

# The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - June

by F. L. Mortimer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, both towards others and towards God, and encourages listeners to trust in God's provision and be bold in their witness.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 23:27, Luke 11:46-47, Luke 11:52

**Topics:** "Hypocrisy Exposed", "True Righteousness"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the exposure of the wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees by Jesus, highlighting their hypocrisy, burdening others with difficult requirements while not practicing them themselves, and honoring the dead prophets while persecuting the living ones. Jesus condemns their outward show of piety while lacking true righteousness in their hearts, warning them of the judgment to come for their deceitful practices and unrepentant hearts.

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## Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

JUNE 1

Matthew 18:21 to end. The parable of the unforgiving servant.

How odious that servant appears, who after having received such exceeding benefits from his Lord, went out, and acted with such rigor towards his fellow-servant! Yet that unfeeling servant affords but a faint picture of the unforgiving sinner. For what was the obligation that he had received, compared to that under which we lie to God! His Lord had forgiven him a debt of ten thousand talents; but we are not informed, that in order to do this, his Lord had made any painful sacrifice. But before our Lord could forgive us, He was constrained by his own holiness to find an atonement for our sins, and that atonement was the blood of his Son. Now if after having received this gift, we should go forth, and willingly retain any unkind feeling against those who have done us wrong, how great would be our guilt!

We should also remember how infinitely greater the debt is that we owe to God, than any debt our fellow-creatures can owe to us. In the parable the disproportion is immense; two millions of pounds in the

one case, and three pounds in the other; (according to the calculations of some;) but there is a still greater disparity between our debt to God, and man's to us.

Consider these two circumstances, which most aggravate offences. The repeating of them often, and after having received great benefits. Have not our offences against God these two aggravations in an eminent degree? Who can have provoked us so OFTEN as we have provoked God? from our birth until this moment, we have not ceased to sin against him in thought, word, and deed; and yet he is still willing to be reconciled to us. Who can have received such benefits from us, as we have received from God--not only temporal blessings, but the offer of everlasting life, and the gift of his Son!

If we had a more just idea of the nature and extent of our transgressions against him, we should be ashamed of thinking of the sins of men against us. Indeed, perhaps, in our quarrels, we may be most in fault, and may really owe more than is owed to us; or though we may have been ungratefully treated by one, we ourselves may have ungratefully treated some other person, so that on the whole nothing may be owing to us. How it would quiet the tumult of our passions, if, when disposed to think of the injuries we have received from our fellows, we were to turn our attention to the insults we have offered to God!

But perhaps we do not feel that God has forgiven these insults. Perhaps we are still troubled by the dread of his anger for our past transgressions. Nothing would soften our hearts so much, as a sense of his forgiving love. Let us pray for this blessed assurance. Then we shall feel the force of the apostle's command, "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any--even as Christ forgave you, so also do you."

June 2

Luke 10:1-16. Christ sends out seventy disciples.

This charge to the seventy disciples very much resembles the charge to the twelve apostles, that we read some time ago. As it was necessary that the twelve apostles should be generally with their Master, Jesus appointed seventy other people to preach the gospel in various parts of the land.

He sent them to every place where he himself would come. Still he sends his faithful servants before his face. When they appear, we may expect to see their Master coming soon afterwards in the power of the Spirit. But as seventy men were too few to instruct all those who were perishing through ignorance, Jesus commanded them to pray that God would send forth laborers into his harvest. Is there not cause still to offer this prayer? There is too small a number of ministers and missionaries scattered over the world. When the Sabbath dawns, how few rejoice to see its beams!

Before the seventy went forth, Jesus informed them what to expect in their journeys. They were to expect sufferings, (v. 3,) "I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves." They were to expect their message to be sometimes rejected, (v. 10,) "Into whatever city you enter, and they receive you not." Those men who resembled wolves, would ill-treat the lambs of Christ. They were to expect that God would incline some to receive them, and to be kind to them. Were all to frown upon them, their spirits would be utterly cast down. But the Lord is too tender a Father to suffer his children to remain without any encouragement. At the needful moment a friendly voice cheers, and a friendly hand sustains.

The Lord Jesus also instructed his disciples what to do in their journeys. They were to carry no provision nor clothes with them, but to trust to God's promise to provide for them, (v. 4,) "Carry neither purse, nor

bag, nor shoes." Missionaries who lived after Christ's ascension, thankfully received gifts from their converts before they set out to teach heathen nations. (See John's third epistle, 5, 6.) It is the duty of Christians to provide for the wants of missionaries; but these seventy disciples were placed in peculiar circumstances, and received peculiar aid. They were to use haste in delivering their message, and to lose no time in showing useless civilities. "Salute no man by the way." They were to pronounce blessings on everyone who received them, saying, "Peace be unto you." They were to accept the food offered to them; but they were not to seek better fare by going from house to house. They were to confirm the truth of their message by healing the sick. They were to warn their enemies by shaking off the dust from their feet in departing from their city.

The Lord concluded his instructions by denouncing woes upon the favored cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. The traveler can witness how the Lord's predictions have been fulfilled in the temporal destruction of those cities, for their very names have perished. Why did he speak to the seventy concerning the guilt of those cities? To remind them how he himself, the Son of God, had been rejected by the cities in which he most frequently preached, and thus to prepare them for similar treatment. Our proud hearts are ready to rebel when we find that our instructions produce no effect upon the hearts of men. But can we repine at want of success, when we remember how our Lord seemed to toil in vain? Yet, there were a few who received him; the woman of Tyre, the weeping sinner, and the sorrowful father who cried, "Help my unbelief." How delightful to be permitted to strengthen one trembling believer, or to reclaim one wretched wanderer!

And this we should remember for our comfort, that if we do not behold the fruit of our own labors, those who come after us will reap the benefit; for the word of the Lord shall not return unto him void.

June 3

John 7:1-13. The brethren of Christ reproach him.

Such was the conduct of sinners to the Lord of glory when he was upon earth. His brethren (that is, his relatives) refused to believe in him, and treated him with scorn. They ventured to dictate to him who possessed all wisdom, saying, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you do." And they insolently hinted, that if he were really a great prophet, he would not remain in retirement; for they said, "There is no man does anything in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly." How trying such conduct in relatives must have been! We know that it is easier to bear unkindness from strangers, than from near and dear kindred. But if the Lord suffered in this manner, his people ought to be patient under the same trials.

And how did the world feel towards Jesus? How did the rich, the great, the learned esteem him? They hated him; they hated the express image of the Father; they hated the brightness of his glory. And why did they hate so lovely a being? Because he testified that their works were evil. The wicked cannot bear to be reproved. The most amiable behavior cannot secure a faithful Christian from the world's hatred. But is it not an honor to share the reproach of the Son of God?

And what did the people think of Jesus? They were divided in their opinions. Some said, "He is a good man." What faint praise to bestow on him, who was goodness itself! Was this all that they would say for him who was the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely? Yes, they were ashamed to say more than "He is a good man;" while others dared to accuse him of deceiving the people. Thus have the servants of God been faintly praised, and falsely accused in all ages. How little worth must popular esteem

be, when it is so often given to the worst of men, and withheld from the best!

How bright do the perfections of the Lord shine forth when viewed in contrast with the base qualities of human creatures! The Son of God remained unmoved in the midst of all the conflicting storms of human passions. His eyes were directed to his Father, whose will was his only guide, whose favor was his greatest joy. He met his brethren's insinuations by the calm and dignified reply, "My time is not yet come." He knew the times that the Father had appointed for all his actions. The time for him to go forth to meet his enemies, was not yet come. It came at last, and then he set his face as a flint, and boldly said, "I am he." But until that time arrived, he avoided danger. Jesus knew all things that were coming upon him. We, like Paul, must always confess that wherever we go, we know not the things that shall befall us there; but, like him, we may also say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

The Christian waits the Lord's time, while unknown, and welcomes it, when known. The holy martyr Bradford languished long in prison, not knowing the day appointed for his execution, but patiently waiting the Lord's time. When he knew it, how joyfully he welcomed it! One afternoon the keeper's wife suddenly came up to him, troubled, and almost breathless, saying, "O Master Bradford, I come to bring you heavy news."--"What is it?" said he. "Tomorrow you must be burned, and your chain is now a buying." The martyr put off his cap, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, "I thank God for it. I have looked for the same a long time, and therefore it comes not to me suddenly, but as a thing waited for every day and hour. The Lord make me worthy thereof."

June 4

John 7:14-29. Christ defends himself for healing on the Sabbath day.

In these verses we have a fresh instance of the insulting manner in which Jesus was treated upon earth.

He was despised for his want of a learned education. "How knows this man letters?" exclaimed the Jews scornfully, "having never learned!" Soon afterwards their insolence increased, and they cried, "You have a devil." This treatment gave Jesus an opportunity of displaying his meekness. Every circumstance that befalls us affords the opportunity of cultivating some grace. Disappointment affords the opportunity of exercising resignation; enjoyment of showing gratitude; when we are praised, then is the time for humility; when we are insulted, then is the time for meekness; every temptation to sin furnishes an occasion of manifesting faithfulness to God.

Jesus showed not only great meekness, but also great wisdom, in his dealings with perverse sinners. He knew what accusation they had against him, namely, that on the Sabbath-day he had healed the impotent man who lay by the pool. With wonderful skill he unveiled their inconsistency in accusing him of breaking the Sabbath by performing a work of mercy; for he said that even they themselves performed the ceremonies of Moses' law on the Sabbath-day. How easy it is for Jesus to show men the deceitfulness of their pretenses! At the last day those who profess to have the best motives for doing the worst things, will be confounded and speechless in the presence of their Judge.

What ignorance those people betrayed who said that Jesus could not be the promised Christ, because they knew whence he was. They imagined they knew whence he was; but they were mistaken; they did not know he came from God. So Jesus answered them by a question; for the words in verse 28 should be regarded as a question, "Do you both know me and do you know whence I am?" By this he meant to say, "You think you know whence I am, but you do not know."

Then Jesus added these words respecting his Father, "I know him!" How happy are they who can truly say of the Father, "I know him;" for the world does not know him, and no man can know him, except Jesus reveal Himself to his soul. But the meek and lowly Savior is willing to teach all those who desire to know his Father. He came into the world "to bring us to God."

Do we desire to know God? Is this our chief desire? It may appear that we can pass away our time, and enjoy ourselves without knowing God; but what should we do at the last day if God should say, "I never knew you, O you that work iniquity!"

June 5

John 7:30-36. Christ speaks of going where his enemies could not come.

The discourse our Savior publicly delivered in the temple, offended his enemies so much, that they sent men to take him. These men found him preaching. Jesus knew for what purpose they were come, and he uttered a dreadful warning in their presence, telling them that he should be with them only a little while, and that then they should seek him, and should not find him, adding, "Where I am, there you cannot come." The Jews experienced the truth of these words when the city of Jerusalem was taken, and they looked in vain for the promised Messiah to deliver them--but found no deliverer.

It will also be fulfilled in the experience of every unbeliever, unless he repent. A time will come to all the ungodly, who die impenitent, when they will seek Christ and not find him, and when they will desire in vain to reach the place where he is. Such a day came to the rich man, when he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Lazarus afar off, and heard that there was a great gulf between them, which none could pass. How dreadful it will be to see Christ afar off, and to find the compassionate Savior deaf to our entreaties! Such a day is spoken of in Prov. 1, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

But Christ's enemies did not even understand the warning He had given. They only expressed to each other their wonder, "Can he be going to teach the dispersed Jews who live in Gentile countries," or can he be going to teach the Gentiles themselves?

They thought it a thing impossible that Gentiles should be taught; they imagined that they were unworthy of the least notice from God, and that they would be left to perish in heathen ignorance. But God thought not so; his thoughts were not as their thoughts; even then he had purposes of mercy towards our savage forefathers. He saw them wandering with painted skins among their forests of oak, and offering up their children to horrible idols. He saw them, He pitied, and He sent (if not an apostle) the convert of an apostle, to proclaim in their untutored ears his glorious gospel. Our fathers sought him, and they found him, and many of them are now with God. Where they are, and where Jesus is, we desire to come.

Jesus has not yet said to us, "Where I am there you cannot come." Shall he ever say it? He never will, if it is our heart's warm desire to be where he is. Has he not said, "Where I am, there shall my servant be?"

This was the sweet verse that an aged minister often repeated in his dying hours--

And when I'm to die,

"Receive me," I'll cry;

For Jesus has loved me,  
I cannot tell why;  
But this I can find,  
We two are so joined,  
He'll not be in glory  
And leave me behind.

June 6

John 7:37-39. Christ invites the thirsty to come to him.

The Savior delights more in promises than in threatenings. In the presence of his enemies he often uttered most sweet and encouraging invitations.

On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, (even on the eighth,) it was the custom to pour large quantities of water upon the ground, as a type of God's promise of pouring the Spirit upon man in the latter days. It seems probable that it was in the midst of this ceremony, that Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And what is the meaning of this invitation? Coming to Christ is believing in Christ; "drinking" is receiving the Holy Spirit into the heart.

Since Jesus uttered these gracious words, the Holy Spirit has been given in large measure; for when he was glorified and seated at his Father's right hand, he sent down the Holy Spirit. Until He had presented an atonement for sin, this great gift could not be bestowed upon guilty man. Those, indeed, who believed in Christ from the beginning, received a measure of the Spirit; but not so abundant a measure as those who have believed in him since he was offered up.

This is the substance of the preaching of every faithful minister, "If any man thirst, let him go to Jesus and drink." The whole world is suffering the torments of parching thirst. It is evident that they feel uneasy by their anxiety to obtain wealth, pleasure, and honors; but they know not the only fountain that can quench their thirst. They little imagine that the Holy Spirit would make them more happy than all the enjoyments earth can afford.

Not only would they be happy themselves, but they would obtain the power of making others happy. For out of them should flow rivers of living water to quench the thirst of their fellow-creatures. It is an inexpressible delight to make the wretched happy. None but true believers can do this. Kind-hearted, worldly people often try to make their friends and neighbors happy, but they never can succeed. The Christian has discovered the secret by which he can assuage human grief, and quiet the restless heart. None can conceive what will be the delight of God's faithful servants when they look around in the abodes of bliss, and behold those who once thirsted upon earth, but who now thirst no more, and when they remember that it was their privilege to persuade them first to taste of the fountain of living waters. But happiness will be as nothing compared to the joy of the Son of God. This joy cheered his heart when he endured the cross. He knew that millions of souls would be made blessed forever through his blood. It is a pleasure to remember having saved the life of a fellow-creature. Have you ever seen a young person's eyes sparkle with delight at the thought of having extinguished the flames that were raging around her

companion? Or have you heard an old man relate how in former days he snatched a poor child out of the water? The satisfaction that they showed may remind us of the infinite joy the Lord of glory will feel when he looks around upon the souls that he has blessed forever. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Is. 53:11.)

June 7

John 7:40 to end. The enemies of Christ dispute concerning him.

We here read of the effect of the discourse Jesus delivered in the presence of the officers that came to take him. Many people were there, and they expressed different opinions concerning him. Some thought he was the prophet, or the messenger that was to be sent before Christ, to prepare his way. (Mal. 3:1.) These people did not know that John the Baptist was that prophet. Others thought that Jesus was the Messiah. There was another party that made objections to this belief. They imagined that Jesus had been born in Galilee, though he had only been brought up there; and they did not know that he was of the family of David. They remembered that the Scriptures had prophesied that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, of the family of David; therefore they thought that Jesus could not be the true Messiah. But had they made diligent inquiries, they would have found that the reports concerning him were false, and that he had been born in Bethlehem, and was of the family of David. These people were much to blame for their negligence. How many people are now in error, because they have not made diligent inquiries! They believe the reports they hear against the ministers of Christ--they believe the objections that infidels make against the Bible, and they never examine into the truth of these reports and objections. They do not consider the importance of the subject, or they would not be able to rest until they had discovered the truth.

We find that the officers returned to their masters without having taken Jesus. The reason they gave for their conduct was, "Never man spoke like this man." They had been awed by the power of his words. When God pleases, he can make the words of his servants strike awe into their enemies, so that they dare not lift up their hands against them. Scoffers have sometimes entered into the assemblies of God's people with an intention to hurt them, and have been constrained to give up their designs. A daring sinner once prepared a weapon with which he intended to murder a holy man who came to seek the lost among the haunts of vice. He heard him read Isaiah 54. Struck by the words, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper," he renounced his purpose, and even confessed his guilt.

In the conclusion of the chapter, we find an instance of the power of divine grace. Nicodemus, who was once so timid as to go to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews, was grown so bold as to acknowledge him openly in the midst of the council. He was himself one of that council, called the Sanhedrin, composed of seventy chief people among the Jews. There have always been some among the honorable of the earth who have done homage to the Lord of glory. Such people are exposed to sharper trials than those in humbler stations, and they require a very large measure of grace to enable them to remain firm amid the derision of their equals in power and grandeur. But God is with them when they stand up in the midst of their enemies, and he will defend his defamed servants. What would a Father feel who should overhear one of his children pleading his cause with rebellious brothers! Does not our God listen with delight to all who take his part when men rise up against him?

June 8

John 8:1-11. Christ refuses to condemn a sinful woman.

How much wisdom the Lord Jesus showed in the manner in which he withstood the artful designs of the Jews! The Pharisees had in vain endeavored to seize him by force--and now they sought to entrap him by fraud. Nicodemus, in the council, had inquired, "Does our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he does?" The Pharisees seem to have taken these words as a hint to find some accusation against the Lord. They thought that by bringing this woman before him they placed him in a difficulty from which he could not escape; because, if he condemned her, they might accuse him to the Romans of interfering in the government, and if he acquitted her, they might say he contradicted the law of Moses, by which she was sentenced to die.

But how completely all their expectations were confounded! They desired to hear the Lord pass sentence against the woman, but they were compelled to hear him pass sentence on themselves. For when he replied, "He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone;" the conscience of each accuser was troubled, and one by one the whole band of enemies retreated ashamed from his presence!

Conscience may slumber long, but it often suddenly awakes. God can arouse it when he pleases. Sometimes in this life, it stings a sinner and forces him to confess his iniquities. But its power will be better known at the day of judgment, when all the wicked will be made to feel the justice of their own condemnation.

While the guilty Jews were escaping from the temple, the Lord was stooping down to write upon the ground. It appears that he had not looked up to observe their confusion. But after they were gone, he lifted himself up to speak to the sinful woman. There she was standing in the midst! How dreadful was her situation at that moment! She was in the presence of one who might have condemned her to everlasting destruction. Instead of condemning, he began to converse with her, "Woman, where are those your accusers? Has no man condemned you?" Her answer was full of reverence and awe. "No man, Lord." With what feelings must she have awaited the Lord's next words! They were full of mercy, and also of holiness--"Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."

Jesus did not come into the world to act as an earthly judge; but hereafter he will condemn the wicked, as well as save the righteous. This woman will stand before him at the day of judgment; she will then hear either that she is pardoned or condemned. We know nothing of her history after this interview. Was her heart drawn to the Lord by his merciful treatment, or did she go from his presence to plunge into new crimes? It is a dreadful thing to abuse mercy. Can we remember any period in our lives when we seemed to be on the point of receiving the punishment due to our sins, and when the Lord, instead of dealing with us as we deserved, spared us? Ought not such forbearance to win our love? There was a dying girl who first learned to love the Savior from reading the account of his treatment of this sinful woman. Though she had never committed open transgressions, she knew she was a sinner, and needed pardon. When she read this history, she felt that Jesus was infinitely gracious, and she believed that he would not cast her out.

June 9

John 8:12-20. Christ declares that the Father is his witness.

We behold our blessed Savior again surrounded by those enemies who had so lately retreated ashamed from his presence. The officers had refused to take him, after hearing him invite the thirsty to come and drink. But the Pharisees persisted in their wicked designs, though they heard him say, "I am the light of the world--he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Instead of following

the light, they accused him of speaking falsehood, and insolently said, "You bear record of yourself--your record is not true." They referred to words Jesus had once uttered, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," (John 5:31,) but by this he meant, "If I only bear witness of myself, and have no other witness, then my record is not true." But He had another witness, even the Father, who had declared by a voice from heaven that Jesus was his beloved Son, and who had enabled him to do astonishing miracles.

The Pharisees scornfully inquired, "Where is your Father?" How different from the request which an apostle afterwards made, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us!" These unbelieving Jews did not desire to know the Father; yet they thought they knew him already. Jesus told them plainly, "You neither know me, nor my Father." Would He say this to any of us, if He were now to speak to us? No reasonable creature can be happy, who does not know his Creator.

If we were not sinful creatures, the first desire of our hearts would be to know God. A child desires to see his parent. If a mother were to tell her little son that his father, who had long been absent in a distant country, would soon return, would not the child be glad? But if the child were willful and wayward, and had heard that his father would restrain him from fulfilling his sinful inclinations, in that case he would not desire to see him return. Men have heard that God hates evil, and therefore they do not desire to know Him.

If they were not sinful, they would learn to know him from the works of creation. It is written, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it unto them." (Rom. 1:19.) How has he showed it unto them? "By the things that are made." By the earth, and sea, the sun, moon, and stars; by the animals from the enormous whale that agitates the ocean, down to the tiny insect that floats in the breeze. But men did not gain the knowledge of God by the works of creation. "They glorified him not as God." The works of Providence are even greater than those of creation. It is of those works that David speaks in the Psalms, when he says, "How great are your works!" (Ps. 92:5.) If men were not sinful, they would learn to know God from the works of Providence. Paul said to the Athenians, God "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." (Acts 17:26, 27.) But did men feel after him? No--they wandered farther and farther from him.

But in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son.

And why did He send Him? That He might teach us to know God. And all who believe in Jesus Christ know the Father. They know Him to be the God of holiness, and yet of mercy; so holy, that he will not clear the guilty; and yet so merciful, that he will pardon the vilest sinner who trusts in the blood of his Son. But they never could have known Him, if Jesus had not come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and died upon the cross for their sins.

Do we know God? Do we desire to know him? How dreadful it would be to hear the Lord Jesus at the judgment-day declare, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also." No one will be able to reply, "I desired to know God, but could not find him." O no, all who seek to know Him, shall find Him.

June 10

John 8:21-27. Christ warns his enemies against dying in their sins.

The Lord Jesus plainly told his disciples in their retired conversations, that he should be crucified; but he did not speak so plainly to his enemies--he only gave them hints concerning his approaching death. When he said, "I go my way," they understood him not. At last they formed a conjecture concerning his meaning, and said, "Will he kill himself?" They did not venture to put the question to the Lord himself, but consulted with each other on the subject. He knew their thoughts, and by his reply showed that he had alluded to his death. He would not indeed kill himself. Those who with wicked tongues now insulted him, with wicked hands would slay him. He would die upon the cross, but far worse would be the manner of their death--they would die--perhaps, in a bed, surrounded by weeping friends, but--in their sins.

When the Lord said to his enemies, "You are from beneath," he did not mean to say that they had ever lived with Satan in hell; but he meant that they partook of the nature of Satan, and were like him in pride, and hatred, and unbelief. All the inhabitants of this world are divided into two classes--of one it may be said, they are from beneath; of the other it may be declared, they are from above, having been born again by the Holy Spirit. An old writer observes, that though the children of different families are mingled in the day, when night comes on they return home to their fathers' houses. When the night of death comes, the children of Satan will go to their father's dark and horrible abode, and the children of God will go to their Father's light and glorious abode. And where shall we go? Remember the words of Jesus, "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins."

There is only one way of becoming the child of God--it is by believing in Jesus. The Jews scornfully inquired, "Who are you?" Let us humbly ask the same question. Let us say as Saul did when Jesus spoke to him from heaven, "Who are you, Lord?" He will reveal himself to all who desire to know him. He left his Father's house to seek us who were wandering about this world. He desires to bring us to his home. There is room for us, as well as for Him, in the palace of the great King. He said to his beloved apostles, "In my Father's house are many mansions." When night comes on it will be delightful to go to such a home. But what would it be to feel in dying that we were not going to God! A woman who had lived a careless life, expressed no fears on her dying bed, until the last day and night of her life arrived. Then she was heard to cry out repeatedly, "I am going, I am going--but not to God."

June 11

John 8:28-42. He instructs the new believers.

We have followed the Savior through scenes of contempt and insult; but at length we hear, that while he rebuked his enemies, many believed on him. The Lord did not overlook these new believers. As the mother bestows unceasing care, and peculiar tenderness on her infant, especially when so weakly that its life seems doubtful; so the Savior turned towards those who had just embraced the truth, and addressed to them words of counsel and encouragement. Are there any of us who need such instruction? Let us consider the counsels of the all-wise Savior to his weak followers.

"If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Continuance is the difficulty. To believe for a little while will not save the soul. There are many stony-ground hearers, who receive the word with joy. There are many thorny-ground hearers, who bring forth fruit, but not to perfection. These do not continue in the word.

What blessings are promised to those who, in spite of enemies, and temptations, and afflictions, continue in the word! Christ said to them, "The truth shall make you free." Are we not free by nature? Men think they are free--that they can do what they will, and be what they please. But they are deceived. The Jews

misunderstood the nature of the freedom of which Jesus spoke--they thought that he spoke of national freedom. But they did not even possess that freedom; for though they said, "We were never in bondage to any man," the assertion was not true--at that very time they were in bondage to the Romans, and paid taxes to the Roman emperor.

But it was not of national freedom that Jesus spoke; he meant the freedom of the spirit. All sinners are slaves. "Whoever commits sin is the servant (or slave) of sin." Satan has power over the spirits of sinners. He stirs up the evil passions of their hearts, and urges them to commit sinful actions. God restrains him in the exercise of his power; but He has not yet deprived him of it. How then can sinners be made free? By believing in the Son of God. Then their chains fall off, their cruel master flees, and their gracious deliverer adopts them into his family.

A little parable seems to be contained in our Lord's discourse. In one large house there dwell together a numerous family. God is the master of this house, and knows the character of each member. This house contains all those who profess to believe in Christ. But some of its inhabitants are really the slaves of Satan, while some are the children of God. Shall Satan's slaves always remain in the house? No! they shall be cast out. But the children of God shall never quit their father's roof. "The servant abides not in the house forever; but the son abides ever." And when the servants of Satan are cast out, then the children of God shall ascend to the upper room, where their Father unveils his glorious countenance, and invites his elder sons and daughters to partake of the heavenly feast.

June 12

John 8:43-50. Christ accuses his enemies of being the children of Satan.

It may well excite dismay in the bosom of a human creature to hear these words; "You are of your father the devil." A faithful minister once preached from these words in a village church, to a numerous congregation of very poor people. Great was the consternation with which some of them heard, for the first time, that those who lived in sin were the children of the devil. Poor neighbors met one another, and lamented with tears over the dreadful truth. Nor did they lament or weep in vain; for some who were then the children of wrath, became by faith the children of God. One of these blessed converts, in extreme old age, would often lift up her withered hands, and thank God for having shown her the danger she was in.

And what are the marks by which the children of Satan may be known? The marks are the features of their father. He was a murderer and a liar from the beginning--even from that dreadful and mysterious hour when he departed from the truth; for he was created in the truth. God, who created all things, can create nothing evil; therefore Satan and all the wicked angels were originally good. How evil sprang up in them, no human creature knows; it is a deep mystery, not revealed to us. It is sufficient for us to know that Satan was good--that he became evil, and will continue so forever. After his fall, he was a murderer, and sought to murder the souls of Adam and Eve, by tempting them to sin, and to murder in them the whole human race--for in Adam all die. So dreadful a crime was never again perpetrated upon earth, until--Satan's own children, at the instigation of their father, murdered the Son of God, who came down from heaven to save sinners.

Satan is not a murderer only; he is also a liar. He commits his murders by means of lies--he used a lie to murder Eve, when he said, "You shall not surely die." And still he murders by lies; for he tempts men by deceiving them. He persuades them that sin will make them happy, and that it is not dangerous. Above all, he speaks lies of God. He endeavored to set Adam and Eve against their best Friend, by slanders; for he

said that God had forbidden them to eat of the fruit of the tree, because He feared they should become wise.

Satan still speaks lies of God, representing him as a God whose service is bondage, whose promises are unfaithful, and whose threatenings are uncertain. Thus men are induced to keep at a distance from God. As long as men believe Satan's lies, they cannot hear God's words, or understand the Bible. But Jesus came to undeceive us, and to defend his Father's character. Why will not men believe his report? Shall we still be deceived by the lies of Satan, when Jesus tells us the truth! Satan has deceived all who have trusted in him; the Son of God has never deceived one. Who ever heard of a dying believer exclaiming, "I have been deceived--I trusted in the Savior, and I have found his promises vain?" No true believer, however afflicted, has spoken thus. All dying Christians have said by their looks, and many by their words, "He is a faithful God."

June 13

John 8:51 to end. Christ speaks of Abraham.

One of the most precious promises ever made, was received with the most insulting contempt. The Lord declared, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." The Jews replied, "Now we know you have a devil." If they had not been themselves the children of Satan, they would not have uttered such language. They did not choose to understand the meaning of the promise. They said, "The prophets are dead." But to what did our Lord refer when he said, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death?" He did not speak of the separation of soul and body. That is not death to the righteous, for the soul rests with God, while the body sleeps in the grave. He spoke of another death, called the second death. It is the separation of soul and body from God forever and ever. That is death. None shall taste it who keep Christ's saying. What saying? His saying concerning himself, that He is the Son of God and the Savior of men. For on another occasion he declared, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life."

When the Jews insolently inquired, "Whom make you yourself?" the Lord did not choose to tell them plainly who He was; but he told them who they were NOT. They professed to be the children of God. But Jesus told them that because they said "He is our God," they were "liars." How dreadful is the situation of that man who cannot say, "My God," without uttering a falsehood! We pity the child who cannot say to any living person, "My father," or "My mother;" but how much more ought we to pity the soul who cannot look up to heaven and say, "My God!"

What a testimony Jesus bore to his faithful servant Abraham! He said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." The great joy of Abraham's life was not his beloved Isaac, but his more beloved Savior. it was that promised Son who was the chief object of his faith. When God said, "In your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," then he looked forward to the coming of the Savior of the world. Then "he believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness." Even Abraham was saved, not by his own righteousness, but by the righteousness of another. Like us, he was by nature a child of wrath, and it was by grace he became the friend of God, and the father of believers.

The Jews continued to distort the words of Jesus. Because he said, that Abraham had seen his day, they said, "Have you seen Abraham?" who had lived two thousand years before. And what was the Savior's reply? He did not say, "I have seen Abraham;" he said much more than that. He did not say, "Before Abraham I was." He said more than that. "Before Abraham was, I am." The expression "I am," gives the

idea of an existence that had no beginning, and will have no end. Such is God--the first and the last. No human understanding can grasp the idea of existence without beginning and without ending. But let us rejoice in the thought that before we were God existed. He ever lived. No plans could be formed against us, before He had arranged everything concerning us! "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18.)

June 14

Luke 10:17-20. The return of the seventy disciples.

In the first verse of this chapter it is recorded that the Lord sent out seventy disciples to preach. Now we hear of their return.

While they had been visiting the towns and villages, their Lord had been engaged in teaching at Jerusalem. We have heard to what trials he was exposed in that wicked city from the scoffs of his enemies. How great must have been the relief to his sorrowful spirit, when he found himself again in the midst of his attached followers! The messengers returned with joy. They rejoiced because the devils had been subject unto them through Christ's name. The Savior seems to have partaken of their joy when he uttered these mysterious words--"I beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven." Could any sight be more suited to occasion joy to Satan's great enemy and conqueror? When a cruel tyrant is slain, the captives in his dungeons are set free. An interesting account has been written of the destruction of the Inquisition at Madrid in 1809. The wicked men who ruled over that dreadful prison were slaughtered by the French soldiers. At the same time the dungeons were visited, and were found full of miserable captives. Those who had been for many years pining under the fear of death, were suddenly restored to the light of day, and to all the enjoyments of life. Great was the joy felt by the soldiers who wrought this great deliverance!

But who can conceive the joy that our Savior felt when he looked forward to the consequences of Satan's downfall! Already the people of God are delivered from his power. The day shall come when the old serpent will deceive the nations no more. At the end of the world he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and "shall be tormented day and night forever." (Rev. 20:10.) This deliverance Jesus obtained for us by his own death.

Christ gave his disciples power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Did He mean literal serpents or spiritual serpents? Did He not mean both? The disciples were shielded from the attacks of all venomous creatures. In our Lord's parting charge he said to them--"These signs shall follow them that believe--they shall take up serpents." (Mark 16:18.) In the same charge he said also, "In my name they shall cast out devils." Christ must have alluded to Satan and his angels when he spoke of "all the power of the enemy."

Well might the disciples rejoice in the wonderful gifts they possessed. Yet they had a greater cause for joy. Their names were written in heaven. The Lamb has a book of life, in which he has written the names of all who shall never taste the second death. It contains not only the names of the apostles, but of all who love Jesus. As a father writes down in his great Family Bible the names of all his children, so God writes down in the book of his remembrance the names of all His children. A father may some day have to read, with a sigh and with a tear, the list of his family; but Jesus shall never lose one of the members of His family; they shall live forever who are written in the book of life. Is it our chief desire to have our names written there? If this be our supreme desire, we must be saved. Those who perish, perish because they will not come and ask for life.

O that this dreadful sentence might awaken those who are now unconcerned about their precious souls! "Whoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15.)

June 15

Luke 10:21-24. The Savior's joy.

A man's character is shown by the causes of his grief and of his joy! We might learn to know ourselves better than we do, if each would inquire, "What are the things that please, and grieve me most?" We shall find that we are by nature selfish--that we are too much concerned about the events that befall ourselves, and too little about those that befall our fellow-creatures. Above all, we are naturally indifferent to the glory of God. None, except those who are converted, care in the least degree whether God is honored or despised.

The object that lay nearest the Savior's heart was the glory of his Father. He rejoiced in spirit, because his Father had revealed to babes the things concerning Himself, for by this means the glory of God is increased. If the wise and learned alone were saved, it would seem as if they had saved themselves by their own wisdom and learning; but when it is babes chiefly who are saved, then it is clear that God saved them by His great power. Those are compared to babes whom the world esteems foolish and ignorant. Most of the disciples were chosen from among such people. The world called Peter and John unlearned. (Acts 4:13.) The apostle Paul was not unlearned; but he did not trust to his own wisdom, but came like a babe to learn of Jesus. None can explain the manner in which God teaches the soul. We do know the subject of his teaching--it is Himself. We are by nature unacquainted with God. To know Him is the great object of life. To die without knowing Him is to perish. The Savior, in his prayer just before he was crucified, said to his Father, "This is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

No man comes to Jesus until he has heard and learned of the Father. Then he goes as a penitent sinner to the Savior. How does Jesus receive him? He has declared, "Him that comes unto me I will in nowise cast out." He teaches the sinner to know the Father; He shows him the Father's love in sending his Son to be the Savior of the world; he shows it to the heart, as well as to the understanding. It is with the heart we know our friends; it is with the heart we must know God. How different is the feeling that we have when we have become intimate with a person, from that which we experience when we have only heard him described, and have not known him ourselves!

We may hear a great deal about God, but until we listen to his voice speaking to our hearts we cannot know Him. It is sweet to hear him say, "Seek my face," but sweeter still to hear him declare, "You are mine." Then the heart, moved by the Spirit, answers as David did, "Lord, your face will I seek," and "You are my God."

Jesus has observed every desire that has ever entered into the heart of his creatures, and he remembers those of his servants of old. The ancient prophets desired to know him; there were even kings who esteemed the knowledge of God far above their earthly treasures. Such were the feelings of the great Melchisedek, and of the victorious David. But while they were on earth they never knew as much of God as the apostles did while they lived; nor did they ever hear as much as we have heard. Is it our desire to know Him better than we do? He observes the desires of our hearts--and he would be pleased to see in us the same feeling that Moses had, when he said, "I beseech you, show me your glory."

June 16

Luke 10:25-37. The good Samaritan.

This lawyer, who came to Jesus, was a man whose office it was to study the law of God, and to explain it to others. It was therefore to be supposed that he understood it well himself. And he did understand the letter of it, but not the spirit. He knew the words of the law, but he was ignorant of their spiritual application.

He came with the wicked intention of ensnaring Jesus, by asking him questions that should lead him to give some answer contrary to what Moses had written. But how completely was he foiled in his design! Instead of answering his question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" the Lord asked him another question, "How read you?" thus showing that he approved what was written by Moses.

The lawyer gave a correct answer. He said that the duty of man consisted in the love of God and the love of his neighbor. But what is this love? It far surpasses man's ideas. Let the angels tell us from their high abodes in glory, what it is to love God. It is to delight in him perpetually, to show forth his praise, and to do his will without weariness and without fault. What is the love of the neighbor? Jesus explained it in the beautiful history of the good Samaritan. On whom had the Samaritan mercy? On a Jew--a man of a nation whom he had been brought up to detest. Neither did he act from a sense of duty alone; he had compassion on the poor traveler--he paid him immediate attention--he treated him with tenderness, binding up his wounds--he expended his property upon him, "pouring in oil and wine," he incurred fatigue, and perhaps loss of rest, for he took care of him at night. He made provision for his future comfort, by leaving twopence (or two days' wages of a laborer) with the innkeeper, and promised to pay whatever greater sum might be spent, putting no limits on the amount, though he could not know how long the sufferer might languish. And all this he did for a stranger! What must that man be to his friend and his brother, who treats a stranger with such generous kindness!

But if we are inclined to think the Samaritan overstepped his duty, let us remember the words of Jesus, "Go you and do likewise." And when we have done it, we shall still be unprofitable servants, and have only done what it was our duty to do. Remember, remember what HE did for us, who gives the command. The Samaritan showed mercy to a stranger, but he showed mercy to his enemies. And what mercy! He bore the wrath and curse of God to save us from destruction. None of us could bear what he did. But if we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we shall walk in his steps.

There are at this moment in South Africa, two Moravian missionaries, who have gone to spend their days in a hospital for lepers among pitiable objects, whose hands and feet are falling off. No one who ever enters that hospital is permitted to leave it. The missionaries saw the door close upon them, and felt content to be banished from human society for the sake of the poor sufferers within.

Let us not be satisfied with admiring the devoted conduct of these men; but let us seek for objects on whom to show mercy. Do we know of none to whom we can be kind? Is there no fatherless child who needs our help? No widow, no stranger, no sufferer, whom we could comfort? Perhaps today we may meet with one that we never heard of before. May God put into our hearts the love that dwells in his own, that we may act kindly to every afflicted person we see this day.

June 17

Luke 10:28 to end. Martha and Mary.

When a monarch enters into the house of one of his subjects, his looks are observed in order to discover what objects pleased him, his words are treasured up, his minutest actions are noticed and remembered. If the Son of God were to enter into the family of a true believer, with what anxiety would his looks, his words, his actions, be watched! Every sincere disciple would seek with trembling eagerness to ascertain whether the Lord approved his conduct.

And did not those who loved Jesus when he was on earth, experience these feelings? When they saw him approach their dwellings, they must have longed to obtain his company, and when he was seated beneath their roofs, they must have used their utmost endeavors to do him honor. The Lord's visits were, no doubt, hailed with delight by the beloved family of Bethany. Both Martha and Mary desired to please their heavenly guest, but they acted in a very different manner. Martha was so little acquainted with his mind, that she endeavored to provide a sumptuous entertainment; while Mary sat at his feet and heard his word. In the east it is the custom to sit upon the ground or on low couches; therefore there was nothing unusual in Mary's posture. While one sister was listening with devout attention to the words of Jesus, the other was offended because she was left alone to prepare the feast. So confident did she feel of the acceptableness of her services, that she believed the Lord would reprove her sister for not helping her. She said to the Lord, "Do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" If she had been of a more loving spirit, she would have gladly served alone, that her sister at least might enjoy the Savior's instructions.

How many Christians fall into Martha's error! They imagine that much pomp and parade and splendor in religious worship are honorable to God, and they expend strength, and time, and money, in promoting these objects, while they lose many precious opportunities of growing in the knowledge of Christ--and, not content with acting in this manner themselves, they often blame those who devote their chief attention to the word of God.

How beautiful an example does Mary afford to those who are unjustly accused by their fellow-Christians! She remained silent, and left it to her Lord to answer for her.

Perhaps Martha was surprised at receiving reproof instead of commendation. The sister she blamed was praised, and the conduct she thought so admirable was censured. The Lord will pronounce many sentences at the last day that will surprise even his sincere followers. Though Martha was careful, and troubled about many things, we know that she was a real believer, but she had not so enlightened a mind or so devoted a heart as her meek and lowly sister.

Mary cared as much as Martha for the comfort and honor of her Lord. On another occasion she showed her love by expending her choicest treasures upon his precious body, for she poured the ointment on his head just before his death and burial. But she knew that the day-spring from on high had visited us, "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," and she opened her heart to receive those living beams.

Do we desire to enjoy the light of life? Let us get alone with Jesus, and speak to him in prayer, and hear what he will say to us in his word.

June 18

Luke 11:1-13. Christ encourages his disciples to pray.

How blessed must have been those seasons in which the Savior engaged in prayer with his beloved disciples! Once we find him praying with them on the mount of transfiguration--at another time in the garden of Gethsemane. On this occasion the name of the place is not recorded. Surely that was hallowed ground, where the Son of God offered up on the spotless altar of his heart the pure incense of prayer and praise.

After hearing his prayers, the disciples felt conscious of their own inability to pray. They were, like us, compassed with infirmities, and knew not what to pray for as they ought. In the spirit of little children they said to their Master, "Teach us to pray." This petition was pleasing to their Lord--it was immediately granted. The prayer he now taught them he had uttered in their presence when he delivered his sermon on the mount; but the disciples needed repeated instructions. It is a prayer for all that can make a human soul happy; no, more--it is a prayer for all that can make the universe happy.

The first three petitions may be called prayers for God, as it is written in the Psalms--"Prayer also shall be made for him continually." (Psalm 72:15.) The happiness of the universe depends upon God being established upon his throne. All creation would be filled with joy, if the name of the great and holy God were hallowed; if his kingdom were come; if his will were done; as it is written--"Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for He comes to judge the earth." Were any other being raised to this exalted state, he would neither be happy himself, nor would he make his fellow-creatures happy. No being but God is fit to be adored, to reign over all worlds, and to do what He will. Satan once aspired to sit in the seat of God--and what was the consequence? He became eternally wretched, and he plunged a host of his angelic companions in the same misery.

There are some petitions in this prayer suitable for fallen man alone, in all his weakness and his woe. We are made of clay, and we need bread; therefore we say, "Give us our daily bread." We have sinned, and we need pardon; therefore we say, "Forgive us our trespasses." We are liable to be conquered by sin and Satan, and we need deliverance from their power, and we cry, "Deliver us from evil."

If our hearts are in tune with this prayer, they are right in the sight of God. The unconverted never feel desirous for the things mentioned in this prayer, except for their daily bread. And are they satisfied with daily bread? O no! they are not content with necessary things, with food, clothing, and a shelter from the storm; they entertain a thousand exorbitant wishes; they desire pleasure, or praise, or wealth, or some other worldly gift which God has not promised to bestow. Instead of cherishing these unreasonable wishes, the Christian longs for the pardon of his sins, and for his deliverance from the evil one. Will these desires be granted? Will an ungracious friend arise to grant a request that is urged in an earnest manner? And shall a gracious God refuse to hear fervent prayer? Will a sinful father give bread, and not a stone to a hungry child; a fish, and not a serpent; an egg, and not a scorpion? And shall our Holy Father give hell to those who ask for heaven? Since the beginning of the world He has never treated one of his children in this manner, and He never will.

June 19

Luke 9:37-44. Christ exposes the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees.

We never hear of the Savior refusing to visit those who besought his company. Yet no scene could have been more trying to his feelings than a Pharisee's house. The society of publicans and sinners was less revolting to Him than that of proud self-righteous Pharisees.

One of his first actions gave offence to his host. Knowing that the Pharisees imagined that washing their hands before dinner rendered them holy, He purposely neglected to observe this custom. The ruling desire of the Pharisees was the praise of men. No person can desire earnestly both the praise of men and the praise of God; for no man can serve two masters. Just in proportion as we seek honor from men, we shall be indifferent to honor from God. The reward the Pharisees sought was, a high place in the world's esteem. They loved the uppermost seats in the synagogue; (for the most learned and respected among the Jews were permitted to read the law on the Sabbath-days in their sacred assemblies.) When they entered the marketplace, the Pharisees were gratified at receiving tokens of veneration from the multitude; they were constantly seeking the gratification of their pride; and whether in the house of God, or in the public throng, they were thirsting for human honor.

What were the means they pursued in order to obtain it? They diligently observed all the forms of religion--they fasted and made long prayers, and even insisted on giving a tenth of the smallest herbs to the priests. But they neglected all secret duties. They were so much occupied in pleasing men, that they never thought about pleasing God. Secret prayers, secret charities, secret acts of justice, secret feelings of love to God--of all these they knew nothing.

To what did the Lord compare these vain-glorious men? To cups and covered dishes, that looked bright outside, but were full of corruption within--and to graves that were grown over with grass, but that contained dead men's bones.

Are not each of us conscious that we have, by nature, a strong desire for the praise of men, and no desire for the praise of God? This is one of the effects of the Fall. Angels are not coveting the admiration of their companions in bliss; their eyes are fixed upon their Father's face, and in His smile they live and rejoice.

What confusion it would introduce into heaven were a creature to enter there who wishes to be admired! He would find, that though all the blessed inhabitants love one another, that they admire God alone, and are perpetually engaged in singing, "Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." (Rev. 5:13.) How dejected a Pharisee would feel in such a scene!

Does our happiness depend upon our being noticed and honored? If it do, we are not fit for heaven. Job said, "Behold, I am vile." Isaiah said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Abraham said, he was but dust and ashes; David, that he was shaped in iniquity; and Paul, that he was the chief of sinners. Yet these were some of the brightest saints who ever lived upon earth. Do we feel, as they did, unworthy of favor and honor? The wicked boast, "I am not polluted; I am innocent." (Jer. 2:23, 35.) Some even dare to say to their fellow-sinners, "Stand by yourself, for I am holier than you." (Is. 65:5.) What does God say of such proud sinners? "They are a smoke in my nose." But of a penitent, washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed in his righteousness, He speaks thus--"His beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Hos. 14:6.)

June 20

Luke 11:45 to end. Christ exposes the wickedness of the lawyers.

The meek and lowly Jesus took no pleasure in denouncing woes upon sinners, but he was too faithful to conceal from them his abhorrence of their crimes.

Among the guests at the Pharisee's house there were some lawyers. They were Scribes of the highest order, whose office it was to explain the law of God to the people. One of them having heard Jesus say, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," (verse 44,) replied, "Master, thus saying, you reproach us also." Reproof was by him considered as reproach. Instead of confessing his sin, and seeking pardon, he only desired to justify himself.

The Lord did not leave these Scribes in ignorance of what particular parts of their conduct he condemned. He mentioned three glaring sins which they committed.

(Verse 46.) "You lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and you yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." This was the first sin reproved. These lawyers taught the people that they must do many difficult things to please God, such as fasting, washing often, making long prayers; but they did not trouble themselves to do the same.

The second sin reproved was "building the sepulchers of the prophets." But how was this a sin? It was one branch of the hypocrisy of the Scribes. They did not build the sepulchers of prophets, because they loved their holy characters, but because they thought, that by doing honor to the pious dead, they should appear pious themselves. It was evident they really approved of their fathers' persecutions of the prophets. And how was it evident? Because they persecuted the living prophets. They added to their guilt, when, while their hearts were burning with anger against John the Baptist, or against the Lord Jesus, they desired that a monument should be raised to Elijah, or to some other old prophet. It is easy to praise the dead; they cannot offend us by their faithful reproofs, nor shame us by their holy examples. Many praise the reformers and martyrs of ancient days, who hate the

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