

Evening Thoughts - March

by Octavius Winslow

The sovereignty of God and the free grace of the Spirit's operation are essential for understanding the nature of salvation and the believer's relationship with God.

Scripture: Romans 9:15

Topics: "Sovereignty Of God", "Grace and Election"

Description

Octavius Winslow emphasizes the sovereignty and grace of God in his sermon 'Evening Thoughts - March', illustrating how God's mercy is bestowed according to His divine will, independent of human merit. He encourages believers to recognize their election and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit, which leads to sanctification and a deeper understanding of God's love. Winslow highlights the importance of humility and reliance on God's grace, urging Christians to embrace their identity as chosen vessels of His mercy. He reassures the faithful that their struggles and afflictions are shared by Christ, who sympathizes with their suffering and guides them through life's trials.

Transcript

EVENING THOUGHTS, or

DAILY WALKING WITH GOD

MARCH 1.

For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Romans 9:15

THERE is a sovereignty in all the works and dealings of God. If it be asked, what God's own definition of His sovereignty is, we refer the inquirer to His words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Here is the Sovereign! How like Himself He speaks! He carries forward His gracious purposes of infinite wisdom and love--chooses or rejects--reveals or withholds, "working all things after the counsel of His own will," and "giving no account," either to angels or to men, "of any of His matters." We will not expand this part of the subject, by citing the numerous examples of this truth which abound in the Scriptures. We would urge the reader to examine the cases of Jacob and Esau--the Publican and Pharisee--Saul of Tarsus and the men who journeyed with him--the two thieves upon the cross--and mark, if the sovereignty of the Divine choice, and the operation of the Eternal Spirit, are not written out in their histories as with a sunbeam.

Is the reader a child of God? Then we will not confine him to the word of Divine truth. We summon him as a witness to the sovereignty of the blessed Spirit's operation. "You are my witnesses," says God. Who and what made you to differ? You have been taken out of your family, your kindred, your friends, your companions. From this circle you alone have been selected, called, and made a child of grace, an heir of glory. The others, where are they? Still dead in trespasses and sin. Where are they? Living in the world, and to the world--lovers of pleasure, lovers of self, lovers of sin, hating God, rejecting Christ, and warring against the Spirit speaking to them in the word, through providences, and by the conscience. Where are they? Bursting through every restraint, and bending their footsteps down to the doom of the lost. Where are they? Gone, many of them, into eternity--past the confines of mercy, "in hell lifting up their eyes, being in torments." And what are you? A sinner saved by grace--a sinner chosen and called, pardoned and justified, washed and clothed, adopted and sanctified--brought to the foot of the cross, constrained to welcome Jesus, to take up His cross, and to follow Him. Oh the electing love of God! Oh the distinguishing grace of Jesus! Oh the sovereign operation of the Eternal Spirit! "Who are you, O man, that replies against God?" Bow down to the sovereignty of His will--silently wonder, and adore Him who says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Has my reader hitherto found this doctrine a "hard saying"? Has he been prone to cavil at it, or passed it by? I would with all meekness and affection urge him seriously, candidly, and prayerfully to examine it by the light of the Divine word--to cavil not at it, lest he be found to "fight against God;"--to pass it not by, lest he "grieve the Spirit," and rob his own soul of an inestimable blessing. Oh precious truth! It stains the pride of human merit--it lays the axe at the root of self--it humbles and abases--it empties and lays "low in a low place," and ascribes all the praise, honor, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion of the new creation in the soul to the Triune God.

MARCH 2.

So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. Rom. 9:16

INTIMATELY connected with the sovereignty, is the free grace of the Spirit's operation. No worthiness of the creature allures Him to the sinner's breast. What worthiness can be supposed to exist--what merit in an adjudged criminal--an outlawed rebel--a poor insolvent--one whose mind is enmity, whose heart is swelling with treason against God, His government, and His Son--one who owes ten thousand talents, and has "nothing to pay"? None whatever. And that the Eternal Spirit should enter the heart of such an one--convincing of sin--subduing the hatred--breaking down the rebellion--leading to Jesus, and sealing pardon and peace upon the conscience--oh! what but free grace--unmerited mercy--sovereign love, could thus have constrained Him? In exercising his sovereignty in conversion, let none suppose that that which decides Him in the selection of His subject is anything more worthy, or more lowly He discovers in one than in another. Oh no! He often selects the poorest, the vilest, the most depraved and fallen, as if utterly to explode all idea of human merit, and to reflect in its richest luster the free grace of His heart.

Behold, then, the grace of the blessed Spirit's operation, He comes--He knocks--He unbars--He enters, and creates all things new, irrespective of any merit of the creature, if merit that may be called, which is so wretched and poor, that language fails adequately to describe it. Oh the riches of His grace! How it is magnified--how it is illustrated--how it shines in the calling of a poor sinner! "Lord, what did you see in me," exclaims the convinced soul, "that moved You with compassion, that drew You to my breast, and that constrained You to make me Your temple?" Nothing, on my part, but poverty, wretchedness, and misery--on Your part, nothing but love, sovereignty, and unmerited favor." Reader, turn not from this

glorious feature of the blessed Spirit's operation; it glorifies God, while it humbles man--it exalts Jesus on the ruins of the creature.

Poor in spirit, blessed are you! You are rich in your poverty--you are exalted in your lowliness. All the love that is in God--all the grace that is in Jesus--and all the tenderness that is in the Spirit, all, all is for you. Lift up your head, then, and let your heart sing for gladness. Though poor, though nothing, though despised, though worthless in your own eyes--ah! and in the eyes of the vaunting Pharisee--yet for you Jehovah pours out all the treasures of His grace--gave His well-beloved Son, and sent His blessed Spirit. "All things are yours," you poor in spirit, you broken in heart--"all things are yours." How vast the compass of your blessings! "All things are yours; for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Oh, could you know how dear you are to the heart of God--could you know with what tenderness Jesus yearns over you--how the blessed Spirit delights to make you His dwelling-place, you would rejoice in that you are made low. "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

MARCH 3.

I will never forget your precepts: for with them you have quickened me. Psalm 119:93.

IT is no small attainment to arrive at the full belief of the heart in the truth of the Divine record. I speak not now of the historical credence which an enlightened judgment may yield--I speak of a higher faith than this. Nor do I confine myself to that entire assent of the mind, and trembling belief of the heart, upon the grounds of which the soul may have ventured an humble reliance upon Christ, although this is no small attainment; but I allude to that firm, unmoved, and immoveable belief of the truth, which is often an after-work--a work of time and of deep experience, before the heart becomes thoroughly schooled in it. Let me not be supposed to undervalue the smallest degree of faith. To believe that God's word is true, and on the strength of that belief to be willing to renounce all other dependence, and to rest simply and implicitly upon its revealed plan of salvation, is a blessed attainment--an attainment only to be realized by the power of the Holy Spirit; but, to know it from a deep experience of its sanctifying power, from the heartfelt preciousness and fulfilment of its promises, from its sustaining and soothing influence in sorrow, its all-sufficient light in darkness and perplexity--to be brought to trust the naked promise because God has spoken it--to believe, and to go forward, because he has said it, is a still higher step in faith's ladder, and a more illustrious display of the grace and power of the Spirit.

It is an unspeakable mercy to be well grounded in the belief of the truth. Let those speak who have thus been blessedly taught. Let them testify that God's word was, when they first believed, as a sealed book, compared with what it now is--that since they have advanced in the Divine life, led and instructed by the Spirit of truth, it has opened to their minds with all the light and freshness of a new revelation; doctrines, once mysterious, are now beautifully lucid--promises, once unfelt, are now sweetly consolatory--precepts, once insipid, are now powerfully persuasive. And to what is this maturity in the full belief of the truth to be ascribed? We unhesitatingly reply, the witness of the Spirit--the Holy Spirit deepening His work in the heart, teaching the soul more experimentally, and guiding it more fully into all truth--in a word, bringing the truth to the mind with a more realizing and convincing power.

MARCH 4.

Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1 John 3:9

THESE words have received two interpretations, both of which we believe are equally true. The more general one is, that he who is born of God does not willingly sin, having "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," he cannot sin with the full consent and concurrence of the will. He hates it, he fights against it, he resists it. But it may be inquired, is not all sin an act of the will? We reply, not the renewed will. The apostle speaks of two wills in a believer, or rather, the same will under two opposite influences. Thus, Rom. 7:15: "That which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Ver. 19: "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Few will question that Paul here speaks of himself as a regenerate man. And yet he refers to two antagonist principles dwelling in him--the one on the side of holiness, the other on the side of sin. "What I hate, that I do." No man can possibly hate sin, unless he is "born of the Spirit." "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." And still he says, "what I hate," the sin that is so abhorrent to me--"that I do." Is there volition in the act? True philosophy demands that we reply, "Yes." Every sin must be voluntary; if not so, it cannot be sin. Is there the concurrence and consent of the renewed will in the act? True grace demands that we reply, "No." "For what I hate,"--there is the mark of the regenerate man--"that do I,"--there is the act of the will under the influence of indwelling sin.

But there is another and a stronger interpretation of which the passage is susceptible. It is this--He that is born of God, as such, sins not at all--there is in him a regenerate soul, an indwelling, living principle of grace and holiness, whose natural and constant bias is to holiness. "He" (the new man) "cannot sin, because he is born of God." "He cannot sin;"--why? "because his seed remains in him;" and what is that seed? "Incorruptible,"--"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." In accordance with Christ's own words, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is spiritual, holy, "from above," "the Divine nature,"--it "cannot sin, because it is born of God."

Again, we beg the reader to mark this great evidence of regeneration. "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin." He does not commit it with the total, absolute, and complete assent and concurrence of the renewed will. He does not give himself over to sin "with greediness." He "would do good." He hates sin. Grace reigns, not sin. Sin dwells in him, but does not govern--it has power, but does not rule--it torments, but does not reign with a continued, unbroken supremacy; in accordance with the promise, "sin shall not have dominion over you." It may for a moment triumph, as it did in David, in Solomon, in Peter, and in a host of other eminently holy men; yet still the promise is verified, as we see in the restorings of the blessed Spirit in their spirit and conduct, in their humblings and confessions, and their holy and upright walk with God in after-years. Reader, have you ever been made sensible of the inward plague? What do you know of the warfare within--of "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh"? Your honest reply will decide the great question, whether you are born of God.

MARCH 5.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near unto God. Hebrews 7:19

THE Holy Spirit teaches the believer to plead the atoning blood of Christ. He puts this great and prevailing argument in his mouth; and when sin seems a mountain, when unbelief would suppress the aspiration, and a deep consciousness of unworthiness would cause the soul to "stand afar of," He opens to his view

this precious and encouraging truth, the prevalency of the blood of Jesus with God on behalf of His people. In a moment, the mountain is leveled, unbelief is checked, and the soul, unfettered and unrestrained, draws near to God, yes, to the bosom of its Father. What a view does this give us of the love of the Spirit, as the Author of prayer! Who has not experienced it who is not yet a stranger to the blessed exercise of communion with God? How often has guilt caused the head to hang down, and the sense of utter vileness and worthlessness has covered the soul with shame, and even the very destitution has kept back the believer, just as the penury, the wretched covering, the loathsomeness of the poor beggar have kept him from the door--then does the blessed Spirit, in the plenitude of His grace and tenderness, unfold Jesus to the soul, as being all that it needs to give it full, and free, and near access to God. He removes the eye from self, and fixes and fastens it upon the blood that pleads louder for mercy than all his sins can plead for condemnation; he brings, too, the righteousness near, which so clothes and covers the soul, as fits it to appear in the presence of the King of kings, not merely with acceptance, but with delight. Beholding him thus washed and clothed, God rests in his love, and rejoices over him with singing.

Nor must we overlook the understanding which subsists between God the Father and the Spirit. The Father, the searcher of hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit. He understands the desire and the meaning of the Spirit in the souls of His saints. He understands the "groanings which cannot be uttered." He can interpret their sighs, yes, He can read the meaning of their very desires. And, when feeling has been too deep for utterance, and thought too intent for expression, when the soul could but groan out its needs and requests, then has God understood the mind of the Spirit. Oh the inconceivable preciousness of a throne of grace! To have a God to go to, who knows the mind of the Spirit--a God who can interpret the groan, and read the language of desire--to have promise upon promise bidding the soul draw near; and when, from the fullness of the heart, the mouth has been dumb, and from the poverty of language, thought could not be expressed--that then, God, who searches the hearts, and knows what is the mind of the Spirit, should say, "Never did you, my child, pray to me as you did then--never was your voice so sweet, so powerful, so persuasive, never were you so eloquent as when my Spirit made intercession for you with groanings which you could not utter." It was, perhaps, your last resource; refuge failed you, no man cared for your soul; friends failed you, your heart failed you, all forsook you and fled; and, in your extremity, you did betake yourself to God, and He failed you not. You did find the throne of grace accessible; you did see a God of grace upon it, and the sweet incense of the Redeemer's precious merits going up; and you did draw near, and sigh, and groan, and breathe out your needs, and did say, "It is good for me to draw near to God." Yes! "He knows the mind of the Spirit." The secret desire for Jesus, the longing for Divine conformity, the hidden mourning over the existence and power of indwelling sin, the feeblest rising of the heart to God, the first sigh of the humble and contrite spirit, all are known to God. Oh let this encourage you, dear reader, when you feel you cannot pray by reason of the weakness of the flesh, or the depth of your feeling; if the Spirit is interceding in you, your heavenly Father knows the mind of the Spirit, and not a sigh or a groan can escape His notice.

MARCH 6.

For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. John 16:27

THERE is in us a secret tendency to partiality in our estimate of the cost of redemption. There is a proneness to keep out of sight the interest which the Father took in the salvation of His Church; and to look upon the work of the Son as though it originated and purchased all the love, the benevolence, and the allurings which God the Father is represented as manifesting towards His revolted but recovered family.

You have studied but imperfectly the wonders of redemption--have but partially seen its glories--with shallow line have fathomed its depth--and with feeble pinion have soared to its height, if you have not been accustomed to associate the Father's purpose of grace and love with every step which the Son took in working out the recovery of a lost Church. So used are we to fix our admiring and adoring gaze upon the incarnate Son--so used to attach our exclusive affections around Him who for us "loved not His life unto the death," as to come short of the stupendous and animating truth, that all the love, grace, and wisdom, which appear so conspicuous and so resplendent in salvation, have their fountain-head in the heart of God the Father!

May we not trace to the holding of this partial view, those hard and injurious thoughts of His character, and those crude and gloomy interpretations of His government, which so many of us bear towards Him? And was it not this contracted and shadowy conception of the Father, which Jesus so pointedly, yet so gently, rebuked in His disciples, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him." To this, His incredulous disciple still objected, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus says unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that has seen me, has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" What further testimony, and what more conclusive proof, need we? "He that has seen me, has seen the Father." Do we see the glory of Jesus beaming through the attempted concealment of His humanity?--it is the glory of the Father shining. Do we follow Jesus in His walks of mercy, and behold Him lavishing the exuberance of His tenderness and sympathy, upon the objects of misery and want, who thronged His way?--strange though it may seem, yet, in those displays of love, in those meltings of compassion, in that voice of mercy, and in those tears of sympathy, we see and hear the Father Himself. Do we contemplate the love of Jesus, laboring, suffering, dying?--we see the Father's love in equal vastness, strength, and intensity. He that has thus seen the Son, hath seen the Father also.

MARCH 7.

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 1 John 4:14

WOULD we breathe a syllable, or pen a line, tending to lessen your attachment to the Son? God forbid! Rather would we heighten your love, and elevate it to a standard never reached before. We claim for Christ your highest admiration and your supremest affection; and unhesitatingly declare, that there is not an object in the universe so worthy of them as He. But we are jealous of the Father's glory; and we wish to guide you through the channel to the Fountain from where it flows--even the eternal purpose, the everlasting love, the covenant mercy of God the Father. Here is the grand secret revealed, of God so loving the world. His love originated the salvation of His Church--the salvation of the Church did not originate His love. Do not think, then, that the work of Jesus was the procuring cause of God's love to sinners! Oh no! You do Him sore injustice and wrong if so you interpret His affection. He loved the Church long before He tore His Son from His bosom to die for it. There was the love, thirsting, panting, and longing for an outlet, and only finding it through the riven heart of Jesus. Oh! to see that every step which Jesus took to work out our redemption from the curse was in perfect harmony with the purpose, the mind, and the heart of the Father! He could, with all truth, say, as He travailed in soul, "I and my Father are one." "I do always those things which please Him." "The Father that dwells in me, He does the work." "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."

Behold, then, the Fountain of living waters! the infinite, the eternal, and inexhaustible Fountain--the Father's love! Do you now marvel at redemption? Do you now wonder at His un speakable gift? The

mystery is explained in the Father's love. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Learn, dear Christian reader, to include the Father in the affections that cluster around the Son. Eternally welled in His infinite heart was the love which constrained Him not to spare His own Son that He might spare you. Give to Him an equal place in your thoughts, your affections, your worship, and your service. Blend Him with every view which you take of Jesus. Associate His love who gave with every hallowed remembrance of His love who was given. And when you see the heart of the Son impaled upon the Roman's spear, think that it "pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief," for the love which He bore the Church.

MARCH 8.

But as he which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy. 1 Peter 1:15, 16

IF this motive to sanctification came clothed with such solemnity and power, and was so felt by the Jewish Church, what should be its authority and influence with the Church as it now exists! The increased power and solemnity of this motive is drawn from the more resplendent exhibition of God's holiness in the cross of Christ. With no such development of the Divine purity, as an argument to sanctification, were the saints of the Old Testament favored. But we possess it; so that if we continue in sin, after we have believed, we are "without excuse," and God is "clear when He judges." Here, in the cross, is God's grand demonstration of His holiness. Here has He, as it were, unveiled His great perfections, and shown what a sin-hating, holiness-loving God He is. What! could He not pass by His dear Son--did He give Him up to the "shame and the spitting,"--did He not withhold His "darling from the potter of the dog,"--did justice sheathe its sword in the heart of Jesus--did it smite the Shepherd? And why all this? The answer comes from Calvary, "I, the Lord, am a holy God." And then follows the precept--oh how touching!--"Be you holy, for I am holy." See how the justice of God (and what is the justice of God but His holiness in exercise?) revealed itself as a "consuming fire" on Calvary. Our dear Lord was "a whole burned-offering" for His people; and the fire that descended and consumed the sacrifice was the holiness of God in active and fearful process. Here, then, springs the solemn necessity for sanctification in the believer. The God he loves is holy--his Father is holy, and He has written out that holiness, in awful letters, in the cross of His well-beloved Son. "Be you holy, for I am holy." We must study God in Christ. There we see His holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, truth, love, and mercy, all unfolded in their richest glory and most benevolent exercise.

The necessity for sanctification also springs from the work of Christ. The Lord Jesus became incarnate and died as much for the sanctification as for the pardon and justification of His Church; as much for her deliverance from the indwelling power of sin as from the condemnatory power of sin. His work had been but partial and incomplete, had no provision been made for the holiness of the believer. But He came not only to blot out sin, but to rend asunder its chain--not only to remove its curse, but to break its scepter. The believer in Jesus may be but imperfectly aware how closely associated his sanctification is with the obedience and death of Christ. Yes, that the very death of Christ for sin out of him, is the death of sin in him--that no inroads are made upon the dominion of indwelling sin, no conquests obtained, no flesh crucified, no easy-besetting sin laid aside, save only as the believer hangs daily upon the cross. Observe how the Holy Spirit connects the two--the death of Christ and the holiness of the believer "And for their sakes," says Jesus, "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." As their High

Priest to atone and purify, He set Himself apart as a holy sacrifice to the Lord God for the Church's sake: "For their sakes I sanctify myself," or set apart myself. Oh, what a motive to holiness is this! Saint of God! can you resist it?

MARCH 9.

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 2 Thess. 2:13

THE work of sanctification is preeminently the product of the Spirit. He is the great Sanctifier of the soul. The implantation of the germ of holiness in regeneration is of Him. For let it still be borne in mind, that a renewed soul has within him the "incorruptible seed" of holiness; and although its growth, in many instances, may be slow, and scarcely perceptible; though, during a long period of his journey, the believer may be the subject of strong corruptions and clinging infirmities, which in a degree act like frosts upon the tender scion, checking its advance to maturity, yet the seed is there, and indwelling sin cannot destroy it, the frosts cannot kill it; it is "incorruptible," cannot be corrupted; and in process of time, under the tender and faithful culture of the Eternal Spirit, it shall deepen and expand its roots, and put forth its branches and its boughs, and then shall appear the fruit, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear;" varying in its degree of fruitfulness among the saints, "in some twenty, some sixty, some an hundredfold," but in all, of the same nature, and the product of the same Spirit.

It has been the constant effort of Satan to divert men from the great point we are now considering. In two ways has he proved successful. First, in setting them upon the work of mortification of sin before regeneration; and second, in setting them upon the same work after conversion, in their own strength. With regard to the first, sanctification is not the antecedent work of an unbeliever: although it is awfully true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," yet the attainment of holiness is an utter impossibility so long as the heart remains a stranger to the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit. Repentance and faith are the first duties in the order of time, with an unconverted man. And with regard to the second effort of Satan to deceive the soul, equally ruinous is it to all true mortification of sin. No child of God can accomplish this mighty work in his own strength. Here lies the secret, be assured, of all our failure and disappointment in the work. Forgetting that he who would prove victorious in this warfare must first learn the lesson of his own weakness and insufficiency, and, thus schooled, must go forth in the strength that is in Christ Jesus, and in the "power of His might," girt with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit--forgetting this important truth, we march to the overthrow of our giant corruptions in our own fancied wisdom and power; and the result always has been, and with the same means ever will be, our complete discomfiture. Oh! when shall we learn that we are nothing, that we have "no might," and that our feeblest enemy will triumph if his subjection be attempted in our own insufficiency?

The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of all holiness in the believer. If we look into the prophecy of Ezekiel, we find clear intimations of the promise of the Spirit to this effect. There God unfolds what may be regarded as the foundation of all sanctification--the removal of the stony heart, the implantation of a new spirit. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Let us see the doctrine as more clearly unfolded in the writings of the apostles. "And such were some of you but you are sanctified, but you are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." We are far from excluding the Father and the Son from any part in this great

work--we believe they are deeply interested in it, as the Divine word shows: "Those who are sanctified by God the Father," Jude 1. "Those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus," 1 Cor. 1:2. But the Holy Spirit is the special and immediate Agent to whom the work of sanctifying the believer is assigned.

MARCH 10.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners, and eats with them. Luke 15:1, 2.

NEVER was there a tongue like Christ's--so learned, so eloquent, and so skilled. "Never man spoke like this man." Greece and Rome, in their "high and palmy state," never exhibited such philosophy as He taught, such erudition as He displayed, or such eloquence as He breathed. Had He so chosen it, He could have placed Himself at the head of a school of His own, and with a beck might have allured to His feet all the poets and the philosophers of His day, proud to own Him as their Master. But no! the wisdom and the eloquence of this world possessed no charm for Jesus. He drew the learning and the melting power with which He spoke from a higher, even a heavenly, source. His was Divine philosophy; His was the eloquence of God! "The Lord Jehovah has given me the tongue of the learned."

And to whom did He consecrate this learning, this wisdom, and this eloquence? To the very objects whom the proud philosophers and the doctors of His day despised and neglected--even the weary. What a field was here for the exercise of His skill, and for the play of His benevolence! How fully would he demonstrate that He truly possessed the "tongue of the learned"! If to interest the feelings of the exhausted--if to enchain the attention of the weary--if to concentrate upon one subject the powers of a mind jaded and burdened--if to awaken music from a heart whose chords were broken and unstrung, mark the loftiest reach of eloquence, then His was eloquence unsurpassed--for all this He did. The beings whom He sought out, and drew around Him, were the burdened, the bowed, the disconsolate, the poor, the friendless, the helpless, the ignorant, the weary. He loved to lavish upon such the fullness of His benevolent heart, and to exert upon such the skill of His wonder-working power. Earth's weary sons repaired to His out-stretched arms for shelter, and the world's ignorant and despised clustered around His feet, to be taught and blessed. Sinners of every character, and the disconsolate of every grade, attracted by His renown, pressed upon Him from every side. "This man receives sinners," was the character and the mission by which He was known. It was new and strange. Uttered by the lip of the proud and disdainful Pharisee, it was an epithet of reproach, and an expression of ridicule. But upon the ear of the poor and wretched outcast, the sons and daughters of sorrow, ignorance, and woe, it fell sweeter than the music of the spheres. It passed from lip to lip, it echoed from shore to shore--"This man receives sinners." It found its way into the abodes of misery and want; it penetrated the dungeon of the prisoner and the cell of the maniac; and it kindled a celestial light in the solitary dwelling of the widow and the orphan, the unpitied and the friendless. Thus received its accomplishment the prophecy that predicted Him as the "Plant of renown," whom Jehovah would raise up. Thousands came, faint, weary, and sad, and sat down beneath His shadow; and thousands more since then have pressed to their wounded hearts the balsam that exuded from His bleeding body, and have been healed.

MARCH 11.

And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. John 8:9

WHAT an object was here, befitting the Savior's sympathy and power! Do you think, reader, that from it His pure and gentle spirit shrunk? Would He feel terrified or polluted by so close a proximity to an object of

guilt and wretchedness? Ah, no! Come, you vaunting philanthropists of poetry and romance, who dissolve over a fiction, and petrify at a reality--come, you who have your tears for imaginary woe, and recoil from contact with true misery--who deem it pollution to take kindly the hand of a poor wanderer, exclaiming, "Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you!"--come you, and learn what true philanthropy and sensibility mean. Our Lord's was no mawkish, sentimental humanity, standing aloof from the fallen and the despised, and attracting to itself only the virtuous and the worthy. It was a humanity that identified itself with our fall, and with all its consequent miseries. Itself pure, it yet took our impurity; itself happy, it yet took our sicknesses and our sorrows. He came as the Savior, and sinners were the objects of His love and compassion. He was a man, and to nothing that was human, but its essential taint, was he a stranger. He even carried our sins, as a crushing weight, upon that sinless frame; and that heart, to which sorrow was unknown, became "acquainted with grief."

Oh, it is wondrous to see how closely the Son of God linked Himself with fallen, suffering man. Touch what chord you may of the human heart, and there comes up from the depths of His an instantaneous and harmonious response. With what effect would some of these hidden springs of feeling in the human soul of Jesus now be touched! He would remember, as His eye fell upon this trembling object of His sympathy, that He Himself was born of a woman, amid her perils and her pangs. He would remember, too, that there still was one who bore to Him the endearing appellation of mother, and that yet others stood to Him in the sweet relation of sisters, and all that was tender in His heart would be moved. Looking at her humiliation, and thinking of His own, pity would melt His heart; and while listening to the voice of her clamorous accusers, with the garden of Gethsemane and Calvary full in view, her sin would stir to its center the deep fountain of His mercy. Then was fulfilled the Messianic prediction of the Psalmist, "He shall deliver the needy when he cries: the poor also, and him that has no helper; for He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn his soul."

MARCH 12.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. 2 Timothy 2:24

ONE exercise of Christian love will be its endeavor to avoid all occasions of offence. These, through the many and fast-clinging infirmities of the saints of God, will often occur. But they are to be avoided, and, in the exercise of that love which proves our Christian character, they will be avoided. The child of God will desire to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Whatever tends to weaken that bond he will endeavor to lay aside. Whatever He may discover in his communion with the saints calculated to wound, to distress, to alienate, to offend, either in his manner or in his spirit, the healthy exercise of holy love will constrain him to overcome. He will avoid "giving offence." He will be modest in the expression of his own opinion, respectful and deferential towards the opinion of others. He will avoid that recklessness of spirit which, under the cover of faithfulness, cares not to estimate consequences; but which, pursuing its heedless way, often crushes beneath its rough-shod heel the finest feelings of the human heart; saying and doing what it pleases, regardless of the wounds which, all the while, it is deeply and, irreparably inflicting. How sedulous, too, will he be to avoid anything like a dictatorial manner in enunciating his judgment, and all hard words and strong expressions in differing from authorities of equal, perhaps of greater, weight than his own. Oh! were this divine affection but more deeply lodged in the hearts of all those who "profess and call themselves Christians," what courtesy of manner--what grace of deportment--what tender regard of each other's feelings--what kindness in word and in action--what carefulness to avoid inflicting even a momentary pain--what putting away, as becomes saints, all wrath,

anger, evil speaking, and malice--and what constant remembrance of His solemn words who said, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea," would each believer exhibit! Lord, fill our souls more and more with this lovely grace of love!

Especially in Church communion will the grace of forbearance be called in requisition. When the providence of God has thrown together a community of individuals, composed of a great variety of character, of mind, and of constitutional temperament, although each grade may be more or less modified by the renewing of the Spirit, there will still be a broad field for the passive exercise of love. In a Church, necessarily imperfect, there may exist many things, in which taste as well as judgment will be found at fault, calculated to engender a feeling of dislike, and even of disgust, in a mind refined and delicate. But here Christian forbearance must be exercised. They are the infirmities of the weak of Christ's flock, and they who are stronger in grace should kindly and patiently bear them. In pursuing a different course, we may wound some of the most gracious, humble, and prayerful saints of God. We may be but little aware with what frequent and deep humiliation in secret their conscious failings may overwhelm them. And we ought to bear in mind, that if we sometimes might wish to see in them less that was rough in speech, abrupt and forward in manner, and fault-finding in disposition, they may detect in us a loftiness of spirit, a coldness of demeanor, and an apparent haughtiness of carriage, which may be an equal trial to them, demanding the exercise on their part of the same grace of forbearance towards us. How watchful, how tender, how kind, then, should we be, ever standing with the broad mantle of charity in our hands, prepared to cast it over the failings of a Christian brother, the moment it meets the eye!

MARCH 13.

You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive. Psalm 68:18

As a victorious King, our Lord is now enthroned in glory. He went back to heaven as a Conqueror over sin, hell, and death. Never did a Roman victor return from the battle-field, bearing such spoil; or amid such glory and acclamation, as that with which Jesus reentered His kingdom. The Captain of our salvation had gotten Him the victory over every foe of His Church. He met and battled, single-handed and alone, the combined hosts of His enemies and hers. And although He fell in the conflict, He yet won the battle. He conquered by submitting to conquest; He overcame in being overcome. He slew death in being slain by death. Want you a confirmation to your belief in the essential Deity of your Lord? Behold it, beloved. Where will you turn to the record of a battle so strange, between combatants so opposite, and attended by results so wondrous? That, in the greatest weakness, our Lord should demonstrate His greatest strength; that, by a decided defeat, He should prove the victor; and that in succumbing to the power and dominion of death, He should be the death of Death--oh, how truly Divine does He appear!

Believer in Jesus! the King, whose banner waves over you, has fought and won all your battles. One with Him, every believer is victorious. Treading in his Lord's footsteps, he overcomes, even as Christ overcame. It is impossible but that the weakest believer must obtain the victory in the severe conflict which he is waging with the foe. He may at times be foiled, embarrassed, and overcome, but he will ultimately triumph. The battle may go against us, but not the war. Faith, realizing its union with the Lord, obtains the victory. And never does the believer go forth to face the enemy in the name of Jesus, but with the disciples he may exclaim, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Your name." Come, you faint and exhausted warriors! refresh your spirits and renew your strength with this precious truth--your Captain is victorious! He who lives for you upon the throne, He who dwells in you by His Spirit, is He who rose to

glory with your every foe chained in defeat and humiliation to His chariot, carrying "captivity captive." Do you still hesitate to believe so great a truth? Hark how His angelic escort heralded His approach to glory. "Lift up your heads, O ,you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

MARCH 14.

Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. 1 Cor. 15:24, 25.

OUR Lord, although a victorious, is not a triumphant King. Nor will He be, until He comes the second time to receive His kingdom, and to reign in undisputed and universal supremacy in the bosom of a gathered Church, and over a subdued and renovated world. He will then appear "more than a conqueror,"--even triumphant. He is represented as having, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool." What are we to gather from this statement? Much that is deeply and gloriously significant. It describes the Redeemer in the interval between the victory and the triumph--the victory which signalized His past humiliation, and the triumph which will aggrandize His coming glory. It defines His position of repose and His attitude of expectation. It is impossible not to perceive, in these remarkable words, a reference to another and a final conflict--the issue of that conflict being the crowning act of His glory.

Are His enemies yet His footstool? Are all things yet subdued under Him? Is the world subdued? Is sin subdued? Is Antichrist subdued? Are the powers of darkness subdued? Is Death subdued? No! But they shall be. At what time? When Christ "shall appear the second time without sin,"--or a sin-offering, and therefore no more as a Priest who is to die; "unto salvation"--and therefore as a King who is to reign. "For He must reign, until He has put all enemies under His feet." Then, then will our Lord appear as a triumphant King to your eye. Picture the scene! Every foe now falls before Him. Death, the last enemy, is destroyed. All His enemies are "consumed with the spirit of His mouth"--the universal diffusion of His gospel--"and with the brightness of His coming"--the kingly power of His advent. All antichrists retire--their imposture exposed, their pretensions confounded--and Christ remains in triumph. All earthly kingdoms are dissolved--their dominion destroyed, and their glory passed away--and the kingdom of Messiah fills the world. All principalities and powers lay down their sovereignty at His feet, and Immanuel triumphantly reigns, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written--"King of kings, and Lord of lords."

MARCH 15.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. Rev. 19:7

"Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" Jesus sustains no relation to His Church more expressive than this. From all eternity He betrothed her to Himself, and forever. He asked her at the hands of her Father, and the Father gave her to Him. He entered into a covenant that she should be His. The conditions of that covenant were great, but not too great for His love to undertake. They were, that He should assume her nature, discharge her legal obligations, endure her punishment, repair her ruin, and bring her to glory. He undertook all, and He accomplished all--because He loved her. The love of Jesus to His Church, is the love of the most tender husband. It is single, constant, affectionate, matchless, wonderful. He sympathizes with her, nourishes her, provides for her, clothes her, watches over, and indulges her with the most

intimate and endearing communion. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Reader, know you what this union with Jesus is? Apart from its experience, pride not yourself upon any other union. The dearest, choicest ties of human affection are but as brittle glass. They are easily broken, and soon destroyed. No union, but that which is with Jesus, and in Jesus, extends beyond the grave. He must share in every tie of creature love, if it be holy and permanent. Do not think that the union of holy hearts is dissolved by death. Oh no!--death does not sever, death unites the sanctified. The bonds of the holy are beyond his ruthless power to break. The love which the image of Jesus, reflected in His people, inspires, is as deathless as the love of Jesus Himself; it is as immortal as their own redeemed, transformed, and glorified nature. But the Lord Jesus will come in the clouds of heaven, and this will be the occasion of His public espousal of His Church. Her present union to Him is secret and unknown--invisible to the world, and often concealed to herself. But He will appear, openly and visibly to take her to Himself; and before His Father and the holy angels He will solemnize her eternal union. Oh what a time of splendor and of rejoicing will that be! Arrayed in His nuptial robes, Jesus will descend to make her His own; and she, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," will go forth to meet Him. Then will be heard the song of angels, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." Yes! "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." May the writer and the reader, through grace, sit down together there!

MARCH 16.

How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? John 5:44

THE life of the renewed soul, springing from the indwelling of Christ by the Spirit, includes the crucifixion of self in us. "I live, yet not I." What a depth of meaning is contained in these words! We may not in this life be able fully to measure its depth, but we may in some degree fathom it. There is not--indeed there cannot be--a more sure evidence of the life of Christ in the soul, than the mortifying of that carnal, corrupt self-boasting that is within us. For its utter annihilation, in this present time-state, we do not plead. This would be to look for that which the word of God nowhere warrants. But we insist upon its mortification; we plead for its subjection to Christ. Who has not detected in his heart its insidious working? If the Lord has given us a little success in our work, or put upon us a little more honor than another, or has imparted to us a degree more of gift or grace, oh what fools do we often make of ourselves in consequence! We profess to speak of what He has done--of the progress of His work--of the operation of His grace, when, alas! what burning of incense often is there to that hideous idol self! Thus we offer "strange fire" upon the altar.

But the most gracious soul is the most self-denying, self-crucifying, self-annihilating soul. "I live, yet not I. I believe, and am comforted--yet not I. I pray, and am answered--yet not I. I preach, and sinners are converted--yet not I. I labor, and good is done--yet not I. I fight, and overcome--yet not I, but Christ in me." Beloved, the renewed life in us will be ever striving for the mastery of self in us. Self is ever seeking to take the glory from Jesus. This is one cause of the weakness of our faith. "How can you believe," says the Savior, "which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which comes from God only?" "We know but little of God," remarks an eminently holy man, "if we do not sicken when we hear our own praise." And if we have kept the glory of God in view, rather than our own, remember, it is the gift of God, the work of His Spirit, which has gained a victory over self, through faith in Christ. Oh that the life of Christ within us may more and more manifest itself as a self-denying, self-mortifying, self-annihilating life--willing

to be a fool for Christ, yes, to be nothing, that Christ may wear the crown.

MARCH 17.

In all their a action he was afflicted. Isaiah 63:9

HERE is open the true and blessed source of comfort, in the hour and the circumstance of sorrow. The Lord's people are a tried people--Jesus was a tried Savior. The Lord's people are an afflicted people--Jesus drank deep of its bitter cup. The Lord's people are a sorrowing family--Jesus was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He brought Himself down to a level with the circumstances of His people. He completely identified Himself with them. We are not however to suppose that in every peculiarity of trial there is an identity with our dear Lord. There are trials growing out of peculiar circumstances and relations in life, to which He was a stranger. But Jesus took upon Him pure humanity in its suffering form, was deeply acquainted with sorrow as sorrow; and from these two circumstances, became fitted in all points to support, to sustain, and to sympathize with His afflicted, sorrowing people, whatever the cause of that affliction or sorrow was. It is enough for us that He was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." It is enough for us that His heart was composed of all the tenderness, sympathy, and gentleness of our nature, and that, too, freed from everything growing out of the infirmity of sin, that could weaken, and impair, and blunt His sensibilities. It is enough for us that sorrow was no stranger to His heart, that affliction had deeply furrowed His soul, and that grief had left its traces upon every line of His countenance. What more do we require? What more can we ask? Our nature?--He took it. Our sicknesses?--He bore them. Our sorrows?--He felt them. Our crosses?--He carried them. Our sins?--He pardoned them. He went before His suffering people; trod out the path; left His foot-print; and now invites them to walk in no way, to sustain no sorrow, to bear no burden, and to drink no cup, in which He has not Himself gone before. It is enough for Him that you are a child of grief, that sorrow is the bitter cup you are drinking. He asks no more. A chord is in a moment touched in His heart, which vibrates to that touched in yours, whether its note be a pleasing or mournful one. For let it be ever remembered that Jesus has sympathy for the joys, as for the sorrows, of His people. He rejoices with those that rejoice, and He weeps with those that weep.

But how does Jesus sympathize? Not in the sense in which some may suppose--that when we weep He actually weeps, and that when we suffer He actually suffers. This may at one time have been so, but we no more know Christ in the flesh, as He was once known. Ah! there was a period when "Jesus wept"! There was a period when His heart was wrung with anguish, and when His body agonized in pain. That period is no more. There yet is a sense, and an important one, in which Jesus feels sympathy. When the believer suffers, the tenderness of Jesus is drawn forth. His sustaining strength, His sanctifying grace, His comforting love, are all unfolded in the experience of His child, while passing through the furnace. The Son of God is with him in the flames. Jesus of Nazareth is walking with him on the billows. He has the heart of Christ. And this is sympathy--this is fellowship--this is to be one with Christ Jesus.

MARCH 18.

For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death. Psalm 47:14

THE natural man is a god to himself. Yes, he has his gods many. Whether it be self-righteousness, self-gratification, the world, wealth, family, in whatever form it appears, "other lords have dominion over him," to the exclusion of the one true and living God. The nature of the human mind is such, that it must love and worship some object supremely. In his state of innocence, Jehovah was the one and supreme

object of the creature's love and adoration. Seduced from that state of simple and supreme affection by the tempter's promise, that if they ate of the fruit, forbidden of God, "they should be as gods," in one moment, they threw off their allegiance to Jehovah; renounced Him as the object of their supreme love, the center of their holiest affections, and became gods to themselves. The temple was ruined, the altar was thrown down, the pure flame was extinguished; God departed, and "other lords" entered and took possession of the soul. But what a change does grace produce! It repairs the temple, rebuilds the altar, rekindles the flame, and brings God back to man! God in Christ is now the supreme object of his love, his adoration, and his worship. The idol self has been cast down, self-righteousness renounced, self-exaltation crucified. A stronger than it has entered, cast out the usurper, and, "creating all things new," has resumed His rightful supremacy. The affections, released from their false deity, and renewed by the Spirit, now turn to, and take up their rest in, God. God in Christ! how glorious does He now appear! Never did the soul see in Him such beauty, such excellence, such blessedness as it now sees. All other glory fades and dies before the surpassing glory of His character, His attributes, His government, and His law. God in Christ is viewed as reconciled now; enmity ceases; hatred has passed away; opposition grounds its weapons; hard thoughts of His law, and treason thoughts of His government, subside; love kindles in the soul, and in one precious Christ, the one Mediator, God and the sinner meet, embrace, and blend. Truly they become one. God says, "You are mine." The soul responds, "You are my God. Other lords have had dominion over me, but henceforth You only will I serve, You only will I love. My soul follows hard after You; Your right hand upholds me."

God in Christ is his Father now. "I will arise and go unto my Father," is the first motion of a renewed soul. "Father, I have sinned against You," is the first confession rising from the broken heart. The Father hastens to meet and embrace his child, and clasping him to his bosom exclaims, "This my son was dead, and is alive again." Reconciled, he now looks up to Him truly as his father. "You shall call me My Father; and shall not turn away from me." Does God speak? it is the voice of a Father he hears. Does God chasten and rebuke? it is from his Father he feels. Are his hopes disappointed, his plans crossed, his cisterns broken, his gourds withered? "My Father has done it all," he exclaims. Blessed spirit of adoption! sweet pledge and evidence are you of the new creature.

God in Christ is now the object of confidence and trust. Trust in a reconciled God and Father was no mark and portion of his unrenewed state. It was then trust in self, in its imagined wisdom and strength and goodness. It was then trust in the arm of flesh, in second causes. Now the soul trusts in God; trusts him at all times and under all circumstances; trusts Him in the darkest hour, under the gloomiest dispensation; trusts Him when His providences look dark and lowering, and God seems to hide Himself; yes, trusts Him "though he slay." Oh, how safe he feels in God's hands and under His government now! His soul, his body, his family, his business, his cares, are completely surrendered, and God is all in all. Reader, this is to be born again.

MARCH 19.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. John 14:16-17

GOD has never revoked this gift. He has never removed His Spirit from the Church--He is still her Divine, personal, and abiding Resident. All that we spiritually know of ourselves--all that we know of God, and of Jesus, and His word, we owe to the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and all the real light, sanctification,

strength, and comfort, we are made to possess on our way to glory, we must ascribe to Him. To be richly anointed with the Spirit is to be led into all truth; and to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with love to God and man. To plead for the bestowment of that which God has already so fully and graciously given, seems to mark an unbelief in, and an overlooking of, the mercy, as ungrateful to the Giver as it is dishonoring to the gift.

But for a larger degree of His reviving, anointing, and sanctifying influences we do most earnestly plead. The Spirit, though the ever-blessed and abiding occupant of the Church of Christ and of the individual believer, may not always be manifestly present. The prayerless, unholy, and trifling walk of a believer will cause Him to withdraw His sensible presence. The coldness, formality, worldliness, and divisions of a church will compel Him to withhold the plentiful rain or the gentle dew of His precious influence. He may be so disowned, dishonored, wounded, and grieved, as to retire within the curtains of His secret glory, leaving for a while the scene of worldliness and strife to the curse and the reproach of barrenness. All we want is a richer and more enlarged degree of the reviving, sealing, and witnessing influence of the Holy Spirit. This will sanctify and bless the learning, the wealth, and the influence, now so rich an endowment of Christ's redeemed Church; and without which, that learning, wealth, and influence will but weaken her true power, impede her onward progress, and beget in her a spirit of human trust and vain-glory. This, too, will consume in its holy fire the unhallowed spirit of jealousy and party strife, now the canker-worm of the one body; and without asking for the compromise of truth, will yet, in the love it shall enkindle, so cement the hearts of the brotherhood, and so throw around them the girdle of a heaven-born and uniting charity, as will establish an evidence of the truth of Christianity--the last that Christ will give--which all its enemies shall not be able to gainsay or resist. Descend, holy and blessed Spirit, upon all Your churches, Your ministers, and Your people! Descend You upon Jew and Gentile; everywhere and among all people manifest Your glory, until the Church scattered up and down the earth shall acknowledge, receive, and welcome You, her ever-blessed and ever-abiding Indweller, Sanctifier, and Comforter!

MARCH 20.

According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Ephesians 1:4

THE very election of the believer to eternal life provides for and secures his holiness. There could possibly be no holiness without election, because election provides the means of its attainment. Thus clearly does the Spirit of truth unfold it in our motto, and in 2 Thess. 2:13, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Let us be clearly understood. On the ground of no foreseen holiness in the creature, did God thus purpose to save him; but seeing the indispensable necessity of sanctification in order to eternal glory--the impossibility of the one without the other--He chose us in Christ "that we should be holy."

Let not the Christian reader turn away from, or treat lightly, this precious revealed truth of God's word--an election of a people unto holiness here and glory hereafter. The prejudice of education--early modes of thought--a preconceived system--and more than all besides, the neglect of a close and prayerful investigation of God's word for himself, may lead to the rejection of the doctrine. But He who first cavils, and then renounces it, without a thorough and prayerful sifting of its scriptural claims to belief, stands on solemn ground, and assumes a fearful attitude. What God has revealed. "that call not you common." What He has commanded, that turn not from, lest you be found to have turned from God Himself. Why it has so

pleased the Lord to choose a people, it is not our province to inquire, nor, we believe, would it be for our happiness to know. We attempt not to explain the doctrine, much less to account for it. We simply, and we trust scripturally, state it, leaving God to vindicate and bless it. He is the best defender and apologist of His own sacred truth. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." The secret thing in the doctrine of election is, why God has done it--the thing which is revealed is, that He has done it. Let us not, then, seek to be wise above what is written, though it is our duty, as an acute writer has remarked, to be wise up to what is written; leaving the more perfect knowledge of the things that are now seen as "through a glass darkly" to that period of perfect illumination when we shall "know, even as we are known." But thus much we know, that it is the eternal purpose of God, revealed and provided for in the covenant of grace, that all who are chosen, called, and justified, shall, with a view to their being glorified, be "partakers of his holiness." Heaven is a holy place, its inhabitants are a holy people, and He whose glory fills the temple is a holy God. Behold, then, the provision God has made for the sanctification of the believer in the everlasting covenant of grace. The foundation is laid in the death of Christ, it commences in the effectual calling of the Spirit--and by all the precious assurances of grace, and wisdom, and strength, provided in the covenant, it is carried forward to a glorious completion.

MARCH 21.

Also, you son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, That he that escapes in that day shall come unto you, to cause you to hear it with your ears? Ezekiel 24:25-26

WHAT is the history of creature idolatry, but a mournful record of beautiful and inviting cisterns of happiness, which, nevertheless, God has destroyed. This is a wide and an affecting circle. We enter it cautiously, we allude to it feelingly and tenderly. We touch the subject with a pen that has often sought (though in much feebleness it is acknowledged), to comfort the mourner, and to lift the pressure from the bowed spirit. We enter the domestic circle--oh! what beautiful cisterns of creature good, broken and empty, meet us here! The affectionate husband, the fond wife, the devoted parent, the pleasant child, the faithful friend, laid low in de

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