

Zion, the City of Solemnities

by William Gadsby

Zion is the real church of Christ, the spiritual property of Jehovah, and the eternal residence of Jehovah, and it is entered through the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

Scripture: Psalm 30:11-12, Psalm 132:13-14, Isaiah 33:20, Isaiah 60:1, Matthew 19:28, John 10:9, Romans 7:24, Ephesians 5:25-27, Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "The Church", "Spiritual Zion"

Description

William Gadsby expounds on the spiritual significance of Zion as the true church of Christ, emphasizing its divine selection and the solemnities that characterize it. He describes Zion as a city chosen by God, where believers are brought by the Holy Spirit, and highlights the importance of faith in entering this city. Gadsby illustrates the trials faced by true citizens of Zion, who are called to live in union with Christ, and the profound blessings that come from being part of this spiritual community. He concludes by reflecting on the solemn acts of God throughout history that affirm the church's sacredness and the believer's hope in Christ.

Transcript

"Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities." (Isaiah 33:20)

Without making any remarks upon the context, I shall immediately begin with the passage read as a text; and in doing so I do not intend to say anything upon Zion literally, but shall speak to you of Zion in a spiritual sense; and I mean, so far as the Lord shall be graciously pleased to direct and enable me, to show,

What is intended by Zion.

Why called a city.

Point out the way into this city.

endeavour to describe a true citizen.

Dwell a little upon the solemnities of this city.

Show the blessedness of looking, by a vital faith, upon it.

I. By Zion I understand the real church of Christ, and, in the strictest sense, the whole body elect, chosen, and secured in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. 132:13,14) So that Zion is the spiritual property, the glorious church, and the eternal residence of Jehovah. Here the Lord not only declares but subscribes his name, and maintains all the honours of his glorious nature; and to this blessed Zion every real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is brought by the power of the Holy Ghost; as it is written, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. 12:22-24) From this statement we learn that Zion is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the glorious vision of peace, where God lives and dwells as the God of peace, and that it consists of an innumerable company of angels; and if by angels the glorious angelic host above is intended, they are an innumerable company indeed; for "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" (Ps. 68:17) and the mountain was full of them for the protection of Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17) Yet there is a sense in which they cannot fully enter into the glories of the redeemed family of God, for the Lord Jesus Christ did not take their nature into union with his personal Godhead: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. 2:16) The glory of redemption by the blood of the God-Man they cannot experience. This divine mystery contains in it things that the angels desire to look into; so that, as the poet says,

"If sinless innocence be theirs,

Redemption all is ours."

There is a glorious measure of the glory of God in the person, blood, and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ which no creatures but redeemed sinners can enter, and they can only enter into it as the Holy Ghost reveals it unto them. (1 Cor. 2:9-11) If by angels, angels in office are intended, God's messengers, or ministers of the Spirit and of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, raised up, qualified, and sent forth by the Lord to "preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," then it takes in all that ever have been, that are now, or ever will be thus employed by the Lord; and though the true ministers of the Spirit appear but few in number at any one time compared with the rest, the whole collected together, as treasured up in the mind, purpose, and covenant of God's grace, are a great company, and they are a branch of the city of the living God.

This blessed Zion contains the general assembly and church of the first-born; (Heb. 12:23) and if by the first-born we are here to understand the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is so called in Colossians 1:15-18, then the whole family of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, are intended; a people given unto Christ and made his care and charge; for the blessed elect of God, chosen in Christ, redeemed by Christ, and, in God's own time, quickened by the power of the Spirit and made alive to Christ, (Eph. 2:5) having vital life in him, are the true church of Christ; and if Christ be meant by the first-born, then that blessed church is the church of the first-born; and shall for ever live in and with him as his own spiritual property and delight.

Of this blessed church of the first-born it is said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as 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." (Eph. 5:25-27) Bless the precious name of our adorable Redeemer, he will take care of his church, and present to himself a glorious church, come what will; for thus saith the Lord, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no

wise cast out." (John 6:37) So that the whole elect of God appear to be intended, both those that are already gone to glory, and those that are now on their way there, and likewise those that are yet unborn--all sealed up and secured in the covenant, love, and heart of the Lord the Lamb, as figured forth in Peter's vision. (Acts 10:10-16) If by the general assembly and church of the first-born we are to understand all those who are, by the invincible power of God the Holy Ghost, quickened and made alive to God, and "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God," (John 1:13) still the same characters are intended, for all that are chosen in Christ shall, in the Lord's own time, experience this divine change, and none but such ever will; nor can it be accomplished but by the exceeding greatness of God's mighty power. (Eph. 1:19; 2:10) These are all written in heaven, "in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:8) and the rest will, some way or other, live and die in the worship of antichrist, for "there are many antichrists." (1 John 2:18) The pope is not the only antichrist in the world, for every doctrine and every branch of worship which is contrary to the Lord Jesus Christ is antichristian.

The real spiritual worshippers of God are those who are born of God, and who worship him in spirit and in truth; and all such are of the blessed number whose names are written in heaven. Sometimes, when the joys of the child of God appear to run high, he, like the seventy disciples, is ready to triumph because the devils are subject to him; but, poor soul, a thousand to one but by and by he will fear, in his feelings that he is subject to the devil, and all his joy on this ground will leave him to sink in dismay; yet still his name stands securely written in heaven; there has no change taken place there. Though the enemy of souls may greatly annoy and distress the people of God, he cannot destroy them; for their "life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3)

Therefore, saith the Lord, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) So that their names being written in heaven is a much surer foundation for joy than the devils being subject to them; for most assuredly they shall all at last overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

Satan may and does bring a thousand accusations against them, and there are sad times when conscience cannot deny the charge; but by a vital faith in the blood of the Lamb, they shall overcome; for thus it is written: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death." (Rev. 12:11) Well, these characters in union to Jesus the Mediator, and to God the Judge of all in him, whether they are now the spirits of just men made perfect in glory, or whether they are still in this vale of tears, or yet unborn,--all being chosen in Christ, and being written in heaven, are God's blessed Mount Zion.

And if, as some say, the term Mount Zion signifies a sepulcher, it may in this respect set forth what God's people are in and of themselves, a vile, detestable mass of filth, sin, and corruption, brought in very deed, at one time or another, feelingly to cry, "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." (Ps. 38:5) Ungodly men may and do awfully sin against a holy, just, and good God, but none except a real, spiritual Zionite feelingly sickens it, loathes, and detests his stinking foolishness, abhorring himself because of it, and truly uniting with Job: "Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6) It is one thing for a man to own that he is a vile sinner, but it is another thing for him to feel real shame before God on account of his vileness, and feelingly to loathe himself and detest the very root from which all sinful actions spring.

There are professors even of doctrinal truth who will talk much about their corruptions, and, in fact, they have little else to talk about, and they often speak about them as though it was a sweet morsel, or a matter of little or no importance; but this is not the case with real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ: for though they frequently feel the dreadful springings up and workings of corrupt nature, it is their burden and their grief, and they groan under it and heartily detest it, and in real spiritual feeling cry, "My loins are filled with a loathsome disease; and there is no soundness in my flesh.

I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." (Ps. 38:7-9) Yet, they cannot ground their hope of eternal happiness upon their loathing of, or groaning under their vileness. No, there is no solid ground for hope or rest to the weary soul short of Christ crucified.

Does Zion signify a monument? What a monument of rich discriminating grace the church of God is! Here all the honours of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, meet and shine, and matchless grace engraves upon it the name of God. (Rev. 3:12) The church is raised up by the eternal, electing love of God the Father, the eternal and redeeming love of God the Son, and the eternal, quickening, enlightening, convincing, teaching, anointing, sealing, and witness-bearing love of God the Holy Ghost, to show forth the praises of God, as a living monument of the wonders God has done, is now doing, and will still do. This is God's glorious Zion, and he will glorify it. (Isa. 60:7) As she stands in union to Christ, her living Head, life, and glory, immortally complete in him, she is the masterpiece of God's workmanship and declarative glory; and "out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Ps. 50:2) Notwithstanding all the wretchedness that the church, while here below, feels and fears, and in deep humility confesses, yet such are the glorious mysteries of God's grace, that, as she stands in Christ, chosen in him, redeemed by him, and washed from all her sins in his precious blood, clothed in his righteousness, quickened and created anew in Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost, and saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, made comely and beautiful in the comeliness which the Lord puts upon her, she stands free from charge, (Rom. 8:33-35) and shall at last be presented before the throne of God a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. (Eph. 5:27) The glorious church is built by the Three-One God out of some of the worst materials under the sun, to be the glorious dwelling-place of the Lord, raised up by infinite wisdom, love, power, and grace, a glorious monument of discriminating mercy, to show forth the praises of God for ever and ever. This is God's holy hill, or, as it reads in the margin, the hill of his holiness, and here Christ lives and reigns. (Ps. 2:6) Here "the Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord." We now pass on to the consideration of our next head.

II. Why God's blessed church is called a city, the city of God and of the great King; (Ps. 48:1,2) "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel;" (Isa. 60:14) "the Holy City;" (Isa. 52:1) "the city of righteousness, the faithful city;" (Isa. 1:26) "the Lord is there;" (Ezek. 48:35) "the beloved city;" (Rev. 20:9) "sought out, a city not forsaken." (Isa. 62:12) Now all these blessed names and titles are given to the church of God as she stands in union to, and has her life and glory in and from, the Lord Jesus Christ. In him she is completely righteous and holy, and faithful too; and as she derives life, power, and virtue from him, by the divine energy of God the Holy Ghost, she proves faithful unto death. She is the spiritual property and residence of God the great King, beloved of the Father, Son, and Spirit with an everlasting love; sought out by the sovereign act of God in eternal election, and chosen and secured in Christ; sought out by God the Son in the solemn work of redemption, when, as the beloved Immanuel, he bore her sins, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself, and when he wrought out a complete righteousness for her; (Dan. 9:24) sought out of the lumber and rubbish of the fall by God the Holy Ghost, in the solemn act of

regeneration, and the glorious acts connected therewith; sought out by a Three-One God by the various acts of special mercy, from time to time, in reproofs, rebukes, corrections, chastisements, humblings, sweet-drawings, love-kisses, and droppings of love into the heart, yea, sometimes shedding it abroad there; in solemn checks, in kind intimations of mercy; now a blessed smile, which cheers, warms, and sometimes melts the heart, and draws forth prayer, praise, and thanksgivings; then a fatherly frown, accompanied by a little light, which discovers some of the hidden evils of the heart, and leads to deep searchings of heart, humble confessions, and heart-broken sighs, groans, and supplications for mercy and pardon. They are sought out at different times, under different circumstances, and by a great variety of means, but all for one glorious purpose, namely, to wean and draw them from all false hopes, and from self, in all its bearings, to the Lord Jesus Christ, that God may be glorified in them and by them, and to give full proof that it is his city, not forsaken.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his love, blood, and perfect obedience, is the Foundation laid in Zion, and the blessed Rock upon which that city is built; nor shall all the gates or counsels of hell prevail against it. Storms, tempests, and hurricanes may beat against this city, but its standing is upon the Rock of Ages, and Jehovah is a wall of fire around about it, and the glory in the midst of it; therefore it is invulnerable. (Matt. 7:24,25; Zech. 2:5) To reason, and to flesh and blood, this glorious city may appear at times to be in imminent danger, but the issue will prove that all such fears are groundless, and that it is blessedly and eternally safe; for it is Jehovah's strong city, and he has appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks. (Isa. 26:1) Being securely founded upon Christ and gloriously exalted in his righteousness, (Ps. 89:16) this city is beautifully situated, and when the sun shines bright, and the sweet breezes of the Holy Ghost chase away all mists and fogs, the true citizen, by living faith, looks over all the swamps of fallen nature, sin, Satan, and the world, yea, and the fear of death, of Moses, and of the law too, and in some sweet measure sees the King in his beauty, and beholds the land that is afar off, as is stated in connection with our text. Christ and the mysteries of the cross being revealed by the Spirit to faith will lead the soul sweetly to sing, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." (Ps. 48:2,3)

Here vital faith is blessedly employed in tracing some of the wonders of a Three-One God, as made known in the openings of his everlasting love to Zion, his glorious city. This city is blessed with the glorious Lord himself as her King and Governor, Lord and Lawgiver, and the ministers of God's grace as her nobles; (Isa. 32:1; Jer. 30:21) ministers of the Spirit, not of the letter merely. The gospel they preach does not come "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5) They are men quickened and made alive to God by the invincible power of God the Holy Ghost, and taught and led into a blessed measure of the deep things of God by the blessed teachings of the same glorious Teacher, and are qualified and sent forth by his spiritual power to preach. It is one thing for a man to rush into the ministry, and if no door opens for him, to be determined to lift one off its hinges, or to be sent by man, but it is a very different thing for the Holy Ghost to send him. It appears to me that some of the people of God have acted presumptuously rash at times in this solemn business. Moses appeared very ready to go before the Lord's time of sending him, and he met with a just rebuke, which stopped his mouth for forty years, nor was he willing to open it again at the end of that time; (Exod. 2:11-15) for when the Lord did call upon him to go, he felt his own weakness and inability for the work and made many excuses; and even when the Lord said, "Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say," still he wished to be excused.

How different this to the conduct of numbers of men professing the truth of God in our day! Brethren, when you see a man determined to rush into the ministry, and, in the pride of his heart, vamping himself up in his imaginary talent and attainments, and in the wonderful depths of his experience and knowledge, who thinks every one either his enemy or a fool who does not encourage him; who sets all down as enemies to the truth of God who have honesty enough to tell him, whether God's people can profit under him or not; however sound such a man may be in the letter of the word, and whatever depths of experience he may attempt to describe, you may rest assured that God has not called him to the work of the ministry; he is a servant of his own, or of some other man's sending.

You will always find that those whom the Lord sends go forth with tenderness of conscience, great dependence, and with fear and trembling; not in pride, arrogance, and presumption. Even Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, whose call of God was so gloriously conspicuous, told the church at Corinth that he was with them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." (1 Cor. 2:3) But some men who think they are called to preach know very little about this trembling, and if they do tremble, it is with vexation because others do not encourage them, or with mortification because they cannot succeed to their own satisfaction.

Even some good men, who appeared useful members of the church in a private capacity, have rendered their own lives in a measure wretched, and brought a great deal of distress into the church, because they would preach, notwithstanding that very few, if any, besides themselves, believed they were called to the work; and they have been left to be so obstinate in their own view and proceedings, that many who once esteemed them as Christians began to stand in doubt of them, and feared that they have been deceived.

It is not enough that a man be an experimental man, and that he can state his own experience; but, under the divine teachings of the Holy Ghost, he should be able, in some good measure, to unfold some of the glorious mysteries of the gospel of the blessed God, apt to teach others, to do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry. I have known men professing the truths of God who have insisted upon it, for years together, that they were sure that the Lord had called them to preach, and that the church was opposing God because they would not encourage them.

Some such I have known to live and die, and the only proof they ever gave that the Lord had called them to the important work of the ministry was their own word; whilst there are others, both in the letter of the truth, and opposed to the letter of truth, who attain to what the world calls respectability, and it may be said of each of them, in their way, that "they take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore, they rejoice, and are glad.

Therefore, they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag, because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." (Hab. 1:15,16) But neither the one nor the other give any real proof that they are sent of the Lord, or that they are of the number of Zion's nobles.

But we further observe, that the laws, rules, institutes, and order of this city are all appointed by infinite wisdom, and it is richly supplied with blessings immortal and eternal. God will supply all her needs, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) There are numbers of the kingdoms and cities of this world who boast of the beauty and utility of their rivers, as Egypt its Nile, Babylon its Euphrates, and London its Thames, whilst literal Jerusalem had no such river to boast of, neither for commerce nor defence; but spiritual Jerusalem has the glorious Three-One God himself as her "broad rivers and streams," (Isa. 33:21) wherein shall go no rowing self-righteous free-willers, nor high-towering,

presumptuous Antinomians; no, this glorious place of broad rivers is only accessible to, and for the benefit of, real citizens, and the commerce carried on there is all of a heavenly nature. The blessings it contains are indescribable. (Ps. 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-9) The most that presumptuous professors can know of this city is her outward bulwarks, and that only in theory; her internal beauty and glory, blessings and blessedness, they are strangers to; for the Lord himself is her glory and beauty. (Isa. 60:19; Ezek. 16:14) A spiritual acquaintance with God and his blessed truth can only be obtained by the deep teachings of that blessed Spirit which "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:10)

O blessed Spirit! grant unto us more of thy divine teachings, and enable us to carry on more spiritual traffic in spiritual intercourse with the Lord, in faith, and prayer, and praise, and love, that we may live more to his glorious honour. All the glory, stability, security, privileges, riches, order, beauty, bliss, and blessedness of this city stand in, are derived from, and supported by the Three-One God, as the covenant God of Zion; and all that we can really and truly know spiritually of it is revealed unto us by the Holy Ghost.

O that you and I, my beloved brethren, may, under the teaching of the Lord, be enabled to say, "This God is my God for ever and ever; he will be my guide even unto death." May we be of that blessed number of whom it shall be said, "This and that man was born in her;" (Ps. 87:5) then we shall be safe, for "the Highest himself shall establish her." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for they shall prosper that love her." But I proceed,

III. To point out the way into this city, and here I intend to be very brief. There is no real, vital entering into this city but by Christ, the "new and living way." (Heb. 10:20) All that ever enter spiritually into it are blessed with vital faith and life in Christ, and enter in by him. His glorious person as the God-Man Mediator, and his finished work, the atonement he has made for sin, the righteousness he has wrought out and brought in, is the strait gate, "and few there be that find it." This blessed Jesus is the door, "and by him if any man enter, he shall be saved." (John 10:9) The life, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ have put away sin, and been the destruction of death, and "brought life and immortality to light." (2 Tim. 1:10) Jesus is "the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) The Lord Jesus Christ is "the way," not a way merely, but the way, and there is no other, and "the truth," so that, as the poet says,

"All that lacks this test,

Proceed it from an angel's mouth,

Is but a lie at best,"

"And the life," and all other ways lead to death, however painful or pleasing to flesh and blood they may be; for, "no man cometh to the Father but by me." (John 14:6) There is no real spiritual access to God, nor to the blessings of this city, but by Christ. Let men go where they will, and what way they will, not one sinner ever came to the Father, nor entered vitally into this city, but by Christ, the "new and living way." He is the glorious highway in which the redeemed shall walk, and by which they shall enter into this city, and live upon the bounties, admire the beauties, and sing the wonders of everlasting love. But we shall now pass on, and

IV. endeavour to describe a true citizen of this city. Every spiritual citizen of this city is one who has been quickened and made alive to God by the invincible power of God the Holy Ghost, and has followed Christ in the regeneration. (Matt. 19:28; Eph. 2:1) The blessed Spirit must give them eyes to see, and hearts to

feel their need of a free salvation, and to see and feel Christ as the living way, or else they will grope for it in vain; and this way is so strait that no self-righteous recommendations, nor proud, presumptuous, dry profession of the doctrines of the gospel, however high such a profession may be, can ever enter here. No sinner can be admitted at this gate but a poor, rooted-up, stripped, sin-sick soul, who is altogether lost and ruined in self and of self; and such a soul enters in by a vital, living faith in the Lord the Lamb, being drawn by the Father. All who profess to be in this city, and who did not come in by Christ the living way, having life in and from him, not having been drawn there by the Father, are thieves and robbers, and shall be treated as such; as it is written, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

But every spiritual citizen has a vital union to Christ, and lives in him, and he is brought to feel that he has not one spark of spiritual life or light but what is derived from him; and what comes from him is sure to lead to him. Every soul who has been taught of God the purity, extent, and authority of his holy law, and has had his mouth stopped thereby, his hopes cut up and blasted, and has been brought feelingly to acknowledge and confess that his condemnation is just; who has felt that he has no power to help his own soul, nor escape the wrath to come, feeling that he cannot take one right step, either in duty-works or duty-faith, but that all his movements, works, and ways tend to increase his burden, bondage, and misery; who, from feeling necessity, by the life-giving power of the Spirit of God, is drawn to Christ as his only refuge and foundation of hope, feeling a solemn falling upon him, and a believingly entering into him, and being enabled there to cast his burden and cares; such a one is really come to Christ, and is a citizen of this city, and shall live and reign with Christ.

Such a sinner shall be brought to know that all he feels or possesses that would feed the pride of the heart, or vamp him up in self-esteem, is not of God, whether it appear in a profane or in a religious shape; it is only fuel for the fire; for the Lord's "fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." (Isa. 31:9) God is determined that the righteous shall be tried; (Ps. 11:5; Zech. 13:9) yea, the Lord Jesus Christ himself "is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:3) A poor citizen may sometimes be in a great bustle, and in much confusion, while furnace work is going on, but the Lord makes no more haste than good speed. He solemnly and patiently sits by the furnace, and when his blessed Majesty has accomplished a manifestative sight of his own image in the soul, he will speak peace. But every true citizen must be tried by fire, and sometimes it is very hot and sharp work. Whenever he is suffered to gather together a fine stock of hay, wood, or stubble, however well it may be put together, or however neatly it may be tinselled or dressed up, he may rest assured that a day is at hand when a fire shall be kindled, and all this fine fabric shall only be fuel for it: "For every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3:13) Therefore, a true citizen must expect his trials, and not suppose that he is going to live at ease; but whether he expects them or not, trials, painful trials, will come. If for a while he is suffered to try to vamp up his mind with his great knowledge, yea, or his great experience either, or any of his attainments, he must be put in the furnace. In very deed he must be burned out of self and self boasting, be driven and drawn into the Lord Jesus Christ, and be made to feel in his very soul that he has no vital life of feeling, nor sure standing, but in and from Christ; for everything that does not center in, come from, and lead to Christ, must and shall be burned up, though he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:15)

Every true citizen, under the quickening, enlightening, consuming, rebuking, teaching power of God the Holy Ghost, is made truly sick of self, and yet finds self, in some shape or other, to cleave to him, and to be mixed with all he does, often making him groan to be delivered from it, though now and then he may be favoured with a sweet lift above it, by faith in the love, blood, righteousness, fullness, oath, and promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, and enjoy a few drops of the dew of heaven, softening his mind and cheering his soul, and leading him in true thankfulness to praise the Lord, and unbosom his whole heart unto him. At these sweet seasons he is enabled to feel that Christ is his blessed All and in All, and he can truly say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." (Ps. 116:1,2) Yes, there are sweet and solemn moments when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; and by the powerful manifestation of God's love to him, he feels that he loves the Lord, his word, his worship, his people, and his ways. At these times he can truly say, "The will of the Lord be done," and with his whole heart feelingly sing,

"Nothing but Jesus I esteem;

My soul is then sincere;

And every thing that's dear to him,

To me is also dear."

But when these sweet moments end, he finds fleshly self, in some way or other, still cling to and hang about him, and at times its detestable workings are such, that he is compelled, with heart-rending groans, to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24) Whatever men may say about their capability of delivering their own souls, a real Zionite, in his right mind, will neither see nor expect any deliverer but the Lord himself; nor can he feel nor enjoy deliverance, no, nor experience a lift by the way, but as God the Spirit helps him with a little help, (Dan. 11:34) and strengthens his hope in Christ.

A real feeling necessity is laid upon every spiritual citizen to hate sin and Satan in all their workings; and I had like to have said, to feel that Satan hates him. Sin and Satan will sometimes make his soul groan under their infernal workings; so that he will be brought in truth to stand upon the same ground, and have the same feelings as Paul when he said, "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do." (Rom. 7:15) But he is not always blessed with the same measure of faith in exercise as was Paul when he could feelingly say, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Rom. 7:17) When he is favoured with faith thus to see and feel, and can sing victory through the blood of the Lamb, he stands amazed both at himself and at the wonderful love and grace of a Three-One God.

Self is truly debased, and Christ is blessedly exalted, and he both can and does in substance say, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" (Micah 7:18) And while he falls at the feet and leans upon the bosom of the Lord with adoring wonder, sinking into nothing in himself, and yet feeling that the glorious power of the blessed Spirit has raised him above self, and lifted him up into a blessed enjoyment of Christ, that in the Lord he has righteousness and strength, and that in this righteousness he is exalted, (Ps. 89:16) the Lord, in great love and mercy, is pleased to increase his holy wonder, by revealing some such blessed portions of his word to the heart as the following: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon

them that I reserve." (Jer. 50:20) Yes, bless his precious name, he has cast all their sins into the depths of the sea of the love and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when they are sought for they shall not be found.

Being chosen in Christ and united unto him, they stand in covenant relation with him as the sons of God without rebuke. (Phil. 2:15) To such a soul all things appear as dung compared with Christ, and he can feelingly enter into what Paul said to the Philippians. (See Phil. 3:7-11) But there will be some solemn overturnings before this is really experienced; yet, when it is truly felt in the soul, he will sing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1) and his gracious Majesty claims the poor overturned sinner as his own special property, and enables him in vital faith to lay claim to him; as it is written, "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9)

Then, indeed, the soul is made willing to submit to Christ and his laws, feels his heart inflamed with a holy zeal to fight the good fight of faith, and, under the blood-stained banner of Immanuel, to stand up for the rightful honour of his glorious Lord and Saviour, Lawgiver and Sovereign, and gracious King and Governor, viewing every one guilty of high treason who attempts to set up another king. In his whole heart he can unite in the kingdom in all its bearings being given to him whose right it is, (Ezek. 21:27) and in holy triumph he says, "The Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord." (Ps. 146:10) He at times, in his zeal, feels almost impatient for war, that he may use his two-edged sword, and cut down the foes of his Lord and Master; for he now both believes and feels that the Lord's foes are his foes, and that the dear Lord and his own soul must stand or fall together. Yet, ten to one but the Lord will by and by withdraw his smiling face. The devil will then rise up with double power both without and within, roaring aloud, Where are now your zeal and courage? and the poor soul will begin to shrink back, and, with quivering lips and trembling heart, cry, "Lord, look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins; consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred." (Ps. 25:18,19) But though this may be the case, and very likely it will be, yet whilst the sweet presence and power of the Lord are enjoyed, he can with his whole soul unite with David and say, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do unto me?" (Ps. 118:6-17) And to encourage the hope, faith, and zeal of the Lord's regenerated and divinely-taught family, the dear Lord says, "Verily I say unto you, that ye that have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" (Matt. 19:28,29) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." (Isa. 54:17)

But remember, my dear friends, the child of God does not always feel his firm standing in the Lord, nor find himself manifestively equipped with the divine armor that is recorded; (Eph. 6:11-18) and therefore he does not always appear in a courageous, fighting frame of mind. Sometimes he sits mourning in sackcloth, the Lord having withdrawn his sweet presence, and for a little while ceased to fill his soul with love. Then Satan swells and rolls heavy floods against him, and swears by the infernal den that they shall burst in upon him, the poor soul feeling little else but dreadful fear; hardness of heart, darkness of mind, coldness of affection, and the risings of faith, darkness of mind, coldness of affection, and the risings of filth too horrible to be named. The Lord appears to frown, and the devil sends forth a frightful roar of triumph. No daysman appears in view, nor any refuge near, and the soul seems as though it had no strength either to flee, or run, or walk, or creep, or even to stand or sit still; and thus it groans in sackcloth and ashes; and in this frame of mind, with now and then a change of some other sort of inward or outward misery, or both, it remains for a long time together, till the soul is ready to say, "I am cut off; I remain without hope." But in

God's own blessed time the blessed Spirit lifts up Christ, the God-glorifying, Satan-defeating, and flood-resisting and overcoming standard in the soul, (for, as one observes, "All indoor work is the work of the Spirit,") by which the soul is sweetly revived, Satan driven back, and the flood dispersed, (Isa. 59:19) a heavenly dew drops into the conscience, which softens the hard heart and cheers the gloomy mind, and the dear Lord the Redeemer sweetly and powerfully springs up in the soul as life, light, love, and liberty, and gloriously says, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." (Isa. 60:1) Then, in holy triumph, the soul shakes itself from its sackcloth and dust, and blessedly sings, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." (Ps. 30:11,12) And now the soul feels as strong and ready for war as ever, but for a time is enabled to act with a measure of caution and an entire dependence upon the Lord, remembering that its strength is not in itself, but in the Lord, and in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And while the blessed Spirit bears witness in his soul that he is a child of God, and he feels the unction and sealing of the Holy Ghost upon his heart, he will feelingly say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." (Ps. 62:5-7)

But some poor trembling soul will be ready to say, is there no proof of being a true citizen till we are brought to this point? Truly there is; and, as the Lord shall assist, I will endeavour to give you some of the lowest scriptural proofs of one that is indeed a true citizen. Every soul that has been quickened by the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost, and so passed from death unto life, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God, is a real citizen of Zion. Where this life is there will be a mourning over sin and self, and after the mercy of the Lord, a real hungering and thirsting after righteousness, under a feeling sense of our own unrighteousness, and the real need of such a one as is pleasing to God. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6) But if any persons can sit themselves down at ease, with what they call a mourning over themselves and after the Lord, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness; I say, if they can be at ease with these mournings and hungerings, before the Lord has blessed them with faith and hope in Christ, they are resting on a false foundation, and are giving no proof that their mourning, thirsting, and hungering are the fruit of the Spirit and spring from real spiritual life in the soul, for that can never rest short of Christ. But where there is a real feeling of dissatisfaction with self and everything else short of Christ, and a thirsting and panting for him, there is life, and in the end it shall be supplied. But till the Lord is graciously pleased to reveal Christ there will be heart-sickness and heart-groanings and pantings, sighings, strugglings, and cryings. The soul will be truly sick of self and self-attainments, and will truly long for power to disgorge the whole, vehemently thirsting and panting for a manifestation of the pardon of sin and of reconciliation to God, and with heart-rending groans will confess its sins and seek for mercy. Thus will it be thirsting for God, the living God, nor will anything short of an application of divine mercy to the conscience give it real rest; and the more closely and deeply the heart is searched, the viler it will appear and the more the living soul will feel the solemn disparity there is between a holy God and the sinner, and be ready to think it presumption to expect anything less than the just vengeance of God.

But in spite of all the fears, faintings, sickenings, misgivings, unbelief, guilt, and the curses of a broken law, the devil's temptations, and the oozings-up of sin and filth, there will be infelt strugglings and cryings for pardoning mercy, and everything short of that will leave an aching void. Is this thy case, poor distressed soul? Is sin thy burden and grief? Dost thou tremble at the word of God, for fear thou hast no part nor lot in it except the portions that threaten the sinner with destruction? And yet, is there a heaving-up in thy heart for mercy? and canst thou feelingly say, "As the hart panteth after the water

brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God?" (Ps. 42:1,2) Will nothing short of a feeling sense of an interest in Christ satisfy thee? and canst thou in any real measure unite with the psalmist when he says, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me? (Ps. 38:2-9) Perhaps some one will say, "In some measure I can trace myself there; but I fear my sins are not sufficiently burdensome, and that I do not abhor them and myself for committing them as I ought to do. But this one thing I do know; I stand guilty before God, and feel that my sins have all been against a holy, just, and good Lord, that 'there is no rest in my bones because of my sin,' that I am 'troubled and bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the day long,' and that if at any time I attempt to take pleasure in or from the world, I only sink the lower in distress afterwards; and every supposed pleasure I have only tends to increase my distress in the end. If sometimes I appear to have a little hope in the Lord's mercy, I am led to think it was a delusion, so that my cup is painfully bitter, and I feel much bowed down; yet now and then I think that I have felt a little warmth of soul in trying to open my whole heart to the Lord; and I have found a little melting down, and softness of heart, and tenderness of conscience, and a little freedom in prayer, when hope has sprung up in my soul, and I have been ready to say, 'Surely the dear Lord is about to come in mercy, and set my poor troubled mind at rest, with a manifestation of pardoning love!'

But, alas! alas! these feelings have soon ceased. My fears have all come upon me again, and I have felt as destitute as ever, and have thought that the Lord would never hear the cry of such a poor sinful wretch as I am. I have tried to give up all thoughts of eternal things, but I cannot, nor can I forbear sighing, groaning, panting, and crying for mercy." Come, poor soul, though, in self and of self, thou hast every cause to despair, still, "hope thou in God, for thou shalt yet praise him."

Thine is a Bible case, and the God of the Bible, in his own time, will appear. Go on sighing, groaning, and crying for pardon, and never rest till God gives thee rest by faith in the person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though the Lord tarry, still wait for him, for in the end he will in mercy appear and deliver thee. (Ps. 102:19-21) His blessed Majesty never gives spiritual life, and raises a spiritual cry in the soul, but he both hears and answers: "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." (Ps. 107:5,6) "Still," says the poor soul, "I am so loathsome and wretched, that I can hardly believe there is any one altogether like me; and though there are many blessed things in those portions of God's word, I fear they do not belong to me. I am like the man at the pool; I hear of and see others being healed, but I still remain, for I have no helper to help me into the blessings they contain, or to bring the sweetness of them with power to my conscience; and my enemies and miseries appear to come upon me with double violence."

Still, poor soul, wait at mercy's door, and cry unto the Lord, for none but the Lord can really help thee; and he has said, he "will deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their souls from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight." (Ps. 72:12-14) None but a real quickened child of God ever truly felt his poverty and need, nor in real heart-felt experience found himself without help or helper, violently oppressed with the burden of sin, the curse of a broken law, and the dreadful temptations of Satan, crying day and night for pardoning mercy, and being unable to rest or be satisfied with anything short of a believing, feeling interest in Christ; and though he may not at present be able to say that he has entered through the gate into the city, he is nevertheless one of God's blessed family, and in the Lord's own time shall feelingly say, "The Lord preserveth the simple.

I was brought low, and he helped me." (Ps. 116:6) And again, "Blessed be the Lord; for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee." (Ps. 31:22) Then the blessed Spirit will bear witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, and he will cry, "Abba, Father."

But let the true citizen remember, that whatever stage of experience in the divine life he may be brought into, a warfare he must expect; flesh and spirit, or the new man and the old man, never can be reconciled. They must and will hate each other, for the Lord himself has put enmity between the two; as it is written, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) This enmity is seen and felt in all the bearings of the two seeds, in the person of Christ and the person of Satan, in God's spiritual children and his implacable enemies, and in the two principles in every real believer in Christ, so that the real Christian, while in this vale of tears, will more or less feel these two seeds working in him. The old man is the seed of Satan, and stands in his image, and loves his father, and fights for his infernal honour. It can either act in open profaneness, or in external piety, or can even stand up for the doctrines of the gospel without the power, or for presumptuous purposes; it can talk of perfect holiness in the flesh, and assume a great deal of mortification or humility. In fact, the old man, under the deceitful workings of its father the devil, can either be profane or religious, or can turn round in religion as circumstances may appear to be advantageous. Any kind of religion will go down, and suit the purpose, provided the life and power of vital godliness in and from the Lord Jesus Christ, as communicated to the soul and maintained there by the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost, is discarded and opposed; but in all the movements of the old man, the real honour of Christ and the power of vital godliness are abhorred. But the new man is the real seed of Christ, and is after God created in righteousness, and true holiness, and (spiritual) knowledge, "after the image of him that created him;" (Eph. 4:24) and this divine principle, which is the seed of Christ, stands in the image of Christ, has its life and being in Christ, and will fight for the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great object of contention between the two seeds, in all their bearings, is, whether Christ or the creature shall wear the crown. Every real citizen will find this warfare maintained in him, but "the elder shall serve the younger;" and though the struggle may be long and violent, and the child of God, in the conflict, may often fear that he will one day fall to rise no more, (for sin and Satan will maintain an awful riot, and sink the soul in dismay,) yet, nevertheless, grace shall "reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:21)

Poor tempted, buffeted, tried, and horror-struck child of God, call upon thy Captain, pour out thy soul unto him, make thy stand upon Christ and his finished work, lean wholly upon him, and daily seek the aid and influence of the blessed Spirit, remembering that thy strength is in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (Eph. 6:10-18) The Lord bless you with a living faith in Christ, and enable you spiritually to put on and use this armor, and then victory will be sure. Every soul who is brought to experience these blessed realities is a citizen of Zion. But we now proceed,

V. To point out some of the solemnities of Zion.

1. There is the solemn act of the eternal Trinity in the covenant of grace before time commenced. In this covenant the church was chosen in and given to Christ as his spouse, and made his care and charge. In this solemn transaction, each Person in the glorious and solemn engagement it was. Here the Father chose the church in Christ, predestinated them to the adoption of children, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, all being made sure. (See Eph. 1:3-9) In this blessed scripture we have the Father's choice, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's manifestation; for it is the

blessed Spirit that makes manifest the things of God in the conscience; (1 Cor. 2:10) so that each glorious Person in the covenant of grace has his special work; and, according to this glorious covenant, the elect are "saved and called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to God's purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9) The Father chose in Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in him; and the person of the Son, in our nature, as the blessed Immanuel, redeemed; and the blessed Spirit quickens, enlightens, convinces, teaches, anoints, comforts, and seals, and all according to the eternal counsel of his own will; (Eph. 1:11) for God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. (Isa. 46:10)

2. Again. It was another solemn branch of the solemnities of Zion when God the Son became incarnate, being born of Mary in a stable, and laid in a manger at little Bethlehem. (Luke 2:4-6) Here was a solemn mystery which angels could not fully comprehend,--the God who made the world (in union with the Father and the Spirit) now wrapped up in swaddling clothes as the Babe of Bethlehem, an infant just born of Mary and yet the God that built and supported all worlds and all things visible and invisible in one person, the blest Immanuel: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3; Col. 1:16) Solemnly amazing! God contracted to a span, to suit the case and circumstances of his people, to bear their guilt and curse, and redeem them unto God, that he might present them unto himself a holy people! And he no sooner makes his personal appearance in this polluted world than he is persecuted and hunted by men and devils, as though he were born to be a prey for their teeth, upon whom they must vent their utmost spite and malice. His life, as the Head of the church, whilst traveling in this desert, appears to have been one continual scene of trial and affliction; so that it is truly said, "he is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" (Isa. 53:3) and every step which his gracious Majesty took, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the right hand of the Father to his glorious crown, were so many solemn branches of the solemnities of Zion; for he lived, and acted, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and ascended on high, as the glorious Head of the church, with Zion in his heart; nor did he ever take a single step separate from her. Zion was "his reward, and was with him, and his work was before him." (Isa. 40:10) "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him;" (Isa. 62:11) "and he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." (Isa. 53:11) With what solemnity was the dear Lord baptized in the river of Jordan! Here the Holy Trinity appears to crown the solemn act with his divine approbation. The Son is solemnly immersed by John, as an emblem of the sufferings he had to undergo; (Luke 12:50) the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon him, and the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus, we have a demonstrative proof that this ordinance was well pleasing to the Three-One God. (See Matt. 3:13-17)

"And shall my pride disdain the deed

That's worthy of my God?"

There is not one recorded in the volume of inspiration that was more openly crowned with the divine approbation of our adorable Three-One God than this. From thence the Lord of life and glory was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness;" (Mark 1:12) as if the humanity of Christ shuddered at the prospect of what lay before him; and, indeed, well it might, for the prospect was awful. This was Satan's day, and, depend upon it, he was not idle, but used all his infernal powers to torture Immanuel; for "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15) "For in that he hath himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour

them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18) And so solemnly was he engaged in this field of temptation, that he was forty days and forty nights without food; nor was the conflict ended even then. O my friends, there he stood in the scorching heat of hellish temptation, with all the malice and rage of devils roaring around him, and hurling their fiery darts at him. At this awful crisis, holy angels left their high courts above, as if solemnly amazed, and came to see what it could all mean; and they ministered unto him. But his blessed Majesty had to bear the rage of hell; and this he bore for us, that he might sympathizingly feel for us in our temptations, and enable us to see and feel, by vital faith, that he had foiled the enemy, and gained an immortal victory for us. Had the devil defeated Christ in one single point, it would have been all over with us. He had to fight the battle single-handed, and he must either gain a glorious victory, or the whole elect must perish. In this dreadful fight the lovely Jesus had too much solemn work to do to find time to eat or drink; and even after he had fasted forty days and nights the devil still kept up his infernal attacks; for when Jesus was a hungered, the devil came with an, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." If thou be the Son of God!" "O what an if was there!" And must the Lord of life and glory endure those infernal ifs, and all the rage of hell, for such poor ungrateful reptiles as we, that he might be "a merciful high priest," knowing how to succour such poor fearful, trembling worms? Could we, by vital faith, view the dear Lord in that awful conflict, it would appear solemn indeed. Well, poor tried, tempted, conflicting, shattered mourner in Zion,

"Thy Captain stood the fiery test,

And thou shalt stand through him."

But some poor trembling, quaking soul will be ready to say, "I cannot believe that Christ was tempted like me, for if he were he must have been a sinner." Remember, poor soul, thou hast a carnal inclination still lodging in thee, but Christ was pure and holy. "Then if he were free from sin," say you, "temptation could not pain him as it does me." Poor soul, how you bespeak your ignorance! Just allow me to ask you if there were not a time when you could cheerfully practice many things, the forcible temptation to commit which now fills your soul with pain and grief, and at times almost horrifies you?

How comes this to pass? From whence comes this change in your feelings? The fact is, that once you were dead in trespasses and sins, and sin was your delight, but now the Lord has in mercy made you a partaker of a divine nature, and stamped his image upon your mind. You are become the temple of the Holy Ghost, and in the life and light of the Lord you both feel and see sin, in some measure, as it really is, exceedingly sinful, and the temptation to some of its dreadful workings fills your soul with horror and dismay.

It is your spiritual life and light that make you to see, and feel, and groan under the detestable nature of sin, and make the temptation to commit it so painful. Then think for a moment what must the feelings of Immanuel's pure nature have been, when the devil was allowed to hurl his infernal darts. Must not his holy soul have felt pain indescribable? For, remember, Satan did not trifle with the Lord of glory; no, it was his day, and he made an infernal use of it. One temptation is recorded of such a devilish nature, that few, if any, can be worse, namely, to fall down and worship the devil, and this, too, for worldly gain and honour.

Now, if his Satanic majesty could dare to tempt the Lord of glory to fall down and worship him, what would he not dare to do? But it was solemn work when the Lord of life had to bear all the infernally-scandalous insults of the prince of darkness. This, indeed, was one branch of the solemnities of Zion, for he stood as Zion's Head and Surety, and had her eternal welfare at heart; but to accomplish her salvation he had to

wade through an infinite variety of sufferings, any attempt to describe which would be a complete failure.

But such was his love and covenant undertakings, that his heart was determined to accomplish the work; therefore, after his resurrection he said to two of his disciples, when walking to Emmaus, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:25,26) O brethren, what a solemn ought was there! But I shall pass by a great variety of things, and make a few remarks upon his garden scene.

Here we find the Lord of life struggling under the most horrible pangs of death, praying, sighing, and groaning, and, in deep agony both of body and soul, exclaiming, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" (Matt. 26:38) "and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44) Here justice unsheathed its sword and pierced him to the heart; as it is written, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.

Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. (Zech. 13:7) As if every stroke of the sword of justice executed upon devils or ungodly men were but as so many sleepy strokes, compared with what were now about to be inflicted upon Immanuel. Here the law began to pour out its curses with all its righteous authority, death came forth with all the horrors of its sting, devils vented their utmost rage, and the wrath of God, the just due of all his people's sins, lay heavy on his soul.

And where were his disciples at this time? Were they not engaged in endeavouring to soothe his sorrowful mind? O no; not one soul of the human race was there to drop a tear of sympathy over his burdened, agonizing soul and body. Some of them were in the garden, at a distance from him, and three of them, Peter, James, and John, he took with him very near to the spot, as if to witness the awful conflict and watch the war, and he said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me.

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." But did his three favoured disciples watch and pray, or take any other step to sympathize with or console his sorrowful soul? Alas! no; but they went to sleep. What! a loving John go to sleep! and a zealous Peter, too, who had just before declared that he would die for him rather than deny him! did not he keep awake, and watch and pray? No; Peter went to sleep, and so did John and James. Thrice the dear Lord went backwards and forwards, as if to arouse them, or, as the poet expresses it,

"Wished, at least, they would condole

(Twas all they could) his tortured soul."

But no watching, no praying, no condoling. The Lord himself must fight the fight alone, and his own arm must bring salvation. Come poor, tried, burdened, dejected, cast-down, broken-hearted sinner, the dear Lord has accomplished a single-armed salvation, and it is done for thee. May the Spirit of the Lord give thee faith to believe it, and receive it, and set thy soul at rest in it. But when the dear Lord had left his three disciples, and prayed the third time, "then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." And immediately Judas, who was betraying him, came with a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders, who were ready to take him; and zealous Peter, aroused from his sleep, drew his sword and cut off the right

ear of one of the servants of the high priest. Vamped up free will always makes its boast of what it will and will not do, and of being a co-worker with God; but when the solemn work began in the garden of Gethsemane, free will went to sleep, or stood at a distance; and all that boasting Peter did, after he was aroused from his sleep, was to make his dear Lord another job, and increase the agony of his soul, for the Lord had to put on the ear which Peter had cut off, and to bear the curse due to Peter's cursing and swearing, and denying him in the house of the high priest. But no compassion must be shown to the dear Lamb of God. He must therefore be dragged from the garden to Caiaphas the high priest, where their reverences the priests, scribes, and elders were assembled, and where they searched for witnesses against Christ to put him to death, but found none. At length two false witnesses were found, and the council being determined to put him to death, any evidence would pass in their reverences' court--what is called a Spiritual Court, which was and now is among men, a contrivance of Satan to insult God. In this court they suffered men to spit in his face and buffet him, and smite him with the palms of their hands, and treat him with the utmost contempt; but his blessed Majesty bore it all patiently. This, beloved, was solemn work, when the Lord of glory had to stand in the midst of poor, crawling reptiles, and be thus insulted and spitefully treated by them. O ye children of Zion, it was your sins that f

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