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## GRACE AND TRUTH

by Octavius Winslow, 1849

### Preface

The present volume is designed to form a companion to one which immediately preceded it, (*Glimpses of the Truth as it is in Jesus*) and to which, in the general character of its subjects and mode of treating them, it may be thought to bear some resemblance, sufficient, at least, to identify them as originating from the same pen.

"Grace and Truth!" Magnificent and expressive words! Let not the Christian reader unfold these pages with the extravagant expectation of finding within them anything approaching to a consecutive and elaborate treatise upon these vast and lofty themes. They have no pretension of this kind. He will be disappointed, looking for this, in meeting with familiar, simple, and unconnected illustrations only, of these great subjects; not, however, the author trusts, the less important, precious, or sanctifying.

What is Grace? It is the heart of God overflowing—His free mercy in Christ to fallen man, coursing its benignant way through our lost world, and outmeasuring the ravages and the triumphs of sin. For, "where sin abounded, GRACE did much more abound."

What is Truth? Momentous question! The anxious inquiry of every age, of every Church, of every lip. *Pilate* knows it now. And he might have known it when the question first fell from his trembling lips—for ETERNAL and ESSENTIAL TRUTH stood as a criminal at his bar! But summon the witnesses, and they shall testify what is truth. Ask the *devils* who beheld His miracles and quailed beneath His power, and they will answer—"It is Jesus,

the Son of God Most High." Ask the *angels* who beheld His advent and announced His birth, and they will answer—"It is the Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Ask His *enemies* who nailed Him to the tree, and they will answer—"Truly it is the Son of God!" Ask His *disciples* who were admitted to His confidence, and who leaned upon His bosom, and they will answer, "We believe and are sure that it is Christ, the Son of the living God." Ask the *Father*, testifying from the 'secret place of thunder,' and He will answer—"It is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Summon witnesses from *the inanimate world*. Ask the water blushing into wine—ask the sea calmed by a word—ask the earth trembling upon its axis—ask the rocks rent asunder—ask the sun veiled in darkness—ask the heavens robed in mourning—ask all nature agonized and convulsed, as He hung upon the tree—and all, as with one voice, will exclaim—Jesus is TRUTH.

Happy are they, who, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, *receive* Jesus into their hearts as the truth—*believe* in Him as the truth—*walk* in Him as the truth, and who, under the sanctifying influence of the truth, are *employing their holiest energies* in making Him known to others as "the way, the truth, and the life"—thus, like their Lord, "bearing witness unto the truth."

In the Lord Jesus, then, as the head of the new-covenant dispensation, "Grace and Truth" essentially and exclusively dwell; and sitting at His feet, each sincere, humble disciple may receive grace out of His fullness and be taught the truth from His lips. "The law was given by Moses, but GRACE and TRUTH came by Jesus Christ."

To encourage the 'house of Jacob to possess their possessions,' is the lowly design of these pages. Should their perusal stimulate the Christian reader to seek an increase of grace from Christ, -impart to him clearer unfoldings of Jesus as the truth, or lead him into deeper, more comforting and sanctifying views of the 'truth as it is in Jesus,' -let him, in return, pray for the unworthy writer as greatly needing and desiring in his own soul a larger measure of these precious things. And all the glory shall be ascribed to the TRIUNE GOD, to whom exclusively and most justly it is due.

### **"Jesus, Full of Grace"**

The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."

**Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"**

**"Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil."**

**Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side."**

**She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one."**

**But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.**

**She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left." 2 Kings 4:1-7**

**It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of the Bible, to embody and exhibit some of the most important, spiritual, and magnificent truths of His word in the form of type, symbol, and similitude. Neither His wisdom nor His love, in thus throwing a drapery of apparent obscurity around revelations so momentous, can be questioned. It cannot be reasonably denied that God, who saw proper to unveil His own mind, and in a way of extraordinary revelation, communicate his will to man, could as easily, if so it pleased Him, not only have accompanied that revelation with the self-evident assurance that He, and no other, was the Speaker; but that also He could have cleared away whatever was mysterious and obscure from each truth, causing it to stand forth, palpable and demonstrative, bathed in the splendor of its own Divine effulgence. But with a view, doubtless, of simplifying the meaning, of heightening the grandeur, and of deepening the solemnity of truth in the estimation of the human mind, this peculiar mode of conveying it is, in part, adopted.**

**Nor for these reasons alone. The spirit of earnest and persevering research, is the spirit which a proper and successful study of the Bible demands. It is not everywhere upon the surface of God's word that the most important instruction is found. Though even there, truths the most spiritual and precious are sometimes scattered like brilliant constellations pendent from the firmament and visible to the naked eye; or, as gems detached from the ocean's cave, are sometimes thrown upon the shore, and gathered up by the pensive traveler. But in most cases the truth of God lies deep and invisible. A superficial and careless research will not conduct the investigator to its richest revelations. The mine must be excavated, the firmament must be explored, the ocean must be fathomed—in other words, the Scriptures must be searched**

with much prayer for the Spirit's teaching and with patient continuance; or their greatest beauties and their costliest treasures will remain concealed.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and there is no type, nor symbol, nor parable, nor story, nor song, which enfolds not some profound truth, and which conveys not some deep practical lesson of wisdom, or some rich word of comfort, or some precious unfolding of JESUS, the "price of which is above rubies."

To this class of revealed truth may be assigned the instructive narrative which has suggested the topic of the present chapter of our work. The entire story is inimitably beautiful and exquisitely touching. And, were we to descant upon the doctrine of God's providential care of His people, the timely and considerate aid which He has ever been wont to extend on their behalf in seasons of trial and of emergency—limiting ourselves to these points, we should find rich and ample material in the narrative before us, for extended and profitable reflection.

The most prominent figure in this simple picture of real life, around whom gather the light and interest of the entire scene, is the prophet's widow. Her husband dying insolvent, she was found battling single-handed and alone with the embarrassed circumstances of a desolate and an impoverished widowhood. To this gloomy feature of her history must be added a trial, which, to a mother's heart, would be the filling up of the cup of sorrow to the brim—her husband's creditors had come to claim her two sons as bondmen, thus severing the last link of earth-born happiness, and suddenly bringing down her gray hairs with sorrow to the same grave which had just closed upon the husband of her youth.

At this crisis of her affairs the prophet Elisha comes to her door; his steps guided there, he knew not why, by the unseen yet ever-working hand of the widow's God. A solitary cruse of oil constituted all the temporal wealth of the widow. But God can bless, and in blessing can multiply the little that the righteous has. Therefore it is that "the little that a righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked." To see the power of God, nor less His love, in increasing to a sufficiency 'the little' of the righteous, stamps it with an infinitely greater value than the wealthiest revenues of the ungodly. And now God will augment her stinted resources to an abundance, although he would work a miracle to accomplish it.

**At the command of the prophet, a number of vessels were obtained, 'empty vessels, not a few.' Then closing the door, this interesting group shut in with God, she proceeds, at the bidding of Elisha, to pour out the oil from the one full vessel into each empty vessel—They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."**

**And now did the widow's heart sing for joy. Her bond cancelled, her sons redeemed, her need supplied, and the lives of all thus rescued from famine and from death; what a radiance would light up that dreary dwelling, and what music would break from those grateful hearts! Oh, how good is God! He is a 'Sun and a Shield.' He is a 'very present help in trouble.' Reader, are you a widow, adding to the bitter anguish of recent bereavement, the sadness and the gloom of exhausted resources, of embarrassed circumstances, and the pressure of claims which you cannot meet? Take comfort from this sacred narrative, and from the 'exceeding great and precious promise' of your God—  
"Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me."**

**What an amazing promise is this! What a word spoken in season! Who but God could speak it? He has spoken it, and He speaks it, bereaved widow, to you. It is your promise, as exclusively yours as though you were the only individual to whom it were addressed. God stands prepared to make it good. "I have sworn by my holiness that I will not lie," thus pledging His truth and holiness to fulfil this and every other appropriate promise in your individual and happy experience. In view of this precious promise can you not, then, rise superior to your present circumstances, exclaiming with the prophet, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"**

**But interesting and profitable as it might be to pursue this train of thought, our present and main design is to consider the narrative as illustrating, in some of its principal features, the higher operations of God in grace, rather than the subordinate arrangements of God in providence. The sacred episode presents this interesting subject in three essential points of view: the character of those whom the Lord Jesus replenishes with His grace; the sufficiency of**

the grace that is in Jesus to meet each case; and the continuance of the supply of grace until the great purposes of grace shall have been accomplished, and the mystery of God shall be finished. "They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.' But he replied, 'There is not a jar left.' Then the oil stopped flowing." And oh, that while bending our attention to this all important subject, 'great grace' may descend both upon the writer and the reader!

The vessels which the prophet commanded to be brought, let it be observed, were **EMPTY VESSELS**. Spiritual emptiness—an utter destitution of all original holiness and grace—is the great and essential characteristic of all who become partakers of the grace of Christ. They receive not this grace as saints, but as sinners; not as the righteous, but as the guilty; not as the meritorious, but as the unworthy. They become its recipients exclusively upon the ground of their utter destitution of all native righteousness whatever. With what clearness and power has the Holy Spirit delineated their spiritual condition! They are represented as 'poor,' as 'blind,' as 'sick,' as 'naked,' as 'in need,' as 'lost,' as 'enemies to God,' as 'despising and rejecting Christ,' as 'covered with filthy rags,' as self-destroyed,' as 'in their blood,' as 'without strength,' as 'ready to perish,' as 'sinners,' as the 'ungodly,' as 'joined to idols,' as 'lovers of pleasure,' as 'condemned,' as 'without God'—atheists; as 'without hope'—hopeless.

Melancholy, yet true, description of fallen man! That you will not admit this natural destitution of all holiness to be your real state, my unconverted reader, does not in the least degree invalidate the fact. So far from this, the very denial is but a stronger confirmation and a more fearful aggravation of the awful truth. For a maniac to deny that he is insane; for a dying man to deny that he is sick; for a bankrupt to deny that he is insolvent; for a galley-slave to deny that he is in chains—what folly and what madness were this! And yet this moral folly and insanity are yours, so long as you say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

But deny it though you may, this is your actual condition. As to any holiness and strength, heavenly wisdom, spiritual purposes and desires, your soul is an 'empty vessel.' Not a solitary ray of Divine light illumines your understanding, not one pulse of spiritual life throbs in your soul, nor one spark of heavenly love glows in your heart. No, more; there is not only the absence of all spiritual good, but there is the actual existence of all spiritual evil. The mere

negation of holiness, if we can suppose such a state, would be less gloomy and appalling than the positive indwelling and supreme dominion of sin. Sin dwelling in you, Satan lording over you, and hell gleaming in your face, presents a picture of woe which baffles all description. You are a spiritual suicide, for you have destroyed yourself. You are a spiritual homicide, for your influence has destroyed others. You are a spiritual deicide, for the tendency of your sin is to annihilate the existence of God. Thus are you at war with universal being. Such is the power, and such the tyranny, of that monster evil—SIN!

Startle not, my reader, at my application of this appalling description of fallen nature to you. Read it not for another, but read it for yourself. Turn not away from it in unbelief and scorn. It is needful that you should recognize in yourself the moral image of the first Adam, that you might be led to seek a transformation into the moral image of the Second Adam. Your soul—I reiterate the truth—your soul is this 'empty vessel.' God has gone out of it; and as to the existence of any holiness, it is a vast and gloomy void. What can fill His place? Philosophy has tried, and Science has tried, and Poetry has tried, and the World has tried, and Wealth has tried, and Power has tried, and Pleasure has tried, and Friendship has tried—and all have failed to fill your soul's deep emptiness! Each exclaims, as in despair it retires, "It is not in me!" Presumptuous thought, that any created good, whatever, could fill a place designed for, and once occupied by, God Himself!

But there is a process by which the soul is brought to the knowledge of its spiritual destitution and emptiness. This transpires in that first stage of conversion which we denominate the conviction of sin. It is at the period when the 'plague of the heart' is felt, when the inward leprosy of sin is discovered, and the soul lies prostrate before God in the spirit and breathing the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." What a change now passes over the soul! No longer disguised and denied, the startling discovery is made and acknowledged, "I am the chief of sinners." How has the 'gold become dross, and the wine water!' How impotent now the vaunted strength! how poor the boasted riches! how loathsome the prided greatness! how insignificant the paraded grandeur! how groveling the lofty pursuits! A world seems suddenly to have vanished, a universe to have disappeared; and a vast void rushes upon the view, with its dark, shoreless ocean, and its lowering and unending sky. Roused from his long and profound slumber, lo! he finds himself, as it were, the solitary occupant of this void, and the desolate voyager upon this ocean—traveling he knows not where! The spell that bound it is

**broken; the enchantment that held it is dissolved; the dream that entranced it is vanished; the slumber that stupified it is aroused; and the soul awakes to consciousness, to reason, and to life.**

**In what an imaginary, unrealistic world has he been existing, and he knew it not! What a craving emptiness has he been cherishing, and he suspected it not! And all the while he wondered why happiness was a stranger to his heart, and that joy fled at his approach. It was "as when a hungry man dreams, and, behold, he eats; but he awakens, and his soul is empty; or, as when a thirsty man dreams, and, behold, he drinks; but he awakens, and, behold, he is parched."**

**But another step is necessary to complete the soul's consciousness of its emptiness—the step that brings it to the cross. The great change which conversion effects, has a particular and an essential relation to sin. Before conversion, the love of God not having been brought into close contact with the mind—the conscience and the heart, thus receiving their impressions of Divine holiness through the intellect, continue in a dark and torpid state as to the nature, the guilt, and the consequences of sin. To this cause—an ignorance of the law of God, may be traced most of, if not all, the errors that have ever distracted the Christian Church, the sins that have polluted the world, and the ills that have affected our race. Blindness to the Divine holiness, which the law of God was designed to mirror forth, is the root of all sin, and sin is the source of all evil. "Sin is the transgression of the law." Until the mind is brought to see the extent of the law's requirements, the purity of its precepts, and the inflexibility of its demands; it must have inadequate conceptions of the holiness of God, and, consequently, of the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin.'**

**The believer, viewing the precepts of the Divine law embodied in the life of Jesus, adopts it as his rule; and seeing the holiness of the Divine law exhibited in the death of Jesus, stands in awe of its spotlessness. In both, he sees how infinitely holy God is; and thus by conforming to the example of Christ, and by contemplation of the death of Christ, the one deep, ardent desire of his soul is, that he might be a "partaker of God's holiness,"—the highest, as it is the happiest, attainment to which, on earth or in heaven, he can arrive.**

**But oh, who can describe the holy, tender contrition which now takes possession of the soul brought near to the cross of Jesus? Who, but God, can fully interpret the meaning of those flowing tears, of that uplifted glance; of that panting of the heart, of that breathing of the lip—the heavings and the**

language of a soul moved to its center because of sin? If words of man can express these deep and holy emotions, David's penitential confession and prayer have done it. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight."

I have, dear reader, at this stage of our subject, to propose a solemn and heart-searching question. Has this humiliation for your state reached your heart? Has this, contrition for sin touched your spirit? Are you acquainted with that "godly sorrow which is unto life," that "repentance which needs not to be repented of?" Do not be indifferently to this conviction. It is the first link in the chain of your salvation. It is the first step in your journey to the cross. No man will arise and go to Jesus, until convinced that he stands in need of Jesus. A Savior weeping, as it were, tears of blood, will only be looked upon by a sinner weeping tears of godly sorrow. A broken-hearted Savior, and a broken-hearted sinner, dwell together in the sweetest harmony. Thousands pass by the cross of Jesus and never raise a glance towards it. And why? The problem is easy of solution. They have never experienced a heart pierced and sorrowing for sin. The veil that is upon their mind hides the cross of Christ from their view. The look of forgiveness beaming from the eye of that Divine Sufferer, never meets their imploring look of sorrow and of faith. They have felt no burden of sin to lay upon Jesus, no sense of guilt to lay upon Jesus—and so they pass Him blindly, coldly by.

Oh awful condition! To be borne down with a load which Jesus only can unbind; to be enchained by sins which Jesus only can break; to be suffering from a distemper which Jesus only can heal; to be dying a death from which Jesus only can deliver; to be going down to a hell whose door Jesus only can shut—and yet to remain insensible and indifferent, is appalling indeed. Reader, if this is your state, of what are you thinking, of what are you dreaming? Of what opiate have you drunk, that you are so unconscious? By what spell are you bound, that you are so infatuated? With what delusions are you ensnared, that you are so insane? Do you imagine that your condition will always continue as it now is? Will not the fumes of that opiate evaporate, and the world's spell be dissolved, and the mental hallucination vanish, and this corpse-like coldness and this grave-like darkness to all the great and momentous realities of eternity, give place to other and appalling emotions? Doubtless they will!

**There is fast approaching a period that will change the entire scenery of your future existence, and the relations of your present being. A sick and dying bed will impart another aspect to everything around you; and will place your character as a responsible, an accountable, and an immortal being in a new and an awful light. Do you now anxiously inquire, "What, then, must I do?" The word of God supplies the answer,—"repent and be converted." throw down your weapons! Relinquish your hostility to God! Humble yourself under His mighty hand. Lay down the weapons of your rebellion before the cross. You must repent, or you cannot be converted. You must be converted, or you cannot be saved. The whole case resolves itself into this—REPENT, or PERISH!**

**Thus does the Spirit of God empty the soul, preparing it for the reception of the grace of Christ. He sweeps and evacuates the house. He dislodges the unlawful inhabitant, dethrones the rival sovereign, and thus secures room for the Savior. He disarms the will of its rebellion against God, the mind of its ignorance of God, and the heart of its hatred to God. He throws down the barriers, removes the veil, and unlocks the door, at which the Redeemer triumphantly enters. In effecting this mighty work He acts as the Divine Forerunner of Christ. What the Baptist was to our Lord, 'crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord,' the Holy Spirit is in heralding the entrance of Jesus to the soul. He goes before and prepares His way. The Divinity of the Spirit furnishes Him with all the requisites for the work. He meets with difficulty, and He removes it—with obstruction, and He overcomes it—with opposition, and He vanquishes it. His power is omnipotent, His influence is irresistible, His grace is efficacious. There is no soul, however filled with darkness, and enmity, and rebellion, which He cannot prepare for Christ. There is no heart of stone which He cannot break, no brazen wall which He cannot prostrate, no mountain which He cannot level. Oh for more faith in the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man! How much do we limit, and in limiting how do we dishonor, Him in His work of converting grace!**

**The providential dealings of God are frequently instrumental in the hand of the Holy Spirit of accomplishing this emptying process, thus preparing the soul for the reception of Christ. The prophet thus strikingly alludes to it: "Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel." It was in this way God dealt with Naomi. Listen to her touching words: "I went out full, and the Lord has**

brought me home again empty." Thus it is that the bed of sickness, or the chamber of death, the loss of creature good, perhaps the loveliest and the fondest, has prepared the heart for Christ. The time of bereavement and of solitude, of suffering and of loss, has been the Lord's time of love.

Providence is the handmaid of grace—and God's providential dealings with man are frequently the harbinger of the kingdom of grace in the soul. Ah! how many whose glance falls upon this page, may testify—"Even thus has the Lord dealt with me. I was full, and He has emptied me. I was rich, and He has impoverished me. I was exalted, and He has laid me low. Not one cup only did He drain; not one 'vessel' only did He dash to the earth, but many. He has emptied me 'from vessel to vessel.'" Happy shall you be if the result of all this emptying and humbling shall be the filling and enriching of your soul with larger communications of grace and truth from Jesus.

A 'cloud of witnesses' around you testify to this invariable principle of the Lord's procedure with His people—that He enriches by impoverishing them; strengthens by weakening them; replenishes by emptying; and exalts by laying them low.

"Lord! why is this? I trembling cried  
Will You pursue Your worm to death?  
It is in this way, the Lord replied,  
I answer prayer for grace and faith."

"These inward trials I employ,  
From self and pride to set you free,  
And break your schemes of earthly joy,  
That you may seek your all in me."

From thus tracing the process by which God prepares the soul of man for the indwelling of His grace—in other words, from a consideration of the 'empty vessels,' let us direct our attention to another suggestive part of the narrative—THE ONE VESSEL OF OIL. It will be recollected that the resources of the widow consisted of a single pot of oil, from which all the empty vessels brought to its fullness were supplied. How expressive the emblem! The Lord Jesus Christ is the One Divinely appointed Head of all grace to the Church. Written as with a sunbeam is this precious truth. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "And of

his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ."

The headship of Christ sets forth the same truth. It is declared that God has given Him to be "Head over all things to his church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all." "Not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and ligaments, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God." Thus clearly does the Holy Spirit set forth the Lord Jesus as the one vessel of grace provided for poor empty sinners.

The fitness of this truth will instantly appear. It was a necessary part of man's redemption, that there should be a single Depository, one Head, for the custody and administration of this infinite fullness of grace. The question might be supposed to arise—In whom of all the creatures of God shall this grace be deposited? To whom shall be entrusted the keeping and the dispensing of this precious treasure? Adam? It is true that he once stood as the head of all holiness and happiness to a Church yet unfallen. In himself poor, as all dependent creatures of necessity must be, God yet made him the head of all life to countless myriads of beings. But what was the result? Weak in himself, and proving insufficient even for a state of sinlessness, he fell; and in falling, wiped out the holiness, the happiness, and the immortality of a world. It was such an experiment upon the power of created strength as would forever prove the utter weakness and vanity of man even in his best state. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Not to man, then, would this precious treasure be entrusted. We must look elsewhere for the being in whose hands it should be placed.

Shall some angel of superior rank and intelligence, of peerless beauty and strength, be the depository of God's grace to sinners? Still the same objection presents itself. Angels are but finite creatures, weak and dependent; and as such, a portion of their order once abandoned the abode of infinite purity and love, preferring, in the madness of their pride, "to reign in hell, rather than serve in heaven." The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Thus, then, is it clear that God could not confide the keeping of that grace which was to save lost sinners, and bring them to glory, to any mere creature, human or angelic. Beyond angels and men, then,

we must travel.

**Turning from all creatures, among whom He could not find the object for whom He searched, God 'looked within Himself,' and found it there in the person of His own, uncreated, and beloved Son, dwelling in His bosom from all eternity. Here was one in all respects fitted to be the great depository of this Divine grace, and worthy of the high office of dispensing it in all its fullness and freeness to the necessities of lost man. Leaving the bosom of His Father, He descended to our world, took up into a union with His essential Deity the nature which He came to redeem, and thus in His complex person became the Head and the Dispenser of all grace to His "body the Church," "the fullness of Him that fills all in all."**

**Here, then, is the vessel which Jehovah was pleased, in the covenant of grace, to constitute the Head of all salvation to His Church. The fitness and the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one Vessel of grace to the Church, are obvious. The person of our Lord was of the Father's construction. It was the sole conception of infinite wisdom, and the grandest. It would, therefore, in every respect be a work worthy of God. If upon the lowest production of His creative power God has left the imprint of His wisdom and skill, baffling the profoundest effort of man to imitate, how much more illustrious would His greatness appear in the construction of that Vessel to which He would confide alike the salvation of His Church and the vindication of His own glory! His grace was too Divine, too precious, and too holy, to be entrusted to the keeping of a mere creature.**

**The melancholy history of created excellence was still before him, "written in letters of mourning, lamentation, and woe." "The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hands of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." And in these glowing words is the construction of this new and peerless Vessel of grace announced. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth." Before this Vessel of grace, let us for a moment pause in adoring admiration of its greatness and its beauty.**

**It is the 'great mystery of godliness.' Angels are summoned to adore it. "When he brings in the first-born into the world he says, And let all the angels of God worship him." It was the profoundest conception of God's wisdom, the master-piece of His power, and worthy of their deepest homage. Such an**

unveiling of the glory of God they had never gazed upon before. In the countless glories with which He had enriched and garnished the universe, there was not its symbol nor its type. All other wonders ceased to astonish, and all other beauty fades in comparison with this, the grandest, the peerless of all. As if fathoming the utmost depth of infinity, and collecting all its hidden treasures of wisdom and power, of grace and truth, God would seem to have concentrated and embodied, to have illustrated and displayed them in the person of His incarnate Son, "God manifest in the flesh."

In this was found to consist the fitness of Immanuel, as the covenant Head of grace to the Church. The Divine and costly treasure, no longer confided to the guardianship and ministration of a weak, dependent creature, was deposited in the hands of incarnate Deity, one whom the Father knew, His 'equal,' His 'fellow,' made strong for Himself; and thus it was secured to His Church, an inexhaustible and eternal supply.

But not in His Divine nature only did the fitness and beauty of our Lord, as the one Vessel of grace, appear. His human nature, so perfect, so sinless, so replenished, enriched, and sanctified with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, conspired to render Him fairer than the children of men. But in what did the chief excellence and beauty of our Lord's humanity consist? Was it the glory of human wisdom, of worldly grandeur, of secular power? No, not in these! It was that which the world the least esteems, and the most hates, which formed the rich endowment of our Lord's inferior nature—the grace which dwelt within Him.

The world conferred no dignity upon Christ, except that of its deepest ridicule, and its bitterest scorn. In His temporal estate He preferred poverty to wealth, obscurity to distinction, insult to applause, suffering to ease, a cross to a throne. So indigent and neglected was He, though every spot of earth was His, and all creatures were feeding from His hand, He had no nightly shelter, and often no 'daily bread.' How affecting to those who love the Savior, and who owe all their temporal comforts to His deprivation, and all their glory to his abasement, are expressions like these: 'Jesus was hungry;' 'Jesus said, I thirst;' 'Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit;' 'Jesus groaned within himself;' 'Jesus wept;' 'The Son of man has no where to lay his head.' The incarnate God stooped this low! But in the midst of all this poverty and humiliation, God did seem to say, "I will make Him, my Son, more glorious than angels, and fairer than the children of men. I will endow Him immeasurably with my Spirit, and I will replenish Him to the full with my grace. I will anoint Him

with the oil of gladness above His fellows." And when He appeared in the world, and the eye of the evangelist caught the vision, he exclaimed with wondering delight, "The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!"

And oh, how did all that He said and did, each word and action, betray the fullness of grace that dwelt within Him! The expressions that distilled from His lips were 'gracious words;' the truths that He taught, were the doctrines of grace; the works that He performed, were the miracles of grace; the invitations that He breathed, were the promises of grace; the blessings that He pronounced, were the gifts of grace—in a word, the blood that He shed, the righteousness that He wrought, the redemption that He accomplished, the salvation that He proclaimed, the souls that He rescued, and the kingdom that He promised, were the outgoings, the overflowings, the achievements, the triumphs, and the rewards of grace.

From this contemplation of the Vessel of grace, we now turn our attention to **THE GRACE ITSELF**. The narrative is still our guide. The first idea suggested is, the costliness and preciousness of the grace of Jesus. That one vessel of oil, as we have before remarked, was all of temporal wealth which this poor widow possessed. It was her only and her last resource. This exhausted, she must resign her two sons to a slave's life, and then lie down and die. How precious and priceless, then, to her would be each drop of this vessel of oil! But of infinite worth and of priceless value is the grace of the Lord Jesus. Its Divine origin and character stamp its value.

"The grace of God" is its designation and its nature. The redemption of man by Jesus Christ is an exhibition of God's grace which God cannot surpass. And the reason is, God cannot surpass Himself. It were a vain and profitless inquiry, whether God could have saved man by any other way more glorious to Himself. As the method which He adopted could never have suggested itself to any finite mind, to speculate, therefore, upon the possibility of another and a more august expedient, were the extreme of folly. It should be enough for me that the history of God's grace is but the history of Himself—that there is more of the Divine glory unfolded in this redemption-plan than I shall ever be able to master—though a mind developed to its utmost capacity is the faculty employed, and eternity itself the period assigned for its study.

And oh how entrancing is its history! Eternally welled in the heart of infinite love, this grace struggled for its freedom, this mercy panted for an outlet. Its

love of holiness and its reverence for justice forbade that it should obtain that freedom and seek that outlet at the expense of either. Grace must appear in alliance with truth, and mercy in harmony with holiness. God must walk upon the battlements of His love, clothed with every perfection, and each exhibited in its unshaded luster. But how shall we describe the expedient that would combine, and where shall we find the person who should exhibit them thus, in their sweetest harmony and in their richest glory? The answer is at hand. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." This is the key to the infinite grace of God. "I am in the Father;" said Christ, "and the Father is in me." Glorious announcement!

Collecting together all the riches of His grace, the Father places them at the disposal of His Son, and bids Him spread them out before the eyes of a fallen world. True to His covenant engagement, the eternal Son appears "made like his brethren," and announces that He has come to lift the veil, and show to us the heart of a gracious, sin-pardoning God. In declaring, that the "Father himself loves us," and that "he that had seen him," so full of grace, "had seen the Father," He affirms, but in other words, that He is a copy, a representation of the Father—that the love, the grace, the truth, the holiness, the power, the compassion, the tenderness that were exhibited in Him in such a fullness of supply, and were distributed by Him in such an affluence of expenditure, had their origin and their counterpart in God.

Oh! how jealous was He of the Divine honor! He might, had He willed it, have sought and secured His own distinction and advancement, His own interest and glory, apart from His Father's. He could, had He chosen it, have erected His kingdom as a rival sovereignty, presenting Himself as the sole object of allegiance and affection, thus attracting to His government and His person the obedience and the homage of the world. But no! He had no separate interest from His Father. The heart of God throbbed in the bosom of Jesus—the perfections of God were embodied in the person of Jesus—the purpose of God was accomplished in the mission of Jesus—and the will of God was done, and the honor of God was secured, in the life and death of Jesus. "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me," was a declaration emblazoned upon His every act. Anxious that the worship which they offered to His Deity, the attachment which they felt for His person, the admiration which they cherished for the beauty of His character and the splendor of His works, should not center solely in Himself, He perpetually pointed His disciples upward to the Eternal Father. It would seem that, such was His knowledge of

**His Father's grace to sinners, such His acquaintance with His heart of love, that He could find no satisfaction in the affection, the admiration, and the homage yielded to Himself, but as that affection, admiration, and homage were shared equally by His Father. With Him it was an ever-present thought—and how could He forget it?—that the Father's grace filled to overflowing this glorious Vessel.**

**He had just left the bosom of the Father, and this was well near the first announcement which broke in music from His lips, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And as He pursued His way through the awe-struck and admiring throng, He might often be heard to exclaim, in a voice that rose in solemn majesty above their loudest plaudits, "I seek not my own glory. I honor my Father."**

**The spiritual mind will at once perceive that our object in the preceding reflections has been to place the character of God as the "Lord God, merciful and gracious," in its own proper light. It is possible that this truth may appear to the reader as a newly-discovered planet in the firmament of revelation. It may be to him a new truth, presenting to his eye a fresh and a more kindly view of the paternal and gracious character of God. God, the original source of grace to sinners, has, perhaps, hitherto been but a timidly-received doctrine, if received at all. In the first thirstings of your newly-quickenened soul, you sought and found the gentle rivulet of grace issuing from some isolated and shaded spot in your lonely path—and you "tasted that the Lord was gracious." Grateful for its refreshing, but panting for larger draughts, you followed the rivulet to the stream—and drank yet deeper of its fullness. Not satisfied with this, but longing to explore the glorious mystery of the supply, you traced the streamlet to the 'broad river,' transported with joy to find that all fullness dwelt in Jesus—and into it you plunged.**

**But here you have rested. Enamored of the beauty, and lost in wondering delight at the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of this river, you have reclined upon its green and sunny bank, forgetting that this river was but the introduction to an ocean, and that that ocean was nothing less than the heart of the Father, infinitely and eternally full of grace. And little did you think, as you sipped from the rivulet, and drank from the stream, and bathed in the river of grace, that there was a depth still deeper, which, like Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, was so deep that it "could not be passed over."  
"What!" exclaims some tried believer, "Is the heart of Jesus a transcript of**

**the heart of God? Is the Father as full of forgiveness, of love, of mercy, of compassion, of tenderness, as the Son? How different from all that I had conceived Him to be! I thought of God, and was troubled. His terrors made me afraid. His dealings with me have been severe. His way has been in the whirlwind and in the storm, and His path in the waters. His 'judgments' have been 'a great deep.' He has set a hedge about me that I cannot pass. He has spoken to me out of the thick cloud. He answered me by fire. He has spoiled my pleasant pictures, and filled my cup with bitter things! What! is this God all that you represent Him to be? Is He so full of grace and truth? Is He my God, my loving, reconciled Father?" Yes, even so! "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."**

**And who can contemplate the work of Jesus and not be convinced of the costliness and preciousness of this grace? How precious is the grace that pardons, that justifies, that adopts, that sanctifies, that comforts, the vilest who believe in Jesus! And yet all this Jesus does. He died for sinners, he receives sinners, he saves sinners to the uttermost. O precious grace, that has opened a fountain which cleanses every stain; that has provided a robe which covers every spot; that "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life" in the soul it has renewed! Reader, have you felt the power, and tasted the sweetness of this grace? If so, you will feel that no imagination can conceive its beauty, and that no words can express its preciousness. You will regard it as worthy of your warmest love and your highest praise. You will aim to live upon it constantly, to draw from it largely, and to magnify it holily.**

**Nothing this side of glory will be so lovely in your eyes, or so dear to your heart, as the grace of Jesus. Ah yes! inestimably precious is it! There is more of God, and more of heaven, and more of holiness, and more of happiness, unfolded and experienced in one drop of this grace, than in ten thousand worlds like this. "Let others toil for wealth, and pant for glory, and plume themselves with gifts; Lord, give me Your grace; this is all my salvation, and all my desire!"**

**Another attribute of the grace of Jesus is its sufficiency. The widow's pot of oil was strikingly illustrative of this. By the miraculous power of God it became inexhaustible. It filled every vessel. Had other empty vessels, gathered from other dwellings, and of still larger capacity, been brought, there would still have been a sufficiency for all—not one would have been removed unfilled. Onward continued to flow the oil, ceasing not to flow until there was not a vessel more. Nor were any questioned as to whom the vessels belonged, and what their size, or form, or color. It was enough that they were empty vessels,**

brought to be replenished from the one vessel of oil.

Such, dear reader, is the grace of Jesus; Divine in its nature, infinite in its resources, it must be inexhaustible in its supply. "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace;" that is, a counterpart, in measure, of the grace that is in Christ: as the paper receives the form of the type, and the wax the impression of the seal, so the softened and believing heart receives an exact counterpart of the grace that is in Jesus; "grace for grace."

The word 'fullness' in this passage is sometimes employed to express the idea of abundance. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;" that is, the abundance of the earth is the Lord's. But in this connection it has a meaning still more impressive. It signifies not only the fullness of abundance, but the fullness of redundancy. A redundant fullness, an overflowing fullness. The vessel is not only full to the brim, but it runs over, and rushes on in ten thousand streams to the utmost limit of man's necessities. Such a redundancy of grace was required to bring God and the sinner together. The gulf which separated these two extremes of being was just that which separates the bottomless pit in hell from the highest throne in glory. No finite being could annihilate it. All the resources of wisdom, and power, and benevolence, of all the angels in heaven, could not bridge it. But the redundant grace that is in Christ Jesus has crossed this gulf, and God and man meet, and are reconciled in one Mediator.

And now from the glorious heights of pardoning grace on which he stands, the sinner can look down upon a hell deserved, but a hell escaped. Such a redundant fullness of grace was never seen until Jesus appeared. The patriarchs and prophets saw this grace, but not as we are privileged to see it. They realized its sufficiency, but not its redundancy. The truth was revealed to them, but by degrees. The light beamed in upon their minds, but in solitary rays. The grace distilled, rather than flowed. They had the dew rather than the showers of grace.

And yet it was sufficient to meet their case. When Jehovah opened this fountain of grace to two of the greatest sinners the world ever saw, and declared that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," dim and partial as was the discovery, it was sufficient to lift them from the dark borders of despair and of hell, into the sunny region of hope and of heaven. Thus the saints of the former dispensation saw this grace, but not so clearly as we see it. They dwelt amid the shadows, we in the full blaze of glory. They

**lived in the twilight of grace, but we in its meridian day. They had the law, but we have the Gospel. They had grace in the hands of Moses, but we have grace in the hands of Jesus. They were the 'children of the bondwoman,' but we are the 'children of the freewoman.' They had the 'spirit of bondage unto fear,' but we have the 'Spirit of adoption' unto love.**

**And one passage will explain the reason of this great difference: "God, who at sundry times and in diverse ways spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." 'Spoken unto us by his Son!' Behold the fullness, the redundance, the sufficiency of this grace! "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Such, reader, is he fullness of Jesus—this Divine Vessel of grace. And now, if this grace were sufficient for God—sufficient to enable Him to extend mercy to the utmost, to sinners the vilest, and yet remain strictly just, then, I ask, is it not sufficient, my reader, for you?**

**If God, on the basis of this grace, can come forward and extend His hand of reconciliation to you, may you not with the plea of this same grace advance and extend your hand of faith to God? If there is no difficulty, or reluctance, on the part of God, why should there be on the part of man? And has God ever hesitated? Has He ever refused, on the footing of Christ's merits, to save the penitent sinner, who, having heard that the King of heaven is a merciful King, has cast himself upon that mercy, like the servants of Benhadad, with sackcloth upon their loins, and ashes upon their head—humbly suing for life? Never! It is the delight of God, as it is His glory, to prove the power and the sufficiency of His grace in Christ Jesus to save man to the uttermost extent of his guiltiness and woe.**

**How overflowing with saving grace does the heart of God appear in these words: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! place your empty vessel beneath this overflowing Fountain of grace! and remove it not until, in its measure, it becomes the 'fullness of Him who fills all in all.'**

**I have already remarked that when the vessels were brought at the prophet's command, no inquiries were proposed. There doubtless was a marked variety of form and capacity in these vessels—yet all alike received their supply from one and the same source. Believers in Jesus! Saints of the Most High! of**

different names and sections you may be, yet, composing, as you do, but one body, and one church, "out of his fullness have all we received." We came to Jesus, some with larger and some with smaller capacity; we came—some more vile and worthless than others—we came with different degrees of knowledge, and conviction, and faith, yet Jesus received all, welcomed all, and filled all. He asked us no such questions—in what religion we had been trained? in what church we had been educated? to what family we belonged? or what was the measure of our capacity to receive?

It was enough that He discerned in us His own Spirit's work—it was enough that He saw we needed Him, desired Him, looked to Him; that we felt that none but Himself could meet our case, and satisfy the thirstings of our longing hearts. He questioned not, demurred not, refused not—but, drawing us to Himself; all vile, and wretched, and poor, and empty as we were; he poured the stream of His saving grace into our souls, filling us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Blissful moment! Believers in Jesus! "of his fullness have all we received." All the members of the one body, all the children of the one family—Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free—their climate, and color, and language differing—all the chosen of God, all the given of the Father, all the purchase of the Son, all the called of the Spirit, all, in virtue of their union to Christ, equally partake of this fullness. Where, then, is the boasting of one against another? it is excluded. Where are divisions, and envyings, jealousies, heart-burnings, and separations in the family of God? let them not be once named among you, but to be disowned and deprecated, as becomes the recipients and the debtors alike of the grace of Jesus.

Before passing on to our last topic, allow a word of exhortation, suggested by the importance and the preciousness of our theme. As this grace has done much for your soul, aim to do great things for the honor of this grace. Beware of shading its luster. As there are those who abuse the doctrine of grace, be it your constant endeavor to exalt the principle of grace. Deeply and everlastingly are you its debtor. Free grace has laid you under the most solemn and eternal obligation to be holy. The only thing that makes you to differ from the vilest being that pollutes the earth, or from the darkest fiend that gnaws his chains in hell, is the free grace of God. Then strive to glorify it by a life of deepening holiness. By cultivating a meek and Christlike temper, by pursuing a lowly, circumspect walk, and by laying yourself out for the happiness of man, and for the glory of God, prove, to the eternal confusion of

**all its enemies and slanderers, that the "grace of God that brings salvation, and has appeared unto all men, teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."**

**Be the bold and holy champion of this grace, glorying in its principle, and practically illustrating its sanctifying power. Where others pervert it, you must vindicate it. Where others deny it, you must confess it. Where others tread it in scorn beneath their feet, you must lift it meekly up on high, as God's costliest bequest, man's richest inheritance. "And they glorified God in me."**

**I would also caution you to beware of placing any limit whatever to the grace of Jesus. Be your circumstances what they may, remember that "God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Make no allowance for sin, frame no excuses for inactivity—shrink from no cross, be disheartened by no difficulty, give place to no temptation, yield to no excessive grief, for Jesus has spoken it, and He now speaks it to you, "My grace is sufficient for you." Since, then, the grace of Jesus is illimitable, take a vessel of large capacity with you in your journeyings, to the one source of supply, that you may receive abundantly. Remember that, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, "All things are for your sake, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God"**

**Let your life be a perpetual traveling to this grace. Do not be satisfied with what you have already received. Go, again and yet again, to this Divine Vessel, taking every corruption as it is developed, every sin as it is felt, every sorrow as it arises, to Jesus; remembering for your encouragement, that though you have received much, yet "he gives more grace," and is prepared to give you much more than you have yet received.**

**Rejoice that the emptiness of the vessel is no plea against the filling of the vessel. If the Spirit of God has made you 'poor in spirit,' has wrought in you a 'hungering and a thirsting for righteousness,' betake yourself to the grace of Jesus. He does not want the full vessel, nor does the full vessel want Him. "He fills the hungry with good things, and the rich he sends empty away." He invites, He draws, He receives none but the empty. He will have all the glory of our salvation. He will magnify His grace in the creature's nothingness. Your emptiness shall eternally glorify His fullness. With the example and the**

words before me of him who styled himself the I chief of sinners, I hesitate not to encourage the greatest sinner to come to Christ. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy. . . . And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Truly might he exclaim, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Beware, then, I beseech you, of going to Christ for salvation in any other character than an empty sinner. Had the vessels been brought to Elisha other than empty, he would instantly have refused them, filled though they had been with ambrosia itself. Nothing should mingle with the oil. Nothing should shade the luster of the miracle. And so is it with the grace of Jesus. Brilliant genius, profound erudition, costly benevolence, and the purest ethics of natural religion, avail nothing in the matter of the soul's salvation. It is the ambrosia of which the vessel must be emptied before it comes to Christ. It must all be laid aside as constituting a plea of acceptance. The only plea admissible with Christ is, that without His grace you perish forever. "Lord, save, or I perish!"

We are now conducted to our final topic. There is a day approaching when 'every vessel of mercy' being filled, **THE GRACE ITSELF WILL CEASE TO FLOW**; there will be no more conferring of grace, because there will be no more recipients. "And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stopped." Until then, this grace will go on multiplying its subjects, increasing its conquests, and augmenting the Savior's glory. Then let us task our noblest energies, and employ our best exertions, in spreading abroad through all lands the knowledge of this Redeemer, so full of grace and truth. Let the tidings spread—let the widow and the fatherless hear it—let those who are ready to perish hear it—let the most distant and the most degraded tribe of man hear it—let the slave in his chains, the African in his lair, the Hottentot in his bush, the Indian in his prairie, the Hindoo in his jungle, the Greenlander amid his snows, and the Chinese bowing in his temple—yes, let a ruined and a famishing world, with trumpet tongue, hear it—that there is for every penitent a fullness of saving grace in Christ Jesus, and that "whoever will, may come and partake of the water of life freely."

Oh! why are not Christians broader awake to this God-like enterprise? Why are we not consecrating more talent and more time, more property and more personal influence, to the work of spreading abroad the knowledge of Christ? "Glories will be his diadem,

**And songs of ecstasies unknown,  
Who forms for God one beauteous gem,  
To sparkle on the eternal throne."**

**But let us for a moment transport our thoughts to the future. The future! Oh how bright it is, and full of blessing, to the "vessels of mercy prepared beforehand unto glory!" The grace ceasing on earth, is now followed by an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, shall assuredly see that the Lord is glorious! "How may we know," is often a trembling inquiry, "that our departed friends are with Jesus?" Were they partakers, in the most limited degree, of the grace of Jesus? then, their safety is beyond all doubt. The grace which they possessed was the seedling, the germ, the first-fruits of glory. The light which illumined their souls, was the twilight dawn of heaven. It was utterly impossible that that germ could die, or that that light could be extinguished. It was as imperishable and as immortal as God Himself. The weak grace battled with sin, and the feeble light struggled with darkness, but both conquered at last. There they are—standing on the sea of glass, chanting the high praises of the grace that brought them there. Yonder they are—in the Father's house, in the Savior's mansions; they conflict no more, they weep no more, they hunger and thirst no more; for He who once gave them grace, now gives them glory.**

**"Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant; grace is glory begun, glory is grace made perfect; grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace." Lift up your heads, you gracious souls! Heaven is before you, and your full redemption draws near. The Lord is at hand. His coming is near. That 'blessed hope' of the church, His 'glorious appearing,' will soon be realized, bursting upon your soul in all its blissful splendor, and then you shall be perfectly like, and forever with, the Lord.**

## **Faith in God**

**Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God." Mark 11:22**

**In laying the foundation of our faith in Himself, God has made it as firm and durable as Deity itself. Had He proposed for our confidence another and an inferior object, it had been but a mockery of the necessity and the woe He sought to relieve, the most bitter and humiliating. Faith is a divine principle. The object of its trust must necessarily be Divine. It is its privilege, as its**

**boast, that all its concerns are transacted with Deity. It deals with nothing less. It is the queen grace of the royal priesthood, its home is the king's palace, and its position is always near, and its communion is always directly and exclusively with, the King himself. Descending from God, its tendencies are ever ascending to God. It struggles upward from the lowest degree, fighting its way through a host of the fiercest and most formidable foes, until it reaches Him, its Divine and blissful object. This will account for *the indestructibleness of the principle of real faith; springing from, it is perpetually nourished by, God.***

**The church of the Apocalypse, driven into the wilderness, and nourished there, may illustrate the life of faith. It cannot really perish. Its operations may for a season be embarrassed, its actings for a while suspended, its pulsations fluctuating and tremulous, its oppositions and its trials formidable and severe, but it cannot perish. No power can draw it entirely away from God. Voyaging to the better land, faith is the believing soul's compass. The needle points to God, its one object and center. Nothing can divert it. As you cannot destroy the magnetic principle, although you may for a while disturb the regularity of its movement by the false attraction of a foreign object, so does *true faith defy all annihilating power.* Its movements may for a moment be tremulous, and its pointing not always true—for example, when second causes and creature confidence interpose between it and God—but relieve it of its pressure, and remove its false attraction, and, like the magnetic needle left to its free and uncontrolled operation, it will return again to its center, and point once more to its God.**

**And yet no exhortation does the believer more constantly need than that which has suggested the theme of the present chapter. In consequence of the many and sharp trials of faith, the temptations by which it is assailed, and the difficulties with which it has to cope, we require those inspiring words of the Savior to be ever sounding in our ears, "Have faith in God." And in what, my Christian reader, does this high exercise of the soul consist? Need I remark—and yet of elementary truths we should never lose sight—that it commences with the very first principle of the Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" Our Lord embodies the same important sentiment in His remarkable words, "You believe in God, believe also in me." All professed faith in the Father, which ascribes not equal glory to the Son, is an awful delusion. Faith approaches God by Christ. Through this medium only can it behold Him. By this door only can it enter and hold audience with God. A faith, so called, that excludes the Savior, and by sequence denies the atonement, will make shipwreck of the soul whose course to eternity it proposes to steer; guided by**

such a compass, its doom is fixed and fearful—it must eventually strand the noble vessel upon the bleak, dark shores of eternity. It never will conduct it to the haven of eternal blessedness. As a sinner, what confidence can I have in the holy Lord God apart from faith in the atoning Savior? He is so great, so holy, and so true, that I cannot, I dare not approach Him, except through the mediation of One whom He has appointed and accepted. "I think of God and am troubled." Sin makes me afraid, but when I see the sin atoning blood upon the mercy-seat, and when God sees the sin-cleansing blood upon my soul, there is agreement, there is confidence, there is peace, there is fellowship. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Impossible! Here, then, is the ground-work of faith in God—believing with all the heart in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, supposing myself to be addressing a true believer in Jesus, I would endeavor to open up to his mind this—the great principle of all holiness and happiness—faith in God. Have faith in Him 'as God'. His character justifies it, His word invites it, His promises encourage it, His Son imparts it, His Spirit creates it, His blessing crowns it. How frequently in the word does God condescend to invite the exercise of faith in Himself by a declaration, and on the ground of what He is! Thus to Abraham: "And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *I am the Almighty God*: walk before me, and be perfect." And again to His Church: "I am the Lord God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

How kind and condescending in God is this mode of asking and encouraging the confidence of His people! How signally does He come down to our weakness and infirmity! What a foundation for faith to build upon does He reveal; what a field for faith to work in does He open; what amplitude, what scope, and what riches amid which it may revel! "I am God all-sufficient. Is anything too hard for me?" Faith needs and asks no more. Less than this would not meet its case; more than this it could not have. When faith feels that it has God's word for its warrant in believing, God's command for its rule in obeying, God's promise for its encouragement in suffering, and God Himself as the foundation of its confidence and the center of its rest, it becomes invulnerable, and almost omnipotent.

*The exact measure of our faith is the extent of our experimental knowledge of God. Acquaintance with God must inspire the mind with confidence in Him. The more truly we know, the more implicitly we trust in Him. It is in this way,*

among others, that He answers the prayer of His people, "Establish your word unto your servant, who is devoted to your fear." *God establishes the truth of His word by enlarging the believer's knowledge of Himself, and this knowledge is mainly attained through the truth.* The word reveals God, and an experimental knowledge of God confirms the truth of the word; the one thus establishing the other. Our faith, then, if it be a real principle, must have respect to God 'as God'. "Have faith in God." Acquaint yourself now with God, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto you."

We have already hinted that *true faith in God supposes Him reconciled in Christ.* This is the ground-work of all holy, humble converse with God. But here we must be cautious of placing a limit, as, too many do. It is a great display of sovereign grace, that we should have peace with God. God reconciled to us in Jesus is, of all Divine and experimental truths, the greatest. Until this is experienced, we can affirm of no individual that he is safe for eternity. Yet, alas! what numbers reject this truth, and still dream on of heaven! But great as is this grace, it is not less our mercy to be advancing, on the ground of assured peace, *to more matured attainments in universal holiness.* We are, at best, but dull scholars in the science of spiritual arithmetic. We have imperfectly learned one of its first rules, that of adding grace to grace. "Giving all diligence," exhorts the apostle, "add to your faith virtue". Peace through the atoning blood being obtained, the movement is to be progressive, the course onward; each day, if possible, augmenting the measure of our grace, and adding to the number of the Spirit's graces.

**Reconciliation with God is but the starting-post in the Divine life, not the goal;** it is the commencement, and not the end of our course. In other words, *vast numbers rest in their first reception of Christ.* They are hopefully converted, they unite themselves with a particular section of the church of God, and settle down under an attached ministry. But here they seem to abide. There is no advance, no progress, no forgetting of the things that are behind, pressing upwards to higher rounds in the glorious ladder, which a gracious Father has let down out of heaven, by which we may ascend to heaven. Content with having placed the foot upon the first step, there they remain. There is no "following on to know the Lord." And yet why has the Lord removed the burden from the shoulder, but that we might mount upward? Why has He broken the chains from our feet, but that we may go forward? Thus are we constantly forgetting that the cross is our starting-point in our race—and yet ever to be kept in view; while holiness, breathed after upon earth, and in some blessed degree attained, but perfected in heaven, is our bright and certain goal.

Again, the exhortation of our Lord warrants the most implicit reliance upon the 'Divine faithfulness'. To have faith in God necessarily implies faith in Him as a God of truth. Hence the security which the believer possesses, that all that God has promised, He will assuredly perform. He has made all His covenant engagements to rest upon His *faithfulness*. With what frequency and earnestness He alludes to this! "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: has he said, and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" "I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." "Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." "Once have I sworn that I will not lie unto David." "If we believe not, yet he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself."

But precious as these words are, they are only Divine asseverations of the truth. Faith has something still more substantial and firm to rest upon; something even superior to the averment of the promise—even *the faithfulness of the Divine Promiser Himself*. Here it is that faith has its stronghold—not *the word of God merely, but the God of the word*. God must be faithful, because He is essentially true and immutable. "He cannot deny Himself." "God that cannot lie." "It is impossible for God to lie." What asseverations of any truth can be stronger? And now, O believer, have faith in God, as true to His word, and faithful to His promise. Has the Spirit, the Comforter, caused your soul to rely upon His promises, to hope in His word? Have you nothing but the naked declaration to bear you up? Stand fast to this word, for God, who cannot lie, stands by to make it good.

Have faith in His faithfulness. *In doubting Him, you cannot dishonor Him more*. If to discredit the word of man, were an impeachment of His veracity, and that impeachment were the darkest blot that you could let fall upon His character; what must be the dishonor done to God by a poor sinful mortal, distrusting His faithfulness, and questioning His truth! But, "God is faithful." Have faith in Him as such. He is engaged to bring to perfection that which concerns you, to supply all your need, to guide your soul through the wilderness, to protect your head in the day of battle, and to guide you to ultimate victory, and rest. Oh, trust Him! It is all that He asks of you. Is it now with you a day of trouble? a time of trial? a season of pressure? Is your position perilous? Are your present circumstances embarrassed? Now is the time to trust in the Lord. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will

**answer you, and will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."**

**Oh if God were to speak audibly to you at this moment, methinks these would be the words that He would utter: "Have faith in my faithfulness. Have I ever been untrue to my engagements, false to my word, forgetful of my covenant, neglectful of my people? Have I been a wilderness to you? What evil have you found in me, what untruth, what wavering, what instability, what change, that you do not now trust me, in this the time of your need?" Oh let your soul be humbled that you should ever have doubted the veracity, have distrusted the faithfulness of your God. "But though we believe not, yet he abides faithful, he cannot deny himself." "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."**

**In all His dispensations—the severest and the darkest—have faith in God. This is, perhaps, one of the greatest achievements of faith. To believe in God when He smiles, to trust in Him when conscious of His nearness, to have faith in Him when the path is flowery and pleasant, is an easy task. But to have faith in Him when He 'holds back the face of his throne, and spreads his cloud upon it;' to love Him when He frowns; to follow Him when He withdraws; to cleave to Him when He would seem to shake us off; to trust in Him when His arm is raised to slay—this is faith indeed.**

**And yet all this the faith of God's elect can achieve. If not, of what value is it? Of what possible use to the mariner would be the compass which would only work in the day, and not in the night? which only served to steer the vessel in light winds, and not in rough winds? Faith, as we have already shown, is the believing soul's compass, guiding it as truly and as certainly to the heavenly port through the wildest tempest, as through the serenest calm.**

**To change the figure, faith is that celestial telescope which can pierce the thickest haze or the darkest cloud, out-distancing suns and stars glowing and sparkling in the far distance. It can discern God's smile under a frown; it can read His name to be 'love' beneath the dark dispensation; it can behold the Sun of Righteousness beaming through the interstices of the gloomy clouds; and now and then it can catch a glimpse of the harbor itself, and the towering turrets and golden spires of the 'new Jerusalem' glittering in the distance. Oh it is a wonderful grace, the precious faith of God's elect!**

**Is God dealing with you now in a way of deep trial, of dark providence, mysterious to your mind, and painful to your heart? Is He even chastening**

you for your backslidings, correcting you for your sins? Still "have faith in God." Sensible appearances, second causes, cannot in the least degree affect the ground of your faith, which, as we have shown, is God Himself—His immutable nature, His unchangeable love, His eternal purpose, His everlasting covenant, His own Divine and glorious perfections. Believe that you are in His heart, and that your interests are in His hands. Have faith in *His wisdom to guide, in His love to direct, in His power to sustain, in His faithfulness to fulfil every promise* that now relates to your best welfare and happiness.

Only believe in God that all things in His disposal of you, in His transactions with you, are working together for your present and eternal good. All that He expects and requires of you now, is to have faith in Him. The cloud may be dark, the sea tempestuous, but God is in the cloud, and "the Lord sits upon the flood." Even now it is the privilege of your faith to exclaim, "My soul, hope in God. He is my God, I will trust in him and not be afraid." Oh, what inspiring words are these—"hope in God!" I hesitate not to say, my reader, you may hope in God. Though your case may seem desperate, to your eye cheerless and hopeless, not merely too intricate for man, but too unworthy for God, yet you may hope in God. Take your case to Him, hoping against hope, and believing in unbelief. Will He close His heart against you? Never! Will He repel you when you fly to Him? Never! It is not in the heart of God, no, nor is it in His power, to do so. Take hold of His strength—I speak it humbly, reverentially—and you have *overcome God*. You disarm Him of the instrument and of the power to punish you; you have laid your hand of faith upon the strength of His love, and have made peace with Him. You cannot cherish a hope too glowing, nor exercise a faith too implicit in God; hopeless, cheerless, and extreme as your case may seem to be. Impossible! God never appears so like Himself as in the season of the believer's darkness and suffering. At the very moment in which He sees the least of God, God appears the most what He is. The tenderest unfoldings of His heart are in sorrow, the brightest exhibitions of His character are in darkness, and the most glorious displays of His wisdom, power, and grace are seen looming through the mist.

Have faith in God, as the answerer of prayer. "This is the confidence that we have in him," says the apostle, "that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us; and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." And what is the true prayer which the believing soul breathes, which Jesus presents, and which God answers?—is it not the prayer of faith? *Unbelieving prayer is powerless with*

**God.** It prevails not. It is as the discharge of the rifle uncharged with the bullet—there is the transient flash, but there is no execution. Such is prayer without faith.

*But believing prayer is prevailing, successful prayer.* It assails the kingdom of heaven with holy violence, and carries it as by storm. It believes that God has both the heart and the arm; both the love that moves Him, and the power that enables Him, to do all and to grant all that His pleading child requests of Him. We may mention a few of the attributes of believing prayer. It is real prayer, because it is the expression of need. It springs from a felt necessity of the mercy which it craves. It is sincere prayer, welling up from a soul schooled in the knowledge of its deep poverty and need.

Oh, how much passes for real prayer which is not prayer! It is not the breathing of the soul, nor the language of the heart, nor the expression of need. There is in it no true approach to God, no thirsting for Christ, no desire for holiness. Were God to bestow the things which had been so thoughtlessly and heartlessly asked, the individual would be taken by surprise.

The prayer of faith is importunate and persevering. It will not take a refusal. It will not be put off with a denial. Thus Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the covenant until he prevailed—"I will not let you go until you bless me." Thus the woman of Canaan would not release the Savior from her hold until He had granted her suit—"If I am a dog, satisfy me with the crumbs." And thus, too, the man who besieged the house of his friend at midnight for bread, and did not leave until he obtained it; and the oppressed widow, who sought justice at the hands of the unrighteous and reluctant judge until he righted her, illustrate the nature of that prayer; even earnest, persevering prayer, which prevails with God, and obtains the blessing.

Believing prayer is humble. How low in the dust the truly importunate suppliant lies before God! There is nothing of bold ruffianism, of unholy freedom, in the cases of earnest prayer which we have cited. There is no irreverence of manner, nor familiarity of speech, nor rushing into God's holy presence as if He were an equal; but rather that awful consciousness of the Divine presence, that profound spirit of self-abasement, which seems to say, "How dreadful is this place!" "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." Oh, how low is the heart from where arises the incense of believing prayer! How utterly unworthy it feels of the least of all the Lord's mercies; how unfit to be a channel of grace to others;

and with what trembling it lies prostrate upon the spot where God, the Triune God, is passing by! "Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and you upon earth: therefore let your words be few."

Submission is another attribute of the prayer of faith. Its utmost range of request is bounded, and its deepest fervor of spirit is chastened, by *submission to the Divine will*. It presumes neither to dictate to God, nor to counsel Him. It leaves the mode of answering its petitions—the time, the place, the way—with God. Trained, perhaps, in the school of bitter disappointment, *it has learned to see as much love in God's heart in withholding as in granting its requests, as much wisdom in delaying as in promptly bestowing the blessing*. And seeing that *delays* in prayer are not *denials* of prayer, he that believes makes not haste to anticipate the Divine mind, or to antedate the Divine blessing. "Your will, not mine, be done," ever breathes from the praying lip of faith.

Yet another, and the crowning attribute of believing prayer, is that it is presented in the name of Jesus. As it is life from God through Christ, so through Christ it is life breathed back again to God. It approaches the Divine Majesty by the 'new and the living way,' its mighty argument, and its one prevailing plea—the atoning blood of Jesus. This is the ground of its boldness, this the reason of its nearness, and this the secret of its power and success. "Whatever you shall ask in my name," observes Christ, "that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Such, my reader, are some of the features of the prayer of faith. Are you not prepared to exclaim, "What a glorious privilege, then, is prayer!" Ah, yes! and you may add, "What mighty power, too, it possesses!" *The power of a holy wrestler with God approaches the nearest to an act of omnipotence of any display of finite might whatever*. Angelic mightiness must be weakness itself in comparison. What eloquence in that one word 'Father,' lisped in believing prayer! Demosthenes and Cicero, consumed in the blaze and conflagration of their own eloquence, never surpassed, no, never equaled it. It is breathed—and heaven's door expands; it is uttered again—and the heart of God flies open. *With such a key in the hands of faith which may at any moment unlock the treasury of God, as prayer*, why do we not oftener use it? Oh that the Spirit of God might stir us up to more earnest prayer! teaching us to enshrine everything, to envelope everything, to pervade and saturate everything in the heart and with the spirit of humble, importunate, believing prayer. Oh what real gainers should we be, did we, "in everything by prayer and supplication

with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God!" "For what nation is there so great, who has God so near unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?"

In a word, my Christian reader, "have faith in God" at all times and in all things. This is the utmost that He asks at your hands. No unreasonable, or impossible requirement. Would Jesus have limited you to this single duty, making your whole happiness for both worlds dependent upon it, were it so? Never! Relinquishing your own wisdom, resting from your own toil, and ceasing from man, God would have you now cast yourself upon Him in simple faith, for all things. You have had faith in the creature, and it has disappointed you; faith in earthly good, and it has faded away; faith in your own heart, and it has deceived you. Now, have faith in God! Call upon Him in your trouble, try Him in your trial, trust Him in your need, and see if He will not honor the faith that honors Him. "HAVE FAITH IN GOD," -words of Jesus, oh how sweet! spoken to allure your chafed and weary spirit to its Divine and blessed rest. Press the kind message to your grateful heart, responding, in a strain of blended praise and prayer, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

"All joy to the believer, He can speak  
Trembling, yet happy; confident, yet meek.  
Since the dear hour that brought me to Your foot,  
And cut up all my follies by the root,  
I never trusted in an arm but Thine,  
Nor hoped, but in Your righteousness divine.  
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,  
Were but the feeble efforts of a child;  
However performed, it was their brightest part,  
That they proceeded from a grateful heart.  
Cleansed in Your own all-purifying blood,  
Forgive their evil, and accept their good;  
I cast them at Your feet—my only plea  
Is what it was, dependence upon Thee.  
While struggling in the vale of tears below,  
That never failed, nor shall it fail me now.  
Angelic gratulations rend the skies;  
Pride falls unpitied, never more to rise;  
Humility is crowned, and FAITH receives the prize."

## **"God, Comforting the Disconsolate"**

**"God, who comforts those that are cast down." -2 Cor. 5:6**

**What an untold blessing to one believer may be the dealings of God with another! As 'no man lives to himself,' so no Christian is tried and supported, wounded and healed, disciplined and taught, for himself alone. God designs by His personal dealings with us to expound some law of His government, and to convey some lesson of instruction to the mind, or to pour some stream of consolation into the heart of others. Thus the experience of one child of God may prove the channel of peculiar and immense blessing to many. God, in this arrangement, is but acting in accordance with a law of our nature of His own creating—the law of individual and reciprocal influence. No individual of the human family occupies in the world a position isolated and alone. He is a part of an integral system. He is a member of a complete and vast community. He is a link in a mighty and an interminable chain. He cannot think, nor speak, nor move, nor act, without affecting the interests and the well-being, it may be, of myriads. By that single movement, in the utterance of that one thought, in the enunciation of that great truth, He has sent a thrill of sensation along an endless line of existence. Who can tell where individual influence terminates? Who can place his finger upon the last link that vibrates in the chain of intelligent being? What if that influence never terminates? What if that chain never ceases to vibrate? Solemn thought!**

**In another and a remote period, in a distant and an undiscovered region, the sentiment, the habit, the feeling, once, perhaps thoughtlessly and carelessly, set in motion, has gone on working for good or for evil, owned and blessed, or rejected and cursed, of Heaven. Nothing can recall it; no remorse, nor tears, nor prayers, can summon it back; no voice can persuade, no authority command it to return. It is working its way through myriads of minds to the judgment-seat, and is rushing onward, onward, ONWARD through the countless ages of eternity!**

**Thought is immortal. Its propagation is endless. It never dies, and it never ceases to act. The forest oak, beneath whose waving boughs we sit today, and which perhaps sheltered and shaded the Druid in his senseless worship centuries ago, owes its form, its species, and its tint, to the acorn which dropped from its remote ancestor. And still the seed is falling, and the winds, bearing it away, are dropping it where it will take root and spring up, and**

mount heavenwards, and extend its branches; and generations yet unborn will come and worship, perhaps the living and the true God, under its green foliage. Such is the history of personal character and of individual influence. Borne along upon the stream of time, who can calculate the good, or compute the evil, or descry the end of a single life? My soul! aim to live in view of this solemn thought!

But especially is this true of the child of God. He belongs to a people within a people, to a church within a church, to a kingdom within a kingdom—designated as a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." In this separate and hidden community, there is a Divine cement, an ethereal bond of union, which unites and holds each part to the whole, each member to the body in the closest cohesion and unity. The apostle more than recognizes—he emphatically asserts this truth, when, speaking of the church of God, he describes it as the "whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies."

And again, when speaking of the sympathetic influence of the Church, he says, "And when one member suffers, all the, members suffer with it." And so also of the consolation. When Paul penned the letter to the church at Corinth, now under consideration, he was with his companions in circumstances of deep trial. He was 'cast down,' and disconsolate. God sought to 'stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind' by sending to him an affectionate Christian minister and beloved brother. "Nevertheless," writes the apostle, in recording the fact, "God, who comforts those who are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." He who wrote these words has long since been in glory; and yet the experience he then traced upon the page, has been, and is still, telling upon the instruction, the comfort, and the holiness of millions, and will go on telling until time shall be no more.

Remember, my reader, you must depart this world, but your influence will survive you. Your character and works, when dead, will be molding the living; and they, in their turn, will transmit the lineaments and the form of a mind whose thoughts never perish, to the remotest posterity. "He being dead yet speaks." What an expressive epitaph! A truer sentiment, and one more solemn, never breathed from the marble tablet. The dead never die! Their memory speaks! Their character speaks! Their works speak, and speak forever!

But WHO ARE THOSE WHOM GOD COMFORTS? They are the 'cast

down,' or, in other words, the HUMBLE. Their deeper humiliation is the great end, as it regards themselves, which God has in view in all His dealings with His people. "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to test you, to know what was in your heart." The first step which God takes in this work of humiliation is in conversion. The great casting down of a man is when he is brought by the Eternal Spirit to see his true state as a sinner before God. When the mind is convinced of sin, and contrition bows the spirit, and self-righteousness falls before the cross, and Jesus is received into the heart, and the man ascribes his salvation solely to the free and discriminating grace of God—then it is that the great humiliation, the true casting down of the soul, takes place.

What a spectacle of spiritual beauty is this! To witness an idolatrous Manasseh, a proud Nebuchadnezzar, a self-righteous Saul, a covetous Zaccheus, trampling their own glory in the dust, and 'praising and extolling and honoring the King of heaven,' taking their stand upon the finished work of Jesus, and ascribing their recovery to the sovereign mercy of that God whom they had hated; must add delight to the inhabitants of heaven, as it does glory to heaven itself. Such humble souls God lifts up. Passing by the lofty, whom He disdains, and the self-sufficient, upon whose boasting He pours His withering contempt, He will show to the world that to "to this man will he look, even to him who is of an humble and a contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word." "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken it and have done it." This, then, is the first step which God takes in the true humiliation of the soul. With a view to 'hide pride from man,' the Lord veils his eye to his own 'imaginary' greatness, and opens it to his real deformity. "The loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of men is made low: and the Lord alone is exalted in that day."

But in the subsequent and more advanced stages of the Christian life, we find much into the experience of which the believer is brought, tending to cast down the people of God. Without minutely describing the many causes of soul-disquietude which exist, we may group together in one view those, the most fruitful, which conspire to this casting down of the spirit. We may mention, as among the most powerful, the clinging body of sin, to which his renewed spirit is enchained, from which it sighs to be delivered, but from which death only frees it; consequently, there is the daily battle with a heart of

unbelief, incessantly departing from God. Then there are the labyrinths of the desert, the straitness of the narrow way, the 'fears within, and the fightings without,' the trials of faith, the chastisements of love, the offence of the cross, the intricacies of truth, the woundings of the world, the unkindnesses of the saints, and the varied trials and afflictions of the wilderness—all these create oftentimes great disquietude and despondency of soul.

And when to these are added the yet more painful and humbling remembrance of his sins since conversion, his stumblings and falls, his unkind requitals of God's love, the base returns which he has made, and the deep ingratitude which he has felt for all the divine goodness, and the consequent hidings of God's face, and the withdrawments of Christ's presence, he exclaims in the bitterness of his spirit, "My soul is cast down within me." Ah! there is no humiliation like that which a sight and sense of sin produces, the heart laid open and the soul laid low before God. The world's bitter scorn, the creature's cold neglect, are nothing in comparison. In the one case, the heart is only mortified; in the other, it is truly humbled. The one is a feeling that has to do with man only—the other is an emotion that has to do with God.

And when once the believer is solemnly conscious of acting beneath the eye of God, the gaze of other eyes affects him but slightly. Oh how little do some professors deport themselves as though they had to do only with God! How imperfectly do they look upon sin as God looks upon it! But did they live more as setting the Lord always before them, how superior would they rise to the poor opinion of their fellow-sinners! To them it would then appear a very little matter to be judged of man's judgment.

Thus the 'soul of the people is much discouraged because of the way.' Ah! how imperfectly we know the history of a single believer! What gloomy despondency of mind, what deep anguish of spirit, what hidden sorrow of heart, and what painful trials, too personal and too sacred to reveal to another eye, may form the path along which the lonely traveler is pensively treading his way to God—no one knowing, and no one suspecting it! And then in this hidden path how little real sympathy is gathered from the creature! "We have but few companions with us," remarks a beloved minister of Christ. Enlarge your heart as you will in love towards the family of God—take an extended view, pray for a large heart, pray for width, pray for breadth, pray for largeness, yet beware of letting down the truth; and with that truth before you, you will be forced to acknowledge, 'few there be that find it.'

**If a sound creed, if clear views of doctrine, if a little alteration of conduct, if addicting ourselves to a denomination; if this is Christianity, then we must change the text, and confess many 'there are many that find it.' But if Christianity is walking with God, living on Christ, aiming to please Him, if it be those who 'know the plague of their own hearts,' and feel sin to be their burden; if this be the characteristic of the family of God, that the desire of their souls is to consecrate themselves to the God who loved them and gave His Son to die for them—then it still remains a solemn truth, 'Few there be that find it.'**

**Some who once walked with us, have dropped away; they walk with us no more. Some have never walked with us, though they walk with Christ; they have out-walked us, out-run us, out-talked us. Some rejoice so much, they seem but little affected by the inward plague, though they may yet have to endure it, and will, if they are the children of God; and some there are that think so much of their plague, they never rejoice. We can have but little communion with them. And some have dropped away, gone away, because they have entered upon their holy home. Some—oh! it is touching—some that walked once with us to the house of God, and 'with whom we took sweet counsel'—where are they? In the world! Awful, fearful thought! Oh! it is among the things that make us feel our path to be a trying path; and oftentimes our 'soul is much discouraged because of the way.'**

**But if there is much to cast down the child of God, there is more to lift him up. If in his path to glory there are many causes of soul despondency, of heart-sorrow, and mental disquietude, yet in that single truth—God comforts the disconsolate—He has an infinite counterbalance of consolation, joy, and hope. That GOD COMFORTS THOSE WHO ARE CAST DOWN, His own truth declares. It is in His heart to comfort them, and it is in His power to comfort them. He blends the desire, deep and yearning, with the ability, infinite and boundless. Not so with the fondest, tenderest creature. The sorrow is often too deep and too sacred for human sympathy to reach. But what is fathomless to man, is a shallow to God. I have said, that it is in the heart of God to comfort His people. Everything that He has done to promote their comfort proves it. He has commanded His ministers to 'speak comfortably to them.' He has sent forth His word to comfort them. He has laid up all comfort and consolation for them in the Son of His love. And in addition to all this, He has given them His own Spirit to lead them to the Divine sources of 'all consolation' which He has provided.**

**Who could comfort the disconsolate but God? Who could effectually undertake their case but Himself? He only knows their sorrow, and He only could meet it. There is not a moment that God is not bent upon the comfort of 'those who are cast down.' All His dealings with them tend to this—even those that appear adverse and contrary. Does He wound?—it is to heal. Does He cause deep sorrow?—it is to turn that sorrow into a deeper joy. Does He empty?—it is to fill. Does He cast down?—it is to lift up again. Such is the love that moves Him, such is the wisdom that guides Him, and such too is the end that is secured in the Lord's disciplinary conduct with His people.**

**Dear reader, so interesting is this thought, I know not how to relinquish it—that it is in God's loving heart to speak comfortably to your sorrowful heart. Let but the Holy Spirit enable you to receive this truth in simple faith; and your grief, be its cause and its degree what they may, is more than half assuaged. Not a word may yet be spoken by the 'God of all comfort,' not a cloud may be dispersed, nor a difficulty be removed; yet to be assured by the Divine Comforter that the heart of God yearns over you, and that consolation is sparkling up from its infinite depths, waiting only the command to pour its stream of joyousness into your sorrow-stricken bosom, and it is enough. Yes, I repeat it—for every reiteration of so precious a truth must still be but a faint expression of its magnitude—it is in the loving heart of God to lift up your disconsolate soul from the dust. Listen to His words—there is melody in them such as David's harp spoke not when its soft and mellow strains soothed the perturbed spirit of Saul—"I, even I, am he who comforts you." Mark with what earnestness He makes this declaration. How solicitous does He appear to impress this truth upon the heart—that to comfort His own tried saints, is His sole prerogative, and His infinite delight. "I, even I, am he who comforts you."**

**But as it regards THE COMFORT ITSELF with which God comforts the disconsolate, how much have we yet to learn touching both its nature and the channel through which in His sovereignty it may flow to us. How prone is the believer to attach an undue importance to the mere 'instrument' of comfort! To give place to the feeling that when comfort vanishes, all other good vanishes with it—thus, in fact, making the real standing of the soul to depend upon an ever-fluctuating emotion. But let it be remembered that the comfort of grace may be suspended, and yet the existence of grace may remain; that the glory of faith may be beclouded, and yet the principle of faith continue.**

**Contemplate, as affording an illustrious example of this, our adorable Lord upon the cross. Was there ever sorrow like His sorrow? Was there ever**

desertion like His desertion? Every spring of consolation was dried up. Every beam of light was beclouded. All sensible joy was withdrawn. His human soul was now passing through its strange, its total eclipse. And still His faith hung upon God. Hear Him exclaim, "My God! my God! My Strong One! my Strong One!" His soul was in the storm -and oh what a storm was that! But it was securely anchored upon His Father. There was in His case the absence of all consolation, the suspension of every stream of comfort; and yet in this, the darkest cloud that ever enshrouded the soul, and the deepest sorrow that ever broke the heart, He stayed His soul upon God.

And why should the believer, the follower of Christ, when sensible comfort is withdrawn, cast away his confidence which has great recompense of reward? Of what use is the anchor but to keep the vessel in the tempest? What folly were it in the mariner to weigh his anchor or to slip his cable when the clouds gather blackness, and the waves swell high! Then it is he most needs them both. It is true he has cast his anchor into the deep, and the depth hides it from his view; but though he cannot discern it through the foaming waves, still he knows that it is firmly fastened, and will keep his storm-tossed vessel from stranding upon a lee shore.

And why should the believer, when 'trouble is near,' and sensible comfort is withdrawn, resign his heart a prey to unbelieving fears, and cherish in his bosom the dark suspicion of God? Were not this to part with the anchor of his hope at the very moment that he the most needed it? I may not be able to pierce the clouds and look within the veil with an eye beaming with an undimmed and assured joy, but I know that the Forerunner is there; that the Priest is upon His throne; that Jesus is alive, and is at the right hand of God—then all is safe. Faith demands, hope expects, and love desires no more. I would have you, then, my reader, not overlook the truth that the covenant of grace has made provision for everything in the life of a child of God, especially for the life of suffering.

It strews the richest blessings, and the most profusely, upon the chequered path—the path inlaid with stones of various colors, and yet each one needful and most precious. "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires." It is true that the covenant has anticipated as much the perilous season of prosperity, as the dark hour of adversity. But it always supposes the way to glory to be one of trial and of danger. A heavenly-minded man will learn to look upon the earthly distinction and wealth which the world, so

**lavish sometimes of its favors, may confer upon him, as a trial and a snare to one desirous of bearing the cross daily after his crucified Lord. And yet for this specific form of danger the covenant of grace amply provides. Be satisfied, my reader, with any station your God may assign you, believing that for every station in which He places His child, there is the grace peculiar to its exigencies, treasured up for him in the everlasting covenant.**

**We have now reached an interesting and important inquiry in the unfolding of our subject—HOW DOES GOD COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE CAST DOWN? His method is various. He adapts the comfort to the sorrow. He first writes the sentence of death upon all comfort outside of himself. If you have been accustomed to scrutinize narrowly God's way of dealing with you, you will often have marked this peculiar feature—that before He has unsealed the fountain, He has cut off the spring. In other words, He has suspended all human channels of comfort, preparatory to the fulfilment of His own exceeding great and precious promise, "I, even I, am he that comforts you." It was thus He dealt with His Church of old. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." In that wilderness, as a 'woman of a sorrowful spirit,' she is brought: in that wilderness she is separated from her companions; yet in that dreary, lonely wilderness the God of all comfort speaks to her heart. And then follows the "song of the Lord in the strange land"—the music of the wilderness. "And she shall SING there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."**

**This is one way by which God comforts the disconsolate. Overlook it not. It may be painful, humiliating, and trying to faith, but the issue, like all the conduct of our Heavenly Father, will be most blessed and holy. Is He now, in your case, writing the sentence of death upon all creature comfort? Does no eye pity you, no heart feel for you, no tongue address you, and is no hand outstretched to rescue you? Look now for God! for He is on the way, in the time of the creature's failure, Himself to comfort you.**

**By sealing a sense of pardon upon the conscience, God comforts the disconsolate. There is no comfort equal to this. As our deepest sorrow flows from a sense of sin, so our deepest joy springs from a sense of its forgiveness. What comfort can there be where this is lacking? what sorrow where this is felt? "When he gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" This was the comfort which God commanded the prophet to speak to His spiritual Jerusalem: "Say unto her, that her sins are forgiven." And this is the message**

which the Lord sends to His whole Church. This comfort have all His saints. Your sins, O believer, are forgiven. "I have blotted out your sins as a cloud, and your iniquities as a thick cloud," says God. You are not called upon to believe that God will pardon, but that He has pardoned you. Forgiveness is a past act; the sense of it written upon the conscience is a present one. "By one offering Jesus has perfected forever those who are sanctified," has forever put away their sins.

Faith in the blood of Jesus brings the soul into the possession of a present forgiveness. And when God the Holy Spirit thus imprints a sense of pardoned sin upon the troubled conscience, all other sorrows in comparison dwindle into insignificance. In all kinds of trouble, it is not the ingredients that God puts into the cup that so much afflict us, as the ingredients of our distempered passions mingled with them. The sting and the core of them all is sin: when that is not only pardoned, but in a measure healed, and the proud flesh eaten out, then a healthy soul will bear anything. After repentance, that trouble which before was a correction, becomes now a trial and exercise of grace. 'Strike, Lord,' says Luther; 'I can bear anything willingly because my sins are forgiven.' We should not be cast down so much about outward troubles, as about that sin, that both procures them and envenoms them. We see by experience, where conscience is once set at liberty, how cheerfully men will go under any burden: therefore labor to keep out sin, and then let come what will come.

Thus, beloved, God comforts His conscience-troubled people. He loves so to speak to their hearts. Is it any delight to Him to see you carrying your burden of conscious sin day after day, and week after week? Ah no! He has procured the means of your pardon at a great price—nothing less than the sacrifice of His beloved Son—and will not the same love which procured your forgiveness, speak it to your heart? Oh yes, the sun in the heavens pours not forth its light more freely, light itself speeds not more rapidly, the mountain stream rushes on not more gladsome and unfettered, than the pardon of sin flows from the heart of God to the humble and the contrite mourner. Is sin your trouble? Does conscious guilt cast you down? Look up, disconsolate soul! there is forgiveness with God. It is in His heart to pardon you. Repair to His feet, go to God's confessional, and over the head of the atoning sacrifice acknowledge your transgression, and He will forgive the iniquity of your sin.

And oh, what will be the joy of your heart, the music of your lips, the grateful surrender of yourself, when Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven you, go in peace!" "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the

**transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy."**

**God sometimes comforts the cast down, by bringing them to rest in the fullness and stability of the covenant. David was a man of great grace, a man after God's own heart, and yet he was deeply tried. The greater the amount of precious ore which the refiner places in his furnace, the severer the test to which he subjects it. This may explain what perhaps to some minds is a mystery in the Divine conduct—why the most distinguished saints have ever been the most tried saints. But see how God comforted David in the deepest trial which could wring a believing parent's heart. He had arranged, as he thought, for the best welfare of his family. God steps in, and disarranges all. Incest, treason, murder, are crimes which find an entrance within his domestic circle. His children make themselves vile, and he could not restrain them. What a cloud was now resting upon his tabernacle! How bitter were the waters he was now drinking! But see how God comforted him. "Although my house do not be so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire; although he makes it (his house) not to grow."**

**Believer, this covenant is equally yours. You have the same individual interest in it that David had. The 'sure mercies' of the true David are yours as they were his. In the midst of domestic trial—family changes—thwarted designs—blighted hopes, God has made with you, in the hands of Jesus, its Surety and Mediator, an 'everlasting covenant.' In it your whole history is recorded by Him who knows the end from the beginning. All the events of your life, all the steps of your journey, all your sorrows and comforts, all your needs and supplies, are ordained in that covenant which is 'ordered in all things and sure.' And while mutability is a constituent element of everything temporal—'passing away' written upon life's loveliest landscape, and upon the heart's fondest treasure, this, and this alone, remains 'sure,' and never passes away. Let, then, the covenant be your comfort and your stay, your sheet-anchor in the storm, the rainbow in your cloud, upon which God invites you to fix your believing eye; yes, all your salvation and all your desire, though He makes not domestic comfort to grow.**

**But of all the consolations which flow into the soul of the disconsolate, not the least is that he has a covenant God to go to in PRAYER. What can surpass this? What could supply its place? Nothing! In no way does God more effectually comfort those that are cast down than by drawing them to Himself!**

**For this He has instituted prayer, sprinkled the mercy-seat with the blood of His Son, and sends the sweet promise and grace of His Spirit to invite and draw the disconsolate to Himself. A Christian when he is beaten out of all other comforts, has a God to run unto. A wicked man beaten out of earthly comforts, is as a naked man in a storm, and an unarmed man in the field, or as a ship tossed in the sea without an anchor, which presently dashes upon rocks or falls upon quicksands. But a Christian when he is driven out of all comforts below, no, when God seems to be angry with him; he can appeal from God angry to God appeased. He can wrestle and strive with God by God's own strength, can make use of His own weapons, and plead with God by His own arguments. What a happy estate is this! Who would not be a Christian, if it were but for this, to have something to rely on when all things else fail?**

**Approach, then, disconsolate soul! and pour out your sorrow to God in prayer. Your God is upon the throne of grace, and "waits that he may be gracious unto you." Then, "you shall weep no more: he will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer you." Why are you then cast down? Trust in God—grace will be above nature, God above the devil, the Spirit above the flesh. Be strong in the Lord; the battle is His, and the victory ours beforehand. If we fought in our own cause and strength, and with our own weapons, it would be as nothing. But as we fight in the power of God, so are we kept by that mighty power through faith unto salvation. It lies upon the faithfulness of Christ, to put us into that possession of glory which He has purchased for us: therefore, charge your soul to make use of the promises and rely upon God for perfecting the good work that he has begun in you. Corruptions are strong, but stronger is He who is in us, than the corruption that is in us. When we are weak in our sense, then are we strong in Him who perfects strength in our weakness, felt and acknowledged. Our corruptions are God's enemies as well as ours; and, therefore, in trusting to Him, and fighting, we may be sure He will take our part against them.**

**Permit, in closing, A WORD OF AFFECTIONATE CAUTION AND COUNSEL. Take heed that it is God, and not man, who comforts you—that your consolation is divine, and not human. It may be the duty of your minister and the privilege of your friend to speak a promise to the ear, and to spread out before you the riches of divine comfort in the word; but it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit alone to apply the promise, and to give a heartfelt possession of those comforts. Jealous of His love to you, and of the glory that belongs to Himself, God will delegate the office and commit the**

power of lightening the burden of your oppressed spirit, of soothing the sorrow of your disconsolate heart, to no created hand. "I, even I, am he that comforts you." "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

Beware, then, of a creature comfort, and of a false peace. Let no one comfort you but God Himself, and let nothing give you peace but the peace-speaking blood of Jesus. A wound may be covered, and yet not be healed; a promise may be spoken, and yet not be applied. To the God of all comfort, then, repair in your grief. To the precious blood of the Incarnate God go with your burden of sin. Oh, how welcome will you be, coming just as you are! How sacred will be your sorrow to His heart, how eloquent your pleadings to His ear, and how precious in His sight the simple childlike faith that severs you from all other dependences, and leads you to Him alone for comfort! Then will you exclaim—and not David's harp could discourse sweeter music—"My heart trusted in him, and I am helped. You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise unto you, and not be silent. I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

In each season of casting down, ascend your watch-tower in the full expectation of an especial blessing. This would seem to be the order of God: "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up." Expect great mercies through the medium of great trials; great comforts through great sorrows; deep sanctification from deep humiliation. All the trying dispensations of God in the histories of His people are preparatory to their greater grace. It was in this school the distinguished Apostle of the Gentiles was taught the greatest and holiest lesson of his life. Descending from the third heaven, all fragrant with its odors and glowing with its light, he was plunged into the deepest humiliation, in order that he might be instructed more thoroughly in that truth which he could not experimentally have learned even in Paradise itself—the sufficiency of Christ's grace to sustain the believer in the deepest trial.

Tried believer! Suffering saint! expect an especial blessing to your soul. If the Lord has led you in by the north gate, He will lead you out by the south gate. Dark though the cloud may be, and painful the path, have patience in your affliction, and God will give you a happy issue out of all your troubles. "Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end shall greatly increase." And, O blessed result, if sin is embittered, if holiness is sweetened,

**if some tyrant corruption is mortified, if communion with God is quickened, if Jesus is endeared, if your Father in heaven is glorified! "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear  
Your poor unworthy child!  
It is in Jesus I draw nigh,  
In Jesus reconciled.  
Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear!  
In Him I venture nigh,  
Who on the cross my sorrows bare,  
Who sighs whenever I sigh.  
Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear!  
Strait is my thorny road;  
Yet if I weep, ah! let no tear  
Repine against my God.  
Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear  
This fickle heart control;  
And let no idol love be there  
O sanctify the whole!  
Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow; No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear!  
Subdue this self in me;  
Let nothing that's dear, however dear,  
Be dear compared with Thee.**

**Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear!  
Possess me with Your love;  
May I but glorify You here,  
Then live with You above.**

**Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."**

**"My Father, O my Father, hear!  
And shall Your bosom be  
My dwelling, while I sojourn here,  
My home eternally?  
Bow down Your ear, my Father, bow;  
No one can comfort me, but Thou."  
"And shall I see Your face,  
Low at Your footstool lie,  
Forever rest in Your embrace,  
In perfect purity?  
Thine ear, my Father, You do bow;  
Yes, You do comfort, none but Thou."**

### **"Christ's Intercession for Tried Faith"**

**And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Luke 22:31-32**

**There is not, perhaps, a single truth which occurs more frequently or with greater clearness in the sacred writings, and which is more holy in its tendency and effect, than the doctrine of the present security and final glory of the saints of God. Standing as it does in the closest relation to the Divine glory—every perfection of God being involved in it—it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit of Truth should assign to it a position so prominent, and should ascribe to it an influence so mighty, in neutralizing the doubts, in soothing the fears, and in establishing and stimulating the soul in all practical godliness.**

**He who imagines that the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints acts as a moral opiate to the soul, lulling it in a false security, soothing it to a state of inglorious quietude, has, we fear, either rejected the doctrine without investigation, or has studied it with a mind entangled by error, or warped by prejudice. But the truth is revealed, and as such we are bound to receive it. It is declared—written as with a sunbeam. "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The Lord does not forsake not saints." "He keeps the feet of his saints." "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholds him with his hand." "You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to**

glory." "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

It would be easy to multiply these proofs, so replete is the word of God with them, but surely these Divine declarations and assertions place the doctrine beyond the region of doubt. The holy influence of this truth is equally revealed. After assuring the believer of the promises of God—that He would dwell in His people, and walk in them, and that He would be their God, and that they should be His people—thus affirming the final salvation of the whole church—with what gracefulness of manner and earnestness of spirit does the apostle then proceed to educe and enforce the practical influence of the doctrine—"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

It may at first glance be thought that the case which we have selected for our present reflections—the fall of the apostle Peter—involves a contradiction of the doctrine which we have just laid down. A minute examination of each point, however, will decide the question, how far it contains any warrant for believing that He who has commenced a good work in the soul will be found, in any single instance, either incapable or unwilling to complete it, or to have resembled the man who began to build and was not able to finish. We trust, on the contrary, that its spiritual investigation will be full of encouragement to those who are weak in grace, establishing to those whose minds are unsettled and wavering, sanctifying to the heart thirsting after deeper holiness, and tending to endear to all, the person and work of God's beloved Son.

It suggests for our meditation two deeply important and interesting topics—first, that the faith of the believer may be severely assailed, and, at times, may greatly waver; and, second, that the great reason why tried faith cannot absolutely and entirely fail is, the especial and ceaseless intercession on its behalf, of Jesus the great High Priest. Descend, Holy Spirit, and anoint, and teach, and guide us while endeavoring to unravel the mysteries of the kingdom of God within the soul, and while attempting to penetrate the glories of the kingdom of God within the veil.

**That FAITH SHOULD BE MORE FREQUENTLY AND SEVERELY ASSAILED than any other grace of the Holy Spirit, will cease to create**

surprise as we become acquainted with the rank and position it occupies in the renewed soul. Placed in the very front of the battle, itself the strongest, the most determined and successful foe of the assailing powers of darkness and of sin, in effecting its overthrow; all their force, and skill, and malignity are marshaled and directed. But who is its chief and most formidable assailant? It is Satan, the accuser of the brethren, the tempter, the sworn enemy of God and man. It is he, the master spirit of darkness and woe, who, without possessing a single attribute of Deity, yet approaches so near in resemblance to the Divine, that in every place and at each moment of time he is present, narrowly watching, and closely studying, and incessantly working to deceive, and to overthrow, were it possible, the faith of the very elect. By what power or agency he is enabled to prosecute the dark designs of his gloomy intellect, and to effect the malignant purposes of his depraved heart, we cannot now venture at any length to premise. Whether with the subtlety and velocity which belong to light, there is an incessant expansion of thought, imparting a kind of personal ubiquity or omnipresence to the ruling mind of the infernal empire; or whether without being personally present, we may account for the extent of his agency, operating alike in every place, and at the same moment, by supposing intelligence communicated to, and commands issued from, him through the medium of that innumerable host of myrmidons who compose those 'principalities and powers' over which Jesus triumphed, 'making a show of them openly,' must, however strong the presumption, still remain points involved in much doubt and obscurity.

But there is one fact respecting which we are not left to conjecture. I allude to the eager and restless machinations of Satan to weaken, dishonor, and destroy the faith of God's elect. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Observe here, the limitation of Satanic power in reference to the believer. "Satan has desired to have you." This is its utmost extent. He has no power nor control over the redeemed, but that which God permits. He can but 'desire,' and long, and plot; not a hand can he lay upon them, by not a single temptation can he assail them, not a hair of their head can he touch, until God bid him. "Satan has desired to have you."—there stood the arch-foe waiting permission, as in the case of Job, to destroy the apostle of Christ.

Dear reader, I need scarcely pause to remind you how consolatory is this truth to the believing mind. You have often trembled at the power of Satan, and perhaps well-near as often have been the involuntary object of his implacable hatred and deep devices. But press now this animating thought to your

trembling heart—he has no control nor influence nor power over a redeemed soul but that which God permits, and which Christ allows. "Thus far shall you go, and no farther," are words which reveal his inferiority, prescribe his limits, and stay the progress of the proud fiend.

But let us inquire what is that which Satan desires to assault? It is the work of God in the soul. Against his own kingdom not a weapon is raised. It is his aim and his policy to keep all there undisturbed and peaceful. The chaff he never thinks of winnowing. But against the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewed mind, his battery is brought to bear; not a part of this work escapes him. Every grace comes in for its share of malignant attack; but especially the grace of faith. This he sifts and winnows to the utmost. As this is the queen grace, it is against this the treason plot is formed. When, for example, a repentant and believing soul approaches Christ with lowliness and hesitancy, and with the tremulous hand of faith, attempts to touch the border of His garment, or with a tearful eye looks up to His cross, then comes the assault upon faith in the form of a suggestive doubt of Christ's power and willingness to save—"Is Jesus able to save me? Has He power to rescue my soul from hell? Can He blot out my transgressions and redeem my life from destruction? Will He receive a sinner so vile, so unworthy, so poor as I? Has He compassion, has He love, has He mercy sufficient to meet my case?"

In this way Satan assails the earliest and the feeblest exercises of faith in the soul. Does this page address itself to any such? Believer, it is Satan's great effort to keep you from Jesus. By holding up to your view a false picture of His character, from which everything loving, winning, inviting, and attractive is excluded, by suggesting wrong views of His work, in which everything gloomy, contracted and repulsive is foisted upon the mind—by assailing the atonement, questioning the compassion, and limiting the grace of Christ, he would persuade you that in that heart which bled on Calvary there is no room for you, and that upon that work which received the Father's seal, there is not breadth sufficient for you to stand. All his endeavors are directed, and all his assaults are shaped, with a view to keep your soul back from Christ. It is thus he seeks to vent his wrath upon the Savior and his malignity upon you.

Nor does he less assail the more matured faith of the believer. The sturdy oak is swept by the storm equally with the feeble sapling. Not infrequently the sharpest attacks and the fiercest onsets are made, and made successfully, upon the strongest believers. Seizing upon powerful corruptions, taking advantage of dark providences, and sometimes of bright ones, and never allowing any

position of influence, or usefulness, or gift, or grace, that would give force, success, and brilliance to his exploit, to escape his notice, he is perpetually on the alert to sift and winnow God's precious wheat. His implacable hatred of God, the deep revenge he cherishes against Jesus, his malignant opposition to the Holy Spirit, fit him for any dark design and work implicating the holiness and happiness of the believer. Therefore we find that the histories of the most eminent saints of God, as written by the faithful pen of the Holy Spirit, are histories of the severest temptations of faith, in the most of which there was a temporary triumph of the enemy—the giant oak bending before the storm.

And even in instances where there was no defeat of faith, there yet was the sharp trial of faith. The case of Joseph, and that of his illustrious antitype, the Lord Jesus, present examples of this. Fearful was the assault upon the faith of both, sharp the conflict through which both passed, yet both left the battlefield victorious. But still faith was not the less really or severely sifted.

But there are trials of faith other than that which the case of Peter illustrates; his may perhaps be more properly denominated the temptation of faith. Faith has its trials as well as its temptations. Affliction is a trial of faith; sorrow in any of its multitudinous forms is a trial of faith; the delay of mercy is a trial of faith; the promise unfulfilled is a trial of faith; the prayer unanswered is a trial of faith; painful providences, mysterious dispensations, straitened circumstances, difficulties and embarrassments, all are so many trials of faith, commissioned and designed by God to place the gold in the crucible, and the wheat in the sieve, that both may be purified and tried. Ah! is it no trial of the believer's faith when the foundation upon which it rests is assailed? Is it no trial of faith to have distorted representations of God presented to its eye, dishonoring thoughts of God suggested to the mind, unbelieving apprehensions of Jesus, and His love, and His grace, and His word, foisted upon the heart? To entertain for one moment the idea that God is unfaithful to His word, or that in His dealings He is arbitrary and unkind; that Jesus is not what He represents Himself to be, an all-sufficient Savior of the lost, the healer of the broken in heart, the tender, gentle Savior, not breaking the bruised reed, but mending it, nor quenching the smoking flax, but fanning it? Oh yes, these to a holy mind are painful trials of faith, from which the tender conscience shrinks, and the sensitive heart recoils.

But there is something deeply instructive, as well as most consolatory, in one expressive word of our blessed Lord to His servant Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat." Here was that which marked the

reality of his faith. It is only true grace that is really tried. No man puts mere dross into his furnace, or mere chaff into his sieve. All his toil and pains-taking would go for nothing, for it would come forth in its nature unaltered and unchanged—the dross would still be dross, and the chaff would still be chaff. Now the Lord tries, and Satan tempts, nothing but genuine grace. It is the wheat, and not the tares, that is made to pass through the fiery trial. Thus do afflictions and trying dispensations prove tests of a man's religion. When there is nothing but tinsel in a profession of Christianity, the fire will consume it; when there is nothing but chaff, the wind will scatter it. The furnace of temptation and the flail of affliction often prove a man's work of what sort it is, long before the discovery is made in a world where no errors can be corrected, and when it will be too late to rectify mistakes. Thus it is that so many professors, who have not the root of the matter in themselves, but endure for a while, are offended and fall away when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word.

But the wheat—the pure faith of the soul—is tried. "Other graces," remarks the holy Leighton, "are likewise tried in the same furnace; but faith is named as the root of all the rest. Sharp afflictions give the Christian a trial of his love to God, whether it be single and for Himself or not; for then it will be the same when He strikes as when He embraces, and in the fire of affliction will rather grow the hotter, and be more taken off from the world, and set upon Him. Again, the grace of patience is put particularly upon trial in distresses. And both of these spring from faith; for love rises from a right and strong belief of the goodness of God; and patience from a persuasion of the wisdom and love of God, and the truth of His promises. He has said, I will not fail you, and that we shall not be tempted above our strength, and He will give the issue. Now the belief of these things causes patience. The trial of faith works patience. For therefore does the Christian resign up himself, and all that concerns him, his trials, the measure and length of them all, unto God's disposal, because he knows that he is in the hands of a wise and loving Father. Thus the trial of these and other particular graces does still resolve into this, and is comprised under the trial of faith."

And why is the 'wheat' thus sifted? why is so Divine and precious a grace subjected to a process so humiliating and severe? Certainly not because of any intrinsic impurity in the grace itself. All the graces of the Spirit as they proceed from God, and are implanted in the heart, are pure and holy; as essentially free from sin as the nature from where they flow. But in consequence of the impurity of the heart, and the defilement of the nature in

which they are deposited—the body of sin and death by which they are incased—they become mixed with particles of earthliness and carnality, the fine gold with dross, and the pure wheat with chaff. To purify and separate the graces of the Holy Spirit from these things, so foreign to their nature, the Lord permits these temptations, and sends these trials of faith.

We have remarked, that not only may the faith of a child of God be severely assailed, but that there are times when that faith may greatly waver. Is this surprising? No, the greatest wonder is, that with all these severe shocks, through which it passes, it does not entirely fail. Nothing but the Divinity that dwells within that grace, keeps it. Were it not Divine and incorruptible, it would entirely fail. Look at Abraham—on one occasion in the strength of faith offering up his son, and on another occasion in the weakness of faith denying his wife! Look at David—in the strength of faith slaying Goliath, and in the weakness of faith fleeing from Saul! Look at Job—in the strength of faith justifying God in the severest of His dealings, and in the weakness of faith cursing the day that he was born! Look at Peter—in the strength of faith drawing his sword and smiting a servant of the high priest's, and in the weakness of faith forced by a little maid to deny the Lord whom he had but just defended! Oh! the wonder of wonders is, that there remains a single grain in the sieve, or a particle of metal in the furnace, or a solitary spark in the ocean—that all is not utterly scattered, consumed, and annihilated! Nothing but the power of God, and its own incorruptible and imperishable nature, preserve it.

This thought suggests our second topic—THE INTERCESSION OF THE LORD JESUS IN BEHALF OF TRIED FAITH. "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." That any one grace of the Holy Spirit in the renewed soul can ever utterly perish, would seem, from the nature of that grace, to be an utter impossibility. Nothing that is really holy and spiritual is ever destroyed. Divine principles, holy thoughts, spiritual desires, and Godlike actions, survive the period and outlive the occasion which called them forth, and gave to them an existence. Nothing perishes but the material and the fleshly. Upon these fleshly things, be they the fairest and the purest, the most magnificent and refined, 'passing away' is indelibly inscribed. "Meanwhile, heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and Divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while everything which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the

world to adorn that eternal city, which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God does enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Hall)

But we must not forget that the great preservative of faith, especially of tried faith, is the intercession on its behalf of the great High Priest within the veil. And yet no part of our Lord's mediatorial work is more overlooked than this, while no part is fraught with richer and more varied blessing to the Church of God. This work of intercession constituted an essential and a delightful part of the priestly office of our Lord Jesus. Not to atone only, but upon the ground of that atonement to base His office of advocate, and with the plea of that atonement to appear in the presence of God as an intercessor, equally entered into the engagements of Christ in behalf of His people. A moment's reference to the Levitical type will throw much light upon this part of the Savior's work. It will be recollected that the high priest, on the day of expiation, was to slay and to offer the sacrifice in the outer part of the tabernacle; after which he entered within the sanctuary, bearing in his hands the blood of atonement, and sprinkled it seven times upon and before the mercy-seat. He was then to bring a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, within the veil, and place it upon the fire before the Lord, "that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat."

All this was beautifully typical of the atonement and intercession of Jesus our great High Priest. The basis of our Lord's intercessory work is the great atonement of His own blood, with which He has fully met the claims of Justice, paid to the law its extreme demands, and blotted out the handwriting that was against His people in pronouncing their sins entirely and forever cancelled. Upon His atonement Jesus takes His stand as an Intercessor in heaven, within which He has gone to sprinkle His blood upon the mercy-seat, and to present the incense of His infinite and precious merits. Having purged our sins, He is forever sat down at the right hand of God, not in a state of inglorious ease, nor cold forgetfulness of His Church on earth, but to plead as its Advocate and to pray as its Intercessor each moment with the Father, pressing His suit on the ground of Justice, and resting His petition on the basis of merit. "For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "He ever lives to make intercession."

Look up, O you of tried faith, and behold within the veil your Savior there, clothed in His sacerdotal robes, the great High Priest of heaven's temple, the

glorious Advocate of heaven's chancery, representing His Church, and for each individual as for the whole body, praying the Father that the weak and tried faith of His saints might not fail. This is no image of the imagination. This is no picture of the fancy. It is a blessed and glorious reality, that our once atoning and now risen and exalted Redeemer is in heaven, bearing the breastplate upon His heart and the ephod upon His shoulder, in which each name is set of all the tribes of Israel. Yes, poor tried and suffering believer, your name is there, written not only in the Lamb's book of life, but written in the Lamb's heart of love.

In approaching God in any spiritual service, why is it that your person is an object of His complacent delight? Because Jesus presents it. Why do your prayers, imperfectly framed and faintly breathed, come up before the altar with acceptance and power? Because Jesus is in heaven, and as your pleading Advocate separates your petition from all its flaws, and as your interceding Priest purifies it from all its sin, and presents it as a 'golden vial full of aroma' to His Father. And when in pensive sadness you have trodden your lonely path, the spirit chafed, the heart wounded, the world desolate, and a thousand images of terror and of gloom filling the vast void, O little did you think that within that veil, so awfully mysterious to you, there stood one—your Friend and Brother, your Advocate and Priest—who knew your secret sorrow, and who at that moment was pouring out His full heart, His whole soul, in powerful and prevalent intercession, that your tried and wavering faith might not fail.

Nor must we overlook the individuality of our Lord's intercession. This is one of its most interesting features: "I have prayed for you." As if forgetting for that moment the whole Church, and regarding Peter as representing in his person each tempted believer, Jesus makes him the especial object of his prayer. How much comfort do we lose in overlooking this truth—in not more distinctly recognizing the personal interest which each believer has in the love of Christ! "My grace is sufficient for you." "I have prayed for you" are the gracious words with which Jesus would meet each individual case.

Think not, then, O believer, that you are alone, unloved, uncared for, unthought of; Jesus bears you upon His heart; and if loved and cared for, and remembered by Him, you can afford to part with some creature stream, however loved and valued that stream may be. Keep your eye intently fixed upon your Lord's intercession. In every tribulation look unto Jesus, mark His gracious hand directing the scourge and mingling the bitter cup; tempering its proper degree of severity, appointing the limit of its continuance, and

converting seeming disasters into occasions of real good. In every infirmity and failing look unto Jesus, your merciful High Priest, pleading His atoning blood, and on its ground making intercession for you. In every prayer look unto Jesus, your prevailing Advocate, bearing the iniquity of your holy things, and recommending your broken petitions. In every temptation look unto Jesus, the author of your faith, the source of your strength, and the captain of your salvation, who alone is able to lift up the hands that hang down, to teach the fingers to fight, and eventually to make you more than conqueror over all your foes.

We too much lose ourselves in the crowd; and merge ourselves in the mass. We forget alike our individual interest in the covenant, and our personal obligation to glorify God in our different walks of life. But it is the especial privilege of the believer to concentrate upon himself, as in focal power, every thought and affection of God, just as the eye of a well-painted portrait may be said to fasten itself exclusively upon each individual in the room. "I have prayed for you." O cheering declaration! Christian reader, lose not sight of it. Come and lay your hand of faith upon the covenant of grace, and say, "the fullness of the covenant is mine." Lay your hand upon the covenant of God, and say, "the God of the covenant is mine; Jesus its Mediator is my Savior. He obeyed, suffered, bled, and expired, all for me. He has loved me, and has given himself for me. Lord! do You think of me? does my case come up before Your notice? do You bear any burden upon Your arm, my sorrow upon Your heart, my name upon Your lip; and do You pray for my poor, assaulted, and trembling faith? Yes, Lord, You do. I believe it, because You have said it—press the precious truth so rich in consolation to my trembling, grateful heart."

It is another beautiful view of our subject—the anticipative intercession of Christ. "I have prayed for you." The Lord as its shepherd goes before His flock. He precedes it every step, not only to map its path, but also to provide for all the circumstances, the most trivial and minute, of its history. To Him nothing can be unforeseen, from Him nothing can be concealed. No event can surprise Him, no contingency can thwart Him, no difficulty can embarrass Him. The entire history of the individual saint of God, from his first to his last breath, is written in His book, when as yet it had no existence, as minutely and as accurately, as though it were a record of the past. In anticipation of each developed circumstance, of each temptation and trial, difficulty and need—Jesus prays for His people: "I have prayed." It would seem as if the sorrow had reached His heart, before it touched our own; as if the assault had fallen

upon Him before it fell upon us; and that, knowing what would transpire, seeing in what critical and painful circumstances His child would be placed, He anticipates his case by especial intercession on his behalf: "I have prayed for you."

Can the mind of the tried believer repose upon a truth more sustaining and soothing than this? It is a glorious unfolding of the love of Jesus, to know that when the sifting came, when faith was actually tried, that then Jesus prayed for the sufferer. But to be assured that before a dart was winged, or a shock was felt, or even a suspicion was awakened that the tempter was approaching, and that danger was near; Jesus, robed in His priestly garments and bearing the golden censer in His hand, had entered within the veil to make especial intercession for that trial of faith! Oh, it is a view of His love, which to the mind of the tempted believer would seem to overtop and outshine all others!

And for what does Jesus pray? That the temptation might not come? that faith may not be tried? O no! He asks not the Father in behalf of His people for their entire exemption from temptation and trial. Full well does He know that if conformed to Him their Head, they must through much tribulation enter the kingdom. Pure and sinless though He was, needing no sifting and no refining, He yet passed through each process as if there were in Him the chaff to scatter and the dross to consume. How much more needful does Jesus see that His people, in whom there is such a mixture of the precious with the vile, so much indwelling sin, so much powerful corruption perpetually seeking to destroy indwelling grace, should not be exempted from the process which, painful though it be, is absolutely needful and eternally good!

But Jesus prays that in the actual trial of faith it might not fail. And mark how signally the prayer was answered in the case of Peter. His faith did not fail. Trace his subsequent history. "When you are restored", said his Divine Master, "strengthen your brethren." He was restored. One look from Jesus, of painful remembrance, of gentle reproof, and of loving forgiveness, broke his heart, "and he went out and wept bitterly." Deep and sincere was his repentance. 'He went out,' apart from others, and sought some retired spot, where, alone with God, he might with tears acknowledge his transgression, and in faith seek the forgiveness of his sin. I repeat—trace his subsequent history. What a loving disciple, what a zealous apostle, what a vigilant pastor, what a useful preacher, what a valiant soldier of the cross, did he afterwards become! The chaff of self-confidence, and false zeal, and light views of sin, was now scattered in the sifting of his faith, and that faith was now purer and

**stronger than ever. Peter stood more firmly after he had lamented his fall, than before he fell; insomuch, that he found more grace than he lost grace.**

**Listen to the words with which, at his Master's bidding, he strengthens his brethren after his recovery. He reminds them that they are "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be), you are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Now, why is it, O believing soul, that your tried faith has not failed? Why have you passed through the sifting, with not one precious grain fallen to the ground? Because your great High Priest prayed for you before the trial, and prayed for you in the trial, and has not ceased to pray for you since the trial. All upholding grace, all restraining grace, all restoring grace, all establishing grace, has been meted out to you through the channel of your Lord's perpetual and ever-prevalent intercession. O how should this truth endear the Savior to your heart! With what holy contrition should it fill your spirit, and with what sweet affection should it constrain your soul to a simple and an unreserved surrender to God!**

**But what, my reader, if your religion should prove to be nothing but chaff? Does the bare probability startle you? Ah! there are multitudes whom it might well startle—for multitudes are thus deceived. Not a grain of pure wheat is found in their souls. There is no vitality in their faith, no solidity in their profession, no substance in their religion. Before every wind of false doctrine they bend, and by each blast of temptation they are carried away. The stubble of the field, and the chaff of the threshing-floor (fit emblems of their Christianity), are not more unsubstantial and fleeting than it. All is woeful deception. They have substituted a form of godliness for its power; union to the church for union to Christ; the baptism of water for the regeneration of the Spirit; gospel ordinances for sanctifying grace; works of benevolence for faith in the Lord Jesus. And thus their religion is hollow, unsubstantial, and unreal; possessing a "name to live, they are dead."**

**And what will be the end of such? Departing into eternity in this state of soul deception—building their hope of heaven upon this false foundation—in their sad experience must be realized the awful description which the evangelist gives of the judgment power of Christ; "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner; but he will**

burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Thus will perish all human religions, all false hopes, all hollow professions, all soul-destroying doctrines—the 'wood, the hay, the stubble,' of a form of godliness—destitute of the power. Unconverted reader, weigh and consider this solemn statement—it is for your life. Examine the nature and foundation of your hope. Let nothing be a substitute to you for the new birth, for faith in Christ, or for love to God. The most beautiful ritual, the most accurate creed, the most costly religion, the most splendid profession, without Christ in the heart, is but as fuel preparing for the final and eternal conflagration. To such the Savior pointedly and solemnly refers, when He says, "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me."

But if, dear reader, you are in possession of real faith, even in the smallest degree, expect its conflict and its trial. It is truly remarked by the holy Leighton, that God never had but one Son without sin, and never one without suffering. The existence of faith seems necessarily to imply, the endurance of suffering. Not, as we have shown in another part of this volume, because of any intrinsic defect in faith, but in consequence of the impurity of the heart in which that faith is lodged, its perpetual admixture with the dross of a mind but partially renewed, its constant contact with the objects and scenes of sense and of earth, render trial as essential to the purification of faith, as the flail to the pure wheat, and as the crucible to the precious metal.

The trials and temptations, therefore, with which God visits His people, are designed, as tests of faith. Without them we should lack some of the strongest evidences of experimental Christianity. Who would wish the stubble and the chaff to render doubtful the existence of the true grain, or the tin and the dross to obscure the luster of the fine gold? Welcome, then, every trial and test of your faith. Welcome whatever stamps its reality, increases its strength, and heightens its luster.

Nor be surprised that this, above all the graces of the Holy Spirit, should be a target for the great enemy of God. As faith is the grace which most glorifies God, which brings the greatest degree of joy and peace unto the soul, and which constitutes its mightiest shield in the conflict, it becomes an especial object of Satan's malignant attack. The most Christ-exalting, God-honoring,

and sanctifying of all the Spirit's graces must not expect to escape its fearful assaults. If this 'gold' was 'tried in the fire,' in the sinless person of Jesus, is there not a greater necessity that in our fallen and corrupt nature it should be subjected to a second process of trial? It was tried in the Head to show that it was real gold; it is tried in the members to separate it from the dross with which it becomes mixed in its contact with our hearts. In the one case, the trial was to stamp its divine nature; in the other case, the trial is to purify it from the human nature. Thus are we honored to suffer in some small degree, as our Lord and Master suffered. Therefore, beloved, "do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Keep your eye intently fixed upon the intercession of Christ. Is it a privilege to be borne upon the affectionate and believing prayers of a Christian friend? Ah yes! precious channels of heavenly blessing are the intercessions of the Lord's people on our behalf. But there is a Friend still closer to the Fountain of Mercy, still nearer and dearer to the Father, than your fondest earthly friend—it is JESUS, "who ever lives to make intercession for those who come unto God by him." Oh how precious is that declaration upon which in any assault, or trial, or perplexity, you may calmly and confidently repose: "I have prayed for you." Yes, when from confusion of thought, or pain of body, or burning fever, you cannot pray for yourself, and no friend is near to be your mouth to God, then there is one, the Friend of friends, the ever-skillful Advocate, and never weary Intercessor—no invoking saint, nor interceding angel—but the Son of God Himself, who appears in the presence of God moment by moment for you. O keep, then, the eye of your faith immovably fixed upon Christ's intercession; He intercedes for weak faith, for tried faith, for tempted faith—yes, for him who thinks he has no faith. There is not a believer who is not borne upon His heart, and whose prayers and needs are not entwined in His ceaseless intercession.

When you deem yourself neglected and forgotten, a praying Savior in heaven is thinking of you. When you are tried and cast down, tempted and stumble, the interceding High Priest at that moment enters within the holiest, to ask on your behalf strength, consolation, and upholding grace. And when sin has wounded, and guilt distresses, and unbelief beclouds, who is it that stands in the breach, that makes intercession, that removes the darkness, and brings back the smile of a forgiving Father? The Lord Jesus, the interceding Savior!

**Oh, look up, tried and assaulted believer! you have a Friend at court, an Advocate in the chancery of heaven, an Intercessor curtained within the holiest of holies, transacting all your concerns, and through whom you may have access to God with boldness.**

**How sweet are the fruits of the Lord's restoring grace! In the case of Peter, we read that "he went out and wept bitterly." He had never wept such tears, nor sorrowed with such a sorrow before. It was the look of the Savior's forgiving love which broke his heart, and dissolved his whole soul into penitence and sweet contrition. We trace the same in David: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto you." Blessed and holy results of the Savior's intercession in behalf of tried, and tempted, and staggering faith! May we, dear reader, constantly taste the sweetness of the Lord's restorings. That restoring we need day by day, and His upholding grace moment by moment. Let no consciousness of departure from God keep us from returning to Him—seeing that Jesus lives and prays for us.**

**Heart-melting is the language of our sin-pardoning and soul-restoring God to His backsliding Church. "You have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, says the Lord." And again, "And I said, after she had done all these things, Turn unto me." And yet again, as if he would exhaust all the tenderness of language, "Return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity." Can we resist arguments, and appeals, and persuasives like these? And oh, may the result of our restoring be a closer, holier walk than ever! "The Lord will speak peace to his people, but let them not turn again to folly."**

**Jesus, let Your pitying eye  
Call back a wandering sheep;  
False to You, like Peter, I  
Would sincerely like Peter weep.  
Let me be by grace restored,  
On me be all its freeness shown;  
Turn, and look upon me, Lord,  
And break my heart of stone."  
"Savior, Prince, enthroned above,**

Repentance to impart;  
Give me, through Your dying love,  
The humble, contrite heart. Give, what I have long implored,  
A portion of Your love unknown;  
Turn, and look upon me, Lord,  
And break my heart of stone."  
"See me, Savior, from above,  
Nor suffer me to die;  
Life, and happiness, and love,  
Smile in Your gracious eye.  
Speak the reconciling word,  
And let Your mercy melt me down;  
Turn, and look upon me, Lord,  
And break my heart of stone."  
"Look, as when Your pitying eye  
Was closed that we might live;  
'Father (at the point to die  
My Savior gasped), forgive!'  
Surely with that dying word,  
He turns, and looks, and cries, 'tis done!'  
O my loving, bleeding Lord,  
This breaks my heart of stone!"

### **"Nourishment for the Journey"**

The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 1 Kings 19:7-8

We remarked in a previous chapter of this work, that in planning the varied histories of His saints, God had in view, not the instruction and blessing of one individual only, but also of many. He would embrace the 'whole family on earth' in the teaching, the warning, and the comfort found in the experience of a single member of that family. There is much in this thought calculated to soothe the mind of the tried and disciplined believer, and to reconcile him to the dispensations of his heavenly Father. In the light of this truth we cannot look upon the Christian sufferer but with a feeling of the intensest interest. There is a magnanimity, a loftiness of character, a moral heroism about the

**man, the conception of which we may but imperfectly convey to other minds, while it forms one of the most vivid and pleasing images of our own. How prompt should we be to offer to such an one the spirit's kindest sympathy, and to breathe on his behalf the heart's most fervent prayer! From his lips may well breathe the language of the self-denying apostle, "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."**

**An incident in the life of the prophet Elijah presents an appropriate illustration of this truth. It is brief, but interesting and instructive. Fleeing from the murderous designs of Jezebel, the prophet was overtaken in the wilderness by weariness and exhaustion, and sitting down beneath the shade of a tree, in the fretfulness of his spirit, and the gloomy despondency of his mind, he requested of God that he might die. "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." At this critical moment, one of those ministering spirits, sent from the court of heaven to minister to the heirs of salvation, appeared at his side, gently touched him, and bade him arise and eat. And, lo! "there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink., and laid down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.**

**How simple and affecting yet instructive is this episode in the life of the prophet! What an unfolding of human imperfection, and of Divine forbearance! What a picture of the thoughtfulness, carefulness, and tenderness of God towards His people, contrasted with their unbelief, repining, and fretfulness towards Him! Oh, what a God is our God! At the moment that Elijah resigned himself to the feeling of loneliness and desolation, God was near to him. And when, faint from hunger, and exhausted from fatigue, he wished for death rather than life, behold, a table was spread for him in the wilderness by Him who in a subsequent and more complete development of His incarnation, supplied the needs of three thousand with five barley loaves and two fish. Strengthened and refreshed, he arose and addressed himself to the journey. It was an interesting though a long and toil some one.**

**"The desert over which Elijah traveled forty days and nights, was the same**

through which the tribes of Israel traveled during forty years, under the convoy of the cloudy and fiery pillar. Surely this, if any, was holy ground. It had been traversed by the feet of the mighty, it was rich with the most stupendous associations of thought, and with the most interesting recollections. Here the whole miraculous history of the ancient fathers would revive before him in the liveliest colors. Fresh images and scenes from that age of wonders would recur to his mind at every step, and the very profound silence around him would assist in the consideration of the sublime things of which these spots had been once the theater. As often as he descended into a green and palmy vale, he alighted in spirit upon some resting-place of his fathers. As often as the shade of an overhanging rock received him, it was as if the incense of the sanctuary breathed around him; for the prayers of the pilgrims of God had hallowed these shades. Here or there, he would think, perhaps Moses had rested and taken counsel in the sacred circle of his elders; and the leader of Israel would still seem kneeling before the Lord, and speaking to Him, 'as a man talks with his friend.' Thus one heart-elating thought would follow another. The history of the forty years' journey would attain a form and a vitality beyond what he had hitherto realized. At one time he would seem to be gathering the manna with the ancient fathers; at another to be standing with the wounded before the brazen image of the serpent, and feeling with them the return of health. Presently he would be in spirit at the altar which Moses built, and called it 'Jehovah-nissi,'—the Lord my Banner; and then again he would hear the desert resound with loud thanksgivings and solemn hymns of praise for the faithfulness and truth of Jehovah. Every new scene on which he entered would bring before him some new event and feature of those journeyings which were irradiated with the glory of God; and whatever consolation and encouragement is comprised in these histories, would rush upon him with sublime and overwhelming wonder, or exhilarate him with a spring of hope and joy, that seemed to give wings to his feet, and banish the last remains of fear and care from his spirit. Assured that he was pursuing his way under the shadow of the same Almighty hand which once covered the whole host of Israel, he would cheerfully pursue his journey, not doubting that he was led by the right hand of Him, who, under the juniper tree, had given him the direction to depart, and had endued his feeble frame with a strength which no fatigue of the journey was able to diminish; and that as soon as the end was attained, he should be bidden to rest, and lay down his traveling-staff in peace and safety." (Krummacher)

But there is a spiritual view of this narrative still more interesting and instructive. It suggests to the devout contemplation of the believing mind the

following distinctive features of Christian experience—the believer in Jesus is journeying to the mount of God. Because of the greatness of the way the Lord has provided ample nourishment. And in the strength of that nourishment, thus timed to his necessities, he is enabled greatly to advance. "And he arose, and ate and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God."

With regard to the first point we may remark, what a poor and imperfect idea the ungodly world, in its blindness, forms of the Christian's happiness. It sees us break from its thralldom, and trample its fancied joys beneath our feet, and link ourselves to a life of perpetual conflict and of much tribulation, esteeming reproach for Christ greater gain than its best treasures, the ignominy of the cross higher honor than its noblest distinctions—and it marvels at the strangeness of our choice. "What!" it exclaims, "is this your happiness—these pleasures denied, these joys refused, these honors disdained, these distinctions relinquished, for a journey whose history is but the record of difficulty and peril, of weariness and need?" Yes! we reply; Christ and all this constitutes our happiness. Christ and His rugged cross, Christ and His bitter humiliation, Christ and His deep poverty, Christ and His despised burden, we prefer, and choose and glory in, rather than wear again the chains, and return again to the dominion of the world, and drink again of its delusive joys.

Who would desire to return to Egypt, who, in his wilderness journeyings, has caught a distant view of Canaan, and has tasted of its grapes? Who would wish to eject God's love from his heart, however faint its glow, when once that love is felt? Who would lose his hold of faith upon Christ, however feeble its grasp, when once that hold is gained? Or who would willingly resign his hope of glory, however dim its luster, when once that hope has dawned upon the soul? But the world knows us not. The life which we live upon Christ is with Christ, hidden from its view. And although it expects from our Christian profession—and it has a right so to expect—that we should return love for its hatred, and blessing for its curse, and labor for its persecution; and receive without reviling, and with meekness, its bitter scorn and its false imputations, while still toiling for its good—it is yet ignorant of the divine principle from where this grace of meekness, and patience, and forbearance, and love proceeds.

But let us learn to take the world as it is, nor expect more from it than it can give. Who would be hurt at the taunts of an idiot, or think of resenting the blows of a maniac? The world, with all its wisdom, knows not God. Folly and

madness are in the heart, and it cannot therefore comprehend the mystery or perceive the beauty of the Christian life. "If the world hates you," says Jesus, "know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

But the true believer in Jesus is a traveler. He is journeying to a city of habitation, to the mount of God—and, blessed be God, He will soon be there! The apostle Peter dedicates his pastoral letter to the 'strangers scattered' abroad—the people of God dispersed over the face of the earth. Such is the Church of Christ. It is sometimes incorrectly called "the visible Church." The idea is unscriptural. Visible churches there may be, but a visible Church there is none. The saints of God are 'strangers and pilgrims' scattered abroad. They have no permanent abode, no certain resting-place. The Church is in the wilderness, journeying through it. The present is called the "time of our sojourning." We are but wayfarers at an inn, abiding only for a night. "Here we have no continuing city;" strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were. But this, beloved, is the reconciling, animating thought—we are journeying to the mount of God. We are on our way to the good land, which the Lord our God has promised us; to the kingdom and the mansion which Jesus has gone to take possession of, and to prepare, for us. In a word—and this image is the climax of the blissful prospect—we are hastening to our 'Father's house,' the home of the whole family in heaven and in earth, the residence of Christ, the dwelling-place of God. To this each believer in Jesus is journeying.

The road is difficult, the desert is tedious—sometimes perilous from its smoothness, or painful from its roughness; its straitness now wearying, its intricacy now embarrassing. But who will complain of the path that conducts him to his home? Who would yield to the sensation of fatigue who is journeying to an eternal rest? Much of the disquietude and repining of spirit peculiar to the pilgrimage of the saints, arises from the faint conceptions which the mind forms of the coming glory. We think too faintly and too seldom of heaven. The eye is bent downwards, and seldom do we 'lift up our heads' in prospect of the 'redemption that draws near.' And yet how much there is in the thought of glory, in the anticipation of heaven—its nature and associations calculated to stimulate, to cheer, and to allure us onwards! It is the place where we shall be sinless; it is the residence where we shall see God; it is the mansion where we shall be housed with Christ; it is the home where we shall dwell with all the saints; it is the home at which are collecting all the holy of earth, some of whom have left our embrace for its holier and happier regions, and whom we shall meet again.

**Why, then, should we be cast down because of the way, or for one moment lose sight of the glory that awaits us, or cease to strive for the fitness essential to its enjoyment? In a little while—oh, how short the journey!—and we shall be there! Then we shall realize, to their fullest extent, the beauty and the sweetness of the description so often read and pondered with tears of hope before—"You have come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." O my soul! will you not stretch every nerve, endure every privation, and relinquish every weight, thus to reach this glorious mount of God?**

**But for all the exigencies of the Christian journey, God has amply provided. The Lord Jesus being the believer's 'way,' all nourishment for the pilgrimage of the saints is laid up in Him. All supply of wisdom for the perplexing way, of strength for the wearisome way, of grace for the perilous way, of sympathy for the trying way, is in Jesus. In Him has the Father laid up the provision for the wilderness journey. And what storehouses of nourishment—both testifying of Jesus—are the word of God, and the covenant of grace! How full, how rich and ample the supply! All the soul-establishing doctrines, all the sanctifying precepts, and all the precious, comforting promises, go to make up the nourishment for the wilderness journey.**

**Sometimes the Lord brings us into the very heart of the wilderness, just to prove to us how easily and how readily He can provide a table for us even there. And when all other resources are exhausted, and all supply is cut off, and every spring of water is dried, lo! He opens the eye of our faith to see what His heart of love has prepared. Are you, dear reader, sitting down to weep like Hagar, or to die like Elijah in the wilderness—desolate, weary, and exhausted? O see what appropriate and ample nourishment your God and Father has provided for you. The Angel of the covenant touches you with the right hand of his love, and bids you arise and eat and drink, yes, to 'drink abundantly.' In the glorious Gospel are 'all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old,' which the Lord has laid up for His people. "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart," for all this storehouse of nourishment, this table of provision, is for you. All the love that is in God's heart, all the grace that is in the Savior's nature, all the comfort**

**that is in the Spirit's tenderness, all the sanctifying truths, and free invitations, and precious promises which cluster in the Gospel of Christ, all are yours—the sacred nourishment provided for your journey to the mount of God. Listen to the voice of Jesus, saying to you, as of old, "Come and dine."**

**We may now observe, that in the strength of this nourishment the believer is enabled to make great progress in the Divine life: "So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God." Thus it is with the spiritual traveler. The life of faith, which is both our high calling and precious privilege, is the theme necessarily suggested to us by this part of our narrative. It was in this school God placed, and was now teaching, His servant Elijah. This was the Divine mystery he was called to explore, and this the path he was invited to tread: "Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights."**

**We have here an illustration of one of the greatest principles in the Divine life—one of the most wonderful, precious, and influential—the principle of faith: "The just shall live by faith." It is in this way the Lord prepares His people for what He has prepared for them in the future of their history. That history is to them wisely and graciously concealed. The path of the future is to them all unknown, a veil of impenetrable mystery enshrouding it from view. In all this we trace the love of our heavenly Father. There may be, for anything that we know, a long season of poverty before us; many a weary stage is yet untraveled, many a new path is yet untrodden, many a battle is yet unfought, and many a temptation and trial are yet unmet. But faith, living upon the nourishment received, in the strength and sustaining power of some view of God which the Spirit has presented, of some especial grace which Christ has apportioned out, of some higher attainment in truth and experience and holiness, of some profounder lesson learned, of some especial mercy experienced, of some bright realizing view of glory caught, the believer may travel many a long and toilsome stage of his journey to the "rest that remains for the people of God."**

**Ah, how often has the Lord by His present dealings anticipated the future events of your life! For what circumstances of danger, of trial, and of need, has Jesus provided! He well knew—for He had appointed every step and every incident of your journey—the deep and dark waters through which you here to wade, the sands you were to cross, the mountains you were to climb, and the valleys into which you were to descend. That cup of sorrow was not**

**mixed, nor that fiery dart winged, nor that heavy cross sent; before all the necessities it would create, and all the supplies it would demand, had been thought of and provided for by Him who knew the end from the beginning. And when the voice of love gently awoke you as from the stupor of your grief, you marveled at the table spread, and wondered at the supply sent; and you could not define the reason why so much love took possession of your heart, and so much grace flowed into your soul, and so much nerve clothed your spirit, and so much hope and joy bathed you in their heavenly sunlight, and shed their radiance upon your onward way—little thinking that this was the Lord's mode of providing nourishment for the journey. And when the period and event of your life, thus anticipated, arrived, then the recollection of God's preparatory dealings rushed upon your memory, and in an instant you saw how for the 'forty days and the forty nights' solitary travel, your God and Savior had been graciously and amply providing. But all this mystery the life of faith, by which the justified live, fully explains.**

**"O faith, faith! you blessed companion of the children of God! your wondrous power deprives the wilderness of its horrors, and the deepest solitude ceases to be solitary under your guidance! All that earth and heaven possess of beauty is yours, and with the treasures of heights and of depths you enrich your possessors! That which is distant is brought near by you; you develop hidden things, and awaken past events to new life. You merge the gloom of the present into the bliss of the future, and paint the sky of many a departing sun with the dawning radiance of a better world. In the midst of sublunary changes, you anticipate a peaceful paradise. You people our bereaved family circles with holy and heavenly company; you associate both worlds in close connection, and unite things past, present, and to come. In your light the sacred narratives seem acted over again, and our own personal history becomes a sacred record of providence. You have the power of realizing the dead as if they were alive; the patriarchs are our contemporaries, although their ashes repose in the sepulcher of near six thousand years. By your voice they still converse with us, although to human ears they speak no more; by your realizing aid they visit us in our darkness with kindness and consolation; by your light we see a cloud of them as witnesses encamped around us; and every grace they experienced is through these appropriated to ourselves. You nourish us with the promise made to Abraham; sustain us with the strong consolation of the oath divinely sworn unto Isaac; you give us the staff of Jacob to support our steps; you enable us with Moses's rod to divide the sea, and with David to leap over the wall and rampart! O faith, faith! you door-keeper of every sanctuary, you master over all the treasures of God! may He**

**who is your Author draw near unto us, and He who is your Finisher bend down Himself towards us."**

**A circumstance in the life of our blessed Lord will suggest itself to the Christian reader, as affording an eminent and impressive illustration of this mode of God's dealings with His people, the study of which will be found replete with encouragement to those who are especially called to "walk by faith, and not by sight." The incident to which I allude, is Christ's temptation in the wilderness. For a period of 'forty days and forty nights' He fasted; at the end of which He was subjected to the most powerful and malignant attack of the great foe of God and man. It was one of those events in our Lord's history upon which hung results the most momentous—nothing less than the salvation of the Church and the eternal interests of the divine government. It was, so to speak, the great moral battle of the universe, the result of which would decide the right of government, and the salvation of countless myriads. It would be incongruous with all our ideas of the Savior's character, to suppose that He would anticipate such a conflict with indifference, or enter upon it unprepared; or that the Father, whose honor was so deeply concerned in the result, would withhold from His Son the resources demanded by an occasion of such interest and magnitude. Happily we are not left to doubt or conjecture.**

**In view of this great event, behold how God prepared Him for the trial—in other words, nourished Him for the forty days' travail in the wilderness. We read, that "Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan," where He had been to offer an act of personal obedience to His Father, thus fulfilling in His baptism 'all righteousness.' And then follows the account of the temptation: "And was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted by the devil." Who does not see that our Lord's preparation for the conflict was His being 'filled with the Holy Spirit'? His human nature, replenished to its utmost with all the grace and strength and consolation of the Divine Spirit, was prepared for the terrific shock through which it was to pass. And thus nourished and strengthened, He passed through those forty days and forty nights, battling and vanquishing His mighty foe.**

**And can you not look back, dear reader, upon all the way the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these many years, and tell how He has gone before you, not only preparing the trial for you, but in adjusting your spirit to the trial? Can you not testify, to the praise of the glory of His grace, how He has trained you for the race, disciplined you for the conflict, and strengthened**

**your back for the burden? Once and again the Angel of the covenant has surprised you; weak, exhausted, and ready to die, in some lonely path of your journey, and He has stooped and gently touched you, and bade you rise and partake of a new supply of grace and truth; and upheld by that grace, and in the strength of that truth, you have started afresh towards the mount of God. Oh what a loving, faithful God, and what a kind, tender Savior, are ours!**

**We may gather from the subject of this chapter some NEEDED AND HOLY LESSONS. We learn that the life most blessed to us, and most honoring to Christ, is a life of believing and perpetual dependence upon God. For forty days and nights the prophet traveled with no resources in hand, but having all in God. It was the travel of faith. Such is ours. "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" It is the Church of God, emerging from the world, and in her life of faith upon the Son of God, traveling towards the celestial mount. We cannot too frequently nor too deeply study the profound meaning of those words, "The just shall live BY FAITH." God will have His child perpetually looking to, leaning upon, and receiving from Him. At present we are but in a state of spiritual childhood. We are not therefore in a condition to be trusted with grace for the future. Improvident and careless, we should soon squander and exhaust our resources; and when the emergency came, we should find ourselves unprepared to meet it. The Lord, in wisdom and love, keeps all our grace in His own hands, and deals it out just as our circumstances demand.**

**O, who that knows his own heart, and the heart of Christ, would not desire that all his supply should be in God, and not in himself! Who, so to speak, would wish to be his own spiritual treasurer? Who that knows the blessedness of the life of faith, the sweetness of going to God in everything, and for everything, would wish to transfer his mercies from Christ's keeping to his own, or wish to hold in the present the supply of the future? Be satisfied, dear reader, to walk by faith, and not by sight. You have a full Christ to draw from, and a faithful God to look to. You have a 'covenant ordered in all things and sure,' and the precious promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be," to lean confidently upon all your journey through. Be content, then, to be poor and dependent. Be willing to travel on empty-handed, seeing God's heart opened, and Christ's hand outstretched to supply your 'daily bread.'**

**Oh, it is sweet to be a dependent creature upon God—to hang upon a loving Father—to live as a poor, needy sinner day by day, moment by moment, upon Jesus—to trace God in ten thousand ways, to mark His wisdom here, His**

condescension there; now His love, and then His faithfulness, all combining and exerted for our good—truly it is the most holy and blessed life upon earth. Heaven itself has nothing to be compared with it.

Yet another lesson. The Lord imparts extraordinary strength to meet an extraordinary occasion. Why should we, then, shrink from any trial, or flee from any duty, or turn aside from any cross, since for that trial, and for that duty, and for that cross, Jesus has provided its required and appropriate grace? You are perhaps exclaiming, "Trouble is near!" Well, be it so. So also divine grace is near—and strength is near—and counsel is near—and deliverance is near—and Jesus is near—and God is near—and a throne of grace is near. Therefore why need you fear, though trouble is near? "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." There is a table in the wilderness. There is a supply in the desert. "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste." Our Joseph lives. And in anticipation of the seven years of famine, He has amply provided for His brethren; and He will send them on their journey with full sacks, and with their money in their sacks' mouth, that free grace might have all the glory.

And forget not, O believer, that you are journeying to the mount of God, and will soon be there. Behold it in the distance! What wonders encircle it! What glory bathes it! The exile of Patmos, lifting a corner of the veil, has presented it to our view: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads." O what a spectacle of magnificence is this! There is Jesus, the Lamb as it had been slain. To Him every face is turned, on Him every eye is fixed, before Him every knee bends, and every tongue chants His praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Around Him are gathering each moment the one Church of God, redeemed from among men. In the light and splendor of the scene all distinctions are absorbed, all minds assimilate, all hearts blend, all voices harmonize, and the grand, visible manifestation of the unity Of the Church is perfected.

To this consummation you are hastening—keep it fully in view. Do not turn aside, yielding to the enchanting scenes through which you pass; but forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to the mark of the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To Mount Zion you will certainly arrive at last. Your feet shall stand upon its summit. Your voice shall blend with its music. Your heart shall thrill with its gladness. Your soul shall bathe in its glory. Oh! does not your spirit kindle with ardor, and is not your heart

winged with love, while the mount of God unveils its splendor to your view?

**Speak, Elijah! for you have reached that mount, and tell us what it is to be there! No! you cannot tell. You have heard its deep songs of joy—but their strains are unutterable. You have seen its ineffable glory—but that glory is unspeakable. Let your mantle fall upon us, and a double portion of your spirit be ours; and at our departure let your chariot of fire convey us to the skies, and we will be content to wait and gaze for awhile upon the distant vision—like some early traveler pausing upon the mountain's side to admire the ascending sun, until his features and his vestments borrow the crimson glow—until changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, we reach it at last, and lose ourselves forever amid its transcendent beams—ceasing from our conflict, and reposing from our toil, in the beatific presence of God!**

**"And then shall cease the life of sin,  
The conflict and the woe;  
And then have thrown the destined dart,  
My last, my conquered foe."**

**"And then shall come the morning light,  
The golden noon of grace,  
The gates of pearl, the sea of glass,  
The Lamb's unveiled face."**

**"And then shall come the days of strength,  
The awful form and wing;  
When as a crowned prince I sit  
With you, my Lord, my King."**

**"And then shall come the time of joy,  
The golden harp and song;  
The heart with love that overflows  
Amid the ransomed throng."**

**"Thus patient wait, my tranquil soul,  
And trust your Father's love  
Though earth may bring the cloud and storm,  
Bright sunshine reigns above."**

### **"The Chastening of Love"**

**"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Rev. 3:19.**

**Who is the speaker of these words? Even Jesus, described as the "faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last." Not Jesus as in the days of His humiliation; but Jesus in the height of His glory. Not Jesus when the tear was in His eye, and the shade upon His brow, and sadness in His heart; but Jesus exalted above all sorrow, manifested to the exile of Patmos in the splendor of his glorified humanity. The exalted and enthroned Savior is the speaker.**

**And to whom are these words spoken? They were addressed to the self-sufficient, self-approving church of Laodicea, whose spiritual state was neither warm nor cold, but such as God hated, as Jesus loathed. "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And yet to this church was addressed one of the tenderest and most sublime truths of the Bible; and immediately, too, after this severe and searching rebuke—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."**

**The CHASTENING OF LOVE is the interesting theme which these words suggest. The Lord Jesus declares that He loves His people, and especially the people whom He chastens. Had we not a 'thus says the Lord' for its truth, its greatness would render it incredible; and had we not some experience of it in our own souls—alas! how small the measure! -it would be too spiritual and glorious for our conception. But who are the people upon whom the heart of Jesus is set? They are not angels; and yet He loves angels because they are elect and holy; He loves them as the creatures of His power, and as the messengers of His will. But God loves not angels as He loves man. The Lord Jesus bears not the same affection towards those unfallen and pure spirits as He does towards a poor sinner hiding in His wounded side, cleansing in His blood, and enfolding himself within the robe of His righteousness. He never took part of the nature of angels, nor wept over angels, nor bled for angels—but all this He did for man!**

**It is His Church, then, which is represented as the object of His love—His own people, the donation of His Father, the creatures of His choice, the subjects of His grace, the treasure of His heart. Is it asked wherein has He loved them? Rather might we ask wherein has He not loved them! Look at His assumption of their nature! What a mighty stoop was this—the Infinite to the finite! Were it possible for me to save the life of an insect by assuming the form of that**

**insect, I should, by so doing, manifest my great benevolence. But behold the love of our incarnate God! His heart was bent, His whole soul was set, upon saving man. But He could save man only by becoming man. He could not raise our nature, but as He stooped and assumed that nature. He must not only look upon it, and pity it, and weep over it, but He must take it into the closest and most indissoluble union with Himself.**

**Nor was it the mere exchange, or blending together of natures so as to form one new nature. It was not the absorption of the Infinite into the finite, for He ceased not to be God, when He became man; He only veiled, He did not extinguish the glory of His Deity. In this consisted the mightiness of the stoop. I see no humiliation in the Savior's life but as it springs from this one fact—His condescension in taking up into union with His own divine our human nature. This was the first and greatest step in the path that conducted Him to the cross. All the acts of abasement and ignominy which follow were engrafted upon this. And, oh, what humiliation! Look at your nature! Contemplate it in some of its severest forms of degradation, and wretchedness, and woe. Are you not often constrained to blush that it is your own? Do you not turn from it at times with loathing and abhorrence, ashamed to confess that you are a man? Above all, what self-loathing, what self-abhorrence, when the Holy Spirit opens the chambers of iniquity in your own heart, and makes you acquainted with the abominations that are there! And yet this was the nature which the Son of God assumed! Herein is love! When He saw your nature fallen, ruined, and accursed—ejected from paradise as a loathsome thing—He came and allied Himself to it, in order that He might save it. If this truth, dear reader, has no glory to your eye, nor sweetness to your soul, what is your Christianity? From the depths of my heart I pity you. It is the foundation of Christianity, it is the marrow of the Gospel, it is the hope of the soul, it is that truth which takes every ruffle from the pillow of death. "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."**

**And is not this just the truth we need as a suffering and a tried people? When do we extract the sweetest honey from this bitter of bitters? Is it not when our humanity is wounded, oppressed, and cast down? When do we most value and love the humiliation of the Incarnate God? Is it not when by suffering we are driven to it, then to learn the tenderness and the sympathy that are in Christ? O blessed affliction, sweet sorrow, friendly chastisement, that brings my soul into the deeper experience of what God is in my nature!**

**It is impossible to present at a single glance all the evidences of Christ's love to His people. We may refer to His suretyship engagement in their behalf as a most wonderful manifestation of His love. It includes all that is precious to the believer. He became our Surety, and in consequence He suffered as such. The teaching of the word of God on the subject of suretyship is clear and decided. It would appear to be a thing, if not forbidden, at least discountenanced as incurring risk, and exposing to sorrow. "He that is surety for a stranger shall suffer for it: and he that hates suretyship is safe." "If you be surety for your friend, if you have stricken your hand with a stranger, you are snared with the words of your mouth." "Do not be one of those who strike hands, or of those who are sureties for debts." Such is the teaching of the Holy Spirit on this subject. Were this precept more honored by the observance of God's people, how much loss and suffering would be prevented! What ruin and what sorrow have been entailed upon individuals and upon families by its total disregard! How few have ever thus 'struck hands' who have not been made to 'suffer for it'?**

**But we return to our Great Surety—the Lord Jesus Christ. He made Himself responsible to Divine law and justice in behalf of His people. He undertook to discharge all their debts, to meet every claim, and to reimburse the moral government of God the honor it had lost. His suretyship involved the provision of a righteousness which should completely justify His church; a righteousness, abused though it may be, and denied though it is, yet on its basis the believing sinner finds acceptance with God, and shall as certainly be in heaven as the saints who are already there. "Whom he justified, those he also glorified." It is just the righteousness we need, dear reader, at the end of our most holy day. When a close inspection, a careful dissection of that which has appeared the most spiritual and God-glorifying, lays the mouth in the dust, then, O then, how blessed to have one flawless, spotless, finished work to fall back upon, and on which we dare take our stand before the holy Lord God, and plead it with Him for acceptance and for heaven.**

**It is just the righteousness we need to deepen our view of sin, to increase our self-loathing, and to bring the peace of God into the soul in all its soothing and sanctifying influence. It is just the righteousness we need to sustain us amid the swellings of Jordan, when all other confidences give way, when the past seems one mass of sin, and the spirit trembles upon the confines of the dread future—then, O then, by faith to wrap around this robe, and with it strike the billows that they part asunder, and allow the soul to pass over, singing, "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus!" Oh, herein**

is love!

The suretyship of Jesus also secured to His people the entire and free forgiveness of sin. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree," or, to the tree. "Who was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." Blessed announcements! Not the less hateful, nor hated, is the sin because it is forgiven and entirely blotted out. Oh no! Let the Lord touch the heart, Christian reader, with a sense of His pardoning love, with the assurance of His forgiveness, and you will go and hate, and mortify, and forsake it, more resolutely and effectually than ever. And must the Son of God become the Son of man, that they who are by nature children of wrath, might become the sons of God? Must God, the eternal God, the high and lofty One, stoop so low as to become incarnate, and that for sinners; for me, a poor worthless sinner! To save me from eternal woe, must the Son of man suffer, agonize, and die; die in my stead, die for my sins, die an accursed death! Ah, Lord, what must sin be, what must my sin be! How little have I thought of it, how little have I mourned for it, still less have I hated it as I ought to have hated it! Lord, how vile, how unutterably vile I am! "And is this the return that I have made,"—exclaims the poor, humbled, abased, contrite soul, when it reflects on some instances of transgression against light and love, against rebukes, against restorings, against God Himself—"did the Lord deserve this at my hands? Oh base ingratitude! Oh hated sin! Do you forgive it, Father of my mercies? This only makes it more hateful still. Never, never can I forgive myself."

Yes! the Lord loves His people. The Father loves them, for He chose them. The Son loves them, for He died for them. The Spirit loves them, for He dwells in them. Look at the care which the Lord takes of them—the supplies of grace measured out to them—the yearnings of His heart over them—the gentleness of His dealings towards them—seeing how He is collecting them one by one to Himself, that they might be with Him where He is, and behold His glory! And never more ask, Wherein has He loved us?

And yet He CHASTENS them—but it is the chastening of love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is not always, nor in every circumstance of trial, that the children of adoption can receive this truth. While passing under His hand, while yet smarting from the rod, while the bitter cup still presses the lip, it is most difficult for the believer to comprehend and discern the Lord's love to him—yes, what seems to be still more hard to believe, that Jesus chastens him because He loves him. And yet, "those whom the Lord

loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." The spring-head of all Divine chastisement is Divine love. There is not, there cannot be, one drop of wrath in the heart of God towards His people. Their Divine Surety bore it all—suffered it all—took it all away. One drop of infinite wrath left in the heart of God must have borne down the Church forever. That single portion would have been too much for it to bear. How, then, can poor, Christless, impenitent sinners, bear up under the deluge of the wrath which is to come? Had not our Surety been Divine as well as human, He could not have sustained it. And all who are out of Christ, who have no union to Christ, and no acceptance in Christ, must bear that wrath alone. "Who can stand before him when once he is angry?"

But Divine love chastens, because it sees the necessity for the correction. The Lord's love is not a blind affection. It is all-seeing, and heart-searching. When has He ever shown Himself blind to the follies of His people? When has His love been ignorant of their sinful departures? Was He blind to the unbelief of Abraham? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the deception of Jacob? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the impatience of Moses? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the self-applause of Hezekiah? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the adultery and murder of David? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the idolatry of Solomon? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the disobedience of Jonah? He chastened him for it. Was He blind to the self-righteousness of Job? He corrected him for it. Was He blind to the denial of Peter? He rebuked him for it.

It is our mercy to know that love marks our iniquity, and that love and not justice, grace and not vengeance, holds the rod, and administers the correction. Do you think, O chastened child of the Lord, that your Father would have touched you where your feelings are the most acute, where your anguish is the deepest, had He not seen a real necessity? Had He marked no iniquity, no flaw, no departure, no spot, you would have known what the 'kisses of His mouth' were, rather than the strokes of His rod. And yet believe it, for He has declared it, those stripes of His rod are as much the fruit and the expression of His love as are the 'kisses of His mouth.' "For whom the Lord loves he chastens." Sin is the cause of afflictions; were we free from sin we should be free from scourges. Afflictions cease not until sin is quite destroyed, which will not be in this world. Justice finds enough in every believer to punish, and mercy finds enough to pardon.

But all the afflictions of the believer are the effects of Divine love. They can

resolve themselves into nothing else. While the same stroke, falling upon an unbelieving, rebellious, sin-loving sinner, may be the first-fruits of eternal punishment, to the saint of God it may prove the first-fruits of eternal glory. The correction which you at present consider as an argument of wrath, may be an evidence of love and an act of mercy. God will prune you, but not hew you down. The 'right hand of His mercy' knows what the 'left hand of His severity' is doing. Better for you to be a chastened son, than an undisciplined child of the devil. Oh yes! there was no anger, no vindictiveness, no vengeance in that heavy stroke which laid your heart's fondest treasure in the dust. Love smote, but love yearned while it smote.

The Lord's love likewise appears in appointing the rebuke and in tempering the chastisement. That rebuke might have been heavier, that chastisement might have been severer. The deep and dark waters might have engulfed the soul. The language of the chastising Father is most tender. "I will not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure." Thus perhaps your prayer has been answered, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing." And then has followed the pleasant psalm of grateful acknowledgment and praise: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." O could we always analyze the cup, how astonished should we be to find that in the bitterest draught that ever touched our lips, the principal ingredient was love! That love saw the discipline needful, and love selected the chastisement sent, and love appointed the instrument by which it should come, and love arranged the circumstances by which it should take place, and love fixed the time when it should transpire, and love heard the sigh and saw the tear and marked the anguish, and never for one moment withdrew its beaming eye from the sufferer.

Alas! how much is this truth overlooked by the disciplined believer! Think, suffering child of God, of the many consoling, alleviating, and soothing circumstances connected with your chastisement. How much worse your position might be, how much more aggravated the nature of your sorrow, and how much heavier the stroke of the rod. Think of the disproportion of the chastisement to the sin, for "know that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves." Think of the many Divine supports, the precious promises, the tenderness of God, the gentleness of Christ, the sympathy and affection dwelling in the hearts of the saints—and all this will demonstrate to you that the chastisement of the saints is the chastening of love.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, which will trace the sanctified results of God's loving correction, we would remark—how great the dignity and precious the privilege of chastened believers! They are the children of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Angels, bright, sinless angels, stand not so closely and endearingly related to God as they. Wonderful love of God! that He should not think it a dishonor to own them as His sons, and to call Himself their Father, who by nature are the children of wrath, slaves to Satan, and the servants of sin. How great our dignity! Seek, reader, to know it, to enjoy it, to live to it. If there has been no sealing of your adoption upon the heart, give the Holy Spirit no rest until there is. If, in the holy, humble confidence of faith, there never has been an 'Abba, Father,' upon your lip, as one professing to be a child, and soon to be in eternity, it is time that there should be. Seek it earnestly, seek it importunately, seek it believingly, and you will have it. "You shall call me, my Father." "If I then be a Father," says the same God, "where is my honor?" Have you ever honored Him, loved Him, obeyed Him, glorified Him as your Father? Seek, O seek it with your whole soul. Bending over you, the Spirit of adoption waits to impress the great seal upon your heart. Loving you, the Father yearns to clasp you to His bosom, assuring you that you are His loved, pardoned, accepted child. As the loved, then, whom the Lord rebukes and chastens, let our carriage be that of children, even as His discipline is that of a Father. Let us receive the correction with meekness, and hear the voice of the Lord with reverence, since God is parental and loving in all His conduct towards His saints.

Nor let us fail to remember for our comfort that all the chastisement of the children of God are on this side of heaven. "We are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world." Not so with the ungodly. Sinner! unconverted soul! you may laugh now, and sport now, and rejoice now, but remember—your chastisement is to come! Your condemnation is to come! Your stripes are to come! All your real woe is to come. It is coming now, it comes fast, it is near at hand, even at your door—for there is but a step between you and hell! and have you ever thought what it must be to lie down in eternal torment, what it must be to meet an angry God, to confront a despised Savior? To take the fearful plunge without one ray of hope—a starless, sunless, hopeless eternity? O happy if the Eternal Spirit so bless to your soul the perusal of this page as to awaken you to a solemn, an honest and earnest seeking of the Lord; to give up your procrastinations, your waiting for a more convenient season—your worldly excuses—your refuges of lies—the

sparks of your own kindling in which you must lie down in sorrow—your dream of a future, a death-bed repentance; and casting all aside, hastening as a poor, lost, dying sinner to Christ, exclaiming, "I am a dying man! I need a Savior! I need the influence of the Holy Spirit to reveal that Savior, to lead me to that Savior, and to tell me that Savior is mine."

But no future sorrow awaits the children of God beyond the grave. They are chastened now, that they may not be condemned hereafter. All to come is joy and gladness, is purity and bliss. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." O learn from this subject that you are not less the object of God's love because He corrects you. The suspicion has, perhaps, pressed coldly and darkly upon your heart, "He cannot love me, and force this nauseous cup to my lip." Hush that murmur! Be still that thought! and know, O chastened child, O daughter of sorrow, that God is love; and because you are His loved child, His loving correction now makes you great. Then, in the words of your suffering Head, say, "The cup that my Father has given me, shall not I drink it?"

"Yes, Lord, Your chastening hand is good,  
Though painful now to flesh and blood,  
It is my Father's voice of love,  
His strength to show, my faith to prove."

"And shall a murmuring thought arise  
Against my God, most good, most wise  
My God, who has engaged to grant  
Supplies of grace for every want?"

"No! rather would I, meek and mild,  
Sit at His feet His chastened child,  
And learn of Him my cross to bear,  
Transformed into His image fair."

"I hear His voice in gentle strains  
Soothing my sorrows and my pains,  
My love I will not from you take,  
Nor for one moment you forsake."

"While you are in the furnace held,  
My strength shall be your help and shield;  
And your support my arm shall be,  
I will be near and solace thee."

"Do you forget the wounds for you  
I bore upon the accursed tree?"

**Did not my love for you atone?  
Then, think not you are all alone!"  
"Soon will I come, and take you home,  
To reign with me upon my throne;  
Soon shall your tears be dried away,  
In glory's cloudless, endless day.  
"Then, Lord, my chastened spirit take,  
Wholly renew it for Your sake;  
May now Your image in me shine,  
And fit me for the life divine."  
"And whatsoever Your will may be,  
That must be love that comes from Thee;  
To You I would my will resign,  
My heart, my life, dear Lord, are Thine."**

### **"Holiness, the Fruit of the Chastening of Love"**

**"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." Hebrews 12:10**

**It is not an exaggerated observation that the greatest of all afflictions is an affliction lost. An affliction sent as the servant of God, and yet not permitted to fulfil its mission of love in the soul's experience—a messenger bearing like a dove from heaven, an olive branch of peace plucked as from the tranquil bowers of paradise, and yet finding the door of the heart closed against its entrance—a season that might have been made the occasion of a more advanced proficiency in the knowledge of God, and a greater preparedness for heaven, entirely lost—lost no more to return. I repeat, that it is not an exaggerated sentiment, that the greatest of all afflictions is an affliction lost!**

**In the preceding chapter, we considered the chastisements of the believer as springing from the deep, unchangeable love of God. We should leave this intensely interesting theme but partially discussed, did we not place before the reader some of the great blessings which our heavenly Father designs to convey through this particular channel. The apostle's reasoning is clear and his argument conclusive: "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his**

holiness."

**In the unfolding of this second branch of the subject, we shall present some observations upon the holiness of God; then show in what sense all true believers are partakers of the Divine holiness; and then remark that they especially become so by the sanctified chastening of love. HOLINESS is an essential perfection of God. It is an inseparable part of His being. To conceive of a God infinite in essence, divine in majesty, almighty in power, wise in counsel, and eternal in duration, and yet destitute of holiness—infinite, essential purity—to suppose such a Being possessed of the least contagion of moral evil, would be to portray to the imagination—in reverence be it written—an Infinite Monster! We would picture Him before us arrayed with infinite power, wisdom, and duration, and yet lacking in that perfection which tempers, chastens, and beautifies all, and which makes Him truly what His word reveals Him to be—a God of love.**

**A denial of His being would not be a crime so fearful, nor involve a guilt of deeper dye, than would be a denial of his holiness. He who refuses to acknowledge that God is immaculately holy, breathes a more tremendous libel against God, than the Atheist, who, standing in the midst of ten thousand overwhelming demonstrations of His existence, yet impiously declares there is no God!**

**But how rich and palpable are the Scripture proofs—rather say, revelations and unfoldings of God's holiness! One or two must suffice. That is a sublime and conclusive one uttered by the lips of the veiled cherubim—"And one cried unto another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." Was there no other Divine perfection which they might have thus extolled? O yes! Jehovah was infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and infinitely good; but HOLINESS was the greatest and grandest of all, and so they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" thus breathing forth their adoration to the Holy, Triune God.**

**Again, "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." Why did not God swear by His veracity, by His wisdom, or by His power? Because He was about to enunciate a great truth to the house of David; and with a view of imparting to that truth its greatest force, solemnity, and beauty, He swears by His holiness. As if He did say, "holiness is my illustrious perfection, my grandest attribute, and by it I swear that I will make good my**

**word, that I will not lie unto David." For as 'men verily swear by the greater,' so God swears by His holiness, His greatest perfection, and highest glory. O you saints of the Most High, who, standing in the region of doubt, and enshrouded by dark providences, are led to ask, "Will God make good the promise upon which He has caused my soul to rest?"—look at this great truth—God has sworn by His holiness that He will not lie; and you have the warrant and the encouragement to trust in God, to confide in His word, and to resign yourself and all your interests into His fatherly, faithful, though chastening hands. By this solemn oath He has bound Himself to make good to the letter His every precious promise.**

**Take yet another view of this subject. Holiness is the image which God transfers from Himself to the renewed creature. God, in regeneration, draws upon the soul of man His own moral portrait. And what is the image of Himself which He thus transfers, glorious and imperishable, to the renewed mind? Is it His wisdom? No! Is it His truth? No! Is it His love? No! It is His holiness! As if He would say, "I will draw my image upon the renewed man, and it shall be that which is my glory, my beauty, my grandest perfection; and in making the creature holy, I will make him like myself." How strikingly has the Holy Spirit brought out this truth: "And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,"—a truth worthy of our profoundest study. In nothing does the renewed soul so closely resemble God as in holiness. May the Lord the Spirit write this truth deeply upon our heart!**

**But how has God manifested His holiness? He has not only revealed the fact in His word, but He has exhibited the perfection in various ways. Its most palpable, awful, and august demonstration is in the cross of His Son Jesus Christ. Behold the redemption which He has wrought; contemplate this the most stupendous of God's works, and where will you find such a demonstration of God's holiness as that which the cross of the incarnate God exhibits? Not all the vials of judgment that have ever been poured, or that ever will be poured out—not the flaming furnace in the conscience of the ungodly—not the irretrievable vengeance of God against the angels who kept not their first estate—not all the woe and suffering of the condemned in hell, convey any adequate idea of the holiness of God compared with the death of His own beloved Son. There hung the holy, spotless Lamb of God! He had never sinned; there had never been the slightest hostility of his will to his Father's; He had never harbored one treason thought against Jehovah, but had "always done those things which pleased him." Yet we behold Him**

**exhausting the cup of Divine wrath, His human soul scathed by the lightning stroke of Divine justice, and His sinless body bruised, and wounded, and slain.**

**And what do we learn from the spectacle, but that God was so righteous, so holy, He could not pass by the iniquity of the Church, but as He punished it with the utmost severity in the person of its Surety? And what was the perfection of God, the contemplation of which in the hour of His agony upheld him? In prophetic language He tells us, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent: but you are holy." This was the truth which gave His agitated soul rest beneath its overwhelming pressure. He saw God so holy in His withdrawment, so holy in the billows which went over His soul, so holy in taking vengeance for His people's sins, that He bowed His head in meek acquiescence to the Divine will: "but you are holy."**

**Hell is full of the Divine holiness; holiness in the manifestation of justice, holiness in its most glorious exercise. How fearfully are the lost now learning this truth! Think it not a trifling matter, unconverted reader, to look into the bottomless pit, and to know that there is but a step and you are there! You walk to the end of the treacherous plank, and you are gone! O solemn thought—but one step between you and the quenchless flame; but one step between you and endless torment! Throughout eternity the lost soul will be testifying to this truth—"God is holy; I was a sinner; I rejected His salvation, I turned my back upon His gospel, I despised His Son, I hated Himself, I lived in my sins, I loved my sins, I died in my sins, and now I am lost—to all eternity lost! And God is righteous in my condemnation.**

**But a more pleasing contemplation of the subject awaits us—the sense in which all true believers in Jesus are partakers of the Divine holiness. There is a holiness in God, let it be premised, that cannot be communicated to any creature. We allude to His essential holiness. It is utterly impossible that any creature can be a partaker of this. But there is a Divine holiness in which His saints, His holy ones, share—a holiness that is communicable. The creature was originally holy. He lost it by his union with the first Adam, he recovers it by his union with the second Adam: "That you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Couple this passage with another—"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature." Thus, in the regeneration of the soul, we become partakers not of the Divine**

**immutability, nor of the Divine wisdom, nor of the Divine power, but of the Divine holiness. We are "renewed in the spirit of our minds," are born again of the Holy Spirit, and have the germ of imperishable holiness implanted in the soul.**

**The ingrafting of the truth in the heart also assimilates the believer to the Divine holiness. The truth of God must be from its source and in its nature holy. The abuse or the perversion of any single truth does not and cannot affect the pure character and sanctifying tendency of that truth. Truth may be denied, tortured, and forced to the martyr's stake—it still remains, Divine, holy, and immortal—God's great instrument of sanctifying His chosen: "Sanctify them through your truth." To be a partaker of God's truth is to be a partaker of God's holiness.**

**Nor must we omit the indwelling of the "Spirit of holiness" in the believer. In this view he becomes in a high and solemn sense a "partaker of the Divine holiness." His body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit!" Surely no angel in heaven is such a partaker of God's holiness as he. He bears about with him—solemn thought!—the in-being grace and presence of the Holy Spirit, the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity! Surely there must be in Him a Divine nature, a holy principle, approximating to, and assimilating with, the Divine holiness.**

**Having thus rapidly traversed this important ground, we are better prepared to consider our main topic—THE PROMOTION OF THE BELIEVER'S HOLINESS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF DIVINE CHASTISEMENT. "He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." It would be incorrect to suppose that the chastisements of our heavenly Father were in themselves pleasant and desirable. They are no more so than the physician's therapy, or the surgeon's lancet. But as in the one case, so in the other, we look beyond the medicine to its therapeutic qualities; we forget the bitterness of the medication in its remedial results. Thus with the medicine of the soul—the afflictions sent and sanctified by God. Forgetting the bitter and the pain of God's dealings, the only question of moment is, what is the cause, and what the design of my Father in this cause? The answer is—our deeper sanctification.**

**This is effected, first, by making us more thoroughly acquainted with the holiness of God Himself. Sanctified chastisement has an especial tendency to this. To suppose a case. Our sense of God's holiness, previously to this dispensation, was essentially defective, unsound, superficial, and uninfluential.**

The judgment admitted the truth; we could speak of it to others, and in prayer acknowledged it to God; but still there was a vagueness and an indistinctness in our conceptions of it, which left the heart cold and rendered the walk uneven. To be led now into the actual, heartfelt experience of the truth, that in all our transactions we had to deal with the holy, heart-searching Lord God, we find quite another and an advanced stage in our journey, another and a deeper lesson learned in our school. This was the truth, and in this way Nehemiah was taught. "Howbeit you are just (holy) in all that is brought upon us; for you have done right, but we have done wickedly." O blessed acknowledgment! Think not that we speak unfeelingly when we say, it were worth all the discipline you have ever passed through to have become more deeply schooled in the lesson of God's holiness.

One most fruitful cause of all our declensions from the Lord, will be found wrapped up in the crude and superficial views which we entertain of the character of God, as a God of infinite purity. And this truth He will have His people to study and to learn, not by sermons, nor from books, not from hearsay, nor from theory, but in the school of loving chastisement—personally and experimentally. And thus, beholding more closely, and through a clearer medium, this Divine perfection, the believer is changed more perfectly into the same moral image. "He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

The 'rod of the covenant' has a wonderful power of discovery. Thus, by revealing to us the concealed evil of our natures, we become more holy. "The blueness (that is, the severity) of a wound cleanses away evil." This painful discovery often recalls to memory past feelings and sins. David went many years in oblivion of his departure from God, until Nathan was sent, who, while he told him of his sin, with the same breath announced the message of Divine forgiveness. Then it was the royal penitent kneeled down and poured forth from the depth of his anguished spirit the fifty-first Psalm—a portion of God's word which you cannot too frequently study. "I do remember my sin this day," is the exclamation of the chastened sufferer. Thus led to search into the cause of the Divine correction, and discovering it—perhaps after a long season of forgetfulness—the 'blueness of the wound'—the severity of the rod—'cleanses away the evil;' in other words, more deeply sanctifies the soul. "Show me why you contend with me."

Submission to the Divine will is a great advance in holiness; and this is mainly and effectually attained through sanctified chastisement. In prosperity, how

full are we of self-sufficiency! When the Lord asks our obedience, we give Him our counsel. But when He sends the rod, and by the accompanying grace of His Spirit sanctifies its stroke, we learn in what true obedience consists. It was in this school our blessed Lord Himself was taught. "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." He learned to obey in suffering; to bring His will in suffering into complete submission to His Father's will. God has not in His family such obedient children as those who, 'passing under the rod,' are 'brought into the bond of the covenant.' Oh what a high Christian attainment is submission to the will of God! It is the noblest grace attainable upon earth!

When our Lord taught His disciples to ask to the Father for the spread of holiness, He embodied the petition in these words, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The universal and complete holiness of heaven springs from the universal and complete perfection in which the will of God is done by angels and glorified spirits. In proportion as the Divine will prevails upon earth, holiness will reign. And oh what a beautiful earth, and what a blissful world would this be, were the will of God done by every creature! In the new earth, in which will dwell righteousness, it will be so. The original harmony of this fallen universe will then be restored, its pristine beauty recovered, and God, in the person of His Son, will once more reign over, and walk in the midst of, a people whose will shall be but the reflection of His own.

Then to approximate to the Divine will, is to assimilate with the Divine holiness. What God will, how God will, and when God will, defines the rule which should govern all the conduct and limit all the desires of the child of God. The instant the overwhelmed heart is brought into this state, the afflicted believer has planted his feet upon the rock that is higher than he. All is peace, all is composure, because all is submission to the will of God. "The Lord reigns" is the truth whose all-commanding yet gentle whisper has stilled the tempest, and calmed the waves. In its intense anxiety that the Divine will might be done, the chastened soul is but breathing after deeper holiness; and every fervent desire for the attainment of holiness, is holiness already attained. Blessed chastening of love, that produces in this bitter and uncongenial world, the buds and blossoms and fruits of heaven! A richer fruit grows not within the Paradise of God than HOLINESS. And yet, in the experience of a chastened believer, bleeding under the rod of his heavenly Father, there may be obtained such victories over sin, such purification of heart, such meekness of spirit, such Christ-like conformity, and such a discipline of the will, as to make him a rich "partaker of the Divine holiness."

**But how shall we enumerate all the blessings which result from the chastening of love? We might tell how prayer is quickened, how pride is abased, how weanedness is attained, how charity is increased, how character is formed, how meditation and solitude are sweetened, how Christ is endeared, and how God is glorified. It will be recollected that in the ark of the covenant there was "Aaron's rod that budded." Our glorious covenant of grace has, too, its rod, its budding, its blossoming rod—and precious is the nature and rich the variety of the fruit which it bears. But in that ancient ark there was also the "pot of manna." "Mercy and judgment," bitter and sweet, light and shade, are blended in the covenant-dealings of God with His people. The rod and the pot of manna go together. If the one is bitter, the other is sweet. God will never send the rod unaccompanied with the manna. Jesus exhibited in the word, but unfolded by the Spirit, in the sweet sympathy of His nature, in the tenderness of His heart, as the "Brother born for adversity," is the manna, raising, sustaining, and strengthening the believer passing under the covenant rod of God. Thus, if afflictions be grievous, the fruit they bear is gracious.**

**In the history of the Jewish Church there is yet another type beautifully illustrative of God's dealings with the chastened Christian. I allude to the 'pillar' which guided the pilgrimage of the Church in the wilderness. By night it was a pillar of fire, and by day it was a pillar of cloud. The darkest night of weeping that can possibly enshroud the child of God, has its bright light—its alleviation, its promise, its guiding. And in the most prosperous period in the Christian's experience it is ordered by unerring wisdom and infinite love that there should be some counter-dispensation of trial to preserve the just balance of the soul. It has been well remarked that "Things never go so well with God's children, but they have still something to groan under; nor so bad, but they have still some comfort to be thankful for."**

**There are two portions of God's word so confirmatory of the leading principles laid down in this chapter, which, although probably familiar to the Christian reader, I would venture once more to recall to his attention. The passages to which I refer set forth the great truth before us—holiness, the fruit of Divine chastisement. "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." "Remove the dross from the silver, and out comes material for the refiner." Mark the great and glorious end of this fiery process—a righteous offering to the Lord; and a vessel formed, prepared, and beautified for the Refiner; a "vessel unto honor,**

fit for the Master's use." Blessed result! O the wonders wrought by the fire of God's furnace! Not only is 'God glorified in the fire,' but the believer is sanctified.

Have you ever observed the process of the sculptor in the preparation of his beautiful ornament? After removing it from its mold, skillfully and beautifully formed, he then traces upon it the design he intended it should bear, dipping his brush in varied hues of the brightest coloring. But the work is not yet finished. The shape of that ornament is yet to be fixed, the figures are to be set, the colors perpetuated, and the whole work consolidated. By what process? By passing it through the fire. The fire alone completes the work. Thus is it with the chastened soul—that beautifully constructed vessel, which is to adorn the palace of our King through eternity—the gaze, and wonder, and delight of every holy intelligence. God has cast it into the Divine mold, has drawn upon it the 'image of His Son,' with a brush dipped in heaven's own colors—but it must pass through the furnace of affliction, thus to stamp completeness and eternity upon the whole. Calmly, then, repose in the hands of your Divine Sculptor, asking not the extinguishment of a spark until the holy work is done. God may temper and soften—for He never withdraws His eye from the work for one moment; but great will be your loss if you lose the affliction un sanctified!

"We need not ask for suffering: when its test  
Comes, we may prove too faithless to endure  
We need not ask for suffering—it were best  
We wait God's holy orderings, to insure  
Our highest good. But we may ask from Him  
That not one throb of grief, one dart of pain,  
One burning pang of anguish, pierce in vain  
This feeble being, in its faith so dim,  
This fainting frame, or this over-burdened heart  
We may implore Him He would grace impart,  
And strength, to suffer still as the beloved  
Of His own bosom. For, of all below,  
The one affliction in this world of woe,  
Most sad—is an affliction unimproved."

Oh! could we with a clearer vision of faith but see the reason and the design of God in sending the chastisement, all marvel would cease, all murmuring would be hushed, and not a painful dispensation of our Father would afford

us needless trouble. David's pen never wrote more sweetly than when dipped in the ink of affliction; and never did his harp send forth deeper, richer melody than when the breath of sadness swept its strings. This has been the uniform testimony of the saints of God in every age. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept your law."

Learn to see a Father's hand, yes, a Father's heart, in every affliction. It is not a vindictive enemy who has chastened you, but a loving Friend; not an unfeeling stranger, but a tender Father, who, though He may cast you down in the dust, will never cast you off from His love. The Captain of your salvation—Himself made perfect through suffering—only designs your higher spiritual promotion in His army, by each sanctified affliction sent. You are on your way to the mansion prepared for you by the Savior, to the kingdom bestowed upon you by God. The journey is short, and time is fleeting; what though the cross is heavy and the path is rough—you have not far nor long to carry it. Let the deep-drawn sigh be checked by the throb of gladness which this prospect should create. "He will not always chide, nor remain angry forever." The wind will not always moan, nor the waters be always tempestuous; the dull vapor will not forever float along the sky, nor the sunbeams be forever wreathed in darkness. Your Father's love will not always speak in muffled tones, nor your Savior hide Himself forever behind the wall, or within the lattice. That wind will yet breathe music; those waters will yet be still; that vapor will yet evaporate; that sun will yet break forth; your Father's love will speak again in unmuffled strains, and your Savior will manifest Himself without a veil.

Pensive child of sorrow! weary pilgrim of grief! timid, yet prayerful; doubting, yet hoping; guilty, yet penitent; laying your hand on the head of the great appointed Sacrifice, you look up with a tear, confess your sin, and plead in faith the blood of sprinkling. O rejoice that this painful travail of soul is but the Spirit's preparation for the seat awaiting you in the upper temple, where the days of your mourning will be ended. You may carry the cross to the last step of the journey—your tear, even up to heaven's gate—but there you shall lay that cross down, and the last bitter drop shall there be wiped away forever! "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all those who wait for him." Truly we may exclaim, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him from your law!" "He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his

holiness."

"Lord unto You I lift a troubled heart,  
A tearful eye;  
But if Your hand has sent the sting, the smart,  
If You be near,  
Near, though unseen—upon my knees I'll pray,  
Dry not those tears—take not that sting away."  
"Clothe me with sackcloth, mingle my food With ashes-still  
I'll bless the hand that is 'educing good  
From seeming ill'  
Should I thus walk in darkness if my sight,  
Could bear undazzled more of Heaven's own light?"  
"Not until the molten gold be purified  
Do you ease the flame;  
Give me but grace Your will to abide.  
To see Your aim,  
To know that You are with me in the fire,  
I need no more, and nothing else desire."

### **The Vitality of the Atoning Blood**

"The blood is the life." Deut.12:23

How much has the most deeply instructed believer yet to learn of the essential value, the sovereign efficacy, and the mighty power of the atoning blood of Jesus! Standing though we are in a dispensation—the last and the most complete—in which the Great Sacrifice has been offered, the atoning Lamb slain, the blood actually shed, it is yet a mournful reflection, that with regard to the experience of many professing Christians, it is to be feared that they have not even so vivid and realizing a view of the glory and power of that blood as the believers of the Old Testament had, who only saw it in the dim type, but who yet by faith firmly grasped the Great Antitype. Read for instance the penitential psalm of David.

And yet, beloved reader, the atoning blood is everything to us. It is the groundwork of our salvation—yes, it is salvation itself. It is the source of our peace—yes, it is peace itself. It is the open door of heaven—yes, it is heaven itself. *All that is really holy and precious to a poor believing penitent is bound up*

*in the atoning blood of Jesus.* The particular view of the subject upon which we have now entered—the vitality of the atoning blood—will arrest the attention of some who may not have contemplated it in this light before; and will, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, commend itself powerfully to the best feelings of all, as the most sublime and most precious theme which could possibly employ their thoughts or enlist their affections. In the truest and most comprehensive sense it may be affirmed of the atonement of the Son of God, and of the salvation of the Church, which springs from it, "The blood is the life." We propose to spread before the Christian reader two or three important views of this deeply interesting subject.

If we refer for a moment to the type, it will be seen with what distinctness and power the Holy Spirit has brought out this great truth in the word—**THE ESSENTIAL VITALITY OF THE ATONING BLOOD.** The references which we propose to quote, let it be observed, are designed to illustrate one especial view of our subject—the value which God set upon blood, because of its vital principle, and its being *the symbol of a Divine atonement for sin.* Whether it was the blood of the lowest, or of the most costly sacrifice, whether it was shed unintentionally or purposely, Jehovah threw around it His protecting shield, rendering the spot where it fell sacred and precious.

Thus, then, with regard to the type, it will be recollected that God issued a solemn injunction that blood should never form an element of food. Why this prohibition? because of the essential value of that blood—there was life in it. "Moreover you shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings. Whoever eats any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people." Observe, on another occasion, after having given directions in reference to the sacrifice, God enjoins His command, "Only you shall not eat of the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth as water." "Only be sure that you eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and you may not eat the life with the flesh." Observe another occasion on which the eating of blood was expressly forbidden: "And whatever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eats any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul that eats blood, and cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."

This restriction was solemnly binding upon Israel's huntsmen: "And I will turn against anyone, whether an Israelite or a foreigner living among you,

**who eats or drinks blood in any form. I will cut off such a person from the community, for the life of any creature is in its blood. I have given you the blood so you can make atonement for your sins. It is the blood, representing life, that makes atonement for the soul." Leviticus 17:10-11. One reference more and we pass on to the discussion: "Anything or anyone who touches the sacrificial meat will become holy, and if the sacrificial blood splatters anyone's clothing, it must be washed off in a sacred place. If a clay pot is used to boil the sacrificial meat, it must be broken. If a bronze kettle is used, it must be scoured and rinsed thoroughly with water." Leviticus 6:27-28**

**Another opportunity is taken of solemnly charging Israel to remember the blood of atonement. The hunter, in his full occupation, must keep atonement in his eye; and when he has his prey in his hand, must reverently stand still and pour out its blood to Jehovah, and cover it from the gaze of man and the ravenous appetite of creatures of prey. God would have the sinner's soul send up his adoring thanks to Him for atonement amid their forests and in their wilds. Redemption should be sung by every man in every situation; and none should be found in any situation wherein he cannot sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Israel's huntsmen were to be men of faith. They were not to hunt for the gratifying of fiery wild passions, but for food and necessity. The chastening solemnity of 'pouring out the blood' was a check on the huntsmen. None who would not stay in their vehement, eager, keen pursuit to realize redemption must engage in this employment. It is not for the gay, wild sports of youth; or if fiery youth engage therein, it must lead them to the most solemn views of sin and righteousness. Yes, it shall be even a way of life to them. Let them go—let them ride furiously over rock and chasm—let them shoot the arrow— but lo! the field becomes an arena to lead them to the presence of the holy God. They must stand still at the blood! How awful is atoning blood! Even things without life, such as garments, are held in dreadful sacredness if this blood touch them. No wonder, then, that this earth on which fell the blood of the Son of God, has a sacredness in the eye of God. It must be set apart for holy ends, since the blood of Jesus has wet its soil. And as the earthen vessel, within which the sacrifice was offered, must be broken—and not used for any lower end again, so must this earth be decomposed and new-molded, for it must be kept for the use of Him whose sacrifice was offered there. And as the brazen vessel must be rinsed and scoured, so must this earth be freed from all that dims its beauty, and be set apart for holy ends. It must be purified and reserved for holy purposes; for the blood of Jesus has dropped upon it, and made it more sacred than any spot, except where He Himself dwells." -Bonar on Leviticus.**

Now all these solemn and minute injunctions were designed to shadow forth the vitality, solemnity, and costliness of the expiatory blood of Immanuel. And if such be the value in God's holy eye of the blood of the Levitical sacrifice, what must be God's estimate of the dignity and preciousness of the atoning blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ—the blood of the incarnate God! Observe, it was *the life-blood of His pure and sinless humanity*. It is an essential doctrine of our salvation that the only part of our Lord's two-fold nature capable of actually atoning, was *without sin*. The apostle Peter, speaking of our redemption-price, affirms, that it was the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And the apostle Paul declares the same truth almost in the same words: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." Herein did lie, in part, its essential value and vitality—it was the blood of Christ's pure and spotless life. Had there been the slightest degree of sin in Jesus, it would have tainted every drop of his atoning blood.

But the stream while it flowed from the very fountain of life—for the soldier's spear pierced both the heart and the pericardium of the Savior, and "forthwith there came out blood and water"—flowed also from *a pure fountain, a fountain as sinless as God Himself*. O you who know the plague of your own hearts, you who mourn for sin, behold the truth upon which your faith may calmly repose! You see sin, the defiling touch of sin, upon your best, and purest, and holiest offerings, all your sacrifices tainted and defaced with it. Yes, at that moment that your tears of penitence for sin flowed the freest, and your confessions of sin were the most minute and humiliating, and your heart was most perfectly unveiled before the searching eye of God, there was enough sin in those tears, and in those confessions, and in that unbosoming of the heart, to banish you eternally from heaven. That tear of godly sorrow falling upon an angel's white robe would have sullied it. "I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin; no, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my confessions are still aggravations of them. My repentance needs to be repented of, my tears need washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer." (Berridge)

But here exists the true consolation of the humble penitent—*the atoning blood of Jesus, in which he bathes his soul, was without spot*. There was no sin in Christ; "He knew no sin;" "in Him was no sin." Satan came and found nothing in Him. Here is a sacrifice which the vilest sinner may plead with God

and meet with Divine acceptance. Come, you who grieve for sin, who weep over your tears, who confess your confessions, who sigh over your sighs, and behold with believing eye the pure stream that flows from the very seat of the Savior's life—even the heart that never, never sinned. Cleansed in this fountain, you shall appear before God, "whiter than snow,"—all sin forever put away.

But there is also a Divine vitality in the atoning blood of Christ. Here we assume still higher ground, and our subject opens in a more magnificent and important light. It was the blood, not merely of the human Son of the virgin, but of the Divine Son of God. In consequence of the union of the humanity with the Divinity, the blood of Jesus is expressly termed by the Holy Spirit, "the blood of God." "The church of God which he has purchased with his own blood." The Deity of the Son of God imparted a Divine vitality and value to the blood "which flowed from His human nature. So close and intimate was the mysterious union, that while the Deity effected the atonement by the humanity, *the humanity derived all its power and virtue to atone from the Deity.* There was Deity in the blood of Jesus—a Divine vitality which stamped its infinite value, dignity, and virtue. Observe in two instances how strikingly the Holy Spirit has coupled these two truths—the Deity, and the atonement of Jesus—"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins." "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord; smite the shepherd."

Here are brought out in the strongest light, and in the most beautiful and intimate relation, Deity and Atonement. It was not so much that our Lord was the Priest, as that He was the sacrifice; not so much that He was the offerer, as that He was the offering; in which did lie the value of His blood. "When He had by Himself purged our sins." "Who gave Himself for us." "When He offered Himself." What did He offer in offering Himself? He offered up His life—His twofold life. *There was on Calvary the sacrifice of Deity with the humanity.* The Deity not suffering, for it was incapable of suffering; nor of dying, for essential life could not die; but Deity with the humanity constituted the one offering which has perfected forever the salvation of those who are sanctified.

Profoundly and awfully mysterious as is this truth, faith can receive it. It towers above my reason, and yet it does not contradict my reason. While it transcends and baffles it, it does not oppose nor supersede it. Christian

reader, the blood upon which you depend for your salvation is not ordinary blood—the blood of a more human being, however pure and sinless; but it is the blood of the Incarnate God, "God manifest in the flesh." It is the blood of Him who is Essential Life—the Fountain of Life—the "Resurrection and the Life;" and because of the Divine life of Jesus, from thence springs the vitality of His atoning blood. Oh, that is a Divine principle that vivifies the blood of Christ! This it is that makes it sacrificial, expiatory, and cleansing. This it is that enables it to prevail with God's justice for pardon and acceptance; this it is that renders it so efficacious, that one drop of it falling upon the conscience crushed beneath the weight of sin, will melt the mountain of guilt, and lift the soul to God. Hold fast the confidence of your faith in the essential Deity of the Son of God, for this it is which gives to His atonement all its glory, dignity, and virtue.

But let us take yet another view of our subject. *The vitality of the atoning blood of Christ constitutes the spiritual life of the living soul.* Thus is it true in a pre-eminent sense that "the blood is the life." The blood of Jesus is the life of the believing soul. There is a palpable and an awful death in the soul of an unconverted man. His prayers are dead—his duties are dead—his works are dead—his hopes are dead, yes, he himself and his whole religion are "dead in trespasses and in sins." It is the theological creed of some that to those who are spiritually dead, we ought neither to write, nor to preach. But with all meekness would we say, we have not so read God's word, nor have we "so learned Christ." The prophet Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy over the 'dry bones'; and Jesus himself not only warned the impenitent, but wept over them! Who can tell while we are writing and preaching, warning and inviting, the "breath of the Lord" may come forth and breathe over them, and they live!

But the life-possessing and life-imparting blood of Jesus is *the life of the quickened soul.* His blood not only purchased life for His people, but the application of His blood imparts it. It was necessary that the Son of God should die, that we might live. It was essential that Jesus should bleed, that life might flow from His wounds to our souls. The life must be offered: "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep." But for the shedding of the heart's blood of Jesus our heart had been forever a stranger to a single throb of spiritual life. One drop of the life-blood of Immanuel, as we have just observed, falling upon a soul dead in sin, in an instant quickens it with a life that will never die—such is the essential vitality of the atoning blood.

The blood of Jesus is also the life of our pardon and acceptance: "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," that is, the transgressions of the Old Testament saints; *the life-giving blood of Jesus extending its pardoning efficacy back to the remotest period of time*, and to the greatest sinner upon earth, even to him "by whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin"—such is the vitality of the atoning blood of God's dear Son. And if the pardoning blood thus bore an *antecedent* virtue, has it less a *present* one? No! listen to the life-inspiring words! "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Once more, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." It has a *present* life, an *immediate* efficacy. The life of our pardon! O yes! the believing, though trembling penitent, sees all his sins cancelled, all his transgressions pardoned, through the precious blood of Jesus. Nothing but the life-blood of the incarnate God could possibly effect it. And when, *after repeated backslidings*, he returns again with sincere and holy contrition, and bathes in it afresh, lo! the sense of pardon is renewed; and while he goes away to loathe himself, and abhor his sins, he yet can rejoice that the living blood of the Redeemer has put it entirely and forever away.

And what is the life of our acceptance but the blood of Immanuel? "Justified by his blood." The *robe* that covers us, is the righteousness of Him who is the "Lord our Righteousness;" who, when He had by one act of perfect obedience to the law, wove the robe of our justification, bathed it in His own life-blood, and folded it around His Church, presenting her to His Father a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Not only is it the ground of our present acceptance, but the saints in heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect," take their stand upon it. "Who are these," it is asked, "who are arrayed in white robes? And where did they come from?" The answer is, "These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have *made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. Therefore are they before the throne." Thus pleading the justifying blood of Jesus, the believing, though distressed and trembling soul, may stand before God, "accepted in the Beloved." Wondrous declaration! Blessed state! Rest not, reader, until you have attained it. No, you cannot rest until you have received, by faith, the righteousness of Christ.

From where, too, flows *the life of spiritual joy*, but from the life-giving blood of Immanuel? There can be no real joy but in the experience of pardoned sin.

The joy of the unpardoned soul is the joy of the condemned criminal on his way to death—a mockery and a delusion. With all his sins upon him, with all his iniquities yet unforgiven, every step brings him nearer to the horrors of the second death; what, then, can he know of true joy? But when the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon the heart, and the sense of sin forgiven is sealed upon the conscience, then there is joy indeed, "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

From where, too, flows peace-sweet, holy, divine *peace*, but from the heart's blood of the Prince of Peace? There can be no true peace from God where there does not exist perfect reconciliation with God. That is a false peace which springs not from a view of God pacified in Christ, God one with us in the atonement of His Son. "Spearing peace by Jesus Christ." "The blood of sprinkling speaks better things than the blood of Abel," because it speaks peace.

And from where do the *ordinances* derive their efficacy and power—but from the vitality of the Redeemer's blood? There could be no life, for instance, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, but as that institution presented in a lively picture to the faith of the recipient the life-blood of the Savior. With what clearness and solemnity has He Himself put forth this truth: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." Thus he who in lowly and simple faith drinks of the blood of Jesus partakes of the life of Jesus, because the life of Jesus is in the blood. And should the eye of an unconverted soul light upon this page, or should it arrest the attention of an unbelieving, and therefore an unworthy, recipient of the ordinance, let that individual seriously ponder these solemn words of Jesus—"Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you." The ordinance has no life of itself; the mere symbol possesses no spiritual vitality whatever; it cannot impart life, nor can it sustain life. But the life in the ordinance flows from the exercise of faith, through this medium, with the life-blood of Jesus. Therefore, if you rest only in the symbol, if in this ordinance you partake not by faith of the blood of Jesus, your soul is destitute of spiritual life. In the words of Jesus himself, "You have no life in you." Solemn reflection!

But oh what life does the believing communicant find in the atoning blood! What food, what refreshment, what nourishment! Is it any wonder that Jesus should be to him the Chief among ten thousand, and that *the blood of Jesus*

*should be the most precious thing in the universe? If the death of Jesus is his life, what must the life of Jesus be! If the humiliation of Jesus is his honor, what must the exaltation of Jesus be! If the cross of Jesus is his glory, what must the throne of Jesus be! If Jesus crucified is his boast, what must be Jesus glorified! "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."*

**Reader, is the blood of Jesus the life of your soul? So momentous is the truth, though presented before, bear with me for pressing it again upon your attention. Believe me when, with all affection and solemnity, I say that your religion, your creed, your profession, are lifeless if they are not vivified, pervaded, and animated by the blood of the Son of God. God can have no dealings with you in this great matter of your salvation, but through the blood. He cannot 'reason' with you about your sins of 'crimson' and of 'scarlet' dye but on the footing of the blood. He cannot meet you for one moment in any other character than as a 'consuming fire,' but as He meets you at, and communes with you from above, the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood. The blood is everything to God in the way of satisfaction, of glory, and of honor. The blood should be everything to you in the way of acceptance, pardon, and communion. There is not a moment in which God's eye of complaisance is withdrawn from the blood in the perpetual acceptance of the believer; and there should not be a moment in which our eye of faith, in every circumstance of our daily walk before Him, should not also be upon the blood.**

**But here the brief and imperfect discussion of this great truth must rest. The remaining portion of the chapter will be devoted to a few PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS. The subject lifts us to the very porch, and within the porch of heaven. And what is the great truth which it presents to our view there?—the prevalency of the life-blood of Jesus within the veil. *The moment the ransomed and released soul enters glory, the first object that arrests its attention and fixes its eye is the interceding Savior.* Faith, anticipating the glorious spectacle, sees him now pleading the blood on behalf of each member of His Church upon earth. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, NOW to appear in the presence of God for us." There is blood in heaven! the blood of the Incarnate God! *And because it pleads and prays, argues and intercedes, the voice of every sin is hushed, every accusation of Satan is met, every daily transgression is forgiven, every temptation of the adversary is repelled, every evil is warded, every need is supplied, and the present***

*sanctification and the final glorification of the saints are secured.* "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Draw near, you Joshuas, accused by Satan! Approach, you Peters, whose faith is sifted! Come, you tried and disconsolate! The mediatorial Angel, the pleading Advocate, the interceding High Priest, has passed into the heavens, and appears before the throne, *for you.* If the principle of the spiritual life in your soul has decayed, if your grace has declined, if you have 'left your first love,' there is vitality in the interceding blood of Jesus, and it prays for your revival. If sin condemns, and danger threatens, and temptation assails, and affliction wounds, there is living power in the pleading blood of Immanuel, and it procures pardon, protection, and comfort.

Nor let us overlook *the sanctifying tendency of the pleading blood.* "These things I write unto you, that you sin not." The intercession of Jesus is holy, and for holiness. The altar of incense is of pure gold. The advocacy of Christ is not for sin, but for sinners. He prays not for the continuance of sin, but for the pardon of sin. "The righteous Lord loves righteousness." And if sensible of our sin—if mourning over our sin—if loathing and turning from our sin, we come to God through Christ, then "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous.*" The incense-breathing censer is in His hand the fragrant cloud goes up—the mercy-seat is enveloped—the Father smiles—and all once more is peace! Then, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son."

Not the least costly blessing, flowing from the vital power of the atoning blood, is *the life and potency which it imparts to true prayer.* The believer's path to communion with God is called the "new and living way," because it is the way of the life-blood of the risen and living Savior. *There could be no spiritual life in prayer but for the vitality in the atoning blood, which secures its acceptance.* Not even could the Holy Spirit inspire the soul with one breath of true prayer, were not the atonement of the Son of God provided. *Oh how faintly do we know the wonders that are in, and the blessings that spring from, the life-procuring blood of our incarnate God!* Touching the article of prayer—I approach to God, oppressed with sins, my heart crushed with sorrow, my spirit trembling; shame and confusion covering my face, my mouth dumb before him. At that moment the blood of Jesus is presented, faith beholds it, faith receives it, faith pleads it! There is life and power in that blood, and, lo!

**in an instant my trembling soul is enabled to take hold of God's strength and be at peace with him, and it is at peace.**

**Of all the Christian privileges upon earth none can surpass, none can compare with, the privilege of fellowship with God. And yet how restricted is this privilege in the experience of multitudes! And why? simply in consequence of their vague, imperfect, and contracted views of the connection of true prayer with the living blood of Jesus. And yet, oh what nearness to, what communion with, the Father, may the lowest, the feeblest, the most unworthy child at all times and in all circumstances have, who simply and believingly makes use of the blood of Christ! You approach without an argument or a plea. You have many *sins to confess*, many *sorrows to unveil*, many *requests to urge*, many *blessings to crave*—and yet the deep consciousness of your utter vileness, the remembrance of mercies abused, of base, ungrateful requitals made, seals your lips, and you are dumb before God. Your overwhelmed—your spirit exclaims, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to His seat—I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." And now the Holy Spirit brings atoning blood to your help. You see this to be the one argument, the only plea that can prevail with God. You use it—you urge it—you wrestle with it. God admits it, is moved by it, and you are blest!**

**Let, then, the life-power of the blood encourage you to cultivate more diligently habitual communion with God. With low frames, with sinking spirits, with even discouragement and difficulty, you may approach His Divine Majesty, and converse with Him as with a Father, resting your believing eye, where He rests His complacent eye—upon the blood of Jesus. "Having, therefore; brethren, boldness (or liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated (or new made) for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near." Oh the blessedness, the power, the magic influence of prayer! Believer! you grasp the key that opens every chamber of God's heart, when your tremulous faith takes hold of the blood of the covenant, and pleads it in prayer with God. It is impossible that God can then refuse you! The voice of the living blood pleads louder for you than all other voices can plead against you. Give yourself, then, unto prayer—this sacred charm of sorrow, this Divine talisman of hope!**

**"Lord! what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in your presence, will avail to make,**

**What burdens lighten, what temptations slake,  
What parched ground refreshed as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stand forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.  
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others, that we are not always strong!  
That we are ever overborne with care,  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is Prayer,  
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with Thee!"**

**What a powerful motive does this truth supply to *a daily and unreserved consecration of ourselves to the Lord!* If, under the old economy, the utensil or the garment touched with blood was sacred and solemn, how much more the soul washed in the heart's-blood of Christ! When the king of Israel, in the heat of battle, and in the agony of thirst, cried for water, and some of his attendants procured it for him at the hazard of their lives, the God-fearing and magnanimous monarch refused to taste it, because it was the price of blood! but "poured it out before the Lord."**

**Christian soldier! it was not at the *risk* of His life, but more—it was by the *sacrifice* of His life that your Lord and Savior procured your redemption, and brought the waters of salvation, all living and sparkling from the throne of God, to your lips. You are the price of blood! "bought with a price." Will you not, then, glorify God in your soul, body, and substance, which are His? will you not pour it all out before the Lord—presenting it as a living sacrifice upon the altar flowing with the life-blood of God's own Son?**

**If there be a vital, and therefore a deathless, principle in the atoning blood of Jesus, then it will avail to the salvation of the chief of sinners to the latest period of time. Ages have rolled by since it was shed, and millions have gone to heaven in virtue of its merits, and yet it still avails! Listen, lowly penitent, to these glad tidings. Approach the blood of Jesus, simply believing in its Divine appointment and sovereign efficacy; and the pardon it conveys and the peace it gives will be yours. Behold the sacred stream, as vital and as warm, as efficacious and as free, as when eighteen hundred years ago all nature was convulsed at the sight of this blood starting from the pierced heart of its Incarnate Creator! and when the expiring malefactor bathed in it and was saved.**

**No more; if the virtue of the Savior's blood, before it was shed, extended back to the time of Adam and of Abel, for He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," surely since that it has actually been offered, it will continue its virtue through all the revolutions of time to the remotest age of the world, and to the last sinner who may believe. If Jesus is a 'priest forever,' the virtue of His sacrifice must abide forever, for He cannot officiate as a priest without a sacrifice. And as His gospel is to be preached to all nations, even to the end of the world, so the saving efficacy of His blood, upon which the gospel depends for its power and its success, must be as lasting as time.**

**"Christ's blood is never lost and congealed, as the blood of the legal sacrifices. His blood is called a new way. The word rendered new signifies a thing newly slain or sacrificed. His blood is as new and fresh for the work it was appointed to, as when it was shed upon the cross: as full of vigor as if it had been shed but this moment. It is blood that was not drunk up by the earth, but gathered up again into his body, to be a living, pleading, cleansing blood in the presence of God forever. He did not leave His body and blood putrefying in the grave; the sacrifice had then ceased and corrupted, it had not been of everlasting efficacy as it now is." (Charnock)**

*Seek a constant renewal of the blood of Christ upon the conscience. The lamb, under the former dispensation, was to be slain morning and evening. Our Divine and spotless Lamb once slain is no more offered, except as faith deals with Him morning and evening, as if He were newly slain. Herein the vital power of His blood beautifully appears. We need the perpetual application of the blood of sprinkling—a present coming to it. As often as the Israelite was bitten by the fiery serpent he raised his eye to the brazen one reared by Moses, looked again, and was healed. *Since each day brings its fresh contraction of guilt, each day should bring its fresh application to the blood.* Allow no new wound in the conscience to inflame and fester, but the instant it is received seek the balsam that heals it. This will keep the heart fixed upon God, will embitter the nature and weaken the power of sin, and will preserve the conscience like a polished mirror, attracting to itself the beneficent beams of God's love, and reflecting from its surface the light and luster of the Divine image.*

**There is one view of this important truth which bears with great solemnity upon the case of those who entirely reject the atoning blood. It will be best illustrated by a reference to an event in the history of the exodus of the**

**Israelites. It will be recollected, that upon Pharaoh's refusing to release God's people from bondage, God commanded the first-born in every Egyptian house to be slain. It was a night of woe in the land of Egypt, long to be remembered. The only exception in this work of destruction was in favor of the children of Israel. And yet even they could not escape the judicial punishment but in the strictest compliance with the Divine method for their safety. They were ordered on the eve of that fearful night to take "a lamb without blemish, a male of one year," and to "slay it, and take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-posts of the houses; and the blood," says God, "shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood I will pass over you! and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."**

**They obeyed God. And when the angel of death sped his way through the land, smiting the first-born of each Egyptian family, he paused with solemnity and awe where he beheld the sprinkled blood—sheathed his sword, and passed on to do the work of destruction where no blood was seen. Thus will it be with the soul who has no interest in the life-giving and the life-saving blood of Jesus! The sinner who has not this Divine and sacred sign upon him is marked for condemnation; he is under the awful sentence of death! That sentence has gone forth—the destroying angel has received his commission—the sword is drawn—the arm is uplifted—one final word from that God who has long stretched out to you His beseeching, yet disregarded, hand—that moving, that inviting God, whose patience you have abused, whose mercy you have despised, whose law you have broken, whose Son you have rejected—and the stroke falls—and heaven is lost forever!**

**O fly to the atoning blood of Jesus! Not a moment is to be lost. Your only hope is there—your only protection is there—your only safety is there. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Blessed words! Where he beholds the pure heart's-blood of His own Son—so precious to Him—sprinkled upon the broken, penitent heart of a poor sinner, He will pass him over in the great outpouring of His wrath; He will pass him over when the ungodly, the Christless, and the prayerless sinner is punished; He will pass him over in the dread day of judgment, and not one drop of wrath will fall upon him. Escape, then, for your life! Hasten to Christ. It may be late—your evening's sun may be setting, the shadows of eternity may be deepening around you, but you have the Divine promise—plead it in faith, and God will fulfil it in your experience—"And it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." Relinquish now all the strongholds of your long rebellion against God, and**

**Christ, and truth—give up your vain reasonings, and cavilings, and excuses, and come to the Lord Jesus, as a penitent and believing sinner; throw yourself upon His mercy, take hold of His blood, get beneath the covering of His righteousness, and tell Him that if He casts you off you are lost, eternally lost—and you shall be saved! "I went, and washed, and received sight!"**

**And when the chill of death is congealing the life-current of your mortal existence, and heart and flesh are failing—the world receding, eternity opening—what do you think will then throw life and vigor and bloom into death itself, illumine the dark valley, and place you in safety upon the highest wave of Jordan? Oh, it will be the living blood of the Divine Redeemer at that awful moment applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit, testifying that all sin is blotted out, your person accepted, and that there is now *no condemnation*. "Precious blood! precious blood that has secured all this!" will be the grateful expression of your expiring lips, as your ransomed soul shoots across the dark stream into the light and splendor of eternity.**

**May the Lord bless to your soul, beloved reader, the consideration of this spiritual and important subject! May the Savior's life-possessing, life-imparting, and life-supporting blood be endeared to our hearts; and may we be constrained to wash daily in the fountain, living beneath the cross, where pardon and peace, joy and heaven are found—and found alone! Amen and Amen.**

### **"Three Degrees of Christ's Manifestation"**

**"My beloved is like a swift gazelle or a young deer.  
Look, there he is behind our wall!  
Now he is looking in through the windows,  
showing himself through the lattice." Song 2:9**

**Such is the infinite majesty, and such the superlative beauty of the Lord Jesus, that were He, in our present state, to stand before us fully unveiled to the eye, overwhelmed with the effulgence of His presence we should exclaim, "Lord, temper Your glory to my feeble capacity; or enlarge my capacity to the dimensions of Your glory!" When in the days of His humiliation He stood upon Mount Tabor in close converse with Moses and Elijah upon the decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, glowing with the grandeur of the theme, and fired with the thought of the redemption that was before Him, the veil of His humanity would seem for a moment to have dropped, and the**

**Godhead it could imperfectly conceal, shone forth with such overpowering splendor that the disciples who were with Him fell at His feet as dead. After His ascension into heaven, and His inauguration at the right hand of His Father, He again manifested forth His glory in an apocalyptic vision to John at Patmos; and again the same overpowering effects were produced. "And when I saw him," narrates the exiled evangelist, "I fell at his feet as dead."**

**And yet this is the Savior "whom the nations abhor," whom "men despise and reject," possessing to their eye "no form nor loveliness wherefore they should desire him." This is He to whom the world He created, refused a home, and whom man allowed not to live, casting Him out as an accursed thing, too vile in their view to dwell among them—fit only to die! Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes were fountains of tears, that I might weep, dear Lord, while meditating upon the ignominy, the insult, and the suffering to which my species subjected You. Had another order of being so insulted Your person; so mangled Your form; so requited Your love; so slighted and abhorred You; I might have wept in secret places; mourned, and afflicted my soul, and vowed eternal vengeance against Your calumniators and your murderers! But it was hatred, ingratitude, and malignity wearing my own nature—it was MAN, yes, Lord, it was I myself! But for my sin, my crime, my hell, that spotless soul of Yours had known no burden, that gentle spirit no cloud, that tender heart no grief, and that sacred body no scar. And when I read the story of how You were wronged—how they calumniated You, blasphemed You, scourged You, spit upon You, mocked You, smote You, and then bore You to a felon's death—I could cover myself with sackcloth, and bury my face in ashes, and no more cherish the sin—the hateful, the abhorred, the accursed sin, that caused it all.**

**But, overpowering as a full unveiling of the majesty of the Lord Jesus would be to us in our present imperfect state, it yet ranks among our most prized and precious mercies, that He does at periods so graciously and especially manifest Himself as to awaken the exclamation, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Holy and blessed are such seasons! Delighted, yet amazed, the believer inquires, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world?" He answers, and resolves the mystery—as He does the mystery of all His dealings with us—into love. "He who loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Our experience of these divine manifestations of Christ form one of the strongest evidences of His indwelling in our hearts. To none but those who fear the Lord is the mystery of His covenant revealed. "The secret of the Lord is with those**

who fear him." They whose posture of soul most resembles that of the 'beloved disciple,' are led the deepest into the secret of God's love to us in Jesus. It would seem impossible for the Lord to withhold its disclosure from those who in confidence and in love reposed upon the heart that contained it. Their intimate acquaintance with Jesus must bring them into a closer relation and communion with God; it must result in a deeper acquaintance with Him—His glory, His mind, and His love. Blessed, but much forgotten truth—he who knows much of the Son, knows also much of the Father.

We propose to guide the reader's reflections to a subject of the deepest and holiest interest—the different manifestations of Christ to the soul. To one acquainted, in any degree, with these discoveries, whose Christianity is vital and real, something more than the mere "naming the name of Christ," what theme can be sweeter? Oh that the Spirit of truth, the Glorifier of Christ, may now enlarge our view of this subject; and while meditating on the manifestations of our Beloved, may He approach and make Himself known to us in the way of especial and blessed revelation.

The passage upon which this meditation is based PRESENTS OUR LORD IN THREE DIFFERENT POSTURES, each one most expressive and significant. We have CHRIST BEHIND THE WALL; CHRIST LOOKING IN THE WINDOW; and CHRIST SHOWING HIMSELF THROUGH THE LATTICE. My soul! behold your Beloved, bounding towards you 'like a gazelle or a young deer,' in all the fleetness and intensity of His affections, to manifest Himself to you. "Look, there He is BEHIND OUR WALL!" What wall? Not the wall of the old covenant of the Jewish Church, for that is removed, and can no longer obscure Jesus from the eye of the Church, or prevent His clear manifestation. He has removed it in order to bring Himself near to His people. "But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were once far off, are made near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us: having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." Behind this wall Jesus did once stand, and although thus partially obscured, yet to those who had faith to see Him, dwelling though they were in the twilight of the Gospel, He manifested Himself as the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of His people. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," says Jesus, "and he saw it, and was glad." But this wall no longer stands. The shadows are fled, the darkness is dispersed, and the true light now shines. Beware of those teachers who would rebuild this wall; and who by their superstitious practices, and legal representations of the Gospel,

**do in effect rebuild it. Remember that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes."**

**But it is behind "our wall" that Jesus stands—the wall which we, the new covenant saints, erect. Many are the separating influences between Christ and His people; many are the walls which we, alas! allow to intervene, behind which we cause Him to stand. "Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart;" literally, as in the margin, the walls of my heart. What are the infidelity; (I had almost said atheism), the carnality, the coldness, the many sins of our hearts, but so many obstructions to Christ's full and frequent manifestations of Himself to our souls?**

**But were we to specify one obstruction in particular, we would mention unbelief, as the great separating wall between Christ and His people. This was the wall which obscured from the view of Thomas his risen Lord. And while the little Church was jubilant in the new life and joy with which their living Savior inspired them, he alone lingered in doubt and sadness, amid the shadows of the tomb. "Unless I thrust my hand into his side I will not believe." Nothing more effectually separates us from, or rather obscures our view of, Christ, than the sin of unbelief. Not fully crediting His word—not simply and implicitly relying upon His work—not trusting His faithfulness and love—not receiving Him wholly and following Him fully—only believing and receiving half that He says and commands—not fixing the eye upon Jesus as risen and alive, as ascended and enthroned, having all fullness, all power, all love. Oh this unbelief is a dead, towering wall between our Beloved and our souls!**

**And yet does He stand behind it? Does it not compel Him to depart and leave us forever? Ah no! He is there! O wondrous grace, matchless love, infinite patience! Wearied with forbearing, and yet there! Doubted, distrusted, grieved, and yet standing there—His locks wet with the dew of the morning—waiting to be gracious, longing to manifest Himself. Nothing has prevailed to compel Him to withdraw. When our coldness might have prevailed, when our fleshliness might have prevailed, when our neglect, ingratitude, and backslidings might have prevailed, never has He entirely and forever withdrawn. His post is to watch with a sleepless eye of love the purchase of His dying agonies, and to 'guard His vineyard of red wine, night and day lest any hurt it.'**

**Oh! who can adequately picture the concern, the tenderness, and jealousy**

with which the Son of God keeps His especial treasure? And whatever would force Him to retire—whether it be the coldness that congeals, or the fierce flame that would consume—yet such is His deathless love for His people, 'He withdraws not His eye from the righteous' for one moment. There stands the "Friend that sticks closer than a brother," waiting to beam upon them a glance of His love-enkindled eye, and to manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world, even from behind our wall. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

### **CHRIST LOOKING IN THE WINDOW.**

"Now he is looking in through the windows." The Church of Christ is His house. "Christ is a Son over his own house; whose house we are." The ordinances of His Church are the windows of this house, and in these ordinances Christ appears and manifests Himself to His people. But here let me remark how sadly are these windows obscured, these ordinances mystified, perverted, and abused by many. What numbers in their blindness substitute the mere window, for 'Christ appearing' in the window; as if an ordinance without Christ were anything. Every institution of the Christian Church in which Christ is not recognized, seen by faith, and by faith lived upon; is a window closed, darkened, and obscured; it exhibits no object and admits no light. And yet to thousands, the Lord's Supper is nothing more!

But to the soul hungering and thirsting for the Lord Jesus in the ordinance, Jesus presents Himself. He draws back the shutter, opens the window, stands within it, and looks forth upon His people, clustering around His table, desiring to remember His love. "Precious Jesus!" is the meditation of a soul, thus looking for its Beloved, "I have come to Your ordinance invited by Your love, drawn by Your Spirit, but what is it to my soul without You? The minister may open this institution with clearness and power, but if You do not manifest Yourself, to break and heal my heart—if I do not catch one glimpse of You, my Lord, it is no ordinance of grace or sweetness to my soul. I need by faith to see You in the baptism of Your sufferings, to feed upon Your flesh, and to drink of Your blood. I need to enjoy communion with You. You know, Lord, the workings of my heart; You know that this is the great desire of my soul, that I might enjoy fellowship with You. Oh that I might have more of Christ, that I might meet with Christ, that I might have some further manifestation of Christ, and that I might have my soul closer knit to Christ. I come with thirsting after Jesus, knowing my infinite need of Him, and His infinite excellency and fullness to meet my case. My soul does famish and

perish without Christ; but in the enjoyment of Christ there is a sufficiency for the satisfying of my soul. That which I have had of Christ, sometimes in the word, and sometimes in prayer, has been sweet unto my taste; but I look for closer communion, for a clearer manifestation of Christ here, for this is the great 'communion of the body and blood of Jesus.' Behold, Lord, I approach these windows of Your house, a poor, unworthy, backsliding child, tried and tempted; yet just as I am, dear Lord, I come. I dare not, I cannot stay away from You, You Divine loadstone of my heart, You precious magnet of my soul! Draw me, and then I run after You; You show Yourself in the window; You overcome me with Your beauty and Your love—I exclaim, 'Turn away Your eyes from me, for they have overcome me.' Blessed Spirit! I have been taught to believe that You will take of the things of Jesus and show them unto me. Open the window of this ordinance, and let me behold my soul's Beloved standing within it. I cannot live, I cannot die, without Him. Living or dying I must have Christ. 'I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me;' and truly my soul's desire is towards Him. There is to my soul no love like Christ's love. There is no voice like Christ's voice. There is no sympathy like Christ's sympathy. There is no friend like this Friend—there is no Christ like my Christ. The window is open! 'The voice of my Beloved! behold, He comes, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.' He looks forth at the window; and lively faith, and ardent love, and sweet contrition, and joy, possess and overwhelm my soul!"

"I love the windows of Your grace,  
In which my Lord is seen. And long to meet my Savior's face  
Without a glass between."

"Oh that the happy hour were come  
To change my faith to sight!  
I shall behold my Lord at home  
In a diviner light."

"Hasten, my Beloved, and remove  
These interposing clays  
Then shall my passions all be love,  
And all my powers be praise."

#### **CHRIST SHOWING HIMSELF THROUGH THE LATTICE.**

This is a clearer and more glorious discovery of Christ, inasmuch as it is the manifestation of Christ in the revealed word. Our Lord does not want to conceal Himself from His saints. He remembers that all their loveliness is through Him, that all their grace is in Him, that all their happiness is from

Him, and therefore He delights to afford them every means and occasion of increasing their knowledge of, and of perfecting their resemblance to, Him. The 'lattice' of His house is figurative of the doctrines, precepts, and promises of His Gospel. Through these the Lord Jesus manifests Himself, when we come to the study of the word, not as self-sufficient teachers, but as sincere and humble learners, deeply conscious how little we really know, and thirsting to know more of God in Jesus. The Lord Jesus often shows Himself through these 'lattices'—perhaps some type, or prophecy, or doctrine, or command—and we are instructed, sanctified, and blest. It is the loss of so many readers of the Bible, that they search it, but not for Christ. Men will study it with the view of increasing their knowledge of science and of philosophy, of poetry and of painting; but how few search into it for Jesus! And yet in knowing Him the arcades of all spiritual mystery are unlocked—all that God designed to communicate in the present world. To know God, is to comprehend all knowledge—God is only truly known as revealed in Jesus—therefore, he who is experimentally acquainted with Jesus, holds in his hand the key that unlocks the vast treasury of God's revealed mind and heart. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." O search for Christ in the 'lattice' of the word! The type contains Him, the prophecy unfolds Him, the doctrine teaches Him, the precept speaks of Him, the promise leads to Him.

How has the light of the beauty and excellence of Christ, flashing upon the understanding from the glass of the gospel, filled the will and affections of many with desire and love to that glory it represents, and that state it offers! Grace is a beam from the Sun of righteousness, but darted through the medium of gospel air; a pearl produced of the blood of Christ, but only in the gospel sea. Rejoice in the word, but only as the wise men did in the star, as it led them to Christ. The word of Christ is precious, but nothing more precious than Christ Himself, and His formation in the soul. Rest not in the word, but look through it, to Christ.

Blessed Lord, I would sincerely open this box of precious ointment—your own word—that the fragrance of Your grace and of Your name might revive me. It is Your word, and not man's word that can meet my case, and satisfy my soul. Man can only direct me to You, Your word brings me to You. Your servants can at best but bring You in Your gospel to my heart, but Your Spirit of truth brings You through the gospel into my heart. O show Yourself to me in the gospel 'lattice' of Your word, and I shall rejoice as one that has

**found great spoil—in finding You.**

**In conclusion, be cautious, dear reader, how you erect walls, or permit them to be erected, between Christ and your soul. Beware of that which separates from God—which separates, not from Himself, but from the manifestation of Himself; not from His love, but from the experience of His love; not from His covenant, but from the 'secret of His covenant.' "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Nothing but sin separates between God and the soul. Affliction often quickens to a greater nearness to God; temptation and trial often are instrumental of a closer and holier walk; but sin invariably has a separating effect; it drives the soul from God. The moment the consciousness of guilt fastened itself upon the once undefiled and peaceful conscience of Adam, he ran away from God, like a constellation suddenly breaking from its attraction and its orbit, and wandering away into darkness, and distance, and death. God no longer attracted and fixed him; the light of his soul was extinguished, and he became a "wandering star"—yet destined, through sovereign grace, to be again brought back by the Sun of righteousness.**

**But if there is, perhaps, one sin more than another, that tends to throw up a towering wall of separation between Christ and the believing soul, it is the sin of unbelief. No sin can more dishonor the name of God, or grieve the heart of Jesus, or bring greater distress into the soul than this. God has done the utmost which His infinite wisdom dictated, to lay the most solid ground for confidence. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."**

**He has made all the promises of the covenant of grace absolute and unconditional. Were faith simply to credit this, what "strong consolation" would flow into the soul! Take, for example, that exceeding great and precious promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." What a sparkling jewel, what a brilliant gem is this! How many a weeping eye has caught the luster, and has forgotten its misery, as waters that pass away! While others, perhaps, gazing intently upon it, have said, "This promise exactly suits my case, but is it for me? is it for one so vile as I? who by my own indiscretion, and folly, and sin, have brought this trouble upon myself? May such an one as I call upon God and be answered?" What is this**

unbelieving reasoning, but to render this Divine and most exhilarating promise, as to any practical influence upon your mind, of none effect? But the promise stands in God's word absolute and unconditional. There is not one syllable in it upon which the most unworthy child of sorrow can reasonably found an objection.

Is it now with you a 'day of trouble?'—God makes no exception as to how, or by whom, or from where your trouble came. It is enough that it is a time of trouble with you; that you are in sorrow, and in difficulty, and in trial—God says to you, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you." Resign, then, your unbelief, embrace the promise, and behold Jesus showing Himself through its open 'lattice.'

Take yet another glorious promise, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." "This is just the promise that my poor, guilty, anxious heart needs," exclaims a trembling, sin-distressed soul; "but dare I, with all my sin, and wretchedness, and poverty, take up my rest in Christ? What! may I who have been so long an enemy against God, such a despiser of Christ, such a neglecter of my soul and scoffer of its great salvation, approach with a trembling yet assured hope that Christ will receive me, save me, and not cast me out?" Yes! you may. The promise is absolute and unconditional, and magnificent and precious as it is, it is yours. "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." Satan shall not persuade me, sin shall not prevail with me, my own heart shall not constrain me, yes, nothing shall induce me, to cast out that poor sinner who comes to me, believes my word, falls upon my grace, and hides himself in my pierced bosom! "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

My reader, is Jesus your soul's Beloved? Can you in humble faith exclaim, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine?" Then, covet His manifestation to your soul; God in Christ has laid prostrate every 'wall' on His part that would prevent your near approach to Him. The Breaker is gone up before you, the gate is open, and God waits to reveal Himself to you in Jesus. "Draw near unto God, and He will draw near unto you." Is there any wall of separation on your part behind which your beloved Lord stands? Search and see. Is it the world, or the creature, or an unholy life? Yes, is there any self-erected object that obscures your view of Christ, and prevents His manifestations to you? Submit it to Jesus, and beseech Him in love, in gentleness, and in grace to remove it, rather than that you should lose one glimpse of your beloved Lord. He is behind that wall; let it fall—and behold! He stands before you, arrayed in ten thousand charms!

**And do not be satisfied with the mere open window—seek for Jesus in the window, and looking forth upon you with eyes of love. Do not come away from an ordinance without seeing your Beloved in it. While engaged in the hallowed service, watch against the wandering eye, the wavering mind, the truant affection, the cold, formal frame. Fix every glance, and thought, and affection on one object—JESUS. Let it be indeed the "communion of the body and the blood of Christ." And as it is a solemn occasion of the Lord's especial nearness to your soul, let it also be a season of especial opening of your heart to the Lord. Confess to Him all your sins, declare to Him all your sorrows, make known to Him all your needs; for while thus, like the beloved disciple, leaning upon His bosom at supper, you may indulge in the fullest, closest, and most confidential communion with your Lord.**

**Oh seek to know that He is your Beloved; and attempt not to rest in anything short of the blessed assurance, "I Am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."**

**"Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest;  
Far did I rove, and found no certain home  
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast  
who opens His arms, and bids the weary come.**

**With Him I found a home, a rest divine,  
And I since then am His, and He is mine."**

**"Yes, He is mine! and nothing of earthly things,  
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,  
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,  
Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.**

**Go, worthless world, I say, with all that's yours!  
Go! I my Savior's am, and He is mine."**

**"The good I have is from His stores supplied; The ill is only what He deems  
the best**

**He for my Friend, I'm rich with nothing beside;  
And poor without Him, though of all possessed.**

**Changes may come—I take, or I resign,  
Content, while I am His, while He is mine."**

**"Whatever may change, in Him no change is seen,  
A glorious Sun, that wanes not nor declines;  
Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,  
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.**

**All may depart! fret not, nor repine,**

While I my Savior's am, and He is mine."  
"He stays me falling; lifts me up when down;  
Reclaims me wandering; guards from every foe;  
Plants on my worthless brow the Victor's crown,  
Which in return before His feet I throw;  
Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine  
Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine."  
"While here, alas! I know but half His love,  
But half discern Him, and but half adore;  
But when I meet Him in the realms above,  
I hope to love Him better, praise him more,  
And feel and tell, amid the choir divine,  
How fully I am His, and He is mine."

### **The Sick One Whom Jesus Loves**

When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." John 11:4

In one respect only may it be said, that our Divine and adorable Lord would seem to have been exempted from the physical infirmities peculiar to the nature which He so voluntarily and entirely assumed—it does not appear that He was ever, in His own person, the subject of sickness or disease. It is indeed declared by His inspired biographer, thus confirming at the same time a prediction of one of the prophets, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses;" but this He did in the same manner in which He bore our spiritual sicknesses, without any personal participation. He bore our sins, but He was Himself sinless. He carried our sickness, but He Himself was a stranger to disease. And His exemption from the one, will explain His exemption from the other. His humanity knew no sin; it was that 'holy thing' begotten by the Holy Spirit, and as stainless as God Himself. As sin introduced into our nature every kind of physical evil, and disease among the rest, our Lord's freedom from the cause, necessarily left Him free from the effect.

*He was never sick because He never sinned.* No, He had never died had He not consented to die. With a nature prepared and conceived totally without moral taint, *there were no seeds of decay from which death could reap its harvest.* Under no sentence of dissolution, death had no power to claim Him as its victim. As pure as our first parents before the fall, like them in their original

state of holiness, He was naturally deathless and immortal. Had He not, by an act of the most stupendous grace, taken upon Him the curse and sin of His Church, thereby making Himself responsible to Divine justice for the utmost payment of her debt, the 'bitterness of death' had never touched His lips. But even then His death was voluntary. His relinquishment of life was His own act and deed. The Jew who hunted Him to the cross, and the Roman by whose hands He died, were but the actors in the awful tragedy. The king of terrors wrenched not His spirit from Him. Death waited the permission of Essential Life before He winged the fatal dart. "Jesus yielded up the spirit," literally, made a surrender, or let go His spirit. Thus, violent though it was, and responsible for the crime as were its agents, the death of Jesus was yet voluntary. "I lay down my life," are His expressive words.

But there is a sense in which it may be said that our Lord was not exempt from sickness *in the sense of His love for, and His union to, and sympathy with, all the sick of His flock*. In this light it may be truly said, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." Let us briefly follow out these thoughts, as suggested by the case of Lazarus. Believers in Jesus, though they are the objects of the Lord's especial love, are often the subjects of His painful dealings in sickness. In the bodily sicknesses of His people the Lord designs, in connection with their good, the promotion of His own glory. This may be traced in a sanctified recovery from sickness.

In alluding to the introduction of this infirmity of our nature, I have already remarked, that in the paradisiacal state of the world the human frame was a total stranger to the ravages of disease and the spoliations of death. It was of necessity so. *There was no sickness, because there was no sin*. The reign of holiness has ever been the reign of happiness. God, in justice to Himself, and in goodness to us, has indissolubly connected the two. Apart from each other they cannot exist. We address ourselves to the unconverted man, the poor seeker of this world's happiness, to the panting chaser after the child's bauble, the variegated bauble that dances before the eye of his fancy—and in truth and solemnity we affirm, that until the reign of holiness is once more set up in your soul, your notion of happiness is but a fiction, and your possession of it but a dream—the mere negation of the blessing.

In thus making the happiness of the creature to depend upon his holiness, let it not be overlooked, that God has studied the highest good of man equally with what was due to His own glory. Bent upon restoring him to happiness, He could only accomplish it by also restoring him to holiness; and in thus

making man holy, He glorifies Himself by multiplying His own moral image.

We repeat, then, the moment that witnessed the suspension of the government of holiness in our world, saw the introduction of the curse, with all its entailed and dire effects. What must have been the astonishment and horror which seized the mind of Adam, hitherto a stranger to any physical malady, when for the first time he became conscious of the taint of bodily disease! What a new and strange sensation to him, the writhing pain—the burning fever—the maddening convulsion—the debility that unstrung and prostrated all the energies and vital powers of his frame! How overwhelming must have been the mournful reflection—keen as the adder's sting—"SIN, MY sin, has created this! How have I destroyed myself, and afflicted my posterity!"

But let us turn to the case of Lazarus, as presenting, in some of its main features, *a type of all the sick ones whom Jesus loves*. Here was one dear—O how dear—to the heart of Christ, and yet the subject of disease and the victim of death. His interest in Christ's love did not exempt him from the visitation of sickness; nor his union with Christ's person shield him from the shaft of the last enemy. Contemplate the beauty with which the Lord's love is in this instance brought out. As soon as they discovered that the hand of disease was upon their beloved brother, the affectionate sisters of Lazarus sent to Jesus. And what were the terms in which their message was couched? Observe, they did not say, "Lord, behold, *he who loves you* is sick;" but, "Lord, behold, *he whom you love* is sick!" They cast themselves solely upon the love of Jesus to Lazarus, and while their brother's love to Christ was indeed most precious as wrought by the Holy Spirit, and as a fruit of faith, they yet based upon it no plea and drew from it no argument wherefore the great Physician and Friend should hasten to the chamber of sickness where he lay; but, founding their request entirely upon the Lord's own love to him, they besought Him to come and heal him. They well knew that their brother's love was but the effect, the mere reflection, of their Lord's love to him. His love, they had been taught, was an infinite, an everlasting fountain. They knew that Jesus looked within Himself for that moved His heart towards a poor sinner, and not in that poor sinner, in whom He could see nothing but repulsive deformity. In appealing to His love, therefore, they pressed with skillful and delicate hand that spring which never needs but the gentlest touch of faith, and in an instant every chamber of His heart is opened.

"Behold, he whom you love is sick." What a wondrous truth is here revealed for you, dear saints of God, afflicted with bodily disease—for to you, this

chapter is especially and in prayer dedicated—that *the Lord's people are not, and cannot be, less the objects of His tenderest love, because He touches them with the hand of disease.* I repair to the chamber of sickness, and take my place by the side of the beloved sufferer. The spectacle deeply affects me. I mark the ravages of disease, and the progress of death, advancing by slow and stealthy step, to plant the emblems of his conquest upon that pale brow. I watch the burning fever, the throes of agony, the exhaustion of decay, the weary days without ease, the long nights without sleep—there are tossings, and heavings, and pantings, and sufferings there, which the sufferer's lip cannot describe, still less the beholder's imagination conceive.

Or, if there is the absence of extreme pain, there is, perhaps, the long and tedious disease, life evaporating by slow degrees, the vital principle thrown off by minute particles, until the attenuated and weary-worn invalid is forced to exclaim, in the prophetic language of Jesus, "I can count all my bones: they look and stare upon me." Bending over the couch, I ask, "Is this one whom Jesus loves? Do the Lord's affections entwine around that skeleton form? Is this long-imprisoned sufferer dear to the heart of God?" Yes, faith instantly replies, and truth responds, "Behold, Lord, he whom you love is sick!"

This is the truth, dear invalid reader, upon which the Lord would pillow and sustain your soul—that you are the sick one whom He loves. Doubtless the enemy, ever on the watch to distress the saints of God, eager to avail himself of every circumstance in their history favorable to the accomplishment of his malignant designs, has taken advantage of your illness to suggest hard and distrustful thoughts of the Lord's love to you. "Does He love you? Can He love you, and afflict you thus? What! this hectic fever, these night-sweats, these faintings and swoonings, these insufferable tortures, this long-wasting, this slow, tedious disease—and yet loved by God! Impossible!" Such has been the false reasoning of *Satan*, and such the echo of *unbelief*. But Lazarus was loved by Jesus, and so are you! That darkened room, that curtained bed, contains one for whom the Son of God came down to earth—to live, to labor, and to die! That room is often radiant with His presence, and that bed is often made with His hands. *Jesus is never absent from that spot!* The affectionate husband, the tender wife, the fond parent, the devoted sister, the faithful nurse, are not in more constant attendance at that solemn post of observation than is Jesus. They must be absent; He never is, for one moment, away from that couch. Sleep must overcome them; but He who guards that suffering patient "neither slumbers nor sleeps." Long-continued watching must exhaust and prostrate them—but He, the Divine Watcher, "faints not, neither is weary."

**Yes, Jesus loves you, nor loves you the less, no, but loves you the more, now that you are prostrate upon that bed of languishing, a weak one hanging upon Him. Again I repeat, this is the only truth that will now soothe and sustain your soul. Not the thought of your love to Jesus, but of Jesus's love to you, is the truth upon which your agitated mind is to rest. In the multitude of your thoughts within you, this is the comfort that will delight your soul—"Jesus loves me." *Your* love to Christ affords you no plea, no encouragement, no hope. You can extract no sweetness from the thought of *your* affection to the Savior. *It has been so feeble and fluctuating a feeling, an emotion so irregular and fickle in its expression, the spark so often obscured, and to appearance lost,* that the recollection and the review of it now, only tends to depress and perplex you. But O, the thought of the Lord's love! to fix the mind upon *His eternal, unpurchased, and deathless affection to you*—to be enabled to resolve this painful illness, this protracted suffering, this 'pining sickness,' into LOVE—Divine, tender, unwearied, inextinguishable love, will renew the inward man, while the outward is decaying day by day, and will strengthen the soul in its heavenly soarings, while its tenement of dust is crumbling and falling from around it.**

**All is love in the heart of God towards you! This sickness may indeed be a correction; and correction always supposes sin; but it is, as we have already shown, a loving correction, and designed to 'increase your greatness.' Not one thought dwells in the mind of God, nor one feeling throbs in His heart, but is love. And your sickness is sent to testify that God is love, and that you, afflicted though you are, are one of its favored objects. The depression of sickness may throw a shade of obscurity over this truth, but the very obscuration may result in your good, and unfold God's love, by bringing you to a more simple reliance of faith.**

**"Every cloud that spreads above,  
And veileth love, itself is love."**

**O trace your present sickness, dear invalid reader, to His love who "himself took our infirmities and carried our sickness." If He could have accomplished the important end for which it is sent, by exempting you from its infliction, you then had not known one sleepless hour, nor a solitary day; not a drop of sweat had moistened your brow, nor one moment's fever had flushed your cheek. He, your loving Savior, your tender Friend, your redeeming God, had borne it all for you Himself, even as He bore its tremendous curse—your**

curse and sin, in His own body on the tree. Yield your depressed heart to the soothing, healing influence of this precious truth, and it will light up the pallid hue of sickness with a radiance and a glow—the reflection of the soul's health—heavenly and divine. "Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick."

But there is another most consolatory view of the sickness of the Lord's people which we desire to present—it is the promotion of His own glory which the Lord designs by it. God is the ultimate end of all beings and of all events. The securing to Himself of His own glory must be the grand motive in all that He has created and ordained. To have been guided by an inferior end—to have made the ultimate result of all creatures and events to terminate in themselves, would have been unworthy of His name, and a denial of Himself, for there is none greater than He. But all His works praise Him, and all holy creatures glorify Him. Every atom of matter, and every spark of intellect, will yield Him an endless revenue of honor. He will be glorified in the salvation of His Church, and He will be glorified in the condemnation of the ungodly. Heaven and hell will contribute to this end so long as He exists. "I have created him for my glory," is a sentence impressed upon every product of His power. Solemn truth!

We proceed to remark, then, that God's dealings with His people in seasons of bodily sickness, have this for their ultimate and great end—the glory of God. "Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified* thereby." It is most true that Lazarus died, and for four days was the lifeless tenant of the grave. But death was only the ordained termination of his sickness, not the final result to be accomplished. *The temporary cessation of life was but the means to the ultimate and great end, which was, "the glory of God."* Therefore, with truth did our Lord say, "This sickness is not unto death, *but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified* thereby!" And O how illustrious was the glory brought to Jesus by the sickness and death of this disciple whom He loved! Shall we contemplate it for a moment? Let us go, then; in hallowed imagination, and stand—not by the sick bed, for the mortal struggle was now over—but by the grave of Lazarus.

What a halo surrounds it! It scarcely seems like the place of the dead, for Essential Life is present, and the grave is preparing, at His command, to yield back its prey. Wrapped in his winding-sheet, and reposing in the stillness of death, lay one whom Jesus loved. "Groaning in his spirit and troubled," He approached the spot. Behold the emotions of the Divine Redeemer! "JESUS

**WEPT."** How truly human does He appear! How like the Elder Brother! Never more so than now. Philosophy may scorn to betray emotion, and human genius might deem it beneath its dignity to weep. But the philosophy and the genius of Jesus were Divine, and imparted a dignity and a sacredness to the emotions and benevolence of His humanity: and if it be true that by genius a tear is crystallized and exhibited to the admiration of future ages, surely the tears of sympathy and love which Jesus dropped over the newly-made grave of Lazarus, will thrill the holy heart with feeling to the remotest period of time, and perpetuate their wonder through eternity.

Bereaved mourner! cease not to weep. Stifle not your emotions, impede not the flow of your tears. They well up from the fountain of feeling placed in your bosom by the Son of God Himself, who, as if longing to experience the luxury of human emotion, bowed His Deity to your nature and wept. This only would I say, let your tears fall like the dew of heaven—gentle, noiseless, chastened; or rather, like the tears of Jesus—meek, resigned, submissive.

But not illustrious does appear His humanity only. Behold, on this occasion, how His Deity shone forth resplendent and overpowering. He who had just wept, and while yet the tear-drop lingered in His eye, with a voice of conscious God-like power, which showed how completely Essential Life held death within its grasp, exclaimed, "Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth." Behold the spectacle, you condemners of His Divine nature—you who would pluck the diadem from His brow, and force us by your soulless, lifeless creed to a reliance upon a created Redeemer—gaze upon the wondrous scene! See the Savior bathed in human sensibility like a man—behold Him summon back the dead to life like a God! Never did the glory of His complex person—the Son of man, the Son of God—burst forth with more overpowering effulgence than at this moment. Who will deny that the sickness and death of Lazarus brought glory to the Deity of the Savior?

But what was true of this servant of Christ, is also true of all the sick whom Jesus loves—their sickness is for His glory. Trace it in the origin of your sickness. It came not by accident, nor by chance—words which should never find a place in the Christian vocabulary of a child of God. It was God who stretched you on that bed of languishing. By the arrangement of your heavenly Father, those circumstances transpired which resulted in your present painful visitation. You have been looking alone at second causes—I do not say that they are to be entirely excluded in attempting to unravel the mystery of the Divine procedure, for they often develop links in the chain of God's providence most harmonious and instructive; but there is such a thing

as resting in second causes, and not using them rather as steps in the ladder which conducts us up to God Himself as the *first great cause* of all the circumstances of our history, from our cradle to our grave.

Oh how is the Lord glorified when the sinking patient whom He loves, traces the mysterious and strange event which, arresting him in the midst of health and usefulness, has severed him from active life, from domestic duties, and public engagements, imprisoning him in that lone chamber of sickness and solitude, the prey of disease, and perhaps the destined victim of death—to the infinite, infallible, unerring wisdom of the Son of God!

*In the gentleness, tenderness, and love displayed in the sickness, the Lord is glorified.* What a touching expression is that of the Psalmist, "You Shall make all my bed in my sickness!" What a view it gives of the consideration of our heavenly Father—stooping down to the couch of His sick child—softening the sickness by a thousand nameless kindnesses—alleviating suffering and mitigating pain. Would you learn the Lord's touching tenderness towards His people? Go to the sick chamber of one whom He loves! Ten thousand books will not teach you what that visit will. Listen to the testimony of the emaciated sufferer—"His left hand is under my head, his right hand embraces me." What more can we desire?—what stronger witness do we ask? What! is Jesus there? Is His loving bosom the pillow, and is His encircling arm the support of the drooping patient? Is Christ both the physician and the nurse? Is His finger upon that fluttering pulse, does His hand administer that draught, does He adjust that pillow, and make all that bed in sickness? Even so. Oh, what glory beams around the sick one whom Jesus loves!

Trace it, too, in the grace which He measures out to the languid sufferer. The season of sickness is a season, in the Christian's life, of especial and great grace. Many a child of God knew his adoption but faintly, and his interest in Christ but imperfectly, until then. His Christianity was always uncertain, his evidences vague, and *his soul unhealthy*. Living, perhaps, in the turmoil of the secular world, or amid the excitement of the religious world, he knew but little of communion with his own heart, or of converse with the heart of God. No time was extracted from other and all-absorbing engagements, and consecrated to the high and hallowed purposes of self-examination, meditation, reading, and prayer—elements entering essentially and deeply into the advancement of the life of God in the soul of man. But sickness has come, and with it some of the costliest and holiest blessings of his life. A degree of grace answerable to all the holy and blessed ends for which it was sent, is

imparted. And now, how resplendent with the glory of Divine grace has that chamber of sickness become! We trace it in the spirit and conduct of that pale, languid sufferer. See the *patience* with which he possesses his soul; the fervor with which he kisses the rod; the meekness with which he bows to the stroke; the subduing, softening, humbling of his spirit, once perhaps so lofty, fretful, and sensitive to suffering. These days of weariness and pain, these nights of sleeplessness and exhaustion, how slowly, how tediously they drag along, and yet not an impatient sigh, nor a murmuring breath, nor an unsubmitive expression, breaks from the quivering lip. This is not natural, this is above nature. What but Divine and especial grace could effect it? Oh how is the Son of God, in His fullness of grace and truth, glorified thereby!

In the result of this visitation, whether it be in recovery or in death, Christ is glorified by the sickness of His people. *The control and power of Christ over bodily disease* form one of the most instructive and tender pages of His history, when upon earth. We should like to have quoted largely from that page in this connection of our subject, had the limits of the chapter permitted. We can but briefly refer the reader to a few of the different traits of the Divine Physician's grace, as illustrated by the various cures which He effected. His promptness in healing the nobleman's son, John 4:43-54. His unsolicited cure of the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, and the man with a withered hand, John 5:1-9; Mark 3:1-6. The humility and delicacy with which He heals the centurion's servant, Matt. 8:5-13. The tenderness with which He restored the widow's son, Luke 7:11-17. The simplicity with which He recovered the man born blind, John 9:1-7. The gentle touch with which He cured the man sick of the dropsy, Luke 14:1-6. The *physical and spiritual healing* of the paralytic, Luke 5:17-28. The resistless compassion with which He cured the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, Mark 7:24-30. The wisdom and the authority with which He healed the lunatic child, Luke 9:37-43. The power with which He ejected the demon from the man into the swine, Matt. 8:28-34. Truly the name of our Divine Physician is "Wonderful!" All this skill and power and feeling He still possesses; and in their exercise, in His present dealings with His suffering saints, is He glorified.

When human power has come to its end; when skill and affection can do no more; when man retires, and hope is extinguished, and the loved one is despairingly abandoned to death—then to see the Lord step forward and take the case in His hands, arresting the disease, rebuking the distemper, bringing back the glow of health to the cheek, vigor to the frame, elasticity to the limb, and brilliance to the eye, and raising as from the very grave itself—oh how

**glorious does He appear in that chamber of sickness!**

**Who bowed down His ear to the whisper, that faintly cried for help and support? Who heard the fervent, agonizing prayer that that precious life might be spared, which, in another room, broke from the lips of some anxious, holy wrestler—a parent, a brother, a sister, a friend, it may be? It was the Son of God! and oh how is He glorified in the recovery!**

**But trace it further in an increased acquaintance with God and His truth. The season of sickness is the schooling of the soul. More of God is unfolded then, and more of His truth is learned, than perhaps in any other circumstances. The individual was, it may be, but little more than a mere theorist. He could talk well about God, and Christ, and the Gospel. He could reason accurately, and argue skillfully, and speak fluently, and yet there was a great and melancholy deficiency in his religion; much was still lacking. But a lonely sick chamber has been his school, and sickness the teaching discipline. Oh how the character, and the perfections, and the government of God become unfolded to his mind by the teachings of the Spirit of truth! His dim views are cleared, his crude ideas are ripened, his erroneous ideas are rectified; he contemplates *God* in another light, and *truth* through another medium.**

**But the sweetest effect of all, is the personal appropriation of God to his own soul. He can now say, "This God is my God, and is my Father, and is my portion forever"—words of assurance hitherto strange to his lips. The promises of God were never realized as so precious, the doctrines were never felt to be so establishing, and the precepts never seen to be so obligatory and so sanctifying as now—blessed results of a hallowed possession of the season of sickness!**

**And what a pruning of this living branch has taken place! What weanedness from the engrossing claims of the earthly calling, from an undue attachment to created good, from the creature, from the world, and from what is the greatest weanedness of all—a weanedness from the wedded idol—*self*! What humility of mind, what meekness of spirit, and self-renunciation follow! Accompany him on his return to the world, where he has again been brought, as from the confines of the grave, and from the land of Beulah—he appears like another man! He entered that chamber as a proud man! he leaves it as a little child. He went into it with much of the spirit of a grasping, covetous, worldly-minded professor; he emerges from it with the world under his feet—'Consecration to Christ, and holiness to God' written upon his substance, and**

engraved upon his brow. He has been near to eternity! he has been looking within the veil! he has been reading his own heart! he has been dealing with Christ! he has seen and felt how solemn a thing it was to approach the gate of death, to enter the presence of God—and from that awful point of vision, he has contemplated the world, and life, and human responsibility, as they are; and he has come back like a spirit from another sphere, clothed with all the solemnities of eternity—to live now as one soon in reality to be there.

What a holy and a lovely being does he now appear! A fresh conversion would seem to have taken place. The 'dust' swept from beneath his feet, he stands upon the naked 'rock' with a firmer foothold than ever. He is brought nearer to Christ. He has the inward witness more clearly to the preciousness of Jesus, and his own personal salvation. His lightness and levity are lessened, and there is a heavenliness of mind, a sobriety of manner, and a spirituality of conversation, which mark one who has been in close converse with the great realities of eternity. Truly his sickness was "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Or, if that sickness terminates in death's slumber, is He less glorified? Ask the spirit just emerged from its shattered tenement, and hastening away to its home on high—ask it as it enters the portals of heaven, the blaze of eternal glory bursting upon its view—ask it as it finds itself before the throne of God, once an earthly, polluted creature, now whiter and brighter than an unfallen angel—ask it as it rests in the bosom of its redeeming Savior, blissfully conscious of its final and eternal safety, and reposing in expectation of its complete glorification, when its reunion with the spiritual body shall take place on the morning of the first resurrection—ask, and it will testify how great was the glory brought to the Son of God by the termination of a sickness which, while it left kindred and friends weeping around the death-bed below, demonstrated His life, and power, and love, "who has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." Blessed words of Jesus! "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

But the subject is suggestive of much practical reflection. We would briefly present one or two. It addresses itself pointedly to those who have been arrested by the hand of bodily disease, after a long course of preparation for holy labor, and who may have just entered upon, or may have been stopped in the midst of, a career of usefulness, full of promise and of hope. It requires no effort of the imagination to portray the class of feelings and of thoughts which now agitate the heart and crowd upon the mind. The whole dispensation is, to

you, mysterious, dark, and painful. Taking your view of its circumstances from the complexion of your own feelings, you are probably disposed to regard it rather as a token of Divine displeasure, than as a messenger of mercy, and as an evidence of love. But is it really so? Suffering from disappointed expectation, the mind sympathizing with the body; gloominess, despondency, and unbelief prevailing; are you fitted to form a clear and just view of God's present dealings with you? May not your judgment err, and your conclusion be wrong?

But is it true that God, by setting you aside from active engagements, has set you aside from all duty and labor? We think not. Is it too much to say, that He is now summoning you, though to a more limited and obscure, yet to a higher and holier, because more self-denying and God-glorifying, sphere of duty? Your present loss of health has brought with it its high and appropriate duties, obligations, and employments. It bears an especial message from God to you, and through you to others. Contemplate the work to be done in your own soul, and the testimony through this which you are to bear to the power of Divine grace, to the sustaining energy of the gospel, and to the character of God, and I ask if the lone chamber of sickness has not its especial and appropriate duties, responsibilities, and work; equally as difficult, as honorable, and as remunerative as any which attach to the sphere of activity, or to the season of health? You are called upon now to glorify God in a *passive* rather than in an *active* consecration to His service. *Graces* hitherto perhaps dormant, or but feebly brought into play, are now to be developed and exercised to their utmost capacity. *Patience* is to be cultivated, *resignation* is to be exhibited, *faith* is to be exercised, *love* is to be tried, and *example* is to be set—and are not these great, holy, and sublime achievements?

Who will affirm that there is no sermon to be preached from that solitary couch, that sick-bed—yes, and it may be more solemn, more searching, more full of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, than the pulpit ever preached. The Church and the world have now the testimony of one passing through the present and personal experience of what he speaks. A sick room is not the place for theorizing and experimentizing upon truth and eternity. All transpiring there, is stern reality. The dust of human applause is laid, the breath of adulation is hushed, the flush of excitement has faded, and the delirium of an admiring throng has passed away—the artificial gives place to the real. All is as substantial and solemn as eternity.

Deem not yourself a useless cumberer because sickness has incapacitated you

**for active labor. God has but changed your sphere of duty, transferring you, doubtless, to one more glorifying to Himself. What though your cherished hopes are blighted, what though your fond plans are frustrated, what though your brilliant prospects are darkened, what though your years of hard, ambitious study seem for nothing, and the honors won by unwearied application and midnight toil, are withering and drooping upon your brow? God is summoning you to a profounder study, to more splendid achievements, and to a more verdant and deathless reward.**

**Do you think that your life has been all a blank? Was Kirke White's? was Spencer's? was Brainerd Taylor's? and a thousand more, whose brilliant career was darkened, and whose opening prospects of eminence and of usefulness were suddenly arrested by sickness, and speedily closed by death? Oh no! Though dead, they still live, and speak, and influence. And who can tell for what nobler purpose and higher employment in heaven the severe mental and moral discipline through which they passed, was designed by God to fit them? No, it is impossible that the past, its toil and sacrifice, can be a blank in your history, or that its literary and spiritual acquisitions are utterly fruitless and lost. To say nothing of the pleasures which you have derived in your mental discursions through the glowing fields of literature and of science, of the high gratification you have felt in converse with ancient authors, and of the feeling of ecstatic delight which has thrilled your soul, when, with the Grecian philosopher, you shouted your "Eureka! Eureka!" over some deep mystery unraveled, or some profound problem solved.**

**What is a still more consolatory reflection, you have been cultivating those mental powers with which God has endowed you, in the precise way which His wisdom ordained, and which His providence marked out. The future, now mournfully realized, of disappointed ambition, of blighted hope, and of withered expectation, your Heavenly Father studiously concealed from your view, that nothing might suppress your ardor or daunt your zeal in its high and brilliant career of investigation and of thought. And which, let me ask you, would from your bed of sickness be the most painful and humiliating retrospect—the years spent in mental dissipation and wasted time, or the years which you have devoted to those acquisitions which expanded your mind, and enriched it with thoughts, which now shed an intellectual luster upon your pallid countenance, and supply material for pleasing reflection in the weary hours of sickness and of solitude?**

**But there is a view of your present trial even more soothing and consolatory**

than this. It is the thought that your heavenly Father—to whom, in youth, and, perhaps, by renewed dedication in riper years, you gave yourself in solemn covenant, to use you and to dispose of you as best promoted His glory—is dealing with you now; that His wisdom is infallible, His love immutable, and that all His thoughts towards you are precious thoughts of peace, and not of evil. *Receive, then, with meekness your Heavenly Father's dispensation*, which, while it has set you apart from *the Lord's work*, has set you apart more exclusively and entirely for *the Lord Himself*. Your great desire has been to glorify Him; leave Him to select the means which may best advance it. *You* have thought of health and activity, of life and usefulness, of being a champion for the truth, a herald of salvation to the ignorant and the lost, a leader in some high and laborious path of Christian enterprise—but *He* has ordained it otherwise. And now, by sickness and suffering, by silence and solitude, He is giving you other work to perform, which shall not the less secure your usefulness and promote His glory. Oh take this cup of trembling from His hands and say,

"My God, my Father, while I stray  
Far from my home on life's rough way  
Oh teach me from my heart to say,  
Your will be done."

"Though dark my path, or sad my lot,  
Let me be still and murmur not,  
But breathe the prayer, divinely taught,  
Your will be done."

"Should pining sickness waste away  
My life in premature decay,  
May I with meek submission say,  
Your will be done."

"If You should call me to resign  
What most I prize—it never was mine,  
I only yield You what was Thine.  
Your will be done."

"Control my will from day to day,  
Blend it with Yours, and take away  
All that now makes it hard to say,

**Your will be done."**

**"And when on earth I breathe no more  
The prayer often mixed with tears before,  
I'll sing upon a happier shore,  
Your will be done."**

**But let us not lose sight of the Physician of the patient. "The whole need not a physician, but those who are sick." That Physician is He who spoke these words. The power of the Son of God over the moral and physical diseases of men, prove Him to be just the Physician which our circumstances require. Do we need skill? He possesses it. Sympathy? He has it. Patience, tenderness, perseverance? all belong to Jesus. Wonderful Physician! No disease can baffle You, for You are Divine. No suffering can fail to move You, for You are human. Are your deep anxieties awakened, my reader, on behalf of some loved object, now pining in sickness, perhaps, to all appearance, in circumstances of extreme danger? In simple faith call in the aid of this Physician. Let the prayer of Moses for Miriam be yours, presented with the faith, and urged with the importunity, of the Syrophenician mother, "Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech you." "I will come and heal her," will be His reply. Deem not the case beyond His skill. Thus reasoned the sister of Lazarus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatever you will ask of God, God will give it you." *Go in prayer and faith, and lay your sick one at His feet.* Jesus is with you. One word from Him, and the disease shall vanish; one touch of His hand, and health shall be restored. He who raised Lazarus from the grave, can bring back from its brink the dear one around whose fast waning life the veins of your heart are entwined. Ask *believingly*, ask *submissively*, ask *importunately*, and then leave the result with Him.**

**Christian sufferer! you marvel why the Lord keeps you so long upon the couch of solitariness, and upon the bed of languishing—why the "earthly house of this tabernacle," should be taken down by continued and pining sickness, the corrodings of disease, and the gradual decay of strength. Hush every reasoning, anxious, doubtful thought. *Your Heavenly Father has so ordained it.* He who built the house, and whose the house is, has a right to remove it by what process He sees fit. The mystery of His present conduct will, before long, be all explained. Yes, faith and love can even explain it now, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight!" Yours is an honorable and a responsible post. God has still a work for you to do. You have been**

waiting year by year in the quietness of holy submission the summons to depart. But God has lengthened out your period of weariness and of suffering, for the work is not yet done in you and by you, to effect which this sickness was sent. Oh what a witness for God may you now be! What a testimony for Christ may you now bear! What sermons—converting the careless, confirming the wavering, restoring the wandering, comforting the timid, may your conversation and your example now preach from that sick bed! And oh, for what higher degrees of glory may God, through this protracted illness, be preparing you!

That there are degrees of glory in heaven, as there are degrees of suffering in hell, and degrees of grace on earth, admits of not a doubt. "As one star differs from another star in glory," so does one glorified saint differ from another. Will there be the absence in heaven of that wondrous variety of proportion which throws such a charm and beauty around the beings and the scenery of earth? Doubtless not. *Superior grace below, is preparing for superior glory above.* And the higher our attainments in holiness here, the loftier our summit of blessedness hereafter. For these high degrees of heavenly happiness, your present and lengthened sickness may, by God's grace, be preparing you. Sanctified by the Spirit of holiness, the *slow fire* is but the more perfectly refining; and the more complete the refinement on earth, the more perfectly will the sanctified soul mirror forth the Divine Sun in heaven. Be, then, your beautiful patience of spirit—meek and patient sufferer—increasingly that of the Psalmist, "I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

Has the Lord recently recovered you from sickness? Then see that He receives much glory from your recovery. Let your life, which He has anew snatched from the grave, be anew consecrated to His service. Preserve in constant and grateful remembrance the hallowed seclusion, the sacred impressions, the solemn transactions of the sick chamber. "Vow, and pay your vows unto the Lord." *Be doubly guarded against that which, previously to your illness, deadened the life of God in your soul.* It is not seemly for a Christian to emerge from the solemnities and retirement of sickness, light, trifling, and earthly. We look for it far otherwise. We expect to see the *froth of vain conversation* subsided, the *dust of earth* blown away, the *clinging attachment to objects of sense* weakened; and in their place, sobriety of spirit heavenliness of deportment, and weanedness from earth. Let these Christian traits be yours, beloved reader. Let it appear by your increased spiritual-mindedness, that you have risen from the bed of sickness, and come forth from the place of

solitude, like the "bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race."

*Cherish in your heart and perpetuate in your life a grateful sense and remembrance of the Lord's mercy in your recovery.* He it was who healed you. He gave the skill, and blessed the means, and rebuked the disease. You were brought low, and He helped you. *A monument of His sparing mercy, may you be a monument of His sanctifying grace.* Let the life which He has 'redeemed from destruction,' be as a pleasant psalm to the Lord. "O Lord my God, I cried unto you, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from the grave; you have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O you saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; for his anger endures but a night: in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to you, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto you forever." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

Go, with lowly and adoring spirit, to the house of the Lord, saying, "I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." There lay yourself, a living sacrifice, upon the altar of your living High Priest—a renewed consecration to God.

"Here in Your courts I leave my vow,  
And Your rich grace record;  
Witness you saints who hear me now, If I forsake the Lord."

*You who visit sick and dying beds,* tread solemn and important ground. You have need to visit much the throne of grace for the wisdom and the grace which such a sphere of labor requires. Remember that *you are brought in contact with those with whom God is especially dealing.* Your advantages for instruction and impression are great. Sickness has given a distaste for the world; God's judgment has perhaps aroused the conscience, and his dealings have made the heart soft. Your first step will be to ascertain, as far as it is possible, the real state of the soul. What medical man would attempt to prescribe for his patient without first thoroughly ascertaining the nature of

the disease, its symptoms, phases, and the course of treatment demanded?

But your post is infinitely more important and responsible than his, whose only office is to heal the body. Having learned this, you will then be prepared to bring *the grand remedy* contained in the gospel of Jesus to bear upon the case. *Let your unfoldings of that remedy be scriptural, simple, and appropriate.* You will present such statements of divine truth as the nature of the case requires, making prominent the two great ingredients in your Divine recipe—the fall in the first Adam—the recovery in the second Adam; out of self, into Christ. Before the truly awakened, yet anxious, restless soul, you will array all the precious promises and gracious invitations of the Gospel, so amply provided for such. You will lay peculiar stress upon the finished work of Jesus, and the perfect freeness of the remedy which he has provided; especially holding up to view the great and glorious fact, that *Christ died for the ungodly.* You will explain *faith* to be the one simple channel through which flow pardon and peace to the soul—"believing in the Lord Jesus Christ;" while you unfold his richness to meet all the necessities of his own beloved and called people. But the Spirit of truth will be your Teacher and your Guide. Looking up to Him, and leaning upon Christ, your labor in this peculiarly difficult, trying, and important sphere of Christian exertion will not be in vain in the Lord.

Nor would I fail to remind the Christian physician, should the eye of such an one light upon this page, of the peculiar advantages which he possesses of uniting the healing of *bodily* disease with a deep solicitude for the *spiritual* welfare of the sick. The example of our adorable Lord, our great model in all things, presents a beautiful and instructive illustration of this union. Immediately preceding His magnificent sermon on the mount, it is narrated of Him, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick people who were taken with diverse diseases and torments, and those who were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatics, and those who had the palsy: and he healed them."

Molding his Christianity and shaping his professional career after this illustrious example, doubly and immensely useful may the pious physician be. Let no delicacy of feeling lest you should invade the sacred functions of the Christian ministry—let no dread of being singular, nor fear of man, dissuade you from a work which God has so providentially placed in your hands. Some

of the most illustrious names in the history of medical science have been identified with the profession and propagation of Christianity. Bateman and Hamilton, Hervey and Sydenham, Boerhaave and Mason Good, were Christian physicians. Illustrious as they were in the annals of science, still more honored and distinguished were they as men of whom it is their highest eulogy, that while they healed the bodily malady of the sick, they administered to the 'mind diseased,' and both in their professional and private life, walked with God.

And, oh, if but one soul is, by your instrumentality, brought to Christ—if one, wounded by the serpent, is led to raise his eye of faith, even in the agonies of death, and fix it upon the Savior—slain and lifted up for sinners the chief, the vilest—that were a blessing and a reward before which all the honors of your professional skill and reputation droop and die. Christian physician! be faithful to souls, be faithful to your high trust, be faithful to God.

The subject of *Christian Missions*, in connection with the medical profession, is becoming one of deepening interest and importance. It is found that a practical acquaintance with the art of healing, clothes the missionary of the Cross with an importance in the estimation of the heathen, and places in his hands an influence over their minds, superior to all other laborers in the field. *The healing of the body opens an avenue to the healing of the soul.* Confidence and gratitude, and even affection, are inspired within the 'savage breast,' and these prepare the way for the Gospel message. The human physician thus becomes the herald of the Divine; and the balm which he administers to the physical malady, is but the introduction to the 'balm of Gilead,' of which the diseased and deathless mind so deeply stands in need. The question of duty with pious medical men, as to their personal consecration to the missionary work, viewed in this point of light, is worthy of their most solemn and prayerful consideration.

The following remarks by a distinguished Christian physician are so singularly appropriate, and withal so excellent and eloquent, that I am happy to strengthen my appeal by their quotation. Alluding to the duty of pious medical men, he says, "And responsibility stops not at themselves. Having become Christians, they find it at once their privilege and their duty to become Christianizers too. A privilege—for thus only can they satisfy that burning desire which else consumes them—to make known and convey to others the blessings they have themselves received. And a solemn duty, inasmuch as God has given to them, more than to perhaps any other class of

men, *many and invaluable opportunities of advancing His glory, and doing His will, in the salvation of lost souls*—perishing and yet immortal. It is commonly said that 'man's extremity is God's opportunity.' *The heart is soft in sickness, and impressible; and the soul awakened, seeks earnestly for hope and comfort then.* The faithful pastor is perhaps little less successful in turning souls to Christ, by his ministrations in the sick-room, than by those of the pulpit; and the faithful physician, too, can look back with thankfulness to many happy times, when with one hand he healed and soothed the body, and with the other guided the soul heavenward and home. Conversion may come mysteriously and softly as the breeze—no man knowing where it comes or where it goes. At other times it is dated back to special providences in perils and escape. But, oh! how often is it referred, with adoring gratitude, to some lingering disease or sudden and sore sickness! It is in the fear of death and judgment that conscience regains its power, and speaks for God. Memory upbraids and conviction grows deeper and darker; but memory alone will never bring peace. News, good news, is eagerly sought—news of hope and salvation. Then is the sowing time, while the earth is soft and open, and watered by the tears of penitence. Then is it that the smitten patient clings with child-like confidence to the physician; and, hanging life upon his looks and lips, implores his aid. Then is it that he, sad and sorrowful, his best skill baffled, and himself bereft of all hope of cure, yet rejoices in being able to say—'One thing more I can do. It is the sure prescription: believe and live!' Then is it that in the deep furrow of affliction, the good seed may be by his hand hopefully laid. Nourished by the dews of the Holy Spirit, and warmed by the rays of God's love, it takes deep root, springs up, and bears fruit, to the praise and glory of His name." -Professor Miller of Edinburgh.

Let *the Christian invalid* be cheered with the prospect of before long arriving at that land the inhabitants of which shall no more say, I am sick. It is the land of light and love, of rest and holiness. The moment the spirit is 'absent from the body and present with the Lord,' it treads those balmy shores where health breathes in the air, flows in the waters, and sparkles in the sunbeams. There is no sickness in heaven, for "the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity," and this accounts for the absence of all physical malady. There is no sickness in heaven, because there is no sin. But the more full enjoyment of this blessing is reserved for the new earth, upon which the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, will dwell. Then it is that, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former

things are passed away."

**Christian sufferer! you are nearing this land—a few more days of languishing and pain, a few more nights of weary wakefulness, and you are there! Do you see through the chinks of the, "earthly house of this tabernacle," "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Do you see the "city which has foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God?" It has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it for the glory of God does enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there is no night there."**

*Soon you will exchange this hospital for your Father's house, and as you cross the threshold, the last pang is inflicted, the last sigh is heaved, and the last tear is brushed from your eye. Then, at the resurrection of the just, comes *the new body*. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." All this blessedness and glory JESUS has procured for you. All this blessedness and glory awaits you. And into its full possession and experience Jesus will soon bring you. Animated with such a prospect, and cheered with such a hope, patiently endure the prolonged sickness, the protracted suffering, exclaiming in the spirit and language of Jesus, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, your will be done!"*

**"Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers."**

**"When languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,  
It is sweet to look beyond our cage,  
And long to fly away."**

**"Sweet to look inward and attend  
The whispers of His love;  
Sweet to look upward to the place  
Where Jesus pleads above."**

**"Sweet to look back and see my name  
In life's fair book set down;  
Sweet to look forward and behold  
Eternal joys my own."**

**"Sweet to reflect how grace divine  
My sins on Jesus laid;  
Sweet to remember that His blood  
My debt of sufferings paid."**

**"Sweet on His righteousness to stand,  
Which saves from second death;  
Sweet to experience, day by day,  
His Spirit's quickening breath."**

**"Sweet on His faithfulness to rest,  
Whose love can never end;  
Sweet on His covenant of grace  
For all things to depend."**

**"Sweet in the confidence of faith  
To trust His firm decrees;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hand,  
And know no will but His."**

**"Sweet to rejoice in lively hope  
That, when my change shall come,  
Angels will hover round my bed,  
And waft my spirit home."**

**"There shall my disimprisoned soul  
Behold Him and adore;  
Be with His likeness satisfied,  
And grieve and sin no more."**

**"Shall see Him wear that very flesh  
On which my guilt was lain;  
His love intense, His merit fresh,  
As though but newly slain."**

**"If such the views which grace unfolds,  
Weak as it is below;  
What rapture must the church above  
In Jesus' presence know!"**

**"If such the sweetness of the stream,  
What must the fountain be;  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from Thee!"**

**"O may the unction of these truths  
Forever with me stay;  
Till from her sinful cage dismissed,  
My spirit flies away."**

### **The Glorious Prospects of the Believer**

**"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Cor. 2:9**

**The believer in Christ must of necessity be a happy man. Though like the Master whom he loves—and loving, he serves—his path in some places may be paved with flint, or fenced with briar, yet amid it all, fed from the fullness of Christ and living upon the supply of the covenant, yes, upon the God of the covenant, he is, and he must be, a truly happy man. Beloved reader, we live below, far below our spiritual privileges. We claim not all the blessings of our birth-right, which, in this present time-state, are ours to enjoy. And if we rise not to the experience of what God has provided and promised for us now, what marvel that we so faintly imagine, and yet more faintly realize, the glories prepared for us hereafter. To a brief meditation upon these future glories this chapter invites you. And may the Eternal Spirit so cause us to see them with the glass of faith—the believer's telescope—as they are revealed in the word, as to fill our souls with heavenly and ardent desire for them.**

**What animating words are those which suggest the theme of our present reflections! It would, however, be doing violence to the text, and injustice to the Holy Spirit of truth, not to remark that there is undoubtedly a reference to the *present* blessedness as well as to the *future* prospects of believers. The Apostle primarily alludes to the doctrines of grace and to the mysteries of the Gospel, as inconceivable by, and as veiled to, the 'princes of this world:' and then adds, "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." But as the present blessings and the future blessedness of believers are so closely connected, not only with**

each other, but in the experience of the child of God, we cannot well contemplate the one without carrying forward our thoughts to the other. It is with the glorious prospects of the saints of God we at present have especially to do. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him."

It is of the greatest moment that we clearly understand FOR WHOM THIS FUTURE GLORY IS PREPARED. "Those who love Him." To such only does heaven unfold its gates of pearl. What, reader, are your pretensions to this character? Those who in reality love God form but a small portion of the human family. The great mass are lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, lovers of sin, rather than lovers of God. The fearful and universal characteristic of the unrenewed mind is enmity, and not love, to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The word of God makes no exception in favor of those who say that they love God, or who profess that they love him, or whose creed is orthodox, or whose lives are fair, or who, according to the world's estimate, are deemed 'religious.' If there be lacking this essential element, this crowning grace of true religion—love to God—all is lacking. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

But what an expressive and honorable designation is this—a designation belonging to all the people of God—"those who love him!" In this quality are merged all other and inferior distinctions of birth, and wealth, and learning, and power; and the one character, the one badge, the one style and title of all is—love to God. This is the one soul; animating, pervading, and assimilating the members of the one body, the children of the one family.

Love to God is a Divine emotion, implanted in the human heart, corresponding in its nature and quality with its Divine and holy Object. It is a moral affection inspired by the perfection of moral beauty. God is a perfect Being. "In him is no darkness at all"—neither intellectual nor spiritual. "There is no unrighteousness in him." He is the perfection of all perfection. Who can set forth the Almighty to perfection? He must be infinite in his powers of conception and description who can do it. All finite imagination droops, and thought expires, and language fails, and imagery fades, in the attempt to describe what God is. And yet He is sufficiently revealed in the word, and embodied in Jesus, to be known, and known to be loved. Love to Him constitutes the essence of true godliness. A religion that has not love to

**God as its great principle, its grand requirement, its supreme end, is, and must be, false. It supposes another and a higher object of affection. It enthrones upon the heart a sovereign, and recognizes a government antagonist to Jehovah's. It, in fact, supposes the existence of another God—for whatever object supplants Him in the affections of the creature, whatever divides the heart with, and alienates it from, Himself, is in direct opposition to the Divine law, and 'as God sits in the temple of God, showing itself that it is God.' "You shall have no other God but me."**

**In nothing has God acted more worthily of His nature than in constituting love as the soul and essence of religion, and Himself its supreme Object. In doing so, He has as much consulted the happiness of the creature as His own honor; as much our benefit as His glory. Indeed it would seem as if, in enjoining the obligation, in issuing the requirement, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," He had a view to our happiness beyond every other end. Apart from the honor which accrues to Him from our obedience to this precept, what advantage can He derive from our affection? Himself the infinite sea of love, full to the eternal satisfaction of His own nature, what good could arise to Him from the tribute of affection poured from every heart? But He would bring us to a more perfect enjoyment of Himself by bringing us to love Him with a supreme affection. He who loves God, walks with God, dwells with God, is like God. He has not far to travel in order to find God. Let him look within upon his own tranquil conscience, let him wander through the illuminated chambers of his own soul, and there, in finding love, he finds God. If love is not there, neither is God there; for where love is, there is God enthroned upon the heart. "God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him."**

**It is, then, the great characteristic of true believers that they love God. Their love embraces each person in the Godhead. They love the father—for to Him they are indebted for His unspeakable gift. They love the Son—for to Him they owe their redemption. They love the Spirit—for, having renewed them, He dwells in them forever as His temple. Such are all the children of God. O the blessedness they feel in loving God in Christ! O the happiness that springs from this divine, this heavenly emotion, expanding, purifying, and ennobling the soul! They ascribe its possession to no motive existing in themselves, but with the Apostle are ever ready to acknowledge, "We love him because he first loved us."**

**It is true, their love to God, the Triune God, is at best but an imperfect**

emotion, mingling with a thousand frailties, an affection unworthy of themselves, still more deeply unworthy of Him yet they love Him sincerely; He has drawn their hearts, has overcome them by His grace, and they are enabled to say, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth whom I desire in comparison of you."

The deathlessness of love to God is a beautiful idea of Scripture. Every other grace will cease but that of love. *Faith!* that precious grace which has been as the sheet-anchor of our soul in the wildest storms; which, as our compass, has steered us through the deep billows and brought us in safety to the port; which, amid all the trials, needs, and perils of the way, was so great and so sweet a solace—when we reach the world of glory we shall need it no more, for faith must then give place to sight.

*Hope!* that pole-star of the soul, which cheered us with its mild luster many a weary step of our desolate journey, gilding the dark pictures of our earthly pilgrimage with its heavenly brightness, and alluring us on to the heaven from where it shone—when we reach the world of glory we shall need it no more, for hope will terminate in full fruition.

But Love will live forever! It will tread with us the dark valley, and will cross with us the swelling river, and enter with us into the realms of eternal blessedness—its home, from where it came, and where it again returns. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away"—but 'love never fails,' but lives forever.

We proceed now to a rapid glance at the "things which God has prepared for those who love him." And first, there is the PRESENT blessedness of the saints. And, O, how sweet is this, what tongue of man or angel can describe? They are inconceivably great. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." Contemplate what He has prepared for us in the everlasting covenant of grace. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," says God. This covenant, made with Christ, who is both its Mediator and Surety, secures to the believer all the mercies appropriate to his present state of conflict and of trial. They are 'sure mercies.' None others are so. The mercies of the worldling are as uncertain as the wind, as unstable as the sea. 'Passing away' is written upon them all. But the present blessings of the covenant child of God are 'sure.' Redemption,

'sure;' regeneration, 'sure;' salvation, 'sure;' the promises, 'sure;' a present God, 'sure;' a full Savior, 'sure;' eternal life, 'sure;'—all as 'sure' to the 'house of David' as Christ the spiritual David can make them.

Saints of God! what a sweet encouraging truth is this as you tread the vale of tears towards the mount of God! The world knows us not; the saints but imperfectly understand us. Tender and sympathizing as some are, how often are we compelled to say to them—"There are depths of sorrow in my soul, there are secret recesses in my heart, which you cannot reach. No one can touch those springs but Jesus. None can enter into and illumine the orbit but the Sun of Righteousness." Turning from the ignorance of the world, from the false judgment, the wrong interpretation, the misplaced confidence, the unkind rebukes of the saints, what a reviving cordial and what a soothing balm to the faint and wounded spirit is this truth—"the things which God has prepared for those who love him;" even the "sure mercies of ]David!"

But especially in the Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the covenant, are all great and glorious blessings prepared and treasured up. No conception can fully grasp the greatness of that declaration, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Fullness of justification, so that the most guilty may be accepted. Fullness of pardon, so that the vilest may be forgiven. Fullness of grace, so that the most unholy may be sanctified. Fullness of strength, and consolation, and sympathy, so that the most feeble, afflicted, and tried, may be sustained, succored, and comforted. O how imperfectly are we acquainted with the things which God has prepared in Jesus for those who love Him! He would seem to have laid all His treasures at our feet. We go to Pharaoh, and he sends us to *Joseph*. We travel to the Father and sweet it is to go to Him!—but we forget that having made Christ the, "Head over all things to the Church." He sends us to Jesus. "Go unto Joseph." Precious words! Every need has the voice of the Father in it, saying, "Go to Jesus." Every perplexity is the Father's voice—"Go to Jesus." Every trial is the Father's voice—"Go to Jesus." If it pleased the Father to prepare in Christ all these spiritual things for those who love Him, surely it must be equally pleasing to Him that I, a poor, needy, ignorant, guilty creature, should draw from this supply to the utmost extent of my need. I will, then, arise with my burden, with my sorrow, with my need, and go to Christ, and prove if His infinite *willingness* to give, is not equal to His infinite *ability* to provide for me all that I need.

But let us turn to the contemplation of the FUTURE PROSPECTS of believers—of all contemplations perhaps the most sanctifying that can interest

the feelings or engage the soul of man. In this sense of the passage it may in truth be said, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." We at present dwell but in the *suburban* parts of heaven. We tread here below its lower streets—the mere *outskirts* of glory. Now and then we catch a view of what is passing within the celestial city. We gaze for a moment upon its glittering spires, its star-paved streets, its walls of jasper, and its dome of light. An occasional strain of its music floating upon fragrant breezes, falls upon our ear, soothing the spirit and awakening desires to be there. But the glorious vision is not of long continuance. Pisgah's summit is again capped with clouds, and we descend to the valley beneath, to battle once more with sin and sorrow, and learn that heaven, though it soon will be, is not yet come.

I have remarked, that *the contemplation of the coming glory is, of all meditative themes, the most deeply sanctifying*. Heaven is revealed, and not as a state merely, but as *a place*, "I go," says Jesus, "to prepare *a place* for you." And upon the ear of the expiring malefactor He poured these enchanting words, "This day shall you be with me in Paradise." We have sufficient data given to us upon which to found some correct idea of what awaits us in the upper world. We glean from the sacred Scriptures enough knowledge of its nature and society, of its employments and blessedness, to awaken the most intense desire for its fitness and its enjoyment. It thus becomes the focal point upon which the believer's eye loves to fix its longing gaze.

In the race, he views it as his goal; in the warfare, he anticipates it as his prize; in the pilgrimage, he looks forward to it as his rest; and amid the toil of the pilgrimage and the battle of life he is often heard to betray the inward longings of his soul, "O that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away and be at rest."

How blessed the prospect of attaining in heaven to a state of perfect holiness! This is its most glorious beatitude. Think of possessing a nature as pure and holy as the nature of God. Think of the soul being as a mirror concentrating upon its unsullied bosom all the moral perfections of Jehovah, nothing intercepting or dimming their rays, and returning the image of the Divine and glorious Object it reflects—each sparkling beam presenting a perfect resemblance of God. This is heaven. It is no picture of the fancy, it is no ideal conception of the imagination, but a real, and tangible, and scriptural delineation of the holy state awaiting every believer. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to

glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

**In heaven we shall be freed from the indwelling of evil, and be delivered from the tyranny of corruption. Sin, now our thrall, our torment, and our burden, will then enslave, and distress, and oppress us no more. The chain which now binds us to the dead, loathsome body of our humiliation will be broken, and we shall be forever free! To you who cry, "O wretched man that I am," who know the inward plague, and feel that there is not one moment of the day in which you do not come short of the Divine glory, whose heaviest burden, whose bitterest sorrow, whose deepest humiliation springs from the consciousness of sin—what a glorious prospect is this! "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as he is."**

*The absence of all evil, and the presence of all good, constitute elements of the heavenly state, which place its blessedness beyond the conception of the human mind. Assure me that in glory all the effects and consequences of the curse are done away—that the heart bleeds no more, that the eye weeps no more, that the spirit grieves no more, that temptation assails no more, that sickness, and bereavement, and separation, and disappointment are forms of suffering forever unknown, and let the Spirit bear his witness with my spirit—that I am a child of God, and a door is open to me in heaven, through which a tide of, "joy unspeakable and full of glory," rushes in upon my soul. And this is heaven. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

**But heaven is not a place of *negative* blessedness merely. There is the positive presence of all good. "In your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." The soul is with Christ, in the presence of God, and in the complete enjoyment of all that He has from eternity prepared for those who love Him. All soul, all intellect, all purity, all love—'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard' the inconceivable blessedness in the full ocean of which it now bathes. Its society is genial, its employments are delightful, its joys are ever new. How deeply does it now drink of God's everlasting love, with what wondering delight it now surveys the glory of Immanuel, how clearly it reads the mysterious volume of all the Divine conduct below, and how loud its deep songs of praise, as each new page unfolds the 'height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ,' which even then 'passes knowledge!' Truly we may call upon the "saints to be joyful in glory." Sing aloud, for you are**

now with Christ, you see God, and are beyond the region of sin, of pain, of tears, of death—"forever with the Lord!"

But we cannot conceive, still less describe, the glorious prospects of believers, for, "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." *We shall soon go 'home', and experience it all.* Then the eye will have seen, and the ear will have heard, and the heart will have realized the things which from eternity God has laid up in Jesus, and prepared in the everlasting covenant for the poorest, lowest, feeblest child, whose heart faintly, yet sincerely, thrilled in a response of holy love to His.

### **God Resting in His Love**

"He will rest in his love." Zephaniah 3:17

It must be the mournful acknowledgment of every spiritual mind, that, after all the clear revealings of truth, and the deep teachings of the Holy Spirit, our views of what God is in Himself, of what He is to His people, and, we may add, of what His people are to Him, fall so far below what they ought to be. May not this disproportion of our conception of their magnitude and preciousness be traced, in a great measure, to the deficiency of our faith in the plain matter of fact statements of God's word? We stumble at the very simplicity of the truth. Take, for illustration, that single declaration—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The most unhesitating, simple belief of this, shall we say, matter of fact, yet astounding announcement—faith just receiving it without any qualification, or demur, exactly as it is found in the Bible—will teach us more in one hour of what God in Christ is to a poor penitential believer, than a century of human teaching. The truth is, *we do but half believe the word of God.* We doubt, we hesitate, we reason, we cavil, we add to it, and we take from it—we receive just so much as we can understand, and reject just so much as is not palatable or clear; and the sad consequence is, God reproves our unbelief by leaving us for a season to the effects of our unbelief.

But although we believe not, yet He remains true to every jot and tittle of His revealed truth. The imperfect credence which we give to its statements cannot invalidate His promise, nor alter the word that has gone out of His mouth. In

the midst of all our slowness of heart to believe, and insensibility of heart to love, "He abides faithful." There, more immovable than the rock of the ocean, more impregnable than the battlements of heaven, firmer than the pillars of the universe, our God, our own covenant God abides, for "he will rest in his love."

In conducting these pages to a close, what theme of holier, tenderer interest, what view of God more elevating, soothing, and sanctifying, could we with greater appropriateness leave upon the mind of the pious reader, than 'God resting in His love'? May the Holy Spirit impart to us an enlightened view and a personal possession of this truth.

The perfection in which God is described as resting is, His love. That He should rest in this, and not in His holiness, or His wisdom, or His power, conveys the most exalted view of its transcendent excellence, and of His own ineffable delight in it. For what is God's love? It is not so much a perfection of His being as it is the essence of His being, for "God is love." It would seem as impossible to separate love from God, as to separate God from Himself. In resting in His love, He rests in Himself. Here, then, is one of the most sublime conceptions of God ever presented to the human mind. The great, Eternal God resting—from no exhaustion nor weariness—in His love. What infinite satisfaction with, and what inconceivable delight in Himself, does this Divine posture express! There is not, perhaps, another view of God in the Bible which sets forth this truth with such vividness as this.

In resting in His love towards His saints, He must rest in the Son of His love. "God was in Christ." It was only in Christ that the Divine perfections employed in saving man could meet, and harmonize, and repose. But one object could reconcile their conflicting interests, maintain the honor of each, and unite and blend them all in one glorious expedient of human salvation, as effectual to man as it was honoring to God—that one object was God's only and beloved Son. The essential dignity of the Son of God was such, that all agreed that the rebel sinner should live if the Divine Savior would die. Divine justice—vindicating holiness, and sustained by truth—pursued the victim of its vengeance until it arrived at the cross. There it beheld the provision of mercy, the gift of love—God's dear Son, suspended, bleeding, dying in the place of the sinner, "giving himself a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor"—and justice was stayed, stood still, and adored. It could proceed no further in arrest of the rebel—it had found full, ample, perfect satisfaction, and returned, exclaiming, "it is enough!" and God rested in His love.

**Yes! Jesus is the rest of the Father. Listen to the declaration which He loved so frequently to repeat—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." With what holy satisfaction, with what fond complacence and delight does He rest in Him who has so revealed His glory, and so honored His name! How dear to His heart Jesus is, what mind can conceive, what language can express? Resting in Him, delighting in His person, and fully satisfied with His work, an object ever in His presence and in His heart, the Father is prepared to welcome and to bless all who approach Him in the name of His Son. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand." And again, "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me." Therefore Jesus could say, "Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Behold the Father resting in His love—resting in the Son of His love—resting in the gift of His love. Approach Him in the name of Jesus, and ask what you will, "he will give it to you."**

**God rests in the people of His love. It had been no selfishness in God had He loved Himself solely and supremely, to the exclusion of every other object. He might have remained eternally happy in the contemplation of His own glory, delighting in His own infinite excellence, and resting in His love to Himself. But this would have been almost impossible. Himself essential Love, the infinite ocean of benevolence, it would appear that He could not rest in the abstract contemplation of His love, but must have other objects upon whom to lavish, and with whom to share it. It pleased Him, therefore, of His own free unconditional choice, to take out of the fallen race of man, a church, a people, whom He, "loved with an everlasting love," and had elected in Christ their Head. "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 having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved." "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are his." They are a people for the most, part hidden from the knowledge of the world, and but few in number.**

**How few there are among the many professing Christ, who yet know anything by experience of the great and wondrous life of faith! Only they who are taught by the Spirit the plague of their own hearts can possibly know it. How few there are who appear to possess vital religion in their souls! How few choose Christ with His cross! The great mass of professors are aiming to**

separate Christ and His cross! They would sincerely bear the name of Christ, and be accounted as the followers of Christ, and do something for the cause of Christ, but they hide His cross, they are ashamed of His cross, they shrink from His cross. Christ and His outward lowliness, Christ and His poverty, Christ and His humiliation, Christ and the world's despising, form no part of their creed nor their religion. But Christ and the world, Christ and the popular voice, Christ and the slavery of sin, Christ and an unhumbled spirit, Christ and a love of money, and ease, and self-indulgence, make up the religion of vast numbers who yet profess, and call themselves Christians. Awful fact! How forcibly does it remind us of the solemn words of Jesus, "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Let us, in view of this solemn truth, search our hearts, and ask the searching of God's Spirit; and in ascertaining the real state of our souls, let us take nothing for granted, rest not in past experience, nor in gifts, nor usefulness, but be satisfied only with the present, inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, God rests in the people of His love. They are precious, inconceivably precious to His heart. He keeps them as the apple of His eye. In their own view, they may be vile, polluted, worthless; but seen by Him in Jesus, He can, and He does say, to each one, "You are all beautiful, my love, I see no spot in you." Resting in Jesus, the Son of His love, He rests in His people, the objects of His love. He may afflict, and chasten, and rebuke, and try them, and permit them to be severely assailed; He may even hide His face from them for a little moment, and speak harshly to theirs, like Joseph to his brethren: He may disturb their resting-places, and scatter their creature mercies to the wind—nevertheless, you saints of God, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over you with singing."

Nor will He be satisfied until He has gathered them all around Him within His house in heaven—Jesus presenting to Him the whole body, 'a glorious Church,' exclaiming, "Behold, I and the children whom you have given me." Then, and not until then, will the joy of the Lord over His Church be full. Then, and not until then, will His rest in the people of His love be complete.

God rests in the manifestation of His love. Even in our fallen state, with our impaired affections clinging to us, like the green ivy around a splendid ruin, we can understand something of this feeling. If love exists, where is the heart that can conceal the affection? It must, in some mode or other, express the

sentiment it feels. If revealed only to God, the heart must unburden itself of its hidden, trembling emotion. But how delightful is the expression of affection! The parent feels it when he presses his little one to his fond heart. The mother, when she clasps her infant to her thrilling bosom. The friend, when he communes with his friend. But if this principle be so strong, and its expression so delightful, in such a nature as ours, all of whose affections are so sinful and selfish, what must it be in God!

Conceive, if it is possible, what must be the holy delight of God's heart in lavishing its affection upon His people; what must be the joy of Christ when He comes and manifests Himself to His saints as He does not unto the world. A benevolent mind delights in the exercise of benevolence. God is infinitely so. Infinite, therefore, must be the satisfaction of His heart, intense the delight of His soul, when He sheds abroad His love in the hearts of His people, when He draws near in the day that they call upon Him, and manifests Himself as a loving, tender, faithful Father. "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness, those that remember you in your way." Since, then, the Father delights to unlock the springs of His love, and to fill the heart to overflowing, take your poor, timid, doubting heart, and place it beneath those springs, that it may be perfect in love, and, perfected in love, all slavish fear will be expelled.

God rests in the immutability of His love. It is a love that knows no change in its character, and no variation in its degree. There never has been a period in which the love of God in Christ towards His people has been more or less than it is at this moment. It must have been great before conversion, because then it was that He gave His only begotten Son that they might live through Him. Then, too, it was He sent His own Spirit to regenerate their minds, and to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus. If He thus loved them before conversion, when they were yet sinners, do you think, dear reader, that His love can be less since conversion? Impossible! God rests in the unchangeableness of His love towards His saints. Nothing can move Him from it. Nothing can disturb His repose.

When He set His heart upon His people, He foresaw and foreknew all that was in them. He knew when they would revolt, when they would start aside like a broken bow, when they would stumble and fall. He knew all their waywardness, and folly, and ingratitude. "I knew that you would deal very treacherously," says God. And yet He loved them. Acquainted with their sin, does He not chasten it? and in chastening, does He withdraw His love from

them? Listen to His own words—"If my children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail." What language can more strongly set forth *the Lord's determination to correct the departures of His people, while yet resting in the unchangeableness of His love towards them?*

The marginal rendering of the passage, which we have thus been briefly amplifying, is exceedingly beautiful and expressive: "He will be silent because of His love." Divine wrath is silent because love has hushed it. Divine justice is silent, because love has satisfied it. Sin is silent, because love has condemned it. Satan is silent, because love has vanquished him. God's love has silenced every voice but own. When an accusation was brought against a poor sinner in the presence of Jesus, and He was called upon to adjudicate in the case, it is recorded that He, "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." He was silent, because of His love!

And have we no accusers? Ah, yes, many and just. Conscience accuses, and Satan accuses, and sin accuses, and the world accuses—but Jesus accuses not; He is silent because of His love. They condemn loudly, fiercely, justly, but He never condemns. "And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground." Still not a word of condemnation breathed from His lips. He had been wronged, He had been sinned against, His own holy law had been broken, and the witnesses, many and malignant, are there to testify in truth against the sinner—but Jesus is silent, and silent in His love.

"Some write their wrongs in marble—He, more just,  
Stooped down serene, and wrote His in the dust;  
Trode under foot, the sport of every wind,  
Swept from the earth, and blotted from His mind;  
There, buried in the dust, He bade them lie,  
And grieved He could not keep them from the Almighty's eye."

What sweet repose is here for the saints of God! Does God rest in His love? Then the believer in Jesus may rest in it too. Does Infinity find repose here? Then may a poor finite creature. Does Immanuel rest in it? Then may I, resting in Immanuel. If it is enough for Jehovah, surely it is enough for the people of Jehovah. Our dear Lord's exhortation harmonizes with this truth. "Abide in me." "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; continue in

my love." Beloved reader, *come and rest in this love*—Jesus invites you to its blessed repose. Are you weary, tossed with tempest? Is there sadness in your spirit, sorrow in your heart, a cloud upon your mind? Is some crystal cistern broken, some fragrant flower withered, some fond and pleasant mercy gone? "Come," says Jesus, "and rest in my love—rest in the reality of my love—rest in the depth of my love—rest in the tenderness of my love—rest in the deathlessness of my love!"

O blessed rest! Poor, heart-broken sinner, weeping penitent, weary, laboring soul! What do you need? Mercy? It is in Christ. Forgiveness? It is in Christ. Acceptance? It is in Christ. The silencing power of love? It is in Christ. A reconciled Father, a pacified God? He is in Christ. All that you need is in Christ. Draw near, then, and rest in His love. The Father rests in Jesus—His justice rests in Jesus, His holiness rests in Jesus, His truth rests in Jesus—His power rests in Jesus—and in Jesus you too may rest! God rests in His love towards you, because He rests in the Son of His love. And in the Son of His love your weary, jaded, trembling spirit may find full and eternal repose.

And whatever your present circumstances are, be the severity of your Father's dealings what it may, ever remember that He still rests in His love. Judging of Him by providences rather than by promises, your faith may become unhinged from this truth. But the standard by which you are to form your views of God's character is the same by which you are to judge of your own—His word. That word declares that He rests in His love, that He now rests in it, that He rests in it at the present time, and therefore He rests in it at the moment that His providences in your history are the darkest and most lowering. When to your view all things seem against you—when even God Himself seems against you, then is He resting with infinite satisfaction and delight in the love with which He has loved you from everlasting. And when all the mighty wheels of His providence are rapidly revolving, when event follows event, and convulsion succeeds convulsion; when your spirit is agitated, and your heart is alarmed, and your whole soul is awe-struck and appalled at the wonder-workings of His power, then is God calmly, serenely resting in His love towards you—unmoved, unruffled, unobscured by the things which convulse the universe.

If God thus rests in His love towards us, how jealous ought we to be of the fervor and fidelity of our love to Him! Ah! how inconstant, and wavering, and restless have been our affections! How little have we rested in our love to Christ! Other objects have attracted us away from it, and we have been as

changeable as the wind, and as unstable as the sea. But let us watch over this holy affection, apart from which God takes no pleasure in our sacrifices or services. Let it be our aim to yield up whatever rivals Christ. He sacrificed all for the love He bore us; let us sacrifice all that He requires for the love we bear Him. Jesus is worthy—O how worthy—of our deepest, strongest, most self-consuming affection. And God, who gave us His Son, asks nothing in return but that we give Him our heart. Let His love, then, constrain us to a more unreserved obedience, to a holier walk, to a more ardent, inseparable attachment to Him, to His people, and to His cause.

Let us, in this day of easy and abounding profession—this day of papal encroachment, and of popish imitation—this day of exaltation of human authority above the word of God—this day of error, of rebuke, and of blasphemy—this day of rapid and of excited action—this last, solemn dispensation of the world—the events of which are rapidly ushering in the coming of the Son of man—let us, under the influence of more simple faith, and more fervent love, and brightening hope, 'go forth unto Jesus outside the camp, bearing his reproach,' resting amid our conflict and our toil, where the Father rests—where the sinner rests—where we may rest—in Jesus!

"Jesus, I rest in Thee,  
In You myself I hide  
Laden with guilt and misery,  
Where can I rest beside?  
It is on Your meek and lowly breast  
My weary soul alone can rest."

"You Holy One of God!  
The Father rests in Thee.  
And in the savor of that blood  
which speaks to Him for me.  
The curse is gone—through You I'm blest,  
God rests in You—In You I rest."

"The slave of sin and fear,  
Your truth my bondage broke,  
My happy spirit loves to wear  
Your light and easy yoke;  
Your love, which fills my grateful breast,  
Makes duty joy, and labor rest."

**"Soon the bright glorious day  
The rest of God will come,  
Sorrow and sin shall pass away,  
And I shall reach my home  
Then, of the promised land possessed,  
My soul shall know eternal rest."**

**READER! "May the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ Be with Your Spirit.  
Amen."**