood,

Presented by Th' eternal name,

Betroth'd in love, and free from blame.

"Not as she stood in Adam's fall,

When guilt and ruin cover'd all;

But as she'll stand another day,

Fairer than sun's meridian ray."

He delighted in her before she had either a natural or a spiritual being, and from the beginning could He say, "My delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. 8:31.) Having covenanted to be the Surety of the elect, and having determined to fulfil every stipulation of that covenant, He from all eternity delighted to survey the purchase of His blood, and rejoiced to view His Church, in the purpose and decree, as already by Him delivered from sin, and exalted to glory and happiness.

"Oh, glorious grace, mysterious plan

Too great for angel-mind to scan,

Our thoughts are lost, our numbers fail;

All hail, redeeming love, all hail!" Our first bundle of myrrh lies in the open hand of the text.

When He speaks positively, how complete is His admiration! She is "fair", but that is not a full description; He styles her "all fair." He views her in Himself, washed in His sin-atoning blood, and clothed in His meritorious righteousness, and He considers her to be full of comeliness and

beauty. No wonder that such is the case, since it is but His own perfect excellences that He admires, seeing that the holiness, glory, and perfection of His Church are His own garments on the back of His own well-beloved spouse, and she is "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh." She is not simply pure, or well-proportioned; she is positively lovely and fair! She has actual merit! Her deformities of sin are removed; but more, she has through her Lord obtained a meritorious righteousness by which an actual beauty is conferred upon her. Believers have a positive righteousness given to them when they become "accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6.)

Let us mark well the repeated sentences of His approbation.

"Lo, thou art fair! lo, thou art fair!

Twice fair thou art, I say;

My righteousness and graces are

Thy double bright array.

"But since thy faith can hardly own

My beauty put on thee;

Behold! behold! twice be it known

Thou art all fair to Me!"

After having surveyed her whole person with rapturous delight, He cannot be satisfied until He takes a second gaze, and afresh recounts her beauties. Making but little difference between His first description and the last, he adds extraordinary expressions of love to manifest His increased delight. "Thou art beautiful, O My love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks. . . . My dove, My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." (Son_5:4-7, Son_5:9.)

Let us remember that He who pronounces the Church and each individual believer to be "all fair" is none other than the glorious Son of God, who is "very God of very God." Hence His declaration is decisive, since infallibility has uttered it. There can be no mistake where the all-seeing Jehovah is the Judge. If He has pronounced her to be incomparably fair, she is so, beyond a doubt; and though hard for our poor puny faith to receive, it is nevertheless as divine a verity as any of the undoubted doctrines of revelation.

Christ Jesus has no quarrel with His spouse. She often wanders from Him, and grieves His Holy Spirit, 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 it is so, for if Jesus were as mindful of injuries as we are, how could He commune with us? Many a time a believer will put himself out of humour with the Lord for some slight turn in providence, but our precious Husband knows our silly hearts

too well to take any offence at our ill manners.

But the question returns,—How is this? Can it be explained, so as not to clash with the most evident fact that sin remaineth even in the hearts of the regenerate? Can our own daily bewailings of sin allow of anything like perfection as a present attainment? The Lord Jesus saith it, and therefore it must be true; but in what sense is it to be understood? How are we "all fair" though we ourselves feel that we are black, because the sun hath looked upon us? (Son_1:6.) The answer is ready, if we consider the analogy of faith.

And Dr. Gill excellently expresses the same idea, when he writes, "though all sin is seen by God, in articulo providentiae, in the matter of providence, wherein nothing escapes His all-seeing eye; yet in articulo iustificationis, in the matter of justification, He sees no sin in His people, so as to reckon it to them, or condemn them for it; for they all stand 'holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.'" (Colossians 1:22.) The blood of Jesus removes all stain, and His righteousness confers perfect beauty; and, therefore, in the Beloved, the true believer is at this hour as much accepted and approved, in the sight of God, as He will be when He stands before the throne in heaven. The beauty of justification is at its fulness the moment a soul is by faith received into the Lord Jesus. This is righteousness so transcendent that no one can exaggerate its glorious merit. Since this righteousness is that of Jesus, the Son of God, it is therefore divine, and is, indeed, the holiness of God; and, hence, Kent was not too daring when, in a bold flight of rapture, he sang,—

"In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.

"Oh, the heights and depths of grace,
Shining with meridian blaze;
Here the sacred records show
Sinners black, but comely too!"

II. OUR LORD'S ADMIRATION IS SWEETENED BY LOVE. He addresses the spouse as "My love." The virgins called her "the fairest among women "; they saw and admired, but it was reserved for her Lord to love her. Who can fully tell the excellence of His love? Oh, how His heart goeth forth after His redeemed! As for the love of David and Jonathan, it is far exceeded in Christ. No tender husband was ever so fond as He. No figures can completely set forth His heart's affection, for it surpasses all the love that man or woman hath heard or thought of. Our blessed Lord, Himself, when He would declare the greatness of it, was compelled to compare one inconceivable thing with another, in order to express His own thoughts. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." (John 15:9.) All the eternity, fervency, immutability, and infinity which are to be found in the love of Jehovah the Father, towards Jehovah-Jesus the Son, are copied to the letter in the love of the Lord Jesus towards His chosen ones. Before the foundation of the world He

loved His people, in all their wanderings He loved them, and unto the end He will abide in His love. (John 13:1.) He has given them the best proof of His affection, in that He gave Himself to die for their sins, and hath revealed to them complete pardon as the result of His death. The willing manner of His death is further confirmation of His boundless love. How Christ did delight in the work of our redemption! "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." (Psalms 40:7-8.) When He came into the world to sacrifice His life for us, it was a freewill offering. "I have a baptism to be baptized with." (Luke 12:50.) Christ was to be, as it were, baptized in His own blood, and how did He thirst for that time! "How am I straitened till it be accomplished." There was no hesitation, no desire to be quit of His engagement. He went to His crucifixion without once halting by the way to deliberate whether He should complete His sacrifice. The stupendous mass of our fearful debt He paid at once, asking neither delay nor diminution. From the moment when He said, "Not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), His course was swift and unswerving; as if He had been hastening to a crown rather than to a cross. The fulness of time was His only remembrancer; He was not driven by bailiffs to discharge the obligations of His Church, but joyously, even when full of sorrow, He met the law, answered its demands, and cried, "It is finished."

III. LET US NOTE THAT CHRIST DELIGHTS TO THINK UPON HIS CHURCH, AND TO LOOK UPON HER BEAUTY. As the bird returneth often to its nest, and as the wayfarer hastens to his home, so doth the mind continually pursue the object of its choice. We cannot look too often upon that face which we love; we desire always to have our precious things in our sight. It is even so with our Lord Jesus. From all eternity, "His delights were with the sons of men;" His thoughts rolled onward to the time when His elect should be born into the world; He viewed them in the mirror of His fore-knowledge. "In thy book," He says, "all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalms 139:16.) When the world was set upon its pillars, He was there, and He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. Many a time, before His incarnation, He descended to this earth in the similitude of a man; on the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-33), by the brook of Jabbok (Genesis 32:24-30), beneath the walls of Jericho (Joshua 5:13), and in the fiery furnace of Babylon (Daniel 3:19-25), the Son of man did visit His people. Because His soul delighted in them, He could not rest away from them, for His heart longed after them. Never were they absent from His heart, for He had written their names upon His hands, and graven them upon His heart. As the breast-plate 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, which He ever hung nearest His heart. We may often forget to meditate upon the perfections of our Lord, but He never ceases to remember us. He cares not one half so much for any of His most glorious works as He does for His children. Although His eye seeth everything that hath beauty and excellence in it, He never fixes His gaze anywhere with that admiration and delight which He spends upon His purchased ones. He charges His angels concerning them, and calls upon those holy beings to rejoice with Him over His lost sheep. (Luke 15:4-7.) He talked of them to Himself, and even on the tree of doom He did not cease to soliloquize concerning them. He saw of the travail of His soul, and He was abundantly satisfied.

"That day acute of ignominious woe,

Was, notwithstanding, in a perfect sense,

'The day of His heart's gladness,' for the joy
That His redeem'd should be brought home at last
(Made ready as in robes of bridal white),
Was set before Him vividly,—He look'd;—
And for that happiness anticipate,
Endurance of all torture, all disgrace,

Seem'd light infliction to His heart of love." Nor is He content with looking, He must feed His ears as well as His eyes, and therefore He commends her speech, and intreats her to let Him hear her voice. See how truly our Lord rejoiceth in us. Is not this unparalleled love! We have heard of princes who have been smitten by the beauty of a peasant's daughter, but what of that? Here is the Son of God doting upon a worm, looking with eyes of admiration upon a poor child of Adam, and listening with joy to the lisplings of poor flesh and blood. Ought we not to be exceedingly charmed by such matchless condescension? And should not our hearts as much delight in Him as He doth in us? O surprising truth! Christ Jesus rejoices over His poor, tempted, tried, and erring people.

The Holy Spirit is often pleased in a most gracious manner to witness with our spirits of the love of Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them unto us. No voice is heard from the clouds, and no vision is seen in the night, but we have a testimony more sure than either of these. If an angel should fly from heaven, and inform the saint personally of the Saviour's love to him, the evidence would not be one whit more satisfactory than that which is borne in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Ask those of the Lord's people who have lived the nearest to the gates of heaven, and they will tell you that they have had seasons when the love of Christ towards them has been a fact so clear and sure, that they could no more doubt it than they could question their own existence.

If we were wiser and more careful, we might preserve the fragrance of Christ's words far longer; for they are not like the ordinary manna which soon rotted, but are comparable to that omer of it which was put in the golden pot, and preserved for many generations. The sweet Lord Jesus has been known to write his love-thoughts on the heart of His people in so clear and deep a manner, that they have for months, and even for years, enjoyed an abiding sense of His affection. A few doubts have flitted across their minds like thin clouds before a summer's sun, but the warmth of their assurance has remained the same for many a gladsome day. Their path has been a smooth one, they have fed in the green pastures beside the still waters, for His rod and staff have comforted them, and His right hand hath led them. I am inclined to think that there is more of this in the Church than some men would allow. We have a goodly number who dwell upon the hills, and behold the light of the sun. There are giants in these days, though the times are not such as to allow them room to display their gigantic strength; in many a humble cot, in many a crowded workshop, in many a village manse there are to be found men of the house of David, men after God's own heart, anointed with the holy oil. It is, however, a mournful truth, that whole ranks in the army of our Lord are composed of dwarfish Littlefaiths. The men of fearful mind and desponding heart are everywhere to be seen. Why is this? Is it the Master's fault, or ours? Surely He cannot be blamed. Is it not then a matter of enquiry in our own souls, Can I not grow stronger? Must I be a m

owner all my days? How can I get rid of my doubts? The answer must be: yes, you can be comforted, but only the mouth of the Lord can do it, for anything less than this will be unsatisfactory.

Oh, for more of these Bethel visits, more frequent visitations from the God of Israel! Oh, how sweet to hear Him say to us, as He did to Abraham, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) To be addressed as Daniel was of old, "O man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:19), is worth a thousand ages of this world's joy. What more can a creature want this side of heaven to make him peaceful and happy than a plain avowal of love from his Lord's own lips? Let me ever hear Thee, speak in mercy to my soul, and, O my Lord, I ask no more while here I dwell in the land of my pilgrimage!

"Brethren, let us labour to obtain a confident assurance of the Lord's delight in us, for this, as it enables Him to commune with us, will be one of the readiest ways to produce a like feeling in our hearts towards Him. Christ is well pleased with us; let us approach Him with holy familiarity; let us unbosom our thoughts to Him, for His delight in us will secure us an audience. The child may stay away from the father, when he is conscious that he has aroused his father's displeasure, but why should we keep at a distance when Christ Jesus is smiling upon us? No! since His smiles attract us, let us enter into His courts, and touch His golden sceptre. O Holy Spirit, help us to live in happy fellowship with Him whose soul is knit unto us!

"O Jesus! let eternal blessings dwell

On Thy transporting name. * * *

Let me be wholly Thine from this blest hour.

Let Thy lov'd image be for ever present;

Of Thee be all my thoughts, and let my tongue

Be sanctified with the celestial theme.

Dwell on my lips, Thou dearest, sweetest name!

Dwell on my lips, 'till the last parting breath!

Then let me die, and bear the charming sound

In triumph to the skies. In other strains,

In language all divine, I'll praise Thee then;

While all the Godhead opens in the view

Of a Redeemer's love. Here let me gaze,

For ever gaze; the bright variety

Will endless joy and admiration yield.

Let me be wholly Thine from this blest hour.

Fly from my soul all images of sense,
Leave me in silence to possess my Lord:
My life, my pleasures, flow from Him alone,
My strength, my great salvation, and my hope.
Thy name is all my trust; O name divine!
Be Thou engraven on my inmost soul,
And let me own Thee with my latest breath,
Confess Thee in the face of ev'ry horror,
That threat'ning death or envious hell can raise;
Till all their strength subdu'd, my parting soul
Shall give a challenge to infernal rage,
And sing salvation to the Lamb for ever."

THE WELL-BELOVED.

THE WELL-BELOVED. A COMMUNION ADDRESS AT MENTONE.

"Yea, He is altogether lovely."—Son_5:16. THE soul that is familiar with the Lord worships Him in the outer court of nature, wherein it admires His works, and is charmed by every thought of what He must be who made them all. When that soul enters the nearer circle of inspiration, and reads the wonderful words of God, it is still more enraptured, and its admiration is heightened. In revelation, we see the same all-glorious Lord as in creation, but the vision is more clear, and the consequent love is more intense.

Can we come into this inner circle? All do not enter here. Alas! many are far off from Him, and are blind to His beauties. "He was despised and rejected of men," and He is so still. They do not see God in His works, but dream that these wonders were evolved, and not created by the Great Primal Cause. As for His words, they seem to them as idle tales, or, at best, as inspired only in the same sense as the language of Shakespeare or Spenser. They see not the Lord in the stately aisles of Holy Scripture; and have no vision of Himself. May He, who openeth the eyes of the blind, have pity on them!

If we enter this sacred inner circle, we must become witnesses, as she does who speaks of Christ, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." She knows what He is, for she has seen Him. The verses which precede the text are a description of every feature of the heavenly Bridegroom; all His members are there set forth with richness of Oriental imagery. The spouse speaks what she knows. Have we, also, seen the Lord? Are we His familiar acquaintances? If so, may the Lord help us to understand our text!

If the Holy Spirit will help me, I should like to lift the veil, that we may, in sacred contemplation, look on our Beloved.

It is admiration which speaks of Him as "altogether lovely" or beautiful. This admiration rises to the highest degree. The spouse would fain show that her Beloved is more than any other beloved; therefore she cries, "He is altogether lovely." Surely no one else has reached that point. Many are lovely, but no one save Jesus is "altogether lovely." We see something that is lovely in one, and another point is lovely in another; but all loveliness meets in Him. Our soul knows nothing which can rival Him: He is the gathering up of all sorts of loveliness to make up one perfect loveliness. He is the climax of beauty; the crown of glory; the uttermost of excellence.

Our admiration of our Lord is inexpressible. We can never tell all we know of our Lord; yet all our knowledge is little. All that we know is, that His love passeth knowledge, that His excellence baffles understanding, that His glory is unutterable. We can embrace Him by our love, but we can scarcely touch Him with our intellect, He is so high, so glorious. As to describing Him, we cry, with Mr. Berridge,—

"Then my tongue would fain express

All His love and loveliness;

But I lisp, and falter forth

Broken words, not half His worth.

"Vex'd, I try and try again,

Still my efforts all are vain:

Living tongues are dumb at best,

We must die to speak of Christ."

"He is altogether lovely." Do we not feel an inexpressible admiration for Him? There is none like unto Thee, O Son of God!

There He stands: we know Him by the thorn-crown, and the wounds, and the visage more marred than that of any man! He suffered all this for us. O Son of man! O Son of God! With the spouse, we feel, in the inmost depths of our soul, that Thou art "altogether lovely."

Let us meditate upon the proof of our assertion. "He is altogether lovely" in His person. He is God. The glory of Godhead I must leave in lowly silence. Yet is our Jesus also man, more emphatically man than any one here present this afternoon, for we are English, American, French, German, Dutch, Russian; but Christ is man, the second Adam, the Head of the race: as truly as He is very God of very God, so is He man, of the substance of His mother. What a marvellous union! The miracle of miracles! In his incomparable personality He is altogether lovely; for in Him we see how God comes down to man in condescension, and how man goes up to God in close relationship. There is no other such as He, in all respects, even in heaven itself: in His personality He must ever stand alone, in the eyes of both God and man, "altogether lovely."

Passing from His character to His sacrifice; there especially "He is altogether lovely." You may have read "Rutherford's Letters "; I hope you have. How wondrously he writes, when he describes his Lord in garments red from His sweat of blood, and with hands bejewelled with His wounds! When we view His body taken down from the cross, all pale and deathly, and wrapped in the cerements of the grave, we see a strange beauty in Him. He is to us never more lovely than when we read in our Beloved's white and red that His Sacrifice is accomplished, and He has been obedient unto death for us. In Him, as the sacrifice once offered, we see our pardon, our life, our heaven, our all. So lovely is Christ in His sacrifice, that He is for ever most pleasing to the great Judge of all, ay, so lovely to His Father, that He makes us also lovely to God the Father, and we are "accepted in the Beloved." His sacrifice has such merit and beauty in the sight of heaven, that in Him God is well pleased, and guilty men become in Him pleasant unto the Lord. Is not His sacrifice most sweet to us? Here our guilty conscience finds peace; here we see ourselves made comely in His comeliness. We cannot stand at Calvary, and see the Saviour die, and hear Him cry, "It is finished," without feeling that "He is altogether lovely." Forgive me that I speak so coolly! I dare not enter fully into a theme which would pull up the sluices of my heart.

Every feature of our Lord is lovely. You cannot think of anything that has to do with Him which is unworthy of our praise. All over glorious is our Lord. The spouse speaks of His head, His locks,

His eyes, His cheeks, His lips, His hands, His legs, His countenance, His mouth; and when she has mentioned them all, she sums up with reference to all by saying, "Yea, He is altogether lovely."

There is nothing lacking about His loveliness. Some would be very lovely were there a brightness in their eyes, or a colour in their countenances: but something is away. The absence of a tooth or of an eyebrow may spoil a countenance, but in Christ Jesus there is no omission of excellence. Everything that should be in Him is in Him; everything that is conceivable in perfection is present to perfection in Him.

Neither is there anything in our Lord which is incongruous with the rest. In each one of us there is, at least, a little that is out of place. We could not be fully described without the use of a "but." If we could all look within, and see ourselves as God sees us, we should note a thousand matters, which we now permit, which we should never allow again. But in the Well-beloved all is of a piece, all is lovely; and when the sum of the whole is added up, it comes to an absolute perfection of loveliness: "Yea, He is altogether lovely."

What is stranger and more wonderful still, our Lord Jesus makes sinners lovely. In their natural state, men are deformed and hideous to the eye of God; and as they have no love to God, so He has no delight in them. He is weary of them, and is grieved that He made men upon the earth. The Lord is angry with the wicked every day. Yet, when our Lord Jesus comes in, and covers these sinful ones with His righteousness, and, at the same time, infuses into them His life, the Lord is well pleased with them for His Son's sake. Even in heaven, the infinite Jehovah sees nothing which pleases Him like His Son. The Father from eternity loved His Only-begotten, and again and again He hath said of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What higher encomium can be passed upon Him?

Our Lord's loveliness appears in every condition: in the manger, or in the temple; by the well, or on the sea; in the garden, or on the cross; in the tomb, or in the resurrection; in His first, or in His second coming. He is not as the herb, which flowers only at one season; or as the tree, which loses its leaves in winter; or as the moon, which waxes and wanes; or as the sea, which ebbs and flows. In every condition, and at every time, "He is altogether lovely."

III. The little time which we can give to this meditation has run out, and therefore I hasten to a close. I have bidden you look at our Lord as "altogether lovely" with reverent emotions, and with absolute certainty. Now, to conclude, think of Him WITH PRACTICAL RESULTS. "He is altogether lovely." What shall we do for this chief among ten thousand?

You who are not preachers cannot do better than speak much of Jesus, as opportunity offers. Make Him the theme of conversation. People talk about ministers; but we beg you to talk of our Master. Our undecided neighbours are always talking of hypocrites and inconsistent professors; but we would say to them, "Never mind about His followers: talk about the Master Himself." His followers, by themselves considered, never were worth your words; but what a theme is this,—"He is altogether lovely"! Our Lord's people are far worthier than the world thinks them to be; for my part, I rejoice in the many gracious and beautiful characters with which I meet, but even if all the ill reports we hear were true, this would not detract from the loveliness of our Lord, who is infinitely beyond all praise.

Rest not, any one of you, till you know of a surety that Jesus is yours. Do not be content with a hope, struggle after the full assurance of faith. This is to be had, and you ought not to be content without it. It may be your lifelong song, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." You need not pine in the shade: the sun is shining, "walk in the light." Away with the idea that we cannot know whether we are condemned or forgiven, in Christ or out of Him! We may know, we must know; and, as we appreciate our Lord, we shall know. Either Jesus is ours, or He is not. If He is, let us rejoice in the priceless possession. If He is not ours, let us at once lay hold upon Him by faith; for, the moment we trust Him, He is ours. The enjoyment of religion lies in assurance: a mere hope is scant diet.

PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "Once more, it is a fair fruit of our delight in our Lord that our valuation of Him becomes a bond of union between us and others. The spouse cries, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!" and they reply, "Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek Him with thee?" Thus, you see, they institute a companionship through the Well-beloved. Few of us, in this room, would ever have known each other, had it not been for our common admiration of the Lord Jesus. We should have gone on walking past each other by the sea to this day, and we should have missed much cheering fellowship. Our Lord has become our centre; we meet in Him, and feel that in Him we are partakers of one life. We seek our Well-beloved together, and around His table we find Him together; and finding Him, we have found one another, and the lost jewel of Christian love glitters on every bosom. We have differing views on certain parts of divine truth; and I do not know that it is wrong for us to differ where the Holy Spirit has left truth without rigidly defining it. We are bound each one devoutly to use his judgment in the interpretation of the Sacred Word; but we all agree in this one clear judgment: "Yea, He is altogether lovely. "This is the point of union. Those who enthusiastically love the same person are on the way to loving each other. This is growingly our case; and it is the same with all spiritual people. Professors quarrel, but possessors are at one. We hear much discourse upon "the Unity of the Church" as a thing to be desired, and we may heartily agree with it; but it would be well also to remember that in the true Church of Christ real union already exists. Our Lord prayed for those whom the Father had given Him, that they might be one, and the Father granted the prayer: the Lord's own people are one. In this room we have an example of how closely we are united in Christ. Some of you are more at home in this assembly, taken out of all churches, than you are in the churches to which you nominally belong. Our union in one body as Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians, or Independents, is not the thing which our Lord prayed for; but our union in Himself. That union we do at this moment enjoy; and therefore do we eat of one bread, and drink of one cup, and are baptized into one Spirit, at His feet who is to each one of us, and so to all of us, ALTOGETHER LOVELY.

"White and ruddy is my Belovd
All His heavenly beauties shine;
Nature can't produce an object,
Nor so glorious, so divine;
He hath wholly
Won my soul to realms above.

"Farewell, all ye meaner creatures,
For in Him is every store;
Wealth, or friends, or darling beauty,
Shall not draw me any more;
In my Saviour
I have found a glorious whole."

THE SPICED WINE OF MY POMEGRANATE;

THE SPICED WINE OF MY POMEGRANATE;

OR, THE COMMUNION OF COMMUNICATION.

I would cause Thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate. "—Son_8:2.

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."—John 1:16. THE immovable basis of communion having been laid of old in the eternal union which subsisted between Christ and His elect, it only needed a fitting occasion to manifest itself in active development. The Lord Jesus had for ever delighted Himself with the sons of men, and he ever stood prepared to reveal and communicate that delight to His people; but they were incapable of returning His affection or enjoying His fellowship, having fallen into a state so base and degraded, that they were dead to Him, and careless concerning Him. It was therefore needful that something should be done for them, and in them, before they could hold converse with Jesus, or feel concord with Him. This preparation being a work of grace and a result of previous union, Jesus determined that, even in the preparation for communion, there should be communion. If they must be washed before they could fully converse with Him, He would commune with them in the washing; and if they must be enriched by gifts before they could have full access to Him, He would commune with them in the giving. He has therefore established a fellowship in imparting His grace, and in partaking of it.

The word *koinonia*, or communion, is frequently employed by inspired writers in the sense of communication or contribution. When, in our English version, we read, "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26), it is interesting to know that the word *koinwnian* is used, as if to show that the generous gifts of the Church in Achaia to its sister Church at Jerusalem was a communion. Calvin would have us notice this, because, saith he, "The word here employed well expresses the feeling by which it behoves us to succour the wants of our brethren, even because there is to be a common and mutual regard on account of the union of the body." He would not have strained the text if he had said that there was in the contribution the very essence of communion. Gill, in his commentary upon the above verse, most pertinently remarks, "Contribution, or communion, as the word signifies, it being one part of the communion of churches and of saints to relieve their poor by communicating to them." The same word is employed in Hebrews 13:16, and is there translated by the word "communicate." "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." It occurs again in 2 Corinthians 9:13, "And for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;" and in numerous other passages the careful student will observe the word in various forms, representing the ministering of the saints to one another as an act of fellowship. Indeed, at the Lord's supper, which is the embodiment of communion, we have ever been wont to make a special contribution for the poor of the flock, and we believe that in the collection there is as true and real an element of communion as in the partaking of the bread and wine. The giver holds fellowship with the receiver when he bestows his benefaction for the Lord's sake, and because of the brotherhood existing between him and his needy friends. The teacher

holds communion with the young disciple when he labours to instruct him in the faith, being moved thereto by a spirit of Christian love. He who intercedes for a saint because he desires his well-being as a member of the one family, enters into fellowship with his brother in the offering of prayer. The loving and mutual service of church-members is fellowship of a high degree. And let us remember that the recipient communes with the benefactor: the communion is not confined to the giver, but the heart overflowing with liberality is met by the heart brimming with gratitude, and the love manifested in the bestowal is reciprocated in the acceptance. When the hand feeds the mouth or supports the head, the diverse members feel their union, and sympathize with one another; and so is it with the various portions of the body of Christ, for they commune in mutual acts of love.

It is one branch of this mutual communication which we have selected as the subject of this address. "Looking unto Jesus," who hath delivered us from our state of enmity, and brought us into fellowship with Himself, we pray for the rich assistance of the Holy Spirit, that we may be refreshed in spirit, and encouraged to draw more largely from the covenant storehouse of Christ Jesus the Lord.

As the life of grace is first begotten in us by the Lord Jesus, so is it constantly sustained by Him. We are always drawing from this sacred fountain, always deriving sap from this divine root; and as Jesus communes with us in the bestowing of mercies, it is our privilege to hold fellowship with Him in the receiving of them.

Following out the suggestion of our explanatory preface, we can well believe that when the poor saints received the contribution of their brethren, many of them did in earnest acknowledge the fellowship which was illustrated in the generous offering, but it is probable that some of them merely looked upon the material of the gift, and failed to see the spirit moving in it. Sensual thoughts in some of the receivers might possibly, at the season when the contribution was distributed, have mischievously injured the exercise of spirituality; for it is possible that, after a period of poverty, they would be apt to give greater prominence to the fact that their need was removed than to the sentiment of fellowship with their sympathizing brethren. They would rather rejoice over famine averted than concerning fellowship manifested. We doubt not that, in many instances, the mutual benefactions of the Church fail to reveal our fellowship to our poor brethren, and produce in them no feelings of communion with the givers.

Ought not the mass of professors to confess the truth of this accusation? Have not the bulk of us most sadly departed from the purity of our love? We rejoice, however, to observe a remnant of choice spirits, who live near the Lord, and know the sweetness of fellowship. These receive the promise and the blessing, and so digest them that they become good blood in their veins, and so do they feed on their Lord that they grow up into Him. Let us imitate those elevated minds, and obtain their high delights. There is no reason why the meanest of us should not be as David, and David as the servant of the Lord. We may now be dwarfs, but growth is possible; let us therefore aim at a higher stature. Let the succeeding advice be followed, and, the Holy Spirit helping us, we shall have attained thereto.

If thou wouldst enjoy communion with the Lord Jesus in the reception of His grace, endeavor to be always sensibly drawing supplies from Him. Make thy needs public in the streets of thine heart, and when the supply is granted, let all the powers of thy soul be present at the reception of it. Let

no mercy come into thine house unsung. Note in thy memory the list of thy Master's benefits. Wherefore should the Lord's bounties be hurried away in the dark, or buried in forgetfulness? Keep the gates of thy soul ever open, and sit thou by the wayside to watch the treasures of grace which God the Spirit hourly conveys into thy heart from Jehovah—Jesus, thy Lord.

Study thyself, seek out thy necessities, as the housewife searches for chambers where she may bestow her summer fruits. Regard thy wants as rooms to be filled with more of the grace of Jesus, and suffer no corner to be unoccupied. Pant after more of Jesus. Be covetous after Him. Let all the past incite thee to seek greater things. Sing the song of the enlarged heart,—

"All this is not enough: methinks I grow

More greedy by fruition; what I get

Serves but to set

An edge upon my appetite;

And all Thy gifts invite

My pray'rs for more."

Cry out to the Lord Jesus to fill the dry beds of thy rivers until they overflow, and then empty thou the channels which have hitherto been filled with thine own self-sufficiency, and beseech Him to fill these also with His superabundant grace. If thy heavy trials sink thee deeper in the flood of His consolations, be glad of them; and if thy vessel shall be sunken up to its very bulwarks, be not afraid. I would be glad to feel the mast-head of my soul twenty fathoms beneath the surface of such an ocean; for, as Rutherford said, "Oh, to be over the ears in this well! I would not have Christ's love entering into me, but I would enter into it, and be swallowed up of that love." Cultivate an insatiable hunger and a quenchless thirst for this communion with Jesus through His communications. Let thine heart cry for ever, "Give, give," until it is filled in Paradise.

"O'ercome with Jesu's condescending love,

Brought into fellowship with Him and His,

And feasting with Him in His house of wine,

I'm sick of love,—and yet I pant for more

Communications from my loving Lord.

Stay me with flagons full of choicest wine,

Press'd from His heart upon Mount Calvary,

To cheer and comfort my love-conquer'd soul.

(Nymphas, by JOSEPH IRONS.) This is the only covetousness which is allowable: but this is not merely beyond rebuke, it is worthy of commendation. O saints, be not straitened in your own bowels, but enlarge your desires, and so receive more of your Saviour's measureless fulness! I charge thee, my soul, thus to hold continual fellowship with thy Lord, since He invites and

commands thee thus to partake of His riches.

This is a blessed method of fellowship. It is kissing the divine lip of benediction with the sanctified lip of affection. Oh, for more rejoicing grace, more of the songs of the heart, more of the melody of the soul!

Labour to maintain a sense of thine entire dependence upon His good will and pleasure for the continuance of thy richest enjoyments. Never try to live on the old manna, nor seek to find help in Egypt. All must come from Jesus, or thou art undone for ever. Old anointings will not suffice to impart unction to our spirit; thine head must have fresh oil poured upon it from the golden horn of the sanctuary, or it will cease from its glory. To-day thou mayest be upon the summit of the mount of God; but He who has put thee there must keep thee there, or thou wilt sink far more speedily than thou drest. Thy mountain only stands firm when He settles it in its place; if He hide His face, thou wilt soon be troubled. If the Saviour should see fit, there is not a window through which thou seest the light of heaven which he could not darken in an instant. Joshua bade the sun stand still, but Jesus can shroud it in total darkness. He can withdraw the joy of thine heart, the light of thine eyes, and the strength of thy life; in His hand thy comforts lie, and at His will they can depart from thee. Oh! how rich the grace which supplies us so continually, and doth not refrain itself because of our ingratitude! O Lord Jesus, we would bow at Thy feet, conscious of our utter inability to do aught without Thee, and in every favour which we are privileged to receive, we would adore Thy blessed name, and acknowledge Thine unexhausted love!

Regard every spiritual mercy as an assurance of the Lord's communion with thee. When the young man gives jewels to the virgin to whom he is affianced, she regards them as tokens of his delight in her. Believer, do the same with the precious presents of thy Lord. The common bounties of providence are shared in by all men, for the good Householder provides water for His swine as well as for His children: such things, therefore, are no proof of divine complacency. But thou hast richer food to eat; "the children's bread" is in thy wallet, and the heritage of the righteous is reserved for thee. Look, then, on every motion of grace in thine heart as a pledge and sign of the moving of thy Saviour's heart towards thee. There is His whole heart in the bowels of every mercy which He sends thee. He has impressed a kiss of love upon each gift, and He would have thee believe that every jewel of mercy is a token of His boundless love. Look on thine adoption, justification, and preservation, as sweet enticements to fellowship. Let every note of the promise sound in thine ears like the ringing of the bells of the house of thy Lord, inviting thee to come to the banquets of His love. Joseph sent to his father asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and good old Jacob doubtless regarded them as pledges of the love of his son's heart: be sure not to think less of the kindnesses of Jesus.

What an expensive dependent thou art! King Solomon made marvellous provision for his household (1 Kings 4:22), but all his beeves and fine flour would be as the drop of the bucket compared with thy daily wants. Rivers of oil, and ten thousand rams or fed beasts, would not provide enough to supply the necessities of thy hungering soul. Thy least spiritual want demands infinity to satisfy it, and what must be the amazing aggregate of thy perpetually repeated draughts upon thy Lord! Arise, then, and bless thy loving Immanuel for the invaluable riches with which He has endowed thee. See what a dowry thy Bridegroom has brought to His poor, penniless spouse. He knows the value of the blessings which He brings thee, for He has paid for them out of His

heart's richest blood; be not thou so ungenerous as to pass them over as if they were but of little worth. Poor men know more of the value of money than those who have always revelled in abundance of wealth. Ought not thy former poverty to teach thee the preciousness of the grace which Jesus gives thee? For remember, there was a time when thou wouldst have given a thousand worlds, if they had been thine, in order to procure the very least of His abundant mercies.

All thou hast, thou hast in Him: in Him chosen, in Him redeemed, in Him justified, in Him accepted. Thou art risen in Him, but without Him thou hadst died the second death. Thou art in Him raised up to the heavenly places, but out of Him thou wouldst have been damned eternally. Bless Him, then. Ask the angels to bless Him. Rouse all ages to a harmony of praise for His condescending love in taking poor guilty nothings into oneness with His all-adorable person. This is a blessed means of promoting communion, if the sacred Comforter is pleased to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to us as ours, but only ours as we are in Him. Thrice-blessed Jesus, let us never forget that we are members of Thy mystical body, and that it is for this reason that we are blessed and preserved.

Above all, and chief of all, never forget that Christ is thine. Amid the profusion of His gifts, never forget that the chief gift is Himself, and do not forget that, after all, His gifts are but Himself. He clothes thee, but it is with Himself, with His own spotless righteousness and character. He washes thee, but His innermost self, His own heart's blood, is the stream with which the fountain overflows. He feeds thee with the bread of heaven, but be not unmindful that the bread is Himself, His own body which He gives to be the food of souls. Never be satisfied with a less communication than a whole Christ. A wife will not be put off with maintenance, jewels, and a tite, all these will be nothing to her unless she can call her husband's heart and person her own. It was the Paschal lamb upon which the ancient Israelite did feast on that night that was never to be forgotten. So do thou feast on Jesus, and on nothing less than Jesus, for less than this will be food too light for thy soul's satisfaction. Oh, be careful to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and so receive Him into thyself in a real and spiritual manner, for nothing short of this will be an evidence of eternal life in thy soul!

"What more shall we add to the rules which we have here delivered? There remains but one great exhortation, which must not be omitted. Seek the abundant assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable you to put into practice the things which we have said, for without His aid, all that we have spoken will but be tantalizing the lame with rules to walk, or the dying with regulations for the preservation of health. O thou Divine Spirit, while we enjoy the grace of Jesus, lead us into the secret abode of our Lord, that we may sup with Him, and He with us, and grant unto us hourly grace that we may continue in the company of our Lord from the rising to the setting of the sun! Amen.

THE WELL-BELOVED'S VINEYARD.

THE WELL-BELOVED'S VINEYARD. AN ADDRESS TO A LITTLE COMPANY OF BELIEVERS,
IN MR. SPURGEON'S OWN ROOM AT MENTONE.

"My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill."—Isaiah 5:1.

WE recognize at once that Jesus is here. Who but He can be meant by "My Well-beloved"? Here is a word of possession and a word of affection,—He is mine, and my Well-beloved. He is loveliness itself, the most loving and lovable of beings; and we personally love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength: He is ours, our Beloved, our Well-beloved, we can say no less.

This happy afternoon I want you to note that this vineyard is said to be upon "a very fruitful hill." I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord, and lamenting with great shamefacedness that I am not bringing forth such fruit to Him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages, and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searchings of heart. Perhaps to such the text may be helpful, and it will not be without profit to any one of us, if the Lord will bless our meditation upon it.

Let us think of the times in which we live as calling upon us to be very fruitful when we compare them with the years gone by. Time was when we could not have met thus happily in our own room: if we had been taken in the act of breaking bread, or reading God's Word, we should have been haled off to prison, and perhaps put to death. Our forefathers scarcely dared to lift up their voices in a psalm of praise, lest the enemy should be upon them. Truly, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage, in a very fruitful hill.

That this is the case some of us know positively, because we have been fruitful. Look back, brothers and sisters, upon times when your hearts were warm, and your zeal was fervent, and you served the Lord with gladness. I join with you in those happy memories. Then we could run with the swiftest, we could fight with the bravest, we could work with the strongest, we could suffer with the most patient. The grace of God has been upon certain of us in such an unmistakable manner that we have brought forth all the fruits of the Spirit. Perhaps to-day we look back with deep regret because we are not so fruitful as we once were: if it be so, it is well that our regrets should multiply, but we must change each one of them into a hopeful prayer. Remember, the vine may have changed, but the soil is the same. We have still the same motives for being fruitful, and even more than we used to have. Why are we not more useful? Has some spiritual phylloxera taken possession of the vines, or have we become frost-bitten, or sun-burnt? What is it that withholds the vintage? Certainly, if we were fruitful once, we ought to be more fruitful now. The fruitful hill is not exhausted; what aileth us that our grapes are so few?

And what is more, the very circumstances with which we are surrounded all tend to make our position exceedingly favourable for fruit-bearing. In this little company we have not one friend who

is extremely poor; but if such were among us, I should say the same thing. Christ has gathered some of His choicest clusters from the valley of poverty. Many eminent saints have never owned a foot of land, but lived upon their weekly wage, and found scant fare at that. Yes, by the grace of God, the vale of poverty has blossomed as the rose. It so happens, however, that the most of us here have a competence, we have all that we need, and something over to give to the poor and to the cause of God. Surely we ought to be fruitful in almsgiving, in caring for the sick, and in all manner of sweet and fragrant influences. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," is a prayer that has been answered for most of us; and if we do not now give honour unto God, what excuse can we make for our barrenness? I am speaking to some who are singularly healthy, who are never hindered by aches and pains; and to others who have been prospered in business for twenty years at a stretch: yours is great indebtedness to your Lord: in your case, "My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill." Give God your strength and your wealth, my brother, while they last: see that all His care of thee is not thrown away. Others of us seldom know many months together of health, but have often had to suffer sorely in body; this ought to make us fruitful, for there is much increase from the tillage of affliction. Has not the Master obtained the richest of all fruit from bleeding vines? Do not His heaviest bunches come from vines which have been sharply cut and pruned down to the ground? Choice flavours, dainty juices, and delicious aromas come mostly from the use of the keen-edged knife of trial. Some of us are at our best for fruitbearing when in other respects we are at our worst. Thus I might truly say that, whatever our circumstances may be, whether we are poor or rich, in health or in affliction, each one of our cases has its advantages, and we are planted "in a very fruitful hill."

II. I go a step further, by your leave, and say that OUR POSITION, as the Lord's vineyard, IS FAVOURABLE TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE FRUIT WHICH HE LOVES BEST. I believe that my own position is the most favourable for the production of the fruit that the Lord loves best in me, and that your position is the same. What is this fruit?

Another choice fruit is love. Jesus delights in love. His tender heart delights to see its love returned. Am I not of all men most bound to love the Lord? I speak for each brother and sister here, is not that your language? Do you not all say, "Lives there a person beneath yon blue sky who ought to love Jesus more than I should do?" Each sister soliloquizes, "Sat there ever a woman in her chamber who had more reason for loving God than I have?" No, the sin which has been forgiven us should make us love our Saviour exceeding much. The sin which has been prevented in other cases should make us love our Preserver much. The help which God has sent us in hours of need, the guidance which He has given in times of difficulty, the joy which He has poured into us in days of fellowship, and the quiet He has breathed upon us in seasons of trial,—all ought to make us love Him. Along our life-road, reasons for loving God are more numerous than the leaves upon the olives. He has hedged us about with His goodness, even as the mountains and the sea are round our present resting-place. Look backward as far as time endures, and then look far beyond that, into the eternity which has been, and you will see the Lord's great love set upon us: all through time and eternity reasons have been accumulating which constrain us to love our Lord. Now turn sharply round, and gaze before you, and all along the future faith can see reasons for loving God, golden milestones on the way that is yet to be traversed, all calling for our loving delight in God.

Select any fruit of the Spirit you choose, and I maintain that we are favourably circumstanced for producing it; we are planted upon a very fruitful hill. What a fruitful hill we are living in as regards labour for Christ! Each one of us may find work for the Master; there are capital opportunities around us. There never was an age in which a man, consecrated to God, might do so much as he can at this time. There is nothing to restrain the most ardent zeal. We live in such happy times that, if we plunge into a sea of work, we may swim, and none can hinder us. Then, too, our labour is made, by God's grace, to be so pleasant to us. No true servant of Christ is weary of the work, though he may be weary in the work: it is not the work that he ever wearies of, for he wishes that he could do ten times more. Then our Lord makes our work to be successful. We bring one soul to Jesus, and that one brings a hundred. Sometimes, when we are fishing for Jesus, there may be few fish, but, blessed be His name, most of them enter the net; and we have to live praising and blessing God for all the favour with which He regards our labour of love. I do think I am right in saying that, for the bearing of the fruit which Jesus loves best, our position is exceedingly favourable.

Viewed from this table, the vineyard slopes to the south, for everything looks towards Christ, our Sun. This bread, this wine, all set our souls aslope towards Jesus Christ, and He shines full upon our hearts, and minds, and souls, to make us bring forth much fruit. Are we not planted on a very fruitful hill?

Moreover, the Well-beloved Himself is among us. He has not let us out to husbandmen, but He Himself doth undertake to care for us; and that He is here we are sure, for here is His flesh, and here is His blood. You see the outward tokens, may you feel the unseen reality; for we believe in His real presence, though not in the gross corporeal sense with which worldly spirits blind themselves. The King has come into His garden: let us entertain Him with our fruits. He who for this vineyard poured out a bloody sweat, is now surveying the vines; shall they not at this instant give forth a goodly smell? The presence of our Lord makes this assembly a very fruitful hill: where He sets His feet, all good things flourish.

Blessed be God, we are where we have ourselves often grown. We have enjoyed our best times when celebrating this sacred Eucharist. God grant it may be so again! Let us, in calm meditation and inward thought, now produce from our hearts sweet fruits of love, and zeal, and hope, and patience; let us yield great clusters like those of Eshcol, all for Jesus, and for Jesus only. Even now, let us give ourselves up to meditation, gratitude, adoration, communion, rapture; and let us spend the rest of our lives in glorifying and magnifying the ever-blessed name of our Well-beloved whose vineyard we are.

"While such a scene of sacred joys

Our raptured eyes and souls employs,

Here we could sit, and gaze away

A long, an everlasting day.

"Well, we shall quickly pass the night,

To the fair coasts of perfect light;

Then shall our joyful senses rove
O'er the dear object of our love.
"There shall we drink full draughts of bliss,
And pluck new life from heavenly trees.
Yet now and then, dear Lord, bestow
A drop of heaven on worms below."

REDEEMED SOULS FREED FROM FEAR.

REDEEMED SOULS FREED FROM FEAR. A TALK WITH A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE.

"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee."—Isaiah 43:1.

I WAS lamenting this morning my unfitness for my work, and especially for the warfare to which I am called. A sense of heaviness came over me, but relief came very speedily, for which I thank the Lord. Indeed, I was greatly burdened, but the Lord succoured me. The first verse read at the Sabbath morning service exactly met my case. It is in Isaiah 43:1: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not." I said to myself, "I am what God created me, and I am what He formed me, and therefore I must, after all, be the right man for the place wherein He has put me." We may not blame our Creator, nor suspect that He has missed His mark in forming an instrument for His work. Thus new comfort comes to us. Not only do the operations of grace in the spiritual world yield us consolation, but we are even comforted by what the Lord has done in creation. We are told to cease from our fears; and we do so, since we perceive that it is the Lord that made us, and not we ourselves, and He will justify His own creating skill by accomplishing through us the purposes of His love. Pray, I beseech you, for me, the weakest of my Lord's servants, that I may be equal to the overwhelming task imposed upon me.

Let us think for a few minutes of the wonderful depth of consolation which lies in this fact. We have been redeemed by the Lord Himself, and this is a grand reason why we should never again be subject to fear. Oh, that the logic of this fact could be turned into practice, so that we henceforth rejoiced, or at least felt the peace of God!

I suppose there would be a reference here to the great redemption out of Egypt. This word is addressed to the people of God under captivity in Babylon, and we know that the Lord referred to the Egyptian redemption; for He says in the third verse, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom." Egypt was a great country, and a rich country, for we read of "all the treasures of Egypt", but God gave them for His chosen: He would give all the nations of the earth for His Israel. This was a wonderful stay to the people of God: they constantly referred to Egypt and the Red Sea, and made their national song out of it. In all Israel's times of disaster, and calamity, and trial, they joyfully remembered that the Lord had redeemed them when they were a company of slaves, helpless and hopeless, under a tyrant who cast their firstborn children into the Nile, a tyrant whose power was so tremendous that all the armies of the world could not have wrought their deliverance from his iron hand. The very nod of Pharaoh seemed to the inhabitants of Egypt to be omnipotent; he was a builder of pyramids, a master of all the sciences of peace and the arts of war. What could the Israelites have done against him? Jehovah came to their relief in their dire extremity. His plagues followed each other in quick succession. The dread volleys of the Lord's artillery confounded His foes. At last He smote all the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of all their strength. Then was Egypt glad that Israel departed, and the Lord brought forth His people with silver and gold. All the chivalry of Egypt was overthrown and destroyed at the Red Sea, and the timbrels of the daughters of Israel sounded

joyously upon its shores. This redemption out of Egypt is so remarkable that it is remembered even in heaven. The Old Testament song is woven into that of the New Covenant; for there they "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The first redemption was so wonderful a type and prophecy of the other that it is no alloy to the golden hymn of eternal glory, but readily melts into the same celestial chant. Other types may cease to be remembered, but this was so much a fact as well as a type that it shall be had in memory for ever and ever. Every Israelite ought to have had confidence in God after what He had done for the people in redeeming them out of Egypt. To every one of the seed of Jacob it was a grand argument to enforce the precept, "Fear not."

The remembrance of this transcendent redemption ought to comfort us in all times of perplexity. When we cannot see our way, or cannot make out what to do, we need not be at all troubled concerning it; for the Lord Jehovah can see a way out of every intricacy. There never was a problem so hard to solve as that which is answered in redemption. Herein was the tremendous difficulty—How can God be just, and yet the Saviour of sinners? How can He fulfil His threatenings, and yet forgive sin? If that problem been left to angels and men, they could never worked it out throughout eternity; but God has solved it through freely delivering up His own Son. In the glorious sacrifice of Jesus we see the justice of God magnified; for He laid sin on the blessed Lord, who had become one with His chosen. Jesus identified Himself with His people, and therefore their sin was laid upon Him, and the sword of the Lord awoke against Him. He was not taken arbitrarily to be a victim, but He was a voluntary Sufferer. His relationship amounted to covenant oneness with His people, and "it behoved Christ to suffer." Herein is a wisdom which must be more than equal to all minor perplexities. Hear this, then, O poor soul in suspense! The Lord says, "I have redeemed thee. I have already brought thee out of the labyrinth in which thou wast lost by sin, and therefore I will take thee out of the meshes of the net of temptation, and lead thee through the maze of trial; I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and lead them in paths which they have not known. I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring up My people from the depths of the sea." Let us commit our way unto the Lord. Mine is a peculiarly difficult one, but I know that my Redeemer liveth, and He will lead me by a right way. He will be our Guide even unto death; and after death He will guide us through those tracks unknown of the mysterious region, and cause us to rest with Him for ever.

We are at times troubled by a sense of our personal insignificance. It seems too much to hope that God's infinite mind should enter into our mean affairs. Though David said, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me," we are not always quite prepared to say the same. We make our sorrows great under the vain idea that they are too small for the Lord to notice. I believe that our greatest miseries spring from those little worries which we hesitate to bring to our heavenly Father. Our gracious God puts an end to all such thoughts as these by saying "Fear not for I have redeemed thee." You are not of such small account as you suppose. The Lord would never be wasteful of His sacred expenditure. He bought you with a price, and therefore He sets great store by you. Listen to what the Lord says: "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." It is amazing that the Lord should think so much of us as to give Jesus for us. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Yet God's mind is filled with thoughts of love towards man. Know ye not that His only-begotten Son entered this world, and became a man? The man Christ Jesus has a name

at which every knee shall bow, and He is so dear to the Father that, for His sake, His chosen ones are accepted, and are made to enjoy the freest access to Him. We sing truly,—

"So near, so very near to God,

Nearer we cannot be,

For in the person of His Son

We are as near as He." And now the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and the least burden we may roll upon the Lord. Those cares which we ought not to have may well cease, for "He careth for us." He that redeemed us never forgets us: His wounds have graven us upon the palms of His hands, and written our names deep in His side. Jesus stoops to our level, for He stooped to bear the cross to redeem us. Do not, therefore, be again afraid because of your insignificance. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." The Lord's memory is toward the little in Israel. He carrieth the lambs in His bosom.

See how the gifts of God are bound to this redemption. "I have redeemed thee. I have called thee." "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here is a chain in which each link is joined to all the rest, so that it cannot be separated. If God had only gone so far as to make a promise, He would not have drawn back from it; if God had gone as far as to swear an oath by Himself, He would not have failed to keep it; but when He went beyond promise and oath, and in very deed the sacrifice was slain, and the covenant was ratified: why, then it would be blasphemous to imagine that He would afterwards disannul it, and turn from His solemn pledge. There is no going back on the part of God, and consequently His redemption will redeem, and in redeeming it will secure us all things. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" With the blood-mark upon us we may well cease to fear. How can we perish? How can we be deserted in the hour of need? We have been bought with too great a price for our Redeemer to let us slip. Therefore, let us march on with confidence, hearing our Redeemer say to us, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Concerning His redeemed, the Lord will say to the enemy, "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." The stars in their courses fight for the ransomed of the Lord. If their eyes were opened, they would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about them. Oh, how my weary heart prizes redeeming love! If it were not for this, I would lay me down, and die. Friends forsake me, foes surround me, I am filled with contempt, and tortured with the subtlety which I cannot baffle; but as the Lord of all brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, so by the blood of His covenant doth He loose His prisoners, and sustain the hearts of those who tremble at His Word. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength," for the Lord hath said unto thee, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee."

JESUS, THE GREAT OBJECT OF ASTONISHMENT.

JESUS, THE GREAT OBJECT OF ASTONISHMENT. A COMMUNION ADDRESS AT MENTONE.

"Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."—Isaiah 52:13-15. OUR Lord Jesus Christ bore from of old the name of "Wonderful", and the word seems all too poor to set forth His marvellous person and character. He says of Himself, in the language of the prophet,— "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me are for signs and for wonders." He is a fountain of astonishment to all who know Him, and the more they know of Him, the more are they "astonied" at Him. It is an astonishing thing that there should have been a Christ at all: the Incarnation is the miracle of miracles; that He who is the Infinite should become an infant, that He who made the worlds should be wrapt in swaddling-bands, remains a fact out of which, as from a hive, new wonders continually fly forth. In His complex nature He is so mysterious, and yet so manifest, that doubtless all the angels of heaven were and are astonished at Him. O Son of God, and Son of man, when Thou, the Word, wast made flesh, and dwelt among us, and Thy saints beheld Thy glory, it was but natural that many should be astonished at Thee!

I. HE WAS A GREAT WONDER IN HIS GRIEFS: "As many were astonished at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men."

Our astonishment, when in contemplation we behold our suffering Lord, will arise from the consideration of what His natural beauty must have been, enshrined as He was from the first within a perfect body. Conceived without sin, and so born of a pure virgin without taint of hereditary sin, I doubt not that He was the flower and glow of manhood as to His form, and from His early youth He must have been a joy to His mother's eye. Great masters of the olden time expended all their skill upon the holy child Jesus, but it is not for the colours of earth to depict the Lord from heaven. That "holy thing" which was born of Mary was "seen of angels," and it charmed their eyes. Must such loveliness be marred? His every look was pure, His every thought was holy, and therefore the expression of His face must have been heavenly, and yet it must be marred. Poverty must mark it; hunger, and thirst, and weariness, must plough it; heart-griefs must seam and scar it; spittle must distain it; tears must scald it; smiting must bruise it; death must make it pale and bloodless. Well does Bernard sing—

"O sacred Head, once wounded,
With grief and pain weigh'd down,
How scornfully surrounded

With thorns, Thine only crown;
How pale art Thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!"

Remember that the face of our Well-beloved, as well as all His form, must have been an accurate index of His soul. Physiognomy is a science with much truth in it when it deals with men of truth. Men weaned from simplicity know how to control their countenances; the crafty will appear to be honest, the hardened will seem to sympathize with the distressed, the revengeful will mimic good-will. There are some who continually use their countenance as they do their speech, to conceal their feelings; and it is almost a point of politeness with them never to show themselves, but always to go masked among their fellows.

Now think, dear friends, what were the causes of this marring. It was not old age that had wrinkled His brow, for He was still in the prime of life, neither was it a personal sickness which had caused decay; much less was it any congenital weakness and disease, which at length betrayed itself, for in His flesh there was no possibility of impurity, which would, in death, have led to corruption. It was occasioned, first, by His constant sympathy with the suffering. There was a heavy wear and tear occasioned by the extraordinary compassion of His soul. In three years it had told upon Him most manifestly, till His visage was marred more than that of any other man. To Him there was a kind of sucking up into Himself of all the suffering of those whom He blessed. He always bore upon Him the burden of mortal woe. We read of Christ healing all that were sick, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Yes, He took those infirmities and sicknesses in some mystical way to Himself, just as I have heard of certain trees, which scatter health, because they themselves imbibe the miasma, and draw up into themselves those noxious vapours which otherwise would poison mankind. Thus, without being themselves polluted, they disinfect the atmosphere around them. This, our Saviour did, but the cost was great to Him. You can imagine, living as He did in the midst of one vast hospital, how constantly He must have seen sights that grieved and pained Him. Moreover, with a nature so pure and loving, He must have been daily tortured with the sin, and hypocrisy, and oppression which so abounded in His day. In a certain sense, He was always laying down His life for men, for He was spent in their service, tortured by their sin, and oppressed with their sorrow. The more we look into that marred visage, the more shall we be astonished at the anguish which it indicated.

His deepest griefs and most grievous marring came of His substitutionary work, while bearing the penalty of our sin. One word recalls much of His woe: it is, "Gethsemane." Betrayed by Judas, His trusted friend, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me;" deserted even by John, for all the disciples forsook Him and fled; not one of all the loved ones with Him: He was left alone. He had washed their feet, but they could not watch with Him one hour; and in that garden He wrestled with our deadly foe, till His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and as Hart puts it, He—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

I do verily believe that verse to be true. Herein you see what marred His countenance, and His form, even while in life. The whole of His manhood felt that dreadful shock, when He and the prince of darkness, in awful duel, fought it out amidst the gloom of the olives on that cold midnight when our redemption began to be fully accomplished.

II. There is AN EQUAL ASTONISHMENT AT HIS GLORIES. I doubt not, if we could see Him now, as He appeared to John in Patmos, we should feel that we must do exactly as the beloved disciple did, for He deliberately wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." His astonishment was so great that he could not endure the sight. He had doubtless longed often to behold that glorified face and form, but the privilege was too much for him. While we are encumbered with these frail bodies, it is not fit for us to behold our Lord, for we should die with excess of delight if we were suddenly to behold that vision of splendour. Oh, for those glorious days when we shall lie for ever at His feet, and see our exalted Lord!

You notice what is said, concerning the Christ, as the most astonishing thing of all: "So shall He sprinkle many nations." Now is it the glory of our risen Lord, at this moment, that His precious blood is to save many nations. Before the throne, men of all nations shall sing, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood." Not the English nation alone shall be purified by His atoning blood, but many nations shall He sprinkle with His reconciling blood, even as Israel of old was sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice. We read in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the twenty-second verse, of "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," and this is effected by that precious blood by which we have been once purged so effectually that we have no more consciousness of sins, but enter into perfect peace. The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, and much more doth the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.

Listen to this, "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him." They shall see such a King as they themselves have never been; they speak freely to their brother-kings, but they shall not dare to speak to Him, and as for speaking against Him, that will be altogether out of the question.

"Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring."

"That which they had not heard shall they consider." They shall be obliged, even on their thrones, to think about the kingdom of the King of kings, and they shall retire to their closets to confess their sins, and to put on sackcloth and ashes, and to give heed to the words of wisdom. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth." To-day, the humble listen to Christ, but by-and-by the mightiest of the mighty shall turn all their thoughts towards Him. He shall gather sheaves of sceptres beneath His arm, and crowns shall be strewn at His feet; and "He shall reign for ever and ever," and "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." If we were astonished at the marring of His face, we shall be much more astonished at the magnificence of His glory. Upon His throne none shall question His supremacy, none shall doubt His loveliness;

but His enemies shall weep and wail because of Him whom they pierced; while He shall be admired in all them that believe. Adorable Lord, we long for Thy glorious appearing! We beseech Thee tarry not!

"Come, and begin Thy reign

Of everlasting peace;

Come, take the kingdom to Thyself,

Great King of Righteousness!"

BANDS OF LOVE; OR, UNION TO CHRIST.

BANDS OF LOVE; OR, UNION TO CHRIST.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them."—Hosea 11:4.

SYSTEMATIC theologians have usually regarded union to Christ under three aspects, natural, mystical and federal, and it may be that these three terms are comprehensive enough to embrace the whole subject, but as our aim is simplicity, let us be pardoned if we appear diffuse when we follow a less concise method.

2. There is, moreover, a union of purpose as well as of love. By the first, we have seen that the elect are made one with Jesus by the act and will of the Son; by the second, they are joined to Him by the ordination and decree of the Father. These divine acts are co-eternal. The Son loved and chose His people to be His own bride, the Father made the same choice, and decreed the chosen ones for ever one with His all-glorious Son. The Son loved them, and the Father decreed them His portion and inheritance; the Father ordained them to be what the Son Himself did make them.

The foresight of the Fall led the divine mind to provide for the catastrophe in which the elect would have perished, had not their ruin been prevented by gracious interposition. Hence followed as part of the divine arrangement other forms of union, which, besides their immediate object in salvation, had doubtless a further design of illustrating the condescending alliance which Jesus had formed with His chosen. The next and following points are of this character.

4. For the accomplishment of the great works of atonement and perfect obedience, it was needful that the Lord Jesus should take upon Him "the likeness of sinful flesh." Thus, He became one with us in our nature, for in Holy Scripture all partakers of flesh and blood are regarded as of one family. By the fact of common descent from Adam, all men are of one race, seeing that "God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth." Hence, in the Bible, man is spoken of universally as "thy brother" (Leviticus 19:17; Job 22:6; Matthew 5:23-24; Luke 17:3; Romans 14:10, &c., &c.); and "thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:13-18; Matthew 5:43; Romans 13:9; James 2:8); to whom, on account of nature and descent, we are required to render kindness and goodwill. Now, although our great Melchizedek in His divinity is without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, and is both in essence and rank at an infinite remove from fallen manhood; yet as to His manhood He is to be reckoned as one of ourselves. He was born of a woman, He hung upon her breasts, and was dandled upon her knee; He grew from infancy to youth and thence to manhood, and in every stage He was a true and real partaker of our humanity. He is as certainly of the race of Adam as He is divine. He is God without fiction or metaphor, and He is man beyond doubt or dispute. The Godhead was not humanized, and so diluted; and the manhood was not transformed into divinity, and so rendered more than human. Never was any man more a portion of His kind than was the Son of man, the Man of sorrows and the Acquaintance of grief. He is man's Brother, for He bore

the whole nature of man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He who was very God of very God made Himself a little lower than the angels, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

If, in all our straits and distresses, we would always treasure in our minds the remembrance of our Redeemer's manhood, we should never bemoan the absence of a sympathizing heart, since we should always have His abundant compassion for our consolation. He is no stranger, He is able to enter into the heart's bitterness, for He has Himself tasted the wormwood and the gall. Let us never doubt His power to sympathize with us in our infirmities and sorrows.

Pause here, and see if thou canst, without ecstatic amazement, contemplate the infinite condescension of the Son of God in exalting thy wretchedness into blessed union with His glory. Thou art so mean that, in remembrance of thy mortality, thou mayest say to corruption, "Thou art my father," and to the worm, "Thou art my sister;" and yet, in Christ, thou art so honoured that thou canst say to the Almighty, "Abba, Father," and to the Incarnate God, "Thou art my Brother and my Husband." Surely, if relationships to ancient and noble families make men think highly of themselves, we have whereof to glory over the heads of them all. Lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make thee negligent to trace this pedigree, and suffer no foolish attachment to present vanities to occupy thy thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious privilege, this heavenly honour of union with Christ.

5. Christ Jesus is also joined unto His people in a mystical union. Borrowing once more from the story of Ruth, we remark that Boaz, although one with Ruth by kinship, did not rest until he had entered into a nearer union still, namely, that of marriage; and in the same manner there is, superadded to the natural union of Christ with His people, a mystical union by which He assumes the position of Husband, while the Church is owned as His bride. In love He espoused her to Himself, as a chaste virgin, long before she fell under the yoke of bondage. Full of burning affection, He toiled like Jacob for Rachel, until the whole of her purchase-money had been paid, and now, having sought her by His Spirit, and brought her to know and love Him, He awaits the glorious hour when their mutual bliss shall be consummated at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Not yet hath the glorious Bridegroom presented His betrothed, perfected and complete, before the Majesty of heaven; not yet hath she actually entered upon the enjoyment of her dignities as His wife and queen; she is as yet a wanderer in a world of woe, a dweller in the tents of Kedar; but she is even now the bride, the spouse of Jesus, dear to His heart, precious in His sight, and united with His person. In love and tenderness, He says to her,—

"Forget thee I will not, I cannot, thy name

Engraved on My heart doth for ever remain:

The palms of My hands whilst I look on I see

The wounds I received when suffering for thee."

He exercises towards her all the affectionate offices of Husband. He makes rich provision for her wants, pays all her debts, allows her to assume His name, and to share in all His wealth. Nor will He ever act otherwise to her. The word divorce He will never mention, for "He hateth putting away." Death must sever the conjugal tie between the most loving mortals, but it cannot divide the

links of this immortal marriage. In heaven they marry not, but are as the angels of God; yet is there this one marvellous exception to the rule, for in heaven Christ and His Church shall celebrate their joyous nuptials. And this affinity, as it is more lasting, so is it more near than earthly wedlock. Let the love of husband be never so pure and fervent, it is but a faint picture of the flame that burns in the heart of Jesus. Passing all human union is that mystical cleaving unto the Church, for which Christ did leave His Father, and become one flesh with her.

6. As yet we have only considered the acts of Christ for us, whereby He effects and proves His union to us; we must now come to more personal and sensible forms of this great truth.

When the Lord in mercy passed by and saw us in our blood, He first of all said, "Live"; and this He did first, because, without life, there can be no spiritual knowledge, feeling, or motion. Life is one of the absolutely essential things in spiritual matters; and until it be bestowed, we are incapable of partaking in the things of the kingdom. Now, the life which grace confers upon the saints at the moment of their quickening is none other than the life of Christ, which, like the sap from the stem, runs into us, the branches, and establishes a living connection between our souls and Jesus. Faith is the grace which perceives this union, and proceeds from it as its firstfruit. It is, to use a metaphor from the Canticles, the neck which joins the body of the Church to its all-glorious Head.

"O Faith! thou bond of union with the Lord,

Is not this office thine? and thy fit name,

In the economy of gospel types,

And symbols apposite—the Church's neck;

Identifying her in will and work

With Him ascended?"

Faith lays hold upon the Lord Jesus with a firm and determined grasp. She knows His excellence and worth, and no temptation can induce her to repose her trust elsewhere; and Christ Jesus is so delighted with this heavenly grace, that He never ceases to strengthen and sustain her by the loving embrace and all-sufficient support of His eternal arms. Here, then, is established a living, sensible, and delightful union, which casts forth streams of love, confidence, sympathy, complacency, and joy, whereof both the bride and Bridegroom love to drink. When the eye is clear, and the soul can evidently perceive this oneness between itself and Christ, the pulse may be felt as beating for both, and the one blood may be known as flowing through the veins of each. Then is the heart made exceedingly glad, it is as near heaven as it ever can be on earth, and is prepared for the enjoyment of the most sublime and spiritual kind of fellowship. This union may be quite as true when we are troubled with doubts concerning it, but it cannot afford consolation to the soul unless it be indisputably proven and assuredly felt; then is it indeed a honeycomb dropping with sweetness, a precious jewel sparkling with light. Look well to this matter, ye saints of the Most High!

"I WILL GIVE YOU REST."

"I WILL GIVE YOU REST." A COMMUNION ADDRESS AT MENTONE.

"I will give you rest."—Matthew 11:28.

We have a thousand times considered these words as an encouragement to the labouring and the laden; and we may, therefore, have failed to read them as a promise to ourselves. But, beloved friends, we have come to Jesus, and therefore He stands engaged to fulfil this priceless pledge to us. We may now enjoy the promise; for we have obeyed the precept. The faithful and true Witness, whose word is truth, promised us rest if we would come to Him; and, therefore, since we have come to Him, and are always coming to Him, we may boldly say, "O Thou, who art our Peace, make good Thy word to us wherein Thou hast said, 'I will give you rest.'"

I. WHAT MUST THESE WORDS MEAN?

This promise must mean rest to all parts of our spiritual nature. Our bodies cannot rest if the head is aching, or the feet are full of pain; if one member is disturbed, the whole frame is unable to rest; and so the higher nature is one, and such intimate sympathies bind together all its faculties and powers, that every one of them must rest, or none can be at ease, Jesus gives real, and, consequently, universal rest to every part of our spiritual being.

The conscience, when it is at all alive and awake, is much disturbed because the holy law of God has been broken by sin. Now, conscience once aroused is not easily quieted. Neither unbelief nor superstition can avail to lull it to sleep; it defies these opiates of falsehood, and frets the soul with perpetual annoyance. Like the troubled sea, it cannot rest; but constantly casts up upon the shore of memory the mire and dirt of past transgressions and iniquities. Is this your case? Then Jesus says, "I will give you rest." If, at any time, fears and apprehensions arise from an awakened conscience, they can only be safely and surely quieted by our flying to the Crucified. In the blessed truth of a substitution, accepted of God, and fully made by the Lord Jesus, our mind finds peace. Justice is honoured, and law is vindicated, in the sacrifice of Christ. Since God is satisfied, I may well be so. Since the Father has raised Jesus from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, there can be no question as to His acceptance; and, consequently, all who are in Him are accepted also. We are under no apprehension now as to our being condemned; Jesus gives us rest, by enabling us to utter the challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" and to give the reassuring answer, "Christ hath died. "

Next, these words mean rest about all things. He who is uneasy about anything has not found rest. A thousand thorns and briars grow on the soil of this earth, and no man can happily tread life's ways unless his feet are shod with that preparation of the gospel of peace which Jesus gives. In Christ, we are at rest as to our duties; for He instructs and helps us in them. In Him, we are at rest about our trials; for He sympathizes with us in them. With His love, we are restful as to the movements of Providence; for His Father loves us, and will not suffer anything to harm us. Concerning the past, we rest in His forgiving love; as to the present, it is bright with His loving

fellowship; as to the future, it is brilliant with His expected Advent. This is true of the little as well as of the great. He who saves us from the battle-axe of Satanic temptation, also extracts the thorn of a domestic trial. We may rest in Jesus as to our sick child, as to our business trouble, or as to grief of any kind. He is our Comforter in all things, our Sympathizer in every form of temptation. Have you such all-covering rest? If not, why not? Jesus gives it; why do you not partake of it? Have you something which you could not bring to Him? Then, fly from it; for it is no fit thing for a believer to possess. A disciple should know neither grief nor joy which he could not reveal to his Lord.

Assuredly, our Lord has given a blessed rest to those who trust Him, and follow Him. They are often unable to inform others as to their deep peace, and the reasons upon which it is founded; but they know it, and it brings them an inward wealth compared with which the fortune of an ungodly millionaire is poverty itself. May we all know to the full, by happy, personal experience, the meaning of our Saviour's promise, "I will give you rest"!

The first answer is in our text. We should enjoy this rest because Jesus gives it. As He gives it, we ought to take it. Because He gives it, we may take it. I have known some Christians who have thought that it would be presumption on their part to take this rest; so they have kept fluttering about, like frightened birds, weary with their long flights, but not daring to fold their tired wings, and rest. If there is any presumption in the case, let us not be so presumptuous as to think that we know better than our Lord. He gives us rest: for that reason, if for no other, let us take it, promptly and gratefully. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

"Now rest, my long-divided heart,

Fix'd on this blissful centre, rest."

Another reason why we should have this rest is, that it will enable us to concentrate all our faculties. Many, who might be strong servants of the Lord, are very weak, because their energies are not concentrated upon one object. They do not say with Paul, "This one thing I do." We are such poor creatures that we cannot occupy our minds with more than one subject, at a time. Why, even the buzzing of a fly, or the trumpeting of a mosquito, would be quite sufficient to take our thoughts away from our present holy service! As long as we have any burden resting on our shoulders, we cannot enjoy perfect rest; and as long as there is any burden on our conscience or heart, we cannot have rest of soul. How are we to be freed from these burdens? Only by yielding ourselves wholly to the Great Burden-Bearer, who says, "Come unto Me, and, I will give you rest. "Possessing this rest, all our faculties will be centred and focussed upon one object, and with undivided hearts we shall seek God's glory.

Once more, this rest is necessary to our growth. The lily in the garden is not taken up and transplanted two or three times a day; that would be the way to prevent all growth. But it is kept in one place, and tenderly nurtured. It is by keeping it quite still that the gardener helps it to attain to perfection. A child of God would grow much more rapidly if he would but rest in one place instead of being always on the move. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Martha was cumbered about much serving; but Mary sat at Jesus' feet. It is not difficult to tell which of them would be the more likely to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. I have left myself only a minute for the answers to my third question,—HOW CAN WE OBTAIN THIS REST?

Next, we obtain rest by yielding to Christ. "Take My yoke upon you, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Christ bids us wear His yoke; not make one for ourselves. He wants us to share the yoke with Him, to be His true yoke-fellow. It is wonderful that He should be willing to be yoked with us; the only greater wonder is that we should be so unwilling to be yoked with Him. In taking His yoke upon us what joy we shall enter upon our eternal rest! Here we find rest unto our souls; a further rest beyond that which He gives us when we come to Him. We first rest in Jesus by faith, and then we rest in Him by obedience. The first rest He gives through His death; the further rest we find through copying His life.

"Lastly, we secure this rest by learning of Christ. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." We are to be workers with Christ, taking His yoke upon us; and, at the same time, we are to be scholars in Christ's school, learning of Him. We are to learn of Christ, and to learn Christ; He is both Teacher and lesson. His gentleness of heart fits Him to teach, and makes Him the best illustration of His own teaching. If we can become as He is, we shall rest as He does. The lowly in heart will be restful of heart. Now, as we come to the table of communion, may we find to the full that rest of which we have been speaking, for the Great Rest-Giver's sake! Amen.

THE MEMORABLE HYMN.

THE MEMORABLE HYMN.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."—Matthew 26:30. THE occasion on which these words were spoken was the last meal of which Jesus partook in company with His disciples before He went from them to His shameful trial and His ignominious death. It was His farewell supper before a bitter parting, and yet they needs must sing. He was on the brink of that great depth of misery into which He was about to plunge, and yet He would have them sing "an hymn." It is wonderful that He sang, and in a second degree it is remarkable that they sang. We will consider both singular facts.

This remark, however, is quite a secondary one to the next: our Lord's complete fulfilment of the law is even more worthy of our attention. It was customary, when the Passover was held, to sing, and this is the main reason why the Saviour did so. During the Passover, it was usual to sing the hundred and thirteenth, and five following Psalms, which were called the "Hallel." The first commences, you will observe, in our version, with "Praise ye the Lord!" or, "Hallelujah!" The hundred and fifteenth, and the three following, were usually sung as the closing song of the Passover. Now, our Saviour would not diminish the splendour of the great Jewish rite, although it was the last time that He would celebrate it. No; there shall be the holy beauty and delight of psalmody; none of it shall be stinted; the "Hallel" shall be full and complete. We may safely believe that the Saviour sang through, or probably chanted, the whole of these six Psalms; and my heart tells me that there was no one at the table who sang more devoutly or more cheerfully than did our blessed Lord. There are some parts of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm (Psalms 118:1-29), especially, which strike us as having sounded singularly grand, as they flowed from His blessed lips. Note verses 22, 23, 24 (Psalms 118:22-24). Particularly observe those words, near the end of the Psalm, and think you hear the Lord Himself singing them, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee: Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever."

May we not venture to suggest another and deeper reason? Did not the singing of "an hymn" at the supper show the holy absorption of the Saviour's soul in His Father's will? If, beloved, you knew that at—say ten o'clock to-night—you would be led away to be mocked, and despised, and scourged, and that tomorrow's sun would see you falsely accused, hanging, a convicted criminal, to die upon a cross, do you think that you could sing tonight, after your last meal? I am sure you could not, unless with more than earth-born courage and resignation your soul could say, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." You would sing if your spirit were like the Saviour's spirit; if, like Him, you could exclaim, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt;" but if there should remain in you any selfishness, any desire to be spared the bitterness of death, you would not be able to chant the "Hallel" with the Master. Blessed Jesus, how wholly wert Thou given up! how perfectly consecrated! so that, whereas other men sing when they are marching to their joys, Thou

didst sing on the way to death; whereas other men lift up their cheerful voices when honour awaits them, Thou hadst a brave and holy sonnet on Thy lips when shame, and spitting, and death were to be Thy portion.

There is much more that might be said concerning our Lord's sweet swan-song, but there is no need to crowd one thought out with another; your leisure will be well spent in meditation upon so fruitful a theme.

Remembering the fact commemorated by the Paschal supper, Israel might well rejoice. They sang of their nation in bondage, trodden beneath the tyrannical foot of Pharaoh; they began the Psalm right sorrowfully, as they thought of the bricks made without straw, and of the iron furnace; but the strain soon mounted from the deep bass, and began to climb the scale, as they sang of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lord appearing to him in the burning bush. They remembered the mystic rod, which became a serpent, and which swallowed up the rods of the magicians; their music told of the plagues and wonders which God had wrought upon Zoan; and of that dread night when the first-born of Egypt fell before the avenging sword of the angel of death, while they themselves, feeding on the lamb which had been slain for them, and whose blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and upon the side-posts of the door, had been graciously preserved. Then the song went up concerning the hour in which all Egypt was humbled at the feet of Jehovah, whilst as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and they went by the way of the sea, even of the Red Sea. The strain rose higher still as they tuned the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Jubilantly they sang of the Red Sea, and of the chariots of Pharaoh which went down into the midst thereof, and the depths covered them till there was not one of them left. It was a glorious chant indeed when they sang of Rahab cut in pieces, and of the dragon wounded at the sea, by the right hand of the Most High, for the deliverance of the chosen people.

III. The time has now come for me to say HOW EARNESTLY I DESIRE YOU TO "SING AN HYMN."

Being satisfied on this point, perhaps you ask, "What hymn shall we sing?" Many sorts of hymns were sung in the olden time: look down the list, and you will scarcely find one which may not suit us now.

Another early form of song was the pastoral. When the shepherds sat down amongst the sheep, they tuned their pipes, and warbled forth soft and sweet airs in harmony with rustic quietude. All around was calm and still; the sun was brightly shining, and the birds were making melody among the leafy branches. Shall I seem fanciful if I say, let us unite in a pastoral to-night? Sitting round the table, why should we not sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters"? If there be a place beneath the stars where one might feel perfectly at rest and ease, surely it is at the table of the Lord. Here, then, let us sing to our great Shepherd a pastoral of delight. Let the bleating of sheep be in our ears as we remember the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His flock.

The love-song we must not forget, for that is peculiarly the song of this evening. "Now will I sing unto my Well-beloved a song." His love to us is an immortal theme; and as our love, fanned by the breath of heaven, bursts into a vehement flame, we may sing, yea, and we will sing among the

lilies, a song of loves.

David wrote a considerable number of Psalms which he entitled, " Maschil," which may be called in English, "instructive Psalms." Where, beloved, can we find richer instruction than at the table of our Lord? He who understands the mystery of incarnation and of substitution, is a master in Scriptural theology. There is more teaching in the Saviour's body and in the Saviour's blood than in all the world besides. O ye who wish to learn the way to comfort, and how to tread the royal road to heavenly wisdom, come ye to the cross, and see the Saviour suffer, and pour out His heart's blood for human sin!

Certain Psalms in the Old Testament are entitled, "Upon Shoshannim ," that is, "Upon the lilies." O ye virgin souls, whose hearts have been washed in blood, and have been made white and pure, bring forth your instruments of song:—

"Hither, then, your music bring,

Strike aloud each cheerful string!"

Let your hearts, when they are in their best state, when they are purest, and most cleansed from earthly dross, give to Jesus their glory and their excellence.

We have not half exhausted the list, but it is clear that, sitting at the Lord's table, we shall have no lack of suitable psalmody. Perhaps no one hymn will quite meet the sentiments of all; and while we would not write a hymn for you, we would pray the Holy Spirit to write now the spirit of praise upon your hearts, that, sitting here, you may "after supper" sing "an hymn."

Remember, beloved, that the same Saviour who will accept the joyful shoutings of the strong, will also receive the plaintive notes of the weak and weeping. You little ones, you babes in grace, may cry, "Hosanna," and the King will not silence you; and you strong men, with all your power of faith, may shout, "Hallelujah!" and your notes shall be accepted, too.

We should not choose a tune for the communion table which is not very soft. These are no boisterous themes with which we have to deal when we tarry here. A bleeding Saviour, robed in a vesture dyed with blood—this is a theme which you must treat with loving gentleness, for everything that is coarse is out of place. While the tune is soft, it must also be sweet . Silence, ye doubts; be dumb, ye fears; be hushed, ye cares! Why come ye here? My music must be sweet and soft when I sing of Him. But oh! it must also be strong; there must be a full swell in my praise. Draw out the stops, and let the organ swell the diapason! In fulness let its roll of thundering harmony go up to heaven; let every note be sounded at its loudest. "Praise ye Him upon the cymbals, upon the high-sounding cymbals; upon the harp with a solemn sound." Soft, sweet, and strong, let the music be.

V. We close by enquiring,—WHO SHALL SING THIS HYMN?

You have not much comfort at home, perhaps; by very hard work you earn that little. Sunday is to you a day of true rest, for you are worked very cruelly all the week. Those cheeks of yours, poor girl, are getting very pale, and who knows but what Hood's pathetic lines may be true of you?—

"Stitch, stitch, stitch,

In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt."

But, my sister, you may surely rejoice to-night in spite of all this. There may be little on earth, but there is much in heaven. There may be but small comfort for you here apart from Christ; but oh! when, by faith, you mount into His glory, your soul is glad. You shall be as rich as the richest to-night if the Holy Spirit shall but bring you to the table, and enable you to feed upon your Lord and Master. Perhaps you have come here to-night when you ought not to have done so. The physician would have told you to keep to your bed, but you persisted in coming up to the house where the Lord has so often met with you. I trust that we shall hear your voice in the song. There appear to have been in David's day many things to silence the praise of God, but David was one who would sing. I like that expression of his, where the devil seems to come up, and put his hand on his mouth, and say, "Be quiet." "No," says David, "I will sing." Again the devil tries to quiet him, but David is not to be silenced, for three times he puts it, "I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." May the Lord make you resolve this night that you will praise the Lord Jesus with all your heart!

"Oh!" says one, "would God I could believe!" Poor soul, may God help thee to believe now! God took upon Himself our flesh; Christ was born among men, and suffered on account of human guilt, being made to suffer "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Christ was punished in the room, place, and stead of every man and woman who will believe on Him. If you believe on Him, He was punished for you; and you will never be punished. Your debts are paid, your sins are forgiven. God cannot punish you, for He has punished Christ instead of you, and He will never punish twice for one offence. To believe is to trust. If you will now trust your soul entirely with Him, you are saved, for He loved you, and gave Himself for you. When you know this, and feel it to be true, then come to the Lord's table, and join with us, when, after supper we sing our hymn,—

"It is finished!"—Oh, what pleasure

Do these charming words afford!

Heavenly blessings without measure

Flow to us from Christ the Lord:

'It is finished!'

Saints, the dying words record.

"Tune your harps anew, ye seraphs,

Join to sing the pleasing theme;

All on earth, and all in heaven,

Join to praise Immanuel's name!

Hallelujah!

Glory to the bleeding Lamb!"

JESUS ASLEEP ON A PILLOW.

JESUS ASLEEP ON A PILLOW.

"And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."—Mark 4:38-39. OUR Lord took His disciples with Him into the ship to teach them a practical lesson. It is one thing to talk to people about our oneness with them, and about how they should exercise faith in time of danger, and about their real safety in apparent peril; but it is another, and a far better thing, to go into the ship with them, to let them feel all the terror of the storm, and then to arise, and rebuke the wind, and say unto the sea, "Peace, be still." Our Lord gave His disciples a kind of Kindergarten lesson, an acted sermon, in which the truth was set forth visibly before them. Such teaching produced a wonderful effect upon their lives. May we also be instructed by it!

I. WITHIN THE LORD THERE WAS A GREAT CALM, and that is why there was soon a great calm around Him; for what is in God comes out of God. Since there was a calm in Christ for Himself, there was afterwards a calm outside for others. What a wonderful inner calm it was! "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

There was also mixed with His faith in the Father a sweet confidence in His own Sonship. He did not doubt that He was the Son of the Highest. I may not question God's power to deliver, but I may sometimes question my right to expect deliverance; and if so, my comfort vanishes. Our Lord had no doubts of this kind. He had long before heard that word, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" He had so lived and walked with God that the witness within Him was continuous, so He had no question about the Father's love to Him as His own Son. "Rocked in the cradle of the deep," His Father keeping watch over Him,—what could a child do better than go to sleep in such a happy position? And so He does. You and I, too, want a fuller assurance of our sonship if we would have greater peace with God. The devil knows that, and therefore he will come to us with his insinuating suggestion, "If thou be the son of God." If we have the Spirit of adoption in us, we shall put the accuser to rout at once, by opposing the Witness within to his question from without. Then shall we be filled with a great calm, because we have confidence in our Father, and assurance of our sonship.

But I think I hear someone say, "I could do that if mine were solely care about myself." Yes, perhaps you could; and yet you cannot cast upon God your burden of care about your children. But your Lord trusted the Father with those dear to Him. Do you not think that Christ's disciples were as precious to Him as our children are to us? If that ship had been wrecked, what would have become of Peter? What would have become of "that disciple whom Jesus loved"? Our Lord regarded with intense affection those whom He had chosen and called, and who had been with Him in His temptation, yet He was quite content to leave them all in the care of His Father, and go to sleep.

Having left everything with His Father, our Lord did the very wisest thing possible. He did just what the hour demanded. "Why," say you, "He went to sleep!" That was the best thing Jesus could do; and sometimes it is the best thing we can do. Christ was weary and worn; and when anyone is exhausted, it is his duty to go to sleep if he can. The Saviour must be up again in the morning, preaching and working miracles, and if He does not sleep, He will not be fit for His holy duty; it is incumbent upon Him to keep Himself in trim for His service. Knowing that the time to sleep has come, the Lord sleeps, and does well in sleeping. Often, when we have been fretting and worrying, we should have glorified God far more had we literally gone to sleep. To glorify God by sleep is not so difficult as some might think; at least, to our Lord it was natural. Here you are worried, sad, wearied; the doctor prescribes for you; his medicine does you no good; but oh! if you enter into full peace with God, and go to sleep, you will wake up infinitely more refreshed than by any drug. The sleep which the Lord giveth to His beloved is balmy indeed. Seek it as Jesus sought it. Go to bed, brother, and you will better imitate your Lord than by putting yourself into ill humour, and worrying other people.

II. But here notice, dear friends, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MASTER AND HIS DISCIPLES; for while He was in a great calm, they were in a great storm. Here see their failure. They were just as we are, and we are often just as they were.

And the disciples were so unwise as to do the Master a very ill turn. He was sadly weary, and sorely needed sleep; but they hastened to Him, and aroused Him in a somewhat rough and irreverent manner. They were slow to do so, but their fear urged them; and therefore they awoke Him, uttering ungenerous and unloving words: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Shame on the lips that asked so harsh a question! Did they not upon reflection greatly blame themselves? He had given them no cause for such hard speeches; and, moreover, it was unseemly in them to call Him "Master," and then to ask Him, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Is He to be accused of such hard-heartednesses to let His faithful disciples perish when He has power to deliver them? Alas, we, too, have been guilty of like offences! I think I have known some of Christ's disciples who have appeared to doubt the wisdom or the love of their Lord. They did not quite say that He was mistaken, but they said that He moved in a mysterious way; they did not quite complain that He was unkind to them, but they whispered that they could not reconcile His dealings with His infinite love. Alas, Jesus has endured much from our unbelief! May this picture help us to see our spots, and may the love of our dear Lord remove them!

His voice produced it. They say that if oil be poured upon the waters they will become smooth, and I suppose there is some truth in the statement; but there is all truth in this, that if God speaks, the storm subsides into a calm, so that the waves of the sea are still. It only needs our Lord Jesus to speak in the heart of any one of us, and immediately the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will possess us. No matter how drear your despondency, nor how dread your despair, the Lord can at once create a great calm of confidence. What a door of hope this opens to any who are in trouble! If I could speak a poor man rich, and a sick one well, I am sure I would do so at once; but Jesus is infinitely better than I am, and therefore I know that He will speak peace to the tried and troubled heart.

Note, also, that the Saviour coupled this repose with faith, for He said to the disciples as soon as the calm came, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Faith and the calm go

together. If thou believest, thou shalt rest; if thou wilt but cast thyself upon thy God, surrendering absolutely to His will, thou shalt have mercy, and joy, and light. Even if we have no faith, the Lord will sometimes give us the blessing that we need, for He delights to do more for us than we have any right to expect of Him; but usually the rule of His kingdom is, "According to your faith be it unto you."

Let us survey our mercies. Every sin that we have ever committed is forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The power of sin within us is broken; it "shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." Satan is a vanquished enemy; the world is overcome by our Lord Jesus, and death is abolished by Him. All providence works for our good. Eternity has no threat for us, it bears within its mysteries nothing but immortality and glory. Nothing can harm us. The Lord is our shield, and our exceeding great reward. Wherefore, then, should we fear? The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. To the believer, peace is no presumption: he is warranted in enjoying "perfect peace"—a quiet which is deep, and founded on truth, which encompasses all things, and is not broken by any of the ten thousand disturbing causes which otherwise might prevent our rest. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." Oh, to get into that calm, and remain in it till we come to that world where there is no more sea!

"A calm like that which ruled within our Saviour should we be happy enough to attain to it, will give us in our measure the power to make outside matters calm. He that hath peace can make peace. We cannot work miracles, and yet the works which Jesus did shall we do also. Sleeping His sleep, we shall awake in His rested energy, and treat the winds and waves as things subject to the power of faith, and therefore to be commanded into quiet. We shall speak so as to console others: our calm shall work marvels in the little ships whereof others are captains. We, too, shall say, "Peace! Be still." Our confidence shall prove contagious, and the timid shall grow brave: our tender love shall spread itself, and the contentious shall cool down to patience. Only the matter must begin within ourselves. We cannot create a calm till we are in a calm. It is easier to rule the elements than to govern the unruliness of our wayward nature. When grace has made us masters of our fears, so that we can take a pillow and fall asleep amid the hurricane, the fury of the tempest is over. He giveth peace and safety when He giveth His beloved sleep.

REAL CONTACT WITH JESUS.

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"And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me."—Luke 8:46. OUR Lord was very frequently in the midst of a crowd. His preaching was so plain and so forcible that He always attracted a vast company of hearers; and, moreover, the rumour of the loaves and fishes no doubt had something to do with increasing His audiences, while the expectation of beholding a miracle would be sure to add to the numbers of the hangers-on. Our Lord Jesus Christ often found it difficult to move through the streets, because of the masses who pressed upon Him. This was encouraging to Him as a preacher, and yet how small a residuum of real good came of all the excitement which gathered around His personal ministry! He might have looked upon the great mass, and have said, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" for here it was piled up upon the threshing-floor, heap upon heap; and yet, after His decease, His disciples might have been counted by a few scores, for those who had spiritually received Him were but few. Many were called, but few were chosen. Yet, wherever one was blessed, our Saviour took note of it; it touched a chord in His soul. He never could be unaware when virtue had gone out of Him to heal a sick one, or when power had gone forth with His ministry to save a sinful one. Of all the crowd that gathered round the Saviour upon the day of which our text speaks, I find nothing said about one of them except this solitary "somebody" who had touched Him. The crowd came, and the crowd went; but little is recorded of it all. Just as the ocean, having advanced to full tide, leaves but little behind it when it retires again to its channel, so the vast multitude around the Saviour left only this one precious deposit—one "somebody" who had touched Him, and had received virtue from Him.

Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched Me," from which we observe that, in the use of means and ordinances, we should never be satisfied unless we get into personal contact with Christ, so that we touch Him, as this woman touched His garment. Secondly, if we can get into such personal contact, we shall have a blessing: "I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me;" and, thirdly, if we do get a blessing, Christ will know it; however obscure our case may be, He will know it, and He will have us let others know it; He will speak, and ask such questions as will draw us out, and manifest us to the world.

Peter said, "The multitude throng Thee, and press Thee," and that is true of the multitude to this very day; but of those who come where Christ is in the assembly of His saints, a large proportion only come because it is their custom to do so. Perhaps they hardly know why they go to a place of worship. They go because they always did go, and they think it wrong not to go. They are just like the doors which swing upon their hinges; they take no interest in what is done, at least only in the exterior parts of the service; into the heart and soul of the business they do not enter, and cannot enter. They are glad if the sermon is rather short, there is so much the less tedium for them. They are glad if they can look around and gaze at the congregation, they find in that something to interest them; but getting near to the Lord Jesus is not the business they come upon. They have not looked at it in that light. They come and they go; they come and they go; and it will be so till,

by-and-by, they will come for the last time, and they will find out in the next world that the means of grace were not instituted to be matters of custom, and that to have heard Jesus Christ preached, and to have rejected Him, is no trifle, but a solemn thing for which they will have to answer in the presence of the great Judge of all the earth.

But, "somebody," said Christ, "somebody hath touched Me," and that is the soul of the matter. O my hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed; do not give it up till you have touched Christ in prayer; or, if you have not got to Him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do! Do not think you have prayed, but try again. When you come to public worship, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with listening to the sermon, and so on, as you all do with sufficient attention; to that I bear you witness;—but do not be content unless you get at Christ the Master, and touch Him. At all times when you come to the communion table, count it to have been no ordinance of grace to you unless you have gone right through the veil into Christ's own arms, or at least have touched His garment, feeling that the first object, the life and soul of the means of grace, is to touch Jesus Christ Himself; and except "somebody" hath touched Him, the whole has been a mere dead performance, without life or power.

Note, first, she felt that it was of no use being in the crowd, of no use to be in the same street with Christ, or near to the place where Christ was, but she must get at Him; she must touch Him. She touched Him, you will notice, under many difficulties. There was a great crowd. She was a woman. She was also a woman enfeebled by a long disease which had drained her constitution, and left her more fit to be upon a bed than to be struggling in the seething tumult. Yet, notwithstanding that, so intense was her desire, that she urged on her way, I doubt not with many a bruise, and many an uncouth push, and at last, poor trembler as she was, she got near to the Lord. Beloved, it is not always easy to get at Jesus. It is very easy to kneel down to pray, but not so easy to reach Christ in prayer. There is a child crying, it is your own, and its noise has often hindered you when you were striving to approach Jesus; or a knock will come at the door when you most wish to be retired. When you are sitting in the house of God, your neighbour in the seat before you may unconsciously distract your attention. It is not easy to draw near to Christ, especially coming as some of you do right away from the counting-house, and from the workshop, with a thousand thoughts and cares about you. You cannot always unload your burden outside, and come in here with your hearts prepared to receive the gospel. Ah! it is a terrible fight sometimes, a real foot-to-foot fight with evil, with temptation, and I know not what. But, beloved, do fight it out, do fight it out; do not let your seasons for prayer be wasted, nor your times for hearing be thrown away; but, like this woman, be resolved, with all your feebleness, that you will lay hold upon Christ. And oh! if you be resolved about it, if you cannot get to Him, He will come to you, and sometimes, when you are struggling against unbelieving thoughts, He will turn and say, "Make room for that poor feeble one, that she may come to Me, for My desire is to the work of My own hands; let her come to Me, and let her desire be granted to her."

This woman also came into contact with Christ under a very deep sense of unworthiness. I dare say she thought, "If I touch the Great Prophet, it will be a wonder if He does not strike me with some sudden judgment," for she was a woman ceremonially unclean. She had no right to be in the throng. Had the Levitical law been strictly carried out, I suppose she would have been confined to her house; but there she was wandering about, and she must needs go and touch the holy Saviour. Ah! poor heart, you feel to-night that you are not fit to touch the skirts of the Master's

robe, for you are so unworthy. You never felt so undeserving before as you do to-night. In the recollection of last week and its infirmities, in the remembrance of the present state of your heart, and all its wanderings from God, you feel as if there never was so worthless a sinner in the house of God before. "Is grace for me?" say you. "Is Christ for me?" Oh! yes, unworthy one. Do not be put off without it. Jesus Christ does not save the worthy, but the unworthy. Your plea must not be right eousness, but guilt. And you, too, child of God, though you are ashamed of yourself, Jesus is not ashamed of you; and though you feel unfit to come, let your unfitness only impel you with the greater earnestness of desire. Let your sense of need make you the more fervent to approach the Lord, who can supply your need.

I have known many staggered with that saying of Paul's, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Now, understand that this passage does not refer to the unworthiness of those persons who come to the Lord's table; for it does not say, "He that eateth and drinketh being unworthy." It is not an adjective; it is an adverb: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily," that is to say, he who shall come to the outward and visible sign of Christ's presence, and shall eat of the bread in order to obtain money being a member of the church, knowing himself to be a hypocrite, or who shall do it jestingly, trifling with the ordinance: such a person would be eating and drinking unworthily, and he will be condemned. The sense of the passage is, not "damnation", as our version reads it, but "condemnation." There can be no doubt that members of the church, coming to the Lord's table in an unworthy manner, do receive condemnation. They are condemned for so doing, and the Lord is grieved. If they have any conscience at all, they ought to feel their sin; and if not, they may expect the chastisements of God to visit them. But, O sinner, as to coming to Christ,—which is a very different thing from coming to the Lord's table,—as to coming to Christ, the more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the better. Come, thou filthy one, for Christ can wash thee. Come, thou loathsome one, for Christ can beautify thee. Come utterly ruined and undone, for in Jesus Christ there is the strength and salvation which thy case requires.

You see, the woman did really touch Christ, and so I come back to that. Whatever infirmity there was in the touch, it was a real touch of faith. She did reach Christ Himself. She did not touch Peter; that would have been of no use to her, any more than it is for the parish priest to tell you that you are regenerate when your life soon proves that you are not. She did not touch John or James; that would have been of no more good to her than it is for you to be touched by a bishop's hands, and to be told that you are confirmed in the faith, when you are not even a believer, and therefore have no faith to be confirmed in. She touched the Master Himself; and, I pray you, do not be content unless you can do the same. Put out the hand of faith, and touch Christ. Rest on Him. Rely on His bloody sacrifice, His dying love, His rising power, His ascended plea; and as you rest in Him, yo ur vital touch, however feeble, will certainly give you the blessing your soul needs.

II. THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD DID TOUCH JESUS, AND, HAVING DONE SO, SHE RECEIVED VIRTUE FROM HIM.

And now, child of God, I want you to learn the same lesson. Very likely, when you came in here, you said,—"Alas! I feel very dull; my spirituality is at a very low ebb; the place is hot, and I do not feel prepared to hear; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; I shall have no holy enjoyment to-day!" Why not? Why, the touch of Jesus could make you live if you were dead, and surely it will stir the life that is in you, though it may seem to you to be expiring! Now, struggle hard, my

beloved, to get at Jesus! May the Eternal Spirit come and help you, and may you yet find that your dull, dead times can soon become your best times. Oh! what a blessing it is that God takes the beggar up from the dunghill! He does not raise us when He sees us already up, but when He finds us lying on the dunghill, then He delights to lift us up, and set us among princes. Or ever you are aware, your soul may become like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Up from the depths of heaviness to the very heights of ecstatic worship you may mount as in a single moment if you can but touch Christ crucified. View Him yonder, with streaming wounds, with thorn-crowned head, as in all the majesty of His misery, He expires for you!

"Ay!" saith another, "but my sins come to my remembrance, my sins since conversion." Well, return to Jesus, when your guilt seems to return. The fountain is still open, and that fountain, you will remember, is not only open for sinners, but for saints; for what saith the Scripture—"There shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,"—that is, for you, churchmembers, for you, believers in Jesus? The fountain is still open. Come, beloved, come to Jesus anew, and whatever be your sins, or doubts, or heaviness, they shall all depart as soon as you can touch your Lord.

I do not know your names; a great number of you are perfect strangers to me. It matters nothing; your name is "somebody", and Christ will know you. You are a total stranger, perhaps, to everybody in this place; but if you get a blessing, there will be two who will know it,—you will, and Christ will. Oh! if you should look to Jesus this day, it may not be registered in our church-book, and we may not hear of it; but still it will be registered in the courts of heaven, and they will set all the bells of the New Jerusalem a-ringing, and all the harps of angels will take a fresh lease of music as soon as they know that you are born again.

"With joy the Father doth approve

The fruit of His eternal love;

The Son with joy looks down and sees

The purchase of His agonies;

The Spirit takes delight to view

The holy soul He formed anew;

And saints and angels join to sing

The growing empire of their King."

"Somebody!" I do not know the woman's name; I do not know who the man is, but—"Somebody!"—God's electing love rests on thee, Christ's redeeming blood was shed for thee, the Spirit has wrought a work in thee, or thou wouldst not have touched Jesus; and all this Jesus knows.

Now, as Jesus knows of your salvation, He wishes other people to know of it, and that is why He has put it into my heart to say,—Somebody has touched the Lord. Where is that somebody? Somebody, where are you? Somebody, where are you? You have touched Christ, though with a feeble finger, and you are saved. Let us know it. It is due to us to let us know. You cannot guess

what joy it gives us when we hear of sick ones being healed by our Master. Some of you, perhaps, have known the Lord for months, and you have not yet come forward to make an avowal of it; we beg you to do so. You may come forward tremblingly, as this woman did; you may perhaps say, "I do not know what I should tell you." Well, you must tell us what she told the Lord; she told Him all the truth. We do not want anything else. We do not desire any sham experience. We do not want you to manufacture feelings like somebody else's that you have read of in a book. Come and tell us what you have felt. We shall not ask you to tell us what you have not felt, or what you do not know. But, if you have touched Christ, and you have been healed, I ask it, and I think I may ask it as your duty, as well as a favour to us, to come and tell us what the Lord hath done for your soul.

Whoever you may be, my dear friend, though you may be nothing but a poor "somebody", yet if you have touched Christ, tell others about it, in order that they may come and touch Him, too; and the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

CHRIST AND HIS TABLE-COMPANIONS.

CHRIST AND HIS TABLE-COMPANIONS.

"And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him."—Luke 22:14. THE outward ordinances of the Christian religion are but two, and those two are exceedingly simple, yet neither of them has escaped human alteration; and, alas! much mischief has been wrought, and much of precious teaching has been sacrificed, by these miserable perversions. For instance, the ordinance of baptism as it was administered by the apostles betokened the burial of the believer with Christ, and his rising with his Lord into newness of life. Men must needs exchange immersion for sprinkling, and the intelligent believer for an unconscious child, and so the ordinance is slain. The other sacred institution, the Lord's supper, like believers' baptism, is simplicity itself. It consists of bread broken, and wine poured out, these viands being eaten and drunk at a festival—a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us, and of the fellowship which the saints have with one another and with Him. But this ordinance, also, has been tampered with by men. By some, the wine has been taken away altogether, or reserved only for a priestly caste; and the simple bread has been changed into a consecrated host. As for the table, the very emblem of fellowship in all nations—for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table, and eating and drinking together?—this, forsooth, must be put away, and an altar must be erected, and the bread and wine which were to help us to remember the Lord Jesus are changed into an "unbloody sacrifice", and so the whole thing becomes an unscriptural celebration instead of a holy institution for fellowship. Let us be warned by these mistakes of others never either to add to or take from the Word of God so much as a single jot or tittle. Keep upon the foundation of the Scriptures, and you stand safely, and have an answer for those who question you; yea, and an answer which you may render at the bar of God; but once allow your own whim, or fancy, or taste, or your notion of what is proper and right, to rule you, instead of the Word of God, and you have entered upon a dangerous course, and unless the grace of God prevent, boundless mischief may ensue. The Bible is our standard authority; none may turn from it. The wise man says, in Ecclesiastes, "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment;" we would repeat his advice, and add to it the sage precept of the mother of our Lord, at Cana, when she said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. "

While we see the Saviour sitting down with His twelve apostles, let us enquire, first, what did this make them? Then, secondly, what did this imply? And, thirdly, what further may we legitimately infer from it?

Note what they were at first. By His first calling of them they became His followers, for He said unto them, "Follow Me." That is to say, they were convinced, by sundry marks and signs, that He was the Messiah, and they, therefore, became His followers. Followers may be at a great distance from their leader, and enjoy little or no intercourse with him, for the leader may be too great to be approached by the common members of his band. In the case of the disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very condescending, but still their intercourse was not always

of the most intimate kind at first, and therefore it was not at the first that He called them to such a festival as this supper. They began with following, and this is where we must begin. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may, at least, know His voice by His Spirit, and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to trust Him, and then diligently to imitate His example. This is a good beginning, and it will end well, for those who walk with Him to-day shall rest with Him hereafter; those who tread in His footsteps shall sit on His throne.

Being the Lord's disciples, the chosen ones next rose to become His servants, which is a step in advance, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has some strength, has received some measure of training, and renders somewhat in return. Their Master gave them power to preach the gospel, and to execute commissions of grace, and happy were they to be called to wait upon such a Master, and aid in setting up His kingdom. My dear brethren and sisters, are you all Christ's servants consciously? If so, though the service may at times seem heavy because your faith is weak, yet be very thankful that you are servants at all, for it is better to serve God than to reign over all the kingdoms of this world. It is better to be the lowest servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men, and remain slaves to your own lusts, or be mere men-pleasers. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling; yet is there something beyond.

Now note that, on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader; the disciple does not claim to be a fellow-commoner with his master; the servant is seldom entertained at the same table with his lord; the befriended one is not always invited to be a guest; but here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be His table-companions; He lifted them up to sit with Him at the same table, to eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never degraded them; they were representative men, and where the Lord placed them, He has placed all His saints permanently. All the Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. He has come into our hearts, and He sups with us, and we with Him; we are His table-companions, and shall eat bread with Him in the kingdom of God.

II. So now we shall pass on, in the second place, to ask, WHAT DID THIS TABLE-COMPANIONSHIP IMPLY?

But, beloved, you do not understand this supper unless you are also reminded of the faithfulness that is due from you to your Lord, for the feast is common, and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him, you plight your troth to the Crucified, Beloved, how have you kept your pledge during the past year? You have eaten bread with Him, and I trust that in your hearts you have never gone so far aside as to lift up your heel against Him, but have you always honoured Him as you should? Have you acted as guests should have done? Can you remember His love to you, and put your love to Him side by side with it, without being ashamed? From this time forth, may the Holy Ghost work in our souls a jealous fidelity to the Well-beloved which shall not permit our hearts to wander from Him, or suffer our zeal for His glory to decline!

In the next place, eating and drinking together was a token of mutual confidence. They, in sitting there together, voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their

Master, they knew He would not mislead or deceive them. They trusted each other also, for when they were told that one of them would betray their Lord, they did not suspect each other, but each one said, "Lord, is it I?" They had much confidence in one another, and the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, had placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings, and death. They were a trustful company who sat at that supper-table. Now, beloved, when you gather around this table, come in the spirit of implicit trustfulness in the Lord Jesus. If you are suffering, do not doubt His love, but believe that He works all things for your good. If you are vexed with cares, prove your confidence by leaving them entirely in your Redeemer's hands. It will not be a festival of communion to you if you come here with suspicions about your Master. No, show your confidence as you eat of the bread with Him. Let there also be a brotherly confidence in each other. Grievous would it be to see a spirit of suspicion and distrust among you. Suspicion is the death of fellowship. The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks hardly of him, though there may not be the slightest truth in that thought, yet straightway the root of bitterness is planted. Let us believe in one another's sincerity, for we may rest assured that each of our brethren deserves to be trusted more than we do. Turn your suspicions within, and if you must suspect, suspect your own heart; but when you meet with those who have communed with you at this table, say within yourself, "If such can deceive me, and alas I they may, then will I be content to be imposed upon rather than entertain perpetual mistrust of my fellow-Christians."

Oh, that Christian brotherhood were more real! The very word "brother" has come to be ridiculed as a piece of hypocrisy, and well it may, for it is mostly used as a cant phrase, and in many cases means very little. But it ought to mean something. You have no right to come to that table unless you really feel that those who are washed in Jesus' blood have a claim upon the love of your heart, and the activity of your benevolence. What! are ye to live together for ever in heaven, and will ye show no affection for one another here below? It is your Master's new command that ye love one another; will ye disregard it? He has given this as the badge of Christians: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,"—not if ye wear a gold cross, but—"if ye have love one to another." That is the Christian's badge of his being, in very truth, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Here, at this table, we find fraternity. Whosoever eateth of this sacred supper declares himself to be one of a brotherhood in Christ, a brotherhood striving for the same cause, having sincere sympathy, being members of each other, and all of them members of the body of Christ. God make this to be a fact throughout Christendom even now, and how will the world marvel as it cries, "See how these Christians love one another! "

Lastly, on this point, the feast at the one table indicated familiar affection. It is the child's place to sit at the table with its parents, for there affection rules. It is the place of honour to sit at the table: "Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table." But the honour is such as love and not fear suggests. Men at the table often reveal their minds more fully than elsewhere. If you want to understand a man, you do not go to see him at the Stock Exchange, or follow him into the market; for there he keeps himself to himself; but you go to his table, and there he unbosoms himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. 'Twas a meal; 'twas a meal of a homely kind; intimate intercourse ruled the hour. Oh, brethren and sisters, I am afraid we have come to this table sometimes, and Christ, and then it has been an empty formality and nothing more. I thank God that, coming to this table every Sabbath-day, as some of us do, and have done

for many years, we have yet for the most part enjoyed the nearest communion with Christ here that we have ever known, and have a thousand times blessed His name for this ordinance. Still, there is such a thing as only eating the bread and drinking the wine, and losing all the sacred meaning thereof. Do pray the Lord to reveal Himself to you. Ask that it may not be a dead form to you, but that now in very deed you may give to Christ your heart, while He shall show to you His hands and His side, and make known to you His agonies and death, wherewith He redeemed you from the wrath to come. All this, and vastly more, is the teaching of the table at which Jesus sat with the twelve. I have often wondered why the Church of Rome does not buy up all those pictures by one of its most renowned painters, Leonardo da Vinci, in which our Lord is represented as sitting at the table with His disciples, for these are a contradiction of the Popish doctrine on this subject. As long as that picture remains on the wall, and as long as copies of it are spread everywhere, the Church of Rome stands convicted of going against the teaching of the earlier Church by setting up an altar when she confesses herself that aforetime it was not considered to be an altar of sacrifice but a table of fellowship, at which the Lord did not kneel, nor stand as an officiating priest, but at which He and His disciples sat. We, at least, have no rebukes to fear from antiquity, for we follow, and mean to follow, the primitive method. Our Lord has given us commandment to do this until He comes,—not to alter it, but just to "do this," and nothing else, in the same manner until He shall come.

I answer: first, there may be inferred from it the equality of all the saints. There were here twelve apostles. Their apostleship, however, is not concerned in the matter. When the Lord's supper was celebrated after all the apostles had gone to heaven, was there to be any alteration because the apostles had gone? Not at all. Believers are to do this in remembrance of their Lord until He shall come. There was no command for a change when the first apostles were all gone from the Church: No, it was to be the same still,—bread and wine and the surrounding of the table, until the Lord came. I gather, then, the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there was a difference in miraculous gift, and there are great differences in growth of grace; but still, in the household of God, all saints, whether apostles, pastors, teachers, deacons, elders, or private members, being all equal, eat at one table. There is but one bread, there is but one juice of the vine here.

Another inference, only to be hinted at, is this, that the wants of the Church in all ages will be the same, and the supplies for the Church's wants will never vary. There will be the table still, and the table with the same viands upon it,—bread still, nothing more than bread for food; wine still, nothing less than wine for drink. The Church will always want the same food, the same Christ, the same gospel. Out on ye, traitors, who tell us that we are to shape our gospel to suit this enlightened nineteenth century! Out on ye, false-hearts, who would have us tone down the everlasting truth that shall outlive the sun, and moon, and stars, to suit your boasted culture, which is but varnished ignorance! No, that truth which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, is mighty still, and we will maintain it to the death; the Church wants the doctrines of grace to-day as much as when Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin preached them; the Church wants justification by faith, the substitutionary atonement, and regeneration, and divine sovereignty to be preached from her pulpits as much as in days of yore, and by God's grace she shall have them, too.

We finish with this word of deep regret,—regret that many here cannot understand what we have been talking about, and have no part in it. There are some of you who must not come to the table of communion because you do not love Christ. You have not trusted Him; you have no part in Him. There is no salvation in sacraments. Believe me, they are but delusions to those who do not come to Christ with their heart. You must not come to the outward sign if you have not the thing signified. Here is the way of Salvation: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. To believe in Him is to trust Him; to use an old word, it is recumbency; it is leaning on Him, resting on Him. Here I lean, I rest my whole weight on this support before me; do so with Christ in a spiritual sense: lean on Him. You have a load of sin, lean on Him, sin and all. You are all unworthy, and weak, and perhaps miserable; then cast on Him the weakness, the unworthiness, the misery and all. Take Him to be all in all to you, and when you have thus trusted Him, you will have become His follower; go on by humility to be His disciple, by obedience to be His servant, by love to be His friend, and by communion to be His table-companion.

"The Lord so lead you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

A WORD FROM THE BELOVED'S OWN MOUTH.

A WORD FROM THE BELOVED'S OWN MOUTH.

"And ye are clean."—John 13:10.

AS Gideon's fleece was full of dew so that he could wring out the moisture, so will a text sometimes be when the Holy Spirit deigns to visit His servants through its words. This utterance of our Saviour to His disciples has been as a wafer made with honey to our taste, and we doubt not it may prove equally as sweet to others.

Acceptance with the Lord, safety, happiness, and every blessing, always go with cleanness of heart, and he that hath it cannot miss of heaven. It seems too high a condition to be ascribed to mortals, yet, by the lips of Him who could not err, the disciples were said, without a qualifying word, or adverb of degree, to be "clean"; that is to say, they were perfectly justified in the sight of eternal equity, and were regarded as free from every impurity. Dear friends, is this blessing yours? Have you ever believed unto righteousness? Have you taken the Lord Jesus to be your complete cleansing, your sanctification, your redemption? Has the Holy Spirit ever sealed in your peaceful spirit the gracious testimony, "ye are clean"? The assurance is not confined to the apostles, for ye also are "complete in Him," "perfect in Christ Jesus," if ye have indeed by faith received the righteousness of God. The psalmist said, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;" if you have been washed, you are even to that highest and purest degree clean before the Lord, and clean now. Oh, that all believers would live up to their condition and privilege; but alas! too many are pining as if they were still miserable sinners, and forgetting that they are in Christ Jesus forgiven sinners, and therefore ought to be happy in the Lord. Remember, beloved believer, that, as one with Christ, you are not with sinners in the gall of bitterness, but with the saints in the land which floweth with milk and honey.

Much of the force of the sentence before us lies in the Person praising. To be certified as clean by the blind priests of Rome, would be small comfort to a true Christian. To receive the approving verdict of our fellow-men is consoling, but it is after all of small consequence. The human standard of purity is itself grossly incorrect, and therefore to be judged by it is but a poor trial, and to be acquitted a slender comfort; but the Lord Jesus judges no man after the flesh, He came forth from God, and is Himself God, infinitely just and good, hence His tests are accurate, and His verdict is absolute. I wot whom He pronounces clean is clean indeed. Our Lord was omniscient, He would have at once detected the least evil in His disciples; if there had remained upon the man unpardoned sin, He must have seen it; if any relic of condemnation had lingered upon them, He must have detected it at once, no speck could have escaped His all-discerning eye; yet did He say without hesitation of all but Judas, "Ye are clean."

It may cheer us to call to mind the persons praised. They were not cherubim and seraphim, but men, and notably they were men compassed with infirmity. There was Peter, who a few minutes after was forward and presumptuous; and, indeed, it is not needful to name them one by one, for

they all forsook their Master, and fled in His hour of peril. Not one among them was more than a mere child in grace; they had little about them that was apostolic except their commission, they were very evidently men of like passions with us; yet their Lord declared them to be clean, and clean they were. Here is good cheer for those souls who are hungering after righteousness, and pining because they feel so much of the burden of in dwelling sin; for cleanliness before the Lord is not destroyed by our infirmities, nor prevented by our inward temptations. We stand in the righteousness of Another. No measure of personal weakness, spiritual anxiety, soul conflict, or mental agony can mar our acceptance in the Beloved. We may be weak infants, or wandering sheep in ourselves, and for both reasons we may be very far from what we wish to be; but, as God sees us, we are viewed as washed in the blood of Jesus, and we, even we, are clean every whit.

The time when the praise was given is not without instruction. The word of loving judgment is in the present tense, "Ye are clean." It is not, "ye were clean," that might be a rebuke for purity shamelessly sullied, a condemnation for wilful neglect, a prophecy of wrath to come; neither is it, "ye might have been clean," that would have been a stern rebuke for privileges rejected, and opportunities wasted; nor is it even, "ye shall be clean," though that would have been a delightful prophecy of good things to come at some distant period; but ye are clean, at this moment, in this room, and around this table. Though but just then Peter had spoken so rudely, yet he was even then clean.

May the Holy Ghost now bear witness with every believer, "and ye are clean."

"Then may your souls rejoice and sing,

Then may your voices sweetly ring,

For if your souls through Christ are clear,

What cause have you to faint or fear?"

THE BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN.

THE BELIEVER NOT AN ORPHAN.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."—John 14:18.

YOU will notice that the margin reads, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." In the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples were like children deprived of their parents. During the three years in which He had been with them, He had solved all their difficulties, borne all their burdens, and supplied all their needs. Whenever a case was too hard or too heavy for them, they took it to Him. When their enemies well nigh overcame them, Jesus came to the rescue, and turned the tide of battle. They were all happy and safe enough whilst the Master was with them; He walked in their midst like a father amid a large family of children, making all the household glad. But now He was about to be taken from them by an ignominious death, and they might well feel that they would be like little children deprived of their natural and beloved protector. Our Saviour knew the fear that was in their hearts, and before they could express it, He removed it by saying, "You shall not be left alone in this wild and desert world; though I be absent in the flesh, yet I will be present with you in a more efficacious manner; I will come to you spiritually, and you shall derive from My spiritual presence even more good than you could have had from My bodily presence, had I still continued in your midst."

I. First, here is, AN EVIL AVERTED.

Now remember, that an orphan is one whose parent is dead. This in itself is a great sorrow, if there were no other. The dear father, so well beloved, was suddenly smitten down with sickness; they watched him with anxiety; they nursed him with sedulous care; but he expired. The loving eye is closed in darkness for them. That active hand will no longer toil for the family. That heart and brain will no longer feel and think for them. Beneath the green grass the father sleeps, and every time the child surveys that hollowed hillock his heart swells with grief. Beloved, we are not orphans in that sense, for our Lord Jesus is not dead. It is true He died, for one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, a sure evidence that the pericardium had been pierced, and that the fountain of life had been broken up. He died, 'tis certain, but He is not dead now. Go not to the grave to seek Him. Angel voices say, "He is not here, for He is risen." He could not be holden by the bands of death. We do not worship a dead Christ, nor do we even think of Him now as a corpse. That picture on the wall, which the Romanists paint and worship, represents Christ as dead; but oh! it is so good to think of Christ as living, remaining in an existence real and true, none the less living because He died, but all the more truly full of life because He has passed through the portals of the grave, and is now reigning for ever. See then, dear friends, the bitter root of the orphan's sorrow is gone from us, for our Jesus is not dead now. No mausoleum enshrines His ashes, no pyramid entombs His body, no monument records the place of His permanent sepulchre.

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives,

What joy the blest assurance gives!"

We are not orphans, for "the Lord is risen indeed."

But in spirit there is no need for you to stir from the pew, no need to say a word; Jesus hears your thoughts talk, and attends to all your needs at the same moment. No need to press to get at Him because the throng is great, for He is as near to me as He is to you, and as near to you as to saints in America, or the islands of the Southern Sea. He is everywhere present, and all His beloved may talk with Him. You can tell Him at this moment the sorrows which you dare not open up to anyone else. You will feel that, in declaring them to Him, you have not breathed them to the air, but that a real Person has heard you, One as real as though you could grip His hand, and could see the loving flash of His eye and mark the sympathetic change of His countenance.

The orphan, too, has lost the kind hand which took care always that food and raiment should be provided, that the table should be well stored, and that the house should be kept in comfort. Poor feeble one, who will provide for his wants? His father is dead, his mother is gone: who will take care of the little wanderer now? But it is not so with us. Jesus has not left us orphans; His care for His people is no less now than it was when He sat at the table with Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, whom "Jesus loved." Instead of the provisions being less, they are even greater, for since the Holy Spirit has been given to us, we have richer fare and are more indulged with spiritual comforts than believers were before the bodily presence of the Master had departed. Do your souls hunger to-night? Jesus gives you the bread of heaven. Do you thirst to-night? The waters from the rock cease not to flow.

"Come, make your wants, your burdens known."

You have but to make known your needs to have them all supplied, Christ waits to be gracious in the midst of this assembly. He is here with His golden hand, opening that hand to supply the wants of every living soul. "Oh!" saith one, "I am poor and needy-." Go on with the quotation. "Yet the Lord thinketh upon me." "Ah" saith another, "I have besought the Lord thrice to take away a thorn in the flesh from me." Remember what he said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." You are not left without the strength you want. The Lord is your Shepherd still. He will provide for you till He leads you through death's dark valley, and brings you to the shining pastures upon the hill-tops of glory. You are not destitute, you need not beg an asylum from an ungodly world by bowing to its demands, or trusting its vain promises, for Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you.

It is most for your profit that you should receive the Spirit of truth, not through the golden vessel of Christ in His actual presence here, but through the poor earthen vessels of humble servants of God like ourselves. At any rate, whether we speak, or an angel from heaven, the speaker matters not; it is the Spirit of God alone that is the power of the Word, and makes that Word to become vital and quickening to you. Now, you have the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is so given, that there is not a truth which you may not understand. You may be led into the deepest mysteries by His teaching. You may be made to know and to comprehend those knotty points in the Word of God which have hitherto puzzled you. You have but humbly to look up to Jesus, and His Spirit will still teach you. I tell you, though you are poor and ignorant, and perhaps can scarcely read a word in the Bible; for all that, you may be better instructed in the things of God than doctors of divinity, if you go to the Holy Spirit, and are taught of Him. Those who go only to books and to the letter, and

are taught of men, may be fools in the sight of God; but those who go to Jesus, and sit at His feet, and ask to be taught of His Spirit, shall be wise unto salvation. Blessed be God, there are not a few amongst us of this sort. We are not left orphans; we have an Instructor with us still.

Now I want, without saying many words, to get you who love the Master to feel what a very precious thought this is, that you are not alone in this world; that, if you have no earthly friends, if you have none to whom you can take your cares, if you are quite lonely so far as outward friends are concerned, yet Jesus is with you, is really with you, practically with you, able to help you, and ready to do so, and that you have a good and kind Protector close at hand at this present moment, for Christ has said it: "I will not leave you orphans."

What does this mean? Does it not mean, from the connection, this—"I will come to you by My Spirit"? Beloved, we must not confuse the Persons of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is not the Son of God; Jesus, the Son of God, is not the Holy Spirit. They are two distinct Persons of the one Godhead. But yet there is such a wonderful unity, and the blessed Spirit acts so marvellously as the Vicar of Christ, that it is quite correct to say that, when the Spirit comes, Jesus comes, too, and "I will come to you," means -"I, by My Spirit, who shall take My place, and represent Me, I will come to be with you." See then, Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you and with you to be the Representative of Christ. Christ is with you now, not in person, but by His Representative,—an efficient, almighty, divine, everlasting Representative, who stands for Christ, and is as Christ to you in His presence in your souls. Because you thus have Christ by His Spirit, you cannot be orphans, for the Spirit of God is always with you. It is a delightful truth that the Spirit of God always dwells in believers;—not sometimes, but always. He is not always active in believers, and He may be grieved until His sensible presence is altogether withdrawn, but His secret presence is always there. At no single moment is the Spirit of God wholly gone from a believer. The believer would die spiritually if this could happen, but that cannot be, for Jesus has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Even when the believer sins, the Holy Spirit does not utterly depart from him, but is still in him to make him smart for the sin into which he has fallen. The believer's prayers prove that the Holy Spirit is still within him. "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," was the prayer of a saint who had fallen very foully, but in whom the Spirit of God still kept His residence, notwithstanding all the foulness of his guilt and sin.

And then notice the persons to whom it is addressed, "I will not leave you comfortless, you, Peter, who will deny Me; you, Thomas, who will doubt Me; I will not leave you comfortless." O you who are so little in Israel that you sometimes think it is a pity that your name is in the church-book at all, because you feel yourselves to be so worthless, so unworthy, He will not leave you comfortless, not even you! "O Lord," thou sayest, "if Thou wouldst look after the rest of Thy sheep, I would bless Thee for Thy tenderness to them, but I—I deserve to be left; if I were forsaken of Thee, I could not blame Thee, for I have played the harlot against Thy love, but yet Thou sayest, 'I will not leave you.'" Heir of heaven, do not lose your part in this promise. I pray you say, "Lord, come unto me, and though Thou refresh all my brethren, yet, Lord, refresh me with some of the droppings of Thy love; O Lord, fill the cup for me; my thirsty spirit pants for it.

"I thirst, I faint, I die to prove

The greatness of redeeming love,

The love of Christ to me.'

Now, Lord, fulfil Thy word to Thine unworthy handmaid, as I stand like Hannah in Thy presence. Come unto me, Thy servant, unworthy to lift so much as his eyes towards heaven, and only daring to say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Fulfil Thy promise even to me, 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.'"

Do you not see, dear friends, here is not only all you can sentence, "I will come to you"? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell;" so that, when Christ comes, in Him "all fulness" comes. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," so that, when Jesus comes, the very Godhead comes to the believer.

"All my capacious powers can wish

In Thee doth richly meet;" and if Thou shalt come to me, it is better than all the gifts of Thy covenant. If I get Thee, I get all, and more than all, at once. Observe, then, the language and the sufficiency of the promise.

Let me remind you that the text is at this moment valid, and for this I delight in it. "I will not leave you comfortless." That means now, "I will not leave you comfortless now." Are you comfortless at this hour? It is your own fault. Jesus Christ does not leave you so, nor make you so. There are rich and precious things in this word, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you, I will come to you now." It may be a very dull time with you, and you are pining to come nearer to Christ. Very well, then plead the promise before the Lord. Plead the promise as you sit where you are: "Lord, Thou hast said Thou wilt come unto me; come unto me to-night." There are many reasons, believer, why you should plead thus. You want Him; you need Him; you require Him; therefore plead the promise, and expect its fulfilment. And oh! when He cometh, what a joy it is; He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber with his garments fragrant with aloes and cassia! How well the oil of joy will perfume your heart! How soon will your sackcloth be put away, and the garments of gladness adorn you! With what joy of heart will your heavy soul begin to sing when Jesus Christ shall whisper that you are His, and that He is yours! Come, my Beloved, make no tarrying; be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of separation, and prove to me Thy promise true, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you."

God grant that we may all break bread in the kingdom above, and feast with Jesus, and share His glory! We are expecting His second coming. He is coming personally and gloriously. This is the brightest hope of His people. This will be the fulness of their redemption, the time of their resurrection. Anticipate it, beloved, and may God make your souls to sing for joy!

"Mid the splendours of the glory

Which we hope ere long to share;

Christ our Head, and we His members,

Shall appear, divinely fair.

Oh, how glorious !

When we meet Him in the air!

"Bright the prospect soon that greets us
Of that long'd-for nuptial day,
When our heavenly Bridegroom meets us
On His kingly, conquering way;
In the glory,
Bride and Bridegroom reign for aye!"

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. AN ADDRESS AT A COMMUNION SERVICE AT MENTONE.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."—1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

I WILL read you the text as it is given in the Revised Version: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?" That is to say,—Is it not one form of expressing the communion of the blood of Christ? "The bread," or as it is in the margin, "the loaf which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body: for we all partake of the one loaf." The word "loaf" helps to bring out more clearly the idea of unity intended to be set forth by the apostle.

What does this supper mean? It means communion: communion with Christ, and communion with one another.

I. The teaching of the Lord's supper is just this—that while we have many ways of COMMUNION WITH CHRIST, yet the receiving of Christ into our souls as our Saviour is the best way of communion with Him.

Communion is ours by personal intercourse with the Lord Jesus. We speak with Him in prayer, and He speaks with us through the Word. Some of us speak oftener with Christ than we do with wife or child, and our communion with Jesus is deeper and more thorough than our fellowship with our nearest friend. In meditation and its attendant thanksgiving we speak with our risen Lord, and by His Holy Spirit He answers us by creating fresh thought and emotion in our minds. I like sometimes in prayer, when I do not feel that I can say anything, just to sit still, and look up; then faith spiritually descends the Well-beloved, and hears His voice in the solemn silence of the mind. Thus we have intercourse with Jesus of a closer sort than any words could possibly express. Our soul melts beneath the warmth of Jesus' love, and darts upward her own love in return. Think not that I am dreaming, or am carried off by the memory of some unusual rhapsody: no, I assert that the devout soul can converse with the Lord Jesus all the day, and can have as true fellowship with Him as if He still dwelt bodily among men. This thing comes to me, not by the hearing of the ear, but by my own personal experience: I know of a surety that Jesus manifests Himself unto His people as He doth not unto the world.

Next, we have communion with Christ in His thoughts, views, and purposes; for His thoughts are our thoughts according to our capacity and sanctity. Believers take the same view of matters as Jesus does; that which pleases Him pleases them, and that which grieves Him grieves them also. Consider, for instance, the greatest theme of our thought, and see whether our thoughts are not like those of Christ. He delights in the Father, He loves to glorify the Father: do not we? Is not the Father the centre of our soul's delight? Do we not rejoice at the very sound of His name? Does not

our spirit cry, "Abba, Father"? Thus it is clear we feel as Jesus feels towards the Father, and so we have the truest communion with Him. This is but one instance; your contemplations will bring before you a wide variety of topics wherein we think with Jesus. Now, identity of judgment, opinion, and purpose forms the highway of communion; yea, it is communion.

Further, we have had fellowship with Christ in many of our actions. Have you ever tried to teach the ignorant? This Jesus did. Have you found it difficult? So Jesus found it. Have you striven to reclaim the backslider? Then you were in communion with the Good Shepherd who hastens into the wilderness to find the one lost sheep, finds it, lays it upon His shoulders, and brings it home rejoicing. Have you ever watched over a soul night and day with tears? Then you have had communion with Him who has borne all our names upon His broken heart, and carries the memorial of them upon His pierced hands. Yes, in acts of self-denial, liberality, benevolence, and piety, we enter into communion with Him who went about doing good. Whenever we try to disentangle the snarls of strife, and to make peace between men who are at enmity, then are we doing what the great Peace-maker did, and we have communion with the Lord and Giver of peace. Wherever, indeed, we co-operate with the Lord Jesus in His designs of love to men, we are in true and active communion with Him.

Nor this alone: we have been with our Divine Master in His joys. I suppose there never lived a happier man than the Lord Jesus. He was rightly called "the Man of sorrows"; but He might, with unimpeachable truth, have been called, "the Man of joys." He must have rejoiced as He called His disciples, and they came unto Him; as He bestowed healing and relief; as He gave pardon to penitents, and breathed peace on believers. His was the joy of finding the sheep, and taking the piece of money out of the dust. His work was His joy: such joy that, for its sake, He endured the cross, despising the shame. The exercise of benevolence is joy to loving hearts: the more pain it costs, the more joy it is. Kind actions make us happy, and in such joy we find communion with the great heart of Jesus.

Such fellowship is eternal. No power upon earth can henceforth take from me the piece of bread which I have just now eaten, it has gone where it will be made up into blood, and nerve, and muscle, and bone. It is within me, and of me. That drop of wine has coursed through my veins, and is part and parcel of my being. So he that takes Jesus by faith to be his Saviour has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from him. He has received the Christ into his inward parts, and all the men on earth, and all the devils in hell, cannot extract Christ from him. Jesus saith, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." By our sincere reception of Jesus into our hearts, an indissoluble union is established between us and the Lord, and this manifests itself in mutual communion. To as many as received Him, to them has He given this communion, even to them that believe on His name.

Let me go over much the same ground as before. We commune by holy converse. I wish we had more of this. Time was when they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; I am afraid that now they more often speak one against another. It is a grievous thing that full often love lies bleeding by a brother's hand. Where we are not quite so bad as that, yet we are often backward and silent, and so miss profitable converse. Our insular reserve has often made one Christian sit by another in utter isolation, when each would have been charmed with the other's company. Children of one family need not wait to be introduced to each other: having eaten of this one

bread, we have given and received the token of brotherhood; let us therefore act consistently with our relationship, and fall into holy conversation next time we meet. I am afraid that Christian brotherhood in many cases begins and ends inside the place of worship. Let it not be so among us. Let it be our delight to find our society in the circle of which Jesus is the centre, and let us make those our friends who are the friends of Jesus. By frequent united prayer and praise, and by ministering the one to the other the things which we have learned by the Spirit, we shall have fellowship with each other in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved friends, our emotions are another royal road of fellowship. You sit down and tell your experience, and I smile to think that you are telling mine. Sometimes a young believer enlarges upon the sad story of his trials and temptations, imagining that nobody ever had to endure so great a fight, when all the while he is only describing the common adventures of those who go on pilgrimage, and we are all communing with him. When we talk together about our Lord, are we not agreed? When we speak of our Father, and all His dealings with us, are we not one? And when we weep, and when we sigh, and when we sing, and when we rejoice, are we not all akin? Heavenly fingers touching like strings within our hearts bring forth the self-same notes, for we are the products of the same Maker, and tuned to the same praise. Real harmony exists among all the true people of God: Christians are one in Christ.

Certainly we have much communion one with the other in our sufferings . There is not a poor sick or despondent saint upon the earth with whom we do not sympathize at this moment, for we are fellow-members, and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. I hope we can say,

"Is there a lamb in all Thy flock,

I would disdain to feed?

Is there a foe, before whose face,

I fear Thy cause to plead?"

No, we suffer with each other, and bear each other's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ. If we do not, we have reason for questioning our own faith; but if we do so, we have communion with each other.

When I have put all these modes of Christian communion together, no one of them is so sure, so strong, so deep, as communion in receiving the same Christ as our Saviour, and trusting in the same blood for cleansing unto eternal life. Here on the table you have the tokens of the broadest and fullest communion. This is a kind of communion which you and I cannot choose or reject: if we are in Christ, it is and must be ours. Certain brethren restrict their communion in the outward ordinance, and they think they have good reasons for doing so; but I am unable to see the force of their reasoning, because I joyfully observe that these brethren commune with other believers in prayer, and praise, and hearing of the Word, and other ways: the fact being that the matter of real communion is very largely beyond human control, and is to the spiritual body what the circulation of the blood is to the natural body, a necessary process not dependent upon volition. In perusing a deeply spiritual book of devotion, you have been charmed and benefitted, and yet upon looking at the title-page it may be you have found that the author belonged to the Church of Rome. What then? Why, then it has happened that the inner life has broken all barriers, and your spirits have

communed. For my own part, in reading certain precious works, I have loathed their Romanism, and yet I have had close fellowship with their writers in weeping over sin, in adoring at the foot of the cross, and in rejoicing in the glorious enthronement of our Lord. Blood is thicker than water, and no fellowship is more inevitable and sincere than fellowship in the precious blood, and in the risen life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, in the common reception of the one loaf, we bear witness that we are one; and in the actual participation of all the chosen in the one redemption, that unity is in very deed displayed and matured in the most substantial manner. Washed in the one blood, fed on the same loaf, cheered by the same cup, all differences pass away, and "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

Let us take care to see Christ in the mirror of this ordinance. Have any of you eaten the bread, and yet have you not seen Christ? Then you have gained no benefit. Have you drunk the wine, but have you not remembered the Lord? Alas! I fear you have eaten and drunk condemnation to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. But if you did see through the emblems, as aged persons see through their spectacles, then you have been thankful for such aids to vision. But what is the use of glasses if there is nothing to look at? and what is the use of the communion if Christ be not in our thoughts and hearts?

Beloved friends, when you have thus received Jesus, fail not to rejoice in Him as having received Him. How many there are who have received Christ, who talk and act as if they never had received Him! It is a poor dinner of which a man says, after he has eaten it, that he feels as if he had not dined; and it is a poor Christ of whom anyone can say, "I have received Him, but I am none the happier, none the more at peace." If you have received Jesus into your heart, you are saved, you are justified. Do you whisper, "I hope so"? Is that all? Do you not know? The hopings and hoppings of so many are a poor way of going; put both feet down, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." You are either saved or lost; there is no state between the two. You are either pardoned or condemned; and you have good reason for the highest happiness, or else you have grave causes for the direst anxiety. If you have received the atonement, be as glad as you can be; and if you are still an unbeliever, rest not till Christ is yours.

"Oh, the joy of continually entering into fellowship with Christ, in such a way that you never lose His company! Be this yours, beloved, every day, and all the day! May His shadow fall upon you as you rest in the sun, or stray in the gardens! May His voice cheer you as you lie down upon the sea-shore, and listen to the murmuring of the waves; may His presence glorify the mountain solitude as you climb the hills! May Jesus be to you an all-surrounding presence, lighting up the night, perfuming the day, gladdening all places, and sanctifying all pursuits! Our Beloved is not a Friend for Lord's-days only, but for week-days, too; He is the inseparable Companion of His loving disciples. Those who have had fellowship with His body and His blood at this table may have the Lord as an habitual Guest at their own tables; those who have met their Master in this upper room may expect Him to make their own chamber bright with His royal presence. Let fellowship with Jesus and with the elect brotherhood be henceforth the atmosphere of our life, the joy of our existence. This will give us a heaven below, and prepare us for a heaven above.

THE SIN-BEARER.

THE SIN-BEARER. A COMMUNION MEDITATION AT MENTONE.

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."—1 Peter 2:24-25. THIS wonderful passage is a part of Peter's address to servants; and in his day nearly all servants were slaves. Peter begins at the eighteenth verse (1 Peter 2:18): "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." If we are in a lowly condition of life, we shall find our best comfort in thinking of the lowly Saviour bearing our sins in all patience and submission. If we are called to suffer, as servants often were in the Roman times, we shall be solaced by a vision of our Lord buffeted, scourged, and crucified, yet silent in the majesty of His endurance. If these sufferings are entirely undeserved, and we are grossly slandered, we shall be comforted by remembering Him who did no sin, and in whose lips was found no guile. Our Lord Jesus is Head of the Guild of Sufferers: He did well, and suffered for it, but took it patiently. Our support under the cross, which we are appointed to bear, is only to be found in Him "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

Let us, as we hope to pass through the tribulations of this world, stand fast by the cross; for if that be gone, the lone-star is quenched whose light cheers the down-trodden, shines on the injured, and brings light to the oppressed. If we lose the cross,—if we miss the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have lost all.

I. The first is, THE BEARING OF OUR SINS by our Lord; "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." These words in plainest terms assert that our Lord Jesus did really bear the sins of His people. How literal is the language! Words mean nothing if substitution is not stated here. I do not know the meaning of the fifty-third of Isaiah if this is not its meaning. Hear the prophet's words: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" "for the transgression of my people was He stricken;" "He shall bear their iniquities:" "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many."

It does not much matter what these modern haters of the cross may dare to say; but, assuredly, that which they deny, denounce, and deride, is the cardinal doctrine of our most holy faith, and is as clearly in Scripture as the sun is in the heavens. Beloved, as we suffer through the sin of Adam,

so are we saved through the righteousness of Christ. Our fall was by another, and so is our rising again: we are under a system of representation and imputation, gainsay it who may. To us, the transference of our sin to Christ is a blessed fact clearly revealed in the Word of God, and graciously confirmed in the realizations of our faith. In that same chapter of Isaiah we read, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and we perceive that this was a matter of fact, for He was really, truly, and emphatically sorrowful; and, therefore, when we read that "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree," we dare not flitter it away, but assuredly believe that in very deed He was our Sin-Bearer. Possible or impossible, we sing with full assurance—

"He bore on the tree the sentence for me." Had the sorrow been figurative, the sin-bearing might have been mythical; but the one fact is paralleled by the other. There is no figure in our text; it is a bare, literal fact: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Oh, that men would give up cavilling! To question and debate at the cross, is an act near akin to the crime of the soldiers when they parted His garments among them, and cast lots for His vesture.

This sin-bearing on our Lord's part was continual. The passage before us has been forced beyond its teaching, by being made to assert that our Lord Jesus bore our sins nowhere but on the cross: this the words do not say. "The tree" was the place where beyond all other places we see our Lord bearing the chastisement due to our sins; but before this, He had felt the weight of the enormous load. It is wrong to base a great doctrine upon the incidental form of one passage of Scripture, especially when that passage of Scripture bears another meaning.

This sin-bearing is final. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but He bears them now no more. The sinner and the sinner's Surety are both free, for the law is vindicated, the honour of government is cleared, the substitutionary sacrifice is complete. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him; for He has ended His work, and has cried, "It is finished." As for the sins which He bore in His own body on the tree, they cannot be found, for they have ceased to be, according to that ancient promise, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jeremiah 1:20). The work of the Messiah was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24). Now, if sin is made an end of, there is an end of it; and if transgression is "finished", there is no more to be said about it.

Beloved friends, we very calmly and coolly talk about this thing, but it is the greatest marvel in the universe; it is the miracle of earth, the mystery of heaven, the terror of hell. Could we fully realize the guilt of sin, the punishment due to it, and the literal substitution of Christ, it would work in us an intense enthusiasm of gratitude, love, and praise. I do not wonder that our Methodist friends shout, "Hallelujah!" This is enough to make us all shout and sing, as long as we live, "Glory, glory to the Son of God!" What a wonder that the Prince of glory, in whom is no sin, who was indeed incapable of evil, should condescend to come into such contact with our sin as is implied in His being "made sin for us"! Our Lord Jesus did not handle sin with the golden tongs, but He bore it on His own shoulders. He did not lift it with golden staves, as the priests carried the ark; but He Himself bore the hideous load of our sin in His own body on the tree. This is the mystery of grace which angels desire to look into. I would for ever preach it in the plainest and most unmistakable language.

We are henceforth legally dead to the punishment of sin. If I were condemned to die for an offence, and some other died in my stead, then I died in him who died for me. The law could not a second time lay its charge against me, and bring me again before the judge, and condemn me, and lead me out to die. Where would be the justice of such a procedure? I am dead already: how can I die again? I have borne the wrath of God in the person of my glorious and ever-blessed Substitute; how then can I bear it again? Where was the use of a Substitute if I am to bear it also? Should Satan come before God to lay an accusation against me, the answer is, "This man is dead. He has borne the penalty, and is 'dead to sins,' for the sentence against him has been executed upon Another." What a wonderful deliverance for us! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

The Greek word here used cannot be fully rendered into English; it signifies "being unborn to sins." We were born in sin, but by the death of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon us, that birth is undone, "we are unborn to sins." That which was wrought in us by sin, even at our birth, is through the death of Jesus counteracted by the new life which His Spirit imparts. "We are unborn to sins." I like the phrase, unusual as it sounds. Does it seem possible that birth should be reversed: the born unborn? Yet so it is. The true ego, the reallest "I," is now unborn to sins, for we are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We are unborn to sins, and born unto God.

III. The apostle then speaks of THE HEALING OF OUR DISEASES by Christ's death: "By whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. "

First, it was brutishness. "Ye were as sheep." Sin has made us so that we are only fit to be compared to beasts, and to those of the least intelligence. Sometimes the Scripture compares the unregenerate man to an ass. Man is said to be "born like a wild ass's colt." Amos likens Israel to the "kine of Bashan", and he saith to them, "Ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her." David compared himself to behemoth: "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." We are nothing better than beasts until Christ comes to us. But we are not beasts after that: a living, heavenly, spiritual nature is created within us when we come into contact with our Redeemer. We still carry about with us the old brutish nature, but by the grace of God it is put in subjection, and kept there; and our fellowship now is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. We "were as sheep," but we are now men redeemed unto God.

Another disease of ours was inability to return: "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned." Dogs and even swine are more likely to return home than wandering sheep. But now, beloved, though we wandered, we have returned, and do still return to our Shepherd. Like Noah's dove, we have found no rest for the sole of our foot anywhere out of the ark, and therefore we return unto Him, and He graciously pulls us in unto Him. If we wander at any time, we bless God that there is a sacred something within us which will not let us rest, and there is a far more powerful something above us which draws us back. We are like the needle in the compass: touch that needle with your finger, and compel it to point to the east, or to the south, and it may do so for the moment; but take away the pressure, and in an instant it returns to the pole. So we must go back to Jesus; we must return to the Bishop of our souls. Our soul cries, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Thus, by the virtue of our Lord's death, an immortal love is created in us, which leads us to seek His face, and renew our

fellowship with Him.

Finally, beloved friends, when we were wandering we were like sheep exposed to wolves, but we are delivered from this by being near the Shepherd. We were in danger of death, in danger from the devil, in danger from a thousand temptations, which, like ravenous beasts, prowled around us. Having ended our wandering, we are now in a place of safety. When the lion roars, we are driven the closer to the Shepherd, and rejoice that His crook protects us. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

"What a wonderful work of grace has been wrought in us! We owe all this, not to the teaching of Christ, though that has helped us greatly; not to the example of Christ, though that is charming us into a diligent copying of it; but we owe it all to His stripes: "By whose stripes ye were healed." Brethren, we preach Christ crucified, because we have been saved by Christ crucified. His death is the death of our sins. We can never give up the doctrine of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, for it is the power by which we hope to be made holy. Not only are we washed from guilt in His blood, but by that blood we overcome sin. Never, so long as breath or pulse remains, can we conceal the blessed truth that He "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." The Lord give us to know much more of this than I can speak, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

SWOONING AND REVIVING AT CHRIST'S FEET.

SWOONING AND REVIVING AT CHRIST'S FEET. AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CLOSE OF ONE OF THE PASTORS' COLLEGE CONFERENCES.

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Revelation 1:17-18.

WE have nothing now to think of but our Lord. We come to Him that He may cause us to forget all others. We are not here as ministers, cumbered with much serving, but we now sit at His feet with Mary, or lean on His bosom with John. The Lord Himself gives us our watchword as we muster our band for the last assembly. "Remember Me," is His loving command. We beseech Him to fill the full circle of our memory as the sun fills the heavens and the earth with light. We are to think only of Jesus, and of Him only will I speak. Oh, for a touch of the live coal from Him who is our Altar as well as our Sacrifice!

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Permit me, dear brethren, to take my text from its connection, and to apply it to ourselves, by bringing it down from the throne up yonder to the table here. It may be, I trust it will be, that as we see Jesus even here, we shall with John fall at His feet as dead. We shall not swoon, but we shall be dead in another sense, most sweetly dead, while our life is revealed in Him. After we have thought upon that, we shall come to what my text implies: then, may we revive with John, for if he had not revived he could never have told us of his fainting fit. Thus we shall have death with Christ, and resurrection in Him. Oh, for a deep experience of both, by the power of the Holy Spirit!

For, first, here we see provision for the removal of our sin, and we are thus reminded of it. Here is the bread broken because we have broken God's law, and must have been broken for ever had there not been a bruised Saviour. In this wine we see the token of the blood with which we must be cleansed, or else be foul things to be cast away into the burnings of Tophet, because abominable in the sight of God. Inasmuch as we have before us the memorial of the atonement for sin, it reminds us of our death in sin in which we should still have remained but for that: grace which spoke us into life and salvation. Are you growing great? Be little again as you see that you are nothing but slaves that have been ransomed. "God's freed-men" is still your true rank. Are you beginning to think that, because you are sanctified; you have the less need of daily cleansing? Hear that word, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," yet even then "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." We sin even when in the highest and divinest fellowship, and need still the cleansing blood. How this humbles us before the Lord! We are to be winners of sinners, and yet we ourselves are sinners still, needing as truly the Bread of life as those to whom we serve it out.

Herein we fall as low as the dead. Where is the "I"? Where is the self-glorifying? Have you any left in the presence of the crucified Saviour? As you in spirit eat His flesh and drink His blood, can you glory in your own flesh, or feel the pride of blood and birth? Fie upon us if there mingles a tinge of pride with our ministry, or a taint of self-laudation with our success! When we see Jesus, our Saviour, the Saviour of sinners, surely self will sink, and humility will fall at His feet. When we think of Gethsemane and Calvary, and all our great Redeemer's pain and agony, surely, by the Holy Ghost, self-glorifying, self-seeking, and self-will must fall as though slain with a deadly wound. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

The "I" cannot live, for our Lord has provided no food for the vain Ego, and its lordliness. He has provided all for necessity, but nothing for boasting. Oh, blessed sense of self-annihilation! We have experienced it several times this week when certain of those papers were read to us by our brethren; and, moreover, we shrivelled right up in the blaze of the joy with which our Master favoured us. I hope this happy assembly and its heavenly exercises have melted the Ego within us, and made it, for the while, flow away in tears. Dying to self is a blessed feeling. May we all realize it! When we are weak to the utmost in conscious death of self, then are we strong to the fulness of might. swooning away unto self-death, and losing all consciousness of personal power, we are introduced into the infinite, and live in God.

All the life-floods of our being will flow with renewed force if, first of all, we are brought into contact with Jesus: "He laid His right hand upon me." Marvellous patience that He does not set His foot upon us, and tread us down as the mire of the streets! I have lain at His feet as dead, and had He spurned me as tainted with corruption, I could not have impugned His justice. But there is nothing here about His foot! That foot has been pierced for us, and it cannot be that the foot which has been nailed to the cross for His people should ever trample them in His wrath. He at these words, "He laid His right hand upon me." The right hand of His strength and of His glory He laid upon His fainting servant. It was the hand of a man. It is the right hand of Him who, in all our afflictions, was afflicted, who is a Brother born for adversity. Hence, everything about His hand has a reviving influence. The speech of sympathy, my brothers, is often too unpractical, and hence it is too feeble to revive the fainting; the touch of sympathy is far more effectual. You remember that happy story of the wild negro child who could never be won till the little lady sat down by her, and laid her hand upon her. Eva won poor Topsy by that tender touch. The tongue failed, but the hand achieved the victory. So was it with our adorable Lord. He showed us that He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; He brought Himself into contact with us, and made us perceive the reality of His love to us, and then He became more than a conqueror over us.

Still, there was something else wanted, for our Lord Jesus, after the touch, gave the word: "Fear not; I am the first and the last." What does He say? Does He say, "Thou art"? Open your Testaments, and see. Does He exclaim, "Fear not; thou art the beloved disciple, John the apostle and divine"? I find nothing of the kind. He did not direct His servant to look at himself, but to remember the great I Am, his Saviour, and Lord. The living comfort of every swooning child of God, of everyone who is conscious of a death-wound to the natural "I," lies in that majestic "I," who alone can say "I am." You live because there is an "I am" who has life in Himself, and has that life for you.

Read on,—"I am He that liveth." "Because I live, ye shall live also; no real death shall befall you, for death hath no more dominion over Me,—your Head, your Life." While there is a living Christ in heaven, no believer shall ever see death: he shall sleep in Jesus, and that is all, for even then he shall be "for ever with the Lord."

"And behold, I am alive for evermore." Yes, behold it, and never cease to behold it: we serve an ever-living Lord. Brothers, go home from this conference in the power of this grand utterance! The dear child may sicken, or the precious wife may be taken home; but Christ says, "I am alive for evermore." The believing heart can never be a widow, for its Husband is the living God. Our Lord Jesus will not leave us orphans, He will come unto us. Here is our joy, then: not in ourselves, but in the fact that He ever lives to carry out the Father's good pleasure in us and for us. Onward, soldiers of the cross, for our immortal Captain leads the way.

Conclude the verse,—"and of death." Our Lord has the keys of death, and this will be a joyful fact to us when our last hours arrive. If we say to Him, "Master, whither am I going?" He answers, "I have the key of death and the spirit world. Will we not reply, "We feel quite confident to go wherever Thou wilt lead us, O Lord"? We shall then pursue His track in His company. Our bodies shall descend into what men call a charnel-house, though it is really the unrobing-room of saints, the vestibule of heaven, the wardrobe of our dress where it shall be cleansed and perfected. We have a fit spiritual array for the interval, but we expect that our bodies shall rise again in the likeness of "the Lord from heaven." What gainers we shall be when we shall take up the robes we laid aside, and find them so gloriously changed, and made fit for us to wear even in the presence of our Lord! So, if the worst fear that crosses you should be realized, and you should literally die at your Lord's feet, there is no cause for dread, for no enemy can do you harm, since the divine right hand is pledged to deliver you to the end. Let us give the Well-beloved the most devout and fervent praise as we now partake of this regal festival. The King sitteth at His table, let our spikenard give forth its sweetest smell.

C. H. SPURGEON'S COMMUNION HYMN.

C. H. SPURGEON'S COMMUNION HYMN.

C. H. SPURGEON'S COMMUNION HYMN.

(No. 939 in "Our Own Hymn Book.")

AMIDST us our Belov'd;stands,
And bids us view His pierc'd;hands;
Points to His wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified.
What food luxurious loads the board,
When at His table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
When Jesus deigns the guests to meet!
If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs but see not Him,
Oh, may His love the scales displace,
And bid us see Him face to face!
Our former transports we recount,
When with Him in the holy mount,
These cause our souls to thirst anew,
His marr'd but lovely face to view.
Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
Thy present smile a heaven imparts:
Oh, lift the veil, if veil there be,
Let every saint Thy beauties see!

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